

Pompton Lakes School District Lenox and Lincoln School Elementary Counseling Program



January 2, 2019

Presented By: Kate Vivino

Lenox and Lincoln School Counselor

General Overview

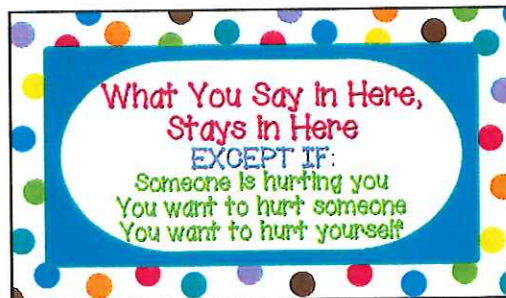
After ten years without an on-site school counselor, the Elementary Counseling Program was put back into place during the 2016-2017 school year. Goals of this program include, but are not limited to: providing a safe place for students to discuss any difficulties they are experiencing, assist staff and administration with any and all student/family related crises, provide community resources to families in need, bring educational and fun programs to the elementary schools to promote socio-emotional health, and to improve and unite the overall school climate. As one counselor being shared between two elementary schools, the position requires that the elementary counselor be located at each school for 2.5 days a week. During a time of crisis, the counselor will travel to whichever school is currently in need. During this current school year, our Elementary Counselor has a total caseload of over 650 students.

Elementary Counseling Program

The Elementary Counseling Program consists many different components. The areas that follow are a few highlighted pieces of the program to help you better understand the day to day tasks of an Elementary Counselor.

Individual Counseling

The Elementary Counselor will see students based on teacher request, parent request, or student request. Parents and teachers are welcome to reach out at any point in time to discuss any thoughts or concerns they may have about a child. The students may request to speak to the counselor by asking their parent or teacher, asking the counselor in person when they see her, or by leaving a note in the counselor's mailbox. The counselor will then reach out to the student's teacher in order to decide the best possible time to borrow the student for a meeting, helping to ensure that the student is borrowed at an appropriate time and will not miss any important academic lessons in class.



Confidentiality is an important piece of the counselor/student relationship. Each student is aware that their conversations with the counselor are confidential unless someone is hurting them, they are planning to hurt someone, or they are planning to hurt themselves. If any of these circumstance arise, the

counselor will then involve the proper authorities to ensure the safety of the student, or any other person involved.

Group Counseling and Mediation

The counselor can also provide counseling for small groups and provide mediation settings for issues between students. This type of environment allows students to speak to one another about their feelings and their concerns in a supervised constructive way. The counselor is on hand to ensure that each student gets a chance to speak, to be heard, and to resolve their problems in a safe space.

Class Lessons

At any point throughout the school year, a classroom teacher can request that the counselor come in to provide a classroom lesson on a variety of subjects. The counselor meets with teachers to discuss the needs of their class, research proper lessons based on topic and age group, and schedule a time to come in to present the lesson. The topics for these lessons include but are not limited to:

Anxiety/Stress	Anger Management	Coping Skills	Respect
Manners	Personal Space	Self-Esteem	Rule Following
Growth Mindset	Social Filters	Responsibility	Family Changes
Career Exploration	Self-Awareness	Middle School Prep	Integrity

Anti-Bullying Specialist

The Elementary Counselor is also the Anti-Bullying Specialist for both elementary schools. As the Anti-Bullying Specialist, the counselor is responsible for any possible Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying investigations that may arise at any time. Due to the shared schedule between the schools, the ABS is expected to travel to whichever school is currently in need of an investigation. All other job responsibilities are then put on hold until the completion of the investigation. The counselor will conduct the investigation by speaking with any and all students involved (victims, perpetrators, and witnesses), completing a typed report for the district, and then providing follow up counseling for all parties involved.

To better help the students understand our district's HIB policy, the counselor also presents classroom lessons to every 5th grade class at both elementary schools during the Week of Respect. These presentations explain what HIB means, the behaviors involved, what a "defining characteristic" is, and how the investigation process is done. These lessons give the students a chance to ask questions about the HIB policy, and to also learn what kind of behavior is appropriate in school, out of school, and online. Teachers of younger graders have also requested to have the HIB lesson done in their classrooms

targeting their specific age group. The counselor then tailors the presentation to be age appropriate for the corresponding class.

In addition to providing the 5th grade with a presentation on the HIB policy, the counselor also conducts school-wide respect-based activities. Each year at least one assembly is booked for the month of October featuring respect and anti-bullying themes. In the past, we have had Keith Deltano, the Omegaman Group, Bright Star Children's Theatre, and Michael Spiers come to perform for the children to promote kindness and good character. To accompany the assembly, we also hold a "Week of Respect" theme week to promote respect school-wide. Fliers are created and sent home with every student, and are also hung throughout the schools so that each child, and staff member, can participate in a different theme each day during the week of respect. Lenox and Lincoln Schools have matching theme weeks to help promote unity between the schools. Past spirit days have included: Cardinals Unite! (wear Cardinals gear or red), be a FAN of respect (sports jerseys), being respectful is SUPER (super heroes), LEI off bullying (floral/Hawaiian theme), and being a friend is NO SWEAT (pajama day).

Positive School Climate & Charity Outreach

Because of the success of our Week of Respect spirit weeks, the elementary counselor has also held spirit weeks at different times throughout the school year. In December, we hold a "Holiday Spirit Week" before the schools are released for holiday break. This spirit week is held to promote the annual donation drive that the elementary schools hold for the Ramapo Bergen Animal Refuge, Inc. During a time of year when children can be preoccupied with gifts they would like to receive, we encourage them to think of others – including our furry friends. Fliers are created and sent home with students encouraging them to donate a variety of goods to RBARI. Everything is collected throughout the month of December, ending with the celebratory spirit week. All students are welcome to participate in the spirit week without being required to make a donation. All donations are delivered to the Ramapo Bergen Animal Refuge, Inc during winter break.



We have also held a "Spring Fever" spirit week towards the end of May to celebrate the schools' completion of state testing. It is a chance for students and teachers to celebrate the beautiful weather and

share their excitement as summer approaches. It is always fun to see the creative ideas and outfits our students and staff come up with!

School Testing Coordinator

The Elementary Counselor also serves at the School Testing Coordinator for Lenox School. The testing coordinator has worked on statewide testing such as the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA), the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK), and the Test of Cognitive Skills (TCS). The testing coordinator works with administration and classroom teachers to make sure that each student is placed in the environment where they will be most successful, that all state guidelines and policies are met, and that technology runs smoothly throughout the course of testing.

School Based Committees and Teams

The School Counselor is a part of the Intervention and Referral Services Committee and the School Safety Team at each elementary school. The Intervention and Referral Services Committee meets monthly to discuss possible interventions that can be used to assist students who are struggling academically. Often times, if we believe there is a socio-emotional component to their struggle, the counselor is brought on to meet with the student and conduct follow up counseling sessions after their action plan is put into place. As a member of the School Safety Team at each school, the counselor reports on any patterns in behavior (frequency/location), any HIB investigations, and helps to encourage a positive school climate.

Socio-Emotional PM Learning Center

For the first time, the elementary after school program now has a socio-emotional component that is provided by the School Counselor. One day a week at each elementary school, the counselor runs an after school group that consists of students who are struggling academically and may also need socio-emotional assistance as well. Each week, the students participate in activities planned around areas they struggle with in their daily lives. These areas may include: family issues (divorce, etc), grief and loss, friendship difficulties, self-esteem, confidence, procrastination, organizational skills, anger management, stress or anxiety, and depression, among many others. This program also includes a family outreach component which allows the counselor to host conferences every few weeks when parents can meet with the counselor to discuss their own concerns, or to discuss strategies for helping their children become more successful in school. The after school group at Lenox School meets on Monday afternoons. The after school group at Lincoln School meets on Wednesday afternoons.

Caught Being Good

Caught Being Good is a program that the counselor runs at both elementary schools to promote students' kind and respectful behavior. Each time a staff member sees a student doing something kind, helpful, or respectful WITHOUT being asked to do so, they can be nominated for a "Caught Being Good" award. The staff member then emails the counselor with the name of the student and the action they were "caught" doing. The counselor then sends a postcard home to the student's parents and/or guardians announcing the good deed they are being honored for. The students also receive "Caught Being Good" bracelets for their good deed. Each student receives two bracelets; one for them to keep and one for them to give away to someone they catch being good. Their name is also written on a card and hung up in the hallway. At the end of the year, an award is given to the teacher whose class had the highest number of "Caught Being Good" awards. Last year's recipients were Mr. Michael McCarthy (5th grade Lenox) and Mrs. Joanne Riggio (5th grade Lincoln).

"Look for the Good"

This February, the school counselor will be running the "Look for the Good" campaign at both elementary schools. This program inspires students to think about what they are thankful for, and encourages them to reach out to the meaningful people (and places, events, pets, you name it!) in their lives to express their gratitude. It is a school-wide program that will begin on February 4th with a kickoff assembly at each school. Student leaders will assist in running the program from February 4th-15th. During these two weeks, students will participate in a "grateful moment" each morning when they write down something they are thankful for on a brightly colored post it note. These post it notes will be collected and displayed on a main wall in each school until we have an entire "Wall of Gratitude" featuring thousands of things our students are grateful for. There will also be "Gratitude Spot" decals placed around the school hallways. When they land on a "Gratitude Spot," students are encouraged to say something out loud that they are thankful for. Students will also write letters to someone who is meaningful to them and must deliver the letter, and read it to the recipient by the end of the two week campaign. This program also has a survey component that will allow us to receive feedback from our students about what they liked or disliked about the program. Due to the fact that the counselor must travel between schools, staff members have volunteered at each school to assist in running the campaign. To learn more about this campaign, please go to lookforthegoodproject.org and watch their inspiring videos and messages!



Cardinal Flight Team: Helping Cardinals Soar

During the Spring of the 2017-2018 school year, the Elementary Counselor created a new program called the "Cardinal Flight Team." This team consists of a group of 5th grade students who have been identified by teachers as children who have a large influence over others. The group was brought together with the goal of promoting positive character traits throughout the school year. (They even named the group!) Many of their activities were thought of by the students themselves. Here are some of the highlights from the first ever Cardinal Flight Team.

The Inaugural Cardinal Flight Team

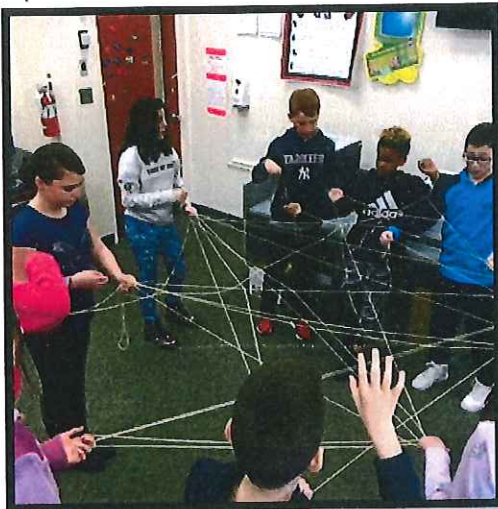
Lenox School



Lincoln School



- ❖ These photos feature the icebreakers and team building activities (escape rooms!) the teams participated in order to build the feeling of unity and family within their groups.



In this "web" activity, the students found out how much they have in common by tossing a ball of yarn to each person who agreed with a statement a student made. For example, if one student said their favorite subject was reading, they tossed the yarn to every student who also loved reading!

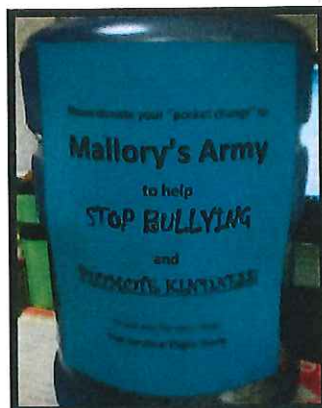


The students broke into teams and participated in an escape room to escape being abducted by their substitute teacher who turned out to be an alien! This activity encourages creative and teamwork!

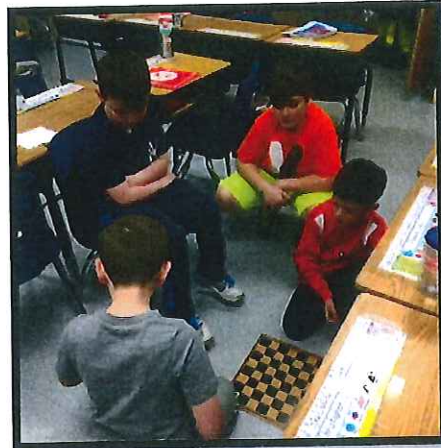
- ❖ They decorated the schools with posters promoting kindness, respect, and their love for their schools!



- ❖ The teams promoted a school-wide "loose change" drive in support of Mallory's Army.



- ❖ The Flight Team was often requested to spend indoor recess with younger grades to help teach them how to play kindly and include everyone. They also sat with younger grades during assemblies to show them how to be respectful!



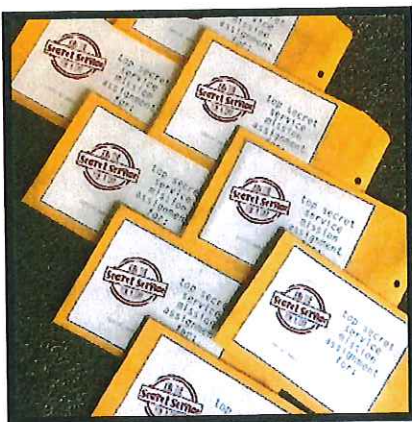
- ❖ The team created bulletin boards to remind students that *we are in this together* featuring inspiring quotes and kind words. The students were encouraged to take a post it if they felt it could help them or if it inspired them.



- ❖ The Kindness Challenge was a huge undertaking for the Cardinal Flight Team. The entire school was invited to participate by opening an envelope on our “Kindness Bulletin Board” to reveal a kind act that they then had to make happen! We took photos of the students who completed their kind acts and gave them shout outs on our Flight Team instagram. Between Lenox and Lincoln, our students completed over 600 acts of kindness!

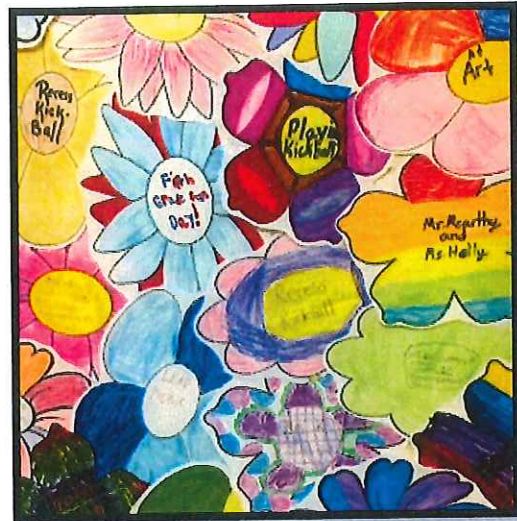


Third grade teacher Mrs. Kelly Toye (currently teaching 4th grade at Lincoln School) used the Kindness Challenge to create a “Kindness Bingo” game within her classroom inspiring even more good deeds.



While the rest of the school participated in the Kindness Challenge, the Cardinal Flight Team completed “secret service” kindness tasks anonymously throughout the school. They wrote letters of appreciation to staff members and assisted other students without revealing who they were!

- ❖ To close out the year, the Flight Team invited their entire graduating class to create a “Garden of Gratitude” for the 4th grade. They wrote their favorite memories of Lenox and Lincoln in the center of their flowers and “left them behind” for the 4th grade to take care of. The entire 5th grade also wrote letters of appreciation to a staff member that they felt helped them during their years in elementary school.



Meet the 2018-2019 Flight Team!

Lenox Elementary

Sophia Adair	Caprice Ezzo
John Falbo	Jonah Pettibone
Leah Ciabattoni	Anthony D'Agostino
Jenna Khoudair	Jaydon Pinkney
Jonathan Popovich	Gianna Whittmore
Jensel Sanchez	Tyler Whartnaby
Max Martinez	

Lincoln Elementary

Julianna Ayers	Gianna Alloy
Erik Argandona	Gabe Logan
Redon Xheladini	Luana Quierolo
Lennon Zsoldos	Katie Venin
Amanda Fasolino	John Ligouri

This year, the Flight Team will serve as “Student Leaders” during our Look for the Good campaign!

Future Goals & Plans

The Elementary Counseling Program is very much like our students – constantly growing and evolving! Each year we are researching new programs to bring into the school and new ways to connect with each individual student. Our elementary counselor is currently working with District Technology Coordinator, Ms. Dana Aagaard, to plan a community outreach project that would invite members of the community in to talk with our students about their future careers. We are hoping to inspire our students to find careers and interests that they are passionate about, while learning from members of their own community – including some parents!

Conclusion

The Elementary Counseling Program was put into effect to help encourage our students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally while being true to themselves. Without core skills and beliefs such as self-confidence, integrity, and kindness, the students would not be able to be as successful throughout their careers as Pompton Lakes students. The counseling program aims to help the students find love for themselves, love for their school, and love for their goals – both academically and socially. It hopes to make each student feel special, inspired, and supported. The success of this program would not be possible without the help of the administrators, elementary staff, our Superintendent, and the entire guidance department. Thank you to the Pompton Lakes Board of Education for all of your support over the last three years!