

# ISLANDER MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELOR CONNECTION

Summer Edition

June 2024

## YOUR IMS COUNSELING TEAM

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## Summer Break

You did it! You (and your child) have made it to the end of the 2023-2024 school year! Summer break is here, along with all the summertime plans and possibilities ahead of you.

So take a moment to enjoy a morning without saying: "You're going to miss the bus!" or, "Do you have your homework/iPad/lunch/jacket?"

In this Summer break edition of our counseling newsletter, we share some ideas to help your student maintain routines, practice responsibility, and balance technology use. Be sure to set some calendar reminders now for the important dates listed at the end of the newsletter!

Summer break is here now, so embrace it! We have some time, but the 2024-2025 school year is just around the corner and we look forward to seeing our Islander Middle School students (maybe a little bit taller, tanner, and, perhaps, more responsible) in the Fall!



## Raising Responsibility

Summer break doesn't mean taking a break from contributing to household tasks. "By involving children in tasks, parents teach their children a sense of responsibility, competence, self-reliance, and self-worth that stays with them." This comes from research done at the University of Minnesota.

Summer can be the time to enhance family belonging through organizing fun activities, travel and by including your children in planning those activities. This includes continuing to do the tasks/chores that need to be completed in any household.

Below are a few common chores that can be assigned to a 12-year-old:

- Putting away their belongings.
- Keeping their room clean.
- Doing laundry and folding clothes.
- Setting the table.
- Washing dishes.
- Feeding and walking pets.
- Vacuuming, dusting, cleaning.
- Helping with food prep or cooking.

Parents will likely need to be active coaches at the start of these activities. Depending on your child, you will also need to adjust your expectations to keep the child engaged and the experience one that will build a sense of competence and self-worth.



# How To Really Embrace Summer Break

As the school year came to a close, many middle-schoolers eagerly anticipated the arrival of summer break. This cherished time offers a unique blend of freedom, adventure, and relaxation that plays a crucial role in their overall development. Here's why encouraging them to fully enjoy their summer break can be incredibly beneficial.

- **Time for relaxation and recharging:** After a demanding school year filled with academic pressures, extracurricular activities, and social obligations, tweens need time to unwind. This downtime helps reduce stress and can improve their overall well-being, allowing them to recharge both mentally and physically.
- **Exploration of interests:** Summer break offers a fantastic opportunity for tweens and teens to explore their passions and hobbies. Whether it's delving into a new book series, experimenting with art, playing sports, or learning to play a musical instrument, they will be fostering new skills and a deeper understanding of themselves.
- **Strengthen social connections:** Building social connections and nurturing friendships are crucial life skills. Through activities like summer camps, community events, and family vacations, your child can form lasting bonds and create cherished memories with friends and family.
- **Encouraging independence:** By allowing children to make simple decisions, like choosing their outfits, deciding what to make for dinner, or planning a weekend activity, they build confidence and learn valuable life skills such as responsibility, time management, and problem-solving.
- **Physical activity and outdoor fun:** Whether it's swimming, hiking, biking, or just playing in the park, these activities not only promote physical fitness but also enhance mood and energy levels.
- **Educational Opportunities:** Fun learning experiences, such as summer programs, specialty camps, or online courses, keep their minds active and curious, and can provide a fun way to continue learning without the formal pressures of school.

While embracing the warmth and joy of summer, let's encourage our middle schoolers to make the most of this break. By balancing relaxation, exploration, socializing, and learning, they can return to school refreshed, motivated, and ready to excel.

## Technology and Summer

We encourage parents to think about technology usage over the summer to help ensure a healthy balance of screen time and other activities. We know many middle schoolers love to be on their technology, but it's okay to still have rules/guidelines around when, where and how much for your kids, even during unstructured summer days. Having these conversations near the start of summer can help set expectations and ensure everyone is on the same page.

1. **Establish clear guidelines:** Set clear rules and limits on when and how technology can be used. Create a schedule that includes designated screen-free times.
2. **Monitor and limit social media use:** Keep an eye on your child's social media activity and set limits on the amount of time they can spend on social networking sites. Encourage them to interact with friends in person or through phone calls instead.
3. **Promote outdoor activities:** Encourage your child to spend time outdoors and engage in physical activities. Plan family outings, bike rides, hikes, or sports activities.
4. **Model healthy tech habits:** Be a positive role model by demonstrating responsible technology use yourself. Limit your own screen time, especially during family time, and engage in face-to-face conversations with your child.
5. **Communicate openly:** Talk to your child about the importance of balanced technology use and the potential risks of excessive screen time. Encourage open communication and be available to address any concerns or questions they may have.



## PREPARING FOR THE RETURN TO SCHOOL IN MID/LATE AUGUST

We recognize that summer is just beginning, but we wanted to take a moment to make some suggestions for how to best prepare your child for the return to school after a flexible summer schedule. We sincerely hope you will enjoy the freedom that summertime brings, but once we arrive to the midpoint of August, we suggest that you consider thinking about and discussing with your student the following:

1. **The importance of building a routine:** Discuss the significance of establishing a daily routine that includes time for homework, studying, extracurricular activities, and relaxation.
2. **Tips for practicing waking up on time:** Provide strategies for gradually adjusting sleep schedules, such as going to bed and waking up 15 minutes earlier each day leading up to the start of school.
3. **Setting academic goals:** Encourage students to set specific and achievable academic goals for the upcoming school year, whether it be improving grades, participating in new clubs, or taking on leadership roles.
4. **Organizational tips:** Offer suggestions for organizing school supplies, creating a study schedule, and using tools like planners or digital calendars to stay on top of assignments and due dates.
5. **Mental and emotional preparation:** Address the anxiety or nervousness that students may feel about returning to school, and provide coping strategies such as deep breathing exercises, positive affirmations, and/or seeking support from the IMS School Counselors.
6. **Healthy habits:** Emphasize the importance of maintaining a balanced lifestyle by eating nutritious meals, staying physically active, and getting enough sleep to support academic success.

We are hopeful that this comprehensive list of suggestions will effectively prepare your student for the return to school post summer break. Have a wonderful summer!



- **BACK2SCHOOL DAY: AUGUST 20th**
- **FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28th**

### **IMPORTANT BACK-TO-SCHOOL DATES!**

***\*Calendars get updated, so please check emails and the IMS and MISD websites for the most accurate and up to date information!***

**2024-25 MISD Academic Calendar:**

**<https://www.mercerislandschools.org/about-us/calendar>**