

September 15, 2011

To Middle School Parents and Guardians,

We are pleased to announce that the “Banana Splits” program, for students who have lost a parent or who have parents who are divorced or separated, is again being offered in the Middle School. We are offering a separate group for the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders because of the unique developmental needs of each group. The Banana Splits program is a national program that has been used in both public and private schools for over 18 years. It is a peer support program where students can share their feelings of loss and change while regaining a feeling of stability. Students only participate when they feel comfortable. The group will meet during lunch about twice a month, and they will not miss recess unless they want to continue the discussion. More information about this program and resources for parents can be found at www.bananasplitsresourcecenter.org.

The format of each meeting may include a story, sharing, or discussion according to the age and needs of the group. The purpose of the group is to help the children:

- Realize they are not alone
- Identify and appropriately deal with their feelings
- Take responsibility for their feelings and actions
- Learn child-appropriate coping and problem-solving skills
- Offer a neutral environment for expression of thoughts

The discussions of the group are confidential. Your child may discuss with you the activities and topics from the Banana Splits meetings, but they should not discuss what other children share during the meetings. During the year we will contact you regarding any specific concerns that may arise about your child. Dr. Cantrell, the Lower School Psychologist, will be co-facilitating the 5th and 6th grade groups. Please talk with your child, and if he or she is interested in participating, contact Suzanne Ritter at suzanne_ritter@columbusacademy.org or by phone at 509-2296.