

Wagner Humanities +

6th Grade; PCMS

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What Have We Been Up To

In Social Studies, we just finished our unit on early humans. Students watched a video titled, *The Birth of Civilization*, which took them on a journey from the time of hunter-gatherers to the first civilization. Students spent time analyzing the process and identifying the characteristics of a complex village.



In Language Arts, students have begun to study the writing genre of personal narrative. Students have been learning the characteristics of personal narrative and have begun their rough draft in class. Throughout the next couple of weeks, we will have mini lessons on: types of introductions, using dialogue, word choice, sentence branching, and figurative language. This experience allows students to reflect on their own lives and how they have been affected by their own ex-

periences.

This week, students will also be working on preparing for their student led conferences.

Student Led Conferences

Student Led Conferences will be held on October 29th and 30th after school. Students will be working on goal setting this week and will share those goals, among a variety of other things, at their conference.

Since student-led conferences may be new to many of you, I wanted to take an opportunity to remind you what your role is at the conference.

- Help your child refine parts of their goals (if needed).

- Listen to your child reflect upon their learning and how they perceive their progress.
- Ask questions to help clarify what your child is saying.
- Allow your child the chance to communicate their goals and progress with you.
- Be supportive and patient!

your time slot, please contact me!



If you have questions or need to change

Perfectionism and Homework

A few parents have expressed concern at the time and effort students are spending on homework. For many, it's not the amount of homework that gets in the way, but the effort that is spent on making it "perfect." I thought these articles would be helpful for many of you!

When Perfectionism and Homework Collide

Helping your child reduce the time they spend on homework

"Does your child erase and redo homework over and over again until it's just right? Is anything less than 100% not good enough? Welcome to the world of perfectionism, where unrealistic expectations are daily and unrelenting. Perfectionists engage in frequent hypercritical self-talk, bringing themselves down and creating a whole lot of stress within the family. With these children, the goal is to change their mindset." Begin by using the following techniques

"Reward efficiency, not grades

Studies show that the majority of perfectionist children have parents that are demanding and overly critical. Although this certainly isn't the case with every child, it's important for parents to pay attention to how they act and react when it comes to grades. Let's say your daughter brings home a 90% on a writing project." Instead of saying, "This is good, but you could have had a 100% if you had a stronger thesis statement." Consider "Way to go! You worked hard on this project, but didn't spend too much time revising it. It turned out just fine!" **Instead, praise your child's efficiency when she gets her work done in a timely manner without redoing it multiple times."**

"Help to make a homework plan

When it comes to homework, perfectionists sometimes procrastinate because they fear the work they will produce won't be good enough. Having a homework plan helps them to feel in control and more confident. **Encourage her to start with an easy task followed by a hard one, and to repeat this sequence (easy, hard, easy, hard).** In essence, she's easing herself into homework by starting with something she likes. Later, she's rewarding herself after a tough assignment with an easy one."

"Switch gears

If you see that your child is spending an inordinate amount of time on one homework assignment, switch gears. At this point there are three choices. The first is that she can either quickly finish it up with the mindset that it just has to be good enough. The second is that she can take a much-needed break away from all homework, and the third is to switch subjects and go back to that assignment later with a fresh frame of mind."

"Stick with a schedule

Starting homework at the same general time each day helps to reduce procrastination. It's perfectly fine to help your child get started if needed. Take a few minutes to discuss the assignment and watch your child begin before you leave the room. More important than a start time is an ending time for schoolwork. Many students will correct and revise their work well into the evening. **Have a family policy such as, "All homework must be completed by 9pm." Remind your child that the final product just has to be 'good enough.'"**

In my class, I would rather students are getting enough sleep than wearing themselves out doing homework. My homework is never meant to keep students up until all hours of the night.

If students are spending an inordinate amount of time on a project/assignment, they are probably doing WAY too much or have misinterpreted the directions.

“Empathize, do not criticize

Try to steer clear of comments like, “Stop worrying about that,” or “You don’t always have to be perfect.” Instead, empathize with her insecurities. “I can understand why you’re worried about reciting your poem. All of the children will be in front of the class, too. You’ll be part of a group,” or “I realize that you want to correct your paper, but at this point, your essay has all the qualities the teacher expects according to the directions.”

“Quell test-taking anxiety

For many, perfectionist characteristics spill over to preparing for exams and test-taking. Studies show it helps when students write down their worst fears right before the test. Students who do this perform just as well as their non-anxious peers. But students who do not take the time to jot down their anxieties perform poorly compared to the other two groups. Taking time to release worries can make a big difference when it comes to test-day performance.”

Different assignments required different amounts of effort.

Assessments will require more time and effort: These assignments will require more time, but multiple days are generally given to complete them/study for them.

Weekly Homework Assignments are not meant to take as much time and effort. Many of the writing assignments come with a time limit (in the directions), and students should stop at the end of the time period, no matter if they are “done” or not.

Dolin, Ann. "When Homework and Perfectionism Collide." *Educational Connections, Inc.*. Educational Connections, Inc., 26 2011. Web. 18 Oct 2012. <<http://ectutoring.com/blog/when-homework-and-perfectionism-collide>>.

Ways to Help your Perfectionist Child

“For many parents, getting children to do homework and study for tests is a nightly battle, and they would be thrilled to have kids who are self-motivated, hard-working, and very concerned about their success in school. However, the other side of the extreme can be just as difficult for parents, in a different way.

Some children are so worried about excelling at everything they do, in school and out, that they end up putting an extreme amount of pressure on themselves to succeed, and completely fall apart when they do not. Children who are perfectionists often have a skewed vision of what success means; they may become hysterical after missing only one question on a difficult test. They tend to have very high, even impossible to reach standards and a commitment to doing anything they can to reach those standards.

Although we are a society that places a great deal of importance on both academic and extracurricular success, skills that relate to the classroom or playing field are not the only ones that children need to thrive. Children also need to learn how to handle failure. Many parents believe that they are doing their children a favor by protecting them from experiencing failure, but what these well-intentioned parents fail to realize is that what they are really doing is preventing their children from developing the skills that they will need to cope with the multitude of mistakes and failures that inevitably arise throughout life.

Perfectionism can also be a concern because of its link to mental health disorders, such as eating disorders, anxiety disorders, and self-injury (popularly known as “cutting.”). Though it is difficult to establish direct cause and effect when it comes to perfectionism and such disorders, a tendency towards perfectionism should indicate to adults that a child needs some assistance in learning healthy coping skills. Even if a child may not suffer from a major mental health disorder, the persistent drive to be perfect at all times sets that child up for constant worrying and disappointment. In addition, when a child is always concerned with demonstrating perfection in school and related activities, she misses out on times when she can simply enjoy herself.”

- **Pressure:**

1. Although the pressure to be perfect often seems to come from the child herself, evaluate the messages that you are giving to your child. Even if you tell your child that high grades or first-place trophies do not matter to you, if she hears you bragging about such honors all the time, she may feel a great deal of anxiety about continuing to bring them home. Your child needs to understand that your love is unconditional, and not based on how she does in school. Point out other ways in which she makes you proud, such as when she helps others.

- **Focus:**

1. **Keep the focus on the importance of learning new material or a new skill, rather than being the best.** When your child brings home a perfect test score, say, “Wow, you worked so hard to learn that tough material,” rather than, “Great job, another hundred percent!”

- **Logic:**

1. **Address faulty or unhealthy logic in your child’s thinking.** Perfectionists tend to think in terms of “all-or-nothing,” such as, “If I don’t get 100% on this test, then I’m stupid.”

- **Let children make mistakes.**
 1. Offer minor assistance and support if asked, but **let children turn in work that is truly their own** so they can get comfortable with constructive feedback. Allowing children to do their own work and make mistakes not only can decrease a sense of pressure on them to always present a perfect front to the outside world, but also gives them the confidence that they can succeed on their own without your help.
 2. Have a mantra in your home, such as, “Everyone makes mistakes. The important thing is what you learn for next time.” Even better, come up for another word to use instead of “mistake,” such as “obstacle” or “detour.”
- **Anxiety:**
 1. Do not brush off school anxiety with comments such as, “Don’t worry, I know you’ll get an A, you always do!” Even though you may have good intentions, your child may interpret comments like these as adding more pressure to maintain his status. **Instead, tell him that what matters is him putting in enough effort to learn the material, no matter what the grade is.**
- **Activities:**
 1. The pressure to be perfect may stem from school (or other areas where perfectionism is exhibited) being the only place from where your child derives self-esteem. Try to expand your child’s notion of her identity by finding activities for her to participate in that do not involve scoring or competition – activities that simply exist to feel good and have fun. Be careful about over-scheduling, and make sure that you child has time “scheduled” to just relax.
 2. Find activities for your child where she will not be the best. Help her learn how to handle being in such a situation. Do not let her discontinue the activity because it is difficult or uncomfortable.
- **Role Models:**
 1. Look for books and movies that provide role models of real people or characters who succeeded after a string of failures. Be a good role model yourself by not holding yourself to perfectionist standards and showing your child how you handle mistakes. Point out what you did and how you learned from it. Make sure that you are not deriving your own sense of worth only from your child’s accomplishments.

Medoff, Lisa. "10 Ways to Help Your Perfectionist Child." *Education.Com*. Education.Com. Web. 18 Oct 2012.

Pacific Cascade Middle School

Ms. Katrina Wagner
Room 1312

Phone: 425-837-5931
E-mail: wagnerk@issaquah.wednet.edu

Next Couple Weeks...

Social Studies:

During the next couple of weeks, students will be learning about the first civilization: Mesopotamia. This will be the start of our civilization units and will be much longer than our previous units.

Reading and Writing:

We will also continue to read Freak the Mighty and practice writing analysis paragraphs. Additionally, we will continue to work on Shared Inquiry Discussions; which help students participate in a class discussion about literature. In writing, we will continue to revise our personal narratives.