



Riverside School  
Princeton, NJ

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## Riverside School Counseling Newsletter

### What's New?

Can you believe it's almost the middle of the school year? It's amazing that so much time has flown by so fast. I hope everyone had a safe, happy, and restful Thanksgiving holiday.

School Violence Awareness Week in October was a great success, with many of our students participating in theme days designed to raise awareness for bullying-prevention, tolerance, and conflict resolution. Students were also treated to many great presentations and classroom lessons on these topics. Thank you to students, staff and parents for making this week such a success.

Now it's time to look forward to the many wonderful things we have in store for the remainder of the year!

I have many different groups already underway at Riverside, and I hope to start several new groups in the near future. Currently, I am facilitating groups on several different grade levels, covering topics such as study skills, stress and anxiety, friendship and social skills.

I run these groups based on student needs, as expressed by teachers and/or parents. Therefore, the topics and the number of groups vary from year to year. If you feel your child would benefit from a particular group or have a suggestion for a group topic, please let me know.

Finally, as testing season begins to approach, please let me know if you feel your child could use some additional help with stress, study skills or other related areas.

Wishing the entire Riverside family a safe holiday season and a happy New Year!

Sincerely,  
Ben Samara  
Riverside School Counselor

### "Come Join In" by Naomi Drew

***A few weeks ago I came across this poem by author Naomi Drew at the end of her book "No Kidding About Bullying." I was moved by the message it communicates to our children. This poem is now posted prominently in my office and I'm happy to share it with you here as well:***

Come join in, come join in,  
whatever your background or color of skin.  
You are of value, for all that you are—  
your special uniqueness will carry you far.

It's not about the way you look,  
your size, or weight, or height.  
What matters most is what's within,  
the things that aren't in sight.

It's not about the clothes you wear  
or place that you may live.  
Your character defines you—  
and the kindness that you give.

This world that we inhabit  
could never be the same  
without your excellent qualities,  
your presence, and your name.

Take these words with you every day,  
and treasure your own worth—  
this planet changed in wondrous ways  
the moment of your birth.

You are part of everything --  
to life's great promise you belong.  
Rejoice in who you truly are,  
stand up, join in,  
and sing your song.

Naomi Drew



## What is a 504 Plan?

As Riverside's school counselor, I am the coordinator of all 504 plans. These plans provide formalized accommodations, both in the classroom and during standardized testing, to students who have a disability or condition that impacts their learning. **504 plans are not the same as an IEP or classification and are not part of the Child Study Team process.**

Often, a student is tested with the Child Study Team for classification but does not qualify. If they have a disability or condition that significantly impacts their learning, they may be eligible for a 504 plan.

If you would like more information on the 504 process, please don't hesitate to contact me.

## Books of the Month

### **The Alphabet Kids**

"The Alphabet Kids series follows the fun adventures of a group of six diverse children (Allegra, Elena, Isaac, Oni, Umar, and Yang) who learn about their multicultural backgrounds. Their stories help children to love who they are and realize that people who are different can still be good friends."

<http://www.alphabetkids.com/>



## Helpful Websites

### **Fun Brain**

<http://www.funbrain.com>

One of the best websites around for fun, educational children's games. Includes a wide range of games, including math, science and literature games

### **Family Education**

<http://www.familyeducation.com>

A robust site with tips for parents on topics such as school, home life, entertainment and more.

### **Kids-In-Mind**

<http://www.kidsinmind.com>

A movie review website specifically designed to help parents select appropriate movies for their children. The site rates movies based on the amount of adult content, profanity, and violence in each film. The reviews also include discussion questions to pose to young viewers after watching a film.

## Important Dates

### **December 24-January 3**

Winter Recess

### **February 7 - 11**

National School Counseling Week!

### **March 15-16 & 22-23**

Riverside Parent Conferences

### **April 15 -April 25**

Spring Recess

## 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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