

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

September 2014 | Volume 2, Issue 1

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. We will offer some information about social skills training, special events, and other topics of interest.

Welcome Back DSW families! We hope everyone had an enjoyable summer, and look forward to getting to know all our new students and families. As school counselors, our goal is to help every student be the best student they can be; this includes working directly with students as well as collaborating with families and staff. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help your child transition smoothly into the school year!

Social Skills Training in the Elementary School

Although social learning happens on a daily basis on all levels, social skills training as a class takes place in the 3rd and 4th grades parallel to the Computer Course. Topics are planned by Ms. Schweitzer in advance but will remain flexible so that other important topics that may come up can be integrated or expanded upon. The topics will be taught through role plays, group discussions, worksheets, games, and reading materials. Some of the goals are to strengthen the group, to develop empathy and conflict resolution skills, to recognize and deal with feelings, to strengthen a sense of respect and responsibility, and to recognize and prevent bullying (more general info on bullying here: <http://www.safefrombullies.com/WhatsNotBullying.aspx> <http://www.safefrombullies.com/WhatsBullying.aspx>)

The students of the 3rd grade have started to explore the topic of feelings. It is important that children learn to read other people's feelings and also learn how to express their own feelings appropriately. We will expand on this topic shortly by practicing expressing our feelings in the following manner: "I feel..... when you (or because you)....., and I would like you to.....". For example: "I feel sad and hurt when you take my things without asking. I would like for you to stop doing that and to ask me for permission". They will be given various example situations and asked to demonstrate in role plays how they could express themselves if something bothers them. These strategies are intended to teach students to use polite language and to enable students to be aware of each other's feelings without the usage of



hurtful language or physical reactions.

In 4th grade we have been working on positive self image and sense of self within a group. The students are working on identifying things they have in common with their peers while also learning what may set them apart in a positive way. They are learning to assess their own strengths and to see their weaknesses as things they can improve upon and not as things that define them. The goal is for them to learn to take pride in their positive traits while also having the group acknowledge what makes their classmates unique and special. Next, we will be speaking about peer pressure and the temptation to conform to a certain standard of "cool". Here too, we will focus on the importance of individuality and making decisions to stay true to yourself.

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS: BEING YOURSELF

The following children's books on the topic of "being yourself" allow you to delve into these ideas more at home:

Irgendwie Anders by Kathryn Cave & Chris Riddell
It's Okay to be Different by Todd Parr

I'm Gonna Like Me by Jamie Lee Curtis & Laura Cornell

Don't Laugh at Me by Steve Seskin & Allen Shamblin

I like Myself by Karen Beaumont

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act.now (active competency training) for grades 5-10

Since 2007, Mrs. Fabina, in cooperation with the Social Learning Group, has coordinated the Social Skills Training program called act.now for students in grades 5-10. This program was created by a group of staff, parents and students to promote social competencies as part of the school's permanent curriculum. The 90-minute-trainings focus on topics that our students may deal with at some point: friendships, bullying/cyberbullying, stress, rumors, cliques, respect, transitions/change, and others. Topics are discussed in an age-appropriate manner using discussion, role play, visual aids, work sheets, and other methods. We choose the topics based on current need, the students' feedback, as well as information from teachers and parents that is gathered throughout the school year. Although the topics that are discussed in the sessions are predetermined, the trainers have the flexibility to make adjustments as appropriate to address a particular issue that may come up during the class discussions. The training sessions are conducted by the staff of the Family Support Center, a non-profit organization that works with both private and public schools offering a full range of professional services. The act.now program will get under way in the fall.

FROG EVENT IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

At the beginning of the school year it is always important that students are reminded of the behavior that is expected from them at school. The Elementary School has been using their FROG system for many years now. FROG is an acronym for "freundlich" (friendly), "respektvoll" (respectfully), "organisiert" (organized), and "gemeinschaftlich" (group-oriented). The students are expected to behave in a manner that reflects these values. In order to encourage our students to recognize and apply the values, school staff can hand out a small FROG ticket to students who demonstrate appropriate behavior. When the students have collected 20 tickets, they can cash them in for a small present in Ms. Schweitzer's office. Shortly after the school year began, Ms. Schweitzer and Mrs. Rodrigues held two assemblies (one for the 1st and 2nd graders and one for the 3rd and 4th graders) in order to explain the system and to convey the importance of positive behavior. Basic good manners, like not running and yelling in the hallways and politely greeting fellow students and staff, were stressed. Students were also reminded that conflicts should be resolved peacefully, never physically. The students were also made aware of possible consequences if they break the code of conduct, like loss of recess privileges. Additionally, Ms. Schweitzer has also reminded all students that they can come to her office to speak to her alone or in a group about anything that bothers them with which they may need help.



Start Fall with New Responsibilities

It's a new school year, and your child is capable of new things! To encourage independence, give him tasks he can handle, and be sure to praise his success!

For example, he can:

- Put his school bag by the front door each night.
- Choose the next day's outfit before bedtime.
- Set an alarm clock and wake up on time.
- Follow a simple morning routine.

(from ["Firm, Fair & Consistent"](#), available on the DSW website)

Avoid Homework Hassles by Offering Schedules & Space

Don't let homework headaches derail a successful school year! To make it easier for your child to complete home assignments:

- Designate** a workspace. Whether it's a desk, table or the floor, have him work in the same spot each day.
- Schedule** a time. Get him in the habit of studying at a set hour each day.
- Stand back**. It's fine to offer guidance once in a while, but never do the assignment for the child.

(from ["Firm, Fair & Consistent"](#), available on the DSW website)



Current Events



This is an exciting - as well as nerve-racking- time of year for our seniors. They are not only preparing for their *Abitur*, but some of them are in the middle of the college application process as well. To help them find a college or university that fits their individual needs, we encourage our students to do their research, meet with the counselor, and attend college fairs such as the Greater Washington DC National College Fair that will be held at the Washington Convention Center on October 2nd and 3rd. Information about the fair is available in the counseling office or at www.nacacnet.org/ncfstudent. On average, about 20% of our students will attend a college or university in the United States or Canada each year. They will take their SATs (Scholastic Aptitude Test) and/or ACT (American College Testing) just as they would at an American high school. In conjunction with Jefferson Academics, the German School has been offering a prep course for many years to help these students prepare for this important test. We are proud to say that our students consistently score higher than both the State and National average. A list of SAT averages for the past years can be found on our [website](#), as well as a complete list of the colleges that have offered our students admission over the past few years. Students from the graduating class of 2014 will be attending such outstanding schools as Columbia University, the University of Maryland, USC Marshall Business School, Oberlin College, Occidental College, George Mason University, the University of St. Andrews, and American University. Congratulations to them all!

STUDENT SERVICE LEARNING AT THE GERMAN SCHOOL WASHINGTON, D.C.

“Quality service learning provides the student with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and career exploration opportunities that lead to effective citizenship in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.”

The overall mission of the German School focuses not only on giving our students a solid academic foundation, but emphasizes the importance of giving back to their community through social service. Students in grades 8-12 are required to complete 10 hours of service learning per year. Students will be earning these hours by taking part in activities within the curriculum, the school, or the community. Completing the service learning activity is mandatory in order to receive a High School Diploma from our school. Students have reported over the years that helping out in their school and their community is enriching and fun, and a great way to discover their own abilities while helping others. If you are interested in more information on the Student Service Learning Program, please visit our [website](#).

“Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are endless”



Upcoming Parent Workshops in the Area



More information on the following workshops can be found at:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/parentacademy/workshops.aspx>

Positive Discipline

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 7:00–8:30 P.M. **Takoma Park ES, 7511 Holly Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912**

Are you having difficulty addressing inappropriate behaviors? Hear strategies to encourage, set limits and establish consequences. Learn about a discipline approach which promotes cooperation and self-restraint. Presented by the Parent Encouragement Program (PEP).

Developing Study Skills for Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 7:00-8:30 P.M. **Thomas W. Pyle MS, 6311 Wilson Lane, Bethesda, MD 20817**

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).

Study Skills 101

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 7:00–8:30 P.M. **Montgomery Village MS, 19300 Watkins Mill Rd., Montgomery Village, MD 20886**

Does your child need help with getting organized, finishing assignments, and studying for tests? Learn ways to support your child at home and hear strategies for academic success from an MCPS educator.



Cybersafety and Social Media

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1 7:00-8:30 P.M. **Takoma Park MS, 7611 Piney Branch Rd., Silver Spring 20910**

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.

Homework Hassles: Encouraging Student Responsibility

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8 7:00-8:30 P.M. **Francis Scott Key MS, 910 Schindler Dr., Silver Spring 20903**

Would you like to be organized for the school year with a new and improved family homework policy and homework plan? Learn how parents can encourage their children and teens to skillfully complete homework and strive for excellence at school. Presented by YMCA Youth and Family Services.

Promoting Teen Resilience

MONDAY, OCTOBER 27 7:00-8:30 P.M. **Watkins Mill HS, 10301 Apple Ridge Rd., Gaithersburg 20879**

This will be an interactive discussion to empower parents to explore the risks that could hinder academic achievement. Parents will learn county trends and strategies to promote resiliency in youth. Parents will participate in activities that will enhance the communication between parent and youth to encourage protective factors. Parents will receive a tool kit that can be used when engaging youth around the risks associated with low academic achievement. Presented by Many Voices for Smart Choices.

Internet Safety

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29 7:00-8:30 P.M. **Tilden Middle School, 11211 Old Georgetown Rd., Rockville 20852**

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 by Family Services Inc.

Communicating with Teens

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5 7:00-8:30 P.M. **Argyle MS, 2400 Bel Pre Rd., Silver Spring 20906**

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.



Cybersafety and Social Media

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12 7:00-8:30 P.M. [Rosa Parks MS, 19200 Olney Mill Rd., Olney 20832](#)

Learn about the most 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.

Raising Your Child's Self-Esteem

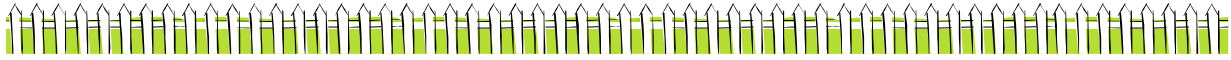
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19 7:00-8:30 P.M. [Galway ES, 12612 Galway Dr., Silver Spring 20904](#)

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.

Consequences that Work

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3 7:00-8:30 P.M. [Sligo Creek ES, 500 Schuyler Rd., Silver Spring 20910](#)

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.



Jewish Social Service Agency

<https://www.jssa.org/>

CHILDREN OF DIVORCE SUPPORT GROUP – FALL 2014 (VA)

DATE(S) AND TIME(S)

This group meets twice monthly on Wednesdays. Dates and times are subject to change.

October 1, 2014 - February 4, 2015

7:00 pm - 7:50 pm

LOCATION(S)

JSSA, Northern Virginia

3018 Javier Road

Fairfax, VA 22031

COST

\$25 per session

REGISTRATION

Pre-registration is required.

For more information or to register, please call: 703-896-7557

GIRLS ON THE RISE! WORKSHOP (MD Venue JSSA, Ina Kay Building

This six session group for 3rd to 5th grade girls encourages positive emotional, social, mental and physical development. Workshops will examine how to develop self-esteem and peer relationship skills.

Pre-registration is required. (Multiple dates)

