

COUNSELING CORNER

Monthly school newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services

SPECIAL EDITION: INCLUSION

#IAmStronger

#IAmStronger Edition

Our goal is to promote **Inclusion** on school campuses to decrease the impact of bullying.

The #IAmStronger Initiative runs yearly across school campuses that Lutheran Counseling Services serves in the Orlando area. This year it is held **February 3-7 th**, in conjunction with **National School Counseling Week**. It is our goal, through IAmStronger, to help educate students, school staff and parents on how to be STRONGER by including others with our words, minds and actions and to stop hurtful & excluding behavior.

Event Spotlight:

Ask-A-Therapist Webinar
2/12/20 @ 2 p.m.

Join the LCS Ask-A-Therapist webinar as we focus this month on relationships, families & inclusion. Mark your calendar & join from your tablet, smartphone or PC. Sign up @ [GoToMeeting link](#)



Word of the Month: Inclusion

Our focus for February is on **Inclusion**, which the National Bullying Prevention Center defines as, **the act of inviting and involving others, so that they are welcomed, valued and supported.** Parents, students, teachers and all members of our community can support this drive to include others.

Promote **IN**clusion with these other "IN" words: (Includesomeone.com)

- **IN**volve, **IN**fluence, **IN**teract, **IN**vite, **IN**terest, **IN**spire

Families, classrooms, schools, clubs, any organization can focus on being INclusive. Children of all ages learn from what is modeled to them and what they are taught and encouraged to develop. Children learn best when given a clear goal and model to follow. As such, focus more on promoting these traits, rather than guiding them away from what not to do.

Start by focusing on showing interest in what kids have to say by validating their feelings & ideas shared. We can influence and inspire them to develop a habit of including others by finding ways to do that ourselves. Invite someone to sit near you at a soccer game, or go ahead of you in the grocery line if they have a few items. Find ways to involve the whole family/classroom in tasks and activities, finding a special role for each person. Challenge yourself to interact with new people daily, whether with a smile, warm greeting, compliment or short conversation.

Making inclusion a daily focus allows our children to feel valued, and to learn the skills to promote this in their own social circles. Throughout the lifespan, feeling included and belonging promotes wellbeing. Building habits to cultivate inclusion of all people leads to long-lasting rewards in self-esteem, social-emotional growth and connection with others. In your daily life, **Choose to Include!**



Car Conversations

Whether in the car, at the dinner table or store line, here are conversation ideas to build this quality in your child.

- As a family, make dinner in a way that includes all family members. Each family member has a task to contribute to the process (buying food, cooking, setting table, clearing table, cleaning dishes, even the family pet eats food that has fallen on the floor). Discuss how each family member's contribution was different & valuable.



- Take 5 random items/toys and challenge each person to tell a 1 sentence story that includes all items. Discuss how a focus on bringing things together, rather than excluding, is useful at school or work.
- Complete a puzzle as a family. Discuss how each piece fits together and plays an important role in the overall picture. How is this also true in the family, classroom, sporting field, church, club, or neighborhood?



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Check-in with your Child

Feeling included is important at all ages. Even the youngest babies cry to seek a sense of connection to their caregivers and ensure they are fed and cared for. Babies look frequently towards faces and are drawn to watch what others are doing and learn from this modeling.

Preschool-aged children begin to understand their own emotions. They learn how to move from playing next to other children to playing with them. Sharing toys and learning that parents will return become important lessons at this stage, leading to feeling included and getting along well with others.

Early school-aged children begin to understand others' emotions, feel a sense of embarrassment and can engage well in groups, such as team sports or clubs. They also start to form friendship groups and begin to develop their own identity. Peer conflict can arise at these ages as they learn to navigate their social world and learn the skills to listen to and understand others while also sharing their own thoughts and feelings.

Middle school is a time of further refining identity and can lead to difficulties with feeling included as interests start to narrow. Vast brain and emotional development can also lead to fluctuations in mood. This age tends to seek independence while still needing structure and support from parents and other adults.

High School is a time of further solidifying identity, interests, plans for the future and romantic connections. Social groups become more important and can vary as adolescents embark in different peer groups related to experimenting with different identities. This is a time of fluctuating between academic, work, peer, romantic, and extracurricular social connections.

Parents can and should regularly check in with their children about ways they feel included and excluded in their social circles and daily lives. Parents can check in with teachers, coaches and youth leaders of younger children to get a sense of how often their child is included in groups such in the classroom, recess or lunch time. Parents of children who have any device that allows for communication with others, or any social media involvement should regularly check in on these forms of communication. Parents should gauge how much support their child needs in using these tools, or in developing social skills to manage these platforms well.



RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

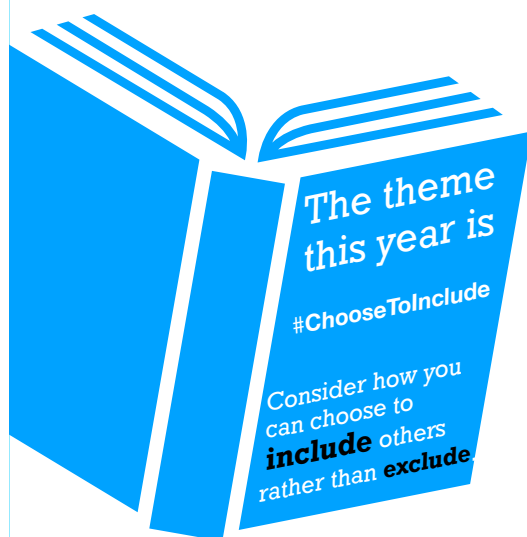
This school year we have focused on sharing books and other resources related to the word of the month. When you purchase through our link, you are supporting our efforts to expand our school counseling program to reach to new schools, children, and families. Thank you!

Consider the following resources highlighting inclusion for different ages:

Younger children will enjoy the colorful pictures in Todd Parr's books, including **It's Okay to Be Different.**

Lutheran Counseling Services is excited to announce this year's contest for our #IAmStronger Campaign!

This year, LCS has focused on books and other resources to encourage character development and mental health. Now it's your turn to create a book cover to promote the importance of Inclusion!



Tips for your book cover:

- Include the following in your book cover:
 - Title of your book
 - Author(s): first & last name & grade level/age of student(s) completing book cover
 - Biography paragraph about the author(s) and why inclusion is important to him/her/them (2nd grade and under- parent supported)
 - Visuals
 - Summary paragraph of the book/story. (2nd grade and under- parent supported)
- Students can work alone or with others, but prizes will be awarded per entry (Ex: 1 giftcard per winning book cover submission)
- **Submit your book cover by March 1, 2020**
 - A physical copy can be given to the LCS School Counselor at your school -OR-
 - E-mail a digital version to Schools@lcsfl.com

Submission Judging

Contest entries will be evaluated based on the following:

Each category earns 0 to 5 points:

- 5 areas included: Title, Author(s), Biography, Visuals & Summary
- The importance of Inclusion is clearly and strongly communicated
- Visuals are visually pleasing and enhance the importance of inclusion
- Book title is creative and ties to inclusion
- Biography section addresses how inclusion is important to the author(s)
- Storybook summary highlights how inclusion is important.

Entries will be divided into 2 categories:

- 2nd grade and under
- 3rd grade and up

The Top 3 book covers will be posted on the Lutheran Counseling Services website and social media pages to share the message of Inclusion!

Top 3 winners earn a Target gift card!



1st place: \$50
2nd place: \$25
3rd place: \$10

Full rules & information at LCSFL.com!

Elementary through Middle Schoolers will connect to **Wonder**, by **R.J. Palacio**, as it tells the story of Auggie, who navigates being different while starting middle school (Also made into a **movie.**)



COUNSELOR CONNECTION

Reach out to your school, the LCS main office at (407) 644-4692 or lcsfl.com to connect to your school's counselor for additional support and resources on this or other topics.

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