

# BANANA SPLITS

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GUILDERLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
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## What

- Banana Splits' is a peer support group for students who have experienced family changes due to separation, divorce, or remarriage.
- Opportunities for support and interaction are provided to help students cope. Group content is tailored to meet individual needs of group members. Each group helps plan their own activities.
- Specific skills covered may include empathy, solving problems, and what to do when you are mad. In addition, students may learn coping skills, dealing with stress, and what to do when you are afraid.
- Skills are taught in a manner that is both fun and educational, and cooperative learning techniques are emphasized.
- Stories, music, games, art projects and role-play are integrated to support the curriculum.
- The Banana Splits program is based on a national program and exists in many schools throughout the area. These groups are educational in nature and NOT "therapy" groups. Members do not have to experiencing a particular difficulty to participate.

## Why

The effectiveness of peer supports group to assist children in coping with family changes is well documented. The Banana Splits program is has received tremendous support from students, parents and teachers. Currently over 80 students participate in the program at Guilderland Elementary School.

## Who

Mark Lane, LCSW-R has worked for over 19 years in the mental health field including positions as a:

- **School social worker** at Guilderland Elementary School for the past 11 years facilitating approximately 20 friendship and banana splits groups a week, teaching social skills to grade K-5 and performing teacher consultation and crisis intervention.
- **Private practice therapist** with Albany Associates for Child and Family Mental Health since 2005.
- **Outpatient mental health social worker** with children and families at Saratoga and Rensselaer Counties from 1992 through 2005. This experience included facilitating a men's group and a boy's social skills group.
- **Group therapist for Waveriders**, a support group for grieving children and adolescents, at the Community Hospice of Albany for four years.
- **Adjunct faculty** at State University of New York at Albany teaching a graduate level course on Solution Focused Therapy, since 1996.

## Where and When

Students meet for group and to eat lunch together in the social work room during their scheduled lunchtime.

## Parent and Teacher Involvement

Teachers are consulted to coordinate services and facilitate generalization of skills. Parents are encouraged to be involved and can contact me by calling 869-0293 or emailing [LaneM@guilderlandschools.org](mailto:LaneM@guilderlandschools.org).