

TRMS SCHOOL COUNSELING NEWSLETTER

Trimester 3
School Year 2017-2018

Resilience in the Face of Transitions

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Humans are creatures of habit — the majority of us would not enthusiastically sign up for change. Yet transitions, both planned and unplanned, are a part of everyday life. From something as big as changing schools, leaving home, unexpectedly losing a friend or having our parents divorce, to something as small as a surprise snow storm (or 3 in a row), Dunkin Donuts being out of your favorite donut, or switching between classes, adapting to change requires mental flexibility. This is the ability to mentally shift perspective when faced with a change and problem-solve to identify a new response. Mental flexibility is a skill that develops through experience and practice — which means that experiencing a range of transitions is a *good thing*.

This winter has been particularly hard on students (and staff!) who like structure and routine. Many planned and unplanned changes have required mental flexibility. When faced with transitions, here are some ways that parents can work with their students:

- **Expect Students to Feel Stress but Monitor for Anxiety**

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, although we tend to use the words interchangeably, “stress” and “anxiety” are 2 different things. Remind students that it’s natural for them to experience some stress when faced with the specific transition; however, if your student continues to report stress after the transition or worrying about future transitions, this may signal anxiety that coping skills could target.

- **Think Positively, Think Opportunity**

So you *really* wanted that donut or for that relationship to work out. You can admit that to yourself as a closed door, but if a student gets “stuck” there, mental flexibility may not develop. Help your student see a transition as an opportunity to explore, brainstorm, and try out new things outside of old habits. Although this can feel

forced to you and your student, your support with seeing the situation in a positive light may help your student shift.

- ***Hit the Ground Running!**

Because we are creatures of habit, it doesn’t take us long to develop new ones in response to a transition — even if those habits aren’t good for us. Keeping momentum to move through a transition allows us to address the stress and develop a plan. Humans really like plans too!

- **Emphasize Self-Advocacy**

Encourage your student to both ask for and accept help from adults and peers. Sometimes just talking a challenge out with another person can help us shift our perspective and consider other options. We might even come up with something we might not have tried on our own without support!

- **Have Realistic Timeframes and Expectations**

Mental flexibility does not develop overnight! Transitions are hard because we don’t have the old but we also don’t have the new — YET. While each transition is different, the skills required for mental flexibility are the same. Be patient, positive, and proactive.

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Leaders in Prevention Conference 2018



Since 1983, NH Teen Institute has offered comprehensive, dynamic, leadership training programs for middle and high school students to help them thrive in the midst of the pressure of growing up.

The weekend Leaders In Prevention (LIP) program brings together a team of eight middle school students and two advisors (Ms. Binette & Ms. O'Sullivan) for a weekend of activities and discussion with other teams from across New Hampshire. Schools identify students with leadership potential who are capable of working as part of a team and are willing to bring new skills back to their community.

This past February, Alida, Lexi, Owen, Maria, Josie, Sarah, Lindsey and Taylor came together with 7 other teams from NH to take a

look at issues such as bullying behavior, substance misuse and diversity. The students were challenged to look at others through a different lens and use the power of their voice to encourage change in their communities.

Throughout the weekend the Timberlane Team discussed ideas as to how to make our school a better place. After much discussion, they decided that they'd like to see our school courtyard improved... everything from a cleanup to new plantings. They hoped to create a relaxing space for teachers and students to use.

7th Grade Wellness Day 2018

Mindfulness (n.):
“a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.”

7th grade students participated in the first Wellness Day on March 28th. Students took a day out of Core classes to learn about Social-Emotional topics such as brain development and stress vs. anxiety, social skills, coping skills, mindful movement, and executive functioning. Students were presented topics in rotating 25-minute segments throughout the

day by a range of professional support staff including the 7th Grade School Counselor, Speech Therapist, and Occupational Therapists. At the end of the day, they were surveyed to ask about what they had learned and how they felt they could use it in their daily lives.

Middle School staff would like to expand the Wellness Day format to include all 3

grade levels starting next year. These skills are essential to “whole child” development and can help students learn to manage stress, identify and cope with anxiety, and further develop higher thinking skills such as planning, prioritizing, and considering possible short- and long-term consequences for choices.

More Leaders in Prevention!



TRMS Career Week 2018

This year's Career Week will run from May 14th through May 18th. The goal of Career Week is to spark students' curiosity about higher education options and to connect their academics and experiences in middle and high school to future education options and the world of work. Our programming will include question and answer sessions with current college students, advisory activities and questions-of-the-day on the morning announcements. Our video club interviewed several teach-



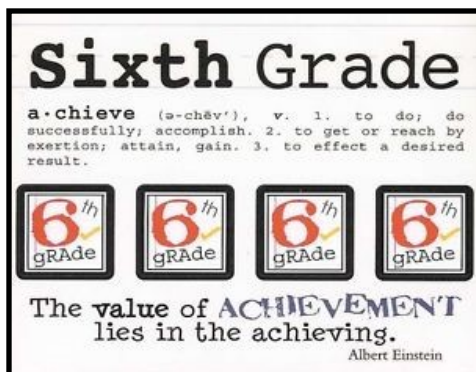
ers about the colleges they attended, their experiences in college and words of advice. This video will be shown at lunches for all grades. Staff alma maters will be displayed throughout the school and we will have a main display in the cafeteria hallway.

COLLEGE CAREERS

Take Action on Your future!



6th Grade Updates



The end of 6th grade is approaching and it doesn't seem possible that the

students who came through our doors in August are the same students we find walking the hallways today. It's been a journey!

Students have mastered many new skills since the beginning of the year from learning to use their locker to doing presentations in front of their classmates. They have learned to make new friends, work cooperatively with others, and navigate the social landscape of middle school.

Yes, there have been stressful times for all students, but this is all part of growing up and becoming a strong, confident adult. Your students are

learning how to be resilient! As the year finishes, students will be expected to develop more independence and autonomy in their schoolwork. We will all be there to help, but students will start to take responsibility for their own learning. You can support your student by:

- *keep asking about their school day

- *foster self-advocacy by encouraging your child to ask questions

- *help your child strengthen their problem solving 'IQ' encouraging them to brainstorm solutions; work with your child on how they can implement these solutions on their own, and review with them how things turned out.

7th Grade Updates

Third trimester is a busy time in 7th grade! Students will be able to experience different in-house "field trips" tying into topics discussed in Core classes. They will also be wrapping up academic units that will spiral up into 8th grade. End of year placement assessment for Math will help determine your student's math class for next year.

Opportunity Blocks will continue to rotate and offer a variety of enrich-

ment, support, and social-emotional topic areas. Students will be encouraged to take on more organizational responsibility in preparation for 8th grade. At this point, students are over halfway done with Middle School! As an almost 8th grader, it is important to continue to develop executive functioning strategies that work for your brain by using folders, binders,

agendas, and other organizational tools. Students are encouraged to advocate for help/clarification of material before and after school and during Opportunity Blocks.



New Hampshire State Assessment

This year the state of New Hampshire will be implementing new state-wide standardized testing. The Smarter Balanced Assessment has been replaced by the New Hampshire Statewide Assessment System (SAS). This new format will include ELA/Writing and Math assessments for all students in Grades 6-8 as well as a Science assessment for Grade 8. Testing will be computer-adaptive, meaning that the nature, order, and number of test questions will be influenced by how your student has answered previous questions.

This is similar to the current STAR testing.

Below are the testing windows for TRMS:

Grade 8 testing window: April 2nd – 6th (Reading, Writing, Math and Science)

Grade 7 testing window: April 9th – 13th (Reading, Writing and Math)

Grade 6 testing window: April 30th – May 4th (Reading, Writing and Math)

Please feel free to contact your student's School Counselor with any questions.



Congratulations 8th Graders! Upcoming Events



Eighth grade students' middle school careers will be wrapping up in the next few months. The middle school and the high school combine to put on a number of important transition activities for our 8th graders. This is an exciting time for our students and we are looking forward to preparing them for TRHS!

**April 3, 2018 5:30-7:30
(come when you can)**

A Special Education Information Night for any family interested in learning about Special Education Services at the High School. This event is open to ALL Timberlane School District

families, with special invitation to our upcoming 8th grade students (CLASS OF 2022).

Hosted by the community of TRHS, come to learn about high school Special Education programs and the supports that will transition students from their public school experience into the future of their design.

Dinner provided. Contact Nash Reddy, for more information: 382-6541 ext 3931

April 11, 2018

Freshmen Ambassadors
Freshmen visit 8th grade teams to talk about their first year high school experience and answer questions.

April 13, 2018 8:15-9am

Senior Panel
A panel of selected seniors present their high school academic and co-curricular experiences to the 8th

grade class. Presentation followed by a question and answer session. Eighth graders get a good look at the lives of TRHS students and the different opportunities that are available.

Early June (TBD) 6:00 – 8:00 PM

PTSA Welcome Wagon
Tours visit the high school with student leaders on an evening in June. Administrators and the PTSA will be available to answer your questions.

**End of May or Early June
Date TBA**

On-line fall sports registration and concussion testing is to be completed prior to the end of the current school year. All 8th grade parents will receive an email with directions on how to register their child to participate in fall sports at the high school. Fall Sport Tryouts begin in August prior to start of school. Please check the athletics page on the website for dates beginning in June.

Tentative Date: August 28, 2018, 6:00 – 8:30 pm

Freshmen Orientation Night
After a welcome by the Principal and Director of Guidance in the PAC, students and parents will follow their student's schedule. Each class will meet for 10 minutes for a brief introduction by the teacher regarding course syllabus and class expectations.

Early September Freshman Adventure Team Building Field Trips

Students, teachers, and administrators have the opportunity to participate in a unique team bonding experience at Adventurelore. Using adventure activities, adventure therapy and experiential learning, the program is designed to demonstrate a positive model that participants can apply to their school community life and beyond. The bonding that comes out of this experience carries over into the classrooms and daily lessons.

Why Attendance Matters: Preparing for High School

This winter it has felt difficult to get into the "groove" of school. With planned vacations, Snow Days, Blizzard Bag Days, and changes in schedule due to standardized testing, regular school attendance is more important than ever! In particular, due to the block schedule format, a missed day of a Core class is equivalent to what might have previously been covered in 2 classes.

Additionally, students who are out of school not only miss out on the direct instruction of the concepts but the group work and collaborative learning that happens in the classroom. Being absent or tardy to school can make it difficult for a student to get into a routine and develop executive functioning habits such as following a consistent school schedule, remembering all materials for class, and feeling like an active member

of the classroom. As adults, even one day out of work can make us feel "out of the loop"!

By the time that students are entering High School, attendance also becomes a matter of credits toward graduation. The 2017-2018 TRHS Student Handbook states:

"Students may not exceed five (5) absences for a semester-long course or ten (10) absences for a year-long course. If a student is absent over the

limit (5 & 10) then they will have to work with their administrator to buy back class time or they will not receive course credit even if they earned a passing grade." (page 20).

We want to teach our students the lifelong importance of being on time, completing work to meet deadlines, and staying organized. Regular attendance at the Middle School level goes a long way toward solidifying these skills for High School and beyond.



Keeping End of Year Momentum

The end of a school year can be so exciting with field trips, special events, and wrapping up academic units But it can also be hard for students to keep the momentum they have established throughout the school year. With summer so in sight, it is normal for students' attention to begin to flag and their drive to complete work and do well on assessments weaken. Here are some tips to help assist our students with keeping the "eye on the prize":

1) Identify What is

Most Important

With so many things going on, organization is key! Making lists or calendars of what needs to be prioritized will help students know where their energy should go.

2) Take a Look Back

Toward the end of a school year, students can look back to identify strategies that have or have not worked for them, as well as where they are in terms of personal and family goals. This can help them direct their energy to proven

strategies.

3) Be Realistic

The end of a school year is busy! This might not be the time to add in new activities. Adults can help students learn to time manage in order to not feel overwhelmed and shut

down.

4) Self-Advocate

Sometimes we don't realize something is too much until it'stoo much. Or we knew we didn't understand a concept but waited too long to admit it and now it's testing time. Asking for and accepting help from trusted adults can

help students continue to feel successful and motivated to move forward into the home stretch.

