



MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELING CORNER

HOMEROOMS

As counselors, we are excited to have homerooms available to us. We can now get in to meet your children more, build those relationships, and share lessons without taking away from classroom learning. We have important information concerning guidance, college and career readiness, and academic planning.

One of our most important lessons we share is over suicide prevention. It is a state and district mandate which we provided the first two weeks of school. This gives us an opportunity to introduce ourselves and discuss the topic. We share signs and steps on seeking help for students themselves and for friends they are concerned about. Parent information will be forthcoming so please keep an eye on your emails. If you do not receive information, please check with your counselors to make sure your information is correct in the system.

Sixth grade students receive additional information regarding what bullying and relational aggression are and steps to address the situation. The steps include telling the other to stop, telling teacher in class/area, and then telling the counselor if it persists or occurs in more than one location. The reason we discuss having the student tell the other to stop is more in the relational aggression or if a friend makes them uncomfortable so that it does not continue. Often friends do not realize they have caused a situation to occur.

Our overall goal is for our students to have a safe learning environment and begin practicing how to advocate for themselves.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is the character topic this six weeks. This is being reinforced weekly in the homerooms with discussion and activities. General characteristics of trust include integrity, honesty, keeping promises, being dependable and loyalty.

Ways to Reinforce the concept at home:

- Model the behavior
- Be consistent
- Develop family rules and consequences
- Use a teachable moment while watching a movie
- Share with your child when you had difficulty with this
- Listen to your child share their difficulties



BENEFITS OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Middle school is an important yet vulnerable time for youth. Studies have shown that this is a critical period for identity formation and is central to students' later academic paths.

Extracurricular activities, such as clubs, sports, fine arts endeavors and other non-academic pursuits can be a big part of middle school. Studies have even shown that there are numerous benefits to participating.

One of the major benefits is in **social development**. This is becoming more critical since often students use technology and miss the important face-to-face cues that aid in interacting with others.

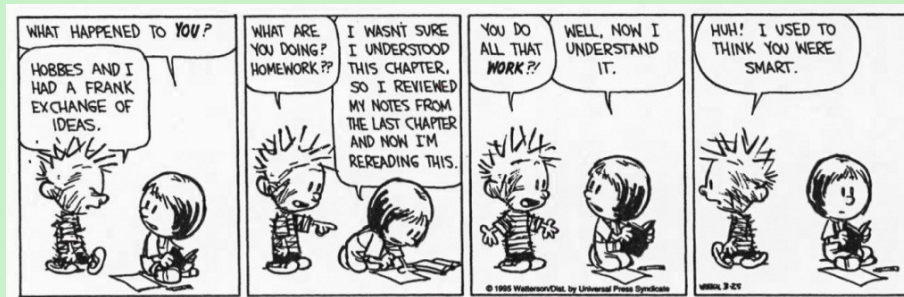
In addition, studies have shown that extracurricular participation improves **academic performance**. It helps develop or

enhance areas of the brain that cannot be achieved through academic work. Also, most participation through school groups requires students to pass in order to participate.

When students find areas of interest, they are less likely to have **attendance** issues. This means students are more inclined to stay in school.

Furthermore, students learn skills that will continue to assist them in their futures like:

- **Time management**
- **Prioritization**
- **Long term commitment**
- **Self esteem**
- **Confidence**



IMPORTANCE OF CULTIVATING A GROWTH MINDSET

The only limitations are those you place on yourself and those you allow other people to place on you.

- Jean Driscoll

Students with a fixed mindset tend to view their abilities, such as intellect or talent, as set and do not require effort to develop. They also tend to give up if they feel they are unable to do something.

Those with a growth mindset believe their abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. These students tend to view failures as challenges to be overcome.

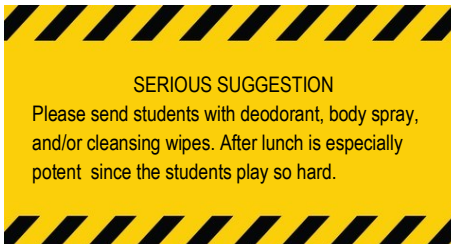
Studies show that students with a growth mindset are more resilient and better able to cope when difficulties arise. So we hope to develop a growth mindset in the students.

GROWTH / DEVELOPMENT DURING MIDDLE SCHOOL

Early adolescence is a time of growth in young people, but each child's development is unique. Typically, children progress through predictable milestones but on their own timetable.

Physical

- Growth spurts
- Eating patterns change (overly concerned with diet)
- Physical activity / High energy
- Increased need for sleep
- Increased need for hygiene
- Increased interest in relationships



Social / Emotional

- Less overt affection towards parents
- Peer pressure / peer relations
- Inclusion / exclusion; cliques; want to belong
- Struggle with sense of identity
- Desire independence
- Demand privileges but may avoid responsibilities
- Moody



Intellectual

- Increased ability to think abstractly
- Puberty may slow rate of cognitive development
- Short term thinking
- May experiment with risk taking behaviors
- Lack cause / effect as well as feel invincible (That can't happen to me)
- Very concerned about fairness
- Struggles with organization and memory
- Questioning beliefs



COPING SKILLS

Coping skills are the strategies and activities we use to deal with our emotions. These are usually learned from family members and the people that have been most influential in our lives whether intentional or not. The skills can be positive and healthy or negative and unhealthy. Sometimes a healthy coping skill can become negative by impacting one's health badly or taking up too much of one's time.

The number one coping skill when someone is struggling is to ask for help. We are here to assist or point you in the right direction.

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

Fort Worth ISD provides supportive behavioral and mental health services for students, families, and their caregivers.

Ask your counselor for a referral or a parent can make a referral online at the district website.



The facility closest to our school is located at Western Hills ES.



Some community partners include:



WELLNESS TOOLBOX

Wellness tools are things we do every day to feel better or help us maintain an emotional balance. In other words, coping strategies.

Most information online begins with making a list. This is helpful to go to time and again when deciding an activity. It can be hard to remember in the moment.

The list is to identify the things that are helpful in feeling better. Some of the things should include what must be done like eating healthy meals and drinking water. Other things will be based on individual preference that helps someone feel better.

Mental health is not a destination, but a process. It's about how you drive, not where you're going

IDEAS FOR A WELLNESS TOOLBOX

Try to address all dimensions of wellness:

- eating three healthy meals a day
- drinking plenty of water
- getting to bed by 10:00 p.m. (or at a good regular time for you)
- playing a musical instrument
- watching a favorite TV show
- knitting
- reading a good book
- exercising
- doing a relaxation exercise
- writing in a journal
- talking to a friend on the telephone
- taking medications
- taking vitamins and other food supplements
- gratitude activity
- positive affirmations
- listen to music
- coloring



A PHYSICAL WELLNESS TOOLBOX

The purpose of a physical wellness box is to have access to items that interact with your senses and can distract, calm, center, and ease you. The areas to address are:

1. Something to smell—lotion, candles, aromatherapy
2. Something to touch—stress ball, Rubik's cube
3. Something to taste—candy or gum
4. Something to listen to—mixtape, soothing music on iPod
5. Something to focus on—journal/pen, book, coloring
6. Something for self-care—nail polish, facial mask, cooling eye mask

