

Dear Families of Students in Grades 2-5,

It is time for the tenth year of our MPH Lower School **Banana Splits** Program to begin! The children have been patiently waiting for our special lunchtime gatherings to begin. In order to get things rolling, the first thing we need is permission from you for your child to participate this year.

What is Banana Splits?

- **Banana Splits** is a support group to help children who live with a single parent, or have experienced divorce, separation, or the death of a parent. It should not be considered as counseling or therapy.
- **Banana Splits** is a “kids helping kids” program. It provides an opportunity to see that there are others who have a similar type of home life and deal with similar challenges.
- More than anything, **Banana Splits** is a time for friendships to grow and for each child to realize that he or she is not the only one.
- **Banana Splits** provides a chance to get ideas from peers on how to solve problems that others have already dealt with or are currently facing.

Who comes to Banana Splits?

- **Banana Splits is for children in grades 2- 5.**
- **Banana Splits is appropriate for children living with only one parent, in a step-family, or moving back and forth between parents or families.**
- **Banana Splits also welcomes children who are adopted, children from gay families, and children with step-siblings.**
- **It is for those whose “split” is some years past as well as for children who are currently experiencing a new “split.”**

How did Banana Split originate?

- Elizabeth McGonagle, a social worker in Ballston Spa, created this program in 1978. She felt strongly that it was important for children to have a safe place to share feelings, explore ways to handle problems associated with living with only one parent, or only one parent at a time, and to see that they are not alone with the unusual stresses they face. Since 1978 this successful program has been adopted in hundreds of schools across the country.
- The program is called **Banana Splits**—the “splits” to describe the reality of the child’s home circumstances and “banana” as a reminder of the fun we have together!

The Nitty-Gritty:

- In **Banana Splits**, small groups of students get together for lunch with Mr. Lutz and Mrs. Layhew about twice a month. (Children do not miss class or recess time to attend.)
- School lunch is provided that day, though we all eat together in a Lower School classroom.
- We eat and chat, discuss whatever comes up, play games, do puzzles and sometimes make things. The time goes fast!

- Attendance is voluntary each meeting and the rules are simple. Students are expected to attend the whole meeting if they come.
- Behavior must be such that it allows each person to feel valued and have an enjoyable experience.
- Lastly, to preserve confidentiality, we do not share the particulars of other people's lives outside of the group. Children are encouraged to communicate with their families about any issues we discuss.

If you would like more information, call us, Nathan Lutz or Vicki Layhew. If you are interested in having your child participate, **please return the attached form to school as soon as possible. All participants—those new to the program and those continuing—should send back the registration form.**

Thank you. As always, we are looking forward to spending time with your children.

Sincerely,

Nathan Lutz

Vicki Layhew

Banana Splits 2010-11 Registration

I give permission for my child _____
in Grade _____ to participate in **Banana Splits**.

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____

(You may use this form if you have more than one child participating.)

I give permission for my child _____
in Grade _____ to participate in **Banana Splits**.

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____