



# The Anderson School

## NEWSLETTER

© 1999 by the Anderson Private School for the Gifted & Talented  
14900 White Settlement Road, Fort Worth, Texas 76108

Fall 1999  
Telephone (817) 448-8484 / (817) 294-8437

### PERSPECTIVES

of Doctor & Mrs. Anderson

Choices, freedom and failure are all essential in learning for life. Our choices make us who we are. They determine how we live, who we spend time with, what we will be doing in twenty years and how happy we will be. And the significant choices children make begin at a very early age.

Parents tell us that their children ultimately choose just how happy they, as parents, become. So for the sake of our own well being (and sanity) we must focus upon helping our children make good choices. And that begins with the freedom to choose. Without the freedom to *practice* the fine art and science of choice making, can children learn the real life consequences of decision making?

Granting them this fundamental democratic right does not come naturally. We have become so accustomed to making decisions for our children, and they are so habituated to having few real decisions to make, that giving this freedom proves difficult. And in giving permission to choose, we accept the inevitable freedom to fail.

*“In giving permission to choose, we accept the inevitable freedom to fail.”*

And in accepting, discover that failure is a formidable teacher. As Frank Lloyd Wright observed, *“You do not learn by way of your successes. No one does. Your successes gradually build a wall between you and your creative self. You keep your mind open, keep inquiring and try to drive that nail a little better than the one you drove before, and see the mistake you made when you slammed the wood alongside instead of hitting the nail. You learn from that blow more than you do from one when you hit the nail. And that applies all down the line.”*

*“You do not learn by way of your successes. No one does.”*

Developing the persistence that is absolutely vital to be truly successful is predicated upon how a person philosophically views failure. For we can infer that problem solving is in reality a game, and a game in which young children are innately adept.

If you closely observe children at play you realize that, when left to their own devices and natural consequences, they rebound from failure with increased vigor, creative insight and stronger determination. They may lose a round of vigorous play with another child but quickly utilize their healthy attitude to anxiously engage their playmate with another turn, round or game. Failure triggers creative instincts to pursue yet another avenue to adventure and success.

(Continued page 2)

*- We get our parents so late in life that it is impossible to do anything with them. -*

### IMPORTANT DATES

Oct. 11 Columbus Day Holiday  
Oct. 12-15 Fall Adventure trip (Kansas)  
Nov. 22-26 Thanksgiving / Fall Break  
Dec. 1-3 T.A.G.T. Conference (Inservice)  
Dec. 20 - Jan. 4 Christmas Holiday  
Jan. 5 First Day of the Spring Semester

*- There are four things a child needs - plenty of love, nourishing food, regular sleep and lots of soap and water - and after those. . . some intelligent neglect. -*  
(Ivy Baker Priest)

### TO THE COSMOSPHERE

While driving through the Midwest this summer, we chanced upon a unique place called, “The COSMOSPHERE” in Hutchinson, Kansas and decided to take a “quick” visit to see it. We stayed for the entire day and did not see it all.

It houses the largest collection of Russian space artifacts outside Russia, and a significant American collection, such as the Apollo XIII space capsule.

During one presentation the audience was asked what we would do in case of a fire. Alex loudly proclaimed, “I would grab the model (of the International Space Station) and head for the door”.

He was, as you can see, very impressed with it. Upon leaving Annie was overheard asking "What is this doing out here in the middle of the wheat fields?"

We are now planning to return with the entire student body for our Fall adventure trip and undertake a serious study of space science October 12 - 15.

*- Cleaning your house while your kids are still growing is like shoveling the walk before it stops snowing. -*  
(Phyllis Diller)

## **PERSPECTIVES,** continued

However, failure, to affect a young person in a *positive* way, must not become synonymous with or attached to a child. To label a child as "a failure," with grades, verbally or otherwise, is to prescribe a self-fulfilling prophecy. To do so will effectively merge the child's self-esteem with the negative connotations that failure, in our society, historically implies. Then the child's courage to traverse new pathways will quietly, quickly and most assuredly wither.

In studies of highly successful gifted adults we find failure viewed in a psychologically healthy way. After Thomas Edison was questioned about his failure to produce an electric light bulb following more than a thousand tries, he stated that he had not failed a thousand times but had eliminated a thousand things that simply would not work and, thus, was well on his way to finding one that would.

Learning that failure is a friend, that it brings you one step closer to success, is very significant in a young life. And to nurture a healthy and productive perspective, we must allow our children the fundamental right to choose and the right to fail, while realizing that no child is ever a "failure".

Children may not be immediately successful in solving a problem, but they are constantly learning as they attempt to be successful. This is one reason the Anderson Private School does not give traditional grades, but simply credits

students with accomplishment whenever it occurs. We also raise our level of expectation by requiring a minimum of 90% mastery of the curriculums. If your going to be successful, be truly successful!

With very young children, choices can be narrowed to one of two or three selections. (Which one of these hats do you choose today?) But with older children, the menu of choice should be plentiful. And in offering choices, remember the broad range of opportunities provided whenever they make decisions. These are precious moments that bring together parent and child to discuss choices. Ultimately, your young decision maker, with practice and guidance, will prove to make good choices. And sometimes make better decisions than you.

***"These are precious moments - that bring together parent and child to discuss choices."***

The self esteem of your child will be a primary beneficiary of the trust you place in him or her. And, what transpires may not be **your** first choice. But if you can live with it, your child will grow to be less dependent upon you, which adds to your freedom. Then he or she will be well on the way to becoming a healthy adult with the self-confidence needed not just to survive, but to truly thrive. But most importantly, they will acquire the willingness to accept responsibility for the choices they must inevitably make in life.

***"The self esteem of your child will be a primary beneficiary of the trust you place in him or her ."***

At the Anderson Private School, we expect our students to make frequent choices. And we fully know they will not always choose wisely, but this is what developing an autonomous learner is ultimately all about.

Freedom is fraught with failure. It is about moving on with an enhanced ability that is honed on the whetstone of

wonderful relationships that permit others the freedom to mold and shape their abilities and personalities through the natural dynamics of trial and error.

*- Freedom is not worth having if it does not connote the freedom to err. -*  
(Mohandas K. Gandhi)

## **NEW FRANK ADAMS LEARNING CENTER**

In sincere appreciation for dedicated and distinguished service and the numerous contributions of Frank Adams to our school and to the students, the Board of Directors names our new learning center in his honor. The new addition features vistas enabling students to enjoy the surrounding countryside with a spectacular view which blends nicely with our school philosophy of removing physical and psychological barriers from the learning environment.

We gratefully acknowledge all of those who have assisted in the preparation of the new facility: Aaron Rivera, Frank Adams, Seth Wright, Roy Rendon, Kevin Moss, Don Ketterlin, Ben Stricklin and Reagan Stricklin, and our own Annie and Alex Anderson, who vows to build one just like it (only smaller) for himself.

*- I am not young enough to know everything. -*  
(James Barrie)

## **AARON RIVERA IS KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

The Children's Miracle Network Texas Champion and Anderson School scholar, Aaron Rivera, was recently selected as the keynote speaker for the annual Sara Lee employee inservice. Aaron's busy summer included touring the White House, appearing on the Tonight Show and the Donnie & Marie Show and meeting celebrities including Al Broker, Olympian gymnast Mary Lou Retton and John Snyder of the Dukes of Hazard.

*- Life is what happens while you are making other plans. -*