

# How to Thrive at Longfellow

Presented by Longfellow Middle School and the  
Longfellow PTA

# Agenda

- **Opening** – Sophia Bruner, PTA President; LMS String Quartet
- **Welcome to Life at Longfellow** – Carole Kihm, Principal
- **Adolescent Development in Context** – Dr. Michael Axler, Psychologist, FCPS
- **Helping Your Student be Successful** – Samantha Kramer, Margaret Veenstra, Bruce Walker, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Counselors
- **What Else You Need to Know as a Longfellow Parent** – Gail Bigio, Director of Student Services
- **Closing** - Carole Kihm
- **Q&A with Speakers**
- **Q&A with Current Longfellow Parents**

# Adolescent Development in Interpersonal Context

**Michael S. Axler, Psy.D.**

*Psychologist, Fairfax County Public Schools  
Office of Intervention and Prevention Services*



# Significant Interpersonal Relationships During Adolescence

# Parent-Adolescent Relationships: Primary Questions

- How do parent-adolescent relationships change over the course of adolescence?
  - ▣ What is the impact of adolescence on the family?
- How does adolescent adjustment vary as a function of variations in the parent-adolescent relationship?
  - ▣ What is the impact of the family on the adolescent?

# Changes in Family Relationships:

## Autonomy

- As children enter adolescence, they will strive toward greater autonomy
  - ▣ Establishing autonomy involves becoming a self-governing person *within* relationships
- Adolescents' early attempts at establishing autonomy frequently precipitate conflict between parents and teenagers
  - ▣ During adolescence, a shift occurs toward a more egalitarian relationship

# Changes in Family Relationships: Conflict

- Frequent, high-intensity, angry fighting is *not* normative during adolescence
- There *is* a genuine increase in bickering and squabbling between parents and teenagers during the early adolescent years
- Much parent-adolescent conflict results from changes in the adolescent's reasoning about the legitimacy of parental authority.

# Changes in Family Relationships:

## Harmony

- Subjective feelings of closeness decrease during adolescence, as does the amount of time parents and teenagers spend together
- Although *perceptions* of relationships often remain warm and supportive, both adolescents and parents report less frequent *expressions* of positive emotions
- Children who had warm, close relationships with their parents during childhood are likely to remain close and connected to their parents during adolescence, even though the frequency and quantity of positive interactions may be somewhat diminished

# Influence of Parenting on Adjustment

- Four patterns of parenting:

<b>Authoritative</b> (responsive and demanding)	<b>Permissive</b> (responsive but not demanding)
<b>Authoritarian</b> (demanding but not responsive)	<b>Indifferent</b> (neither responsive nor demanding)

# Influence of Parenting on Adjustment

- **Authoritative**: adolescents are more responsible, more self-assured, and more socially competent
- **Authoritarian**: adolescents are more dependent, more passive, less socially adept, less confident, and less intellectually curious
- **Permissive**: adolescents are often less mature, less responsible, more vulnerable to peer pressure, and less able to assume positions of leadership
- **Indifferent**: adolescents are disproportionately impulsive, more likely to be involved in delinquent behavior, and more likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol

# Influence of Parenting on Adjustment

- Across a variety of outcomes, adolescents fare best in homes that strike a balance between autonomy and connectedness
- Such homes are characterized by a climate of warmth, in which they are encouraged both to be “connected” to their parents and to express their own individuality
- Such homes employ joint decision-making, whereby the adolescent plays an important role in the decision-making process but parents remain involved in the eventual resolution

# Friendships

- In adolescence, friendships are the primary contexts for the acquisition of skills – ranging from social competencies to cognitive abilities – and socio-cultural values and expectations
- In adolescence, perceptions of parents as primary sources of support decline and perceived support from friends increases
- High quality friendships become increasingly important as sources of support for adolescents experiencing emotional problems, though they do not substitute for parental support

# Romantic Relationships

- Romantic interests are both normal and important during adolescence
- Many adolescents regard being in a romantic relationship as central to “belonging” and status in their peer group
  - ▣ This link is transactional: peer networks support early romantic coupling, and romantic relationships facilitate connections with other peers

# Romantic Relationships

- Although early dating and sexual activity are risk factors for subsequent social and emotional difficulties, high quality romantic relationships are associated with enhanced feelings of self-worth
- The developmental significance of romantic relationships depends more heavily on the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional processes that occur in the relationship than on the age of initiation and degree of dating activity that an adolescent experiences



# Interpersonal Contexts and the Psychosocial Tasks of Adolescence

# Independence and Interdependence

- Adolescence is a period of tension between two developmental tasks:
  - 1) Attaining individual competence and autonomy from the influence of others
  - 2) Increasing connections to others beyond the family and conforming to societal expectations
  
- Successful adolescent development involves separating oneself from others while simultaneously forming connections and close relationships

# Developing a Sense of Independence

- Although the development of independence is often cast as an individual accomplishment, it is embedded in the interpersonal contexts of family and peer relationships
- Independence is both a process and an outcome
- Independence is valued differently in different cultural contexts
- There are two broad types of independence: emotional and behavioral

# Emotional Independence

- Developing emotional independence involves increasing one's subjective sense of independence, especially in relation to one's parents
- In early adolescence, this is achieved in part by separating oneself from and arguing with one's parents
- Through this process the relationship is transformed and the adolescent develops both a new behavioral repertoire and a new image of his or her parents

# Emotional Independence

- Developing emotional independence is not primarily an individual transformation but rather an interpersonal transformation in which patterns of parent-child interaction are mutually (if unwillingly) renegotiated
  
- This transformative process yields three outcomes:
  - 1) A changed *adolescent* who now views him- or herself in a different light
  - 2) Changed *parents* who now view their adolescent (and perhaps themselves) in a different light
  - 3) A changed, more egalitarian parent-child *relationship*

# Behavioral Independence

- Developing behavioral independence involves increasing one's capacity for independent decision-making and self-governance
- It involves strengthening one's ability to function responsibly
  - ▣ In the absence of external guidance or monitoring
  - ▣ In the presence of strong external influences

# Behavioral Independence

- Parents facilitate the development of behavioral independence in four ways:
  - 1) Modeling effective decision-making
  - 2) Encouraging independent decision-making in the family context
  - 3) Rewarding independent decision-making outside the family context
  - 4) Instilling in the adolescent a more general sense of self-efficacy through the use of parenting that is both responsive and demanding

# Developing a Sense of Interdependence

- There are two psychosocial goals comprising the task of interdependence:
  - 1) Attachment
  - 2) Intimacy

# Attachment

- Achieving interdependence in adolescence is part of a developmental attachment process begun at birth
- Attachment refers to a parent-child connection – begun in infancy – that supports children’s efforts to feel safe from threatening circumstances and to be regulated emotionally

# Attachment

- Attachment to parents or caregivers forms the substrate on which other attachments are built
  - ▣ Representations of parent-child attachment relationships organize expectations and behaviors in later relationships
  - ▣ Healthy parent-child relationships expose children to components of effective relating, such as empathy, reciprocity, and self-confidence

# Attachment

- Maintaining interdependence in adolescence involves redistributing the functions of relationships
  - ▣ Perceptions of parents as primary sources of support decline and perceived support from friends increases
  - ▣ Attachment is transformed from a relationship where one partner (the parent) cares for another (the child) to one characterized by mutual caregiving between two partners (friends or romantic partners)

# Attachment

- The quality of early attachment relationships predicts the quality of all future relationships
- For adolescents to achieve interdependence, they must build on earlier secure relationship patterns to form and maintain further stable relationships

# Intimacy

- Intimacy is an interpersonal process within which two interaction partners experience and express feelings, communicate verbally and nonverbally, satisfy social motives, reduce social fears, talk and learn about themselves and their unique characteristics, and become “close”
- As a psychosocial task of adolescence, intimacy refers to experiencing this mutual openness and responsiveness in at least some relationships with peers

# Intimacy

- Concepts of friendship first incorporate notions of intimacy in early adolescence
- Adolescents become increasingly capable of intimate relationships as they develop a more sophisticated understanding of social relations, and as they hone their ability to infer the thoughts and feelings of others

# Intimacy

- In peer relationships, spending larger amounts of time with peers and correspondingly less time with adults contributes to adolescents' development of intimacy by increasing comfort with peers and encouraging self-disclosure as well as openness to others' self-revelations
- Shared interest in mastering the distinctive social challenges of adolescence also stimulates a desire to communicate with peers

# Intimacy

- The superficial sharing of activities that sufficed between childhood friends is supplanted, during adolescence, by the potential for mutual responsiveness, concern, loyalty, trustworthiness, and respect between adolescent friends
- Friendship in adolescence meets a basic psychological need to overcome loneliness and develop a sense of belonging

# Conclusions

- Adolescent development, though largely characterized by biological changes, cannot be understood outside of the interpersonal contexts in which it occurs
- Perceptions and expectations forged through parent-child relationships mediate the psychological and behavioral impact of pubertal changes and provide a foundation on which all adolescent interactions and relationships are based

# Conclusions

- By being mindful of the changes that occur during adolescence and the ways in which parent-child interactions influence these changes, parents will be better equipped to interact with their adolescents in ways that equip them with the skills they require to successfully navigate these transitions and maximize positive developmental outcomes

# Resources

- Parenting from the Inside Out

Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. & Mary Hartzell, M.Ed.

- *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*

John Gottman, Ph.D.

# HELPING YOUR STUDENT BE SUCCESSFUL

**Samantha Kramer**  
**Margaret Veenstra**  
**Bruce Walker**  
*7<sup>th</sup> Grade Counselor*  
Longfellow Middle School

# What Does Longfellow Provide?

- Classroom lessons
  - September-Student interviews
  - October-Sexual Harassment/Bullying
  - November-Study Skills
  - January-Career
  - February-Registration
  
- Individual and Small Group Counseling

# What Does Longfellow Provide?

- Start to Success (August 22-23 or 24-25, full day)
  - ▣ Orientation to middle school covering such topics as organization, study skills, “life as a middle schooler”
  - ▣ Cost is \$35
- Jump Start Program (August 8-19, mornings)
  - ▣ For academically challenged students (recommended by elementary schools)
  - ▣ Focuses on reading and other core fundamentals
- Academic Support Programs
  - ▣ Read 180, Action Literacy, Dual enrollment in Math 7

# Expectations for First Week

- Students report to first period and then follow their schedule
- Teachers will provide supply lists
- Students learn the seven period day schedule and hallway pass time
- Gym uniforms will be given out and paid for the first day of school
- Payment for lunch will be accepted the first day of school (monthly menus are available online)
- SRR and school policies will be discussed

# Expectations Continued..

- Backpacks are not permitted in classes and need to be stored in lockers, rolling bags will not fit into the lockers
- Students will be assigned a main locker and a gym locker (through their PE teacher)
- Distribution of student agendas

# Ways You Can Help Your Child

- Encourage the use of the planner
- Help your child set up a schedule
- Homework folder
- Projects
- Motivation
- Help your child set goals - but make sure they are your child's goals and not just yours!
- Nutrition/Sleep
- Learning Styles
- It is okay to send a QUICK email to check to see how your child is doing - i.e. "Everything turned in this week?"

# Academic Tips

- Make sure your child has a place to study (not in bed)
- Due diligence regarding homework
- Flash cards/mnemonic devices/acronyms
- Math
  - ▣ Keep all homework and correct it in class or home
  - ▣ Homework problems should be reworked on a different sheet before a test for practice. Refer to homework for correct answer.
- Study buddy
- Homework Club

# Bullying Prevention

- Supervise and monitor student's use of social networking sites such as: Facebook, Springform, Google Buzz, etc...
- Cell phones are not permitted in school and should remain off and in lockers during the school day
- At home, limit texting and cell phone use
- Encourage dialogues between you and your children
- Online Bullying Reporting System

# Resources

Longfellow Middle School Web Site - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.fcps.edu/LongfellowMS/pages/parent\_resources.html

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help SnagIt

Longfellow Middle School Web Site

Home RSS Print Page Tools

About Us

Administration

After School

Attendance

Bell Schedule

Business Partners

Calendars

Counseling Dept.

FCPS Resources

General Info.

Library Resources

## Longfellow Middle School

2000 Westmoreland Street – Falls Church, VA 22043 – 703.533.2600  
Fax 703.533.2697 – Attendance Line – 703.533.2626

**Helpful Links For Parents & Students:**

- [Longfellow PTA Information](#)
- [Parent Liason Information](#)
- [Longfellow Reading Resources](#) - Quarterly Newsletter from our Reading Specialist
- 2010 - 2011 [Course Selection Booklet](#)

### Parent Resources

- Parent Test Taking Help Strategies  
<http://www.testtakingtips.com/parents/index.htm>
- How Parents Motivate Their Children Academically  
<http://sitemaker.umich.edu/356.benjamin/resources>
- MVParents Website  
<http://www.mvparents.com/>
- Family Education Website  
<http://life.familyeducation.com/parenting/teen/43735.html>
- [Academic Motivation](#)

Trusted sites 100%

# What Else You Need to Know

**Gail Bigio**

*Director of Student Services*

Longfellow Middle School

# Basic Information

## □ Teams:

- Each of the five counselors are assigned to a team.
- Each team is composed of an English, Social Studies, and Science teacher.
- Math is off team and students are placed in math classes based on their foundational knowledge.

## □ Bell Schedule:

- On Longfellow's webpage
- Classes average 46 minutes
- Four lunches – two 7th grade, two 8th grade
- Block scheduling at McLean

# Basic Information

- Lancer Time:
  - Presently the last twenty-two minutes of the day.
  - Used for Positive Behavior agenda – character education, test/quiz make-up, subject review, homework – teacher discretion

# Starting Off the Year

- Schedule Process:
  - ▣ Will occur the week prior to the beginning of school
  - ▣ No class changes allowed until the end of the first quarter for elective and honors courses.
- Open House (August 31<sup>st</sup> and September 1st):
  - ▣ For parents and students
  - ▣ Locker assignments
- Orientation (September 2, 9:00-11:00)
  - ▣ Students take buses from elementary schools
  - ▣ Students tour the building and meet their teachers

# After-School Programming

- Every day from 2:45 - 5:45
- No charge to participate
- Students are welcome to participate any time during the year – simply fill out a form acknowledging student's participation in the program
- Various clubs and activities are sponsored by the faculty and adult volunteers and may vary from year to year. Examples: Homework Club, Math Counts, Science Olympiad, Lego's, Knowledge Masters, Chess Club, Robotics; Flag Football, Basketball, Tennis, and Volleyball.
- Late buses Monday, Wednesday & Thursday @ 3:50 or parents can pick-up any time before 5:45.

# Healthy Balance

- Balance academics, outside activities, exercise, diet, and sleep
- Be aware of teacher expectations
- Stay informed!
  - Email teachers
  - Use Blackboard
  - Read KIT
  - Visit LMS webpage often

# School Based Supports

Ms. Annette Romita, School Psychologist

Hours: Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

7:00am-3:30pm

703-533-2611

ALRomita@fcps.edu



Ms. Irene Kane, Social Worker

Hours: Tuesday, Friday

7:00am-3:30pm

703-533-2645

IMKane@fcps.edu



# Additional School Based Supports

Ms. Alexia Candamo, Parent Liaison  
Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday  
9:00am-12:00pm  
703-533-4554  
AMCandamo@fcps.edu

