

Student Support Services

Newsletter



May 2023



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Visit our Student Support Services website at columbusacademy.org/studentsupportservices



Meet Our Support Services Team



Heather Levingston
Co-Director of Student
Support Services



Suzanne Ritter, Ph.D.
Co-Director of Student
Support Services



Brelle Farrenkopf
Associate Head of Lower School;
Chair for Student
Support Services



Amy Brooks
Middle School Counselor



Taylor Dillon
Upper School Counselor



Andrea Arner
Learning Styles Specialist
Middle School



Kelsey Pecenka
Learning Styles Specialist
Middle School



Alyssa Thiele
Learning Styles Specialist
Lower School



Sarah Wolff
Learning Styles Specialist
Lower School



Jeff Arndt
Reading Specialist
Upper School



Katy Frickel
Reading Specialist
Upper School



Kim Masturzo
Reading Specialist &
First Grade Associate
Lower School



Cyndi Yakscoe
Reading Specialist
Lower School



Kate Dudenhoeffer
Speech-Language
Pathologist



Alexis Marin
Speech-Language
Pathologist Grades 4-8



Ann McCabe
Health & Wellness
Middle & Upper School



Beckie Hoagland
School Nurse



Janet Fireman
School Nurse



Teresa Bowman
School Nurse

A Word from Our Directors

Heather Levingston and Suzanne Ritter
Co-Directors of Student Support Services

We are proud of the work that our Support Services team has done to become more visible and integrated into the everyday life of the school. Along with supporting our students individually, our Lower, Middle and Upper School specialists have increased their time in the classroom so students can learn to apply skills in real time. Our US reading specialists have made their new location a cozy and inviting space for students to take tests, study, and seek additional support. They have also offered test taking strategies to upper-schoolers. Our counselors for Middle and Upper School have helped us learn more about the mental health needs of our students and are continuing to find creative ways to meet those needs.

We are looking forward to welcoming our new LS counselor, Danielle Gibbs, in August. She has a wealth of school counselor education and experience, with an M.A. in counselor education from The Ohio State University and 18 years spent as a school counselor. The last 17 years she has been the early childhood and lower school counselor at The Wellington School.

Here are some resources when you have questions over the summer about how to help your children to flourish, and handle any mental health concerns that arise. We are also adding resources designed to help parents support their children as learners for next school year.

These websites offer research-based education, resources and advice for parents:

[Action for Happiness](#): This website offers evidence-based skills for creating a sense of belonging, and ways to commit to personal action to create more happiness for ourselves and others.

[Child Mind Institute](#): I regularly turn to this website as an up-to-date and accessible source of information for mental health and learning disorder research.

[On Our Sleeves](#): This is Nationwide Children's sponsored website designed to provide up-to-date resources and education about the supporting your child's mental health

[Flusterclux Podcast](#): This is an excellent podcast with the goal of helping families manage their children's anxiety. It is hosted by a nationally recognized psychotherapist and trainer, Lynn Lyons, LICSW. You can check out her [website](#), with more information about her books, articles and parent education training.

[The Stand Project UA](#): This is an excellent local resource for information about teen drug and alcohol use, prevention and treatment.

[ADditude Magazine](#): This is an online resource for families living with executive functioning difficulties, ADHD, and related conditions.

[Understood.org](#) - This is a non-profit organization that provides resources and support to all kinds of learners.

Finally, in the event of a crisis with your teen or child, here are **emergency contact numbers** that you can call to support you and walk you through the process of linking your child with a mental health provider:

Children's Hospital Crisis Line

614-722-1800 (ages 17 and under)

1-888-276-2273 (over 18)

Non Crisis Appointments: (614) 355-8080

Syntero

Intake: 614-889-5722, ext 133

www.syntero.org/programs/programs-for-youth/

OSU Harding Behavioral Health

(Ages 17 +) 614-293-9600

Most of all, we are hoping that you don't need any of this information this summer, and that you all take the time to relax, enjoy the weather, savor the moment and have some fun with your families over the summer!

See you in August!

Co-Directors of Student Support Services

[Suzanne Ritter, Ph.D.](#)

[Heather Levingston, M.A.](#)



Middle School Counselor Update

Amy Brooks
Middle School Counselor

Summer Balance: Setting Goals and Finding Breathing Space

Summer provides time and opportunity that is sometimes tricky within the bustle of the school year. As this summer starts, striking a balance between setting goals and finding time to breathe is something to strive for with middle-schoolers. Goals can help motivate students to grow and learn new skills. Rest is also necessary for adolescents. The practice of embracing breaks as a time to find peace and calm is a skill that can serve students into adulthood.

Summer goals for middle school students could be physical, social or academic. Giving adolescents the opportunity to figure out what is important to them is key for their summer goal setting. Writing down a specific goal can help with motivation. It also provides a source of accountability and an outlet for creativity. The key is to make sure the goal belongs to the student. Let them have some control over what they would like to achieve in the summer months. Parents can help encourage and define the timing of goals, but giving control to middle school students over their hopes and dreams for the summer months can be empowering.

Finding breathing space in the summer can help set middle school students up for success when they return to the classroom in the fall. Summer can translate to a slower tempo and allow students a chance to reset and reflect on their previous school year. Navigating middle school can be exhausting. Summer provides time and space for students to recharge their batteries. The longer days allow students to soak up the sunshine and vitamin D. This can help with mood and overall well being.

Carving out time for rest and supporting middle schoolers with their personal goals can be extremely beneficial. Summer can be a great time for the whole family to slow down a bit and reflect on the progress from the previous school year. It's also a great time to grow and learn something new.

Here are some additional articles and resources:

[Summer Fun with the Brain in Mind](#)

[SMART Goals](#) template

[10 Tools to Help Teens De-Stress](#)

[51 Summer Activity for Teens](#)

[Amy Brooks](#)

Middle School Counselor



Upper School Counselor Update

Taylor Dillon
Upper School Counselor

Welcome to the end of the school year! You know what that means ... SUMMER BREAK! I'm sure we all are excited for the summer months with vacations, trips to the pool, BBQ's and more. But what does it mean for our mental health? We see it all the time, where a student struggles during the school year with some depressive symptoms or anxiety but during the summertime it just melts away. What is it about summer that improves our mental health so much?

A large part of it is the fact that we are spending more time outside in the sun. Researchers agree that exercise, nature and sunshine are essential ingredients for improving how we feel both physically and mentally. Vitamin D is absorbed through our skin and assists our bodies in producing serotonin which helps us regulate our mood. With nice weather, we are also more inclined to be outside being active, going for a walk or hike, swimming or riding a bike. We all know the benefits that come from exercise and summer provides more opportunities for us to be active. Summer is the perfect time for us to relax and enjoy our family, friends and the world around us, leading to us feeling happier and healthier.

On the flip side, sometimes summer can bring on that summertime sadness, often seen in kids and teens. With lack of a routine, less social interactions and less sleep (due to longer days and late nights), their moods can take a drastic down swing. Kids and teens thrive with structure but in the summer months the lack of routine can have a big impact. This can cause a lapse in their responsibilities, poor impulse control and feelings of depression or anxiety. The lack of routine might also lead to less social interaction with friends. They aren't seeing their peers everyday and might cause them to be stuck inside, on their phone or other electronic devices. Sometimes they will stay up late, past midnight on their devices leading to poor sleep habits in the summer. The extreme heat in the summer can lead to a more irritable attitude as well. Also, there is this expectation for summer to be an amazing adventure, but sometimes it's just staying at home. All these things combined can create a perfect storm for a depressed or anxious child.

If you notice your loved one starting to become a little down, encourage them to establish some sort of structure to their day. Have them wake up at the same time, make breakfast, and go for a morning stroll. Encourage them to put their device down and go outside. Offer for a friend to come over, hang out, or maybe join your family for an outing. Find opportunities to sneak in a routine and positive social interactions. Sit down with them and create a weekly calendar of events and routine. Help them to manage their expectations about what the summer will look like. Not all summers are epic adventures, sometimes it is just reading a good book at home.

Summer is a time to relax and enjoy friends and family. While many teens notice a positive change in their mental health, not everyone has the same experience. Parents and guardians can help their teens understand that they can improve their teen's overall well-being by helping them manage expectations and add some healthy habits to their summertime.

If you would like to read more on summer's impact on mental health, check out the following articles:

[How Summer Can Affect Our Mental Health](#)

[Summer Can Have Both Positive and Negative Effects On Your Mood](#)

[Avoiding Dread and Enjoying Summer: A Teen's Guide to A Mentally Healthy Summer Transition](#)

[Taylor Dillon, MSW, LISW](#)
Upper School Counselor



Upper School Support Update

Jeff Arndt and Katy Frickel
Upper School Reading Specialists

At the beginning of the 2022-23 school year the upper school reading specialists, [Jeff Arndt](#) and [Katy Frickel](#), moved into a new space in our Reinberger Upper School Library. While Katy and Jeff continue to meet with students one-on-one and in small groups, all students are welcome to take advantage of the informal and roomy surroundings. Formerly the Upper School Makerspace, this area was transformed last summer to include two offices and a common area where students can come to during scheduled and unscheduled times to complete homework, work together on projects, take tests or get extra help from the reading specialists on various academic skills. This month we are beginning study skills mini-workshops that will be open to all upper-schoolers. Some of the topics will include, test taking and study strategies, time management, active reading and notetaking skills and more.



The reading specialists have also been busy partnering with departments and teachers across the curriculum in the upper school. In mid-December, they visited all freshman Research classes to share midterm exam preparation, study and time management tips with as they prepared to take their first round of semester exams. They have also been joining ninth grade Human Geography classes to assist with refining topics and starting the organization process of their opening statements as they prepare for in-class debates. Katy and Jeff have also been working with some Modern World History classes to assist in the research and organization of topics for upcoming term papers.

If you find yourself on campus and near the Reinberger Upper School Library, stop by and say hello and check out their new offices and common study area. They'd be happy to show you around!