



MONTANA
SCHOOL
COUNSELOR
ASSOCIATION

Making a Difference

March 2008

www.mtschoolcounselor.org

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MSCA Has the Answer

Here we are, almost to the end of the year already. The minute the Spring testing cycles hit, I begin to receive phone calls, crying out that people are overwhelmed.

MSCA has the answer! The Spring Institute this year really is for YOU! I know we said that last year, and chances are we may say something similar next year, but this year it really, really is true. This year is all about you! We have speakers who are experts in their fields, coming to us to share their helpful information on how to stay renewed. Our focus will be on supporting school counsel-

ors with the professional development opportunities to empower for that re-learning and to refresh with positive affirmations. Our long term goals are to encourage our students to achieve goals to prepare for their futures. During these times of desperation we may be that one person who validates and encourages, supports and acknowledges the specialness of each of these kiddos with unconditional regard, a topic that one of our speakers will talk about.

Please come to our Spring Institute! We invite you! We want you to be involved and to support your own programs through connections with others in your field. It is the one time each year where we have a large majority of our state school counselors in the same place. Do not let this opportunity go by the wayside.

Visit us at www.mtschoolcounselor.org for updates. Peace to You all.

Your President
Kristy Savaria

Important Dates

- MSCA Conference
April 17-18, 2008
Bozeman, MT
- MT Indian Ed. Conference
April 24-26, 2008
Missoula, MT
- MT Mental Health Assoc. Conf.—May 30-31, 2008,
Bozeman, MT
- ASCA National Conf.
June 28-July 2, 2008
Atlanta, GA
- MEA/MFT Conf.
October 16- 17, 2008,
Missoula, MT
- MT Council for Exceptional Children
April 17-18, 2008
Billings, MT

Counseling With A Focus

It is interesting to wonder how you and your job would be described by someone from your school. So often our work with students is dependent upon the administrative staff, district leadership, and even our own personalities and strengths.

My district is just finishing up a year and a half of work revising our district's counseling curriculum. With that process, I was reminded of the importance of a school board approved comprehensive counseling program. I love the focus and clarity that the program gives to my work. It is easy to become purely "responsive services". That is, we come to

school and then just start putting out fires. Looking at what skills and knowledge the students should have when they leave us and then planning to provide that to them is important to keep us focused and balanced in our work.

MSCA has had several conferences providing skills on putting together your own curriculum or comprehensive program. The ASCA Model and the MSCA Montana Model (on the website) are both good frameworks for devising a curriculum appropriate for your students and your schools. If you don't have

one or yours needs revision, I would recommend doing just that. The process can be slow but once the work is done, you will find you are more efficient and more effective. I

If your job and your work would be described in a way that is not what you would like, perhaps a written curriculum and defined program would make a difference. If you need help, call any member of the MSCA Board and we would be glad to help you get started.

Barb Holden
Past President



MSCA Board Elections

Greetings Montana School Counselors! I hope this newsletter finds you well, and that you are getting excited for the MSCA Spring Conference! We have some exciting and enriching activities planned.

MSCA is pleased to announce the following upcoming vacancies: High School Vice President and Elementary Vice President. We invite all MSCA members to apply or nominate someone that would be qualified for the position.

The Elementary or High School Vice President candidate must:

- 1) Be a Professional Member or a Retired Member of the MSCA.
- 2) Hold a master's degree or higher, or the substantial equivalent.
- 3) The candidate must hold a school counselor or guidance certificate or license from Montana.
- 4) Be a school counselor in the work setting to be represented.
- 5) Be a person of high stature within his/her profession.
- 6) Have made significant civic, community, or professional contributions.

Duties of the Elementary or High School Vice President:

- 1) Shall serve as a resource and spokesperson for MSCA, promoting needs and interests of elementary or high school counselors in the State of Montana.
- 2) Shall submit article/information in the quarterly newsletter relevant to the elementary or high school counselors.
- 3) Shall, in capacity to be agreed upon by the MSCA Board, help with facilitation of the annual MSCA conference.
- 4) Shall lead the elementary or high school level sharing at conferences when level sharing is offered.
- 5) Shall attend MSCA Board meetings.
- 6) Shall maintain MSCA Elementary or High School Level VP binder, including job description, minutes, budget reports, and information pertinent to this position.
- 7) Shall attend conferences/trainings to help further their ability to better provide leadership and serve as a resource and spokesperson for elementary level counselors in the State of Montana.

Please Note:

The Elementary or High School Vice President who is selected should be prepared that this role will require a two-year commitment.

To nominate an Elementary or High School Vice President, or to self nominate, please complete a nomination form from our website and return it with required attachments by March 30, 2008, to:

Carrie Stefanatz, MSCA President-Elect, St. Ignatius High School,
PO Box 1540, St. Ignatius, MT 59865 cstefanatz@mission.blackfoot.net

Counselor Burnout

Recently a counselor newsletter from Anycollege.com appeared in my e-mail. As I browsed through it, one of the articles peaked my interest. It addressed burnout, and how school counselors are especially vulnerable because of the “diversity and confusion” of our roles.

The writers went on to describe three areas of burnout including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion affects the ability of the school counselor to invest physically and emotionally in clients and to accomplish even routine tasks. Depersonalization is a lack of personal commitment in certain relationships from students, coworkers and families, making the counselor unable to understand clients and their issues. Counselors who are experiencing burnout are unable to conceptualize their own success, which detracts from the personal accomplishment area.

Stressors that the authors cited included role ambiguity and role conflict. Research has actually been done that compared burnout of school counselors, reading specialists, teachers, school psychologists and school social workers. School counselors had the high-

est level of role ambiguity and role conflict.

Although what they had to say makes sense, I also thought to myself, “These folks obviously know nothing about the role of the K-12 counselor in rural Montana! Often times we are asked to assume the tasks that don’t fit under anyone else’s job description. Couldn’t that be considered “role ambiguity”? In small districts, we don’t always have a choice as the budgets place limits on the number of staff members that can be hired.

Occasionally, these duties also force us into situations that seem to be direct conflicts. However, I feel we can use these situations to our own advantage. While supervising the playground and lunchroom may be looked upon as a disciplinary role by some, I look at it as an opportunity to watch students interact with their peers in a whole different setting than I usually see them in. I guess I see it as the old saying “when life hands you lemons, make lemonade.”

Nevertheless, burnout can be a big issue if we forget to take care of ourselves. The following points directly from the article may help diminish burnout before it becomes a major

problem.

- Utilize the social support of friends, family and colleagues
- Reframe pessimistic attitudes into a more optimistic outlook
- Maintain a sense of humor
- Take on leadership roles of interest within the school
- Be active in national, state and local professional organizations
- Seek consultation of colleagues
- Make time for enjoyable activities.

I’d like to add a couple more:

- Come to the MSCA Spring Institute....it’s just what the doctor ordered!
- With spring comes more challenges, so take a deep breath, hang on, and take time to smell the roses!

*Linda Konesky
K-12 Vice President*

**“....burnout
can be a big
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Providing Groups for Students

“A school counselor must weigh the topics of group carefully.”



Students arrive at school to learn, to be engaged in the learning process, and to acquire knowledge that will assist them in becoming successful, productive members of society. That is quite the idealistic statement. As school counselors, we are often faced with a multitude of serious clinical topics. Our students and their parents are coming into our offices requesting personal counseling to address some of these serious clinical issues. So the question must be asked, “In consideration of the myriad or clinical issues, developmental levels of students, time constraints, student to counselor ratios, and our obligation to support all students to be successful learners, what is appropriate to cover in a group and what is not?”

This question is one that we at Ronan School District #30 have been struggling to answer. I continue to refer back to the ASCA guidelines on confidentiality and group work: 1) confidentiality, 2) informed consent, and 3) the topic being discussed in group.

I believe that all school counselors would agree that when working with minors, whose social groups change fre-

quently and loyalties can often vary from recess to recess, or class to class, that whatever is stated in group will in fact be repeated. Thus, there is no way to guarantee that confidentiality will be kept. A good question to ask when devising a group in the first place is, “Do the gains we will be making as a group outweigh the possible price to an individual student’s emotional well-being?”

At what point do you feel a minor can provide informed consent? This question causes heated debate. My thought: we work with minors. Thus, parents need to be aware of the scope of the group, the activities, and the possible discussion points. An adolescent may not be able to understand the consequences of divulging private information in the company of peers. Thus, a school counselor must understand that it is highly unlikely that students can provide informed consent specifically if the group topic is dealing with sensitive issues.

It is difficult to gauge appropriate topics for group. The simple reason being we as school counselors cannot control what an individual will say at any given

time. With careful consideration of group topic, it may be easier to “control” dialogue if a topic is about school success skills versus cutting or eating disorders. Often some of the heavier issues may be able to be covered in a general information based guidance lesson rather than more in depth processing in a group setting. A school counselor must weigh the topics of group carefully.

It is unrealistic for the community, school administration, parents, or even school counselors themselves to tackle heavier issues. Often times the student’s needs are bigger than our abilities and/or ethical obligation. I believe that it is more productive to become a manager of resources and a catalyst of information for parents and students to find assistance outside of the school setting.

*Amy Griffin
Elementary School
Vice-President*

Senior Survival Kit

It's hard to believe we're winding down our third quarter already! The time has flown by and most seniors will tell you how quickly this year is passing. Senior year is one of the busiest as there are so many things they need to take care of: verification of credits for graduation, taking senior pictures, ordering announcements, visiting colleges and completing applications, applying for federal student aid and scholarships, taking the ACT or SAT, planning for prom, working, volunteering, etc., etc. Before long the class of 2008 will be packing their bags and they'll be onto another chapter.

As adults who've "been there" we can probably think back about things we wish we had gotten together before we left home. I would like to suggest helping them put to-

gether a "Senior Survival Kit". You can consider using manila envelopes, file jackets/pockets or expanding wallets or those nice colored, see-through "view folders". Here is a list of things to consider for their kit:

- Copy of Birth Certificate
- Copy of Social Security Card
- Copy of Medical Insurance Card; list of any medications taking; family doctor's name and address
- Phone Book (our area prints a mini-version which fits nicely)
- Address Book (family, friends, relatives, employers – incl. birthdays)
- Copies of Transcripts (college also if credits earned in H.S.)
- Copies of Immunization Record
- Copies of test scores or reports (ACT, SAT, ASVAB, etc.)
- Copy of learning disability documentation (and last IEP)

- Any other legal documents (name change, ward of court, etc.)
- For Native American Students: Copy of Certificate of Indian Blood and/or Tribal I.D., Address and phone for Indian Health Service, Letter for "Contract Health" if going to college, IHS chart number, Address and phone for Tribal Enrollment and Education Departments

Some students may not need some of these items but there may be other things you might think of to include (and please share your ideas). If you don't have the time to help them get all the items, consider giving them an envelope with a list, along with copies of the items you have access to. Well, best wishes as you spend these last few days with a great group of students who will be starting a new chapter!

*Vicki Smith
High School
Vice-President*



**Senior year
is one
of the
busiest....**

'Typical or Troubled'™ Grants Available

ASCA is once again working with the American Psychiatric Foundation to make the *Typical or Troubled?™* grant program available to school counselors. Established by the American Psychiatric Foundation (APF), a philanthropic and educational subsidiary of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the Typical or Troubled?™ School Mental Health Education Grant Program provides funding to implement the Typical or Troubled?™ School Mental Health educational model in

communities nationwide. Community organizations, high schools and school districts are eligible to receive funding.

Typical or Troubled?™ is an educational program, designed for school personnel (teachers, coaches, school counselors, etc...) to raise their awareness of mental disorders in teens. The program focuses on promoting the importance of early recognition and treatment, recognizing the early warning signs of mental health problems, and encouraging action and appro-

appropriate referral to a mental health professional.

Go to http://www.psychfoundation.org/typical_or_troubled.cfm to find out

- Background information on the program
- Application information
- Request for Application (RFA) PDF form - **which must be downloaded**

- Selected *visuals* of the *Typical or Troubled?™* PPT training presentation (not the whole presentation)

FAQs about the grant application process

In addition, the link contains information about the grant process and timeline. **Grant applications must be received at the ASCA office by March 30, 2008.** Applicants should send **five copies (plus the original)** by mail.

Alternative Education Experiences

“This was a win-win experience for the student...and for my remaining students...”



With spring break fast approaching, I am reminded that many of our students may have an opportunity to travel with family resulting in a few days of being absent from school. As educators, we always want to encourage alternative educational experiences for our students; we sincerely believe that it is important for learning to take place no matter where their travels carry them. For this reason, several years ago I developed a travel packet with activities and assignments for my students to complete on their family trips. It was understood that upon their return, they would be required to make a presentation for their classmates, but of course you may opt for something entirely different. The travel packet provided suggestions for items to be used in their presentation: postcards, photographs, free brochures, newspaper articles, souvenirs, home produced video, or actual interviews of people from the area visited (primary source). Naturally, I stressed the importance of having a great time on their trip.

Mathematics – During their trip, it became their responsibility to keep track of all expenditures incurred by the student and their family members. Some of these expenses could possibly include airline tickets, gasoline (miles per gallon), meals, souvenirs, illnesses

(A trip to the Honolulu ER was costly for one family.), etc.

English – The students were required to keep a journal about their many experiences. Also, extra credit was made available for writing a short story or composing a poem. It was left up to the student whether these activities would relate to the overall theme of the trip or be totally from their own inspiration.

Science – I reminded them, as a stellar citizen, that they had a responsibility to their World Community to be *stewards of the land*. They needed to list environmental concerns and possible solutions. Also, the physical components of the land (mountains, oceans, rivers, deserts, forests, plains, grasslands, etc.) needed to be noted with comments about how these characteristics influenced the environment.

Social Studies – For this area, my students were required to write briefly about at least two of these three issues: 1) Political issues, presently. 2) Social issues of the present (unemployment, taxes, crime, education, and health were possible topics). 3) Economics (I suggested that they find

a free real-estate magazine at a grocery store to see what an average house would cost).

To grade their efforts, the student was provided a rubric with a certain number of possible points for each component. The student was able to assess their efforts followed by my evaluation. I provided an opportunity for a discussion to take place, while making it clear that I would have the final say in how many total points they would earn.

In conclusion, this was a *win-win* experience for both the student that completed the travel packet and for my remaining students that vicariously were able to go scuba diving in Hawaii, bow hunting for elk, or scream through the Costa Rican cloud forest on a zip line. The next time you have a student missing school in order to take a family trip, think about how they might enhance this opportunity by providing a meaningful experience for themselves and for that of their classmates.

*Elaine Schoyen
Middle School
Vice President*

2007-08 MSCA Board Members



President—Kristy Savaria

Kristy is employed with the Laurel School District at Fred Graff Elementary School. Her counseling career began in the late 70's. She has had the privilege to learn from the best in areas of women and children's health/safety, teen intervention services, mental health and education. Kristy is a state certified foster parent and has three children and four grandchildren; they are her pride and joy!



President-Elect—Carrie Stefanatz

Carrie is in her 8th year as Counselor at St. Ignatius. Carrie graduated from the University of Montana with BS in Biology and Masters in Counselor Education. She has taught with the Peace Corps and worked at a crisis center. She loves working with her diverse population and is passionate about student empowerment and development. Her 8 year old daughter Clair makes her world go around!



Past-President—Barb Holden

Barb Holden, LCPC, has been a middle school counselor with the Great Falls Public Schools for 15 years. Prior to this she was the Executive Director of the Alliance for Youth and a Lamaze Instructor. Barb is on her District Crisis Team, the Counseling Curriculum Committee, and involved in her building with a number of committees. She is married to Lon and together they have three adult children and almost 6 grandchildren.



Secretary—Keri Sansaver

The Secretary for MSCA is Keri Sansaver. In her 16th year in education, she is the Wolf Point School District Junior High Counselor. Keri is married and has two children, Matt, 27, and Kami, 23. "I am honored to be involved with MSCA and am very excited about this year's Spring Institute!"



Treasurer—Laura N. Simpson

Laura Simpson is currently the K-12 school counselor and 7-12 English teacher for Geraldine School. She has a B.S in Education from MSU-Billings and a M.S. in Education from Montana State in Bozeman. Previously, she was a high school counselor in Livingston and the K-12 school counselor in Dodson.



K-12 Vice-President—Linda Konesky

An MSU Bozeman graduate, Linda has taught elementary grades and special education. Since receiving her counseling degree from MSU-Northern in 1990, she has been the K-12 counselor at Centerville Public School. Linda and her husband Joe have been married for almost 35 years, and ranch south of Stockett, MT. They have two grown children.



High School-Vice President—Vicki Smith

Vicki is in her 3rd year as Career Counselor at Wolf Point Schools. She is a graduate of MSU-Northern with a BS in Business Ed. and MEd-Guidance & Counseling. Vicki spent 10 years in Insurance before teaching business then was a counselor for TRIO in higher education for 7 years. Vicki is married to Loren Bisbee and they have 4 children and 2 grandchildren.



Middle School Vice-President—Elaine Schoyen

Elaine Schoyen is currently a counselor at East Middle School in Great Falls. Elaine has 34+ years in the education profession. She also serves as the President of MMHA's State Board. Elaine is married to Michael Croskrey; they have three children and five grandchildren.



Elementary School Vice-President Amy Griffin

Amy has been employed by Ronan School District # 30 as the Elementary School Counselor for seven years. She earned her Masters of Education in School Counseling from Montana State University in 2002. She continually learns from her students the importance of resiliency and fortitude. Amy has been married to Aaron for ten years and she and her husband had their first child in February, 2008.



Graduate Student Representative

(Unfilled)

The MSCA Newsletter, "Making a Difference" is published three times annually as a service to our members. Two issues are sent to members electronically and one issue is mailed. Board members, except for Treasurer and Secretary, submit articles of interest related to their level of representation. We welcome articles of interest from members or other educational professionals who would like to share information. We encourage submissions be written in a friendly, informative, and practical style rather than technical or academic. Articles must be original and references are to be used when appropriate rather than footnotes. Articles must meet the mission of MSCA. No compensation is given for submitted articles. All articles are available on the MSCA website: www.mtschoolcounselor.org.

Advertisements may be submitted according to guidelines found on the website. We reserve the right to edit copy or reject advertisements that do not meet the mission of the Montana School Counselors Association. If you have questions please contact the Editor, President or author.

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MONTANA SCHOOL COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION
Laura N. Simpson, Treasurer,
Geraldine Schools, PO Box 117,
Geraldine, MT 59446

2008 MSCA Spring Institute

April 17-18, 2008
Bozeman, Montana

Relearn, Renew, Refresh

“R” Purpose & “R” Vision

Freida Trujillo—April 17, 8:00-11:00 a.m.—Solution-Focused Brief Counseling
*John Sommers-Flanagan—April 17, 1:00-4:15 p.m.—Student & School Counselor
Rejuvenation & Motivation*
Denny McLoughlin—April 18, 8:00-3:30 p.m.—High Trust Psychology

Register online at www.mtschoolcounselor.org