

## **Hello Summit Street Friends!**

Welcome back! I am very happy to be here for my 6<sup>th</sup> year. I hope you all had a wonderful summer. I spent the summer waitressing at my other job and visiting beaches in New England. I couldn't have asked for better weather!

I am thankful to have an experienced intern from the University of Vermont's Masters in Counseling Program working with me this semester. Amanda Shoen will be helping me facilitate groups, check in with students, and teach guidance classes. Parents will be notified if Ms. Shoen works with your child.

For new families and a reminder to returning families, here are the services Ms. Shoen and/or I will offer throughout the year:

**Guidance Classes** - Social and emotional skills are important to healthy child development. "Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum" is a research-based curriculum designed to promote social competence and reduce social and emotional problems by teaching children skills in the core areas of empathy, emotion management (impulse control, emotion regulation, anger management), and social problem solving. "Second Step" uses music, role plays, sign language, puppets, pictures, and videos to teach children about feelings, problem-solving, and stress management. These developmental guidance lessons will be taught on Thursdays for 45 minutes every week. Please look at the Thursday schedule to see when guidance lessons are taught in which classroom.

**Stop Bullying!** Because of the law against bullying in Vermont, we want to make sure students are educated on the topic at the beginning of the year. Guidance classes will focus primarily on how to recognize and stop teasing and bullying. We read books such as "Blue Cheese Breath and Stinky Feet" by Catherine DePino, "Chrysanthemum" by Kevin Henkes, "The Recess Queen" by Alexis O'Neill and Laura Huliska-Beth. We will brainstorm and discuss ideas and ways to deal with bullying and teasing. To go along with the bullying prevention theme, we will be working on activities that focus on diversity and celebrating differences. The hope and goal is that all students, while at Summit Street and in their future school experiences, will be able to recognize teasing and bullying, celebrate uniqueness and differences, and continue to learn in a safe environment.

**Small Groups** Due to the change in the schedule I will be available to facilitate more small groups for students. In addition to the brief descriptions below, you will also be receiving information in Friday folders with a sign-up sheet.

**"We are the Same, We are Different"** - Group for all Summit Street students - once a week for 6 weeks. This is a group for anyone interested in learning more about multiculturalism and diversity. We will do crafts, read stories, play games, and have conversations about different cultures, races, colors, languages, countries, etc...

**"Banana Split"** - This group is for any student who lives in a family where his/her parents are divorced or separated. We will play games, read stories, and do art projects to help facilitate discussion about divorce/separation.

**"While You Are Away"** - This is a support group for children who have a family member who is deployed or may be deployed. We will read stories, do art projects and talk about feelings.

**"Ready..Set...Relax"** - This is a group for students who want to feel more empowered to take an active and productive approach to handling stress at school, home, and in the community. I will be using a research-based program of relaxation ("Ready, Set, R.E.L.A.X." by Jeffrey S. Allen, M.Ed. and Roger Klein, Psy.D.) that involves listening to calming stories, painting, drawing, using clay, doing role plays, breathing, and stretching.

**Individual Check-Ins** - Throughout the year you may wish for you and/or your child to check in with me. I will always try and make time to work individually with your child and make appropriate referrals if necessary. We have a great team of supports at Summit to help your families with any challenges that come along. Also, every Friday morning there is a meeting to address any challenges that come up with children and families. This team consists of me, Mrs. Hughes (the Principal), our nurses - Mrs. Ready and Mrs. Ferreira, Alice Dee Scannell (the Social Worker) and the Learning Specialists - Mrs. Kilcollins, Mrs. O'Leary, Mrs. Sewell, Mrs. Reynolds-Wahl. If you feel your family is in crisis and/or in need of support, please let me know and perhaps this meeting would be a resource for you.



Finally, toward the end of the school year last year, I was given the opportunity to participate in an "International Counselor Exchange." Thanks to this school district, the PTO, and community members, we were able to fund this initiative. Next week, counselors from St. Kitts will be visiting some of your children's' classrooms to share and answer questions. In October I will have the opportunity (along with about 15 colleagues around Vermont) to visit schools in Nevis and St. Kitts. As the Essex Junction community continues to grow and diversify, so do our children at Summit Street School. We feel cultural exposure and diversity are an important part of the school climate. We also welcome visitors from any cultural background or heritage to share their story. Please let me know if there is something you or your family would like to share with us.

If you have any questions or feedback, please call me at 857-7000 ext. 2526.

Thanks! Ashley Wageman, School Counselor