

Location	Tenafly, NJ
School Type	Middle School
School Size	Medium (~ 800 students and parents, 120 staff members)
Demographics	43% Caucasian, 30% Asian, 7% Other, 8% Multiracial, 4% African-American, 5% Hispanic

Tiger Stripes

Tenafly Middle School, located in Tenafly, NJ, completed the [Comprehensive School Climate Inventory \(CSCI\)](#) in March 2013. Students reported a lower perception for Social-Emotional Security* while staff and parent scores verged on positive. Tenafly pinpointed several troubling areas within this dimension, including experiences of exclusion, neutral or mixed responses to teasing behavior, and bystander behavior.



Tenafly studied these findings and found a gap in its programming: a missed opportunity to address these areas with explicit lessons focused on awareness and resolutions. To fully embrace these lessons, students needed a dedicated period of time each week to allow guidance from a trusted adult. An advisory program would provide the time to build these meaningful relationships. Numerous studies show improved grades, greater feelings of connectedness, and tremendous improvements in school climate are due to effective advisory programs. Tenafly Middle School enlisted [professional development](#) guidance from NSCC to implement this plan.

In partnership with NSCC’s Education Director, Richard Cardillo, Tenafly Middle School launched a new advisory program that infused the entire school community into school climate improvement efforts. NSCC collaborated with Tenafly for eight sessions throughout the 2012-2014 academic years to develop the “Tiger Stripes” program, modeled after their Tiger Pride honor code values of Honesty, Responsibility, Caring, Respect, and Trust. Meetings explored the current status of school improvement efforts, must-have lessons for the advisory program, and how to best integrate advisory lessons with all other school programs. Together, Tenafly Middle School’s Leadership Team, Advisory Support Committee, and NSCC referred to the CSCI and used the findings to develop topics by grade. Soon, weekly topics under social-emotional learning, diversity, upstander behavior, empathy, and more became the framework for the program.

All Things Advisory

The goal of advisory time is simply to provide a vehicle for students to experience connectedness. The advisory program was introduced as a 15 minute period with no more than 12-15 students per advisory. Guided lessons were provided to advisors with an ample list of resources and guides to complement each lesson. At the end of every lesson, each advisor has the opportunity to “star” rate the effectiveness and ease of the lesson to continue development of the program. Staff meetings and some team level meetings would also schedule time to discuss “all things Advisory” moving forward. Lessons were also sequenced to coincide with either curricular connections or special seasonal connections (such as anti-bullying month, preparation for HS events, etc.) to avoid disconnect between school-wide learning and advisory topics.

Students Matter

The advisory program, with a total of ninety-six lessons, was officially launched September 2014. It's too early for quantitative data to reveal the impact of the advisory program, but there are already positive reactions to the program. Tenafly Middle School students are learning the foundational skills to cope with difficult situations in productive and healthy ways. The advisory collaboration was specifically developed in response to Social-Emotional Security, but Tenafly Middle School is finding this collaboration is encouraging another layer of leadership as students are finding their voices to create change.

To give you insight of the powerful work done between Tenafly Middle School and NSCC, below are three examples of advisory lessons by grade to celebrate.

The 6th Grade Advisory Program seeks to enable each student to self-advocate, problem-solve, develop skills to be good decision makers, be respectful of others, understand the difference between positive and negative attention, explore self-confidence, and develop appropriate leadership skills

Lesson for the Week: Caring Scenarios - Students role-play different scenarios that allow them to practice what caring looks like

Activity/Procedures

1. Ask students to role-play a scenario below. Two or more students can act out the scenario in front of the class. *How would you practice caring if ...*
 - A family member is sick at home?
 - You saw a child in your neighborhood fall off his or her bike?
 - You see a new student eating alone in the cafeteria?
 - A classmate is feeling sad because their dog has died?
2. Ask students how they would handle the scenarios

Reflection

Discussion questions

- How do you know when someone cares about you?
- How do you feel when people show that they really care about you?
- How do you feel when you do something really care for someone else?

Adapted from <http://www.lf67.org/district/programs/EWC/CARING%20master.pdf> pg 5-6

The 7th Grade Advisory Program seeks to enable each student to develop more self-awareness, encourage more understanding and acceptance of others (i.e. respect and empathy) and be better at working with others

Lesson for the Week: Steps of Conflict Resolution

Teacher Talk: Conflicts are an inevitable part of even healthy relationships. Disagreements happen, frustrations, hurt feelings occur in all relationships... So how do we resolve conflicts? How do we work through them?

Review 6 steps of conflict resolution

- Take time to cool off
- Use “I Messages” to state feelings. (No blaming, no name calling, no interrupting)
- Each person states the problem as the other person sees it.
- Each person says how they are responsible for the problem.
- Brainstorm solutions together - choose a solution that satisfies both.
- Affirm, forgive, or thank each other.

Introduce the Abbreviated Win/Win

- Cool off
- “I” message
- Say back
- Take responsibility
- Brainstorm solutions
- Acknowledge

Using the following scenario, model and work with students on practicing the steps of the process:

Two students disagree about a call during a basketball game. One student insists the ball was out of bounds, while the other says it was a fair ball. The students begin arguing and calling each other names.

Elicit examples of conflicts that could be solved using the Win/Win Guidelines. (Make sure to reinforce these steps are only used for normal conflict... never for bullying situations)

The 8th Grade Advisory Program seeks to enable each student to improve their skills of tolerance and understanding, be better collaborators, develop stronger self-advocacy skills, and strengthen self and community pride

Lesson for the Week: Safe and Healthy Relationships

Objectives: Students will define “relationship” and be able to discern healthy and unhealthy signs and behaviors in relationships.

Special Materials Needed: Chart paper, Markers, Handout

Activity/Procedures

Divide students into two groups. Give each group a piece of chart paper and some markers. Then give them the following directions:

- “I want each group to pick a speaker and a recorder. Once you have done that, I want you to think about the relationships you have with your friends, parents, brothers and/or sisters and other family, and boy/girlfriend. Are they good/healthy relationships or bad/unhealthy relationships? Why? Think about the characteristics of these relationships. What makes them “healthy” or “unhealthy?”
- I am going to assign each group a type of relationship- “healthy” or “unhealthy”- and I want your group to write down as many characteristics as you can that make those relationships that way. Label the type of relationship at the top.” Assign the types of relationships to the groups, and then give them 5 minutes to jot their ideas.
- Have the speakers tape or stick the papers to the wall and stand by their papers with a marker color of their choice.

Discussion Questions:

What makes a “healthy” relationship? What makes an “unhealthy” relationship? How are they different? How do you know a relationship is unhealthy?

Additional questions:

- How do you feel when you are involved in healthy relationship? Unhealthy?
- How do they know the relationship is unhealthy?
- What is verbal abuse? What is emotional abuse?
- Why is respect important in a relationship? Trust?

To learn more about how your school can benefit from the CSCI or professional development, visit: www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci.php and <http://www.schoolclimate.org/programs/pd.php> *School Climate Dimension Definitions