



ISCA *Insight*

The Newsletter of the Illinois School Counselor Association
a state chapter of the American School Counselor Association

Winter 2011 Issue

www.ilschoolcounselor.org

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The mission of the Illinois School Counselor Association (ISCA) is to provide leadership, advocacy, and collaboration for Illinois school counselors, which results in systemic change to enhance the success of all students in their academic, career, and social/emotional development.



Dr. Heidi Larson (2nd from right) and Eastern Illinois University school counseling students.



ISCA Secondary Vice President Sherri McLaughlin presenting at the ICA Conference.



ISCA Vice President Counselor Supervisor Vince Walsh-Rock and Elaine Kies at the ICA Conference.



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a division of



National School Counselor Week

from Laurie Siegel
President

A message from the President...



School Counselors, this newsletter is for you... We feel strongly about School Counselors taking care of themselves! **WE CARE ABOUT YOU!** Below I have put together a list of a few suggestions to assist you in your quest to **TAKE CARE OF YOU!** In the month of February, during School Counselor's week, we have a very

special self-care counseling event planned for you. Please read on in this newsletter for more specifics.

Self-Care for School Counselors

Self-care for counselors and educators is an absolute **MUST**. This work is challenging, detail-oriented, sometimes frustrating, often emotional, and if we don't build up ample energy reserves, the potential for job burn-out is huge. Here are a few tips, you might find helpful:

SELF-CARE AT YOUR SCHOOL

~ **Find a sounding board:** Designate someone you trust to be your sounding board when things get stressful. Confidentiality is essential, so if there's not someone in your school you fully trust to keep confidences, choose someone off-site who can be reached by phone. (If you vent with anyone about students or parents, honor confidentiality by not using names.) The ability to call someone and rant for five minutes at any time during the day is priceless.

~ **Ask for support:** Along those same lines, remember to ask for help, support, and ideas from colleagues, supervisors, or mentors. School counselors can't know and do everything (though we feel like we're supposed to sometimes), so model for your students that asking for help is healthy and natural.

~ **Take your lunch break:** Take enough time for a healthy lunch **EVERY DAY**. If you're feeling closed in, eat in the staff lunch room or whatever is provided for you so you can socialize. If you'd rather have some time alone, find a quiet place to eat, or go off campus if you can. If you eat in your office, **DON'T** do work-related paperwork while you eat. Turn on some music, close the door, and relax, and recharge. Eat healthy! You will

feel better tomorrow for this.

~ **Keep your work at school:** Create time during the school day to do your paperwork and make needed phone calls. No matter how busy you are (and we do know how busy you are), you'll be far more effective in the big picture if you leave your work at work every day. The work will still be there tomorrow.

~ **Work within your Circle of Influence:** If you're not familiar with the concept of "circle of need" and "circle of influence," here's something to consider. The circle of need (all the students and families who need your help and services) is huge, and trying to meet all the needs in that huge circle is overwhelming and unrealistic. The circle of influence is the amount of work (phone calls, 1:1 student interactions, groups, paperwork, meetings, etc.) you can actually reasonably complete each day, week, month, or school year. If you focus on what you can actually do within those parameters, you'll be more effective and more efficient than you would be if you try to do it all.

~ **Choose you're self-talk:** Have something (or a list of things) you can tell yourself when things don't go well, so you can keep your perspective. For example, if you see a student heading in a negative direction despite some great ideas you've offered, you may tell yourself, "Even if she doesn't listen now, I may have planted some seeds that will bloom sometime in the future." Or if a student tells you something difficult he's dealing with that you can't do anything about, you can tell yourself, "Well, I was present for him. I really listened and I know he felt heard and validated. If nothing else, I know there's real value in that."

~ **Stay out of Chronic Complaint Mode:** When you're with colleagues, leave or stay out of conversations that turn into chronic complaint sessions about students, parents, colleagues, or administration. Venting is one thing, but getting sucked into a whirlpool of negative conversation will sap your energy and not resolve a thing. The same goes for gossip and any kind of communication triangle. Direct, assertive conversation is more professional and more effective.

~ **Take pro-active steps:** If you do need to have a conversation with your administrator to speak up about something frustrating, make a list ahead of time of your frustrations, and for each one, make a specific request about what you'd like to be different, or suggest a solution if you have one. Your meeting will be much more productive, and you'll present yourself as pro-active instead of negative.

SELF-CARE ON YOUR OWN TIME

~ **Do what you love to do:** Make time regularly to do something you really love to do — all the better if it's completely unrelated to school. Do it every week, or every day if possible. This is your investment in you. You build

Continued on page 3

Calendar of Events

JANUARY 2012

1/16/2012 Martin Luther King Day
1/19/2012 CPS School Counselors' Social

FEBRUARY 2012

2/6-10/2012 National School Counseling Week
2/11/2012 Wellness Works
2/8/2012 ISAT dates
2/12/2012 Lincoln's Birthday
2/20/2012 President's Day

MARCH 2012

3/5/2012 Casimir Pulaski Day
3/17/2012 St. Patrick's Day

APRIL 2012

4/18/2012 Easter
4/13/2012 ISCA Annual Conference
Springfield
4/20/2012 ISCA Annual Conference Skokie

MAY 2012

5/2-4/2012 IACAC Annual Conference-Itasca
5/13/2012 Mother's Day
5/28/2012 Memorial Day

JUNE 2012

6/17/2012 Father's Day
6/23/2012 ASCA Delegate Assembly-Minn.
6/25/2012 ASCA Conference

National School Counselor Week (continued)

energy reserves, and then at work you can give from your surplus instead of trying to give from an empty cup.

~ **Vent your frustrations:** Find outlets for your work-related (and other) frustrations and stresses. Go for walks or hikes, go to the batting cages, sing, dance, have real conversations with people you love and trust, write unsent letters (and shred them), go out in the desert and yell, or whatever works for you. Try several outlets until you find the ones that work best for you.

~ **Spend time in your favorite zone:** Find a creative outlet you can get so immersed in that time ceases to exist. You've probably found one sometime in your life — go back to it and spend some time there again. The restoration and revitalization are wonderful for you and for everyone who comes in contact with you.

~ **Exercise:** Walk, run, swim, etc. Just move! Exercise has been proven to assist with feeling better about yourself, not only physically but emotionally. JUST DO IT!

~ **Eat Well:** If you don't eat well, you won't feel well. Take time to examine the food you take in. A daily log helps. You would be surprised that making a small adjustment to your diet, can improve your attitude, energy and your emotional wellness.

~ **Rest:** Rest and sleep. Rest and read. Rest and putter. Rest and lie on the couch. Take some time to do nothing and enjoy it. This is also a major investment in you, and it allows you to model the best kind of self-care in our fast-moving, overly busy, chaotic society — DOWN TIME.

The Importance of Grit

By: Steve Murray, President Elect-Elect



In late September, I met with the parents of a freshman to discuss their son's academic progress. The student is very intelligent, and yet he was failing two classes due to missed assignments. The parents explained that "*missing assignments*" has been a recurrent theme throughout his academic career and the cause of countless arguments. Having tried coaxing, bribery and severe punishment, they expressed frustration

that nothing seems to work. I acknowledged that because their son is now a high school student the stakes are higher. I assured them of my commitment to work with their son to improve his classroom performance.

When I talked with the student's teachers and reviewed his records to develop a counseling strategy, I questioned, "Why do some individuals accomplish more than others of equal or greater intelligence?" Psychologist Angela Duckworth, believes that fortitude, stick-to-it-iveness or "grit" is what separates brilliant slackers from the simply talented. Duckworth developed an eight question Grit Scale that she believes demonstrates that "measures of self-control can be a more reliable predictor of students' grade-point averages than their I.Q.'s." Duckworth looked at a full-range of character traits that lead to success in populations that ranged from West Point cadets to New York middle-schoolers, and she named the overall quality

"grit," or the combination of a passion for a single mission with an unswerving dedication to achieve that mission. I asked the student to take the eight-question Grit Scale which assesses consistency and perseverance of effort. When I met with him, we reviewed his results and talked about each question in detail. This provided the opportunity to confirm his strengths and to explore areas to improve upon. The student confirmed that he rarely finishes what he starts. He told me that he did not finish a research project in Biology because he lost interest. His admission opened the door to a conversation about diligence. We discussed the characteristics of a diligent person and he admitted that he is not diligent.

After reviewing his Grit Scale results, we were able to establish goals, develop action plans around each of the eight-points, talk through the obstacles to meeting his goals, and come up with rewards for meeting his goals. We acknowledged that change is hard work and it requires great effort and stamina. We agreed that we would meet regularly and focus on incremental change. I can report that the student is missing fewer assignments, and his grades are gradually improving.

The use of the Grit Scale has given me another tool to use when counseling students. The Grit Scale has led to meaningful and directed interactions with the students. As we know the academic achievement of students is positively impacted when counselors assist with developing the character of their students.



Featured Speaker
Dr. Robert Wubbolding

IMHCA Member Appreciation Program

Friday, March 2, 2012

**Dealing with Avoidance,
Resistant Individuals
and Difficult Behaviors**

Members: \$35
Non-Members: \$120



Reality Therapy is based on the principle that human beings need not be victims of external forces.

Self-Care for Student Counselors

By: Sarah Martin - Graduate Student & Intern



“Please secure your own mask and then proceed to secure the mask of your child or those who need assistance around you.”

Anyone who has flown on a plane has heard this phrase during the safety instructions many times. Why do flight attendants insist that adults take care of their own oxygen masks before they assist others? Because if you are not able to function properly, you will be of

no service to anyone else. This is the same reason it is so important for student counselors to take care of themselves; in order to be able to properly and effectively serve their students.

Being a counselor is emotionally, physically and mentally draining. As a profession, we take on the issues and problems of others. Students in counseling have the additional stress of job hunting, internship and balancing jobs to pay off student loans. We are learning as much as possible and discovering there is a wealth of information we have not yet even been exposed to. The potential for burn out is immense. It is vital for students to be on top of their game, especially while job searching. We think that because we are students, we need to stretch ourselves as thin as possible and learn as much as we can immediately. We believe we have to pay our dues, put in longer hours, and work harder and faster than counselors already established in the field. It is that much more important for us to take care of ourselves so that we can prove our capability as professionals in this industry.

We have a responsibility to our students and ourselves to practice self-care. Take it as a blessing. It is okay to take a nap on your day off if it is what you need. Listen to your body and don't feel guilty about down time! It is necessary to maintain mental and physical wellness.

Students could qualify to travel with the Ringling Brothers based on the amount of juggling we do on a daily basis. Rest and relaxation are required to keep our minds and bodies fresh and performing at their full potential. The most important things to remember are to eat healthy, get plenty of rest, participate in physical activity and find an outlet. No one feels satisfied and energized after eating a bag of potato chips. Eat foods that are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber and protein. This will help you perform physically, as well as give you energy and make you feel good. Getting a good night's sleep is also vital to daily

performance. Try to avoid an access of alcohol as it will slow you down. Exercise in any form is incredibly beneficial to burn off stress, clear your head and stay in shape. From running, walking, swimming, or biking to yoga, Pilates, meditation or weight training, there is a physical activity for every preference and body type. Finally, having a creative outlet and someone to confide in is necessary for mental well-being. Participating in painting, photography, sculpture or drawing is a healthy way to increase your creative juices. Find a fellow professional to confide in and commiserate with. All these things contribute to a balanced and productive lifestyle.

In February, during School Counselor's week, we have self-care counseling events planned for counselors and students. Stay tuned to future news letters and email blasts to get more information. In addition, the following link is a great resource that explores various stress management tactics and additional ways to practice self care. Remember, you have a responsibility to take care of yourself, and only then will you truly be able to help take care of others.

http://helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping.htm

ISCA Annual Conferences

April 13th
Northfield Inn Suites &
Conference Center
Springfield, IL

April 20th
DoubleTree
Skokie, IL



To register visit our website
ilschoolcounselor.org

Counselors See Conflict in Carrying out Mission

By: Catherine Gewertz

Middle and high school counselors believe they have a unique and powerful role to play in preparing all students for good jobs or college, but they feel hamstrung by insufficient training, competing duties, and their own schools' priorities, according to a study released today.

The online survey of 5,300 counselors was conducted this past spring for the College Board's Advocacy & Policy Center. One of the largest-ever surveys of counselors, it paints a picture of a committed but frustrated corps that sees a deep schism between the ideal mission of schools and the work that takes shape day-to-day.

Nine in ten counselors, for instance, said that two objectives should top their schools' priority lists: ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education and that they graduate well-equipped for college and careers. But fewer than four in ten said their schools actually operated as if those goals were central to their mission.

That disconnection was even sharper among counselors in public and low-income schools than in private and wealthier ones. Only 19 percent of counselors in high-poverty schools said college and career readiness was part of their schools' day-to-day mission, compared with 30 percent of counselors overall. Two-thirds of those in private schools said so, compared with one-quarter of those in public schools.

"We have more than 100,000 counselors in our [school] system, and yet they're not being strategically deployed," said John Bridgeland, the lead author of the report and the President and Chief Executive Officer of Civic Enterprises, a Washington-based public-policy group that includes high school improvement among its focus issues.

"Counselors are uniquely positioned to see the whole life of the child; to see their family circumstances... their social and emotional needs, the nonacademic supports they may require, and their academic progress and challenge, not just in a given year, like a teacher can, but over time," he said. "That's an advantage that's extremely powerful. Not deploying counselors in a way that takes advantage of that unique role is a huge national loss."

Job Interference

Counselors reported that a broad and unclear conception of their role gets in the way of focusing on what they believe to be most important. Nine in ten said they wanted to reduce their administrative burdens and have smaller caseloads so they could receive more training and spend more time helping students with supports and preparation for careers and college. The average caseload of the counselors in the study was 368 students; 427 in schools with high poverty rates.

"Counselors' duties should be aligned to the needs of students, but that doesn't always happen in a school setting," said Patricia Z. Smith, who is now a counselor-consultant to the Hillsborough County school district in Florida, after three decades as director of guidance services there. "They get pulled into lunchroom duty and bus duty, into substituting for teachers, and proctoring tests. This is a shock to new counselors when they first get into schools."

The quality and focus of counselors' training is a problem, said Ms. Smith. Typical training programs—focusing on skills such as counseling technique, group counseling, crisis intervention, and human growth—are stronger at preparing counselors for their roles as personal and emotional supports to students than they are for their work helping students plan for college and careers, she said.

The study reflects that appraisal. Although seven in ten middle and high school counselors hold master's degrees, and half were teachers first, only 16 percent rated their training as "highly effective" in preparing them for their counseling work in schools.

"Despite the good intentions of many of these professionals, research suggests that little alignment exists among counselor training, work assignments, and school goals," the report says. "There seems to be consistent misalignment between the counseling field and the education system."

"Counselors' duties should be aligned to the needs of students, but that doesn't always happen in a school setting."

CICO Report

In a special session November 29, 2011 the legislature voted to keep open five mental health facilities and two prisons that been scheduled for closures by Gov Quinn and would have laid off 2,000 employees. But we are warned that keeping everything open can't be a long term plan.

CICO Executive Director Dan Stasi has continued to meet with IDFP staff and other mental health associations to work out details to the counselor licensure law reenactment in 2012. As we stated earlier the counselor licensure law will end 12/31/2012 unless we take action to introduce new legislation to keep the law around. Yes, this would mean that counselor licensure would cease to exist in Illinois. That is why you are part of a strong state association that advocates for your interests. We are working on legislation to reenact licensure and to strengthen the counselor licensure law in Illinois. We expect a bill to be introduced in January 2012 with some changes in licensure law. We will definitely be clarifying the language in the law that only LCPCs can be in an independent private practice. We want to protect the LCPC license.

We are continuing to work with IMHCA and ICA Board members on supporting increased rates for reimbursement from insurance providers and managed care companies. We were pleased with the results from ILBCBS when they raised rates by 17% for LCPCs.

The Counselor Educator Summit is scheduled for March 9, 2012 in Lisle, IL. We will be discussing the new counselor

licensure rules as well as the proposed licensure law changes. School counselor legislation as well as the upcoming switch at ISBE from teacher and school counselor certification to licensure will be explained. If you have not been updated Public Act 097-0607 which was senate Bill 1799 makes changes to certification and renames it licensure. Instead of ISBE having certification for school counselors, teachers, principals, etc they will be "licensed." It is all still done through ISBE. Nothing to do with IDFP licenses. It does lay out how money will be distributed to Master Certificate counselors under NBPTS if the money is appropriated. It makes changes in Type 78 temporary certificates (good for 2 years). It does several things for applicants from other countries. It states specific crimes that bar getting licensed in schools. Plus fee increases.

CICO continues to look very seriously at the issue of Illinois requiring a 60 credit hour degree for counselor licensure. The ICA division ICES (Illinois Counselor Educators and Supervisors) is surveying other states for how the licensure process works in other states. There are a lot of questions around this issue still to be answered. It will take a change to

licensure rules and if it were to happen it would have a future effective date and it would grandfather in those who are currently licensed.

Please keep yourself up-to-date by maintaining your membership. Please remember that the state will never notify you of changes. That is why it is so important to belong to a professional association. Join LinkedIn <http://www.linkedin.com> Illinois School Counselor Association and follow us on twitter <http://www.twitter.com/myisca>. We send out the latest news promptly through those sources.

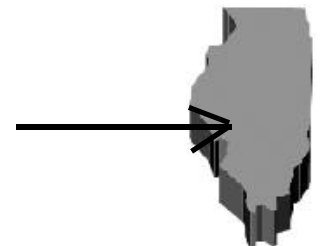


Kris Wheatley, Representative Linda Chapa LaVia and Daniel Stasi, CICO Executive Director



ICA 2nd Annual Southern Conference March 30, 2012

DoubleTree by Hilton- Collinsville, IL



- Breakout Sessions, Lunch and Networking
- More info @ www.ilcounseling.org

Counselors See Conflict in Carrying out Mission

By: Catherine Gewertz

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Creating Links

The counseling field has begun to grapple with such schisms and define the roles counselors should play in supporting students' all-around success.

The Education Trust's National Center for Transforming School Counseling,

for instance, developed a "new vision for school counseling," which advocates a role as "powerful agents of change" and "leaders" who create opportunities for all students to "pursue dreams of high aspirations." In April, the College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy released eight components of work it considers crucial to schools' mission of promoting college and career readiness, including helping students see and create strong links between their academic programs and their future work and education plans.

School leaders don't always appreciate the role counselors can play in the school's academic improvement plan, said Mel Riddile, a former principal of two Virginia high schools. Counselors are key in connecting the dots between the broad goals and the concrete, student-level changes necessary to reach those goals, he said. "Principals who get it realize that when you have a school plan to implement, the plan is implemented when counselors sit down with students to schedule them [for classes]. That's the moment of truth," said Mr. Riddile, who is now the Associate Director of high school

services for the National Association of Secondary School Principals, based in Reston, VA.

The report advocates key policies to bring about shifts in school counseling. Counselors must be seen as "leaders focused on keeping students on track

"The quality and focus of counselors' training is a problem"

to graduate from high school ready for college and career," and their activities should be tightly tied to that

vision, with "less expensive" and highly-trained staff members redeployed to handle administrative functions, the report says.

More professional-development dollars should be aimed at counselors, and preservice training should be reworked to reflect the current demand for deeper skills in supporting students with college and career planning, including college access issues such as financial aid. Additionally, states should enact or enforce caseload requirements. As of 2009, the study says, only five states met the American School Counselor Association's recommended ratio of 250 students per counselor.

Central to the study is the idea that counselors should be held accountable for student progress, a view that Mr. Bridgeland and others in the field planned to advocate in a briefing today on Capitol Hill, where lawmakers have been working to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Accountability Measures

Exploring counselors' views on accountability in the survey produced mixed results. Six in ten said they "strongly or somewhat" support certain accountability and incentives for counselors to help students meet career and college readiness goals. Support for the idea was especially strong among African-American counselors and those in urban and high-minority schools.

Queried about possible indicators that might be used to influence judgments about their performance, high school counselors expressed the strongest support for measures such as rates of high school graduation and college application, the completion of college-preparation courses, and students' access to college-level courses. More than half said using such indicators was "somewhat fair" or "very fair."

But more than half said it would be unfair to judge them on other factors, such as their schools' dropout rates, or how many students fill out federal financial aid forms, gain acceptance to college, or graduate from college.

At the middle school level, most counselors said it would be fair to judge them in part on middle school completion rates, but not on a range of other indicators, including student attendance, promotion, success in Algebra 1, and high school graduation.

Some school districts have been experimenting with counselor accountability. Florida's Hillsborough County is well known for its work on teacher performance pay, but has

Counselors See Conflict in Carrying out Mission

By: Catherine Gewertz

also begun similar work with counselors. This is the first year that counselors' evaluations will be based in part on accountability for student progress, Ms. Smith said.

As part of its "EXCEerator" initiative through the College Board to get more students into higher-level courses, Hillsborough asked its middle school counselors in 2007-08 to help build a college going culture and increase enrollment and success in Algebra 1, said Ms. Smith.

By the 2010-11 school year, 79 percent of 8th graders were taking the course, compared with 47 percent when the push began, and passing rates rose by 43 percent, she said.

The counselors collaborated on many strategies to accomplish that, Ms. Smith said, including producing and distributing brochures to families to raise awareness about the importance of completing Algebra 1 in 8th grade, and organizing tutoring sessions for students

before and after school, and at lunch, with teachers or high school students to help them through the classes.

Counselors also began using data available to teachers to monitor students earlier and more closely, she said. "They'd go into our online grading system, which counselors didn't really use to look at very much, and check those grades instead of waiting until report cards came out. They'd see if kids were doing their homework, and see how their grades were, and decide maybe it's time to call home or get a group together for some extra help."

Special coverage on the alignment between K-12 schools and post secondary education is supported in part by a grant from the Lumina Foundation for Education, at www.luminafoundation.org.

As first appeared in *Education Week*, November 15, 2011. Reprinted with permission from Editorial Projects in Education.

Leadership in a School Setting

By: Christina K. Nolan, NCC, LCPC, ISCA Vice President Counselor Educator

Today, I would like you to contemplate how you contribute to leadership in your school setting. Often, we as Counselor Educators, ask you to consider the multiple roles you play as you serve your students and school communities. But I wonder whether we help you understand how your individual actions throughout the day are guided by the larger principle of leadership. Donaldson's (2006) description of leadership helps frame this discussion:

When leadership is present, we can detect it in the synchronicity of members' thought, words, actions, and outcomes . . . many unique actions and interactions work together in a systematic manner so that what they do as individuals creates a collective effect greater than the sum of all those individual efforts (p. 7).

As professional school counselors, you are charged with leadership in who you are and what you do every day in your service to your students and school communities. You have been trained to view the world through a lens which opens itself to multiple ways of thinking, doing and being. Whether you serve on your school improvement team or find a passage for the teacher down the hall to use with her 4th grade students, you are 'living' your leadership role. When you refrain from conversations which are not productive or in the best interest of your students, you are 'living' your leadership role. When you reframe what others are seeing as a 'problem' with the suggestion this might actually be an 'opportunity', you are 'living' your leadership role.

As we move toward what many consider fresh starts in the new year, if who you are in leadership has become a quiet voice tucked somewhere in the back of your mind, I'd like to encourage you to reacquaint yourself with the power that lies within.

Donaldson, G. A. (2006). *Cultivating leadership in schools: Connecting people, purpose, and practice* (2nd Ed.). Teachers College Press, NY: New York.

Team Building Grains of Sand

By: Sarah Martin, Graduate Student, National-Louis University



"You held my trust in your hand. It sifted through like grains of sand. If you want it back, it won't be done 'til you pick up the grains, one by one." Trust is a vital part of any relationship. Trust is fragile and it must be earned. Trusting someone takes personal risk. Once trust is violated, it takes a long time to gain back. I was fortunate to witness trust grow and blossom among my high school students last

Friday at the outdoor team building facility, Irons Oaks Environmental Learning Center.

The students of Hinsdale Central High School are fortunate to have the resources to attend a field trip like Irons Oaks. However, many of the students included on the trip felt awkward, out of place and lonely at the start of the day. This is because they are new students and transfer students who have only been at HCHS for two weeks. Attending a field trip where one is encouraged to exit their comfort zone can be an overwhelming task for a student who already feels alienated among their peers.

This group of new students is part of a club at HCHS called the Ambassador's Club. This club, which is co-sponsored by three Guidance Counselors, pairs up new students with a current student who has similar interests and personality attributes. The current students mentor the new students, walk them to class, invite them to social activities and sit with them during lunch. The club sponsors pizza lunches, get-to-know-you breakfasts and fieldtrips that are meant to promote team work and bonding, such as Irons Oaks. As school had only been in session for two weeks, the new students were still fairly raw and unsure of their place within HCHS.

They arrived in the cafeteria the morning of the field trip looking worried and uncomfortable. Most were immediately greeted by their ambassador and felt some relief. The group as a whole was still in the beginning stages of getting to know each other, which is increasingly difficult when mixed with the dynamics of adolescence. There was a growing nervous energy present as we began to board the buses. After arriving at Irons Oaks, the students were

corralled under a large white tent and asked to await instructions. The look on their faces said, "Where am I and what am I doing in the middle of the woods?" This is about the time that the rain started soaking the forest preserve around us. Fortunately, this tradition was expected and all the students began donning their rain gear. The students were asked to break into groups of four; a daunting task when you only know one other person in a group of 50. After linking arms in groups of four, each student chose one of four animals to represent. One was a bear, one a tyrannosaurus rex, one a raptor and one a lion. The groups then surprisingly split again, and all the bears formed a group, and so on. Each group was paired with an instructor from Irons Oaks and the games began.

Each group took off in a different direction into the soggy woods. Irons Oaks is a woodland maze containing a multitude of ropes, logs, climbing walls and other contraptions that are intended to boast team building. The other sponsors and I were intrigued as we wandered from group to group, observing the dynamics between new and current students. We observed 13 students fitting into a 4'tall x 6' long wooden box and watched in

"You held my trust in your hand. It sifted through like grains of sand. If you want it back, it won't be done 'til you pick up the grains, one by one."

shock as they figured out a way to pry themselves free after being shoulder to shoulder, wall to wall. We witnessed a group of 15 teenagers hold up two logs with only ropes and manage to walk 10 yards on the logs without anyone falling off. We watched a group of 12 students carry a tennis ball across a field using only string! And we listened as not one student complained about the rain.

My favorite challenge was the last one I witnessed. The group of 16 mostly new students had to cross four thin boards and make it safely from platform to platform without any person falling off. I was filled with pride and excitement as I watched students ages 15 to 18, speaking different languages and from different backgrounds, who barely knew each other, come together as a unifying force to accomplish this task. Not only were the students completing the challenge successfully, but they were encouraging each other, supporting one another and physically holding hands and assisting each other across the wooden planks. I was honestly touched at how many students were able to open

Team Building Grains of Sand

By: Sarah Martin, Graduate Student, National-Louis University

up to their peers, step up as leaders and make it across this obstacle as a unit. In one day, these new students and strangers went from being school acquaintances to trusting their groups enough to accomplish very difficult tasks together. Seeing that trust develop throughout the day was truly inspiring.

The dynamic on the bus ride home was one of camaraderie and accomplishment. Students whose shyness had been concerning had blown us away. I was proud of my students for taking risks and allowing themselves to trust their classmates. I consider myself fortunate to have witnessed a transformation

like this. A bond of trust formed between these students over the course of six hours. Trust is a precious and delicate thing. I hope these students are able to maintain this trust throughout their high school career. The risks of trust are great. But so are the rewards.

BE brilliant

**ASCA ANNUAL CONFERENCE
JUNE 23-26/2012 MINNEAPOLIS**

CELEBRATING ASCA'S DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY

2012 Annual Conference Be Brilliant: Celebrating ASCA's Diamond Anniversary June 23–26, 2012 Minneapolis

Registration: Online registration opens Jan. 3, 2012. Registration fees remain the same as last year.

Exhibit/Sponsor: Put your company, college or industry in front of more than 2,000 school counselors by sponsoring or exhibiting at the ASCA Annual Conference.

Hotel: The Hilton Minneapolis is the official conference hotel. ASCA has reserved a block of rooms at a special rate of \$185 single or double occupancy. Rooms are also available at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis for the Same rate. When making your hotel reservation, mention ASCA to get this rate. Hilton: (800) HILTONS. Hyatt: (888) 421-1442.

Keynote & Featured Speakers: ASCA has booked an inspiring line up of keynote and featured speakers this year.

Pre-conference Workshops: Pre-conference workshops, both full- and half-day, give you the chance to start your conference experience early and delve into a particular topic in an in-depth manner.

Breakout Sessions: More than 100 breakout sessions give attendees at all experience levels a wealth of choices for their professional development. With this much to choose from, you're bound to find myriad gems.



**Illinois School
Counselor Association**

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**April 13, 2012
Springfield**

**April 20, 2012
Skokie**