

From Middlebrook School Counselors:

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When Your Child Sees the Counselor

Only kids who have serious personal troubles have to see the school counselor, right? Wrong! If the school lets you know that your child ought to see the school counselor, it could be for a wide variety of reasons - many of them not indicative of a major problem.

Though parents' contact with the school is primarily with the classroom teachers, in fact, a whole team of experts work together to ensure that your child is getting the most out of school. From the principal to the classroom teachers, from the school counselor to the speech therapist, from the school psychologist to the school nurse, a network is in place to make sure that your child's unique needs are being met and his development tracked for possible snags.

It's when one of those "snags" comes up that one or more of the team of professionals is mobilized to step in so your child can continue along a smooth road of learning and development.

School counselors provide a variety of services to the students, from assisting with class scheduling problems and conflicts, helping students who are having trouble getting along with others, to providing a developmental guidance program. There is no shame in utilizing these services; the shame would be in refusing help.

Every year, many students visit us, sometimes just once, sometimes every week for a short period of time, sometimes all year - depending on the need. A youngster might meet individually with the counselor or as part of a small group. Most of these students are perfectly healthy and bright and will continue to develop into happy, successful adults - perhaps in part because of the attention they received when they needed it!

Why might a student be asked to see the counselor?

- A change in behavior;
- Not keeping up with class work to his/her potential;
- Excessive anxiety or shyness;
- Difficulty relating to his teachers or classmates;
- Evidence of substance abuse;
- Excessive absenteeism.

Anything that signals that a student is unhappy, hurt or not developing well deserves special attention. Such problems hinder learning. School counselors are trained to help youngsters work through difficult periods, make wiser choices and learn how to get along better with others. A painfully reserved adolescent may need to have his confidence bolstered; an aggressive one may need to be taught acceptable ways to express feelings.

If a student is having a problem academically, we may chat to help pinpoint the cause. This may result in a recommendation to change his schedule, spend some time with the reading specialist or follow some other individualized educational plan. You will be notified if the school decides that your child needs such attention. You, too, are a primary team member when it comes to your child's care. You may be asked to meet with the counselor to discuss possible reasons for his behavior. Certainly this may cause some fear, but there's no reason for alarm. Parents are invited to help with solutions, not to answer for their child's actions.

A youngster has the best chance of overcoming development "snags" when the classroom teachers, counselor and parents work together. As a parent, you can provide the counselor with insights into your child's background and home situation. The counselor may suggest certain strategies for you to try at home with him. Very often, a youngster who acts out in school is doing the same at home. Sometimes a counselor can intervene in problems between a parent and child by offering perspective and an objective assessment.

TWO IMPORTANT NOTES:

Never feel as though you are in the dark or isolated from what is going on with your child. Feel free to call the school at anytime and talk to a classroom teacher, the school counselor, dean or principal.

Be sure not to make your child feel bad about seeing the counselor. It is not punishment or a condemnation of him as a person. Let your child know that everyone is working to help him because they care about him and want to see him be happy and do well!