

Marvelwood's Connections Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the objective of the Program?

In the Connections Program, a 'coach' works collaboratively with the student to strengthen the student's social-emotional competency skills. The coach and student explore topics including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making (see SCLD link below). Each student has an individualized program that is designed around the student's strengths and challenges. The boarding school setting provides the coach the unique opportunity to observe the student in classrooms, hallways, athletics, dormitories, and the dining hall. The coach is able to see if the skill that has been practiced in the 1:1 office setting has been generalized to other settings. The boarding school coach is also able to work collaboratively with the faculty and staff to maximize the level of support that the student is provided.

It is important to note that the Connections coach is not a licensed mental health professional. When given permission by the parent and student, the coach is willing and able to collaborate with licensed therapists and other medical professionals.

How are students selected for the program?

- A student may be referred by parents or teachers based on concerns relating to social-emotional competency skills.
- The student's testing may include a recommendation that the student receive social-emotional competency skill support.
- The Connections Coach observes the student in various social and academic settings and informally evaluates the student's ability creating comfortable exchanges with teachers and their peers.

What is the evaluation process?

Once a student is recommended, the Connections Coach meets with him/her to explain the role of a Connections Coach. The meeting(s) are "casual" yet, they are used to evaluate a myriad of skills that are critical to the social connection process. The word "social" is not used when describing the work of the Connections Coach. Students are very sensitive and do not want to be labeled as being "socially challenged". Support in the Connections program is multi-faceted and as described above supports the development of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. Our goal is for all of our students to develop skills that will enable them to feel connected to and a valued part of the Marvelwood community as well as the social world in which we live.



If it is determined that support would be beneficial, the student is invited to meet weekly with the coach. The student must be invested in the process. If the student is not ready to commit to regularly scheduled meetings, the Connections Coach will “check-in” with them as the year progresses to see if the student might feel differently.

The maximum number of participants in the program is between 15-18 students. If the maximum number has been reached, the student will be put on a “waitlist”. In this situation, the Connections Coach will meet with the student but will not be able to so regularly.

How does the program support parents?

Parental support and involvement are very important to the student’s progress. Parents are provided with information relating to specific skills that they can use to reinforce student’s learning at home.

When do we meet? Are there any additional fees for the “Connections” Program?

1:1 work

If the student is in the Strategies program, one Strategies period a week is used to meet with their Connections coach. “Connections” is included in the Strategies fee. There may be times when a student needs full academic support and is unable to use a Strategies period. If that is the case, the student meets with his/her coach during an elective period one time each week.

If the student is not part of the Strategies program, they will meet with the Connections Coach during an elective period. Parents are charged a fee of \$75 for each 1:1 meeting. The fee also includes any group work or walk-in meetings during that week. The fee is paid directly to the school and is itemized on the monthly statement.

Group work

Students meet in small groups. Groups typically meet after the last period of classes or in the early evening. A small group of students may gather in a room to learn, practice, and role-play specific skills. Often the students are given a problem to solve or hands-on projects which allows them to practice cooperative learning and working toward a group goal. Trips off-campus may also be scheduled and provide the students the opportunity to practice different skills in the “real world”.

“Walk-Ins”

Should the student be struggling with something that requires immediate attention, the Connections Coach will make every effort to find time during the day to meet with them.



Suggested Reading for Students and Adults

Social-Emotional Learning Competency Descriptions:

https://gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/SEL_Handouts.pdf*

Socially Curious and Curiously Social: A Social Thinking Guidebook for Bright Teens and Young Adults
by Michelle Garcia Winner

Brainstorm: The Teenage Brain from the Inside Out by Dr. Dan Siegel, MD

Contact Information

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If you are interested in speaking by telephone, please send me an email and we can set up a mutually convenient time to speak.