

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**SAFE RELATIONSHIPS**

### What is it?

Life happens in the context of relationships. Humans are wired for social connection, and it's in that connection that we are able to express our best selves, contribute to our communities and achieve successful and satisfying lives.

### Why is it Important?

Learning about our teachers and our role in the class community helps us to connect to one another and feel safe at school.

### School Connection

Your child will be becoming familiar with the role of the teacher and instructional aide. They will also be meeting new friends and learning how they fit into the classroom community.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### Develop a "Hello and Goodbye" Routine

As kids begin the year, they will be entering a new classroom with a new teacher and new classmates. For some kids, this will be their first time away from home. We want our kids to be independent and happy going to school, but it's understandable that this can be a scary and challenging time. One way you can provide support is by providing a consistent routine for saying hello and goodbye. Find a fun or personal way to say goodbye each morning before you take them into class, and to say hello when you pick them up. Be sure to do the same thing every day, because this predictability and consistency helps kids feel safe. If different people take your child to school, that's okay, too! You can still say goodbye before they go to school, or another family member or friend and practice this routine. Going to school may be hard at first, but this is one way you can help your child to feel safe and secure!

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**THE BRAIN**

### What is it?

The brain guides everything that you do: how you move your body, make decisions, experience emotions and deal with stress. When children understand how their brain is connected to their emotions, they are better able to manage those emotions.

### Why is it Important?

Learning the parts of the brain and how the brain influences behavior and emotions empowers children to control their brains and their feelings.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning about the three main parts of the brain and how their brain helps them learn, think, and make choices.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### *Connect to Your Child's Curiosity*

Your child may ask many "why" questions. This is normal! They are curious about the world around them and will look to the adults in their life for answers.

Take a few minutes each day to intentionally explore new things with your child. If they become excited about an object or event, such as an ice cube melting on the counter or a thunderstorm, this is an opportunity to connect to your child and their curiosity. Because of their short attention span, this will probably only last a few minutes. You can say things like, "What's happening?" or, "Why do you think that is happening?" These conversations will help them understand the world around them and build a connection with you.

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**BREATH**

### What is it?

The positive impact of focused breathing on overall well-being has been well researched. Children and the adults in their lives can learn how to use their breath to calm, center and refocus.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning that focused breathing influences how their body feels.

### Why is it Important?

By learning breathing strategies for self-regulation, children can respond to stressful situations in a more mindful way.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### Breathe to Five

It is normal for children to throw temper tantrums when they are frustrated or having a hard time communicating. It is helpful to teach them a strategy they can use when they feel overwhelmed. Focused breathing is a practice used for calming, centering, and refocusing.

Sit in a comfortable position facing your child. Tell your child you are going to practice counting to five in a different way. Exhale through the mouth. Raise your hand out in front of you and make a fist. Inhale through the nose. As you exhale through the nose, open up one finger from your fist and say "one." Repeat this breath until your fist is fully opened and you have counted to five. You can repeat with the other hand if needed. It's important to teach this strategy when both you and your child are feeling regulated and calm. Over time and with practice, your child may choose to use this strategy to help them calm down when they are upset.

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**FEELINGS**

### What is it?

The ability to identify personal feelings, recognize the feelings of others and understand that feelings are not permanent, but change throughout the day.

### Why is it Important?

The ability to manage how you feel is a necessary lifelong skill for all social interactions.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning how to identify feelings and understand that their feelings come and go.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### *Feelings Scavenger Hunt*

Children experience many intense emotions, and often! Think about a time when your child had a very big feeling. This may have been a meltdown when you dropped them off at school or when they couldn't eat the snack they wanted. Were they able to express what they were feeling at that moment? Probably not. Young children usually don't have the vocabulary to express how they are feeling, and instead communicate in other ways such as crying or throwing a tantrum. A way we can provide support is by helping them identify and validate their feelings.

While reading picture books or watching TV with your child, intentionally identify feelings in the characters. Point out their facial expressions and ask questions to expand their thinking.

- Can you see her eyebrows pointing downward and her hands on her hips?
- How do you think she may be feeling right now?
- How do you know?
- It looks like she is mad. I wonder what made her so upset?

Identifying emotions in this way helps kids discuss feelings by focusing on a character as well as develop the vocabulary to identify the same emotion when they are experiencing the same feeling.

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**THE BODY**

### What is it?

Self-awareness begins with learning how the brain and body work together.

### Why is it Important?

Children need to understand how their brain and body are connected. By understanding how we experience emotions in the body, children will deepen their sense of self-awareness. Having this understanding will allow children to self-regulate more easily, because they will have an understanding of how to use the body to calm strong feelings.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning about personal space and that people often have strong feelings about their own personal space.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### *Let's Talk About Personal Space*

Many children love affectionate touch and often want to show how much they love the people in their life by getting as physically close as possible. We want to encourage this at home, but some children may struggle to understand why hugging, kissing, and sitting close to friends may be an intrusion of personal space and not appropriate at school.

Help children increase their understanding of personal space by talking to your child about the rules of personal space. Children understand when you label physical items as mine and yours. The same idea can be applied to personal space. You can explain that personal space works differently at home with your family than in public or at school. Explain that the space closest to me is my space. Your space is created by holding your arms out. The more a child can understand and appreciate his own personal space, the more he can understand it for others.

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**IMPULSE CONTROL**

### What is it?

Impulse control is the ability to control sudden urges to react.

### Why is it Important?

When children begin to understand what an impulse feels like, they can then begin to learn how to manage those impulses when they arise. Teaching children how to control themselves empowers them to navigate difficult situations successfully.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning about impulses and strategies to control impulses.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### Join In to Regulate

It's common for young children to have a lot of energy, interrupt conversations, have a hard time waiting their turn and struggle with self-control. Sometimes we hold children to the same regulation expectations as adults. It seems like we spend a lot of time telling kids to calm down and be quiet. This isn't realistic and can leave adults feeling overwhelmed.

The next time you notice your child engaged in impulsive behavior like running around the room or jumping up and down, join in for a few minutes, if appropriate, and try to match their energy level. Get them laughing and releasing stress and big emotions through play and silliness. Instead of always asking them to meet your energy level, do the opposite. Try matching that excitement and do some roughhousing for 5 to 10 minutes and see if they calm down after that.

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**GRATITUDE**

### What is it?

Gratitude is the quality of being thankful and the readiness to show appreciation for kind actions by showing kindness in return.

### Why is it Important?

Through the practice of gratitude, children learn to consider and appreciate goodness in the world and understand that they receive benefits from sources outside of themselves. Gratitude is a building block for developing an optimistic outlook.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning that they can be grateful and thankful for many things and will practice expressing gratitude by using the terms "thank you" and "you're welcome".

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### *Look for the Good!*

Children at this age tend to think that the world revolves around them. This is totally normal. They need more support understanding the experience and expression of gratitude. Prompt your child to connect experiences where they could be thankful to thankful actions and ways they could help other people.

Encourage your child to notice throughout the day things or people they are grateful for and brainstorm what to do to express appreciation in return.

LOOK: I noticed that my sister put away all my toys for me.

DO: I can say thank you or give her a hug.

LOOK: I noticed that the cashier at the grocery store put all of my bags in my cart.

DO: I can smile and say thank you.

Modeling the thought process of identifying what to be thankful for and an action to show thankfulness, helps children get in the habit of showing gratitude for little things each day.

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**OPTIMISM**

### What is it?

Optimism is a mindset that allows us to see options for addressing challenges in life. When you have optimism, you have the ability to see that opportunities exist in any situation.

### Why is it Important?

Having optimism makes it easier to take risks and view mistakes and challenges as opportunities for growth. Approaching challenges with an optimistic attitude will help children persist, target their efforts and ultimately succeed.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning that everyone makes mistakes, and will practice turning their mistakes on paper into something beautiful.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### My Favorite Mistake

Choose a time each day to reflect about their day. This can be on the car ride home or at meal times. Ask these two questions and include yourself by answering them as well.

- What was your favorite thing about today?
- What was one mistake or oopsie you made today?

Let your child know they have your complete attention and they can say anything without judgment. This activity is particularly important as kids begin to realize that mistakes are normal and they will experience them every day. It is also important to show them that adults make mistakes, too. After listening, it's great to share developmentally appropriate examples of your own favorite things and mistakes.

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**GRIT**

### What is it?

Grit is the ability to keep working toward a goal, especially when it is hard or challenging.

### Why is it Important?

In school, children are asked to work hard on things that are not necessarily intrinsically motivating. Sometimes they can begin to associate struggle with failure. We want children to learn to feel comfortable with taking risks and working on challenges. When children learn early that they have an inner source of strength, they approach life and learning with more confidence.

### School Connection

Your child will be practicing strategies to use when they encounter difficult tasks.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### We Think We Can!

When we see young children encounter problems, it is natural to want to help or possibly do the task for them. Encountering a little bit of struggle is good for young children. Find a small challenge to support your child with, like zipping a jacket or completing a puzzle. When your child feels discouraged or tempted to give up, try asking, "What's the hard part?" Once they can put into words what is challenging about the task, you can support them in figuring out a plan to tackle the challenge. "What can you do to solve the hard part?" Your child will most likely have a few ideas. Try to let them complete it on their own while adding support. You will be surprised at what your child can do and the confidence they will gain when they complete hard tasks.

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**RESILIENCE**

### What is it?

Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from failures or setbacks.

### Why is it Important?

Failure and setbacks are an inevitable part of life. Sometimes, the caring adults in children's lives try to shield them from failure. This is a mistake! We learn so much about ourselves when we experience failure and then "bounce back." It is essential to teach resilience so that children will have the skills they need to bounce back from setbacks that they will experience in the future.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning that setbacks are a part of learning and the feelings associated with them are a part of learning, too.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### *We Can Do It!*

Resilience is an important skill for children and adults alike! Using books or pieces of cardboard, create a path from one side of your living room to the other. Add small challenges along the way, perhaps a chair to climb over or narrow "balance beams" made of masking tape. While your child is completing the obstacles, give them encouraging phrases like, "you can do it". If they are having a hard time, let them know that it's okay to make a mistake and encourage them to try again!

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**PERSPECTIVE TAKING**

### What is it?

A perspective is a particular attitude toward something, or a point of view. Perspective taking is the ability to appreciate the viewpoint of another person, even if it differs from your own.

### Why is it Important?

Understanding that it is okay for each of us to have our own unique needs, ideas and opinions gives us the emotional space to consider perspectives that differ from our own. Seeing things from the perspective of others opens up a whole new world of possibilities and gives us options that would never be available otherwise.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning that others may have thoughts, opinions and preferences that are different from their own.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### How Do They Feel and What Makes Them Feel Better?

At this age, a child will begin to show concern for others who are upset. However, they often confuse their own perspective with others and need more support understanding that people have different preferences and feelings. Your child may think that since she likes bananas, everyone likes bananas. This type of thinking also leads to actions like giving a crying friend her favorite toy because she knows that is what cheers *her* up.

Pretend to hurt your finger or that you feel sad. Label your feelings and talk about why you feel that way. Then tell them what would make you feel better. You may also ask them what would make them feel better if they were hurt, pointing out that everyone has different ways of feeling better. Brainstorm with your child ways to help a friend feel better if they are hurt. Give some ideas like going to get an ice pack, helping the other child up if they fell down, or asking them what they need.

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**EMPATHY**

### What is it?

Empathy goes beyond simply seeing another's point of view; it takes us into the other person's world of feeling and helps us understand the motives and context of their perspective.

### Why is it Important?

Empathy is the glue that binds relationships of all kinds. When we are able to express empathy and really let the other person know that we feel with them, we form bonds of trust and cooperation that create the solid foundation of relationships in every aspect of life.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning that people can feel differently and that their response to those feelings is important.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### *See Me, See Empathy*

Young children have the capacity for empathy, but just like learning to read, it requires practice and guidance. Regularly drawing attention to how children can be helpful helps children learn to be empathic and understanding, and allows this skill to come more naturally.

Be on the lookout for your child comforting or being helpful to friends and family. Practice drawing attention to the positive interactions. Create opportunities for your child to show empathy and highlight how being kind can benefit everyone.

"Wow, you helped your brother find his favorite toy. That was very kind of you to help. I bet he'll remember that and help you the next time you need it!"

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**KINDNESS**

### What is it?

Kindness is the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate.

### Why is it Important?

Children are often quick to announce when someone has treated them badly, and are sometimes surprised when another child offers an act of kindness. This makes sense because developmentally, children are focused on their own needs. When we model and teach kindness, we help children to develop this skill and create a positive culture in our classrooms. Children need to experience kindness to be able to reproduce it. It's our job to help them balance their needs with the needs of others, and learn that kindness toward others helps meet both sets of needs.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning how to recognize acts of kindness and understand that doing kind things will help them feel good about themselves.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### Mailing Kindness

Kindness is universal, but we all express kindness in our own individual way. We all have our own ideas about what it feels like to be treated kindly. Take a moment to consider what you think kindness is, and what it looks like in your family.

Create a homemade postcard to send kind thoughts to friends or family. You may choose to hand deliver or send through the mail. Taking the time to create a note helps to spread a little kindness and foster positive feelings towards others.

Step 1: Cut thick paper into a rectangle or use an index card.

Step 2: Have your child decorate one side of the postcard with a picture or words.

Step 3: On the back of the picture, draw a line down the middle, write the address on the right side, and ask your child to dictate a personal message for you to write on the left side.

Examples could include: "I am thinking of you!" "Can't wait to see you soon!" Or, "Remember when..." Emphasize messages of kindness and good feelings.

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**COMPASSION**

### What is it?

Compassion is the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's distress and feel motivated to do something to help.

### Why is it Important?

Nothing teaches compassion better than practicing it! Focusing on the feelings and needs of people in the community will empower children and lead them to realize they can be a positive influence in the lives of others.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning about different ways to show compassion and caring.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### Feed the Birds

Young children have a natural need to be helpful. Having an understanding of the perspective of others, including animals, helps children to become more aware of the world around them.

Create a bird feeder with your child. Making a bird feeder is a great way to teach children about caring for nature, how to properly feed wild animals and how to identify birds. You can make a simple bird feeder out many items at home. Here are a few examples:

#### Cereal Bird Feeder

- Step 1: Use 12 inches of string and have your child string circle-shaped cereal onto the string.
- Step 2: Once the string is full, tie the ends together and hang outside.

#### Toilet Paper Roll Bird Feeder

- Step 1: Tie a piece of string through an empty toilet paper roll and tie together at the ends.
- Step 2: Smear peanut butter or honey on the surface of the roll.
- Step 3: Roll it through birdseed or cereal and hang your toilet paper roll bird feeder outside.

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**HOPE**

### What is it?

Hope is the belief that the future will be better than the present and one has the power to make it a reality.

### Why is it Important?

Hopeful children are more likely to tell themselves, "I can do this! I'll try again." By helping children focus on how hope is at the center of what we want in our homes, neighborhoods and cities, we can help them to be more hopeful about their own dreams and future.

### School Connection

Your child will be learning about how to value their own contribution in caring for the world around them.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

### Future You

Talk with your child about the different jobs that people have. Allow them to tell you what they want to be when they grow up. Using pictures found in newspapers, magazines, catalogs or online, give them an opportunity to make a collage of what they want to be when they are older. At the top write, "When I grow up I..." Have them glue or draw pictures on the paper and tell you about what they see for their future. Encourage them to be creative. No answer is the wrong answer!