



S.P.A.R.K.

Supporting positive attitudes, resilience, and knowledge

October 2023



A note from Mr. Whipple

We had another great month in SPARK this week covering topics of organization, decluttering, positive self talk, meditation practices, online self-image, and FOMO! Students worked on hands on projects and engaged in brainstorming activities that helped teach each other different ways of dealing with the challenges that come with social media, mental health, and just being a middle school kid in an academically rigorous school.

I am always encouraged by the take away of these students, especially since it takes place on a Friday afternoon! Today we had our second conversation circle where grades discussed the challenges of relationships and how to navigate the complexities of them using good communication.



Digital Citizenship with Dr. Eicher

In 8th Grade Spark we took a look at how the images online can affect your own body image. Our Seabury kids suggested clever strategies we can deploy: one suggested, "toss your phone and head outside," another said, "go to the grocery store and look at real people," and one insightful 8th grader recommended taping a baby picture of yourself on your mirror to remind you that when you hate on your looks, you are also putting down that special baby. To continue this conversation at home, parents could encourage kids to actually implement these wonderful plans if online images make them feel self-critical. As we know, it's one thing to give advice, quite another to take our own advice. Another strategy is modeling truth: If you post a picture of yourself without a filter, maybe show your child that you are posting it "as is" rather than a make-believe "perfect" version.

In 7th Grade Spark we made a shift in the plan, as we felt it would be best to spend that time making cards and notes for one of our classmates who recently had a parent pass away. Miss Kalli and Ms. Simpson discussed the grieving process and different ways to support someone struggling with a loss. The students were reflective and thoughtful in creating cards to give to their peer, utilizing their compassion and creativity skills. If you would like to continue the conversation at home we suggest talking about grieving loved ones and how being there for one another and showing up for friends in mourning can be a powerful tool in healing. It is always challenging when a community goes through a tragic loss and we are proud of all the things the kids are doing to help comfort and empathize with their peers.

In 6th Grade Spark we explored the concept of FOMO—Fear of Missing Out. This can include missing texts, not having the newest apps, or seeing friends having fun on Instagram and knowing we were not invited. Our Win at Social lesson showed 6th graders ways to adjust their settings so they can generate auto messages for times when they want to be undisturbed and would like others to not worry/be anxious. In terms of combatting FOMO, one 6th grader said it helps to talk to someone about it when you feel left out, and another 6th grader wisely pointed out that "FOMO is not a real thing—it's just in your head, and you have to remember that you might be overreacting." Of course, knowing FOMO is in our heads does not necessarily make it easier to handle. If you would like to continue this conversation at home, maybe tell your kids about a time you felt FOMO so they see it's not just a childhood experience, and also share your strategies for dealing with FOMO when it happens.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING WITH MS. BAKER POWERS

This month in EF Skills SPARK class, 6th and 8th graders learned organizational strategies, including decluttering and minimizing distractions, and methods like color coding and labeling for better organization. They were advised to regularly clear out lockers and backpacks, maintaining "a place for everything and everything in its place." For missing items, students should check all nooks before declaring them lost. Good habits, we noted, develop with consistent practice.

Meanwhile, 7th graders focused on study habits and exam preparation, using the "yep, sorta, nope" method to prioritize areas they're less familiar with. They learned about the effectiveness of flashcards and strategies to combat test anxiety, such as tackling known problems first and using box breathing. I have created a folder in Schoology titled EF Skills: materials and resources if you are looking for ways to help your child study and test effectively.



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL & ETHICAL LEARNING WITH KALLI

This semester in SPARK classes we've spent time talking about setting goals, balancing social media time, school culture and inclusivity, and body positivity. Each of these areas has internal or external factors that contribute to how we see, feel, and think about ourselves and how we feel our life is going- our self-esteem. Our day is full of expectations from other people- teachers, parents, coaches, friends, siblings. It can feel impossible to do everything right and make everyone happy. This is where self-compassion comes in!

Self-compassion is different from self-esteem. Self-compassion is supporting and encouraging ourselves, not based on what others think about us. 3 significant parts of self-compassion: we are learning to treat ourselves with kindness, even when we make a mistake. We accept that we are a human being and are not alone, especially when we struggle. We practice mindfulness, recognizing when we are hurting instead of ignoring pain.

Self-Compassion Guided Meditation

How parents can continue the lesson at home: In my role at Seabury I am constantly modeling self-compassion in ways that are easy to also model at home. Normalize making small mistakes and forgiving yourself for them. Positively reframe negative self-talk. If I hear "I'm too dumb for this class" I will ask them to instead think and say things like, "I'm still learning, this class is challenging me to learn. I'm not supposed to know everything already." If I'm struggling with my own self-compassion I might reflect on how I would talk to a student or a friend going through what I'm feeling. It's not uncommon to be nicer to others than you are to yourself, yet, the more compassion you have for yourself the easier it will be to have compassion for others.

THE SOCIAL INSTITUTE

Our partnership with [The Social Institute](#) has provided us with an abundance of useful material for student engagement, but some of their most impressive content can be accessed via the [Parent Toolkit](#). I hope you will take the time to explore the site and learn more about the things your students are engaging with in the digital world. When prompted, our code is: 27dc696725AD56

#WINATSOCIAL
APP SPOTLIGHT

Snapchat



TRIP-UPS:

- Sharing their password with a friend to keep up with streaks
- Staying up late to chat with their friends and not getting enough sleep
- Posting or sending pictures and videos without realizing they are not always private (spoiler: screenshotting and screen-recording can make any post permanent)
- Allowing their friends to see where they are through the Snapchat map

WINNING MOVES:

- Consider all snaps and chats permanent even though they disappear after 24 hours or after a friend views them. Screenshots don't disappear, and there are several creative ways someone can take a screenshot without you knowing.

STRONG SETTINGS:

- Protect your privacy like you're famous. In your smartphone settings, **allow the app to access your location "never."**
- Allow only friends to contact you in Settings under "Who Can..." You then get to **choose** who can and can't view your stories.
- Block a stranger who added you on Snapchat by tapping Added Me on your profile screen, swiping left on their name, and choosing Block.