

The Counselor's Desk

September 2009

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Calendar

September 3 School begins

September 23 Back To School Night

September 18 Newcomer's Breakfast

September 30 Redirecting Children's Behavior classes begin

What's New This Year

Early Act Club

Once again we will continue with our Early Act Club. In September children in grades 1st through 4th will receive a form asking if they are interested in participating. Meetings will be held monthly after school. Our meeting day will be Thursday. Parents will be responsible for picking their child up at 3:45.

The mission of Early Act is to promote goodwill, understanding and peace through the active participation of its student members so that with committed citizenship and effective leadership they may improve the quality of life of their school, local and global communities.

Over-Scheduled Kids

by [Carleton Kendrick Ed.M., LCSW](#)

I wish that it was make-believe, like *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*. But the phenomenon of parents over-scheduling their kids' lives and stealing

their childhood is all too real. Many parents fill up their kids' lives with one "enrichment activity" after another, starting in the early preschool years, all in an effort to help them "get a leg up" so that they will eventually gain admittance to a top-ranked college.

The mindset seems to be: "It's never too early to beginning assembling your children's success portfolio. Enroll your three-year-old in an academically challenging, preparatory preschool that emphasizes reading readiness. Sign up your eight-year-old for an intensive six weeks of basketball summer camp, where you're guaranteed that it's basketball -- and -- basketball only from dawn to far beyond dusk. Make them smart. Train them to be the best in one sport. You have to start early. That college application clock is ticking."

There isn't much time for our kids to have "free time": unstructured time, time to dream, time to discover -- and yes, to even become a little bored once in a while. Parents have convinced themselves that the only productive way for their kids to play is in a structured, adult-supervised program. Kids whose lives are so tightly structured and scheduled are not learning how to feel comfortable on their own, alone with their imagination, free to pursue their natural curiosities and sense of wonder, encouraged to become resourceful, self-reliant and resilient. Parents are adding more and more activities to their children's lives, behaving like business managers trying to get more productivity out of their work force. But your family is not your corporation and your children are not your employees.

Whatever happened to play for its own sake? Why have serious, goal-oriented, skill-building, adult-managed activities and programs replaced the freedom and carefree laughter of backyards, parks, fields, and swimming holes? Because many parents believe that the presence of free, unstructured, unsupervised time for their children is the equivalent of wasted time, missed meaningful opportunities, and a reflection of poor parenting. They believe this in spite of recent scientific research that supports the theory that self-initiated, unstructured creative play is the single most important activity that young children can engage in to develop at all developmental levels, including neurological and cognitive growth.

Professionally, I have seen more and more young children experiencing stress-related psychosomatic symptoms -- headaches, stomachaches, insomnia, anxiety attacks -- caused by pressure and over-scheduling. If you believe the parents of these children, their kids love juggling all these activities and wouldn't know what to do without them. I've heard a different tale. Their children have confided in me that they wish their parents would

just let them "hang out" some of the time, so that they wouldn't always have to be busy, rushing from one extra-curricular activity to another, all the time thinking that if they don't that they'll disappoint their parents -- and worse, that they won't "make it" in life. Rushed, hurried, anxious parents are turning their children into mini-versions of themselves. A childhood should be every child's birthright. Let's stop stealing it.

[For additional articles go to www.familyeducation.com](http://www.familyeducation.com)

Helping Your Child Learn About Character

Character is a set of qualities, or values, that shape our thoughts, actions, reactions and feelings. People with strong character

- Show compassion,
- Are honest and fair,
- Display self-discipline in setting and meeting goals,
- Make good judgments,
- Show respect to others,
- Show courage in standing up for beliefs,
- Have a strong sense of responsibility,
- Are good citizens who are concerned for their community, and
- Maintain self-respect

Children learn about strong character when parents and other adults in their daily lives

- Set a good example through their own behavior and actions,
- Set and communicate high standards and clear expectations,
- Coach them on how to be responsible and kind, and
- Use literature to reinforce the values of strong character.

Counseling Programs at Franklin School

- **Individual counseling:** This is available to any student who needs to communicate about issues relevant to them regarding interpersonal and/or academic development.
- **Small Group Sessions:**

Changing Family Groups: This group is for students who are currently experiencing parental separation and/or divorce. Group provides information and teaches skills to assist the children cope with family changes.

Newcomers' Club: All student's new to Franklin School meet with the counselor to help them orient themselves to their new school.

Friendship Groups: Sometimes children have a difficult time making or keeping friends. In this group we explore self-esteem and skills for making friends.

Study Skills Groups: This group is most popular with 3rd graders who experience a greater need for organization, planning and research. The focus is on academic improvement.

Social Skills Groups. Some children need additional coaching in making good choices in social settings. In this group we explore problem solving skills, anger management, manners and more.

Watch for new groups to form throughout the year!

How Does a Student See a Counselor?

Self-referral

Request of the counselor

Parent referral

Administrative referral

Teacher or other staff referral

Students feel comfortable talking to the counselor after they have become familiar with her in the classroom guidance sessions. They see this as an opportunity to find solutions for peer problems.

Websites

www.apa.org The American Psychological Association offers a general section on their web site maintaining articles on current issues.

www.casel.org Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning offers ongoing information on the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL).

www.eqparenting.com Dr. Elias and Dr. Tobias offer information on current parenting issues.

www.incaf.com The International Network for Children and Families is the founding organization for the parenting program "Redirecting Children's Behavior" that I offer during the school year. The website has parenting articles that are of interest.

Back to School

Once again it is that exciting time of getting back to school. The stores remind us of that fact late in July and attempt to sell us all the cute little gimmicks that they convince us will make our children happy in school. Unfortunately, what the gimmicks do are distract our children and reinforce the idea that things make them happy.

Why not start this year with a promise of back to basics. Here are 10 things that you will find help your child succeed and find pleasure in school:

1. Make a plan for activities after school. Not too many!
2. Scale back on TV, video games and computer game time.
3. Establish a family reading time.
4. Establish bed times for school nights.
5. Keep a large calendar and mark each family member's activities in a different colored pen.
6. Have a back up plan for when you cannot be there to pick up your child or be there after school. Keep in mind late openings and early dismissals.
7. Spruce up a study space for your child.. Provide only the necessary items such as pencils, paper, dictionary, etc.
8. Set up a file for school papers.
9. Get children in the habit of getting ready the night before school.
10. When your child asks for something new ask yourself and your child "Is it a need or a want?" Things will not make your child happy. Social and emotional growth will.

Counselors are the Heart of the School by...

- *Helping to create a safe school environment where children can learn.*
- *Helping teachers create a positive learning environment.*
- *Helping children learn anger management, conflict resolution, and mediation skills.*
- *Helping parents learn how to meet the needs of their children.*

