Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board

Math Moment…

Mindset and Math

Let's take this scenario. You are out with friends for dinner and the bill comes. One person says, "Can anyone help me with the tip? I am not a math person." Yet, you would never hear anyone say, "Can someone read the menu for me? I am not a reading person." Somehow, it has become acceptable for society to think there are Math People and Non-Math People; we are ALL Math People! As parents, this is where we can start to change things for our children. Math is everywhere and if we help to show our children different ways that we use it every day, they will begin to feel more comfortable and less anxious about doing Math. However, part of this 'showing' is also in how we speak to our children about math and having a Growth Mindset ourselves.

In general, a Growth Mindset is the belief that intelligence can also be learned and that the brain grows from experience and effort. The opposite, a Fixed Mindset, is the idea that you are smart, or you are not. In math, that translates into "some people are good at math, and some are not." Did you know that praising efforts rather than intelligence or results can impact your child's ability to persevere in challenges? The goal is to have children thrive on challenges and see failures, not as a sign of low intelligence, but as a learning opportunity. Brain research tells us that making mistakes actually wires more connections into the brain. When a person has a Growth Mindset, they accept challenges, see their efforts as worthwhile, and are open to learning from mistakes. Students with a Growth Mindset achieve at higher levels than those with Fixed Mindsets.

How can you help? Here are some simple ways:

- Adding "yet" when your child claims they are "not good at this" (Respond: "You are not good at this yet.")
- Ask questions that focus on your child's effort and choices. Get them to reflect on satisfaction of that effort. (e.g. What did you learn today? What mistake did you make that taught you something? What did you try hard at today?)
- Do not reflect on a product, but rather the learning process. Help your child use teacher feedback to deepen their understanding
- Model this yourself as you share about your day

More resources and supports can be found in the document: *Yes, I Can!*