

# TRMS SCHOOL COUNSELING NEWSLETTER

TRIMESTER 2

SCHOOL YEAR 2018-2019

## *What is Self-Advocacy?*

As our society gets busier and the demands placed on students more complex, the importance of self-advocacy skill development has come even more to the forefront. "Self-advocacy" is the ability to let other people know what you need in a respectful and productive way. At school, this includes a student taking additional responsibility for him/herself every year of Middle School as well as owning learning styles and organizational strategies. As educators, school staff recognize that everyone learns differently. Students can self-advocate in order to help their teachers better support them and their education. Teachers aren't

mind readers! But they always want to help!

"Self-advocacy" at the Middle School level can look like a student asking questions to clarify aca-



demic content or expectations. It can include a student asking for additional help with organization. It can be a student sharing with a teacher that she does better with opportunities to move around, take breaks, sit in a particular place in

the classroom, or using visual cues. Self-advocacy is goal-driven, which means it is not just complaining. In fact, sometimes a student will self-advocate and be told "no," because the Middle School struggle can also be productive for overall skill development.

What keeps students from self-advocating? Unfortunately, this is a skill that, just like reading and math, needs experience and practice to develop. Students may be reluctant to self-advocate because it can seem intimidating, embarrassing, risky, and unpredictable. Look below for ways to help your student learn this valuable life skill.

## *How can I help my student learn to self-advocate?*

Self-advocacy is a skill that is vital to everyday life. Whether it is talking to your boss about a concern or calling to schedule a doctor's appointment, all adults need to be able to share their thoughts and needs with others. This takes practice! How can parents/guardians encourage self-advocacy development for their students?

**\*Encourage your student to share his/her learning style with others:** As parents, we speak up for the needs of our students. During Middle and High School, it becomes important for students to

recognize what "works" for them and take more responsibility sharing that with others.

**\*Encourage your student to volunteer:** "Real world" situations allow students to experience more independence while at the same time testing out skills in a structured setting.

**\*Involve your student in decision-making conversations:** Middle School students increasingly want to be "part of the action" rather than having adults talking about/around them. Give your student a structured, supportive oppor-

tunity to share his/her thoughts and opinions. This encourages goal-setting and more investment in the process, boosting the odds your student will self-advocate when needed.

**\*Help your student think of the future:** For most Middle School students, "the future" can mean an hour or a day from now! Fear of the unexpected can hold students back from self-advocating. Parents can help them consider possible options/solutions in advance that will make them feel more comfortable in the moment.

### School Counseling Staff

Tracy Antczak (Registrar/  
Administrative Assistant)  
x4920

Zachary Champion (6th)  
x4923

Patricia Fanning (7th)  
x4925

Amanda Huyler (8th)  
x4924

Kelley Binette (Student  
Asst Counselor) x4926

Leslie Pasquini (School  
Adjustment Counselor)  
x4927

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## *6th Grade: New Expectations*

Happy winter everyone! As the temperature drops outside, the academic expectations in 6th grade rise. The first few months of 6th grade are all about getting our students adjusted to their new school and getting to know their new classmates from the different towns. Teachers spend time

establishing their classroom routines and slowly increase the workload. From the start of the second trimester to the end of the year, academics are in full swing.

We encourage all parents/guardians to make sure they have a parent portal setup on PowerSchool. This will

allow you to keep a close eye on your student's grades and assignments. If you have any questions on how to setup a parent portal account please contact the School Counseling Office.

We also encourage all parents/guardians to sit down with their student each night

after school and review Google Classroom together. All students know how to access Google Classroom on their Chromebooks. Teachers will post the daily homework assignments online, so if your student says he or she does not have any homework or forgot their homework at school, you can log in and verify or print assignments.



## *7th Grade: Students as Learners*

Well, we're almost half-way through 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and half way through middle school! You can see the transition students are making from children to young adults. Classroom conversations are more lively and varied

and students are starting to take ownership of their education. Students are also being challenged in their classes more than ever before. You may see your student struggle with schoolwork for the first time, and your stu-

dent may start to doubt their ability to be successful. You can help your student by reminding them of the many things they've learned in the past: how to walk, how to talk, how to read, how to ride a bike to name a

few! We are all born with the ability to learn. Convey your confidence in your student's ability to persevere and then help develop a plan of action.

## *8th Grade: Moving Toward High School*

Our 8th grade students are inching closer to being freshmen! Earlier this trimester they received a lesson on Naviance, the online college and career readiness program used by the High School, by Mrs. Huyler. Students are now officially starting

their transition with the TRHS course selection process! The High School Counselors came down on January 15th to present topics including how to sign up for courses, how credits work, and what to expect. Students will be receiving teacher

recommendations for their Core classes as well as Foreign Language and Special Education at the end of January. Course selection sheets will be going home for parents to look over and sign the first weekend in February. Please send these sheets

back to school as soon as possible so that Mrs. Huyler can get them to High School staff. 8th graders will be receiving their last lesson in Naviance in March. This time of year is busy so please reach out to Mrs. Huyler with any questions!

## NAEP Testing for 8th Graders February 21st

Timberlane Regional Middle School will participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) on Thursday, February 21st. NAEP is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what students know and can do in various subjects. NAEP is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics, within the U.S. Department of Education. NAEP is different from our state assessments because it is a common measure of achievement across the coun-

try. The results are released as The Nation's Report Card, which provides information about student achievement to educators, parents, policymakers, and the public.

The assessment takes about 120 minutes for most students, including transition time and directions.

The information collected is used **for statistical purposes only**. The district does not receive any scores or feedback.

Your child's grades will **not be affected**.

Students may be excused for any reason, are not required to complete the assessment, and may skip any question.

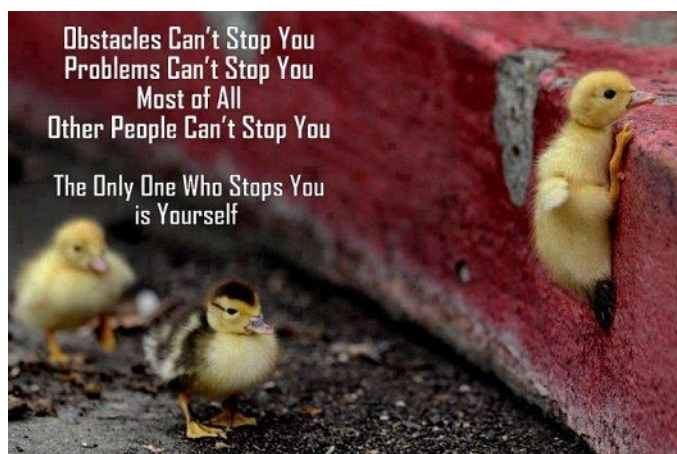
While the assessment is voluntary, NAEP depends on student participation to help policymakers improve education. However, if you do not want your child to participate, please notify Mr. Mencis, 8th Grade Assistant Principal, in writing by Friday, February 1st.

There is no need to study in preparation for NAEP, but please encourage your child to

do his or her best. A brochure that explains what participation in NAEP means for you and your child is available at

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/parents/2012469.pdf>.

We are excited that our school is participating in NAEP. We know that Timberlane Regional Middle School's students will show what our nation's students know and can do.



## Tips for Keeping Your Middle School Student Organized:

What can parents/guardians do at home to help students succeed?

**Making sense of tasks:** Use a white board calendar to organize work according to due date; use a daily calendar to plan when to do homework—don't forget to include after school activities (sports, planned social/family activities etc.

**Make a list:** Check off tasks/

work that need to be accomplished each day. Break down long term projects into smaller, manageable chunks.

**Use reminders:** Make technology work for you. Have your student set reminders in their phone about upcoming due dates and use the timer to help your student learn how much time is being spent on each task

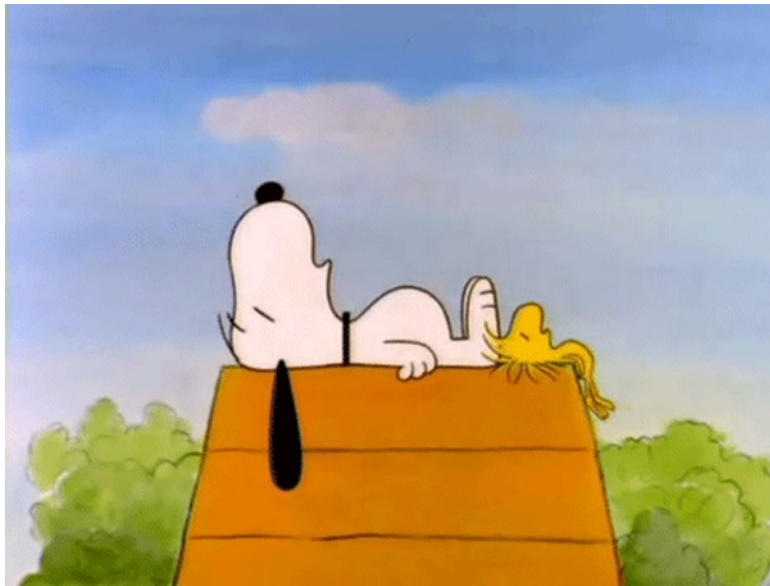
**Keep it simple:** Designate

one space for your student to leave their school items for the next day and stick to it. Create a central location for school supplies that your child uses often such as pens, pencils, markers, paper and folders

**Keep it clean:** Have your student go through their backpack every week to remove old papers, snacks, etc. Take note of any supplies that need to be replenished like pens or pencils.







## *Your Teen and Sleep*

If you've ever struggled to wake up a teen in the morning, it will come as no surprise that the average American teenager doesn't get enough sleep. The recommended nightly amount of for teens is roughly **nine hours**, but the average amount of sleep a typical teens gets is about seven. So what happens when teens don't get enough sleep?

- \*a decrease in ability to listen and concentrate

- \* adversely affects memory, decision making and attention

- \*may exacerbate irritability and moodiness

- \*may increase instances of anxiety and depression

### **How Can You Help**

- \*maintain a regular sleep schedule

- \*avoid oversleeping on the weekends

- \*minimize caffeine and sugar before bed

- \*try to reduce the amount of activities scheduled for evenings

- \*power down screens at least an hour before bed

Parents/guardians would be amazed at the number of students staying up into

the early morning hours playing video games, texting/snapchatting friends, and watching sites like YouTube! "Sneaking" electronics is a common report to teachers and counselors. Keeping devices in adult bedrooms and maintaining a regular electronic "curfew" can help teenagers learn to manage their screen time and social media presence.

## *Social Media Contracts*

As a parent/guardian, you've established rules for your student for when (s)he's at home, school or a friend's house. In this digital age, it is also important for parents/guardians to set clear rules for when your student is online. Start

thinking now how you would like your student's digital/social media presence to look. What are your expectations as a family? Take the time to physically write down the guidelines your student must follow for all forms of digital communication.

The next page of this newsletter contains a sample contract from **verwellfamily.com** to help identify rules and behavior for both you and your student. Having a "family meeting" with contract in hand will clarify specific rules as well as conse-

quences. There are many different templates available online and the School Counselors are always here to help! Feel free to contact us with any additional questions. We all want to raise respectful, digitally responsible students.

### Sample Social Media Contract for Tweens (taken from <https://www.verywellfamily.com>)

- I understand the using social media is a privilege and not a right. I understand that my privileges may be revoked by my parent/guardian at any time for poor choices, disrespectful behavior, dropping grades, or not helping with family chores and responsibilities.
- I understand that I should never use social media to harass a schoolmate, teacher, or any other person. I will not participate in online fights, threaten others, or encourage others to behave badly.
- I understand that my parent/guardian have the right to review my online behavior and that they should have access to my password and accounts.
- I understand that I will not use inappropriate language on social media or post photos that could be embarrassing to myself, my family members, friends, or classmates.
- I understand that I should keep my parent/guardian informed if others are using social media to bully, threaten, or harass me.
- I understand that the best policy regarding social media is, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all."
- I understand that I will get my parent/guardian's permission before establishing an account with a social media site such as Snapchat, Facebook, or Instagram.
- I understand that poor choices on social media could reflect poorly on me and my family.

### Social Media Contract for Parent/Guardian (taken from <https://www.verywellfamily.com>)

- I promise to help my student identify the pros and cons of using social media.
- I promise that I will check my student's social media accounts on occasion to be sure that (s)he is staying safe and behaving appropriately on social media.
- I promise not to overreact if I see something on social media that concerns me. I will calmly discuss the matter with my student and work through the situation together.
- I promise that my student may come to me at any time to talk about a social media challenge, such as bullying, trolling, or other poor choices.
- I promise that if my student breaks our social media rules, I will enforce fair but firm consequences for the behavior.
- I promise to set a good example on how to behave on social media for my student by avoiding profanity, sarcasm, or other negative behaviors or attitudes.
- I promise to take immediate action if I determine that my student's safety is in any way in question due to social media, which may include confiscating my child's phone, contacting my child's school or local law enforcement officials if necessary.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent's Signature)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Student's Signature)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

### IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES:

February 7th: 8th Grade Course Selection Sheets Due

February 21: NAEP testing 8th Grade

February 25th—March 1st: Vacation Week (No School)

March 15th: Trimester 3 Begins

March 19th: Trimester 2 Report Cards Posted

March 28th: Professional Development Day (No School)



### *What You Need to Know About Your School Counseling Office*

We meet with students individually and in groups on a variety of topics including but not limited to: problem solving, peer interactions, social skill building, goal setting, academic counseling and support, navigating early adolescence, building resiliency skills, anxiety, and depression

Students can access their school counselor in many ways, for example:

- \*stopping by the counseling office during advisory or lunch to make an appointment
- \*emailing their counselor to request an appointment
- \*asking their teacher to go to the counseling office
- \*asking their teacher to notify the counselor that they would like to see them
- \*parent email/call request

We welcome the opportunity to support and provide consultation to parents. Parents can access their child's school counselor via email, phone and in-person appointments.



## **Timberlane Parent Advisory Forum (TPAF)**

**Tuesday, January 29<sup>th</sup>**

**6:00-8:00p.m.**

**Timberlane Middle School Library**

**44 Greenough Rd, Plaistow**

### **Vaping 101 - What Parents Need To Know**

TPAF brings to you a very informational and engaging evening presented by  
Laurie Warnock and the TRSD Administrative Team.

Is that a USB flash drive or a vape device in your child's backpack? What was originally marketed as a smoking cessation device has now become popular with teens all over the country. Cigarette smoking may no longer be a social norm, but companies have now found a way to create a whole new generation of nicotine addicted consumers. Many devices are also used to vape highly concentrated marijuana oil and wax with no detectable odor. Come out and get your questions answered, learn about the different types of devices & what to look for as well as the health implications associated with vaping and addiction.

**Laurie Warnock**  
**Northern New England Poison Control**

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### **~IMPORTANT~**

If you are unable to join us in person on January 29th, the meeting will be broadcasted via **LIVE**

**STREAM** at [livestream.com/TRSD/TPAF](https://livestream.com/TRSD/TPAF)

You may send your questions to [TPAF@timberlane.net](mailto:TPAF@timberlane.net) while watching LIVE STREAM.

Your questions will be addressed throughout the evening.

**All parents of Timberlane students are invited to attend!**

Parents may suggest future agenda topics by emailing them to [TPAF@timberlane.net](mailto:TPAF@timberlane.net)

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**TPAF Co-Chaired by:**  
**Timberlane Parent and School Board Member, Sarah Machermer**  
**District Administrators, Christi Michaud and Sandra Allaire**