

The image features the year '2020' in a large, stylized font with a gradient from purple to red. The background is a soft-focus bokeh of warm, golden-yellow lights. Below the year, the text '— HAPPY NEW YEAR —' is centered in a simple, dark font.

2020

— HAPPY NEW YEAR —

CLEARSPRING MIDDLE SCHOOL

January Newsletter

Welcome to 2020! Our school ended 2019 with three performance arts concerts. The Grade 7 & 8 Bands were joined by the Grade 7 & 8 Choir Club in early December. The music was festive and our students performed wonderfully. In the last week of school, our Grade 5 students took to the stage for the Christmas concert. Their singing was impressive, and they demonstrated some great skills as their separate classes played and sang some of the classic Christmas Carols. And then, finally, on the last day of school, we had our annual talent show. Hosted and produced by 8KM, this talent show has become a true highlight for our school every year, and this year was no exception. Our concerts are celebrations of learning, and I want to thank our teachers for planning for and supporting the learning of students, and our students for their hard work to learn the skills they need.

As we look ahead to January, we look forward to a return to the routines of daily school life. While we are always interested in what is new and exciting, our school is also aware that for most students, routine is desirable, and even necessary, for deep learning to take place. We are looking forward to a day of presentations by a storm chaser, we will be focusing a little on Pink Week (our annual focus on kindness), and also plan for our Options Day in late January.

Our school has been putting significant emphasis on Math achievement this year. For many students (and adults too), the thought of Math creates feelings of worry and even failure. One way to combat that feeling is to build and develop a growth mindset. Our school has a strong commitment to helping students develop a growth mindset. For many people, Math is about wrong answers, and the frustration that has grown from that. But what if we looked at that differently. What if we said that wrong answers lead to great learning?

Wrong Answers, Great Learning

Thomas Edison said that he did not fail at making the light bulb one thousand times, but rather that "the light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps."

"I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot... and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. That is why I succeed." (Michael Jordan)

Making mistakes is a natural part of all learning. Those who we consider to be "great" are clear that mistakes lead to learning.

The latest research on mathematics shows that mistakes are a very important part of learning math! When a person makes an error in math and they have the opportunity to learn from it, they actually develop a much stronger understanding. In fact, the research states that students learn more from making mistakes than from getting all the right answers. When your child makes an error, it offers insight into what understanding your child has about a mathematical idea. It allows parents and teachers to talk to the child about what they know, and ask questions to stretch their thinking around where they are currently developing their understanding.

Parents can ask "How do you know that? What was your thinking here? Is there another way you could solve that? How did you think about X (an element they may be missing or have misunderstood)?" This conversation helps to develop the crucial skills of reasoning and communication and is therefore more helpful than simply showing a child how the math is done. When you support an attitude that values learning from mistakes, you are telling your child that mistakes are a valuable and natural ingredient in learning and lead to deeper understanding. Research shows that this attitude supports stronger achievement!