

IN THE OFFICE



*let the ride
begin*

HELLO NEW SCHOOL YEAR!

I can not believe that my first year at OVS is already in the books. It was a fast-paced learning adventure and I am so ready for the second part of the journey to begin.

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year! It is so great to be reconnecting with familiar faces and build rapport with all our new students and families. Remember that this newsletter gives you a glimpse into the important conversations occurring, various strategies, and talking points to continue the conversation at home!

IN THIS EDITION:

- **New Changes:** what is new or slightly different this year with the School Counseling Program?
- **Conversations Started:** What topics are being covered in advisory or SEL
- **Social Media Suggestions:** how to help handle the enforcement of the phone policy
- **Tips and Tricks:** ways to assist your student in adjusting back to the academic year



*we all just
want to be
heard*

*sometimes
all we need
is a chance
to change*



C H A N C
G E

NEW CHANGES:

As I reflect on the first year of School Counseling at OVS I see the variety of ideas that were tried and explored. Over the summer I was able to truly take a deep dive at what was still needed within the OVS community, what worked well for the community, and what systems should be started in order to set the future of the students and program up for success. Here are both the tweaks and new things going on within the counseling program.

Lower Campus:

- **Adjusted Advisory Program:** The middle school advisors will all be using advisory slides/content designed “in-house” by the counselor to promote common language, allow peers to hear various perspectives, initiate important conversations, and assist in building advisor/advisee rapport.
- **Push for Push-Ins:** as a lower campus we will be pushing our faculty to schedule preventative social-emotional learning lessons with the School Counselor to get more face-to-face time occurring. This will allow more students to build a rapport with the Counselor!

Upper Campus:

- **Flex Time:** the addition of daily flex time allows for students to take agency in meeting with teachers, completing homework to assist with school-life balance, attend various activities/groups, or building community.
- **Advisory:** the new advisory program has students meeting every Monday and every other Friday during Flex Time. This means weekly contact with their advisor and their advisory group. All advisors will be using the advisory content that is created “in-house” for the Upper Campus specifically. Advisory will teach various strategies, discuss important topics, help build community, and give the advisors chances to check-in with their advisees.
- **SEL class:** each grade will receive 4-5 social-emotional learning opportunities with their classmates throughout the year. The SEL classes meet during flex time and will teach the grades a variety of social-emotional skills and content.
- **Affinity Groups:** affinity groups are back and still student led! As the advisor for these groups I will ensure routine meetings and that the student voice is heard!

CONVERSATIONS STARTED

Here a few highlights from the conversations already being started within the School Counseling program. September has started off with a wide variety!

3rd Grade: What is a Hero?

Our group of 3rd graders began the school year discussing what it means to be Hero. They learned that anyone can be a Hero if they possess a few key qualities. Some of the qualities include spreading kindness, celebrating each other, being helpful, making a sacrifice, and thinking about others.



Middle School Advisory: Advisory 101

To start the year off the middle school is being introduced to an advisory routine. They practiced attendance questions, sharing ideas with their peers, and having open discussions. Most recently the advisory groups worked together to determine ways they can show the OVS values of respect, compassion, responsibility, and fairness.

Upper Advisory: The Anxious Generation

Upper Campus students have been taking a deep dive into the information presented in “The Anxious Generation” a book discussing the impact of social media on our world today. Students are looking at the pros/cons from various perspectives, the differences between a childhood with and without a phone, how to balance our tech use, and why we as a school have really enforced the no phone policy.



Upper Campus SEL: Hope

Our 9th graders are kicking off the SEL class by briefly discussing hope. Does this generation have it? Does this generation need it? Why is it important? Students will discuss what they believe is going on with hope, hear its importance, and get them thinking about what their hope and vision is for their future through a self-reflection activity!

SOCIAL MEDIA SUGGESTIONS:

The world is talking about social media use with teenagers and so is OVS. The way I frame the conversation is that we are not trying to take away anything, but in fact we are trying to ensure they get the opportunity to gain important skills such as face-to-face conflict resolution, understanding body language, how to combat boredom, and to practice patience. The following are a list of suggestions to aide in balancing tech and social media:

- model your expectations: adolescents thrive on fairness and need modeling. If you want them to limit use at night then be an example of the various ways on how to do it.
- provide interesting alternatives: the phone is perfect to combat boredom but if we replace it with other alternatives then they may choose those instead
- emphasize in person communication/friend hangouts: students rarely hangout in person after school or on weekends when you compare it to past generations. Help organize and plan in-person activities to assist in balancing in person social skills and social media use.



TIPS AND TRICKS

Adjusting to a new year can be difficult. Here are some tips and tricks that may be beneficial to implement:

- remind them of their in-school supports and/or help them initiate the conversation
- inquire about their perspective and understanding: most students don't like seeking adult help because adults compare their experience to the students but that isn't helpful. Listen to their voice and provide multiple options for them to decide what might work best for them.
- set up necessary routines now: if you know homework is difficult make a routine now. Be preventative to last year's challenges with a routine to address the concern.