

Taunton Forge SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM



October 2, 2009

Dear Parents,

As we wrap up the first month of school, I am hoping that it has been a smooth transition for each of your children thus far and a level of being comfortable is setting in. It has been my pleasure to meet so many of you. Please come and introduce yourself as you come into the building if we have not yet met. Welcome to our new 14 students and their families at Taunton Forge since the beginning of September. We have a New Student program and those students are reporting that everyone here is nice and they are making friends.

Our school counseling program has been busy and includes several components available for your children. The counseling classroom program is an ongoing teaching program from kindergarten through fifth grade. Kindergarten through fourth grade classes meet for six to eight lessons and include topics such as teasing, bullying, and respect for others while incorporating communication, social skills and decision making. An orientation to Haines School is part of the fifth grade program and includes a mini-workshop, "How to Be a Better Student."

After the first marking period, fourth and fifth grade students are eligible to participate in a group for improving their grades or simply to make their life easier as a student to achieve success. S.W.E.A.T. (Students Working, Encouraging, and Trying) TEAMS are from student referrals. We will also have an advanced SWEAT TEAM for anyone who participated last year. There were 5 TEAMS last year.

Students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 are encouraged to request peer mediation (utilizing trained grade 5 students) for any concerns or conflict such as harassment, teasing, name calling, misunderstandings, fights, misuse of personal property, etc. An important message we want to convey to all children and one that you can reinforce is that: "Our school is a place where we can talk over our differences. We don't have to fight to get justice." Students from Grades K, 1, and 2 are invited to also talk over any differences with myself. The whole process reflects important life skills as part of a problem solving model that empowers students to solve their own problems through improved communication and understanding of differences.

Another facet of our developmental counseling program is that I meet with students individually or in groups to help them cope more easily with their school environment or to deal with concerns that might be hindering progress in school. I will be happy to discuss with you any concern you may have about your child. You may reach me at (609) 654-67323, select menu option 4.

When groups are formed for a particular topic, it is not only for those who have trouble dealing with particular changes in their lives or feelings associated with changes, but for anyone who has experienced such changes. The developmental approach to school counseling considers prevention to be more effective than to be reactive in a crisis situation.

Children are grouped by age, usually in primary and intermediate sections as needs and appropriate activities differ. Various groups will run for about six weeks and will be in response to both parent and teacher referrals. Small groups occur throughout the year, with the majority of the groups running during the third marking period.

If you have a child that might benefit from being part of a small group, please fill out and return the attached form. Depending on the needs noted, appropriate groups will be formed and then you will be notified of your child's participation.

Kathy Brown, School Counselor