



West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District Student Assistance Grade 8

Student Assistance Curriculum, Grade 8

Content Area: Guidance

Activity & Grade Level: Student Assistance Curriculum, Grade 8

Summary & Rationale

8th Grade is a time of internal conflict and identity formation, intensified by the impending transition to high school, and the stressors involved with this transition. As the “alpha dog” of the three grades in the middle school, 8th grade is often a time of increased risk-taking behavior as students, struggling toward individuation make impulsive choices or act out for social recognition. As students are introduced to older peers through high school friends, sports, and social events, they are challenged with risky situations and behaviors. Student Assistance Counseling at this level is focused on the building of decision-making skills and coping mechanisms to reduce inappropriate risk-taking while fostering acceptance of self and others. Additionally, providing education about the effects of stress on the body and strategies to reduce the negative impacts is key with this age group. These skills are critical to reinforce at this time of increased upheaval. Additionally, reminding students of resources within the school and community from which to seek assistance is a critical transitional task.

Timeline

- Students will be reminded of the role/availability of the SAC during the first marking period.
- Each student will meet the SAC through a lesson in Health by spring of Grade 8.
- Students (referred by counselor or self-selected) will participate in a 5-6 session Transition Group of their peers, facilitated by the SAC as can be accommodated throughout the school year.
- Students will meet with high school peer mentors by spring of 8th grade to hear a student perspective of how to ease the transition to high school/cope with increased peer pressure.

NJ State Standards

Standard 2.3: Drugs and Medicines: All students will acquire knowledge about alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and medicines and apply these concepts to support a healthy, active lifestyle.

Strand B. Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs

Strand C. Dependency/Addiction and Treatment

Content Statements:

- There is a strong relationship between individuals who abuse drugs and increased intentional and unintentional health-risk behaviors.
- Substance abuse is caused by a variety of factors.
- The ability to interrupt a drug dependency/addiction typically requires outside intervention, a strong personal commitment, and the support of family, friends, and others.

CPI #	Cumulative Progress Indicator (CPI)
2.3.8.B.5	Explain the impact of alcohol and other drugs on those areas of the brain that control vision, sleep, coordination, and reaction time and the related impairment of behavior, judgment and memory.
2.3.8.B.6	Relate the use of alcohol and other drugs to decision-making and risk for sexual assault, pregnancy and STIs.
2.3.6.C.3	Determine the extent to which various factors contribute to the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs by adolescents, such as peer pressure, low self-esteem, genetics, and poor role models.
2.3.8.C.1	Compare and contrast theories about dependency/addiction (such as genetic predisposition, gender-related predisposition, and multiple risks) and provide recommendations that support a drug-free life.
2.2.8.C.2	Summarize intervention strategies that assist family and friends to cope with the impact of substance abuse.
ASCA National Standards	
Standard: Personal/Social Development	
A: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.	
B: Students will make decisions, set goals and take necessary action to achieve goals.	
C: Students will understand safety and survival skills.	
PS:A1.11	Identify and discuss changing personal and social roles.
PS:B1.5	Demonstrate when, where and how to seek help for solving problems and making decisions.
PS:B1.7	Demonstrate a respect for individual and cultural differences.
PS:A1.8	Understand the need for self-control and how to practice it.
PS:B1.8	Know when peer pressure is influencing a decision.
PS:C1.8	Learn about the emotional and physical dangers of substance use and abuse.
PS:C1.9	Learn how to cope with peer pressure.
PS:C1.5	Differentiate between situations requiring peer support and situations requiring adult professional help.
PS:C1.7	Apply effective problem-solving and decision-making skills to make safe and healthy choices.

Instructional Focus

Unit Enduring Understandings

- It is more important to respect oneself and others than to project an image to impress others.
- When making decisions, it is important to think through all possible outcomes before taking action.
- Choices made today can affect us for years to come.
- It is important to stand up for what you believe in, even if it is not the popular belief (be true to yourself.)
- It is important to respect others for their differences, without judgment.
- It is a sign of strength to request help from others when needed (especially from a trusted adult.)
- The transition to high school brings with it increased responsibility, both academic and personal/social, so choosing wisely is critical.

Unit Essential Questions

- How can I deal with change while staying true to myself?
- What are healthy ways to deal with stress, anxiety and/or pressure to “fit in” as I mature?
- How can I tell if a choice is a good one for me?
- How can I resist peer pressure without being influenced by fears of being judged or excluded?
- When I feel excluded, how can I deal with those feelings in a healthy way?
- What new decisions do I face as I prepare to move to high school?
- Who can I trust to guide me in my decision-making?
- How do I know when asking for help from adults is necessary?

Objective: To have students leave 8th grade knowing:

- Effective ways to cope with stress/other problems without compromising personal values.
- How to make informed, healthy choices when confronted with challenging/risky opportunities.
- How to recognize characteristics of healthy vs. unhealthy relationships.
- The importance of demonstrating good character and integrity, and how this will impact their future.
- The physical, emotional and academic risks posed by substance use/abuse.
- The role of the SAC as a resource, both at the middle and high school levels.
- The level of confidentiality specific to the SAC.
- How to contact/utilize SAC services.

Students will:

- Identify specific healthy coping skills to use when feeling stress/peer influence.
- Practice assertive communication skills, standing ones' ground in the face of peer influence.
- Discuss the importance of differentiating between sincere friendships vs. social acquaintances.
- Reflect on the future impact of today's choices and impulsive acts.
- Demonstrate acceptance of others' differing opinions/beliefs/social or cultural backgrounds.
- Understand the importance of seeking adult support for self or peer when faced with critical life choices.
- Receive a list of community and online resources and their contact information.

Evidence of Learning

Assessment:

- Students will complete a pre- and post-survey to demonstrate their acquisitions from participation in transition group.
- Students will have follow-up discussion with health teacher about topics covered in lesson with SAC.
- Students will initiate contact with SAC for services following presentations/group involvement.

Competencies for 21st Century Learners

X	Collaborative Team Member	X	Effective Communicator
	Globally Aware, Active, & Responsible Student/Citizen		Information Literate Researcher
X	Innovative & Practical Problem Solver		Self-Directed Learner

Resources

Core Text:**Suggested Resources:**

- Exercises for Enhancing Social Skills & Self-Esteem, SiriNam S. Khalsa, author. 1996: Professional Resource Exchange, Inc.
- Developing Character in Students, Dr. Philip Fitch Vincent, author. 1999: Character development Publishing.
- Activities That Teach, Tom Jackson, M.Ed, author. 1993: Red Rock Publishing.