

FAILING AS A ROAD TO SUCCESS A KODO PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION



“Failure” – it’s the forbidden word that’s been shunned by many educators, parents, and child care providers alike. No one wants to see their children fail, of course. It is our love and concern for our children that cause us to enable their successes when they are headed on the path toward Failure. At Kodo, however, we believe that simple Failures are essential for the development of critical 21st century skills that allow children to grow into successful adults. We also believe that play is an important tool to empower children to find challenge and experience failure where the consequences of failing are minimal.

The idea is this: if children aren’t afforded the chance to fail, they will may not get the opportunity to persevere and develop creative problem solving skills. Perseverance develops resilience, which is essential for children to create their own successes both now and years in the future. In the face of failure, children who can think critically without always depending on adults for answers will grow to be independent, thoughtful, and creative problem solvers.

Criss Cross Philosophy of Education If necessity is the mother of invention, then it is important as adults that we provide opportunities for children to problem solve out of necessity. Necessity causes us to look outward at the tools available to us and the world around us in order to fix our problems. If adults solve all the problems for children, then many opportunities to be inventive will be missed, as failures create the necessity for invention. For example when a section of a child’s ramp system fails, he or she must problem-solve, make adjustments and invent a solution that will support the desired outcome.

So, how do we encourage children to invent in the face of a failure? It’s actually very straightforward in theory, but challenging in practice. When you see something go wrong, or something that a child is doing that is sure to fail, you may have to fight all your urges to step in and point out the solution for the child. Instead, stand back and observe. Write down what you want to ask or say. Once the failure occurs or the failure point becomes apparent, continue to observe silently. This may be an opportunity to pose an open-ended question to your child – “why do you think that happened? What do you want to have happen? What needs to change to make it work the way you want it to?” These types of questions help launch creative and critical thinking, support an investigative approach toward learning, and encourage children to hypothesize and make predictions, experiment, perhaps fail again, and make improvements. Pointing out the failure point without implying negativity is also valuable. “Did you notice which piece didn’t work or failed?” Keep in mind that failure helps us to uncover information. Of course



FAILING AS A ROAD TO SUCCESS: A KODO PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

there will be times when the child may fail at multiple attempts and become frustrated. In this scenario you may opt to redirect or guide the child towards a new activity, invite them to take a little break and come back to the problem later, or ask a question that may help move the child from an impasse to a possibility – “what do you think might happen if we put it here instead?”

You may find these strategies to be harder to practice than you might think – we have conditioned ourselves to step in and “save the day”, and those urges will be hard to resist. You may fail many times when you start using this method of Investigation Based Teaching™ in your classroom – that’s okay! If you continue to practice facilitation in place of “fixing” problems, it will become second nature to you with time.

We’d like to leave you with a powerful quote from psychologist Jerome Bruner:

“We want children to experience success and failure not as reward and punishment, but as information.”

Don’t overlook failure – it may just be the key to success!



This article was originally published on the Kodo Kids Blog. For more great content and early education resources, visit www.kodokids.org