



# Counselor's Corner

Middle School Years

## Middle School Relationships

Your child dating in middle school may seem like a terrifying concept but not all students start dating this young. There are many students that wait to enter the dating scene until they are a little older. However, with Valentines and our school Valentines dance happening in February, relationships and dating is a topic on many student's and parent's minds. As a parent, understand that relationships at this age are less about the intimate connection of two people, and more about exploring who they are as a person. Kids at this age are beginning to question who they are and how other people view them. Dating at this age tends to be short but can feel much longer and more intense for our students. Keep conversations with your child regarding relationships at this age open, honest, and non-judgmental, while still setting clear boundaries that you are comfortable with. Also, be careful to dismiss their feelings during this time. While middle school relationships don't tend to last long, breakups at this age can feel like the world is ending.

For more thoughts and ideas about how to handle your child as they start exploring relationships, consider reading [Young Love & Understanding Middle School Relationships](#) by Michelle Icard on the Parent Toolkit website.



"I talked to my guidance counselor today. He said, 'Whatever will be, will be!'"

## Student Mental Health

[Statistics](#) have shown an increase in student mental health concerns throughout the country over the last two decades, including instances of depression and anxiety among 6-17 year olds. Even more alarming, suicide rates nationwide have also been [on the rise](#). In response to this, on the next page are some tips to help you identify warning signs. Please contact us if have concerns about your child or you are interested in information about local resources.



### UPCOMING



#### 2020-2021 Course Selections

Counselors met with current 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> grade students and completed course selection worksheets for next school year. Please review your student's course selections and sign the form. Selection worksheets are due back to your student's science teacher by February 7<sup>th</sup>.

Counselors will be meeting individually with current 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to review their four year plans and their 9<sup>th</sup> grade course selection worksheets. Students will bring home their plans and worksheets for parent review once we finish the individual meetings.

### Contact



**Sean Moore (A-L)**  
[moores1@georgetownisd.org](mailto:moores1@georgetownisd.org)  
 512-943-5047

**Holly Barrett (M-Z)**  
[barretth@georgetownisd.org](mailto:barretth@georgetownisd.org)  
 512-943-5040 ext.6464

# Preventing Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents and Educators

**If you or someone you know is suicidal, get help immediately via 911, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or the Crisis Text Line (text "HOME" to 741741).**

Suicide is preventable. Youth who are contemplating suicide frequently give warning signs. Do not be afraid to ask about suicidal thoughts. Never take warning signs lightly or promise to keep them secret.

## Risk Factors



- Hopelessness
- Non-suicidal self injury (e.g., cutting)
- Mental illness, especially severe depression, but also post traumatic stress, ADHD, and substance abuse
- History of suicidal thinking and behavior
- Prior suicide among peers or family members
- Interpersonal conflict, family stress/dysfunction
- Presence of a firearm in the home

## Warning Signs



- Suicidal threats in the form of direct (e.g., "I want to die") and indirect (e.g. "I wish I could go to sleep and not wake up") statements
- Suicide notes, plans, online postings
- Making final arrangements
- Preoccupation with death
- Giving away prized possessions
- Talking about death
- Sudden unexplained happiness
- Increased risk taking
- Heavy drug/alcohol use

## What to Do



- Remain calm, nonjudgmental and listen.
- Ask directly about suicide (e.g., "Are you thinking about suicide").
- Focus on your concern for their well-being
- Avoid being accusatory (e.g., don't say, "You aren't going to do anything stupid are you?").
- Reassure them that there is help; they will not feel like this forever.
- Provide constant supervision. Do not leave the youth alone.
- Remove means for self-harm, especially firearms.
- **Get help!** Never agree to keep suicidal thoughts a secret. Tell an appropriate caregiving adult. Parents should seek help from school or community mental health resources as soon as possible. School staff should take the student to a school-employed mental health professional.

## Reminders for Parents



After a school notifies a parent of their child's risk for suicide and provides referral information, parents must:

- **Continue to take threats seriously.** Follow through is important even after the child calms down or informs the parent "they didn't mean it."
- **Access school supports.** If parents are uncomfortable with following through on referrals, they can give the school psychologist permission to contact the referral agency, provide referral information, and follow up on the visit.
- **Maintain communication with school.** After an intervention, the school will also provide follow-up supports. Your communication will be crucial to ensuring that the school is the safest, most comfortable place possible for your child.