

# Counselor's Role from Ms. Leahy-Jones:

---

Hi! I wanted to introduce myself to those families who are new to NCC. This is my fourth year at NCC and my twenty-second in MCPS. I am thrilled to be working again with your son/daughter at NCC! Because we have so many new families this year, I wanted to share my job responsibilities with you. If you come from another MCPS setting, you are probably familiar with the job of a counselor, but if you come from out of the state or from a private school, you might not have had experience with this position.

First, I visit all the classrooms at NCC regularly. Each grade level team decides how I visit the classroom. For example, in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade I visit through homeroom, whereas in 5<sup>th</sup> grade I visit through Reading/Language Arts class. During classroom guidance visits, I cover topics that are salient to that grade level. Each week, your child's teacher meets with their grade level team. At the team meeting, many items are discussed, such as: curriculum, grade level concerns, field trips, etc. Many lessons that I plan come from specific needs expressed from the team, parents and students. I also have counselor standards from the county that I follow. These standards come from five developmental areas: academic, personal, interpersonal, career and healthy development. For example, in grades 3 and 4, we are discussing student gifts and struggles by talking about and reading stories about challenges people face, while in grades five and six, we are talking about stress management. In October, we will continue talking about learning differences and begin talking about healthy choices during Red Ribbon Week. Red Ribbon Week is something all public schools teach in this county. Students will listen to daily morning announcements about healthy foods and activities and I will be teaching lessons specific to each grade level about healthy living: grade 3: prescription drug safety, grade 4: harmful effects of smoking cigarettes, grade 5: alcohol abuse and grade 6: marijuana and other harmful drugs. This run will for one week, ending on Halloween.

Much of my time is spent in the sixteen classrooms delivering lessons. This schedule is wonderful in that it is proactive while providing me the opportunity to be visible and approachable to your child for helping with problems. Students who need to see me fill out a counselor referral slip. These are kept in their classroom or outside my office. The referral slip is broken into 3 types of problems: *"bearly" a problem* (little bear problem), *I can "bear" to wait to see you* (medium bear problem), and *I can't "bear" this problem* (big bear problem). During the first week of school, Ms. Stevens and I had grade level Town Hall Meetings that reviewed this process. Ask your child to describe the process to you. Many of the problems are ones where I meet briefly with your child and we brainstorm ways to solve the problem. What is important is that your child knows there is another adult in the building who can help them when they have tried to deal with a problem.

I also see children in small groups. The most popular groups are lunch bunch groups where students ask to have lunch with their peers and me. Students are also invited to join me for lunch because someone else referred them to me (parent, teacher, or other staff member). I spent the first two weeks having lunch bunch with all new students to the Bethesda Chevy Chase Cluster. We had 42

children! It was fascinating to learn where students were schooled prior to coming to NCC. We have students from Sweden, Panama, Austria, South Africa, Texas, New Jersey and other schools in Montgomery County, to name a few. Other small groups are based on a particular topic/situation, such as grief/loss, family changes, friendship, etc. Please feel free to let me know if there is a way I can help your child or if you have any questions. The best way to reach me is through e-mail:

[Victoria A Leahyjones@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Victoria_A_Leahyjones@mcpsmd.org).

Finally, another responsibility that I have is Student Service Learning Coordinator. If you have a student in grade 6, you are familiar with this graduation requirement. All MCPS students are required to complete 75 SSL hours by the time they graduate from high school. This process (of earning hours) starts the summer entering sixth grade and your child is given explicit instruction on how to do this at the end of fifth grade, in classroom guidance. I spend another class period reviewing this when students return, in grade 6. Again, should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me. It is a pleasure working with your child.