WESPTSA Newsletter

November 2016

Acronyms... and more acronyms...

PBIS, MTSS, RtI… What do these acronyms stand for? How do they impact your kids? MTSS stands for Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. Both PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) and RtI (Response to Intervention) are multi-tiered systems of supports; PBIS addresses behavior and RtI academics (often reading, mathematics, and occasionally writing). PBIS and RtI both involve providing multiple tiers of support - typically 3 (although there can be more levels). Tier 1 for PBIS and RtI are general or universal, meaning they are used for all students. Tier 2 is then targeted supports and services for a percentage of students. Tier 3 is then intensive or specialized for an even smaller group of students. Tier 1 is proposed to address about 80% of students, Tier 2 about 15% and then Tier 3 5% of students. All students participate in both PBIS and RtI through Tier 1. Both PBIS and RtI are prevention focused. Want to know more? Check out Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (Michigan's MTSS program: https://miblsi.org/).

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Upcoming School Dates & Events

- 11/23-25: No school (Thanksgiving break)
- 12/19: No School (Winter break begins)
- 1/3: School resumes
- 1/16 : No School - Martin Luther King Jr Day

Upcoming WESPTSA Events:

11/10: PTSA meeting @ Discovery Media Center (7-8:30)

12/8: PTSA meeting @ Discovery Media Center (7-8:30)

12/12-12/16: PTSA Holiday Shoppe

1/10: Parent Info Night @ Discovery Media Center (6:30-7:30) - prescription pain medication abuse

1/12: PTSA meeting @ Discovery Media Center (7-8:30)

2/7: Parent Info Night @ Discovery Media Center (6:30-7:30) - keeping your family safe on the Internet

2/9: PTSA meeting @ Discovery Media Center (7-8:30)

WESPTSA 3rd Parent Info Night Session

Katie Gerard: Behavior Support for Williamston Elementary Schools

Katie Gerard is the Student Services Coordinator for Discovery and Explorer Elementary Schools. She writes and reviews Section 504 plans, organizes and distributes allergy and medical information, provides individual behavior supports, maintains and develops School-wide Positive Behavior Supports, and serves on the student assistance teams for behavior and academics and behavior response team.

So what is School-wide Positive Supports? Well, think Buzz Words. The Elementary Buzz words are kind, safe, cooperative, respectful. Behaviors associated with these words are modeled to students, directly taught, and then reinforced throughout the year. The positive component of this school-wide behavior supports involves the buzz tickets. Students receive buzz tickets when they are recognized for displaying positive behavior. Students who get a buzz ticket are eligible for drawings at each school.

Other elements of the positive supports in the elementary schools involve a 4:1 positive to corrective feedback approach. This means the teachers seek to provide a ratio of 4 to 1 positive (praise) to corrective feedback. The praise is not generic, but to provide more specific and actionable praise or positive feedback.

Mrs. Gerard also provides grade level specific social lessons to our elementary students. In 3rd-5th, the focus is on anti-bullying rules that provides a discussion of what is bullying and what can you do about it. In K-2, the focus is more on socio-emotional development, such as empathy. The students are exposed to different social lessons.

The schools also employ Responsible Thinking Classroom (RTC); RTC is for everyone. It is a proactive approach to ask students to reflect on what they are doing. The RTC process focuses on asking students 5 questions: (1) What are you doing?, (2) What are the rules?, (3) What happens when you break the rules?, (4) Is this what you want to happen?, and (5) What will happen next time you disrupt? The basis of RTC is that students have the right to learn and teachers have the right to teach in safety as well as that no one has the right to disrupt, to prevent other students from learning or to violate the rights of others. At Explorer, the second time students are addressed for the questions/behavior, they go to the Responsible Thinking Classroom (the first is a warning). At Discovery, there are more opportunities. If a child goes to the RTC, there is a form that is completed - the students work with the RTC teacher on a plan about what they can do differently in terms of behavior. The students reflect on their behavior, to help develop responsibility for their behavior. After a plan is developed (based on the reflection), the student takes back their plan to their teacher; the teacher and the student will discuss the plan together. The RTC is not a punishment - it is an opportunity to support and improve behavior. A letter is sent home the first time a student in Discovery goes to RTC and then every third time. At Explorer, a letter is sent home for every third trip.

Thank you to all our awesome families and community members. Our Fun Run was amazingly successful! We raised $29,849. The WESPTA, schools, teachers, staff, and students all thank everyone who supported the Fun Run.

At-Home Activities

There are multiple ways that we as parents try to support our kids at home with academics that extend beyond homework. In reading, we do a lot of what is called indirect reading activities; reading to our kids is considered an indirect reading activity. Reading to our kids is called an indirect activity as we are not explicitly teaching our students decoding or comprehension skills when we are reading to them; yet, there is good research to support the benefits of reading to our kids. Reading to our kids - kids of all ages - is a widely supported practice by educators, researchers, and even pediatricians. There are also indirect and indirect mathematics activities that we can do as parents to support our kids at home. We can engage in a lot of indirect activities that can make mathematics fun for students and beyond worksheets and apps that focus on memorization and recall of mathematics facts. One way to combine literacy and mathematics is reading math books. There are great everyday books that get at mathematics (e.g., When the Doorbell Rang, How Big is a Foot?); there are also series devoted to integrating mathematics and literacy. A great series for this is MathStart (see http://www.mathstart.net/) that has different levels of books and supports kids generally from PreK through 4th grade. The website also includes activities you can do to extend the books; the books are also interesting to just read. Other ideas to engage in indirect mathematics activities at home includes games and cooking/baking. Great mathematical games - for a range of ages - include Uno, War, Skipbo, Sorry, Life, and Monopoly Empire. There are many ways to strengthen the mathematics into these games, such as making sure kids are the ones adding the dice to know how many spaces to move or to be the banker. There are also ways to change some changes to emphasize the mathematics, while still having fun. For example, you can do multiple variations to the card game War: addition war (each player turns over 2 cards and the winner is the one with the highest sum); subtraction war (each player turns over 2 cards and the winner is the one with the smallest difference); multiplication war (each player turns over 2 cards the the winner is the one with the largest product). You can also play upon your child's interest to embed mathematics. For example, if your child is into sports during football season you can have him/her predict the scores of some different games and then engage in a conversation about how each team could get that score (e.g., a prediction of 49 to 27 could prompt a conversation of how many touchdowns with extra points with a team need to score 49? How many touchdowns and field goals each would a team need to score to get 27? Is there another way a team could get to each final score?). Baking or cooking naturally lends itself to mathematics - whether reinforcing fractions (e.g., 1/3 of a cup) or focusing on what it means to double a recipe or cut a recipe in half. Mathematics is all around us and is fun! There are many ways we as parents can support our children's mathematical development and show them that math is both fun and very useful!

Are there issues or things you want to know more about in the PTSA newsletter? Share your thoughts with me (Emily) at ecb@msu.edu. We are the PTSA try to share information that we think might interest you and benefit you and your family, but we are open to ideas about how we can better serve you!

Another shout-out to all our local businesses that supported our Fun Run; we could not have been as successful without that support. Remember to thank them by shopping local this month on Small Business Saturday and other days as well! THANK YOU; THANK YOU!