

Dear Family,

We are starting a unit on **Empathy and Critical Thinking** from our Sanford Harmony social-emotional learning program. Throughout this unit, students will have opportunities to learn about thinking patterns, empathy and stereotypes, and to put that knowledge into practice.

Thinking Patterns will be explored in depth in this unit. Students will learn how thoughts influence feelings and behaviors. They will also learn to nurture “caterpillar thoughts,” which recognize that people can grow and make positive changes, while avoiding “worm thoughts,” which view people as unchangeable. These skills help students have a greater understanding of themselves and others.

Empathy is the ability to understand and share another person’s feelings. Students will learn to identify how people are feeling by looking for clues in their appearance and actions. Students will also practice empathy skills by recognizing that people can feel differently when faced with the same situation. Fostering empathy helps students create deeper relationships and avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Stereotypes can be about people, objects, activities, and roles. They lead to assumptions that prevent us from knowing what other people are like or what alternatives could be open to us. Students will learn how to recognize and challenge stereotypes, and practice thinking in non-stereotyped ways.

An important part of this program is for students to continue discussing and practicing concepts outside the classroom. I’m hoping you can reinforce at home what we are learning in class. Ask your child about these concepts!

Thank you for your involvement. Please contact me if you have any questions about the Sanford Harmony program.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Denise G. Steffens