

## **Empowering Students in Math Fostering a Culture of Learning**

JO-ANNE CORBIN-HARPER: The style of Amy's teaching has had a definite impact on the school. We could see it trickling through. The approach of it's almost like that full-time kindergarten approach in a grade 2/3 classroom which is great because there's so much inquiry, and voice, and choice in the program, and being a former grade 8 teacher and dabbling a bit in it, it is wonderful to see it spreading where teachers are trying things like spiraling in grade 8 where the kids are coming on a set form of a particular math's trend.

In our 1/2 class we're seeing a open area where kids have centres but they're free to go choose what they want to work on. The permanent activities that they're doing in the morning which Amy starting doing if you can see with all the bikes and the different tools she has in the room you're seeing a bit of that in other classrooms. But more than that I think we're seeing the technology spreading. Teachers not being as afraid maybe to try new things or maybe it's almost like they're having that permission to try these things and to do new things in their classroom that are geared to the children. Amy was here last year so she's continued.

So what the admin here were able to do, we were able to actually gift her most of her class because it was interesting to see the journey that those kids would carry on and the learning, and the possibilities that they could reach. So she had a 1/2 last year so she's carried it now to 2/3. So she was able to move most of her kids but it's also amazing to see that yeah she had some of them for two years but the ones that just came in have adapted so well to the program and you can see the level of thinking with these kids have grown. So it started last year with her and then evolved into this year, but most of our teachers have started coming along for the journey mostly this year.

We think of ourself as a community. So we work closely together with our teachers. We do a lot of self-regulation, a lot of collaborative problem solving type of activities. So I figured if we work on the motional side the academic side hopefully will slowly come along because if the kids can't self-regulate and they're not in tune with their mental balance or filter of the day no learning is happening. So we got to start at the root of where these kids feel comfortable, they want to come to school, they feel safe here and that is through teaching that self-regulation, how to express.

Yeah it's okay to get angry. But it's what you do with that anger. And it's okay to be sad, but how do you express that sadness and what do you do with it? So we focused a lot on that and then the emotional side has to come in as the whole wellbeing of the kid, right?

AMY ZORZETTO: Students understand how the learning that they've had, the opportunities that they've created—and I will say they've created in the classroom have helped their learning and I think where I see that going is them bringing that to the next grade and maybe challenging some status quo in terms of what is happening.

Maybe just bringing their thinking to the table that what happens as a teacher is I can speak only about myself, when students have ideas that challenge my thinking then I have two options, I can either stop that thinking and or ignore that thinking, or I can actually think about it and think how I would be able to acknowledge that, further that knowledge and I think that I've had lots of opportunities to work with teachers, and teachers will do that, and teachers will take that time to have that opportunity that the students are bringing to them and move forward with that. And so what we're actually working through that transition because they may work in a different classroom, they may go and every teacher has a different style and that's the joy of teaching. And so it's really important as a student that they bring what they learned from a previous grade and bring it forward and then also decide about how they're going to in an appropriate way bring their opportunities with them but also how they're going to advocate for themselves to have additional opportunities.

JO-ANNE CORBIN-HARPER: We're not teaching kids for tomorrow. We're teaching kids for 10 years from now, 20 years from now. We're teaching kids for the future. So sometimes as scary as it is we have to adapt to the way that they learn. So the way she's teaching has helped us adapt the way some of our kids are learning so then they leave the kindergarten room where they're having that open approach and that choice and a lot of voice in there. We're starting to see it trickle through in our 1/2, in our 2 and now into our 2/3 and we're hoping it spreads more. We see it in our 4s. Our 4 classroom the environment has changed tremendously and we're starting to see it upstairs as well so it's good to see the trickly coming through the school.

AMY ZORZETTO: I talk a lot about the learning that happens and so that's helped me to—and teachers have teacher friends so we share, and we talk. And so I have colleagues that will call me and ask me how did you do something? And we collaborate, and I'm collaborating with colleagues so that I can share what the students have done because out of the student choices the learning has come and so as a teacher that's one of the biggest pieces and the most exciting aspects is that when students are making those learning choices that bringing the learning to the forefront, and it's deep, and rich, and powerful you can't not be impressed and excited about that. And so when teachers hear about that they want to know more. And so I kind of think that I'm kind of the middle man between the kids and the other teachers sometimes because I share what they've done and then they ask well how did they do that? And then I can help them with how they did that and well, what was out so that they would do that?

And so it's hopefully making a change for other students so that they can have the same opportunities as well.

JO-ANNE CORBIN-HARPER: She knows that in this school I want to try it, go for it because we're there to back them. So if you want to try something is it for the advancement of the student? Is it for student learning? We don't have any roadblocks at all. If it's a kid's best interests go for it.