

# Resource Guide



WITH THE IMPROV TROUPE

## Fitting In

Grades 7-8

This resource guide was compiled by Marylee Girardi, Instructional Services, Fairfax County Public Schools

# HOT TOPICS

## **Thank you for watching Hot Topics With The Improv Troupe.**

We have included a list of resources for you to use to prepare yourself for further educational discussion. These resources include books and articles for educators, parents, and students. Also included are a number of web sites you can review for more information. Please consult with your school administration prior to sharing any of these resources directly with students. These resources are also available to help further your understanding of a student who may be experiencing some difficulty.

Some of the concerns addressed in the series may be difficult to discuss with students. We strongly encourage you to “touch base” with student support staff, such as counselors, social workers, and psychologists. Use these school professionals as resources for continued classroom discussion or to refer students for counseling. They also can direct students and families to other public and private resources for additional help.

The resources for **Hot Topics With The Improv Troupe** were compiled by the following Fairfax County Public Schools, Department of Student Services:

- Richard Crowley, Coordinator—Guidance Services
- Mitchell Kamins, Counselor—Longfellow Middle School
- Sue Ann Murray, Guidance Director—Woodson Adult High School
- Tedd Rynn, Counselor—Twain Middle School

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# TOPICS

## Articles

Brooks, Robert, Ph.D. "Violence Prevention in Our Schools: Promoting a Sense of Belonging." [www.drrobertbrooks.com](http://www.drrobertbrooks.com). April 2002.

Dr. Brooks' article strongly suggests that a caring adult in the school community is important to promoting the sense of belonging that each student needs to become successful in school and to avoid negative, destructive behaviors. These adults can encourage students to feel like they fit in.

National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth. "Supporting Your Adolescent: Tips for Parents." August 1996.

This is an excellent article written for parents about helping their teens develop as healthy adolescents. It covers a wide range of issues including information on what to do is an adolescent is in trouble with the law and recognizing the specific developmental needs of adolescents. It includes a very good resource list of books.

Resnick, M. D., L. J. Harris, and R. W. Blum. "The Impact of Caring and Connectedness on Adolescent Health and Well-Being." University of Minnesota Children, Youth, and Family Consortium. 1993.

This article describes a study conducted by the University of Minnesota's Children, Youth, and Family Consortium. This study of over 36,000 7th-12th grade students confirmed the protective factors of caring and connectedness in the lives of these adolescents. It particularly emphasized the need for connectedness (sense of belonging) at school and in families. The study also stresses the need for professionals working with "at-risk" youth to look for opportunities to foster a sense of connectedness for them.

Talbot, Margaret. "Girls Just Want to be Mean." The New York Times Magazine. February 24, 2002.

This article discusses the "relationship aggression" that teenage young women are very likely to engage in with each other. This aggressive set of behaviors covers the gamut from teasing to exclusion and even physical violence and is one way in which many adolescent girls fit into groups today.

## Books

Brooks, Robert, Ph.D. and Sam Goldstein, Ph.D. *Raising Resilient Children: A Curriculum to Foster Strength, Hope, and Optimism in Children*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. 2002.

From the publisher:

"The work of Drs. Brooks and Goldstein forms the basis for this nine-session curriculum and 70-minute companion video. The material provides parents with strategies they can use to ensure their children are emotionally prepared for life's challenges and setbacks. Ideal for parent education programs, the chapters in the manual and their corresponding video segments cover seven key guidelines for raising resilient children. In class and at home activities help parents recognize the crucial role they play in their children's emotional health while real-life examples illustrate how to nurture the inner strength children need to confront daily challenges and demands."

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# H O T T O P I C S

Devencenzi, Jayne, Susan Pendergast, and Linda Lyon-Wright (Illustrator). *Belonging: Self and Social Discovery for Children and Adolescents*. Sovereignty Press. 1999.

This book describes the process for organizing and facilitating school counseling groups for children and adolescents. It details a series of developmentally sequenced activities and exercises that address issues such as learning to work with others, handling verbal abuse, managing anger, sorrow, and grief, and conflict resolution. The book includes samples of all the forms needed to launch a school-counseling group, i.e., permission letters, referral forms, behavior checklists, and group contracts.

Orenstein, Peggy. *SchoolGirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap*. Alfred A. Knopf. 1995.

This book was inspired by a study by the American Association of University Women that showed girls' self-esteem plummeting as they reach adolescence. Ms. Orenstein spent months observing, interviewing, and getting to know dozens of girls both inside and outside the classroom at two very different schools in northern California. The book speaks to the difficulties that young women have finding their way to success.

Pipher, J. Mary. *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*. Ballantine Books. March 1995.

This classic book from Dr. Pipher describes the most difficult situation faced by adolescent girls as they develop into adulthood. They are confronted by a "girl-poisoning culture" and are victims of increasing violence and abuse, self-mutilation, eating disorders, consumerism, and media pressure to conform to others' ideals. Pipher offers some practical suggestions and strategies for parents to help girls enter into adulthood with their sense of self intact. She urges parents to become involved in the lives of their daughters and to alter the social pressures that push girls into crisis situations.

## **Books for Youth**

Covington, Dennis. *Lizard*. Econo-Clad Books. October 1999.

From the publisher:

"With sea-green eyes more on the side of his head than most people's and a nose that lies on its side, Lucius Sims resembles a reptile. That's why he was sent to the Leesville Louisiana State School for Retarded Boys even though no one ever proved he was mentally handicapped. The state school is no place for a wide-eyed thirteen-year-old boy who wants to see the world. So, when a shoe salesman from up north arrives claiming to be his father, Lizard takes a chance. Lizard knows his real father is dead, but he also knows that this impostor could be his only ticket to freedom."

Katz, Jon. *Geeks: How Two Lost Boys Rode the Internet Out of Idaho*. Broadway Books. February 2001.

This is a great true book about how two adolescent "computer geeks" manage to use their techno savvy to get out of Idaho and go to Chicago. It is instructive to young teens who feel that they do not now nor will ever fit in.

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# H O T T O P I C S

Koss, Amy Goldman. *The Girls*. Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers. May 2002.

This is a novel about a clique of five adolescent middle school girls and their struggles over fitting in and/or being excluded. It addresses the important issues that middle school age females face: how to act, how to dress, with whom to be friends.

Spinelli, Jerry. *Stargirl*. Knopf. May 2002.

This is a novel about a home-schooled teenager, Stargirl Caraway, who returns to high school and does not try to fit in. In fact, she does her best at non-conformity. She dresses in prairie clothes, brings a rat to school, plays the ukulele during lunch, and doesn't seem to care (or even notice) what others think of her. She does fit in and joins the cheerleading squad, then gets kicked off for cheering for the other team, and all the while others try to figure out whether or not it is important to fit in.

## Videos

National Emergency Medical Association. *Fitting In: A Video-Based Program About Peer Relationships and Peer Influences*. 2001.

From the NEMA web site ([www.nemahealth.org](http://www.nemahealth.org)):

"This fresh new educational video on peer pressure was developed in response to teachers' and counselors' requests for a tool to help youth explore issues related to the pressures they feel everyday to "fit in" and find acceptance. The message of this appealing new video program, geared toward middle school-aged students, is that you can be part of a group without losing parts of yourself-you don't need to resort to drinking, using drugs, smoking, harmful dieting, stealing, purposely failing, or belittling others to fit in or feel good."

## Web Sites

[www.fullesteemahead.org](http://www.fullesteemahead.org)

Full Esteem Ahead is a non-profit organization with headquarters in Portland, Oregon. The web site offers resources to parents, youth, and professionals to support youth and encouraging healthy self-esteem as they move through adolescence.

[www.drrobertbrooks.com](http://www.drrobertbrooks.com)

Dr. Brooks' web site has many interesting articles about strategies that parents and professionals can use to increase the resiliency of children and adolescents. Materials to use in furthering the emotional resiliency of youth are offered.

[www.ncfy.com](http://www.ncfy.com)

This is the web site for the National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth, a division of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Many specific articles and resources are available for research and information about youth related topics.

<http://www.juvenilecouncil.gov/>

The Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has a variety of helpful information for parents and professionals about youth development issues.

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