May/June 2024

THE COUNSELORS' CONNECTION

The Newsletter of the
Elementary Counseling Department

What's in this month's issue:

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S TRANSITION TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

As students prepare to transition from elementary to middle school, it's natural for both excitement and apprehension to arise. This jump into middle school marks a significant shift, with new schedules, environments, and social dynamics to navigate. Families play a crucial role in supporting this transition, providing reassurance and guidance to their children.

Peers Take Center Stage

Middle school marks a time of intense transformation, where peers become central in adolescents' lives, influencing their social identities and interactions. Adolescents' desire for social connection, often seen in excessive phone use, is a natural part of identity formation, but parental support remains crucial during this developmental stage.

Be a Consultant, Not the Boss

Parents are urged to shift from a position of authority to that of a consultant, providing guidance and stability while allowing adolescents to navigate their own experiences. Emphasizing good habits like breakfast and sufficient sleep aids adolescents in managing the hustle of crowded hallways and new teachers.

Prioritize Self-Management

Supporting adolescents in middle school involves allowing them to solve their own problems and learn from mistakes, fostering independence and resilience. Parents can support self-management by providing choices, refraining from over-involvement, and encouraging the productive struggle.

Keep Communication Open

Understanding adolescents' concerns about middle school transition involves asking open-ended questions and actively listening, fostering trust and understanding. Acknowledge media portrayals of middle school while assuring adolescents of available support networks, including teachers and counselors.

Click Here to read the full article.

DID YOU KNOW?

Throughout our SEL curriculum, students learn different peer skills, such as how to identify peer pressure and make responsible decisions.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO SUMMER

As parents, it's natural to want to ensure a smooth transition for our children as they navigate this seasonal shift. Here are some strategies to support your child's transition from school to summer:

- **Acknowledge Emotions:** The end of the school year can bring with it big emotions as children say goodbye to their teachers and regular interactions with their friends. Validate their feelings, listen to their potential concerns, and be patient.
- **Maintain a Routine:** Children thrive on routine and predictability. Identify a scheduled bedtime, wake-up time, mealtimes, and other predictable routines. Identify the planned routine before summer break so that your child is aware and feels in control.
- **Stick to Behavioral Rules and Expectations:** All children can benefit from clear expectations and being held accountable. Implement jobs and responsibilities that your child can take ownership of throughout the summer. For children with behavioral difficulties, this is extremely important.
- **Encourage Learning Opportunities and Continued Growth:** Trips to the library, a museum, and other locations where learning can occur will help to continue to stimulate your child's academic growth. When establishing your summer routines, include a time for reading or researching a topic of interest.
- **Encourage and Continue Social Connections:** School is not only about academic learning but also a place of socialization. Provide opportunities for your child to get together with peers from school over the summer and/or meet new friends. Summer camps, pool outings, one-on-one playdates, and neighborhood gatherings are great ways to foster social opportunities.
- **Balance Structure with Flexibility:** Although maintaining structure is important, it is equally important to find ways to be flexible and allow for spontaneity and unstructured play. Allow your child to decide how they will spend their outdoor time, whether it is creating a fort in the backyard or lounging in the grass with a good book. Impromptu outings and activities can also be a lot of fun and help foster your child's ability to be flexible and to go with the flow.

TRY IT AT HOME!

The Change Muscle

Remind your child that we all have a muscle for change. Our bodies remember all the changes they have ever been through and they get better and stronger with each new one. Encourage your child to make a list of changes they experienced so that they can acknowledge their hard work and growth. Have fun with this every morning by flexing your muscles and saying "Change Muscle Activated!" Saying this regularly helps us to truly welcome and take charge of change!

SEL BOOKS OF THE MONTH