

ISLANDER MIDDLE SCHOOL

COUNSELOR CONNECTION

Newsletter

3rd Trimester

March 2025

YOUR IMS COUNSELING TEAM

IMS COUNSELORS:

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“S” is for Spring, and...

Stepping into Trimester Three!

As we spring into a new trimester and welcome the next vibrant season, it's the perfect time to refresh our goals, embrace new opportunities, and continue growing together as a school community. Spring brings with it the promise of renewal, and this trimester is filled with exciting projects, activities, and achievements ahead.

Let's make the most of this time to learn, grow, and celebrate all the wonderful things happening at our school!

SBA TESTING*

- Week of April 28th- ELA
- Week of May 5th - Math
- May 19th & 20th - WCAS (only 8th graders)

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

1. Set a Consistent Schedule.

- Ensure your child goes to bed and wakes up at the same time every day.

2. Encourage Healthy Habits

- Provide balanced meals with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and proteins. Avoid heavy or sugary foods that might lead to energy crashes.
- Remind them to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.

3. Practice Relaxation Techniques

- Mindfulness: Teach techniques such as deep breathing or visualization to help manage nerves.
- Positive Affirmations: Encourage your child to repeat positive statements about their abilities & preparation.

4. Stay Positive

- Remind your child that standardized tests are just one measure of their learning and growth.

This is important data for the schools, so encourage them to do their best!

***SBA stands for “Smarter Balanced Assessment”**
For more info, including how to interpret scores, please go to: <https://wa.startingsmarter.org/>

Supporting Growth

SOLVING STRUGGLES *with Friends and Peers*

Spring is here! This season often brings a variety of changes in middle school. Sixth graders are growing more confident and starting to feel a stronger connection to their school community. Seventh graders are beginning to contemplate their upcoming role as the oldest students next year, while eighth graders are experiencing a mix of nerves and excitement as they prepare for high school.

Amidst these transitions, friendships can shift, leading to hurt feelings and conflicts among peers. As a parent, it can be challenging to navigate these situations when your middle schooler faces difficulties with friends. Often, your child may manage to hold it together during the school day but may come home feeling overwhelmed.

When your child confides in you about a disagreement with a close friend or their peer group, you might wonder about the best approach. Should you get involved, or is it sufficient to offer comfort and guidance?

Using these strategies can help guide your child through their peer conflicts while fostering their independence and problem-solving skills. That said, we know it can be difficult and the IMS Counseling team is always here to support you and your child through challenges. Please reach out if there is anything we can do to help you or your student.

HERE ARE FOUR GUIDELINES TO ASSIST YOUR CHILD WITH RESOLVING PEER CONFLICT:

- 1. Listen to Your Child:** Ensure they feel heard and understood.
- 2. Manage Your Own Emotions:** Stay calm, take a deep breath, and consider the bigger picture. Reflect on whether your intervention is necessary.
- 3. Empower Your Child:** Ask them thoughtful questions, such as, "What would you like to do? Would you prefer I intervene or make a call?" Most of the time, children have an idea of how to handle the situation and may not want external intervention.
- 4. Brainstorm Options Together:** Encourage your child to think through possibilities by asking, "How do you think you should approach this? If you were the principal or coach, how would you respond?"

SETTING EXPECTATIONS FOR POSITIVE SCHOOL BEHAVIOR

As we enter the final trimester, let's work together to encourage students to stay engaged and make the most of their remaining time in school, by reminding them of these key expectations:

- 1. Cell Phones:** Please remind your students that phones must be kept in Yondr pouches during school hours. This is essential in helping everyone stay focused on learning and minimizing distractions.
- 2. Prohibited Items:** Drugs and weapons--including imitations and paraphernalia--are strictly forbidden on campus. We ask for your support in reinforcing the importance of following these rules for the safety and well-being of all students.
- 3. Social Independence:** As Spring brings more opportunities for outdoor socializing, students may encounter new experiences to assert their autonomy outside of school. As they navigate these changes, we encourage ongoing conversations at home about appropriate behaviors both within our school community and online.

Thank you for your continued partnership in creating a safe, respectful, and positive learning environment. We look forward to finishing the school year strong, and we wish everyone a successful and rewarding third trimester.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

...an essential skill for Middle Schoolers

Middle school is a time students are likely to encounter new challenges and responsibilities that can lead to stress. Practicing healthy coping strategies can help them feel more in control and confident.

Here are some simple and effective ways to help middle schoolers manage stress:

1. **Understand Stress:** Stress is a normal reaction to feeling worried or overwhelmed, such as before a test or when handling homework or conflicts with friends.
2. **Recognize the Signs of Stress:** Help them become aware of their stress symptoms, such as:
 - o **Physical signs:** headaches, stomachaches, or tense muscles
 - o **Emotional signs:** feeling irritable, anxious, or sad
 - o **Behavioral signs:** trouble concentrating, changes in sleep or appetite
3. **Healthy Ways to Manage Stress:**
 - o **Deep Breathing:** Teach the 4-7-8 technique: inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7, exhale for 8. Repeat 5x to relax.
 - o **Physical Activity:** Encourage movement to release endorphins that reduce stress.
 - o **Time Management:** Use a planner to break tasks into manageable parts.
 - o **Take Breaks:** Short breaks can clear their mind and lower stress.
 - o **Mindfulness:** Focus on the present through activities like breathing or drawing.
 - o **Positive Thinking:** Encourage replacing negative thoughts with positive ones.
 - o **Talk It Out:** Encourage talking to a trusted person to relieve stress.
4. **Get Enough Sleep:** Managing stress is harder without enough rest.
 - o Stick to a regular bedtime and limit screen time before sleep.
 - o Aim for 8-10 hours of sleep to improve focus and emotional balance.
5. **Create a Relaxing Routine:** Help them develop calming activities like reading, journaling, or listening to music after school or before bed.
6. **Build a Support Network:** Knowing they have trusted people to lean on can reduce feelings of isolation & stress.
 - o Encourage your child to lean on friends, family, or teachers for support during stressful times.
 - o Help your child identify specific people at school, outside of school, and how to reach them.
7. **Model Stress Management:** Children learn by watching adults. Show your child how you manage stress with techniques like deep breathing, problem-solving, or talking through challenges. If they see you managing stress effectively, they'll be more likely to adopt these strategies.
8. **Be Patient and Encourage Practice:** Learning to manage stress takes time. Be patient with your child as they try different strategies.
 - o Encourage them to keep practicing even if they don't feel immediate results!

As we head into the final trimester, remember that "S is for..."

Staying Strong

by managing stress, prioritizing sleep, and navigating social challenges with resilience. Together, we can help our students finish the year confident and ready for success!