



FLIGHT SCHOOL

*Preparing families to help
students take flight*



FBI  **ISD**
INSPIRE • EQUIP • IMAGINE

COMMITTED TO
E  **cellence**

**The Middle School Mind:
Helping Your Child Navigate Middle School with Confidence**

**March 26th, 2026
Thursday with Sign-in Barcode**



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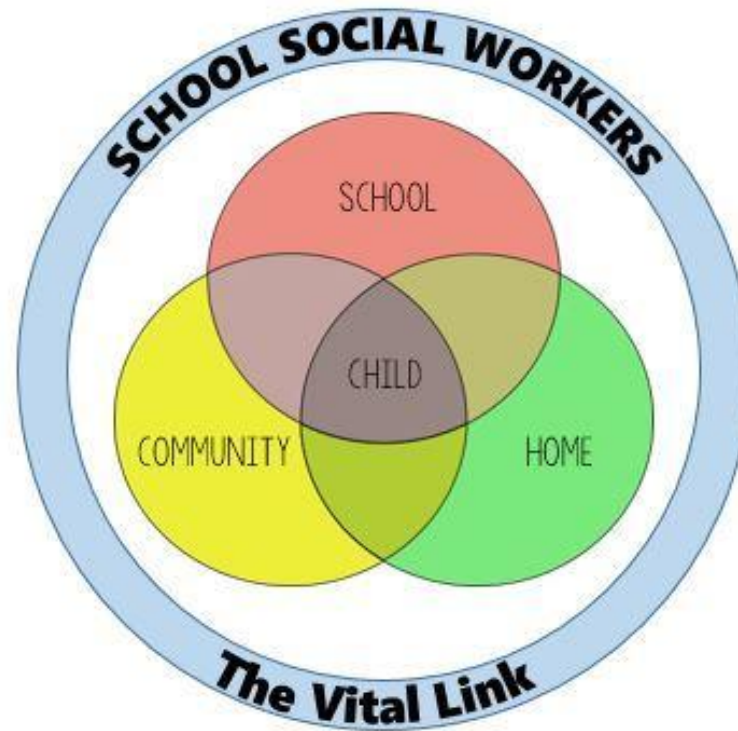


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School Social Worker Services

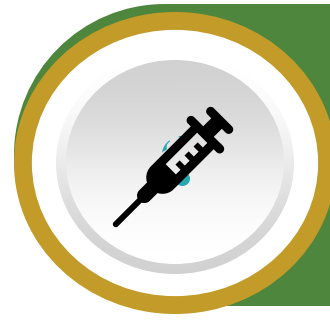
Tier 2 Supports



Whole Child Health Initiative

FORT BEND ISD

WHOLE SCHOOL, WHOLE COMMUNITY, WHOLE CHILD



Expand Health Services



Increase Awareness of Health Services and Resources



Decrease Stigma Around Mental Health

For information about our resources, please scan here.
www.fortbendisd.com/wholechildhealth





MARCH 2026
National Nutrition Month
WATCH Week 3/9-3/13
National School Breakfast Week 3/2-3/6
National School Social Work Week 3/1-3/7
National Drug Facts Week – 3/16-3/22
APRIL 2026
Child Abuse Awareness Month
Autism Acceptance Month – World Autism Awareness Day – 4/2
National Fruit & Vegetable Day - April 3 rd
MAY 2026
Mental Health Awareness Month
Food Allergy Awareness Month/Week 5/10-5/16
National PE & Sport Week May 5/1-5/7
School Lunch Hero Day 5/1
National Bike to School Day 5/6
Nurse Appreciation Week 5/6-5/12 – Nurse Appreciation Day – May 6 th
Mental Health Therapist Day – 5/12
Mental Health Day – Wear Green 5/15



Example questions to ask your child:

- How are you feeling?
- I have noticed _____. Can you tell me more about what is going on?
- Have you felt like this before?
- It is okay to talk about your feelings. I am here to listen. How can I help you feel better?
- Have you talked about your feelings to anyone else?
- Do you feel like you want to talk to someone else about your problem/feelings?

Seek to Understand



Listen without judgment or interruption



Reflect back your understanding of the situation



Understand that everyone reacts to situations differently



Try to understand their point of view—put yourself in their shoes



Your child's feelings are real and what they are experiencing



Validate their feelings



The world is very different from when you were younger



Ask them what they need and how you can support



What NOT to Do

1

Do not label your child as "crazy."

2

Do not dismiss/ignore your child.

3

Do not tell them to "get over it."

4

Do not punish your child for their feelings.

5

Do not say things such as "I don't understand why you are depressed. You have everything you need."

6

Do not assume, or tell them, that they are trying to get attention.



Positive Affirmations:

- You can try new things!
- You get out of your comfort-zone today!
- You are such a risk-taker for trying.
- You inspire me!
- Mistakes help you learn and grow
- You are such a problem solver
- I will always believe in you
- You get better at things when you practice.

Positive Phrasing

Focuses on what a child should do and the positive outcomes. It communicates desired behaviors you wants.

- Don't be late. "Be on time"
- Don't yell. "Lower your voice:"
- Stop jumping. "Please sit down"
- Don't stay up. "Go to bed earlier."



Helping Middle Schoolers Manage Academic Pressure

Supporting Healthy Habits, Confidence & Balance



Why middle school is a pressure point

Increased workload and expectations

More complex social dynamics

Beginning to form identity around achievement

Transition from teacher-guided to more independent learning

Common signs of unhealthy stress

Changes in sleep or appetite

Irritability or emotional outbursts

Avoidance of schoolwork

Perfectionism or fear of failure

Physical complaints (headaches, stomachaches)

Why This Matters

- Middle school = major academic + social transition
- Pressure increases from parents, teachers, peers, and self
- Parents play a powerful role in shaping coping skills

What Kids Say They Need (But Don't Always Express)

- “I want to do well, but I’m overwhelmed.”
- “I’m afraid of disappointing you.”
- “I don’t know how to start.”
- “I need help, but I don’t want to feel ‘behind’.”

This is where parents can make a huge difference.



HOW TO RECOGNIZE ACADEMIC STRESS

Find the Source of Stress

- Is it a particular class or type of work?
- Is it an issue of time management and prioritization?
- Do you have too much on your plate?
- Is it due to family expectations or financial obligations?

Pinpoint How It's Affecting You

- Is the stress preventing you from sleeping?
- Is it making you take longer to do the work or paralyzing you from even starting?
- Is it causing you to feel anxious, unwell, or depressed?



Healthy Ways Parents Can Support Their Middle Schooler

🌟 A. Focus on Effort, Not Perfection

- Praise persistence, problem-solving, and progress
- Avoid tying praise only to grades
- Normalize mistakes as part of learning

🕒 B. Help Them Build Routines (Not Rigid Schedules)

- Create a consistent homework window
- Encourage short breaks every 20–30 minutes
- Use visual planners or digital calendars
- Model time-management strategies

🛌 C. Protect Rest, Sleep, and Downtime

- Middle schoolers need 9–12 hours of sleep
- Limit late-night studying
- Encourage hobbies that have nothing to do with school
- Keep weekends balanced

👂 D. Keep Communication Open and Low-Pressure – Stay calm

- Ask open-ended questions like “What feels manageable today?”
- Avoid interrogating about grades
- Share your own stories of overcoming challenges
- Keep conversations low pressure

🧘 E. Teach Stress-Management Skills

- Deep breathing or grounding techniques
- Breaking tasks into smaller steps
- Positive self-talk (“I can start with just five minutes”)
- Knowing when to ask for help



TOP TIPS TO REDUCE TEENAGE EXAM STRESS



TOP TIP TO BEAT EXAM ANXIETY AND STRESS

1

CREATE A SUITABLE STUDY
SPACE FOR YOUR TEENAGER

ENCOURAGE A BALANCED
STUDY ROUTINE

2

3

REDUCE EXTERNAL STRESSORS
FOR YOUR TEENAGER

BOOST YOUR KIDS CONFIDENCE,
SELF-ESTEEM, SELF-WORTH

4

5

ENCOURAGE TIME OUT,
TIME FOR PLAY

REDUCE TECHNOLOGY
OVERLOAD, SWITCH OFF

6

7

TEACH THEM HOW TO
MEDITATE AND RELAX

HELP THEM GET DEEP
QUALITY SLEEP

8



Take-Home Strategies for Parents

Quick wins

- Create a “no-stress check-in” once a week
- Set up a distraction-free homework space
- Encourage one relaxing activity daily
- Celebrate small wins

Longer-term habits

- Build a family culture that values learning, not just achievement
- Model healthy coping strategies
- Help them set realistic goals and revisit them regularly

What Middle Schoolers Experience in High-Achieving Environments

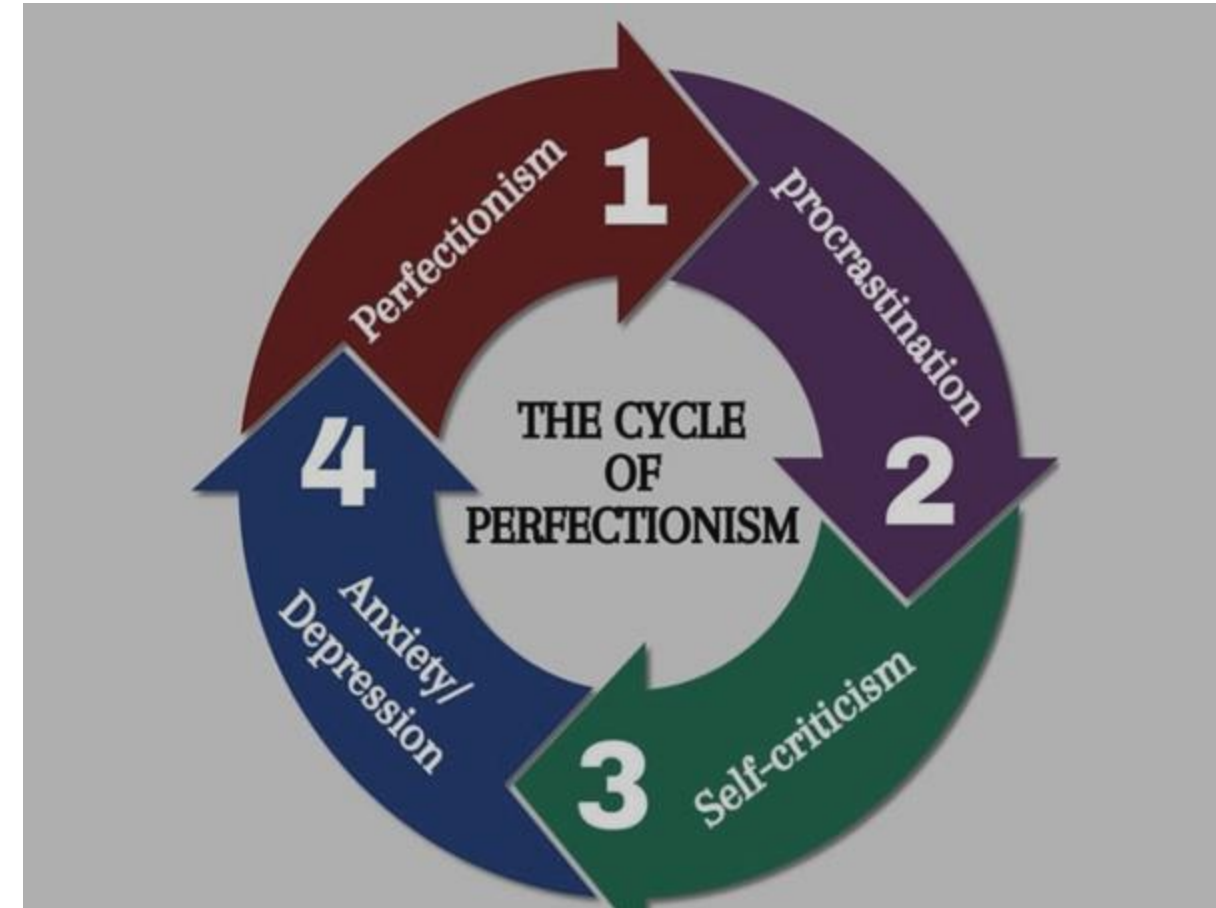
Key Pressures

- **Perfectionism** and fear of failure
- **Comparison culture** (grades, sports, social media)
- **Identity tied to achievement**
- **Over-scheduling** and lack of downtime
- **High expectations** from school, peers, and sometimes family

What This Looks Like

- Avoiding challenges
- Meltdowns over small mistakes
- Anxiety around tests or performances
- Reluctance to try new things

“If I’m not the best, why bother” thinking



Building True Confidence (Not Just Praise)

What Actually Builds Confidence

- **Mastery experiences:** letting kids struggle, try, and succeed
- **Process-focused praise:** “I love how you stuck with that problem”
- **Autonomy:** giving choices and ownership
- **Opportunities to fail safely**

Parent Strategies

- Use “**yet**” language: “You don’t understand it yet”
- Ask “**What did you learn?**” instead of “How did you score?”
- Celebrate **effort, strategy, and improvement**
- Encourage them to teach you something they’re learning



Resilience: The Skill That Protects Kids for Life

What Resilience Really Is

- The ability to recover, adapt, and keep going
- Built through **challenge**, not comfort
- Strengthened by **supportive relationships**

How Parents Can Build It

- Normalize setbacks: “Everyone struggles with something”
- Model calm problem-solving
- Share your own age-appropriate failures and what you learned
- Encourage risk-taking in low-stakes areas (new hobby, new class, new sport)



Healthy Motivation vs. Pressure

Two Types of Motivation

Two Types of Motivation

Healthy Motivation	Unhealthy Pressure
Curiosity	Fear of disappointing others
Personal goals	External comparison
Enjoyment	Perfectionism
Growth mindset	Fixed mindset

Parent Tools

- Ask: “What do *you* want out of this?”
- Help them set **realistic, student-driven goals**
- Protect downtime—rest fuels achievement
- Avoid over-praising outcomes

Practical Tools Parents Can Use Immediately

Daily Habits

- **High-low check-ins** at dinner
- **Screen-free decompression time**
- **Sleep routines** (middle schoolers need 9–12 hours)
- **Weekly planning sessions** to reduce overwhelm

Conversation Starters

- “What challenged you today?”
- “What are you proud of this week?”
- “What’s something you want to get better at?”
- “What’s one mistake you made that helped you learn?”

Mindset Builders

- Keep a **family ‘failure wall’** where everyone posts something they tried
- Use a **growth-mindset vocabulary** at home
- Encourage **non-competitive hobbies**

parenting
**MIDDLE
SCHOOLERS**



What Kids Need Most From Parents

- Unconditional support
- A sense of belonging that isn't tied to performance
- Permission to be imperfect
- A home environment where effort matters more than outcomes
- Adults who model balance, boundaries, and self-compassion

Key Takeaways

- Growth > perfection
- Struggle builds strength
- Parents shape the emotional climate



2025-2026 FSMS Counselors by Grade Level



2025 FSMS *Counselors!*



Marla Angibeau

Mrs. Angibeau has counseling experience at the elementary and middle school levels. Mrs. Angibeau loves to develop and deliver guidance lessons for her students. She also likes leading her students in small group counseling as well as individual counseling. This is her 36th year as a counselor! She is married with one adult daughter who is a former Falcon! Mrs. Angibeau enjoys cooking, baking, scrapbooking, and Pilates. Her favorite pastime is traveling with her family. The beach is her happy place! Mrs. Angibeau is an Original Falcon! She has been a counselor here since the doors of FSMS opened 25 years ago!

**Lead Counselor/
6th Grade Counselor**



Stefanie Armatta

Mrs. Armatta has worked as a counselor in three different school districts: Ganado ISD, Bay City ISD and Fort Bend ISD. Mrs. Armatta has counseled all levels from elementary through high school. She is fond of the middle school level students and enjoys her individual time with them. This is her 18th year as a counselor. Mrs. Armatta is married and has two daughters, one in college and one in high school. Mrs. Armatta spends her spare time juggling her girl's cheer schedules, but if time permits, she loves to be by any body of water — pool, bay, river, ocean, and even the gulf. Mrs. Armatta is starting her 11th year as a counselor at FSMS!

8th Grade Counselor



Kristin Kendrick

Ms. Kendrick taught reading, math, and social studies in elementary and middle school. She is beginning her 14th year as a counselor, at both the middle and high school levels. Ms. Kendrick loves devoting time in the classrooms with her middle school students and leading support groups. Ms. Kendrick enjoys spending time with her daughter, son-in-law, and her twin granddaughters. Last but not least is her 10-year-old schnoodle, Finn. A few of her hobbies are collecting miniatures and building dollhouses. Ms. Kendrick is in her 9th year as a counselor at FSMS!

7th Grade Counselor



Clearhope Counseling



Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine TCHAT



Fort Bend ISD Mental Health Therapists



Alcohol and Substance Use Disorder Program



THANK YOU



Questions?
Comments?

FSMS Flight School Session #1
Feedback

