

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

School based guidance and counseling is available to all students in enrolled in Dover-Sherborn schools. Counselors work to make school counseling seamless for all Dover-Sherborn students as they progress through the grades. The skills students learn and develop in elementary school will help them to successfully navigate their middle and high school years. As students advance through the grades and are promoted to the Middle and High schools, counselors will continue to support them, helping students to successfully meet their academic, social and emotional needs, appropriate to their developmental level and the unique concerns they deal with as they grow and change.

A Developmental Approach to School Counseling

Dover and Sherborn Elementary Schools

The elementary school student

The elementary years are an exciting and stimulating time for children as they transition from home to school, discover the excitement of learning, develop social skills, build peer relationships and strive for independence. A positive elementary school experience sets the stage for the child's love of learning all through life and serves to build self-esteem. During these important years, children can be challenged by many factors that can compromise their academic, social and emotional wellbeing. The elementary school counselor, working in concert with parents and classroom teachers, has the opportunity to help students successfully navigate the issues and concerns which can present during these exciting and important years in the life of a child.

Role of the School Counselor

The primary role of the elementary school counselor is to assist students from kindergarten through fifth grade meet their academic, social and emotional needs, while working in direct partnership with parents and teachers to support students' school success across all lines of academic, social and emotional development. The elementary school counselor serves as counselor for the children in the school community; providing services for children requiring prevention, on-going support, or crisis intervention within the educational setting while meeting with parents and teachers as needed to help address student concerns as collaboratively as possible. In addition to providing education and support to parents/guardians, elementary counselors conduct parent workshops, serve as a resource on parenting and child development, assist with referrals to community based programs, practitioners and agencies and apprise parents of community based programs which would be of interest to parents/guardians.

Dover-Sherborn Middle School

The middle school student

Middle school students struggle between independence and security. Parents may feel that their middle school child is beginning to break away from them, but this is the time they need adult support the most. Emotions may become very fragile in middle school. One event such as the loss of a friendship or a low grade on a test can “ruin” a student’s life for several days. This age group does not have the experience to put things into perspective. Self-concept is a continuous struggle. Stress level is high and self-esteem fragile because of real or imagined attitudes.

Middle school students also develop a sense of fairness that manifests itself in excuses and indignation when they believe they have been treated unfairly. They don’t always practice fairness themselves as evidenced by the slightly changed stories they take home to parents, but they are quick to point out deficiencies between what adults say and what they actually practice.

Middle school is a time for students to take risks, meet new friends and experience new courses and activities. Students have more freedoms and learn to develop responsibility, resiliency and self-advocacy skills. As they mature, they become excited learners, earning more trust and freedom and look forward to the challenges that high school will bring.

Role of the School Counselor

The primary role of the middle school counselor is to be a student’s advocate during the critical years of early adolescence when students are in the middle, caught between two worlds. The sixth grade is split between the counselors. At the seventh grade level, each counselor takes a full grade and follows the grade through the remainder of the middle school experience. In addition to the middle school counselors, the region employs an adjustment counselor/licensed social worker to provide additional support and advocacy to students who may benefit from more specialized services.

In addition to working with students, counselors are part of a team including administrators, specialists, parents and teachers. This team is responsible for guiding a student’s development through the middle school years.

Students often seek a counselor’s assistance for issues such as academics, work habits, and friendships. When seeking a conference with a counselor, students should give their name to the guidance secretary. They will be issued passes indicating the meeting time with their counselor.

Parents are encouraged to call and make an appointment with the counselor whenever they have any questions or concerns about their children. Communication is particularly important whenever there is an illness, death, separation, divorce, stress, or other family crisis.

Dover-Sherborn High School

The high school student

Students enter high school excited to learn and pursue classes in their interest areas. They begin to accept more responsibility for their education and behaviors as they learn to create balance between academics, extra curriculars and other life activities. Their time management and organizational skills improve and they continue to develop higher level and abstract thinking capabilities. As they engage in more differentiated learning, their study skills and communication skills become more advanced. They become more independent, utilize strategies and embrace their personal learning styles. High school is a time where independence grows and students are able to engage in rich and rewarding extra-curricular activities and explore post-secondary opportunities. Students value making positive contributions to the school and their community and choose to make healthy life decisions to positively impact their futures.

Role of the School Counselor

The primary role of the high school guidance counselor is to be a student's advocate, providing each student with the opportunity to acquire the academic, civic, and social skills essential to graduating from high school and becoming productive citizens who respect themselves and others.

In addition to working with students, counselors are a part of the educational team including parents, teachers, administrators, and specialists. This team works in a partnership assisting students in meeting Dover-Sherborn's graduation requirements and in planning post-secondary options.

Each student is assigned to a guidance counselor who will follow the student through his or her high school years, allowing an opportunity for the counselor and student to develop a working relationship. In addition to the guidance counselors, the region employs an adjustment counselor to provide additional support and advocacy to students who may benefit from more specialized services. Students may seek a counselor's assistance with any or all types of questions and concerns. Academics, work habits, study skills, college planning, post-secondary planning, and personal concerns are all common issues of high school students.

When seeking a conference with a counselor, students and parents may directly contact their counselor through an email message or make an appointment by speaking with an administrative assistant. Parents are encouraged to call the guidance office whenever they have questions or concerns about their child's well-being or welfare. Individual concerns about a specific course or class are best addressed directly with the subject teacher. Communication is particularly important whenever there is an illness, death, separation, divorce, stress, or other family crisis.

