



Riverside School  
Princeton, NJ

Fall 2012  
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## Riverside School Counseling Newsletter

### What's New?

Welcome back to Riverside for another wonderful year! We have many amazing things planned for the month ahead. Here's just a few of them:

This year, our popular "lunch bunch" sessions have started earlier and will run more frequently throughout the year.

"Lunch Bunch" is one of my favorite activities, because it provides a unique way to interact with students. The kids enjoy it because they are playing games, talking and having fun together. I love it because they are interacting with new and different peers while working indirectly on key social skills.

Students signed up for "lunch bunch" in class during the week of September 10, and many of them have already been to "lunch bunch." Ask your child if they've signed up!

Also, I will be running a friendship/social skills group in each grade K-5 this year. I hope to start the first group - for fourth graders - during the week of October 1<sup>st</sup>. Be on the lookout for permission slips soon! Students cannot participate without a permission slip.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about your child's academic, social or emotional progress at Riverside, please don't hesitate to reach out. Additionally, if you feel your child would benefit from one-on-one support or small group work on social skills, attention, listening skills, organization, stress, or any other topic, please contact me.

Let's have a great year!!

Sincerely,

Ben Samara  
Riverside School Counselor

### Kindergarten & 1<sup>st</sup> Grade

If you are a parent of a student in grades K and 1, you may have heard your children talk about having "Health" with Mr. Samara. Since the 2010-2011 school year, I have facilitated a weekly class in both grades. I share this time with our wonderful school nurses, Sarah Goen-Chen and Nancy Silverberg. The Kindergarten class meets every Monday morning, while the first grade class meets each Friday afternoon.

We split the time in class evenly. For a few weeks, the nurse will teach about health related topics such as nutrition, dental health or exercise. Then I will teach about mental health or character education topics such as friendship, self-esteem or responsibility. We often co-teach lessons if the topic warrants.

These weekly classes provide me with an amazing opportunity to reach our younger students with a much greater frequency than is normal for a school counselor. I feel that reaching students early is one of the keys to a successful character education program on the elementary level. The hope is that this exposure will provide them with a solid base of character education moving forward to second grade and beyond.

You will occasionally see your children bring home worksheets and coloring pages from our class. Ask them about the topic and what they did during our time together. These interactions will help reinforce the important lessons they've learned that day.



## Group Topics

As I stated on the previous page, I will be running friendship/social skills groups in grades K-5 this year. The tentative schedule is: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade (Oct-Nov), 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grades (Nov-Jan), 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade (Jan-March), K and 1<sup>st</sup> (April). Some of the topics these groups have covered in the past:

- Active Listening/Listening Skills
- Communication Skills
- Assertive/Passive/Aggressive Communication
- Role Plays
- Pair and Share Activities
- Conflict Resolution
- Boundaries/Personal Space
- Right Ways to Relieve Stress
- Choices/Decision-Making
- Friendship Jeopardy

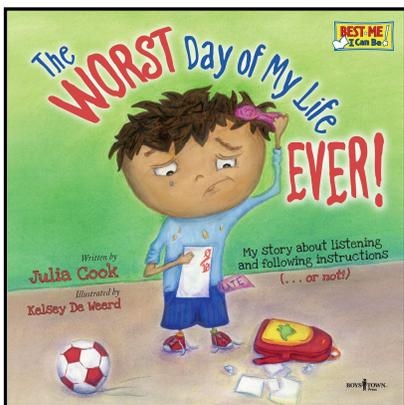
## Book of the Month

### ***The Worst Day of My Life EVER!*** **by Julia Cook**

RJ has had a rough day. He wakes up with gum stuck in his hair, misses recess because he gets caught running in the hall, earns a zero on his math homework, kicks the ball into his own team's soccer goal, and messes up his mom's kitchen with his overflowing pancake batter.

With Mom's help, RJ learns that his problems happen because he doesn't listen and follow instructions from her, his school principal, teachers, or even his friends.

Readers learn the rhyming steps to the skills of listening and following instructions that can turn bad days into great ones! When RJ learns to use these skills the right way, he has the best day of his life.



## Helpful Websites

### **Lumosity Brain Games**

<http://www.lumosity.com/brain-games>  
The brain games on the Lumosity website are great for children and adults alike. These games enhance memory, attention and creativity. Games like "Speed Match," "Lost in Migration," and "The Memory Game" are challenging but fun and reinforce crucial skills.

### **Scholastic**

<http://www.scholastic.com>  
Not just books and magazines, the Scholastic website offers tons of content to help educate students, teachers and parents.

*Found a great website you'd like Mr. Samara to know about? Please e-mail me at:*  
**[ben\\_samara@princetonk12.org](mailto:ben_samara@princetonk12.org)**

## Important Dates

### **September 20**

Back to School Night

### **October 15-19**

School Violence Awareness Week

### **November 8-9**

NJEA Convention Break

### **November 13-14 & 27-28**

Riverside Parent Conferences

## About Mr. Samara

Ben Samara is Riverside's School Counselor. He is available to answer any question you may have about your child's academic, emotional or social progress.

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