



## Middle School Matters

Friday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### EMS FAMILIES,

What a wonderful week it's been at the MS! iReady testing is underway. Our students are 50% complete in both Math and Reading so if you're student hasn't shared their scores with you, make sure to ask them about their progress!



Our 6<sup>th</sup> grade fundraiser kicked off on Friday. If you don't have a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student, no worries! We can connect you through PTO and show you how to order.



Sixth grade parents, mark your calendars: orders are due Monday, October 7<sup>th</sup>. Pick up for items is scheduled for November 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> at the Intermediate.



A Tradition of  
Educational Excellence

## **EDWARDSBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

69410 SECTION STREET • EDWARDSBURG, MI 49112  
(269)663-3055 • Fax (269) 663-6485 • [www.edwardsburgpublicschools.org](http://www.edwardsburgpublicschools.org)

James A. Kroll, Superintendent

September 16, 2019

Dear Parents,

We believe Edwardsburg Public Schools are safe, but no community is immune from the threats of violence and drugs that endanger schools in Michigan. To address those concerns and to prepare your child for his or her part in staying safe, we are hosting OK2SAY programming for our 6th–12th grade students on September 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. We are also hosting the Michigan Cyber Safety Initiative (CSI), student safety seminars and OK2SAY's feeder programming, for our K–5th grade students on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

OK2SAY is a student safety initiative available to Michigan students in grades K–12 and enables students to confidentially report potential harm or criminal activities aimed at students, teachers, staff or other school employees. The program is operated through a partnership between the Department of Attorney General, Michigan State Police, state agencies, schools, parents, law enforcement, and community leaders. Anyone can confidentially submit tips 24/7 using the OK2SAY app, [online](http://www.ok2say.com) ([www.ok2say.com](http://www.ok2say.com)), texting 652729 (OK2SAY), [email](mailto:ok2say@mi.gov) ([ok2say@mi.gov](mailto:ok2say@mi.gov)), or by calling 8-555-OK2SAY.

In just two years, nearly 5,000 tips have been submitted to OK2SAY from across the State of Michigan. There are close to 30 categories to choose from when submitting a confidential tip. However, most tips were related to bullying, cyberbullying, self-harm, and suicide. Other tips reported include drug use, weapon possession, or assault. Upon receipt of a tip, specially trained OK2SAY technicians at the Michigan State Police address the immediate need and, as necessary, forward the information to the appropriate responding agency. Depending upon the nature, tips go to schools, local law enforcement agencies, community mental health agencies, or the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

To ensure tips are acted upon, agencies receiving tips are asked to submit outcome reports detailing how the tip was handled. Annual reports on the program's impact detail the types and numbers of tips handled. Annual reports are available on the OK2SAY website.

Additional information is available on the [OK2SAY website](http://www.ok2say.com) ([www.ok2say.com](http://www.ok2say.com)).



The **7th grade** volleyball team is on a roll, winning all three of their last three games! The girls are working hard and motivated to do their best. Way to go!

Eddies vs. Plainwell---WIN---25-17, 25-11, 19-25, 25-12, 15-2

Eddies vs. Otsego---WIN---25-14, 25-21, 22-25, 25-6, 24-25

Eddies vs. Paw Paw--WIN---25-10, 25-20, 25-11, 25-21, 25-17

This week the **8th grade** Lady Eddies split their matches. The Eddies lost to Otsego, a tough team. The Eddies then redeemed themselves by winning against Paw Paw at home. The 8th grade team stands at 6-2 and is heading to South Haven on Monday.

the Bash is Back  
BACK TO THE 80s

EDWARDSBURG ATHLETIC BOOSTERS  
**Booster Bash**  
SATURDAY, OCT. 19, 2019  
7 - 11 PM

OUR LADY OF THE LAKE  
24832 US 12, EDWARDSBURG

**Tickets \$50 each**  
ADULTS ONLY (21 & UP)

TICKETS INCLUDE: DINNER, DRINKS & DESSERT, SILENT AUCTION, REVELRY AND AWARDS FOR BEST DRESSED (1ST PLACE - \$200, 2ND PLACE - \$150, 3RD PLACE - \$100)

FOR TICKETS CONTACT:  
ASHLY LUNDGREN  
574.215.7439



### **6 ways to help when your child is excluded**

Parents may feel powerless when their child is excluded, but there's actually much you can do to help your child cope and overcome this painful experience.

by: Katie Hurley | September 12, 2019

The mom of a third grade girl sits in my office, her face buried in her hands. Through muffled sobs, she tells me that she's at a loss. She's tried everything to help her daughter repair her friendships at school — arranging coffee dates with the families of the other girls, meeting with the teacher and school director, and even trying to organize a group sleepover to get the girls together — but nothing has made a difference. Her daughter is on the outs with a peer group she formed in preschool, and this mom feels powerless to help.

Her daughter is the victim of what's called relational aggression. For reasons she might never understand, her three close friends have built a new alliance and excluded her. They taunt her, spread rumors about her, and leave her out of their activities, encouraging others to do the same. They seem to have no remorse, while she experiences anxiety, nightmares, and academic difficulties.

Relational aggression can occur in person or online and can include gossiping, spreading rumors, public humiliation, alliance building, and social exclusion. Unlike physical bullying or verbal aggression, relational aggression can be difficult to spot. Recess, passing periods, lunch, and the walk to and from school are hotspots for relational aggression, but the damage can also be done outside of school, often under the radar of adults.

Unfortunately, this girl — and her mother — are not alone. According to statistics compiled by The Ophelia Project, a national nonprofit with expertise in relational aggression, 48 percent of students in grades 5 to 12 are regularly involved in or witness relational aggression, and students between the ages of 11 and 15 report being exposed to 33 acts of relational aggression during a typical week. The proportion of youth who experience cyberbullying is estimated to be as high as 40 percent or more. As I detail in my book *No More Mean Girls*, being the victim of relational aggression can come with some long-term consequences. In fact, relational aggression is said to be as painful as physical blows, and its negative effects can last for years to come. Children who experience relational aggression are more likely to be absent from school, perform worse academically, be socially isolated, and exhibit headaches and stomachaches, behavioral problems, eating disorders, suicidal ideation, substance abuse, symptoms of depression and anxiety, loneliness, and low self-esteem. No wonder that mom is concerned! But there is good news: Parents can help their kids deal with social exclusion by teaching them coping skills and empowering them to seek healthy friendships. While your natural instinct may be to get the school involved, communicate with the parents of other kids, and jump into problem-solving mode, what kids need most is support, empathy, and space from the problem. Try some of these strategies adapted from *No More Mean Girls*.

#### **Watch for the signs**

Given that kids experience feelings of shame and embarrassment when being victimized, they don't always come forward right away. Many wait until they feel like they're falling apart before they reach out for a lifeline. To that end, it helps parents to watch out for the red flags that a child is experiencing relational aggression:

- Anxious or nervous behaviors
- Frequent physical complaints, such as headaches or stomach aches, particularly before school or social events
- Talking about sitting alone at lunch or playing alone at recess more often than not
- Appearing withdrawn or depressed
- Changing academic performance
- Acting out in class or at home, or even turning the tables and acting as the bully
- Talking about having no friends or being “hated”
- Talking about death or engaging in self-harm (cutting)
- Sleep disturbance: Difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep, frequent nightmares, or excessive sleeping
- Changing eating habits

Once you see these signs, you will want to check in with your child or the school to see if relational aggression may be causing them.

#### **Use conversation starters**

One reason kids hesitate to come forward when dealing with relational aggression is that it’s difficult to discuss. They don’t want their parents to think that they’re incapable of making friends.

Open and honest communication with kids is essential during middle childhood and the tween/teen years. They need to know that parents will listen without judgment and provide unconditional love and support. To get in the habit of deep, distraction-free conversations, create a pack of conversation starters to use when you have downtime together. It helps to start a weekly ritual of quiet conversation and hot chocolate (or some other cozy treat).

Examples of conversation starters might include:

- Something funny that happened this week was...
- If I could escape anywhere for just one day, it would be...
- Something hard that I had to deal with this week was...
- I wish my friends...
- Something you don’t know about me is...
- My favorite way to spend a day off is...

Taking turns pulling conversation starters for each other from an envelope helps you connect in a low-stress environment and helps your child open up about difficult topics.

#### **Make a friendship tree**

Kids are usually tasked with making a family tree at some point in school, but making a friendship tree is a great way to help kids realize that they have many different friends in life. Just as family extends beyond the people living in your home, friendships blossom in a variety of contexts.

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Start the tree with the friends your child knows the best (even the ones she doesn’t spend much time with), but cue your child to think about friends made in sports, through religious organizations, in extracurricular classes, or even at your local park. In filling the branches with friends from a wide variety of settings, girls learn to focus on the positive relationships in their lives. When kids see that they have more friends than the people sitting at their lunch table, they are empowered to strengthen those other branches and even add new ones by trying new clubs, sports, or activities.

#### **Create a personal billboard**

When friends constantly leave a child out, that child internalizes the message that he or she is unlikable or not a good friend. It's important to help kids tap into their inner strengths and recognize that they *are* good friends to others.

Give your child a small poster board and ask her to think about her positive qualities. This can include anything from cracking funny jokes to creating cool games to giving great compliments. Next, explain that billboards are used to draw attention to things and showcase the highlights. Have your child put her name in the center of the poster board and ask her to create an eye-popping billboard that includes her positive traits. This is a great way to help kids recognize and focus on their strengths.

### **Problem-solve together**

One thing I see over and over again is that parents are determined to “fix” things for their kids. When kids finally find the strength to come forward and share their feelings and experiences, parents whip out their phones and begin texting other parents, emailing the school, and even reaching out on social media to garner support. Kids tend to retreat inward again in response.

A better strategy is to problem-solve *with* your child. The first step is to really listen to what your child is saying. Ask follow-up questions to make sure you understand. Empathize with your child. Ask your child to help you jot down notes so that you can remember the specifics to share with helpers. Communicate that you understand how painful the situation is and that you are there to help and provide support. Next, move into problem-solving mode. It's important to brainstorm possible solutions together to empower your child to take action. In doing this, you teach your child how to cope with future similar situations. Try to brainstorm four or five possible solutions, and talk about the pros and cons of each. Make an action plan together.

### **Create a coping kit**

Whether your child is left out from one or two social events or experiences social exclusion frequently at school, he or she needs to have coping skills available to deal with the emotional upheaval. I encourage parents to tuck a pack of coping cards into the child's backpack, as it can be difficult to remember what to do when under stress. Every child is different, so it's important to create these cards with your child, but you can try a few of these to get started:

- My touchstone at school is (fill in the blank). I can ask this person for support.
- Deep breaths help me feel calm. Breathe in (count four), hold (count four), breathe out (count four).
- Remember this friend (fill in the blank) in another class to hang out with at recess.
- Tensing and relaxing my muscles helps me release stress. I can start with my hands.

It's perfectly normal for kids to experience ups and downs with friendships, but a pattern of social exclusion (or other acts of relational aggression) should be addressed with the classroom teacher and the school administration. Take notes when your child shares specific stories and capture screenshots if any of this behavior occurs online. If you do notice symptoms of anxiety or depression that interfere with your child's daily living (school, after-school activities, sleep, eating), it's best to seek an assessment from a licensed mental health practitioner.

Parents really are not powerless to help their kids recover from social exclusion, but they do need the right tools. By acknowledging feelings, finding solutions together, and helping children tap into their own resources, parents can support their kids through this agonizing experience and ultimately prepare them to face any future adversity with more confidence.



Week three is in the books! The middle school students have continued to move forward with strong effort. When I walk the building am I inspired by the teachers, staff and the students diligently at work. The potential is unlimited for these students as they are gaining the confidence, knowledge and skills needed to grow. The teamwork between the school and the middle school families are instrumental in the student's success and nothing can give a young student more confidence then sings of caring from the ones they love. I often struggle with my own teenage children at home when it comes to communication but there are lot of was to encourage the person they are becoming:

Thank you • Good job • I'm sorry • I forgive you • I'm proud of you • Great work • I can tell you worked hard • You look great • Sure, I'll watch • Let's play a game • May I help you with that • You have a kind heart • I know you can do whatever you put your mind to • You're hilarious • You crack me up • You're a great friend • I can see how much you've improved • Can you help me • Let's do this together • I believe in you • Tell me more • I'll always be here for you • I know you'll do your best • You're fantastic • Your [sense of humor, dedication, loyalty, etc.] is the perfect addition to our family • I'm so proud to be your mom/dad • We don't always agree, but I always love you • I can't get over how amazing you are • You're so compassionate • Let's hang out. What do YOU want to do • You are really growing up into a wonderful young [man/woman] • That showed such maturity • That was a wise choice • I trust you • You're an impressive kid • I love your [mom/dad] so much, and I can see so much of [him/her] in you • I love being around you • I love doing things with you • I was so blessed the day I had you • I feel so proud when I'm with you • I made your favorite [snack, breakfast, lunch, dinner] • You handled that well • How do you feel about that • That looks great on you • You have such good taste • Would you turn your music up? I want to hear what you love • Can you teach me how to play [your favorite game] • When did you get to be so well-disciplined • You're very courageous • What would you like me to understand about you • What one thing would you change about me if you could • I love watching you grow up • It's such a gift to spend the day with you • I can't wait to see you perform in your [concert, game, etc.] • Let's read a great book together after dinner tonight • How about you pick tonight's family movie • Everyone makes mistakes; I know you'll learn great things from this • You rock • Let's go have a water gun fight • I found this little container – let's go catch lightning bugs • You are the best • Here... I saw this and thought of you • Will you play your [instrument] for me? I love hearing you play • Let's go for a bike ride • You are awesome • I love the way your mind works • You have a great work ethic • I know you'll be an amazing adult • What a fantastic dad/mom you'll be one day • What do you think our family should do about \_\_\_\_\_ • I'm never too busy for you • How was your day • You always make me smile • My life is better because you're in it • You have a wonderful imagination • You're so creative • You are strong • You matter • I'm curious about what you think • you make a difference in so many lives • I'm listening •

HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND EVERYONE!!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca Crocker".

Principal

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrew Jordan".

Middle School Assistant Principal