

COUNSELOR CONNECTION

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A RETURN TO SCHOOL LIKE NEVER BEFORE

Greeting Gator families!

As your Islander Counseling team, we are so excited to be welcoming you all to Islander Middle School for the 2021-2022 school year! This year's back to school experience is sure to be different than those we've experienced in the past. We want you to know that we are here to help make this transition as smooth as possible.

For several years now, we have provided a counseling newsletter with tips and tricks for supporting your adolescent student, covering topics that are timely and encouraging. We plan to continue offering this resource this year, and we will take time to introduce ourselves in fuller detail next month. With the start of the school year rapidly approaching, we wanted to proactively reach out and share some strategies and supportive ideas to help your student be as prepared as possible for their transition (back) to Middle School.

With all of that said, we anticipate that there will be more nerves than we typically see, so we wanted to provide some information for your reference, especially for parents of students who appear to be extra nervous, worried and/or anxious about the return to 5 day a week, in person learning. Hopefully with useful guidance and early intervention, we can get all of our students back in school smoothly and set up for an awesome school year.

We look forward to a great year together!

Your IMS Counseling Team

Dru, Janet, Jayna, Harry and Zachary

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TIPS FOR THE RETURN TO SCHOOL

We are so excited to welcome back students for full time, in person learning. There may be some nerves and anxiety floating around your student as they prepare for the school year to start. These feelings may not present themselves the same way for every child. For some students, they may tell you how scared they feel, while others might withdraw or appear moodier than usual. It's important to leave the door open for talking when/ if your child looks to you for guidance.

- ✦ Remind your child that **you're there to help**. Ask them how they are feeling about school starting up. They might not want to talk and that's okay. Let them know you can just listen when/if they need someone.
- ✦ Remind them **all kids are nervous**. Some of us hide this better and others wear their feelings on their sleeves, but we all feel some level of nervousness around the start of the school year (even teachers and staff!). Sometimes it helps to know we are not alone.
- ✦ Look over their schedule with a map and help them **map out their walking paths**. Remind them that if they get lost, there will be lots of adults around to help them. We offer a lot of grace in the early days of school.
- ✦ **Get all your supplies together** and ready to go prior to the first day. It may also help to have clothes picked out ahead of time, with everything ready the night before.
- ✦ **Start getting into the routine** of going to bed and waking up more in line with school hours. We hope your summer has been relaxing, but we also know that sometimes with that relaxation comes a later bedtime and mornings of sleeping in. It's good to start moving those bedtimes up student's bodies have time to adjust before the first day of school.
- ✦ Remind your student that if anything goes wrong at school, **there are lots of supportive folks around them**. You, as their parent, want to help. Please remind your students that there are also a lot of adults at school who are here for them if they are having a hard time. Encourage them to find a trusted adult if/when challenges arise.

SCHOOL REFUSAL



Some reluctance to go back to school after summer break is normal, but if/ when a student refuses to go to school it is **very important** that the parent/guardian intervenes quickly. School avoidance allows a child or teen to escape distressing aspects of the school day, which provides immediate short-term relief. However, when a student continues to miss school, returning to school can feel harder and harder as they fall behind academically and start to feel socially disconnected from classmates and teachers. Additionally, an avoidant student doesn't get the chance to learn that it is possible to handle school-related anxiety and cope with the challenges the school day brings. This can keep the student stuck in a vicious cycle of school avoidance.

What should I do if I think my student is experiencing school refusal?

The best way to get children back to school is by working as a team with the school. It's important to acknowledge your child's feelings about school, but let them know that you expect them to go back to school and that staying home is not an option.

If you are concerned that your student is at risk for school refusal, it is very important that you **contact your child's counselor immediately**. We will work with you and your student to provide immediate support. If you would like more information about this topic, here is an article about [school refusal article](#) that offers some additional tips.

We wish you all the best for a smooth transition into the 2021-2022 school year!

See you soon!!!!