



Riverside School
Princeton, NJ

February/March 2012
Volume 3, Issue 3

Riverside School Counseling Newsletter

What's New?

As we pass our 100th school day with great anticipation for the spring, I'd like to take a moment to look back and tell you about some of the interesting things we've been doing at Riverside over the past few months.

In January, I was very excited to have the opportunity to do a two week unit on conflict resolution for grades 3-5. The students learned and practiced the six steps to solving conflicts with friends.

In February, we started a round of "lunch bunch," an optional, one-off lunch group designed for the kids to have fun and work indirectly on key social skills while

mingling with classmates they might not otherwise seek out.

Prior to testing season, I will also be running a "friendship" group in third grade. Students in this group will work on valuable skills in the areas of problem solving, decision making, handling difficult situations, and getting along with others. Permission slips were sent home for this group on Feb. 16. Please contact me if you'd like more information on the group.

Sincerely,
Ben Samara, Riverside School Counselor

Building Self-Esteem

An excerpt from an article from KidsHealth.org

Watch what you say. Kids are very sensitive to parents' words. Remember to praise your child not only for a job well done, but also for effort. But be truthful. For example, if your child doesn't make the soccer team, avoid saying something like, "Well, next time you'll work harder and make it." Instead, try "Well, you didn't make the team, but I'm really proud of the effort you put into it." Reward effort and completion instead of outcome.

Be a positive role model. If you're excessively harsh on yourself, pessimistic, or unrealistic about your abilities and limitations, your child may eventually mirror you. Nurture your own self-esteem, and your child will have a great role model.

Identify and redirect your child's inaccurate beliefs. It's important for parents to identify kids' irrational beliefs about themselves, whether they're about perfection, attractiveness, ability, or anything else. Helping kids set more accurate standards and be more realistic in evaluating themselves will help them have a healthy self-concept. Inaccurate perceptions of self can take root and become reality to kids. For example, a child who does very well in school but struggles with math may say, "I can't do math. I'm a bad student." Not only is this a false generalization, it's also a belief that will set the child up for failure. Encourage kids to see a situation in its true light. A helpful response might be: "You are a good student. You do great in school. Math is just a subject that you need to spend more time on. We'll work on it together."

Be spontaneous and affectionate. Your love will go a long way to boost your child's self-esteem. Give hugs and tell kids you're proud of them. Pop a note in your child's lunchbox that reads, "I think you're terrific!" Give praise frequently and honestly, without overdoing it. Kids can tell whether something comes from the heart.

Give positive, accurate feedback. Comments like "You always work yourself up into such a frenzy!" will make kids feel like they have no control over their outbursts. A better statement is, "You were really mad at your brother. But I appreciate that you didn't yell at him or hit him." This acknowledges a child's feelings, rewards the choice made, and encourages the child to make the right choice again next time.

Create a safe, loving home environment. Kids who don't feel safe or are abused at home will suffer immensely from low self-esteem. A child who is exposed to parents who fight and argue repeatedly may become depressed and withdrawn. Also watch for signs of abuse by others, problems in school, trouble with peers, and other factors that may affect kids' self-esteem. Deal with these issues sensitively but swiftly. And always remember to respect your kids.

Help kids become involved in constructive experiences. Activities that encourage cooperation rather than competition are especially helpful in fostering self-esteem. For example, mentoring programs in which an older child helps a younger one learn to read can do wonders for both kids.

Conflict Resolution

This January, I visited each classroom in grades 3-5 to talk about conflict resolution. We discussed the difference between conflict and bullying and students did group work to reinforce the topics. Below are the six steps we learned to solve conflicts. They have been posted in each classroom and also on the bulletin board outside the Counselor's office:

- Cool Off
- "I" Message
- Say back
- Take Responsibility
- Brainstorm Solutions
- Forgive or Thank

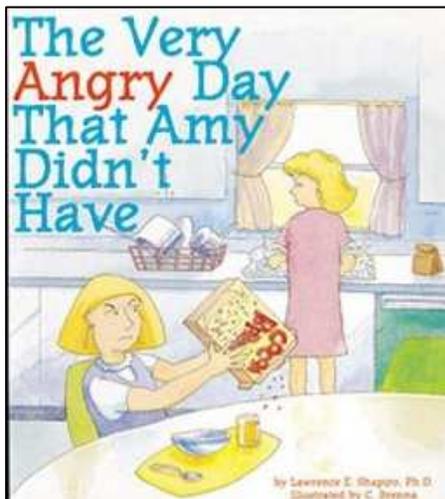
Book of the Month

The Very Angry Day That Amy Didn't Have

by Lawrence E. Shapiro

Amy and Margaret are two very similar girls who are in the same school, ride the same bus, and are in the same class. However, they have one very big difference: their reactions to difficult or frustrating situations.

This is a great book that shows children the difference between good and bad responses to frustration. There are many positive messages to reinforce here, such as staying positive and controlling your emotions.



Helpful Websites

SchoolFamily.com

<http://www.schoolfamily.com>

A website for parents covering a wide range of topics, including academics, home issues, dealing with teachers, bullying and much more.

Stress Free Kids

<http://www.stressfreekids.com>

Lori Lite, founder of Stress Free Kids, advertises many of her books and videos on this website. Surprisingly, there is a wealth of free and very useful information and articles on how to help children manage stress in their lives.

Family Education

<http://www.familyeducation.com>

A robust website for parents of children at any age. Family Education features tips for parents on topics such as health, entertainment, education and much more.

Important Dates

March 13-14 & 20-21

Riverside Parent Conferences

March 31-April 9

Spring Break

April 16-19

Iowa Testing (Grade 2)

April 30-May 11

NJASK Testing (Grades 3-5)

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.

Phone: (609) 806 - 4200 x6781

E-Mail: ben_samara@monet.prs.k12.nj.us

Riverside Room #: 24