

# Guidance & Counseling Program NEWSLETTER

September 2008  
PARENTS' EDITION  
Issue 1



**WELCOME** to a wonderful year at WMES!!!

As your School Counselor, my job is to provide support to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and staff as we all work together to provide the best learning environment for your children.

## CHARACTER EDUCATION TRAIT OF THE MONTH

### **RESPONSIBILITY:**

Being accountable in word and deed.  
Having a sense of duty to fulfill tasks with reliability, dependability and commitment.

**Dr. Josefina Estrella-Figueroa**  
**School Counselor**  
**Wesley Matthews Elementary School**

## *The Guidance & Counseling Program*

The Guidance & Counseling Program is an integral part of the students' curriculum.

As your School Counselor, I will be coordinating and implementing activities for your children based on the requirements and guidelines of the *Standards, Benchmarks, and Learner Outcomes for Grades K-5* of the School Guidance & Counseling Program in the Domains of Academic, Educational, Personal/Social, Career, Community Awareness, and Health.

Guidance & counseling services include class visitations, small group counseling and individual counseling.

Topics for class presentations include the Code of Student Conduct; learning skills; academic planning skills; study habits; goal setting; positive self-concept; decision-making; effective interpersonal skills; conflict resolution; school and community needs; the

school-work connection; and healthy lifestyle awareness.

I am available for consultation with teachers and parents regarding issues related to students' behavior as well as their academic, personal, and social development. Please feel free to call me at school to talk on the phone or to set up an appointment to discuss your concerns.

Every month on the last page of this Newsletter, I will be including some information on topics of interest and relevance to parents. Hope it is helpful!

Thanks for working together with the school personnel and giving us the opportunity to provide your child with a most nurturing and challenging educational environment at WMES!!!

## *TRUST Lessons and Character Education Curriculum*

Character education involves teaching children about basic human values including honesty, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, equality, and respect.

The goal is to raise children to become morally responsible, self-disciplined citizens. Problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution are important parts of developing moral character.

In an effort to promote good character development and basic knowledge

against the use of drugs, the school District mandates that students are exposed to the activities included in the TRUST Lessons and the Character Education curriculum. These lessons are infused in some of the activities of Language Arts, Social Studies or Science classes taught by your child's teachers.

Parents are the first teachers of their children and can promote good character development at home. Make sure you are clear about your values. Take the time to talk about what is important for your family.



*"You don't really understand human nature unless you know why a child on a merry-go-round will wave at his parents every time around - and why his parents will always wave back."  
~William D. Tammeus*

## *"Connect with Respect" Campaign*

On April 30, 2008, Florida Gov. Crist signed a House Bill (HB 669) that requires all school districts to adopt a policy prohibiting bullying, cyber bullying, and harassment. Our **Bullying/Violence Prevention Plan** for the 2008-2009 school year (which appears on our WME Website) includes the introduction of the Student Services Campaign **CONNECT WITH RESPECT**.

On Friday, Sept. 12, we conducted a

kick-off assembly to initiate the implementation of this District initiative.

The event included reading the book "Have You Filled a Bucket Today?" introducing the concept of "filling the invisible bucket of good feelings and good thoughts about self and others" by respecting them, saying compliments, helping, sharing, and being kind.

Please reinforce at home the importance of respecting others.

## *Peer Mediation*

When there is conflict between students, most children respond well to helpful intervention and support from their peers. The Peer mediation Program prepares selected students to mediate conflict among their peers.

In order to facilitate the delivery of peer mediation services, this year I would like to introduce a new concept that involves the training of two students in each classroom in all 3<sup>rd</sup> to

5<sup>th</sup> grade classes. In the next few weeks, I will be asking teachers for the names of two students in the class who will participate in several training sessions. These students should be willing to learn strategies to help others resolve conflicts. A letter will go home for parent's approval. Training sessions will be conducted once a week for a period of time. Students will be responsible for making up any missed assignments.

## *A Peaceful Lunchroom*

If we want to promote a pleasant and orderly environment in the cafeteria, it is important that we often emphasize specific cafeteria behaviors.

Parents, you can help your child to develop good manners when eating lunch in the cafeteria by discussing with him/her behaviors such as:

- Following adult directions.

- Using manners (for example, saying *please* and *thank you* and keeping one's place neat).
- Staying in the assigned eating area.
- Staying seated at the lunch table and using respectful language and a quiet voice.
- Raising a hand for assistance.

## *Saving a Student At Risk (SSTAR) Mentoring*

Once again and by popular demand we will be implementing the **SSTAR PROJECT** in our school. This is a Teacher/Staff Member-Student mentoring project.

Many students who may be experiencing academic, personal, social-emotional, and/or health problems can benefit greatly from the support, friendship, and additional attention of a faculty member.

The **SSTAR PROJECT** pairs a student in need of additional support with a teacher or staff member who volunteers to take special interest in the child, trying to motivate him/her to do well in school, encouraging him/her to do his/her best, and providing some opportunities to help out with projects that can enhance his/her self-esteem.

If your child is selected, you will be contacted to request your approval.

## What is Character Education?

As defined by Dr. Thomas Lickona, character education is the deliberate effort to develop virtues that are good for the individual and good for society.

The objective goodness of virtues is based on the fact that they:

- Affirm our human dignity
- Promote the well-being and happiness of the individual

- Serve the common good
- Define our rights and obligations
- Meet the classical ethical tests of reversibility (Would you want to be treated this way?) and universalizability (Would you want all persons to act this way in a similar situation?).

## What is Self-Esteem?

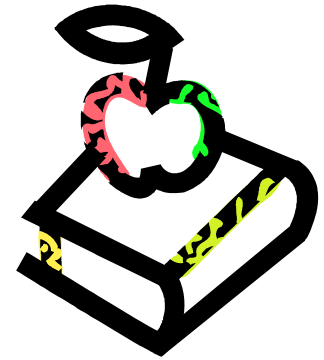
Self-esteem is "how much a person likes, accepts, and respects himself overall as a person".

A child with high self-esteem will:

- Act independently
- Assume responsibility
- Be proud of accomplishments
- Approach new challenges with enthusiasm

- Exhibit a broad range of emotions
- Tolerate frustration well
- Feel capable of influencing others

High self-esteem has been correlated with academic success in school, internal locus of control, strong family relationships, and positive sense of self-worth.



*"Always kiss  
your children  
goodnight  
- even if they're  
already  
asleep."  
~H. Jackson  
Brown, Jr.*

## Parenting Skills

Parents help their children develop the habits and routines of healthy functioning that will serve them the rest of their lives. Parents also teach their value system, a belief system and a way of interpreting the world. By direct intervention and modeling, parents show school-age children how to behave, think and even feel.

Raising a human being is an awesome task, requiring thought and skill.

Applying oneself to parenting doesn't mean that one will be able to raise a perfect person, but it does mean that one can do a good job of parenting. And that's really all a parent has to do. It's also up to a child to accept the teachings of his or her parent as a good beginning and to work on him or herself throughout life to become a better and better human being. ~Sarah Chana Radcliff