

# COUNSELOR'S CORNER

October 2015, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition

## Welcome Back!

Mrs. Fabina, the counselor for grades 5-12 and Ms. Schweitzer, the counselor for the Elementary School, have collaborated to provide regular information regarding counseling related activities in the school and community. Welcome to our 5<sup>th</sup> edition!



## NEWS FROM THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The new school year has begun and is already in full swing! At the beginning of any school year, I ensure that all students are aware of what services I offer at the school. The kids are made aware that I offer appointments during recess to help them find solutions to issues they may be having. Conflicts and concerns can be brought to my attention any time, and also by way of leaving me a note if I'm not in the office or if I'm otherwise occupied. Furthermore, the children are reminded of the F.R.O.G. program and how they can earn frog tickets. Once they have earned 20 frog tickets for behavior that exemplifies friendliness, respect, organization, and community oriented thinking, they can come to my office to pick

out a reward from the treasure chest. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades, I introduced the Social Skills Training that takes places parallel to the computer course. It is important to us that our students not just reach their full potential academically, but also socially. We would like for them to learn how to express their feelings calmly and effectively, how to solve conflicts and deal with anger and stress, how to respect differences and work together in groups. It is our goal that, by the time they leave Elementary School to continue their education in the higher grades, our students are becoming well rounded individuals.

## EVENTS

### Expected Behavior

At the beginning of the school year, Mrs. Rodrigues, the Elementary School Principal, and Ms. Schweitzer, the Counselor, host an event in which all of the grades are introduced or reminded of the expected behavior in Elementary School. This includes a review of the rules and code of conduct during recess, in the hallways, in the cafeteria, and during school events. We have found that this event serves as a good reminder for all of our students and gives them the opportunity to ask questions.

### Food Drive

The Elementary School has established a good relationship with the NIH's Children's Inn facility through the food drive that has been organized annually. The week before Thanksgiving break, we will collect food items to fill the pantry of the Inn once again. The Children's Inn is an important part of the NIH's Children's Unit as it provides families, whose children are receiving medical treatment, with a place to stay so they can stay close to their sick child. To this end, they have a full kitchen we help fill with food items every fall.

More information on this event will be provided in the Wednesday Mail

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## NEWS FROM THE UPPER LEVEL SCHOOL

### Who is the counselor for grades 5-12?

My name is Klara Fabina, and I have been working at the German School Washington, D.C. since 2000. An alumna of the DSW, I earned my *Abitur* here and went on to receive both my Bachelor of Arts and my Master of Education in School Counseling degrees from the University of Maryland, College Park. One of the main objectives of the counseling program is to contribute to the positive academic, social and emotional development of each student. I work with the students in grades 5-12 and offer individual and group counseling, classroom guidance, student observation, responsive counseling, referrals, and support for parents and teachers. I am also the college counselor, and offer students individual

guidance on studying in the US or Canada.

Furthermore, I am the test coordinator for the PSAT, SAT, and AP exams as well as the Student Service Learning coordinator. The counselor is involved in the coordination and planning of school-wide programs that deal with issues such as drug awareness and assertiveness training as well as social skills training for students.

My regular office hours are Mondays - Fridays from 8:10 am - 3:00 pm. Appointments can be made over the phone (301-767-3805) or via e-mail at [counselor@dswash.org](mailto:counselor@dswash.org). I look forward to working with you to support our school community.



*"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."*

*-Aristotle*



### And we're off!

Welcome to the new school year 2015/16! As we get underway, we thought it might be helpful to pass along some tips to get our children off to a good start.

- *Routines are important:*

Structuring your child's day can be very helpful in creating school success. A daily schedule indicating wake up time, bus schedule, homework times, after-school activity time, bed times, and so on helps your child stay organized and on track. It may be helpful to have this schedule in a very visible place, so you and your child can refer to it quickly and repeatedly.

- *Organization is key:*

Getting and staying organized from the beginning can really cut down on stress later. Stock up on school supplies that can be used throughout the school year. Work together to create a filing system so that important forms and work sheets do not get lost in the shuffle.

- *Set realistic goals for the year:*

Sit down with your child and decide on some realistic goals for the school year. Be specific when you choose the goal. Maybe your child wants to improve her Math grade this year. Or your teen wants to reach a 3.5 GPA. It is often helpful to break up the goal into smaller steps and check in regularly to see how your child is doing. Stay positive even if things don't go perfectly. It is important for kids to learn how to deal with setbacks and get back on track to reaching their goals.

- *Positive Reinforcement:*

Especially for kids who may be struggling in school celebrating small victories along the way towards their goal is extremely important. Celebrate a good grade on an exam not only the good grade on the final report card.

- *Volunteer at your school:*

Getting involved in your school is enriching for parents and kids alike. Volunteering at a school event is a great way for kids to develop social skills while having fun, and for parents to get together for the good of their school.

- *Know when to get support:*

Sometimes, despite their best efforts, students may need a little help in certain subjects. Make use of your school's support system if you need to find a tutor. There is a list of tutors for various subjects in the password protected part of the school's website, and your child's teachers are also a great resource in finding the support you need. Their office hours can also be found on the website.

## TIPS AND TIDBITS

### *Use a simple approach to discipline*

The most effective discipline strategy can be summarized with this simple advice: Be firm, fair, and consistent. Here's what it looks like:

- ◆ **Be firm.** Your rule is: No TV before homework is finished. Your child has put off his studies and now his favorite program is getting ready to start. He wants you to bend the rules. "Everyone will be talking about the show at school tomorrow! I promise I won't make this mistake again! Please!" Enforce the rule anyway. Your child may be disappointed, but he will soon learn that you mean what you say.
- ◆ **Be fair.** You make a short list of household rules

and ask your child to share his opinion. "Dad, it's not fair that my bedtime is 8:00. I can't fall asleep that early." You might say, "Good point. You can read in bed until 8:30." Be willing to adjust the rules as your child matures, but the final decision should always be yours.

- ◆ **Be consistent.** Your child should know that if you say it, you meant it every time. But part of being a kid is testing parents. "Why can't I get this video game? All my friends have it. You're the meanest dad in the world!" Despite any frustration you may feel, when your child tests the limits, listen respectfully and respond firmly.

*'Right is right even if no one is doing it; wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it'*

*- Augustine of Hippo*

### *Sleep habits matter*

If your child seems cranky and unfocused, take a look at her sleep habits. School-age children need 10 to 11 hours of sleep per night.

If your child isn't getting enough sleep, she may have trouble paying attention in class.

To ensure that your child is well rested and ready to learn:

- ◆ Enforce a reasonable bedtime
- ◆ Establish a calm "winding down" routine before bed.
- ◆ Switch off electronics at least one hour before bed.
- ◆ Keep the TV and mobile devices out of your child's bedroom.

### *Let good judgment override peer pressure*

Teach your child to handle peer pressure by helping her develop good judgment. Here's how:

- ◆ **Be compassionate.** When she tells you about something that's happening with her peers, just listen. It's fine to remind her of your values, but don't judge.
- ◆ **Encourage her** to stand up for herself. You may want to role-play ways she can do so.
- ◆ **Praise her.** Let her know you're proud of her when she does the right thing.
- ◆ **Show your child** you value her opinion. It will help develop her self-confidence.

## INTERESTING PARENT WORKSHOPS IN OUR AREA

Please visit the DSW's "Coffee and Conversation" series!

November 5<sup>th</sup> 2015, 8am, Parent Café- Where is my stuff? Strategies to Help Your Child Establish Organization Routines at School & at Home. Language: English with German Hand-Outs. Carey Heller, Psy.D., The Heller Psychology Group.

December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015- Got Parenting Stress? De-stress Strategies for Parents and Kids. Language: German and English. Janette Patterson, MSW, LCMFT, Relationship Collaboration Therapy.

### MCPS Parent Academy

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org>

All workshops are FREE and held at schools and locations throughout Montgomery County. Child care and interpretation services are provided.

**Teen Substance Abuse:** What Parents Need to Know MONDAY, OCTOBER 19 7:00–8:30 P.M. Teen substance use does not discriminate by race, socioeconomic status, or talent. You can play a key role in preventing your teen from using alcohol and other drugs. This workshop will include an interactive discussion about substance use trends in Montgomery County, as well as strategies and resources available for parents to help their children, elementary to high school age, stay substance free. Presented by Many Voices for Smart Choices. John F. Kennedy High School, Silver Spring.

**Mastering Encouragement** WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21 7:00-8:30 P.M. en•cour•age (en kër ij) v.t., 1. To inspire with courage, spirit or confidence. 2. To stimulate by guidance, approval. Are you looking for alternatives to threats and bribes? This program will help parents develop positive strategies for building cooperation and setting limits with respect. Facilitated by YMCA Youth & Family Services. Briggs Chaney Middle School, 1901 Rainbow Dr., Silver Spring 20904

**Communicating with Teens** MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9 7:00-8:30 P.M. Is it difficult to interact with your teen? Family Services, Inc. will present the tools you need to improve communication. Learn how to strengthen and enhance family communication, and explore techniques to establish age appropriate expectations for behavior and consequences. Eastern Middle School, 300 University Blvd. East, Silver Spring 20901

**Cybersafety and Social Media** MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16 7:00-8:30 P.M. Learn about common websites and applications used by children and safety issues related to computer and cell phone use. In addition, hear strategies for monitoring the use of social media in your household. Presented in

collaboration with the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office and the Montgomery County Police Department. Robert Frost Middle School, 9201 Scott Dr., Rockville 20850

**Consequences that Work** WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18 7:00-8:30 P.M. This workshop is designed for all parents who wonder if their consequences are teaching their kids valuable life lessons or if they are creating more conflict and tension. Topics addressed will focus on creating family structure, developing logical consequences, and fostering your children's sense of personal responsibility. Facilitated by a family therapist. Watkins Mill Elementary School, 19001 Watkins Mill Rd., Montgomery Village 20886

**The Clock is Ticking...Create a Successful Path from High School to College** THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19 7:00-8:30 P.M. Is your child college ready? Come and learn useful tips and strategies that will help you and your child prepare for college. In this workshop, parents and their high school students will learn the importance of establishing a four year-high school plan to prepare for college, hear the do's and don'ts of college essay writing, and learn the key differences between the SAT and ACT. Facilitated by BREAKTHROUGH Test Prep, Education in Action, and Advanced Placements. Rockville High School, 2100 Baltimore Rd., Rockville 20851

**Developing Study Skills for Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30 7:00-8:30 P.M. For some kids studying comes easy, but for many it can be quite a struggle—especially if they are prone to getting distracted or feel unmotivated. In this workshop, parents will explore effective strategies to build solid study habits. Executive functioning skills, skills that our children use to keep track of time, stay organized and finish projects, will also be discussed. Facilitated by Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD). Tilden Middle School, 11211 Old Georgetown Rd., Rockville 20852

**Raising Your Child's Self-Esteem** WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2 7:00-8:30 P.M. Do you ever wonder how to raise confident kids? During this workshop, you will learn specific techniques to connect and communicate with your child. Your child's self-esteem can be encouraged through some simple and easy interactions that will make a difference in how they view themselves. This workshop will be presented by a family therapist. Burnt Mills Elementary School, 11211 Childs St., Silver Spring 20901

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