Middle School Peer Helping Programs

AnnaGrace Baldwin, Homewood Middle School Counselor and Peer Helper Sponsor

Peer helpers can be a very beneficial and strong support for students at all grade levels, if properly identified and trained. All programs should follow basic tenets, but they can be developed and designed to match the needs at individual schools. It can sometimes be overwhelming to look at a program that has been grown and developed over time and feel the need to implement too much at one time. If you are looking to grow or develop a peer helper program at your school, my best advice would be to look at programs in other schools that are similar to yours or programs you admire, contact the program sponsor, and then beg, borrow, and adapt their ideas! Start small and then grow your program to match the needs of your students based on your school’s data and mission statement.

The Homewood Middle School (HMS) Peer Helping Program is designed to enhance each student’s middle school experience by providing peer helpers with the skills and resources necessary to encourage and help their fellow classmates. This program is based on the concept of students helping other students. Peer helpers are expected to maintain high personal standards and be positive role models and leaders for their peers. These students must be committed to community service either on their own or through other Homewood Middle School organizations such as Builder’s Club and Trendsetters. I started this program and selected the first group of HMS Peer Helpers in 2009. Since that time, we have come a long way in the services we provide and the impact these students have on others. Each year, due to their training, HMS Peer Helpers are responsible for identifying students and families who may be in distress and need additional services.

HMS Peer Helpers are selected in the spring of each school year through a competitive written application and interview process. All peer helpers attend a mandatory all-day training in the summer where students are trained in basic peer helping skills as well as specialty skills including peer tutoring, peer mentoring, and serving as ambassadors. Peer helpers are also trained to recognize and get help for students who may be showing signs of emotional distress, depression, or suicide.

HMS Peer Helper Leadership Team members are elected at the beginning of each school year by the group. These team members assist the sponsor in creating and developing new ideas and opportunities. Leadership Team members are instrumental in the design and updates of our positive messaging campaign, which seeks to encourage and support students and faculty through quick inspirational quotes and messages. They also serve on the Safe and Healthy Homewood Coalition as well as on the HMS Counseling Advisory Board.
2018-2019 Awards
Scholarships! Prizes! Recognition! ALSCA Celebrates National School Counseling Week

Did you see this?

National School Counseling Week Poster & Essay Contest grades K-12

Did you apply?
School Counselors of first place winners are awarded complimentary registration for the ALCA Fall Conference in November. Don’t miss the upcoming 2019-2020 8th Annual contest period!

CONGRATULATE ALL OUR First Place State Award Recipients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE Level</th>
<th>STUDENT WINNER</th>
<th>SCHOOL COUNSELOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-2nd</td>
<td>Molly Northcutt</td>
<td>Shanika Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dean Road Elementary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd-5th</td>
<td>Kennedy Barnes</td>
<td>Cheryl Whetstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th-8th</td>
<td>Sophie Bryant</td>
<td>Kresta DeMent &amp; Amy McIntyre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-11th</td>
<td>Jon Robert Page</td>
<td>Stacy Page, Hamilton High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12th Grade SCHOLARSHIPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT WINNER</th>
<th>SCHOOL COUNSELOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Birmingham $1,000</td>
<td>Autumn Rowe, Ardmore High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deshiah Russell $500</td>
<td>Mona Howard, Dadeville High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirsten Campbell $250</td>
<td>Karen Rowell, Holly Pond High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your ALSCA has awarded over $17,000 in scholarships and prizes to Alabama school counselors and their students since the Poster and Essay contest was initiated seven years ago!

Alabama School Counselors Association
ALSCA
alscaboard@gmail.com
Website: https://www.alabamaschoolcounselors.org/
Building Bonds With Buzz Buddies
Stefanie Cook, School Counselor, Madison Elementary School

Positive relationships are crucial to the success of a school. They can have a lasting impact on the development of a child both academically and socially. At Madison Elementary School in Madison, AL, we value relationships. We began an advisory time called Buzz Buddies (in honor of our friendly hornet mascot, Buzz). During this cross-peer advisory, an older grade level is partnered with a younger grade. We schedule Buzz Buddies once a month, and during this time we focus on relationships and character education. Students are able to build bonds across grade levels and create connections with other adults in their school.

The implementation of this peer advisory time has also had academic benefits for our students. In addition to the time spent in advisory, older students visit the younger students every morning from 7:40 am – 8:00 am. Students help with math facts, oral reading fluency, AR tests, sight words and other academic areas as needed. Several teachers report they are seeing growth with their students. Additionally, Buzz Buddies has been used in conjunction with Response to Intervention (RTI) plans. Students who are having difficulty in class are partnered with a Buzz Buddy to help them reach academic goals set by the RTI team.

We have completed several activities during this advisory time. Our first activity allowed students to learn about their Buzz Buddy and helped them understand what they had in common with their new friend. Students worked hard to complete a Thankful Tree for the cafeteria. The leaves of the tree were created using cutouts of their hand. With the help of their buddy, they identified something they were thankful for in their life. Students did a lesson over the importance of friendships and created a thumbprint tree with their Buzz Buddy class. Those trees are framed and hung in our hallway for everyone to see.

Get Creative With Career Exploration
Submitted by Career Technical Counselor Audrey Smith

Deshler High School students in the ninth, 10th and 12th grades participate in a career fair designed to expose them to careers for which education and training are available within the local community.
Teens Learn Driving Safety With UrKeys2Drv
Kim Benson, Verbena High School

7th - 12th grade students at Verbena High School participated in UrKeys2Drv, a drive safe event. Presenters did an awesome job teaching about choices as both a driver and passenger. Students spent the day rotating through numerous sessions learning about driving under the influence, texting while driving, ATV safety, distracted driving, and seat belt safety. They also had the opportunity to hear the story of a mother who lost a son to a drunk driver.

Students participated in various simulations: texting and driving simulation, drunk driving simulation, distracted driving simulation, concussion experiments, and a drunk goggle driving course.

A huge thank you to the sponsors and presenters that made this event possible: UAB/Children’s of Alabama, State Farm Insurance, Drive Safe Alabama, Safe Kids Alabama, Alabama Department of Public Health, Alabama Department of Transportation, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, CARE Ambulance, Alabama State Troopers, ASF Foundation, and Injury Free Coalition for Kids.

Confident Me! DOVE Self Esteem Program
Jan Gay, Summerdale School

Why is body confidence and self-esteem important for students?
The early teen years are one of the most dynamic in terms of development—physically, emotionally and socially. Fitting in and being accepted by peers is central.

On behalf of the Dove Self-Esteem Project National Cadre and Cairn Counseling and Guidance, I will share about the Dove Self-Esteem Project (DSEP). As a school counselor, I know how challenging it is to find research-based, solid resources for improving self-esteem. I also know how hard it is to find free evidence-based curriculum to use in our programs.

The DSEP Confident Me! program promotes body confidence among youth ages 11-14 in school settings. Lessons include a range of curriculum-relevant teaching resources, developed in collaboration with teachers and students. One strength of the program is its focus on inclusion and recognizes the struggles males and females endure during adolescence. I use the videos in the Confident Me! lessons to engage my students in rich discussions about the challenges of middle school.

To receive information and the curriculum for this free program, please complete this form at https://goo.gl/forms/1GcmC0QXxkM7AFt1. All resources and lesson are available through free downloadable materials created through grant funding. These are free and reusable.

Dove is providing incentives to any educator or school professional who implements the Confident Me! program by Dec. 8, 2019, and provide feedback. Participants are entered into a drawing for a chance to win paid attendance our state conference, a national conference of their choice, 2020—all Expenses PAID!

For more information please contact School Counselor Jan Gay, jannua@hotmail.com. I am a regional representative of the program and will happily provide further details and discuss the program options.