

Generosity

We are so lucky at East Ridge to have teachers whom are committed to embracing and teaching the whole child. The whole child approach to teaching means that beyond the race for testing standards teachers are committed to celebrating and encouraging the essential social and emotional skills for academic success and creating empathetic learners. Empathy, persistence, gratitude and generosity are the character traits that have been featured and proactively modeled monthly in classrooms at East Ridge since the beginning of school in September.

This month teachers are engaging students on the practice of generosity. Teaching generosity is deeply connected to the character traits that have come before it such as empathy and gratitude. What teachers are looking to do is to layer on character traits in such a way that kids begin to understand the way that each of those traits connect to themselves and connect to one another.

The month of December and this "season of giving" usually gives us a great deal of time to re-focus ourselves and our kiddos on many of the things that we think are incredibly important such as kindness, giving back, being grateful and sharing with others.

Like gratitude, one of the most important things about generosity is learning how to teach it as a foundation rather than only practicing it for a brief period of time during the holidays. The idea that generosity should be a part of your every day is key to practicing generosity successfully!

Also, like gratitude, practicing generosity improves our own sense of well-being and improves our emotional connections to the people and the world around us. When kids feel emotionally connected to their day, when they have the opportunity to practice the social and emotional skills that build their character, they feel safer in themselves and in school, and we now also know that they perform better in school. The jury is out on this one; empathetic learners are better students. This stuff is just the best kind of contagious.

Beyond telling our kids to be kind and generous what we really want to do is to create the kinds of opportunities that encourage and support a child's natural altruistic tendencies, which we know are well documented. Very generally speaking, scientists have found that even from a young age we have an instinct towards kind behavior when we feel an emotional connection to others. Most of us have a strong desire to give to one another, we feel better when we do it, and so do our kids. But what we really want to do is to give our kids the opportunity to *practice* these skills **early** and **often** and this is what our amazing teachers and staff at East Ridge are doing each month.

So let's help them out! Talk about generosity with your children. Tell them and show them what it is. Acknowledge their generous behavior, even when they are simply being generous with their time and their words. Generosity can be shown in the simplest of ways. Thank your children for their time, ask them for a hug and then thank them for being generous with their affection.

Embrace kindness and generosity at home. Your family can have a generosity jar where they add small notes that describe something kind and generous a family member did for them, or you can fill it with pennies or jelly beans or something else to share with one another once the jar is full. Our family celebrates two different holidays in our house this time of year. One of the things we share with one another is a daily advent calendar for the month of December. Along with small little prizes and chocolates we also stuff our slots with random acts of kindness. Maybe it's baking cookies for a neighbor, write a small thank you note for your bus driver letting them know that you appreciate the way they get you to school safely and on time. One year my son raked our elderly neighbors leaves before the first snow. Let your kids know that kindness is daily.

Kindness is generosity so continue to celebrate kindness every day and name it when you see it! Let your children know that when they allow a friend to take their turn to speak and share, when they stop to help somebody pick up something they've dropped, when they allow someone to go through a doorway first and when they encourage a friend to stick with something that is tricky and when they are includers on the playground, they are demonstrating generosity with each and every kindness. Kindness is contagious and this is one thing we want to spread 😊.