

March 2017

GUIDANCE NEWSLETTER

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Recent topics in Developmental Guidance classes are as follows:

At this time, all students in **Grades Kindergarten-5** have been involved in their annual Protective Behaviors, or Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Unit. This unit, like all other Guidance Units, is presented in a developmental manner and includes age-appropriate lessons on stranger awareness, body ownership, assertiveness, types of abuse and problem solving skills. Each year, all students learn and review the 3 rules of personal safety, which are “Say Words that Mean No, Get Away to a Safe Place, and Tell a Grownup who can Help”. The students are also learning the following vocabulary regarding their personal safety:

- * **The Always Ask First Rule**
- * **Safe Touch**
- * **Unsafe Touch**
- * **Unwanted Touch**
- * **The Touching Rule**

By studying such key topics, students are learning skills to increase their sense of personal and emotional safety and wellness. Also, by teaching students these assertiveness and problem-solving skills, they should feel stronger and more competent should potential abusive situations occur. Parents received a letter in the Thursday folder when their children’s grade level began this important unit.

In addition to learning about Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention, our **3rd, 4th, and 5th Graders** will have an important lesson on the critical topic of Internet Safety. Students are taught some of the basic guidelines for staying safe when using any kind of technology. You will find an excellent article with sound advice on how to keep your children safe online at this link. (<http://childrescuenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Internet-Safety-Tips-Download1.pdf>)
The article comes from the Child Rescue Network.

Our **5th Graders** have completed their Protective Behaviors unit, and have moved on to their annual ATOD (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs) unit. A great video series called “*The Danger Zone*” helps to explain the dangers of using various types of drugs. The 5th graders will be introduced to this topic by learning about the health hazards of using any type of tobacco product.

How to Talk with Your Children about Sexual Abuse:

At the end of this newsletter, you will find an article about talking with your children about the prevention of sexual abuse (also called “Personal Safety”). This article is from the *Kidsfirst Child Abuse Treatment Center*.



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Caring Community Peer Tutoring

Peer Tutoring sessions began about a month ago at Elm Dale! This is an activity where trained, responsible 4th and 5th graders spend one recess a week tutoring a younger child in math, reading, or writing. The tutors receive training by me in the areas of trust-building, reflective listening, giving feedback, and giving encouragement. This program is mutually beneficial for both the tutors and their younger “study buddies”. I am pleased to say that **81** 4th and 5th graders volunteered to be tutors this year, proving that Elm Dale truly is a “caring community”. Thank you to our 2017 Elm Dale Peer Tutors!

Friendship Troubles:

A common issue during childhood is that of troubles with making and maintaining friendships. I often work with children on this challenge, and I often talk with parents about such concerns as well. I would like to remind you that I have a great *Caring Connection Book Bag* on the topic of Friendship. The bag contains great books for younger children, books for older children, and helpful books for parents as well. I also have some individual books for parents and for students on making and keeping friends. Please let me know if you would like to borrow any books.

Human Growth and Development:

Two Human Growth and Development lessons are offered to all 4th and 5th graders. These lessons cover good health and hygiene habits, as well as social, emotional and physical changes that occur during puberty. Fourth graders had their lessons in March, and 5th graders will receive their lessons in late April or early May. Parents receive permission slips prior to these classes.

Guidance Quote of the Day:



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How to Talk to Young Children About Body Safety

From "Kidsfirst Child Abuse Treatment Center"

We hope that your conversations with your child about body safety will be open and ongoing. Parents should not just have "the talk" with children, but instead should have multiple, natural conversations over time so that children know it is safe to talk about these subjects.

Talk about "safe" and "unsafe" touching rather than "good" or "bad" touching. This removes guilt from the child, and keeps them from having to make a moral distinction about what is and is not appropriate.

Use age-appropriate wording. You can discuss body safety without discussing sexuality. Teach young children that *no one* should touch them in any area that their bathing suit covers, and that they should never touch anyone else in these areas or see pictures or movies that show those areas.

Teach the difference between healthy and unhealthy secrets. An example is that a surprise party is an okay secret to keep, because it will make people happy and will be told at the right time. Secret touching is not okay, and keeping permanent secrets from parents or caregivers is not okay either.

Have your child name five people that they could talk to if someone was touching them in an unsafe way. Children are often afraid to tell their parents out of fear of punishment (or because of a threat made by a perpetrator), so it's important for your child to know they can seek out other trusted adults to confide in. Instruct your child that they should keep telling until someone helps them.

Teach children proper names for body parts so that if they disclose inappropriate touching, it will be clear what they are talking about.

Revisit this safety talk often. Children learn through repetition. How many times do you remind children to look both ways before crossing the street?

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Myth: Teaching my children about “stranger danger” is the best way to keep them safe from sexual predators.

Fact: In the vast majority of sexual abuse cases, the offender was known (and very often trusted by) the victim’s family. Sexual predators invest incredible amounts of energy into creating a persona of a trustworthy person in order to have access to children. Abductions and abuse by strangers represent a very small percentage of sexual abuse in children.

Myth: I should teach my kids about “good touching” and “bad touching.”

Fact: Using the terms “good” and “bad” requires children to make a moral decision, which can be very conflicting, as even inappropriate touching might not feel “bad” to the child. The use of the term “bad touching” can also imply guilt to the child, and make him feel ashamed to tell about what happened. A better approach is to talk about “safe” and “not safe” touching. You can use the example that no one should touch the child in any area covered by their bathing suit. The conversation shouldn’t only be about touching, however. You should also educate your children about indecent exposure and exposure to pornography. You can use the same bathing suit example: “No one should touch you anywhere your bathing suit covers (unless that person is keeping you clean or healthy). No one should ask you to touch them somewhere that their bathing suit covers. No one should show you a part of their body or someone else’s body that their bathing suit covers.”

It is important to remember that inappropriate touching can happen between children, not just between a child and an adult. Do not be exclusionary in your safety talk: don’t talk only about adults, but instead stress that *no one* should do these things to them.

Myth: I can’t talk to my young child about sexual abuse because I’m not ready for them to know about sex.

Fact: You can, and should, talk to young children in an age-appropriate manner. You can teach them personal safety without discussing the birds and the bees.

As parents, we often say that “we’ve had the talk” in a way that implies this is a one-time conversation that we can check off our to-do list. These types of safety conversations need to be ongoing, especially for younger children who need repetition in order to learn. How often do you remind your child to look both ways before they cross the street? Personal safety is just as important.

Myth: I should tell my children to come to me if someone is hurting them.

Fact: While this should be an important part of your safety talk, it should not be the only part. It is important to recognize that your children may not always feel comfortable telling you about things that are bothering them. Also, sexual offenders will frequently threaten children not to tell their parents about the abuse. To ensure greater safety, encourage your children to name five trusted adults they could tell, and instruct them to continue to tell until someone helps them.