

Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointers

Crossing the finish line



Another school year is nearly over. Some of us are sprinting across the finish line, many are crawling on their hands and knees! Perhaps we can take inspiration from professional athletes who might look back at video footage of a race to see where they can improve. Take a few minutes to reflect on the last year and look forward to the next. Here are some things to consider ...

Most importantly, what's gone well? What can our children do now that they couldn't do a year ago? What new skills have we learned as parents? What challenges have we overcome? Sometimes it's hard to spot progress on a day to day basis but choosing to look for and find areas of growth can be a real encouragement. Take the time to talk with children about how far they've come. Perhaps reflecting on some of the comments in their school report can help you to do this. We can help our children to recognise their strengths and feel proud of their achievements.

Secondly, what hasn't gone so well? While I'm a great believer in looking for positives, it's also important to acknowledge sadness or disappointments. Recognising and naming these experiences brings them out in the open and allows us to "grieve" them and then, in time, to move on. When we try and pretend negative experiences haven't happened, they can fester and hurt us even more. Better to be honest with ourselves and accept where things have gone wrong. Better to allow our children to express their negative emotions and to listen to them, even when we can't fix the problem.

Finally, what can we learn and how can we grow? Acknowledging the good things and the bad things helps us to consider changes for the future. If we keep doing the same old things, nothing will change. But, if we continue to work with our successes and learn from our mistakes we will see positive change. Maybe in the last year you've cracked the morning routine ... great! Keep up the good work for next year. Or maybe you're worn out with battling bedtime every night ... that's OK. What changes can you make, what advice or help do you need? The athlete analysing the race they've just completed is focussed on improving their performance. As we cross the finish line into the summer holidays, how can we become even better parents? It's the hardest job in the world but we can all learn and grow if we remain open to change.

All that remains for me to say is that I hope that you all have a great summer. Stay safe and be kind to each other.

