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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE JOB THAT'S NEVER DONE

BY NANCY PENK



I hope everyone is ready for a new school year! As I reflect over my school counseling and teaching career, I remember when summer was a time to have fun. At first it was to enjoy life with my husband and travel. Then it was to enjoy quality time with my daughters. Now it is to feel reenergized and ready to begin a new school year. For me, summer is a time to catch up and feel totally organized and ready for the new year. But as soon as the teachers hit their classrooms and the students are in the hallways, I suddenly feel that my job isn't done.

Five years ago my house was destroyed by an internal flood (that is a long and bizarre story). My family had to move to a hotel for an extended period of time. We had one hour to get what we needed for the next few months. My daughter had to start high school from a hotel many miles from our town, and our pets could not be with us. Needless to say, it was very stressful. But I have a wonderful father who has taught me valuable lessons. He told me that I needed to teach my children that all is okay. We have each other, a roof over our heads, food, and that life goes on. I learned a lot from his lesson. The way I reacted was going to teach my children how to react. I believe we need to teach these types of lessons to our students.

One thing we were all taught and need to keep in mind is that we need to take care of ourselves. We need to be able to do this in order to help those around us. Yes, we all have our own stressors along with having a stressful job. We give 200% and could easily give more. We need to learn our own limits as well as what helps us to handle these many stressors.

For me, a good run is what I need on a regular basis. I share my love of running with my students as well as other children in our district. Modeling to our students how we cope teaches them how to cope. All of our students have stressors in their lives. We may not always know what they are, but they exist. This is when we need to give them tools to cope and teach them resilience. I believe that is one of the most important gifts an adult could give a child. Teach them how to be resilient.

As that first day hits and I am no longer caught up, I realize that my job is never truly done. There is so much to teach our students about school, their future, and life in general. And in return, we learn from them. As Sandra Bullock stated in "The Blind Side" when a friend commented how she was making a difference in Michael's life, "No, he's making a difference in mine." Each day, I learn something amazing about one of my students. They have no idea how they have made a difference in my life. May you all be as blessed as I am each and every day you work with your students.

Have a great year! ■■■■



A student running group organized by Nancy Penk.

Contact Nancy Penk, ISCA president, at npenk@rivertonschools.org.



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ISCA SERVES YOU

ISCA has had a very productive year under the guidance of our immediate past president, Steve Murray. We had record attendance at our two state conferences in Illinois and plans are under way for two again in 2015. We hope to continue with this growth!

This has been a landmark year for us as we have had legislation, HB 5288, pass *unanimously* in both the house and senate. This legislation amends the School Code and deletes existing provisions regarding school counseling to further define the role and services of school counselors in the school environment. This more clearly defines "Professional School Counselor" in the state of Illinois. HB 5286 also passed, which amends the School Code and provides that 4 years of working in the capacity of school support personnel shall be counted towards a principal endorsement for a Professional Educator License. Both of these bills were supported by ISCA and show how much ISCA advocates for all school counselors in the state of Illinois.

We have a committee that has been working on the Illinois model of the ASCA National Model. The Illinois model is aligned to the Illinois State Standards and will be attached to our website, www.ilschoolcounselor.org, soon. We are excited to be able to provide this to all school counselors. The plan is to provide information and training throughout the state of Illinois. We plan to have the training available



The school counseling staff from Prospect High School in Mt. Prospect, IL, shown here with their counseling dog Junie, presented at the ISCA Annual Conference about their school program.

to counselors at no charge in a variety of locations so that it is accessible to all. We also have continued with a long-standing committee to make changes and additions to this living document.

ISCA will continue to strive to serve and advocate for our school counselors. We are proud to serve the many members from across the state of Illinois. ■■■

YOUR OPINION MATTERS!

ASCA invites you to share your feedback on this publication and help us meet your needs! Please participate in a very brief online survey about the content and format. Please note that your responses are anonymous.

Take the reader survey



THE COUNSELOR'S EXTERNAL OFFICE

BY DR. RICHARD O'CONNELL

As a counselor, you can begin a practice that will:

- increase your contact with students
- increase your faculty contacts
- increase your efficiency and decrease your workload
- increase your knowledge of students based on their physical appearance
- increase the guidance public relations effort in your school
- help your students realize you really care about them
- deliver efficiently more service to your students

Simply stand in a central place—entrance to school, outside your office, or in a main corridor—each day, a half-hour before school begins, and greet both students and staff. This practice takes a little courage and self-discipline to get to your self-appointed post each day. Counselors and teachers have to come in before the students in any case. Over the years, I have come to value this practice, so I take the time in a very busy day to achieve this goal. The courage part comes when you assume a piece of hallway turf and staff question why you are there. It takes courage to reach out and begin to greet your students and fellow faculty members with a “good morning.”

The advantage of doing this is that, eventually, both faculty and students know you are there, especially new teachers, to help answer questions, give advice, share small talk, or just say hello.

Relating to knowledge of students, this practice affords the counselor the opportunity to assess student affect. This is a valuable opportunity because students can change in appearance from day to day and indicate to us if they are troubled or demonstrating a change of behavior. I have seen this in my own experience. When a student changes from a usually upbeat youngster into a withdrawn or sad individual, you have an external warning. When you see students arriving late, there is a problem. When you see a couple com-



Standing in the hallway affords the opportunity of seeing many and giving them encouragement or advice.

ing to school each day, forming a new relationship, that is valuable information; equally significant is the sudden disappearance of one member of the couple. There have been cases when students were depressed and suicidal and it was assessed in the hallway. When students break a bone, you have immediate knowledge. All the visual clues you pick up as first-hand information feed back to your dealings with parents and students during the normal course of the day. This information is immediate and you don't have to wait until someone comes to your office to tell you. A case in point: one morning a student approached me. I gently gave him a hello tap on the chest. He immediately flinched in pain. I inquired, “Are you all right?” “I'm all right but I just

had my nipple pierced for a ring,” he said. I have since given up that practice, but his mother was astounded that I had such private information!

You may be amazed by how much of your work can be done in the hallway. By nature of our profession, we are constantly requesting students to follow up:

- Are forms returned?
- Are students reminded to live up to expectations?
- Are students reminded that assignments are due?
- Are students recognized for their achievements and praised?
- Are parental messages delivered?

It is difficult to interview all of your students whose report cards or progress reports reveal that they are doing poorly. Standing in the hallway affords the opportunity of seeing many and giving them encouragement or advice. For most students, a friendly hello will suffice. For those who need a reminder, just your presence may trigger a response. And you never know—a friendly hello in the morning may be the postscript to a horrific family experience the night before. Above all, your presence in the

hallway, greeting students with a kind hello, is a statement to the students that you care about them. I am sure this message is conveyed in other ways during the day as well, but the opportunity to reach more kids is increased by your presence in the hallway.

Regarding faculty members, they are on the run for the most part. Your presence in their path along the way to their classrooms gives them easy access to discuss a student, ask for a conference, or fill you in on a particular problem. These exchanges are made more difficult if they have to schedule a formal meeting, and meetings are more time consuming. Even substitute teachers appreciate someone to turn to in negotiating the intricacies of a new school. This accessibility has tangential side effects. It establishes a good

rapport with staff. For counselors to function effectively in any school, we need the cooperation and support of our staff to assist our students.

From the point of view of the administration, they appreciate the backup in the hallway. I have never been asked to function as a monitor. Rather, administrators appreciate the outreach effort of a counselor who is not closeted in his or her office, "secreted away" from the main flow. The public relations aspect of the "external office" is obvious.

Establishing your "Counselor's External Office" brings more service to students. It makes the counselor more accessible. It supports a rapport with staff and conveys a very caring concern to students. It establishes an atmosphere of involvement and helps to break down barriers. It maximizes

the use of your time, so much so that I stand at my chosen location whenever I can shake free during my busy day. In addition to all these attributes, for me it has become a great deal of fun. ■■■

Dr. Richard O'Connell is retired from the Locust Valley School District, NY. He is a former New York State School Counselor of the Year.

This article appears as an addendum in Dr. O'Connell's book, "The Secrets to Being a Great School Counselor," www.createspace.com/3508330



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PUT DOWN TIME TO WORK FOR YOU

BY KIMBERLY MacDONALD

Think back to your counseling Master's degree program. Remember that last semester filled with finishing your internship, completing classes, applying for certification or licensure, going through the job application process, and preparing for your next professional steps? You stayed up-to-date in the profession, were eager to engage in new opportunities, and troubleshoot issues in the field.

Whether you are a new professional school counselor or a seasoned one, you never forget the rapid pace of that time and the passion you felt about school counseling.

We encourage students to reflect on their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. As school counselors, it is also important for us to use reflection. How have your professional principles and goals changed? Are you as engaged as you want to be as a school counselor? Are there other related areas of the profession you wish to explore? We become so enveloped in our daily routines that we don't take the opportunity to reflect on these questions. We may feel unbalanced, stagnant, and exhausted at times. The use of our down time is critical not only in remaining active in this competitive economy, but in feeling fulfilled as school counselors. Part of this down time should also be applied to caring for ourselves. A colleague once told me, "If we don't care for ourselves, how are we supposed to care for our students?"

My pace rarely slowed after graduating from my Master's program. Now, 10 years later, I am able to reflect upon my experiences and re-evaluate my professional and personal goals.

While carving out time for reflection, planning, and accomplishing professional goals, keep an open mind and remember the art of balance. Listed below are ideas to help you remain active professionally and gain a fresh perspective. We didn't enter this profession for the money, so we need to recognize creative ways to financially support ourselves or our families, while remaining engaged.

1 Stay aware of licensure and certification opportunities and requirements, and local school district compensation practices. Being up-to-date

*Keep an open mind
and remember
the art of balance.*



on certification requirements can prevent future professional problems. You may need additional graduate courses or specialized certifications to advance to a higher pay scale. Consider pursuing National Boards Certification or an additional graduate degree. Some districts provide compensation for educational expenses or an extra stipend. New knowledge will also help you advance your school counseling program.

2 Regularly evaluate your school counseling program with your colleagues. Work together to create activities that meet your program goals while utilizing student data. This is not only a vital common practice according to ASCA national standards, but it also promotes creativity and effectiveness of your program. You may even consider applying for the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) designation!

Examine how you can meet the needs of your students and develop one new activity in each of the three domains. Consider:

- What are personal/social issues your students have in common? Address these issues in small group or classroom activities.
- Is there a demand for tutoring services in particular academic subjects or SAT/ACT preparation? Solicit help from your school's National Honor Society, PTSA, and community organizations.
- Do your students need increased exposure to service learning opportunities? Team with students to create a database of organizations willing to work with your school.

- Is there a need for increased career awareness among your students? Find out if your state or school district sponsors a job shadowing program, and if not, develop one!
- Are there ways to meet student needs through the development of clubs and organizations? For instance, enlist students to help initiate a Bullying Awareness Club if this is a need in your school.

3 Know that job loss and cutbacks are real and do happen. This is a scary reality that can even happen to extremely effective school counselors. Maximize your indispensability to your administrators. Always have a plan B. Awareness of potential job loss will help you remain alert in your career.

4 Network with other professionals. Know what community resources are available to your students and their families, and get to know professionals in other fields. This could provide opportunities for your students and reveal opportunities for you!

5 Learn something from your mentors or become one. Everyone has or should have mentors. I remember the invaluable knowledge I took from my mentors—I could have never progressed in my career without their advice. In this challenging profession, we must rely on one another for help.

6 Embrace your transitional periods. Each school and school district taught you concepts and practices, whether helpful or disastrous. When and if you change schools or districts, recognize these experiences and embrace them (or let them go). Consider how you can apply what you have learned to your new position.

7 Get involved with local legislature and professional organizations. Be aware of changes that impact this profession through your school, district, state, and nation. Attend conferences and workshops to enhance your knowledge and gather new ideas. For instance, by understanding how Common Core Standards affect education

as a whole, you can apply this information to the school counseling field. You can also gain insight into the changes in education nationwide.

8 Look outside the box in pursuing additional professional opportunities. You may wish to consider:

- volunteering for a crisis hotline
- becoming a community mediator
- volunteering for an after-school program
- assisting with research studies through a college/university
- teaching at a local college/university or satellite campus
- working at a hospital in the area of mental health or psychiatry
- providing counseling through a local crisis team
- using your counseling skills to assist hospice
- becoming a Certified Red Cross

- Disaster Mental Health Volunteer
- joining or opening a private counseling practice to provide counseling services after hours
- working for a pre-college advising company
- serving as a board member or officer for a professional organization

This is certainly not an exhaustive list, and consideration must be given to requirements and certifications. Some of these ideas could be paid positions, but all result in building your résumé and expanding your knowledge.

Remember that there is a flip side to pursuing additional opportunities and understand the term “balance.” I often remind myself that it is acceptable and healthy to take a break and relax. Know that you do not have to do everything at once. Although job loss is real, so is burnout. I used to laugh at workshops relating to counselor self-care. I don’t

laugh anymore. Taking care of me and balancing my profession with my personal life is something I continue to work on. If this is part of your journey, you may find helpful the following concepts in attaining balance and working smarter, while remaining effective.

- Pay attention to your motivation levels, energy levels, and attitude. Do you need to take time away from this profession, whether for a day or longer? One of my favorite professors described a moment in his career when he took a sabbatical from being a school counselor to work on a farm. This time away

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can regenerate your passion and energy for our profession.

- Re-evaluate your professional goals and direction. Are there changes you would like to make? A new school? A related career within education? Maybe look for that next challenge outside of school counseling.
- Consider your life priorities. At one point during my career, I realized I had not eaten dinner with my husband in over a week. When we become immersed in our profession, we tend to neglect other vital areas of our lives. Family members can be the most supportive figures in your life, but they can also point

out areas in dire need of attention. A wise colleague once said, "When you leave work at the end of the day, to whom do you go home?" And don't forget personal life goals, passions, or hobbies.

- Do not work harder than your students. How frustrating is it finding yourself working harder than the student you are trying to help? Stop doing this. While creating activities for your program, allow your students to be just as involved as you—or more. This will create more buy-in from the students, giving the activity a bigger bang for the buck. You must take time for reflection to improve your program, the services

you provide for your students and their families, and for yourself as a professional. I hope that the moments where you truly believe you have helped a student outweigh the moments of frustration and exhaustion. Even if you do not think you made an impact, students may remember your help and unconditional belief in them. Forever hold those moments close to you and continue to press forward. ■■■

Kimberly MacDonald, NBCT-SC, is a professional school counselor with Calvert County Public Schools in Maryland. She can be reached at macdonaldka@calvertnet.k12.md.us.

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FIVE GUIDANCE P's FROM A FIRST-YEAR SCHOOL COUNSELOR

BY TIFFANY SHERBERT

As I reflected on my experiences in my first year as a school counselor, I realized that I did not have one epiphany or a-ha moment, but I did learn many concepts that I think are noteworthy and worth sharing. Over the past nine months I have come to live by my own philosophy, "Follow 5 Guidance P's." These are not principles that are published or fancy; they just work for me.

POSITIVE. While entering into any stage of your life—especially into a new profession—remaining positive is important. You will often struggle while trying to figure out what works and what doesn't work. Some of your biggest victories will come after your most devastating defeats, but we must keep moving forward and most important, remain positive. Not everyone uses the same methods, but I found the following to be especially helpful with a positive attitude.

- Eat outside your office. I ate lunch in my office for a period of time and never really got any adult interaction, nor did I ever stop working. Students would come in to meet with me, regardless of whether I was at lunch or not. I also intermingle between departments and do not always eat with the same group. I find this to be helpful because I can associate with other positive people (don't eat with negative people) and network with coworkers.
- Smile. Greet every student and coworker with a smile, and speak to the person. Sometimes lack of positive body language can put off negative vibes. The last thing anyone wants is a grumpy counselor or coworker.
- Be engaged. Take every opportunity to make contact with your stu-



dents. Not only should you speak to your students, but you should make them feel important. Ask them questions, go watch a game, or congratulate them on an award. Invest in them and celebrate them as individuals!

- Be an advocate for positive change. We, as professionals, and our students are going to fail at many things. We cannot focus on these shortcomings because they happened in the past and we cannot change the past. We can only accept it, learn from it, and take action to change the future. Focus on the present and the future. Learn from the past.

PROACTIVE. Sometimes I think we may have missed our calling, and maybe we should set up as psychics (just kidding!). It is important to try and read situations before they turn negative. You can pick up on a student's body language, a change in behavior, or a dramatic drop in grades. Be proactive in identifying problem situations. If you have two students with behavioral problems, they should not be seated together in the back of the room. A student with ADD may need to sit close to you and be given special tasks to give

him or her an opportunity to move around. As a counselor, have check points throughout the year to identify students that are at risk because of potentially failing grades. Keep documentation of student contacts with details of what was discussed or what the issue was. Referrals can only be made with appropriate documentation, and this way you can track behavior over an extended period of time.

PRIORITIZE. It is so easy to get overwhelmed with the to-do lists of first year counselors and teachers. To eliminate stress (and prevent hair loss!), have a plan. Going

at these lists blindly can end badly for both you and the students with whom you are working. When prioritizing, ask yourself, "What is best for the student?" Early in the year, I was swamped with scheduling and trying to meet a deadline, and in the middle of all this, a student came in and needed a conference. I think it is important to note that when a student comes to you, whether it is a real emergency or not, if *they feel* it is urgent you should put them first. These feelings are real to the student, even though we may see it differently. The student in need of conference took precedence over my piles of schedules. Also ask yourself, "When are my deadlines?" In another situation, my principal asked me for a list of seniors in danger of failing. If your principal or boss asks you to do something, that takes precedence. The sooner you get it in their hands, the better off you are. (This is why keeping good notes, having student contact dates, and staying organized is important!) Last, conquer the

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Directly from at-risk students: 7 ways to make improve their education.

“beast” first. The beast is the one thing on your list that you don’t want to do. It would be so easy to keep pushing it further and further back, but that is not the best solution. Conquer your beast first, so that you won’t keep dreading it. After this is done, everything else will come easy.

PERSONABLE. We need to be people that kids and adults feel they can talk to. The most important thing to remember is to smile! Sometimes I felt like screaming and crying all at the same time, but the best thing to do is smile. Have an open-door policy so that your kids know they can come to you about anything. Some people will tell you that an open door policy is dangerous in the fact that students tell you too much information. I say, if you are

keeping your relationship professional and maintaining appropriate boundaries, your students will not come to you unless it is significant and they are genuinely seeking help.

PASSIONATE. I saved this for last because it is fundamental in any area of work. You will make mistakes in work and in life, but if you are passionate and are doing what you feel like is best for the situation, you can leave work knowing you gave it everything you could. Your coworkers, administrators, and your students will respect you for your passion. Your students will be able to feel it and your bosses and peers will be able to see it in action. Do your work for the passion and not the money. If you are passionate about what you do, you will be successful, and the money will take

care of itself. Be an advocate for your kids and stand up for what’s right. Do not judge, but find the balance between teaching them and influencing them.

I have learned a lot in my first year, in part because I asked lots of questions and had great mentors in return. Most of my experiences have been trial and error. I look forward to seeing what the future holds, especially as I continue to develop and get an added grasp on my style of counseling. I feel comfortable, but am always striving to improve while being positive, proactive, prioritizing, personable, and passionate. ■■■

Tiffany Sherbert is a school counselor at Dorman High School in Roebuck, SC. SherbeTP@spart6.org

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THE POWER OF ONE: SCHOOL COUNSELORS GET TO THE HEART OF EDUCATION

BY STEPHEN SROKA



Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.

– Aristotle

Many at-risk students in schools are crying out for help with the issues in their lives, yet many educators respond with an emphasis on academic proficiency skills. With today's stress on academic achievement at all costs with little regard for the mental, social, physical, emotional, or spiritual aspects of the whole student, many teachers teach tests and not students. Students become point averages, not people. And many students tune out and drop out, literally or figuratively. What do our at-risk students want? What can you do as a school counselor to make a difference?

As a teacher across the country, from the poor inner cities to the rich suburbs and on isolated reservations, I have had the opportunity for discussions with at-risk youth. I have asked the students for suggestions on how we can reach and teach the whole student. Students shared their thoughts, shared in this article, on how to retain, engage, challenge, support, and educate all students.

WHAT PROBLEMS WOULD YOU REMOVE FROM YOUR SCHOOL?

Students said:

- Apathy of teachers and students
- Not being challenged
- Not feeling welcomed
- Bullying and fighting
- Discrimination
- Boring classes
- Standardized lessons, standardized tests, and standardized lunches
- Grades and testing as a way of ranking students
- Drugs and alcohol
- Early morning classes

WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS?

Students said:

- They have a passion for the content and the students they teach. They make the classroom come alive. They don't just say, "It's in the book."
- They use humor that doesn't hurt.
- They are nonjudgmental. They let kids know that their opinions are welcomed and respected.
- They are outgoing, understanding, and not intimidating, and you can confide in them.
- They see you as a person and not as a point average.

WHAT TOP QUALITIES WOULD YOU WANT IN YOUR SCHOOL?

Students said:

- Supportive teachers that students can connect with
- Knowing you're there to learn, and there are no outside or internal threats
- Healthy lunches and snacks
- Being free to speak your mind and being respected
- A clean, safe and welcoming environment
- Positive discipline
- Teaching for understanding, not memory
- Creativity that is valued and encouraged

- Extracurricular activities—sports, music, art, clubs, dances, field trips, service learning, and other things to do besides boring schoolwork



There's no way I could pay you back, but my plan is to show you that I understand, you are appreciated.

– Tupac Shakur

Based on listening to the students tell me what they thought, and my own experience teaching for 30 years and researching adolescents and learning, I respectfully offer these observations on how to get to the heart of education for the whole at-risk youth. Although I use "teaching" throughout, this information is highly relevant to school counselors' work with students.

1 | If students are not learning the way we are teaching, we must teach the way that they learn. Do all students learn the same? Of course not, so why do we teach and test them all the same? Are all students gifted?

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Of course they are, but some just open their boxes a little later. All students have different learning styles, so teaching should be tailored to involve all students in activities that are interesting, fun, insightful, useful, and let them explore their creativity, reflect on their life, and develop relevant life skills that utilize all of their multiple intelligences. Every student needs an individualized education program. There is no one right way to teach all students.

2 | At-risk students are crying for help and we punish them. Many students, who put themselves at risk with sex, drugs, and violent behaviors are crying for help. But today, rather than try to help them, we punish them. Why do we incarcerate, when we need to rehabilitate? What good is

it that a student can pass a proficiency test and not a reality test? At-risk students need life skills to prevent risky behaviors, and interventions to help them overcome problems, which impact their ability to learn more and live better, safe and drug free. Treatment makes a difference. Recovery makes a life.

3 | Some at-risk students are invisible. Some at-risk students do not speak up or act up; they just shut up. They live in the poor ghettos and in the rich suburbs. In fact, many at-risk youth live in the suburbs hiding behind their fences, lawns and lawners. One Native American student sent me an e-mail after I spoke on her reservation. It read, "You must be the voice for kids like me, who do not have

the strength to cry for help." What you see may not be what you get with some at-risk students.

4 | If you can't relate, nothing else really matters, no matter how much you know. Teaching is about relationships. To get to the head you must go through the heart. As most effective teachers know, students don't care what you teach if you don't teach that you care. Positive relationships help build positive students and a better school climate. Relationships help keep our youth safe and healthy so they can learn more and live better. Little words and little deeds help build strong relationships and make big differences and change lives. You can help build relationships by addressing the four challenges of communication,



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collaboration, cultural awareness and caring. You cannot give a kid a wake-up call in a foreign language. You can't do it alone. You need to be sensitive to the culture. Caring is crucial. If you can't relate, everything you do is much harder.

5 We tend to treat symptoms and not the source of problems, which is often about mental health. We frequently try to address problems by treating the behaviors and not the causes. For instance, teaching about bullying behaviors (and setting up rules to stop it) without dealing with the underlying mental health issues is like putting a bandage on a cancer. You cover up the problem and it looks good, but the problem is still festering. As we often see with destructive risk behaviors like sex, drugs and

violence, hurt people hurt people. The use of mental health professionals such as school counselors, school social workers, school nurses, and school psychologists may enable us to help people help people.

6 At-risk students need the 3 F's and the 3 H's. There are no easy answers, only intelligent alternatives to help our at-risk youth learn and live. Research suggests that students need a family who loves them, even if it is not a biological family; friends, who will pull them up, not down; and faith, a moral compass, a sense of right and wrong. My experiences suggest that students crave honesty, enjoy sensitive humor, and want hope.

7 Facts are forgotten, but feelings last forever. I retired after teaching health education for 30 years in the inner city. When some of my former students gathered to honor me, I asked them what they remembered about me "back in the day." Was it the time I jumped up on the desk and took off my shoes to teach the bones of the feet, or the community projects in the ghetto in which we participated during summer breaks? One Hispanic student piped up and said, "We forgot most everything you said, and many of the things we did, but we never forgot

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



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the way you made us feel.” In the end for many students, kindness, not content or curriculum is what they remember. Isn't it interesting that once you get to their heart, you can teach your content and curriculum, but that may not be what they remember?

As a school counselor, you have the Power of One to make a difference. The Power of One is my belief that with education, helping one another, and believing in yourself, you can help change schools, communities and lives. The Power of One is based on the research of connectedness (CDC), developmental assets (Search Institute), protective factors (SAMHSA), resiliency (Benerd) and motivational interviewing (Miller and Rollnick). The Power of One is not something you buy; it is something you buy into. You can change the future of an at-risk student by building a powerful relationship and instilling in her or him the Power of One. And you can start today!



How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

- Anne Frank

I believe that education is one of the most powerful tools we have to help build resilient at-risk youth today. I believe that the efforts of one school counselor can make this a better world. This is why I teach. I have the Power of One to make a difference, and so do you. Our at-risk students are speaking. Are you listening? ■■■

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- 26 Johnny Appleseed Day
- 27 Family Health & Fitness Day
- 29 World Heart Day

OCTOBER

- ADHD Month
- Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- Computer Learning Month
- Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- Health Literacy Month
- Month of the Young Adolescent
- National Book Month
- National Bullying Prevention Month
- National Communicate with Your Kids Month
- National Crime Prevention Month



- National Dental Hygiene Month
 - National Depression Education and Awareness Month
 - Positive Attitude Month
- 1 International Day for Older Persons
3 National Diversity Day

- 5 World Teacher's Day
- 5-11 Mental Illness Awareness Week
- 5-11 National Fire Prevention Week
- 6 Child Health Day
- 6 World Habitat Day
- 8 SAVE (Stop America's Violence Everywhere) Day
- 8 Walk to School Day
- 9 National Depression Screening Day
- 10 World Mental Health Day
- 12-18 Teen Read Week
- 13-17 National Health Education Week
- 16 World Food Day
- 19-25 America's Safe Schools Week
- 19-25 National Character Counts Week
- 19-25 National Teen Driver Safety Week
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SCHOOL COUNSELOR CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK

BY JAMES TODD MCGAHEY

The number of school systems embracing the four-day school week is ever increasing, with more than 120 districts in 21 states currently using this schedule, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Many considerations face a district, a school, a department, and the school counselor when their district and school has chosen to implement such a schedule. Advantages and disadvantages can be numerous and impact students directly and indirectly.

The concept of the four-day school week has existed since the middle of the 20th century. Recent trends toward this model seem to emanate from economic concerns spurred by the recent financial downturn that began in 2008. District budget shortfalls required rigorous cuts in programs, personnel, administration, and other resources. Many systems investigated innovative and alternative approaches, including the four-day school week.

Proponents of the abbreviated school week highlight the inverse relationships the four-day week provides. Students' increased amount of time out of school could be utilized in a variety of positive, productive activities: study time, enrichment activities, family time, recreational time. A decrease in drop-out rate has been reported by four-day systems, seemingly due to the increased span of non-school days, although actual hours per week may remain the same as the traditional schedule. A decrease in discipline reports also has been reported, seemingly due to the resuscitating effects of having three consecutive non-school days. Truancy rates both for students and teachers also decrease.

But financial and budgetary concerns are the major incentive. Transportation and energy costs can be significantly reduced by the four-day system. Transporting students only four days a week reduces costs of fuel, personnel, and maintenance. Energy costs can also be reduced by decreasing the utilities that a school system requires to run its facilities. Food costs are reduced as 12 meals instead of the traditional 15 per



week are prepared.

Opponents of the four-day school week suggest that students, parents, and communities are negatively affected by the model. They suggest that schools are jeopardizing education quality for economic reasons, and advocate the trend of increasing school hours. The three-day weekends reduce retention of material, lead to delinquent behavior, and students become bored during the long days, opponents argue. Their most salient argument involves the disruption of a family's economic and cohesive well-being, specifically, the dilemmas of child care for working families, especially poor, single mothers. Families or single parents are burdened with finding and funding child care services or leaving teenagers, children, and adolescents alone or babysitting younger siblings.

School systems will continue to be fraught with budgetary concerns and will test many models and approaches. The four-day school week may become a viable component of a successful system; therefore, a system should be prepared to implement a plan and facilitate its success. The school counselor is critical to a successful plan. They are proactive in implementation, preparing the school population—parents, educators, and students—for

substantial changes. School counselors must be both proactive and reactive to challenges that will confront the new system.

SCHOOL COUNSELORS: LEADERS AND ADVOCATES

School counselors should advocate for a leadership role in the initial planning phase and throughout the implementation and transition phases, and remain in leadership positions once the new system is in place. They possess unique characteristics and skills that complement the entire change process, including desegregating and interpreting data from research and sources in the planning period, deciphering possible challenges and advantages that may affect their home school and district, fostering collaboration, and consulting for successful transition. These skills are developed and studied in their preparatory curriculum, and practiced in clinical experiences of practicum and internship as well as on the job.

Relying on their expertise and experience, school counselors are the primary advocates for students, the judicial voices that protect against maleficence and champion beneficence in the process. They employ communication skills to mitigate various factions, facilitating communication from an understand-

ing of the concepts of empathy, active listening, genuineness, and solution-focused techniques. An understanding and appreciation of the different factions is important. A counselor can draw on group procedures and conflict resolution skills. Awareness of a specific culture or socio-economic group can also assist in achieving common goals.

The school counselor can reach out to supporting resources in the community, such as churches, child-care resources, and supporting agencies. Recreational and extra-curricular activities, important to all students, will have to be adjusted to adhere to schedules, governing rules, and regulations of participation. Counselors advocate for maintaining accessibility and participation across the athletic and extra-curricular spectrum. The school counselor

should engage fully in a community collaboration that includes businesses, local caregivers, health care and mental health, government and quasi-government officials, and citizens. Monthly open meetings can inform participants and the public, and allow those involved with students to network and advocate as a concerted group. If these collaborations do not already exist, the school counselor should take the initiative to create one, appealing initially to the principal or superintendent of the system.

IMPACTS ACROSS THE AGE SPAN

Emergent and Elementary

Many counseling considerations may arise from the transition to a four-day

school schedule. The varying populations of students, parents, siblings, administrators, teachers, staff and others all present unique counseling opportunities. School counselors can address these through psycho-educational, individualistic, or group formats. A wide array of symptoms may present from individuals and groups processing the various phases. Most symptoms will emanate from anxiety, stress, and fear-related triggers associated with the new plan or proposal.

The initial phase of transition usually involves planning and campaigning. School counselors can educate the different stakeholders with psycho-educational groups and meetings to address issues of transition, implementation, and organization. Meetings should take place

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at times that afford access to as many stakeholders as possible and should, at a minimum, include administrators, public officials, and school counselors to address all aspects of the transition and allay concerns through information and education.

School counselors also may consider addressing the transition with classroom guidance plans targeted to the age of students. They should inform students about how their school day will be affected, when to expect the transitional events, and discuss the subsequent thoughts, feelings, and emotions that may arise. Classroom guidance can include strategies and techniques facilitated through teachers, parents, or counselors, and self-help techniques for students dealing with adverse reactions.

At the elementary level, a challenge will be the increased length of time of the school day. The school counselor should promote to faculty and administration innovative curriculums and other activities to increase classroom success, such as programs that help teachers maintain students' attention and decrease negative behavior. School counselors can also advocate for complementary discipline or behavior models. Schools may wish to implement a less intense academic schedule for the afternoon hours, alleviating some frustrations younger students may experience from the extended school day.

Additional weekday child care is a major concern with the four day design for some elementary students and their families. The stress and strain on families will vary depending on family structure, family dynamics, socio-economic level, availability of alternative sources for child care, and other variables. Keep in mind that what are concerns for some families may be viewed as welcome opportunities for other families and students. Flexibility and adaptability, essential characteristics of a school counselor, should be modeled for all involved in the process.

A population substantially affected by the four-day schedule will be working single-parent households, which make up a majority in some districts and schools. This single source of income for the family will be strained to forfeit a day of work, as many work hourly-wage jobs. The flexibility of



School counselors also may consider addressing the transition with classroom guidance plans targeted to the age of students.

employers of these businesses may be limited and school counselors should include local employers in educational outreach programs to help them better understand some of the inherent community challenges.

A proactive school counselor will explore resources available for child care for families burdened by this dilemma. The school or district may consider partnerships with local churches; recreational entities such as YMCA, YWCA, or Boys and Girls Clubs; and other recreational or educational organizations that can provide affordable child care. A school counselor also may advocate for a program that educates older children or adults in proper child care and may include certification in CPR and first aid. High school students may be trained and either paid or given service credits, thus creating a program that positively affects multiple populations within the system. A list of successful candidates should be made available for families in need of this resource.

Middle and High School

The four-day schedule will create unique advantages and disadvantages for middle and high school students, varying with their perspective and situation. Their developmental phase generates both simple and complex scenarios. Students will also be affected by factors such as family composition, socio-economic status, and peer relationships. Counselors should be aware that students may be relied upon

to provide child care to siblings, which may cause resentment and frustration toward the parent and siblings. This may generalize to the school setting as misbehavior in the classroom or declining academic success.

An advantage of this schedule may be increased opportunity for positive peer interaction. Further potential advantages to this age group include closer sibling and familial bonds and opportunity for employment, additional study, relaxation, or recreation. The extra day in the schedule may enrich extracurricular school activities, including sports and other programs, although the school system will have to ensure equal access and transportation to all students.

At the high school level, school counselors will need to be wary of maladaptive behaviors associated with unsupervised teenagers. Schools should provide engaging options for these students on the fifth day. Promoting a vibrant and multifaceted vocational program with work-study and apprenticeship opportunities for high school students is advantageous. The school counselor can assist with advocating for increased vocational offerings and highlighting resulting career pathways. Participating students will be able to experience an entire work day while earning credit or wages for their efforts. A school counselor should assist with implementation and facilitation of such a program, possibly designing a plan of study for each individual student.

Every aspect of implementing the four-day system has numerous considerations. School counselors should be cognizant of all phases and their effects on students and populations. Leadership, advocacy, and other skills of school counselors are vital to the success of such a program, or any other that comprehensively affects a system. Guidance and counseling that addresses concerns and challenges of all populations at all phases will help ensure a decrease in the prevalence of maladaptive and negative thoughts, feelings, emotions, and behaviors and increase the chances of successful implementation. ■■■

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