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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ILLINOIS SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

FALL 2012

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ON BEING ISCA PRESIDENT

BY ERIN MASON



Leadership, in my mind, is synonymous with service. When the work of one group of leaders propels the work of the next group of leaders, then service for the greater good is realized. Being a service-oriented leader doesn't mean leaving a personal legacy of your own but means contributing to the collective legacy of the association.

I've been fortunate to benefit from the strength of the leadership of those who have come before me: Laurie Siegel, Dr. Venisa Beasley-Green, Dr. Christina Nolan, Ray Piagentini, and many others. I'm also fortunate to have an energized and committed ISCA board that is ready to take our association to new heights. All of the work that we will do in the next year will be done in collaboration with each other and with the best interests of ISCA members in mind. We met together on July 17 to get things rolling.

In my role as president, I believe that one of my primary responsibilities is to make sure that the voice of ISCA members, and even non-members, is heard by the board so that we can improve the association. To that end, all are invited to give us your thoughts at any time using this one-question [online form](#). You can share your ideas, suggestions, compliments, or feedback and the ISCA board will consider them in our meetings.

I hope to continue using this newsletter as a place to communicate with all those who are keeping an eye on what is happening with ISCA. Stay tuned for more articles on these topics and more:

- ISCA Goals for 2012-2013
- ISCA Board Member Spotlights
- ISCA Member Spotlights
- ISCA Conference Preview

I look forward to serving you! ■■■



Laurie Siegel, ISCA 2011-2012 president (left), and Erin Mason, ISCA 2012-2013 president (right).

Erin Mason, Ph.D., is the 2012-2013 president of the Illinois School Counselors Association and an assistant professor in the Counseling program at DePaul University. She is a former professional school counselor with 13 years of experience in her home state of Georgia, where she worked in urban, suburban, and rural communities and was consistently involved in the leadership of the Georgia School Counselors Association. Erin is a regular presenter at state and national conferences and also serves ASCA as a lead RAMP reviewer. Erin is most interested in the professional identity development of school counselors and in the incorporation of technology into school counseling practice and preparation. You can find her on Twitter, Facebook, on the ISCA blog, and at emason5@depaul.edu.

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The cost of attending college continues to skyrocket, and far too many students are graduating with debt that can cripple them financially for decades.

As it becomes more difficult and confusing for consumers to negotiate the multitude of for-profit websites and other programs offering conflicting information about financial aid, the National College Finance Center (NCFC) is a free, first-stop, unbiased resource to help educate students, prospective students, graduates and families all across the country about their options for financing a college education and repaying student loans.

The NCFC is powered by the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC). The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) is conducting a national public service announcement campaign to help those in need procure unbiased college financing information via the NCFC.





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

ISCA AT ASCA

BY STEVE MURRAY, ISCA
PRESIDENT-ELECT

Fifteen ISCA members attended at the 2012 ASCA Conference in Minneapolis. In addition to riveting breakout sessions, the conference provided attendees an opportunity to meet with their ISCA colleagues to discuss session content and the counseling challenges we face in Illinois. The members in attendance enjoyed the opportunity to socialize with their colleagues. Please make plans to attend the 2013 ASCA Conference and the ISCA Meeting in Philadelphia—mark your calendar and save the dates: June 30- July 3, 2013

Contact Steve Murray at smurray@nddons.org



MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION EVENT

Save the date for “Ready to RAMP?!” This fall membership appreciation event will be happening concurrently in multiple locations.

READY TO RAMP?!

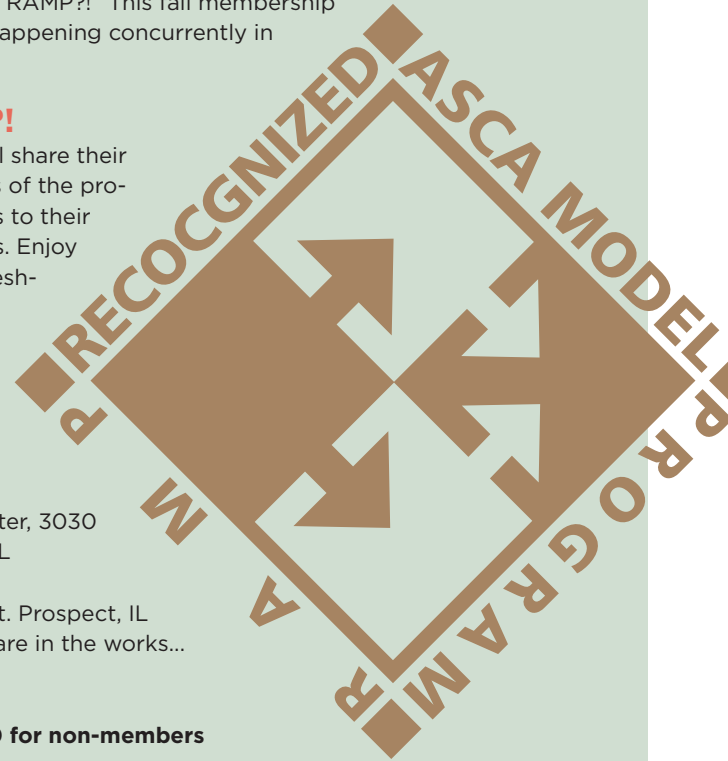
Recent RAMP recipients will share their knowledge and experiences of the process and talk about benefits to their school counseling programs. Enjoy time to socialize, enjoy refreshments, and win prizes, too!

**Wednesday,
October 24, 2012,
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.**

Locations:

- Steinmetz Academic Center, 3030 N. Mobile Ave., Chicago, IL
- Prospect High School, 801 W. Kensington Rd., Mt. Prospect, IL
- Other possible locations are in the works... stay tuned!

Free to ISCA members; \$10 for non-members



ISCA ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATES

ISCA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Skokie, IL
April 19, 2013
Skokie/Northshore
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ISCA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Springfield, IL
April 12, 2013
Northfield Inn and Suites



BEYOND THE SCHOOL WALLS: UTILIZING YOUR TRAINING AS A PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR

BY SUZANNE A. WHITEHEAD, ED.D., CCDCI

Professional school counselors need to be prepared to deal with every type of crisis or disaster, from suicide ideation to floods or ice storms, from intruders to tornadoes, hurricanes, and every natural and manmade disaster. School systems are a microcosm of society; therefore, whatever can happen outside of a school can certainly happen inside of one. Disasters occur in the blink of an eye. It is imperative for school counselors to obtain proper training, not only during their formal education, but also via workshops, conferences, in-services, and volunteer community service. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling Related Educational Programs (CACREP) now mandates that all university counselor education programs teach the required standards as they apply to crises and disaster situations.

Our extensive background training qualifies all school counselors to become disaster mental health counselors certified by the American Red Cross. I cannot recommend gaining this certification strongly enough. As a school counselor, you will be called on in times of crises and disasters, both within your school and beyond its walls. You are the designated go-to person in your school system. Because of your professional affiliations with the American School Counselor Association and the American Counseling Association, you will also be put on an e-mail list and will be notified during extreme times of national disasters and asked for your availability to serve. American Red Cross training will give you the skills and tools necessary to deal with disaster situations, and your primary duty will be to provide psychological first aid. This is profoundly important and can mean the difference between agonizing desperation and renewed hope for survivors of incredible trauma.

IT WON'T HAPPEN HERE

I have been a member of the American Red Cross since 2005 and have assisted during several local disaster situations. If you believe that disasters only happen



Dr. Whitehead helping with the Red Cross

on a national scale or in distant locations, think about how many times there have been terrible fires in your area, or school shootings, or possible gas leaks with explosions. Perhaps your area has dealt with extreme drought or heavy flooding. Or maybe blizzards, nor-easters, or frequent tornadoes have affected your region. No matter where you live, Mother Nature has a form of natural disaster to unleash. Your school system should have a viable, updated crisis and disaster plan that is known to all relevant parties and practiced regularly. If not, this is your wake-up call to kindly but firmly remind your administration to review this living document right away and to keep it current.

What follows are some lessons gleaned from my volunteer service at a shelter during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. My greatest fear, now that we are seven years out, is that we may not have retained these lessons clearly enough. Pain has no memory, they say. But if we allow ourselves to forget, we are forever doomed to repeat the same mistakes. The most compelling lesson I have learned from all my experiences with survivors is this: someday, any of us may be the one who is in need.

WORKING WITH SURVIVORS OF HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA, SUMMER 2005

I was deployed as a disaster mental health counselor with the American Red Cross to a shelter just north of New Orleans to help with the survivors of Hurricane Katrina. I stayed the next 15 days in a Baptist church turned Red Cross Shelter. The volunteers slept on cots, a spare couch, in classrooms, the choir loft, and on the church floor. The survivors received a cot, blanket, and pillow, and lived and slept in the church's large gymnasium. We were theoretically at capacity with 220 residents and little room between the cots. The Southern Baptist Church Emergency Disaster Relief team also sent volunteers of all ages, lots of canned food, and a very precious trailer that contained three showers and a washer and dryer.

The third day I was stationed at the shelter, we had warnings of another Category 5 storm approaching the Gulf Coast, Hurricane Rita. It felt like we were all in a parallel universe. There was nowhere to evacuate to; all other shelters were full, and no mass transportation was

available. By noon of the fourth day, the number of survivors had swollen by another 110 persons, and we literally had no room left. Survivors were located in every area of the church, and we somehow just made do.

At the height of the torrential storm, the police dropped off a young man at our shelter door; he was obviously in great distress. With his best friend and his wife, he was heeding the mandatory evacuation when their car was driven off the road by another vehicle. The young man's car rolled four times, was smashed beyond recognition, and landed in a ditch. As he struggled to regain consciousness, the storm raged around the car with hurricane force winds and constant horizontal sheets of rain. He

eventually was able to crawl out of the mangled wreckage and raced to help his dear friends, but they had already died.

That is just one survivor story; there were so many, many others. We had one small computer in the church that worked intermittently, at best, and one small television with poor reception. The shelter residents would wait for hours to use the computer for five minutes, trying desperately to locate loved ones and friends. We hugged and laughed with great joy when they heard the news that a loved one had made it; and we cried and held them when they learned the news was tragic. There were people from all walks of life, young and old, successful and not so, middle class and lower socio-economic status, mentally well and

quite mentally ill, healthy and many who were frail. Every one there tried to escape those two horrific storms, waited to meet loved ones before they fled, hoped it would pass over, and had a thousand other reasons why they got stuck, ran out of gas, and had nowhere to turn to as the storms engulfed them. They saw the American Red Cross shelter sign on the highway and turned there for help. All of them thought they would be there for a night or two; many came with just the clothes on their backs or carrying a small bag. Most of the survivors learned while there that they lost everything in the storms: their homes, belongings, livelihoods, and dreams. The counseling I pro-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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MSC: 800/856

vided was mostly listening and offering comfort, and helping survivors tell their stories to make sense of their trauma and suffering and to develop meaning from the devastation they experienced. I learned firsthand the incredible importance of offering psychological first aid.

To be a shelter resident is a humbling experience, to say the least. To be a Red Cross volunteer aiding at a shelter is also one of great dimension. I learned more about myself as a human being in those 15 days than I had in the many decades prior in my life. The differences we all too frequently focus on in life, the pettiness, the judgments, all disappeared. We are one race, the human one, and there but for the grace of God go any of us.

If you find yourself in the middle of helping with the devastating effects of any crisis or disaster, or you deploy as an American Red Cross disaster mental health counselor, I hope the following lessons will be helpful to you.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM BEING DEPLOYED AS A DISASTER MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR

1 Leave your ego at the door.

I have a doctorate in Counselor Education. No one cares about this following a disaster, nor should they. Can you help serve meals, move cots, console a grieving parent, sort donated goods? That's what matters. I met so many volunteers who somehow believed they were there for the glory of it all. They felt that waiting in line for a shower, sleeping on the floor for several nights, and eating canned, starchy food was beneath their stature in life. But after 10-14 days, they would be returning home to their warm beds, comfortable lives, and loving families. I learned that glory-hounds need not apply. The survivors knew them in an instant and wanted no part of them.

2 Leave your expectations at the door, also.

I expected only poor people to be in that shelter. I expected them to be uneducated. And I expected them to be minorities. I expected I would need to speak more slowly and with smaller words. This all stemmed from unrealistic assumptions on my part,



Outside showers for residents at the shelter

If you come home and expect to return to your life as you knew it the very next day without so much as a speed bump in between, it will come back to haunt you.

not judgment. And I was devastatingly ashamed. Nothing was further from the truth. You need to leave those false illusions at the door, or, better yet, back home before you even deploy to help. Be very careful of countertransference as a counselor. Survivors of crises and disasters are everywhere and everyone. They are all of us, and we, them.

3 Expect to get no sleep, literally.

But you will be energized beyond belief through your exhaustion. You believe you are helping those who survived, and indeed you are, tremendously. But it is you who will gain such peace, satisfaction, and pure joy from helping another human being in their darkest hour. You will be extremely tired, but it is a job-well-done tiredness. Besides, you will be so busy, you won't even notice...until you head home.

4 Debrief from someone who has been there—this is essential.

Your family desperately wants to understand what you went through; they can't. Your friends really try to listen to all your stories and relate; they can't. Your colleagues care and are quite intrigued, if only they weren't so very, very busy, so they can't understand either. You wind up alone, trying to comprehend this immense transformation that has overtaken you. You want the world to know, but they don't get it. It is not their fault: they weren't there. Try as you might, you cannot manage to find the right words for all the feelings, the senses, the experiences you had. Many will be polite, and listen intently, for a while. But it all gets lost in translation somehow and seems paltry by comparison to the latest news of the day. A funny thing about crises and disasters is that they tend to fade from peoples' radar quickly. The newscasters leave the area, everyday life takes hold, and suddenly the fact that so-and-so was fired by the boss yesterday takes greater precedence. Therefore, it is a mandate and crucial that you receive debriefing from a qualified professional trained in such affairs. You could get by without it; but that is all you will do. And the next time someone needs you, there will be little left to give.

5 Practice wellness, tenaciously.

Be good to yourself. You don't need a reason or an excuse. You have been through a lot and you deserve care. We all believe we are strong: spiritually, physically, and mentally, and you would not have volunteered if that was not true. But please know you are not superhuman! If you come home and expect to return to your life as you knew it the very next day without so much as a speed bump in between, it will come back to haunt you. You are no less deserving than all those survivors you helped. Those people whose lives you touched in immeasurable ways, they would tell you to slow down now and take time to smell the roses. You would tell them the same thing. You would tell them they are worth it. Are you?

6 Cut yourself some slack for being human. It is okay that you weren't able to meet in person with each and

every one of the hundreds of survivors who were waiting in line for 15 hours in the hot, humid, dirty rodeo-turned-Red-Cross-voucher-center. You gave it your best shot, and you reached so very many. Your calm demeanor, reassuring voice, and positive outlook prevailed through the sweltering conditions. You gave out water, compassion, and your heart, and it was felt; believe me, it was felt. I received more “Bless you’s” than anyone has a right to. You will receive them, too. Take them in, and know you are truly blessed for having the ability to be there for others who need you. But also know that you can’t do it all. We can move mountains, but one boulder at a time, please.

7 And lastly: Never take life for granted. When you return home from your deployment, hug your spouse,

your children, your partner, your family members, your friends, your dog, your cat, your goldfish, the trees, the flowers, your bed, and anything else you cherish in this world. (I hugged my bathroom for a very, very long time upon my return.) Know that life is precious, and fleeting. Cry, for all the pain you have witnessed, or just for the release of it, or for no apparent reason at all. Allow yourself to emote, just because. Know that you have experienced life at its most raw, its most real, and its most tragic and empowering, all at the very same time. Very few human beings get to experience that. Many are simply going through the motions, but time almost stood still for a bit while you lived every moment to its fullest and most extreme. There is something incredibly freeing and exhilarating about that. Live life to the fullest; you will now, because everything has changed—al-

though nothing has except you. You may want to take things for granted, but no longer can. You will look at your dear family, friends, and loved ones in a whole new light. You will catch yourself smiling a hundred times a day, and those around you will wonder. You will know there is no finer gift then to give of your heart unconditionally to a complete stranger. Those two precious words, “thank you,” will take on profound importance in your life forevermore. And to think, somehow, you had a small hand in all that. ■

Suzanne A. Whitehead, Ed.D., C.C.D.C.II, is assistant professor of Counselor Education at Northern State University in Aberdeen, SD. She is also president of the South Dakota Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. Contact her at Suzanne.Whitehead@northern.edu.



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**We look forward to seeing you at the ASCA Conference
June 30 through July 2, 2013 in Philadelphia.**

ABCs OF SCHOOL COUNSELING: TIPS FROM TWO DECADES

BY DEBRA MADARIS EFIRD

The enthusiasm and passion of new school counselors is inspiring, and the sage advice of seasoned ones can make a hard day easier. As we head back to school, I offer the following tips—some serious, others lighthearted—in the spirit of smoothing your journey as a school counselor.

A **Advocacy** for your position is vital, especially during National School Counseling Week. Put a short blurb on your school's announcements each day about what you do: guidance lesson topics, upcoming groups, services you provide, even fun personal information. Students may form a closer link with you if they know you own two collies, bike ten miles on Saturdays, or teach karate in the summer.

B The **bulletin** your school puts out each day is worth reading. When a parent calls to see if track tryouts start today, you'll already know and won't have to hunt down the information. The bulletin may also tell you who has a substitute so you can plan to pull students you need to see from those classes, if possible.

C Use **commonsense caution** when counseling students individually. Don't corner a student when you are talking with him or her. Always allow the student to be closer to the door than you are—rearrange your office if necessary. If you're talking to a student in a room at the end of a hall, back into the room and leave the student in the doorway. If you are uneasy about meeting privately with a student for any reason, leave your door open or sit in an open area such as a courtyard or lobby.

D Use a **dollar store** to stock up on giveaway items without breaking the bank. You won't mind giving stress balls to individual students if they didn't cost much. You can find fun pencils and other trinkets as incentives for students.

E **Evaluate:** education today is all about accountability. Although some aspects of what we do seem difficult to



measure, every lesson or group counseling agenda can be fitted with an evaluative piece, be it a pre/post test or simple self-assessment. Use smart response clickers and interactive smartboard games to gauge student recall at the end of a guidance lesson. Or set up an evaluation in a Google doc form if a computer lab is available.

F **Food pantry:** if you don't have one at your school, start one. It can help families meet basic needs and it takes up very little of your energy. Ask a church to supply the goods or suggest it as a service project for clubs in the school. Mention it in guidance lessons throughout the year so students remember this resource.

G Don't fight the expectation to **grow**. Attend workshops, read books on counseling topics, become a leader of any committee you join. Continue to educate yourself even if you already have enough renewal credits for your certificate. Staying on top of our field requires an effort to keep learning and growing.

H **Hopes and dreams:** do not squelch your students' unrealistic career goals. They will learn soon enough their likelihood of becoming a doctor, NFL star, master chef, or pop singer. If you are a high school counselor, please guide them into a related field that is not out of reach. In middle and elementary school, let their hopes soar!

I Provide an **individual note or pass** for each student in every session

of your groups. Listing a group on the announcements or providing schedules in advance is not sufficient to remind students to attend. Put the individual passes in the homeroom teachers' mailboxes the evening before so students don't lose them. Or hand them out yourself on the day of the group as you circulate the halls in the morning.

J **Jump** into something new every year. Don't become stagnant—try a new group or lesson on a topic you haven't covered before. Or add something current or timely to your lessons, such as recent sporting events, political developments, or even snow in the forecast.

K K is for **kudzu**. (Or **kidding**—a sense of humor benefits you at work and may even help you live longer.) Like the ubiquitous vine that takes over, kudzu for school counselors is the proliferation of folders, notebooks, and clutter that accumulates in your office. Besides your annual purging of files and materials, schedule a serious paring-down every three to four years.

L Yes, **liability insurance** is expensive but it gives you that "peace of mind = priceless" feeling. Buy insurance, follow the tenets of your Code of Ethics closely, and surround yourself with other school counselors who value integrity. Then, if a lawsuit occurs, you will know you've done the best you can to protect yourself.

M M is for the **miracle question**. Use it with lots of students; it's amazing. Walking that question through a student's entire day takes time, but it shows you are willing to listen and learn about the student. That sort of obvious caring may be just as valuable as what the student actually learns from the exercise.

N Learn **names**. Calling your students by name in the halls is a great feeling. Try to memorize names early in the year. Study the seating chart and learn names while students are watching a video guidance lesson or working in

small groups. More on names: remind teachers each year not to mention the names of other students during parent conferences. Too often, a teacher will say, "She's hanging around Brianna, and she's a bad influence on your child." Protect your teachers from receiving a call that starts, "So I heard that you said my child was a bad influence on..."

O **Observation** is a powerful way to be a better counselor. Watch another counselor's guidance lesson or ask to attend a group session—even at another school. We learn from each other, no matter who has more years of experience.

P **Props** enliven your lessons. Make a glittery magic wand—it brings a smile to even the most jaded adolescents. Use a (borrowed) graduation cap and gown for your session on high school registration, or any lesson on dropout prevention or educational goal-setting. Play "Pomp and Circumstance" as students enter and leave the classroom. Use hula hoops for explaining proper standing distance from others. Use vegetables: let students in your anger group peel back layers from a cabbage, symbolizing the search for the feelings underneath. Use potatoes or similar-looking seashells in a lesson on diversity or uniqueness—have students name their potato or shell. Then collect them and dump them in a pile, asking students to find theirs.

Q Create a **Quality World** collage. Brainstorm items that your students value: friends, family, sports, electronics, clothes, pets, food, and sleep—and school. Cut out magazine pictures to represent those items. Give each student pictures for each category and ask them to rank them in importance and glue them in that order on long strips of construction paper. Let them discuss their choices and make comparisons with others.

R is for **role reversal**—that means you and the student. When you are exasperated with a frequent-flyer student because he or she keeps coming back

We learn from each other, no matter who has more years of experience.

with the same problems, try exchanging chairs. Let the student imitate you. It will be hilarious and sometimes will give him or her new insight into the situation and propel the student into action.

S **Seasonal décor:** spruce up your office with timely decorations. A tinkling fountain with a few genuine fallen leaves can soothe in autumn, a soft stuffed Santa within reach can be reassuring in winter, and fresh flowers from your own yard can revitalize in the spring. And bring a single gardenia or a couple of daisies to your co-workers occasionally.

T Go **tech!** Case notes in an Excel spreadsheet allows for collection and sorting of data, which helps us demonstrate our accountability. But keep your students' counselor request forms in an alphabetical or chronological file or notebook. And have blank forms on your desk in case a student shows up without one. Why keep them? A stack of a child's counselor request forms is a powerful way to convince a parent to seek outside counseling for a child.

U **"Us vs. them" attitude.** We've all had memorable clashes with parents, but many of us are parents ourselves, and sometimes we have been less than satisfied with our own children's educational experience. Try to take the high road and remain respectful, no matter what. Return parent phone calls the same day. If you must rush home and can't manage to reach them that day, be sure to call first thing the next morning *before* they have a chance to call you again. Provide a parenting skills presentation each year.

V is for **vows.** Vow to see the importance of self-care. Vow to eat lunch, even if you work through it. Vow to

leave school—exit the building—on time at least once a week. Screen your calls if you must. Sometimes when you are going through a stressful spell with a parent or a staff person, it is better for you to address them on your time, not theirs. When you've had an especially draining week, vow to give yourself a treat on the weekend.

W Update your **webpage** regularly—more people look at it than you think. Don't be the counselor who leaves "Back to School Greetings" on the page all year! Show how busy you are by listing all your scheduled activities. Go ahead—impress your readers.

X is not for Xanax. X is for **X-tra special treasures.** Set up a file or drawer where you put the little things that mean so much—a note from a teacher complimenting you, a hand-drawn card or sweet letter from a student. Then, on a low day, take a peek inside for an immediate feel-good moment.

Y stands for **making it yours.** Don't follow a group outline from a book or a coworker's guidance lesson exactly. Put your stamp on everything you do. You are a creative person in your own right, and your ideas are valuable!

Z is for **Zumba.** Find time for an energetic daily or near-daily routine, but don't do it alone. Set up a weekly, after-school, video-based exercise program for students, and encourage other staff members to join. Your principal will appreciate your efforts to model healthy behavior for your students, and you may even receive comp time for working out. Vary the routines each week, mixing in videos of kickboxing, aerobics, hip-hop, yoga, and Zumba. You'll be surprised how much fun it is to work out with your students. ■■■

Debra Madaris Efird, an ASCA and ACA member, is author of "Groups in Practice: A School Counselor's Collection," (Routledge, June 2012). Visit <https://sites.google.com/site/debramadarisefird/home>

STUDENTS SERVING YOUR COMMUNITY

BY SHIRLEY PATE, MS

Emphasis on community involvement is growing in schools across the United States. This affects the work of school counselors, many of whom may be less comfortable delivering lessons on this topic than those related to academic, career, and personal/social issues. For the past year, I worked as a long-term substitute in a middle school and was excited when I heard that a committee had formed to plan a school-wide day of service. I share my experience with the hope that other school counselors will embrace this idea. Although this was scheduled as a one-day event, many of the students continue to volunteer their time in their own way.

A DAY OF SERVICE

The idea for a day of service began when a group of staff members formed a committee to discuss the lack of school pride and sense of community within the school environment. Five Oaks Middle School has a student body of more than one thousand students, including an options school within the school. The committee's goal was to build a sense of school community by working together to provide services that would benefit others who lived within the surrounding community. The committee provided ideas for service projects but the students and teachers worked together leading up to the day of service to develop their own projects.

Five Oaks Middle School's Day of Service began with a student-led, school-wide assembly. As the students entered the gym, their sense of excitement and anticipation was palpable, and energy levels were high. For many of the students, this would be a day unlike any they had ever experienced. Classes were suspended for the entire day so staff and students could participate in service learning projects.

Students from the eighth-grade leadership class began the assembly with an overview of the day and expectations for participation. Students from each grade level team came forward to explain their project for the day. A lively class competition followed with lots of cheering from each grade level. The assembly ended with a student-produced video that highlighted students sharing their ideas about



what community service meant to them. And then the work began.

A WELL-PLANNED SERVICE PROJECT

My sixth-grade team worked with Medical Teams International. This non-profit humanitarian aid and global health organization (formerly Northwest Medical Teams) serves people locally and worldwide who have been stricken by disaster, conflict, or poverty. Our preparation for the service-learning project began a week prior to the actual service day with a field trip to the Real Life exhibit at the Medical Teams International facility in Tigard, Oregon. This is a walk-through, multi-sensory exhibit that allows people to experience what life is really like for children affected by disaster, conflict, and poverty. As I accompanied the first group, I was amazed at how quiet this normally active group of students had become when they entered the first phase of the exhibit, which depicted the aftermath of the Japanese tsunami. It was clear to me that they were touched by the pictures and messages they were seeing. I watched as several students entered the small church and took the time to write messages to those whose lives had been changed by disaster. As we rounded the corner into the exhibit about a Mexican dump where children lived and

played, one boy came to me with tears in his eyes and told me he had experienced this kind of life before his family came to the United States. At the end of the tour, a volunteer debriefed with the students. Students shared their feelings of sadness, anger, and—yes—happiness that they could be a part of helping someone less fortunate than themselves.

The next part of the project was to develop small brochures the students would distribute in nearby neighborhoods, requesting items for Hope Kits (personal care items). As the students worked creatively to design their brochures, I saw evidence that they had learned a lesson in empathy that day.

On the actual day of service, a health care provider who volunteers for Medical Teams International shared her story with the sixth-grade students. This powerful presentation was followed by distribution of the brochures. A week later, the students returned to the neighborhood to pick up donated items and assemble the Hope Kits.

For many of our students, this was the first time they had volunteered to help others. The sense of accomplishment was apparent as the student body gathered at the end of the day to socialize and share with classmates the projects their teams had done to make the school and community a better place.

SERVING MANY NEEDS

Other service learning projects that took place included:

- Card making for a local retirement center
- Sewing pillow cases for the V.A.
- Landscaping at an elementary school
- Letter writing to soldiers
- Car wash to raise funds for Dorenbecher Pediatric Hospital
- Reading to elementary students
- Jeans and sweatshirt drive for the local clothes closet
- Crafts for kids in the hospital
- Designing wood tiles with school expectations
- Tree planting
- Neighborhood cleanup
- Science wing mural

Planning a school-wide service event does require work, but I have found that every school has people who are dedicated to making a difference for

PLANNING A SERVICE DAY

First Steps: What will you do?

- What are the needs of the community?
- What opportunities already exist in the surrounding community?
- Look for local groups or organizations that match your group's interests
- Know your group's abilities and skills
- Keep in mind proximity, time, and available resources

Plan and Promote

- Engage students in planning and the details of activity

students. Find these people and propose your idea. Keep things simple, set realistic goals, and the event will be a success for both the volunteers and the service recipients. ■

- Set goals and prepare a timeline
- Plan location, budget, and contact person
- Plan for extra supervision

Take Action

- Allow students to make choices about which project they would like to do
- Build moments of reflection into your activity

Promote Your Accomplishments

- Make announcements/posters
- Call your local TV/radio stations and newspaper
- Send thank-you letters

Celebrate with your students

Shirley Pate is a school counselor with Five Oaks Middle School in Beaverton, Oregon. Contact her at sapate1951@gmail.com.

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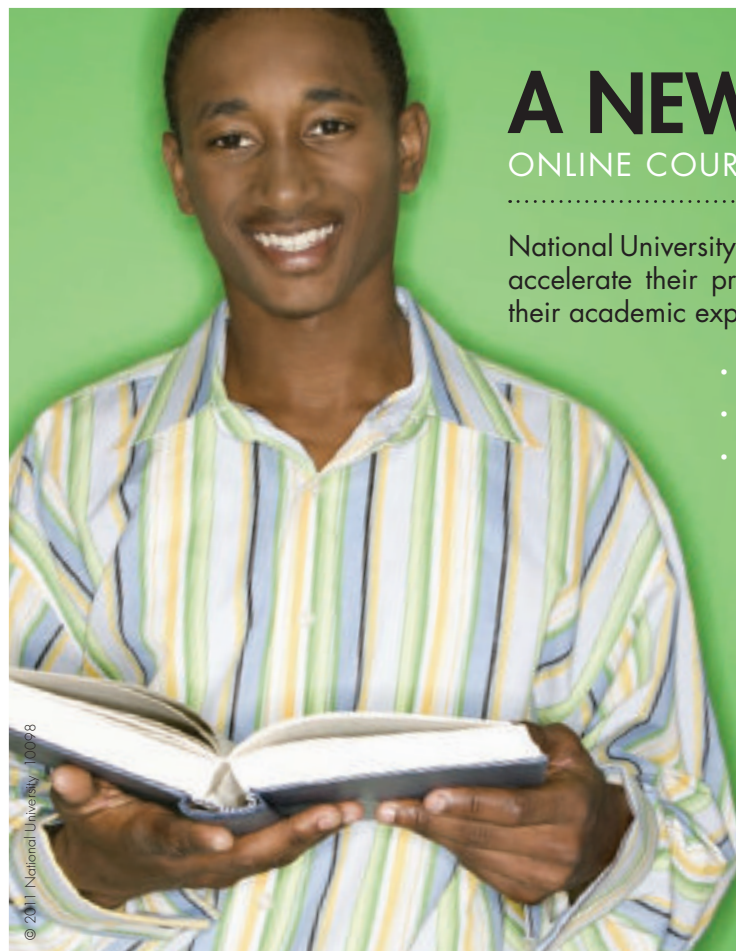
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BACK-TO-SCHOOL TIPS

Connecting with Your Child's School Counselor for a Successful School Year

UNDERSTAND THE EXPERTISE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL COUNSELOR.

School counselors make a measurable impact in every student's life, assisting with academic, career and personal/social development. Professional school counselors are trained in both educating and counseling, allowing them to function as a facilitator between parents, teachers, and the student in matters concerning the student's goals, abilities, and any areas needing improvement. School counselors provide services not only to students in need, but to all students.

MEET OR CONTACT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL COUNSELOR AT LEAST THREE TIMES PER SCHOOL YEAR.

The beginning of a school year is an excellent opportunity to initiate contact with your child's school counselor and doing so can ensure your child's positive school experience. Find out who the counselor is and what his or her experience and background are. By communicating with one another at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year, parents and counselors can have a definite impact on a child's success.



DISCUSS YOUR CHILD'S CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS WITH THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR.

As a parent, you know your child best. However, the school counselor can help you better understand your child as a student. It's important to encourage your child's expression of needs, hopes, and frustrations. School counselors are trained to help your children.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS FROM THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR.

When you need information or assistance, your child's school counselor can help you get in touch with the appropriate school officials; learn about school policies on behavior, attendance, and dress; know the school calendar of important dates; and stay connected

with the school in many other ways. The school counselor can also help you locate resources in the community when you need them.

WORK WITH THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR TO IDENTIFY RESOURCES AND FIND SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS.

If your child is having a problem at school, it is important to work with your child's school counselor to find solutions. Discuss resources available within and outside of the school, and get information on how such programs can benefit your child. Your school counselor can be a valuable partner in your child's education and preparation for life beyond school.

Learn more about the school counselor's role and how parents can work with their children's school counselors at www.schoolcounselor.org/roles

SHARE THIS ARTICLE
WITH PARENTS AT
YOUR SCHOOL!



Use this link to share in an e-mail, on your website, or on Facebook:
<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/files/BackToSchoolTips.pdf>

ULTIMATE STRESS BUSTERS

BY JAMES PHILLIPS

Your natural abilities to consciously breathe and vocalize are the two very best stress busters.

Our ancestors had a deep appreciation for the power of breathing, as referenced in the Bible and in the ancient Egyptian sacred ankh. The Egyptians believed that as long as we breathe, our soul is bound to our bodies, but when breathing stops or becomes shallow, that crucial knot loosens.

Like most of us, you've probably taken on so many different roles that you're exhausted and overwhelmed much of your working day. Conscious breathing is vital to defeat such chronic stress. Stress and shallow breathing go hand in hand. To begin conscious breathing, simply pause wherever you are, close your eyes, and breathe in through your nose until your lungs are completely filled. As you inhale, visualize the life force that surrounds you entering and circulating throughout every level of your being. Exhale slowly through

your mouth releasing all of the air you've breathed in. Repeat this three times. The ancients believed that repeating any action three times made it a sacred activity.

When you breathe consciously, you heal yourself on many levels: enhanced good health, energetic balance, a new self-awareness, and heightened consciousness and intuition. More specifically, while breathing consciously, you are supporting yourself in the alpha brainwave state as opposed to the beta brainwave state. The Beta brainwave state is characterized as being awake, alert, and concentrated. If this state is maintained for a prolonged period, it becomes associated with feelings of tension, worry, fear, or anxiety. The Alpha brainwave state is also a conscious state, but is identified with feelings of pleasure, tranquility, and relaxation.

Another excellent and natural stress buster is to vocalize a simple vowel or "om" for a few minutes each day, particularly at the moment when you're

experiencing significant stress. All sorts of positive physiological effects occur when you do this: oxygen is increased in the cells, and blood pressure, heart rate, and levels of stress-related hormones decrease. Desirable neurochemicals are also released into the bloodstream—melatonin, which reduces stress, enhances sleep and shrinks tumors; endorphins, those self-created opiates that work as natural pain-relievers; and nitric oxide, associated with production of oxytocin, known as the "trust hormone."

Conscious breathing and vocalizing equip you with two powerful tools to defeat chronic stress. And, best of all, they're free! ■■■

James Phillips is an Egyptologist, author, and speaker. A graduate of the Monroe Institute in Faber, VA, his Total Mind series of recorded audios support deep relaxation, focused concentration, and improved sleeping cycles. Contact him via www.totalmind.com.




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PEEPS BUNNIES HELP PREVENT BULLYING



“Our focus is to create a positive school community, in which we all ‘Stand up for our Peeps’”

As students, teachers, and school counselors at Franklin Middle School in Chantilly, VA, head back to school, many will be sporting colorful t-shirts featuring the popular Peeps® brand candies. The shirts are from the school’s Peeps-inspired anti-bullying program, “Standing Up for Our Peeps,” which has been a popular success for two years and is supported by Just Born, the makers of Peeps.

Devra Gordon, MSW, a school social worker at Franklin, is the co-creator of the program, which includes anti-bullying Peeps diorama and essay competitions. It has introduced students and staff to the tools needed to build a school community where bullying is not tolerated. The program establishes a safe and open environment and teaches students and staff positive behavior approaches they can use to prevent and intervene when they encounter a bullying situation. “Our focus is to create a positive school community, in which we all ‘stand up for our Peeps’ and in our role as educators, teach everyone how to do that,” Gordon said. Disruptive and disrespectful behaviors dropped 50% as a result of the Peeps program, which supplemented the school’s existing activities.



Clara Hauth-Pflugrath, Ph.D., and Susan Harris, M.Ed., show off entries in the Peeps diorama contest.



Franklin Middle School gathers for the final assembly in the “Standing Up for Our Peeps” program.

The connection with the Peeps brand began when a Franklin teacher came across an “Inside We’re All the Same” Peeps coffee mug. “This statement and the Peeps bunny image ignited a spark between a few of us, and along with Just Born, we had all the ingredients to create a unique anti-bullying program,” Gordon said. Just Born donated t-shirts and visited the school during the program’s first year with the Peepster chick car.

Cindy Glick, corporate affairs manager at Just Born, said, “Franklin Middle

School is exemplary in what it is trying to accomplish and how it is going about it. When we heard about their anti-bullying effort customized for middle school students, we thought it was terrific.”

The 2012 program culminated in an assembly on June 12 for the school’s 825 students and staff, with an entertaining overview of the year’s project and a preview of the program for the coming year.

Peeps t-shirts are available at the Peeps & Company stores and online at www.peepsandcompany.com.