



Manalapan-Englishtown Regional School District

School Counseling Handbook

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Philosophy

The School Counseling Program at Manalapan-Englishtown Regional Schools is centered on each individual student, recognizing and valuing every student as a unique person with distinct personal, social, and educational needs.

We believe that schools play a vital role in equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary for social and emotional well-being, which is essential for academic achievement. The development of social and emotional skills helps children and adults understand and manage their emotions, set and work toward positive goals, demonstrate empathy, build and maintain healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Our counseling program is designed to help every student reach their full potential through a comprehensive, developmental approach. Counselors support all students within the district's educational framework, providing services through individual, small group, and large group settings. By collaborating with families, school staff, and community resources, counselors strive to help students grow into healthy, capable, and effective individuals.

Nurtured Heart Approach

The Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA) is implemented district-wide. NHA consists of a set of strategies that assist children in developing self-regulation and has been found effective with children of all ages. It focuses on transforming the way children perceive themselves, their caregivers, and the world around them.

Children learn that they will receive endless amounts of praise, energy, recognition, and reward through the positive behaviors they display. This supports children in building a positive portfolio of themselves, which we call "Inner Wealth™."

In NHA thinking, intensity is viewed as a powerful quality that, if developed correctly, can propel children toward amazing achievements. When a child learns to feel great about their intensity, incidents of challenging behavior tend to dissolve.

It is important to note that the Nurtured Heart Approach is not an intervention designed to target specific behaviors, but rather a framework for a school culture that benefits all students. Training for parents is provided throughout the school year.



Possible Small Group Topics

Family Dynamics: Half of all children in the United States will experience the end of their parents' marriage. Students who experience the divorce or separation of their parents or guardians often face significant stress as they navigate the unpredictable and ever-changing nature of the process. This group offers an opportunity for children to process their emotions and deal with the changes in their lives. The group setting helps to normalize feelings that students may have, see that they are not alone in their experiences, and allows them to support one another from a place of empathy.

Depending upon the age and make-up of the group, some topics may include:

- being part of a family, despite divorce;
- reasons parents marry and divorce;
- handling changes;
- two houses;
- feelings;
- being the messenger;
- grieving loss and reducing self-blame;
- dating/stepparenting; and
- happy marriages.

Stress Less/Anxiety: Anxiety disorders are common among children and adolescents and often serve as precursors to psychiatric conditions later in adolescence and adulthood. This group provides children with the opportunity to understand how their bodies respond to stress and anxiety, while teaching effective strategies for self-regulation.

Depending upon the age and make-up of the group, some topics may include:

- identifying and naming worries;
- identifying how the body experiences worry;
- differentiating between the sizes of problems and expected reactions;
- calming strategies;
- things in/out of self-control;
- feelings;
- self-talk;
- using calming strategies in school/home; and
- art activities (e.g., calming jars, mandalas, worry boxes, worry warriors).

Social Skills/Friendship/Kids Talk: Social skills are considered an "academic enabler," and students with well-developed social skills tend to be more successful in the classroom. Poor social competence can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including academic challenges and rejection by both adults and peers.

Depending upon the age and make-up of the group, some topics may include:

- identifying emotions;
- recognizing others' emotions and responding appropriately;



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- characteristics of a friend;
- effective communication with friends (e.g., staying on topic, listening);
- understanding social cues and personal space;
- managing conflict;
- sharing/taking turns; and
- dealing with losing/making mistakes.

Bereavement: The death of a loved one is a highly stressful life event for bereaved children. Studies have shown that affected children are at increased risk for mental health challenges and psychosocial problems, both in school and in their daily lives. This group provides students with an opportunity to process their emotions and cope with the changes in their lives. The group setting helps normalize the feelings students may have, allows them to see that they are not alone in their experiences, and enables them to support one another from a place of empathy.

Depending upon the age and make-up of the group, some topics may include:

- learning about death, and terminology;
- discussing the death, funeral/memorial service;
- identifying and coping with feelings;
- identifying and coping with changes;
- remembering the loved one;
- stress relievers;
- art activities and letter writing; and
- discussing positives in life.

Impulse Control: Multiple studies show that children who can control their impulses have better critical thinking skills to solve problems, tolerate frustrations, and engage appropriately with their peers.

Depending upon the age and make-up of the group, some topics may include:

- Zones of Regulation;
- making choices;
- Stop, Think, Go! strategy and three magic thinking questions;
- understanding emotions;
- recognizing how others view you;
- calming tools & strategies;
- similarity of anxiety and anger;
- I-messages/speaking my feelings; and
- art activities.

Self-Regulation: Being able to effectively regulate one's emotions is correlated with improved performance in social relationships and executive functioning. This group teaches the different components of the Zones of Regulation to help students improve their self regulation skills.

Depending upon the age and make-up of the group, some topics may include:

- recognizing and identifying feelings;
- identifying and understanding the four Zones of Regulation;



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- making a connection between feelings and the corresponding zone;
- identifying triggers that move you out of the green zone;
- strategies for returning to the green zone from each of the other zones; and
- asking for help to regulate by identifying the current zone and what may be helpful to return to the green.

Self-Esteem: There is evidence showing a correlation between self-esteem and achievement. Low self-esteem can reduce a student's desire to learn, ability to focus, and willingness to take risks. It can also lead to bullying behavior or social withdrawal. Building a child's sense of inner wealth - helping them understand what they are capable of and who they are - may help them to navigate challenges and seek positive solutions to the problems they encounter.

Depending upon the age and make-up of the group, some topics may include:

- emotions;
- positive self-talk;
- bucket filling, helping others;
- art activities;
- peer helping;
- identifying and owning personal strengths; and
- giving and receiving compliments.

Possible Large Group Activities - Kindergarten

Feelings: Students will engage in a discussion about feelings, emphasizing that all feelings are valid, everyone has them, and they serve an important role in helping us understand what we are going through. The focus may be on recognizing what feelings look like in ourselves and others, as well as learning how to express feelings in socially appropriate ways that help meet our needs. Students will learn to distinguish between different emotions and feelings, identify situations that may result in different emotions, and identify strategies for managing one's own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Additionally, students will learn how to express themselves using "I messages."

Self Regulation: Students will be presented with an overview of the four Zones of Regulation and will learn how different feelings correspond to each zone. Students will be introduced to strategies for staying in the Green Zone, which is ideal for learning. Using a variety of teaching tools, students will learn techniques to cope with and manage their emotions. Topics may include keeping hands and feet to themselves and using calming strategies including the use of a reset effectively. Mindfulness and breathing techniques may be introduced and modeled.

Cooperative Learning: Students will understand the importance of teamwork with an emphasis on expressing themselves appropriately - especially when feeling frustrated with others.



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Understanding and Accepting Differences: Students will recognize that, although we each have unique differences, we share many similarities. Focus may be on identifying physical characteristics and common likes and dislikes.

Character Education Development: Students will be introduced to various prosocial character traits. They may engage in building-wide or classroom-based activities to reinforce their understanding of these traits. Some examples at the kindergarten level include being giving, kind, and respectful/responsible. Students may engage in building-wide activities that reinforce these traits, and participate in recognition programs like "Greatness Superstars."

Anti-Bullying: At the kindergarten level, teaching students to be inclusive and kind to one another can proactively reduce incidences of bullying. Students will be taught strategies for what to do if they feel they are experiencing or witnessing bullying.

Possible Large Group Activities - Grade 1

Feelings: Students will review the concept that all feelings are valid. Focus may be on understanding how their feelings can affect others. Students will also learn to express themselves by using "I messages."

Cooperative Learning: Students will review the importance of teamwork. Emphasis will be placed on expressing themselves verbally when feeling frustrated with others. Additionally, other concepts - such as turn-taking, distinguishing between tattling and telling, sharing, and problem-solving strategies may be taught.

Understanding and Accepting Differences: Students will review the concepts of similarities and differences with a continued focus on understanding and accepting differences.

Conflict Resolution: Students will review various forms of bullying and learn safe methods for reporting conflicts. Emphasis will be placed on social problem-solving skills, such as dealing with exclusion, promoting inclusion, and navigating social media situations. Students will also practice using "I-messages" as a respectful communication technique. Additional conflict resolution strategies may be introduced and explained.

Anti Bullying & Upstander: The definition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) will be reviewed. Students will examine or identify the behaviors associated with bullies, victims, and bystanders. They will also learn about the characteristics of an upstander and explore strategies to empower themselves and others. Additionally, the topic of cyberbullying will be introduced, along with safe methods for reporting conflicts.



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Self Regulation: Students will review how to identify emotions, with an emphasis on recognizing the intensity of their feelings and evaluating the size of problems (e.g., "How Big Is My Problem?"). They will also be guided to recognize their personal strengths and areas for growth. Additionally, students will be taught the steps involved in the problem-solving process, and introduced to various stress management techniques.

Possible Large Group Activities - Grade 2

Respectful Behaviors: Students will review the use of "I-messages" as a technique for maintaining respectful communication. Additional conflict resolution strategies may be introduced. The focus will be on taking responsibility for one's own actions and fostering a respectful school community.

Conflict Resolution: Students will review various forms of bullying and learn safe methods for reporting conflicts. Emphasis will be placed on social problem-solving skills, such as dealing with exclusion, promoting inclusion, and navigating social media situations. Students will also practice using "I-messages" as a respectful communication technique. Additional conflict resolution strategies may be introduced and explained.

Anti Bullying & Upstander: The definition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) will be reviewed. Students will examine or identify the behaviors associated with bullies, victims, and bystanders. They will also learn about the characteristics of an upstander and explore strategies to empower themselves and others. Additionally, the topic of cyberbullying will be introduced, along with safe methods for reporting conflicts.

Friendship: Students will review the techniques for managing their emotions. The focus will be on identifying behaviors that help attract friends as well as those that may lead to the loss of friendships.

Cooperative Learning: Students will review the importance of teamwork. Emphasis will be placed on expressing themselves verbally when feeling frustrated with others. Additionally, other concepts - such as turn-taking, distinguishing between tattling and telling, sharing, and problem-solving strategies may be taught.

Respecting Differences: Students will explore the idea that, although we each have unique differences, we share many similarities. The focus will be on understanding cultural diversity and accepting others whose interests and abilities may differ from our own.

Self Regulation: Students will review how to identify emotions, with an emphasis on recognizing the intensity of their feelings and evaluating the size of problems (e.g., "How Big Is My Problem?"). They will also be guided to recognize their personal strengths and areas for growth. Additionally, students



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will be taught the steps involved in the problem-solving process, and introduced to various stress management techniques.

Possible Large Group Activities - Grade 3

Respectful Behaviors: Students will review the use of “I-messages” as a technique for maintaining respectful communication. Additional conflict resolution strategies may be introduced. The focus will be on taking responsibility for one’s own actions and fostering a respectful school community.

Expected vs Unexpected Behaviors: Students will be provided with visual supports that clearly demonstrate expectations for the classroom, lunch, and recess. These supports can focus on common expectations such as raising one’s hand, whole body listening, remaining seated, and using school-appropriate language.

Conflict Resolution: Students will review various forms of bullying and learn safe methods for reporting conflicts. Emphasis will be placed on social problem-solving skills, such as dealing with exclusion, promoting inclusion, and navigating social media situations. Students will also practice using “I-messages” as a respectful communication technique. Additional conflict resolution strategies may be introduced and explained.

Anti Bullying & Upstander: The definition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) will be reviewed. Students will examine or identify the behaviors associated with bullies, victims, and bystanders. They will also learn about the characteristics of an upstander and explore strategies to empower themselves and others. Additionally, the topic of cyberbullying will be introduced, along with safe methods for reporting conflicts.

Friendship: Students will review the techniques for managing their emotions. The focus will be on identifying behaviors that help attract friends as well as those that may lead to the loss of friendships.

Cooperative Learning: Students will review the importance of teamwork. Emphasis will be placed on expressing themselves verbally when feeling frustrated with others. Additionally, other concepts - such as turn-taking, distinguishing between tattling and telling, sharing, and problem-solving strategies may be taught.

Respecting Differences: Students will explore the idea that, although we each have unique differences, we share many similarities. The focus will be on understanding cultural diversity and accepting others whose interests and abilities may differ from our own.

Self Regulation: Students will review how to identify emotions, with an emphasis on recognizing the intensity of their feelings and evaluating the size of problems (e.g., “How Big Is My Problem?”). They



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will also be guided to recognize their personal strengths and areas for growth. Additionally, students will be taught the steps involved in the problem-solving process, and introduced to various stress management techniques.

Possible Large Group Activities - Grade 4

Respectful Behaviors: Students will review the use of “I-messages” as a technique for maintaining respectful communication. Additional conflict resolution strategies may be introduced. The focus will be on taking responsibility for one’s own actions and fostering a respectful school community.

Expected vs Unexpected Behaviors: Students will be provided with visual supports that clearly demonstrate expectations for the classroom, lunch, and recess. These supports can focus on common expectations such as raising one’s hand, whole body listening, remaining seated, and using school-appropriate language.

Conflict Resolution: Students will review various forms of bullying and learn safe methods for reporting conflicts. Emphasis will be placed on social problem-solving skills, such as dealing with exclusion, promoting inclusion, and navigating social media situations. Students will also practice using “I-messages” as a respectful communication technique. Additional conflict resolution strategies may be introduced and explained.

Cooperative Learning: Students will review the importance of teamwork. Emphasis will be placed on expressing themselves verbally when feeling frustrated with others. Additionally, other concepts - such as turn-taking, distinguishing between tattling and telling, sharing, and problem-solving strategies may be taught.

Respecting Differences: Students will explore the idea that, although we each have unique differences, we share many similarities. The focus will be on understanding cultural diversity and accepting others whose interests and abilities may differ from our own.

Careers: Students may investigate how school is directly related to future career choices.

Anti Bullying & Upstander: The definition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) will be reviewed. Students will examine or identify the behaviors associated with bullies, victims, and bystanders. They will also learn about the characteristics of an upstander and explore strategies to empower themselves and others. Additionally, the topic of cyberbullying will be introduced, along with safe methods for reporting conflicts.

Self Regulation: Students will review how to identify emotions, with an emphasis on recognizing the intensity of their feelings and evaluating the size of problems (e.g., “How Big Is My Problem?”). They



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will also be guided to recognize their personal strengths and areas for growth. Additionally, students will be taught the steps involved in the problem-solving process, and introduced to various stress management techniques.

Possible Large Group Activities - Grade 5

Respectful Behaviors: Students may discuss the meaning of self-respect and respect for others. Focus may be on empathy, respectful dialogue and reacting appropriately in conflict.

Expected vs Unexpected Behaviors: Students will be provided with visual supports that clearly demonstrate expectations for the classroom, lunch, and recess. These supports can focus on common expectations such as raising one's hand, whole body listening, remaining seated, and using school-appropriate language.

Conflict Resolution: Students will review various forms of bullying and learn safe methods for reporting conflicts. Emphasis will be placed on social problem-solving skills, such as dealing with exclusion, promoting inclusion, and navigating social media situations. Students will also practice using "I-messages" as a respectful communication technique. Additional conflict resolution strategies may be introduced and explained.

Anti Bullying & Upstander: The definition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) will be reviewed. Students will examine or identify the behaviors associated with bullies, victims, and bystanders. They will also learn about the characteristics of an upstander and explore strategies to empower themselves and others. Additionally, the topic of cyberbullying will be introduced, along with safe methods for reporting conflicts.

Cooperative Learning: Students will review the importance of teamwork. Emphasis will be placed on expressing themselves verbally when feeling frustrated with others. Additionally, other concepts - such as turn-taking, distinguishing between tattling and telling, sharing, and problem-solving strategies may be taught.

Respecting Differences: Students will explore the idea that, although we each have unique differences, we share many similarities. The focus will be on understanding cultural diversity and accepting others whose interests and abilities may differ from our own.

Careers: Students may investigate how school is directly related to future career choices.

Self Regulation: Students will review how to identify emotions, with an emphasis on recognizing the intensity of their feelings and evaluating the size of problems (e.g., "How Big Is My Problem?"). They will also be guided to recognize their personal strengths and areas for growth. Additionally, students



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will be taught the steps involved in the problem-solving process, and introduced to various stress management techniques.

Possible Small Group Topics Grades 6 - 8

Small groups are created at the middle school level each year based on need. Some examples of groups that would be run during the school year are:

Stress Less: This group helps students better understand their stressors and anxieties. It focuses on developing strategies and coping skills to effectively navigate stressful and anxious situations.

Friendship/Lunch Bunch: This group is designed for students who may be struggling to connect with their peers. It offers an informal environment where students can build relationships with one another. The group is especially helpful during transitional years, such as moving from 5th to 6th grade and from 6th to 7th grade.

Social Skills: This group is designed for students who may struggle with social skills. It focuses on helping them develop these skills and learn how to navigate various social situations effectively.

Executive Functioning: This group is for students identified as needing support with executive functioning tasks, such as organization, planning, task initiation, time management, and more.

Possible Large Group Activities Grades 6 - 8

Building Good Character: Students will understand the importance of having good character and explore ways to develop it within themselves. They will also review concepts such as self-awareness and taking responsibility.

Acceptance: Students will learn what it means to be accepting of others and why inclusivity is important. They will examine how acceptance relates to Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) by breaking down the HIB definition and discussing how comments about others' differences can fall under HIB.

Responsible Decision Making: Students will identify the steps involved in making responsible decisions and discuss how personal values influence these choices. They will also explore strategies for handling difficult peer pressure situations.

Growth Mindset: Students will distinguish between a growth mindset and a fixed mindset. They will discuss strategies for developing a growth mindset and learn how to shift from a fixed to a growth mindset.



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HIB/Conflict Resolution: Students will review the Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) law, including its criteria and defining characteristics. They will learn about different types of bullying and safe methods for reporting HIB incidents and resolving conflicts.

Substance Use: Students will learn about the risks and consequences of substance use, including vaping, tobacco, and marijuana. The lesson will provide factual information about these substances and their effects on the developing brain and body. Students will discuss peer pressure, media influence, and practice refusal skills using real-life scenarios.

S.M.A.R.T Goals: Students will learn that SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound objectives designed to make goal-setting more effective. They will learn each part of the SMART framework and apply it to their own goals, learning how to refine and structure them using SMART criteria.

Suggested Resources

Websites

- Howard B. Wigglebottom <https://wedolisten.org/books-and-lessons/book/Howard+B.+Wigglebottom+Learns+to+Listen>
- Secondstep.org <https://www.secondstep.org/>
- Daniel Tiger's Life Little Lessons <https://pbskids.org/learn/lifes-little-lessons/>
- Social Thinking Series <https://www.socialthinking.com/>
- The Zones of Regulation <http://www.zonesofregulation.com/index.html>
- <https://www.nurturedheartinstitute.com/>
- <https://student.centervention.com/>

Presentations

- [Zones of Regulation](#)
- [Counselor Developed Lessons and Resources](#)
- [Counselors Faculty Meetings SEL](#)
- [Nurtured Heart Approach District Google Drive Folder](#)
- [Perspective Taking](#)

Other Possible Roles

- Anti-Bullying Specialist (ABS)
- School Safety Committee Chair
- RTI Social and Emotional Interventionist



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- Problem Solving Committee Member
- Character Education
- Crisis Team Member
- Community Resources (e.g., food, shelter, holiday gifts)
- Homeless Liaison
- Standardized Testing Assistance
- 504 coordinator (PB and MEMS)
- Nurtured Heart Champion Team