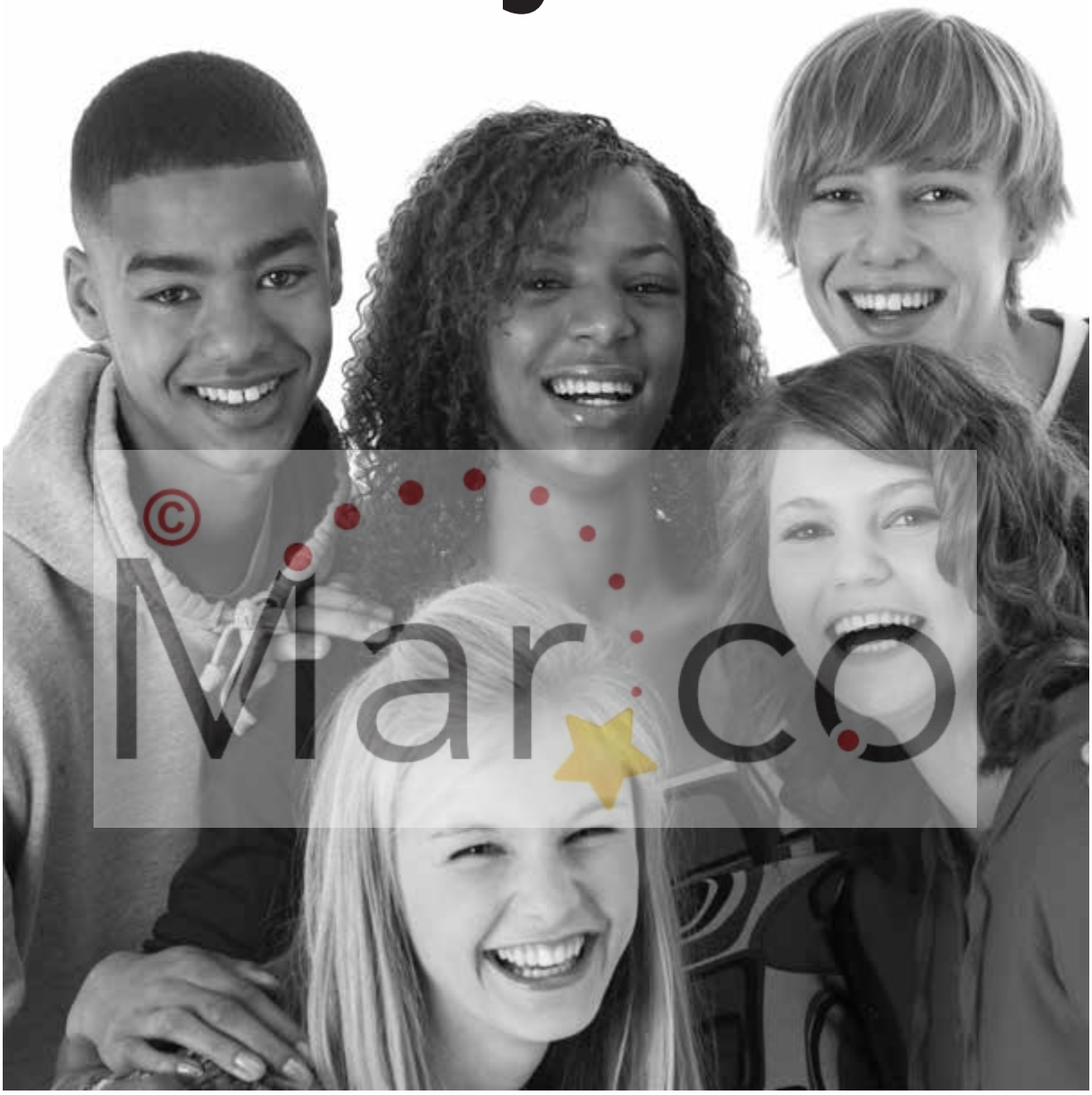
The Ultimate Middle School Counseling Handbook



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WRITTEN BY

Tim Handrich & Deb Schroeder

The Ultimate Middle School Counseling Handbook

10-DIGIT ISBN: 1-57543-174-2
13-DIGIT ISBN: 978-1-57543-174-1

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Published by Mar*co Products, Inc.
1443 Old York Road
Warminster, PA 18974
1-800-448-2197
www.marcoproducts.com

Layout: Cameon Funk

Stock art from: Shutterstock.com

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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

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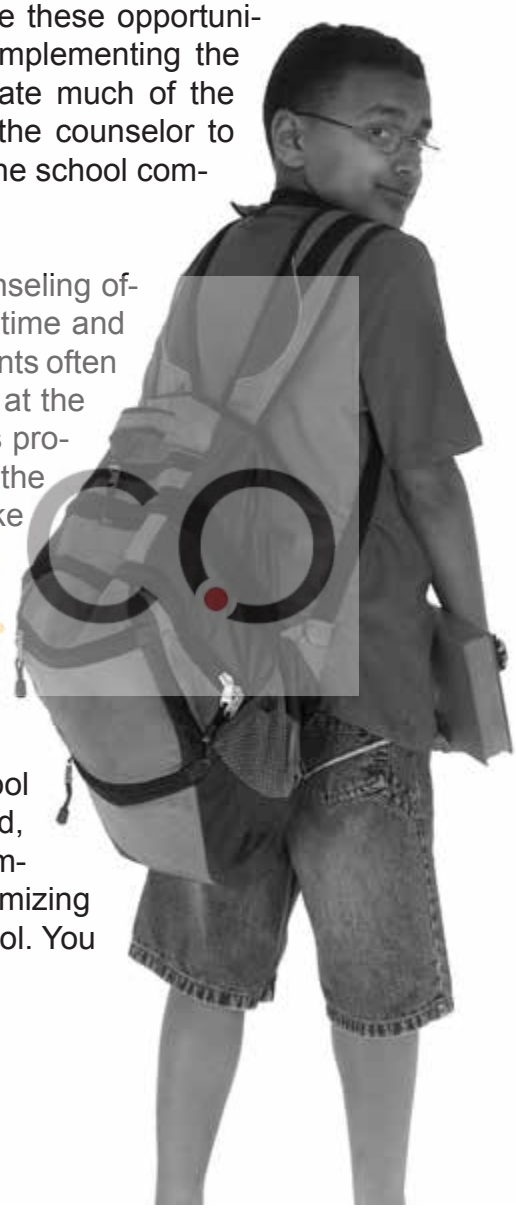
Introduction To Comprehensive School Counseling

What constitutes an exceptional comprehensive school counseling program? As counselors everywhere continually improve their practices, now is the time to draw from literature and research to create new best practices. We've found that ideas from the ASCA and WSCA models have improved our program and job satisfaction beyond belief.

At its core, our counseling program is designed for all students and implemented by the entire school, students' parents, and the community. We embrace the adage, "It takes a village to raise a child." Every student must have the same opportunities to learn, plan to realize dreams and goals, and feel comfortable seeking help with personal concerns. The counselor alone cannot provide these opportunities. Every staff member shares responsibility for implementing the school counseling program. Teachers can incorporate much of the curriculum into their programs, as well as alerting the counselor to concerns about or changes in students. As a team, the school community supports and encourages all students.



The 10–15% of students who showed up in the counseling office have tended to receive most of the counselor's time and attention. We've noticed that the top 10% of our students often do well with minimal help and support. The 10–15% at the opposite end of the spectrum may access resources provided by many different staff members. What about the 70-80% between those extremes? If counselors take time to speak meaningfully with all students—especially those who are often overlooked—about their goals, dreams, and hopes, purposeful learning will take place. Students will finally be able to connect the real world with the world of learning. The light bulb will glow! Such conversations between student and counselor are essential. A comprehensive school counseling program, properly planned and executed, will make an unprecedented improvement. But remember: *The counselor* will make the difference by optimizing how his/her time is spent. The new program is the tool. You are the master carpenter!

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Scooter Relay

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Street cone
- ☐ Scooter for each TLC

Set a time limit for the activity. Determine a starting line. Mark with the street cone the distance you want each student to go. Each TLC lines up at the starting line. The first student in each line sits on a scooter. After each student goes from the starting line to the cone and back as quickly as possible, the next student in line repeats the process until the allotted time has elapsed. Award one point for each student who completes the task.

Relay Race

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Street cone

Set a time limit for the activity. Determine a starting line. Mark with the street cone the distance you want each student to go. Have two TLC groups line up in single file at the starting line. Each student must go to the cone and back, and each team must use each of these movements at least once: crab walk, one-leg hop, cartwheel, and hop like a frog. Only these movements may be used. The first person from each TLC begins the race, the next student in line repeats the process until the allotted time has elapsed. Award one point for each student who completes the task.

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Chariots Of Fire

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Tarp

Determine a starting line and a half-way marker. The TLC works in three-member groups. The object is for one person to ride the chariot (tarp). The other two pull him/her to the half-way line, where one of the pullers hops onto the chariot. The original rider becomes a puller for the return trip. One point is given for each successful round trip.

Two Facts & A Fiction

Objective: To help students learn about each other, start conversations, and develop friendships

Materials: Pen/pencil and paper

Time: 20–25 minutes, including processing

Procedure: Each student writes three interesting statements about him/herself. Two of the statements must be true. One must be false. Each student reads the statements he/she has written, and the group decides which of the three statements is false. After all the group members give their opinions, the student reading the statements reveals which one is false.

Processing Questions:

- Did you learn something about other group members?
- What was it like trying to think of three statements about yourself?
- What was it like trying to "sell" the fiction about yourself?
- How can we learn more about each other?

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A Word About Small Groups

Once again this year, our counselors are offering each student the opportunity to participate in a small group. Students may choose from several topics, including:

Friendship Skills
How to make and keep friends

Superstars
Prepare for life beyond high school!

Family Concerns
Learn to cope with divorce, separated families, and stepfamilies

Decision-Making
How to make good decisions

Hot Topics
Let's talk about issues important to YOU!

Group counseling offers students a great deal. It provides a safe place for kids to try new behaviors, share their thoughts with others, get to know others more closely, belong to something special, get help from students their own age, and learn that others have feelings like their own. In addition, students build the "soft skills" employers are looking for: communication, listening, and decision-making. Small groups also build self-confidence and self-awareness.

Groups meet 3–8 times. We do our best to rotate group times so students do not miss the same class more than once. Students may sign up for groups early in the school year (Sign-up is taking place now!), but participation is limited to one group per year to give everyone a chance to participate. If you have questions about any group, please call (COUNSELOR'S NAME) at (PHONE NUMBER).

Please complete, sign, and return the bottom portion of this announcement to the guidance office by (DATE).

✂- -

☐ I give permission for my child to participate in the group counseling program of his/her choice.

☐ I would like my child considered for the ______________________________ group.

☐ I do not wish my child to participate in the group counseling program.

Parent/Guardian's Signature____

Date ________________

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Getting To Know You

Purpose:

To introduce students to group members, establish group rules, and build trust and familiarity among members

Materials Needed:

For the leader:
- ☐ Chart paper
- ☐ Marker
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Board and marker/chalk
- ☐ Activity from Chapter 3 (pages 38-49)

For each student:
- ☐ *Friendship Group A Pre/Post Test* (page 61 or CD)
- ☐ Set of *Question Cards* (page 64 or CD)
- ☐ Pencil

Pre-Session Preparation:

Print or reproduce *Friendship Group A Pre/Post Test* and a set of *Question Cards* for each student. Cut the *Question Cards* apart.

Nuts & Bolts:

Give each student *Friendship Group A Pre/Post Test* and a pencil. Collect the completed tests and save them to evaluate after completion of the last group session.

Each student states his/her name, favorite activity, and favorite food.

Establish *Group Rules* (see page 58). Record the rules on chart paper and post it in your group room.

Ask each student:

Why should we have a group about friendship?

Brainstorm topics students would like to discuss during the next several weeks. Record their suggestions on the board. (*Note*: Some topics that have come up in groups include:

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Values Clarification

Purpose:

To help students clarify their values and attitudes about divorce

Materials Needed:

For each student:
- ☐ *Divorce Values Clarification Sheet* (page 117 or CD)
- ☐ Pencil

Pre-Session Preparation:

Print or reproduce *Divorce Values Clarification Sheet* for each student.

Nuts & Bolts:

Give each student *Divorce Values Clarification Sheet* and a pencil. Have the students complete the handout, marking *A* for *agree* or *D* for *disagree.*

When everyone has finished, read each statement from the handout aloud. Ask students to respond using "fist to five."

- If you strongly disagree, hold up your fist.
- If you disagree, hold up one finger.
- If you agree, hold up four fingers.
- If you strongly agree, hold up all five fingers.

Discuss each statement after the students respond.

Processing Questions:

- ❓ What have you learned that may help you better understand your parents?
- ❓ What is one thing you appreciate about your parents?
- ❓ What is one thing you hope to do differently when you have a family of your own?
- ❓ What is one thing you learned today?

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I Think I Can

Purpose:

To help students examine why people don't succeed and learn to change negative beliefs into positive beliefs

Materials Needed:

For the leader:
- ☐ *Sentence Starters* (page 177 or CD)

For each student:
- ☐ *Changing Negative Beliefs Into Positive Beliefs* (page 178 or CD)
- ☐ Sticky notes
- ☐ Pencil
- ☐ Student's folder

Pre-Session Preparation:

Print or reproduce *Sentence Starters* for the leader. Print or reproduce *Changing Negative Beliefs Into Positive Beliefs* for each student.

Nuts & Bolts:

Review the group rules.

Read the first *Sentence Starter* aloud and ask each student to orally complete it. When each student has taken a turn, discuss the students' responses. Repeat the procedure until each sentence starter has been completed and discussed. (*Note*: The leader may want to make notes of students' answers.)

Review the students' progress on the previous week's goals.

Ask the students to share their unusual job reports and success-related quotes.

Give each student sticky notes and a pencil. Ask the students to think of reasons why they believe people are unsuccessful and write each idea on a sticky note. Post the completed sticky notes on a door, wall, or board. Discuss students' ideas.

Give each student *Changing Negative Beliefs Into Positive Beliefs*. Have the students complete the handout, then discuss their answers.

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Introduction

Purpose:

To allow students to become acquainted and share thoughts and ideas

Materials Needed:

For the leader:
- ☐ *Marbles and Tubes* (page 39)
- ☐ Activity from Chapter 3 (pages 38-49)

For each student:
- ☐ *Decision-Making Group Pre/Post Test* (page 187 or CD)
- ☐ Pencil

Pre-Session Preparation:

Print or reproduce *Decision-Making Group Pre/Post Test* for each student.

Nuts & Bolts:

Give each student *Decision-Making Group Pre/Post Test* and a pencil. Collect the completed tests and save them to evaluate after completion of the last group session.

Have each student state his/her name and favorite breakfast food.

Introduce the concept of *consensus-building*: Agreement is reached by compromise rather than voting.

Divide the students into two groups. Allow the groups two or three minutes to reach a consensus on each topic. The process will probably take less time as they become more familiar with it. Suggested topics include:

- A chore at home they don't mind doing
- A chore at home they dislike doing
- A TV show they enjoy watching
- A TV show they dislike
- A vegetable they don't mind eating
- A vegetable they dislike

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Sample Mini-Courses Checklist/Timeline

Wednesday, 11/28

- ☐ Distribute *Instructor Information* (pages 225-227 or CD) and *Mini-Course Description Forms* (page 228 or CD) to all staff mailboxes or through e-mail.
- ☐ Mail *Instructor Information* and *Mini-Course Description Forms* to parents who taught mini courses last year.

Thursday, 11/29

- ☐ In the upper right rectangle, date the *Mini-Course Description Forms* as they're received (first come, first served in case of duplicate offerings).
- ☐ Talk with computer specialist about creating database to track instructor's names and course offerings (see sample on page 245).

Monday, 12/3

- ☐ Distribute the *Parent-Information Newsletter* (page 229 or CD) about volunteer mini-course teachers and sign-up volunteers.
- ☐ Selection Order can be performed any time before holiday break (We pick TLC names out of a hat for the order in which students will sign up. You could also do this alphabetically or by lottery by classroom teacher.)

Monday, 12/10

- ☐ Send the *Mini-Course Registration Forms* (page 230 or CD) to be printed on two-part forms. You will need (number of students in your school plus extras) forms by the date students return from the holiday break.

Friday, 12/14

- ☐ *Mini-Course Description Forms* are due back from teachers.
- ☐ Call parents who taught last year and who haven't responded.
- ☐ Distribute *Mini-Course Overnight Experiences* (page 231 or CD) information to students.

Monday, 12/17

- ☐ Arrange for volunteers to type and copy the *Mini-Course Offerings* (see sample on pages 234-243 or CD). This must be completed by the time students return from their holiday break. The *Mini-Course Booklet* should include:
  - ☐ *Timeline* (page 232 or CD)
  - ☐ *Mini-Course Rules* (page 233 or CD)
  - ☐ Course offerings (see samples on pages 234-243)
  - ☐ a copy of the *Parent-Information Newsletter* (page 229 or CD)
  - ☐ the selection process
  - ☐ a copy of the *Mini-Course Registration Form* (page 230 or CD)
  - ☐ a request for display items to generate interest in mini-course options

Friday, 12/21

- ☐ Final course information is given to volunteer typists.
- ☐ Consider giving a small *thank you* gift to volunteers (soap, hand lotion, pen, etc.).

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THE FOLLOWING SAMPLES
ARE REPRODUCIBLE/PRINTABLE PAGES
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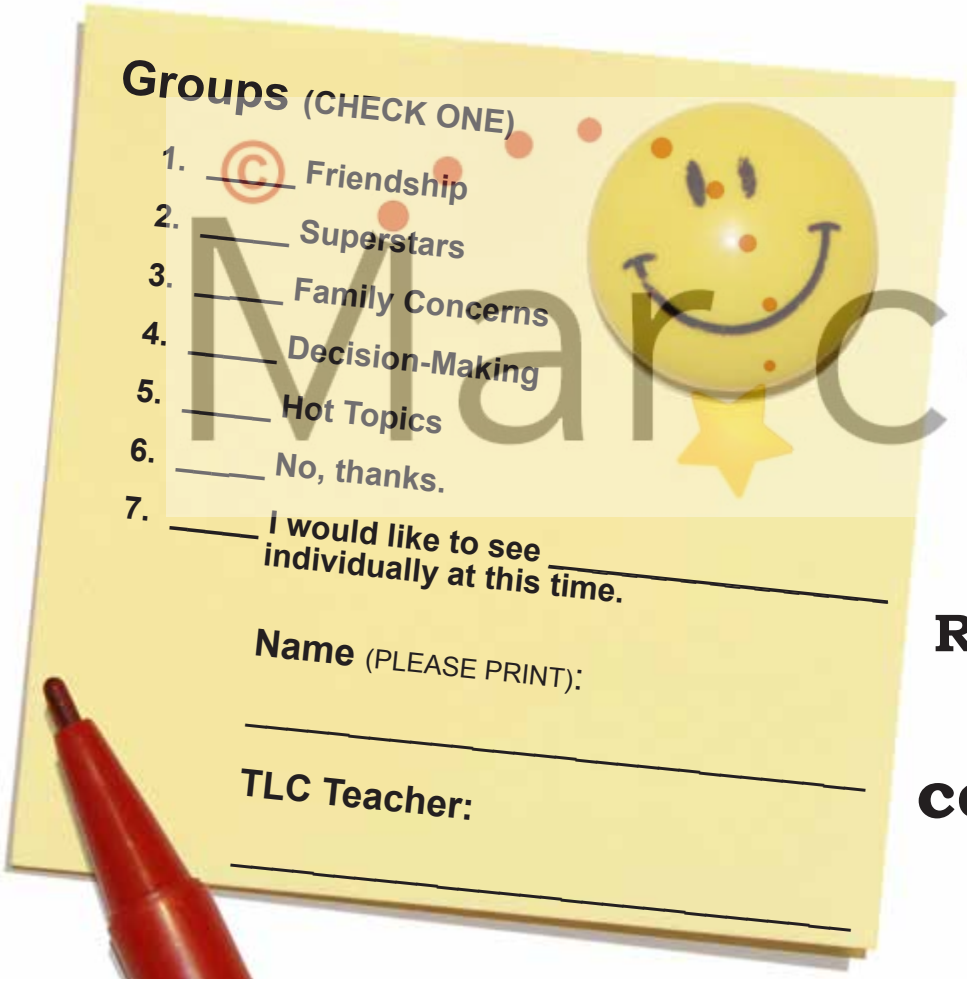
Why sign up for a group?

Build communication, listening, and decision-making skills!
Build confidence and self-awareness!

- **FRIENDSHIP:** This group explores how to make and keep friends. The world revolves around relationships and ability to communicate feelings.
- **SUPERSTARS:** This group is designed for those students who are ready to go "above and beyond" in preparing for their future by developing or strengthening such traits as goal-setting, communication skills, and time management.
- **FAMILY CONCERNS:** This group helps members learn to cope with divorce, separated families, and stepfamilies. Every family has value, and we must be proud of who we are and where we come from.
- **DECISION-MAKING:** This group focuses on how today's decisions can affect tomorrow. Do people ever make bad decisions?
- **HOT TOPICS:** This group focuses on topics group members feel are pertinent. This is a chance for students to talk with peers in a safe environment.



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Remember:
Your counselor cares!

FRIENDSHIP GROUP B

Pre/Post Test

NAME _____ **DATE** _____

Please answer the following questions, using the scale listed below:

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = not sure
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

I know the names of each person in my group.

1	2	3	4	5

I know something about each person in my group.

1	2	3	4	5

I am able to express my feelings without hurting others.

1	2	3	4	5

I am happy with the number of friends I have.

1	2	3	4	5

I am happy with the quality of my friendships.

1	2	3	4	5

I feel positive about myself even though I'm not perfect.

1	2	3	4	5

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Question Cards

What is most important to you in life?	Do you smoke cigarettes/marijuana?
What is the most stupid thing you have ever done?	Name something you hate to do. Why?
Who's your best friend of the same sex?	What's your all-time favorite movie? Why?
What's your favorite possession?	Do you ever cry?
What was your favorite toy as a young child?	What's your favorite game?
What was your childhood nickname? How did you feel about it?	What is the funniest thing that ever happened to you?
Do you have pets? Describe them.	What's your favorite season?

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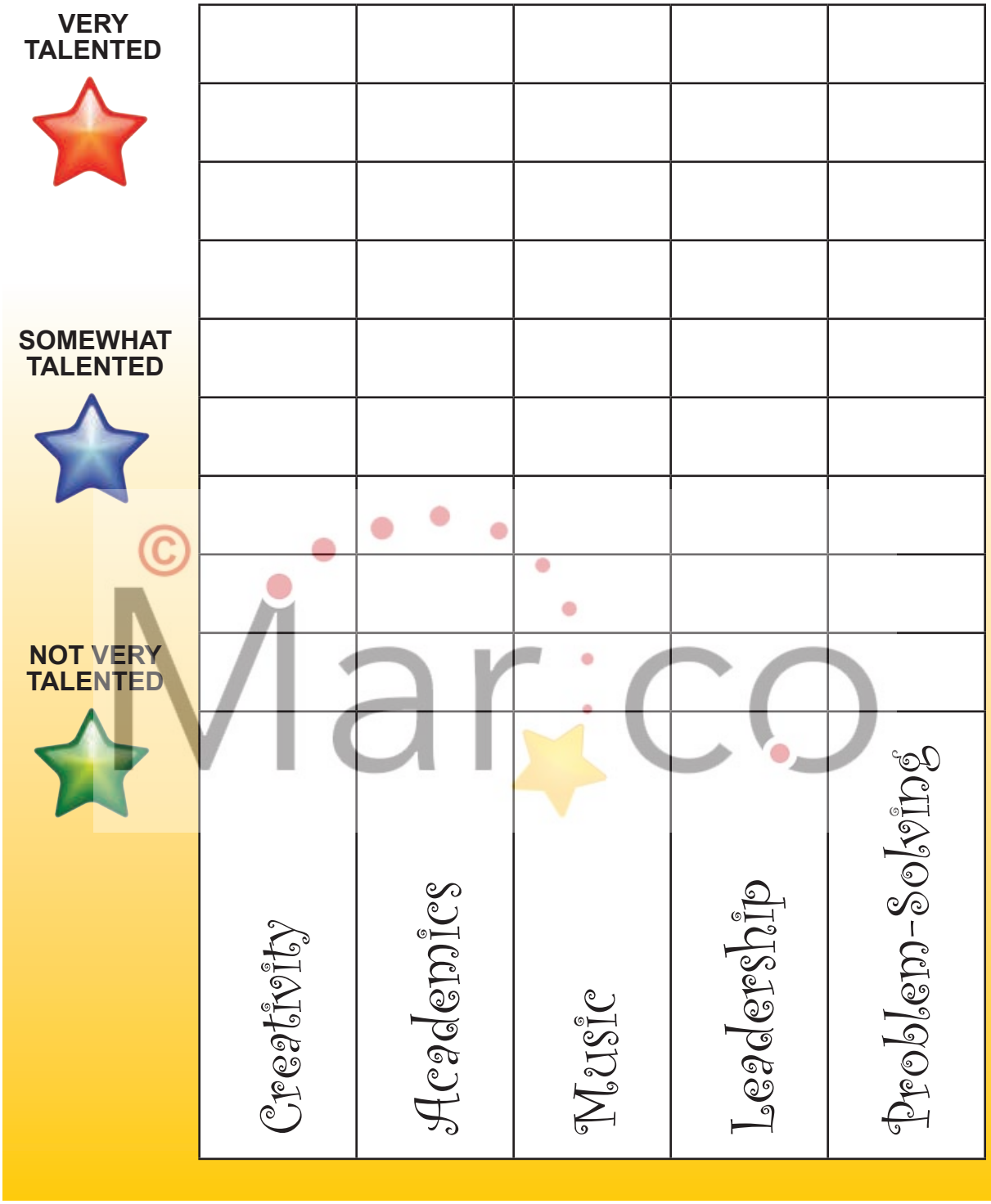
Name: _____ Date_____

MY TALENTS GRAPH

Starting from the bottom, color the graph to show how your talents compare.
The strongest talents will have the largest colored area.



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TIPS For Perfectionists

- Appreciate your perfectionism. Don't be ashamed of it. Make it work *for* you, not *against* you.
- Set priorities. Allow yourself to be a perfectionist in activities that really matter to you, but lower your expectations in some other areas.
- Allow yourself to be less than perfect for a day. Be messy, be late, make a mistake. Realize that the world won't end if you aren't perfect.
- If you aren't successful when you first try something, don't give up. Don't punish yourself if you are unsuccessful or don't meet your high standards. Concentrate your energies on future successes.
- Try taking a risk. Sign up for a challenging activity. Start a conversation with someone you don't know. Study for a test without overdoing it. Change your daily routine. Begin your day without a plan.
- Maintain high standards for yourself. Let others set their own standards.
- Realize that your friends like you for who you are. NO ONE IS PERFECT!
- Take time to enjoy a success or an accomplishment. Don't rush on to the next thing.
- Think carefully about what you expect of yourself in different areas. Decide which expectations are realistic and which might be too high.
- Realize that you can't do it all. Prioritize and focus on what is really important to you.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Learn how to handle stress: Take a walk. Cook. Listen to music. Draw. Paint. Read. Nap. Clean. Write in a journal. Play a game.
- Laugh at yourself.
- Hold onto your goals and believe in your ability to reach them.

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Expert Rankings For The Big Bear Lake Incident

1. **LIFE JACKETS**—The best and only certain protection against drowning and the cold

2. **WOOL SWEATERS**—Your best insulator; help conserve body heat and significantly extend survival time, even in cold water

3. **RAIN SUITS**—Worn over the sweaters; protect against wind and chill; significantly increase survival time

4. **FLARE GUN WITH 8 SHELLS**—Best possible signal for rescue; may be seen by people along the lake

5. **FLASHLIGHTS**—Helpful in early-morning, evening, and night; for signaling rescue boats and aircraft

6. **50´OF ROPE**—Can hold people together

7. **TWO 12´x 12´TARPS**—Could be placed over the group to help retain body heat and cover exposed skin

8. **FIRST AID KIT**—Mirror could reflect the sun for signaling; razor could cut tarps and rope

9. **BUTTER**—An excellent insulator when rubbed on head and face; significantly reduces heat loss from the skin

10. **THERMOS OF COFFEE**—Source of warmth; may help delay effects of hypothermia

11. **MIXED NUTS**—produce modest amounts of energy and warmth

12. **MATCHES**—If kept dry, may help provide warmth on land

13. **SIX CANS OF SODA**—Largely useless, but could aid in producing comfort

14. **SUNTAN LOTION**—Water-soluble and of little /no use in fall temperatures

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Career Day Project Outline

List 8 careers you explored today.

_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____

Name 5 skills important in the careers you explored.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Choose 3 careers and write an explanation of skills needed to succeed in them.

1. _____
_____
_____

2. _____
_____
_____

3. _____
_____
_____

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How is your school helping you acquire the skills you need to succeed in the world of work?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____