



Turning Negatives to Positives

At HF-SL, our teachers turn challenging behaviors into learning experiences. Recently, when a student's behavior derailed a science project, the teacher was able to create a teachable moment and help the student take responsibility for his actions. We strive to help students develop positive coping skills and redirect negative situations into positive ones.

Student Hygiene Clinic

This month, our elementary students participated in a hygiene clinic. Ms. Juliana, with the help of Ms. Karen and Ms. Amber, guided the students through lessons on seven personal hygiene topics. Students enjoyed several experiments including trying to use a toothbrush to wash a stained egg with water, mouthwash, and toothpaste. They also learned about how germs scatter using water, pepper, and soap. Each student was sent home with a hygiene kit and a better understanding of the daily routines needed to keep up with good hygiene.



Blessings in a Bag

Each Friday as resources are available, students that are part of the Workforce Development program, under the direction of our school psychologist, prepare bags of easily preparable food that students can take home for over the weekend. If you'd like to make a donation to this program, please contact Jeannine Lemarie, Development Support Specialist, at lemarie.jeannine@hfi-pgh.org.



April is Counseling Awareness Month!

Holy Family Specialized Learning goes above and beyond what many schools provide for their students, including offering a school-based counseling program. In this program, students meet in groups with our counselor interns and are able to schedule one-on-one sessions with them as needed.

Students seek counseling for many different reasons, but most often, it's because they're having a tough time in the classroom and may just need a break to process what they're feeling. "Sometimes, it can be as easy as taking a short, supervised walk around the building," says Jessica Brechbill, the school's psychologist, "Other times, the students have more serious concerns."

When students are struggling with some of these heavier concerns (more disruptive mental health issues, family issues at home, etc.), HF-SL connects them with Holy Family's Institute's Outpatient program. In this program, students meet weekly with a licensed therapist and work towards their specific goals based on a personal treatment plan.

Overall, the goal of the school-based counseling program, in conjunction with the Outpatient program when needed, is to teach coping and social skills to students. We want to help them be successful in the classroom, and eventually, help them return to their home school districts and continue successfully there.

"Sometimes, a change in behavior just requires a change in mindset," says Jessica, "It's usually a slow process, but we have seen improvement in a lot of our students over time. It's always sad to see them go, but we're so proud of them when they're able to manage their behavior well and return to their home district."



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