



MONTANA SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

Making a Difference



Volume 2, Issue 3

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Letter from the President:

Why Try?

Each day we are faced with students who resist and rebel every movement we, as educators or school counselors, make toward helping them and supporting them. You know the students that I speak of---the ones who lash out each time you get too close. As soon as they taste success, they seem to panic and run in the direction of what 's most familiar---trouble. Can you see their faces? I can. I can see his face.

As I think of this young man, I find myself shaking my head. He has blown out of every option and opportunity that has been opened to him. For every step forward, he takes two leaps back. His teachers have cried tears of anger and frustration over the choices he continues to make and the direction that this will inevitably lead him. *Can you sense the frustration?*

We all have this boy or this girl at our school. We have all shared the frustration and the pain of a student who cannot seem to answer the question, *Why Try?* Can you hear their voice? I can. "Why should I try Mrs. Jones when everything else in my life is falling apart? Why should I try when I go home every day to chaos? Why should I try, Mrs. Jones? Why should I try?"

But it is for this student that I come to school each and every day. It is for this student, and every other student like him, that I continue to "try" every single day. Because at the end of the day, or at the end of the year, if he has gained the smallest ground, then progress has been made. Success is not measured by my time and effort, but by the student's choice to engage and to try in his or her own life.

For the student who struggles every day with the toughest of life issues, success is not measured in straight A's, but in the decision to get up and come to school, the choice to come to class with pencil and paper, the effort to keep his hands to himself and not slap a student on the back of the head or knock him down. Success is measured in the smallest of victories. And through these small triumphs, the student moves closer toward who he desires to be.

We, as school counselors, are given the enormous challenge of working with those students who can't seem to find the motivation to be successful. It is our job to tap into them day in and day out, to help them find an answer to one of the toughest questions that they have in their lives, *Why Try?*

As easy as it is to see the face of the student who keeps falling down, it is also necessary to remember the face of the student who finally begins to pick himself back up. We must keep the faces of the students who have moved toward success in our minds eye, so that we always remember why we need to try.

"Why try Mrs. Jones? Well, because I believe I can make it. That's why."

- Joy Jones

NEWS FROM OPI



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Linda McCulloch

Superintendent

Dear Montana School Counselor,

On behalf of the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), I would like to offer our appreciation to all school counselors for working another year to enhance the success and academic achievement of Montana students. In Montana and nationwide, the education system seeks to be more responsive to the changing expectations for today's youth. School counselors play a central role in increasing student success and achievement by addressing the academic, social and emotional and career needs of students. In this rapidly changing world, it is increasingly critical that school counselors be actively involved and integrated in education reform processes at every level.

Several years ago, a state-level committee, known as the Counseling Leadership Initiative (CLI) was created to provide a central forum through which key stakeholders with an interest in school counseling can engage in deliberate collaboration and planning as to how best to promote and support school counseling in Montana. This committee includes representatives from the Board of Public Education, Office of Public Instruction, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Montana School Counselor Association (MSCA), Montana University System Counselor Education programs, and several other professional groups representing teachers, administrators, and school boards. With the ultimate goal of the CLI to provide leadership and advocacy to help implement comprehensive school programs in all Montana schools, the CLI will help to promote the Montana School Counseling Model as adopted by MSCA.

The growth in your professional organization is exciting and holds great potential for Montana students, schools and communities. We look forward to continuing to work with your leadership to discuss how OPI, in conjunction with MSCA and the Counseling Leadership Initiative, can help to implement the Montana School Counseling Model and support development of comprehensive school counseling programs across the state.

For more information on the Counseling Leadership Initiative or state efforts related to school counselors and school counseling, contact Linda Vrooman Peterson, Office of Public Instruction, by telephone at (406) 444-5726 or e-mail at lypeterson@mt.gov; or Rene' Dubai, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, by telephone at (406) 444-0334 or by e-mail at rdubay@oche.montana.edu.

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Elementary S.O.S. – School Counselors Overflowing Support!

Spring Institute...What a fantastic way to send out this school year and begin to look forward to the next. It is thrilling for me as a member of our state and national school counselors associations to be involved with so many dynamic people. It is my personal challenge to talk with as many of you personally as possible this next year and to share your ideas and vision with our board so that we can meet the needs of our students across the state.

I want to thank you for your attendance at this year's **Spring Institute in Bozeman**. We are quickly becoming unified with constructive criticism and input on how to manage our states school counseling program as a board. I can't promise you we will make all of the "right" decisions, however, with your continued involvement at the Fall MEA/MFT conference and further interest with future planning, we can make a difference. This visible difference happens with courtesy, respect, and care along the way, just like we nurture our kids and loved ones. It happens one person at a time. It may be a catchy tune or a cup.... shared with others with new

and innovative ideas that make it happen when we are dry and feel despair, when schedules are tight and time is gone, when we really feel overworked and want to complain but don't. We need you! All of you!

Our elementary roundtable found that counselors' perspectives across our state differ, needs vary, and administrative attitudes may dictate how well our programs function. Some counselors see great flexibility and are allowed to make choices to benefit their students. Others are told how that program will run and how to do it, along with when their other duties are to be completed and how it is to be done. One visible difference I am noticing this year is that more of you are talking about being involved in the process somewhere along the way. I would like to be able to say someone shared something with you that made a difference in how you feel your schools program could function and you talked to somebody about it. Not everyone is fortunate to have a supportive and passionate administrator, like our administrator of the year, Dr. Pauli. What a wonderful surprise to receive his input from a supervisory perspective and to have empathy for his situation where personal values and district policies may differ. I'm sure none of us have felt those strings being pulled...right? **WRONG!** We all have a responsibility to advocate and support our kids by building the best system we can

with what is available to us.

This summer refresh yourself, do one thing that you have been saying all year you would like to do and never had the time to do. Work in one full month's worth of guidance lessons for a targeted group; set up your first small group; advocate for student support services within your district when they are not expecting that positive movement to happen. Surprise yourself with what creative ideas you have and did not have the time to do throughout the year. Research an area of interest that you don't know anything about. In the past I have said "Be that expert you seek". I truly mean that.

This summer I will be devoted to learning how to effectively support you through Leadership Development Institute. I will be working out of my home also. If anyone would like to collaborate on a piece of educational research or goals for our state's school counseling program, please feel free to contact me. I welcome your calls.

Sincerely,
Kristy Savaria,
Elementary Level Vice President
Work (406) 628-3452
Home (406) 259-5827

K-12 KALEIDOSCOPE

As a new member to the board of MSCA, I am excited to be here representing those of us with the illusive role of K-12 school counselor. Where else but in our ranks might you be dealing with a kindergarten whose pet goldfish was floating on top of the tank, to junior high students struggling with friendship issues, to a senior boy worried that he may become a father sooner than he ever imagined, to a parent concerned about their child's ACT scores all before 9:30 a.m. in the morning??? Not to mention being test coordinator, career/post secondary/scholarship advisor, keeper of the transcripts, scheduler, grant writer/administrator, teacher, AP coordinator.....the list could go on and on. Do

you ever feel like the proverbial "jack of all trades, but master of none"? For sure, there is never a dull moment, and I'll bet there aren't two of us with exactly the same duties! As K-12 Vice President, I would like to hear what your needs are. What kind of information would be helpful to make your job more manageable? What kinds of workshops/training would be valuable to you? Being a member of MSCA is a great way to connect with others who can identify with the K-12 counselor role. Urge your colleagues who aren't members to join our ranks. Plan to attend our fall conference with MEA/MFT this year. Initial planning is underway, and it sounds like another great conference! Let me know how we can help you. You can reach me at linedak@centerville.k12.mt.us, or at 736-5167 (Centerville School). Have a great summer, and

"take time to smell the roses." After a hectic school year, it's time to take care of yourself!

-Linda Konesky

"Teach the young people how to think, not what to think."

-Sidney Sugarman



At the High School Level...

Happy Spring!

I hope that this newsletter finds everyone doing well and breezing through the end of the school year. Breezing through is sort of true for me in that time is going so fast and there seems to be so much to do. I would first like to apologize for missing our Spring Conference – I had to attend to some personal health matters. It seems as though I needed to be hit over the head to take better care of myself. As busy as all of our lives are I think that would be the message that I would send out to our membership. Self care has to be a priority - specifically eating healthy and exercising along with cutting out caffeine, and making time for ourselves.

The nature of our jobs brings not only our stress but everyone else's into our bodies to deal with. I am not good at sharing my weakness with everyone, but I would have to say that I guess I haven't been very good at this in the past. I know that we can all use reminders about self care and the importance, and making it a priority. My challenge and wish for everyone is that we talk about ways of doing this and encourage each other. My experience is that counselor fatigue is common in our profession and as more and more cut backs happen in K-12 education, the more stress we will be asked to deal with. We need to stick together and find ways of supporting each other.

Thank you to my fellow board mem-

bers for supporting me as I have dealt with health issues, especially Tricia Williamson for her help with our Level Sharing time and getting the ListServe set up! Tricia you are wonderful.

I hope that you all have self care a priority in your counseling life. Have a wonderful summer!

In Peace,
Carrie Stefanatz
High School Vice President



*Stop to smell
the flowers and
take care of
yourself!*

Top 5 Self-Referral Topics

Elementary

1. Friendship problems
2. Family problems
3. School problems
4. Pet dying
5. Anger issues

Middle

1. Friendship problems
2. Home problems
3. Academic concerns/ grades
4. Bullying
5. Problems with teacher(s)

Secondary

1. College/Career/Postsecondary planning
2. Peer Conflict
3. Problems w/ teacher(s)
4. Academic concerns/grades
5. Scheduling Issues

Do you have experiences with students in these referral areas? Do you have a best practice you would like to share? Or perhaps you have an outline of some group counseling that would be perfect for these issues? If so, please email your grade level representative with your ideas so we can circulate them. Thank you for sharing!

Bullying, Violence, Sexual Harassment and an Ethical Response

In most schools with students of all ages, behaviors occur that are not good for kids. We deal with bullying, harassment and violence. Because it can be so common some situations are minimalized and the hurt to the heart can be forgotten. As school counselors, our number one role is that of student advocate. We do need to acquaint ourselves with the law, its opinions and the ramifications of choices we might make in regard to these issues for students.

In regard to sexual harassment we need to remember that the law guarantees an education free from harassment. Once we are aware of sexual harassment occurring in our schools, we are required to follow up on it.

One of our most effective methods of prevention can be through your comprehensive guidance program. There are many resources and classroom ideas available for you to be certain that all students know how to recognize harassment as well as how to handle various situations of bullying and harassment in regard to personal response and reporting. Individual responses to a report should be immediate, either with re-teaching or a referral for discipline depending upon the situation. Empowerment for the victim is very important.

An excellent discussion regarding sexual harassment is in the book I have referred to previously, [Ethical and Legal Issues in School Counseling](#) by Theodore Remley and Mary Hermann. This chapter is written by Carolyn Stone, future president of ASCA. She also has an article in *School Counselor* May-June 2003 regarding harassment. Be certain to read it!

SAVE THE DATE!

**For the MSCA Fall Conference
In Missoula's Sentinel High School and College of Technology
In Conjunction with MEA-MFT
October 20th and 21st**

Planning has begun for the 2005 MSCA Fall Conference. MSCA will again hold our Fall Conference with MEA-MFT on October 20th and 21st in Missoula. The location for the MEA-MFT Fall Conference will be Sentinel High School.

At this time, plans are in the initial stages. The theme for this year's Fall Conference will be, "**School Counselors: Reaching All Children.**" MSCA is planning to bring Christian Moore with the WhyTry? Program to Montana to act as our Keynote Speaker and to deliver some sectionals. The goal of the WhyTry? Program is to help youth answer the question 'Why try in life?' when they are frustrated, confused or angry with life's pressures and challenges. The WhyTry? Program is designed to engage students who have lost the motivation to be successful.

SCHOOL COUNSELORS LEADING THE WAY

School counselors are an important professional group who are becoming increasingly recognized as essential participants in educational reform discussions at the state level. The role school counselors play in increasing student success and achievement through the implementation of a state school counseling program based on national standards is becoming more widely recognized by key stakeholders and policymakers across Montana.

In the last newsletter we provided information on a state level policy group focused on school counselors – the Counseling Leadership Initiative. The Counseling Leadership Initiative brings together key organizations, agencies and other entities with an interest in school counselors and counseling programs. The group's purpose is to review current policies and practices and to make recommendations, and to undertake activities which support and strengthen school counseling at all levels. At its spring retreat, the Counseling Leadership Initiative steering committee worked to refine a mission statement and action plan for this important effort. The following questions guided the group's discussion:

What would the "ideal" school counseling picture look like in Montana?

What policies and practices can be undertaken or strengthened to help improve and support school counselors and school counseling programs?

Who are the key stakeholders with an interest in school counseling programs?

What does each stakeholder want, need and bring to this effort?

What structure and what strategies/activities will best accomplish identified goals/objectives for the Counseling Leadership Initiative?

As a result of the group's discussions, the following draft mission statement, and goals and objectives are presently under review. Your feedback on these would be greatly appreciated.

Draft CLI Mission Statement: To promote student success and educational opportunity, the P-20 Counseling Leadership Initiative provides leadership and advocacy to insure implementation of a comprehensive counseling program in every K-12 school in Montana.

Draft Goals and Objectives:

- Share and market the Montana School Counseling Model adopted by MSCA to all stakeholders including administrators, school boards, teacher associations, etc.
- Encourage broader participation in MSCA
- Discuss alignment in Montana University System counselor education programs
- Identify data points/factors or outcome indicators for the success of the Montana School Counseling Model
- Design professional development and materials to support implementation and evaluation of the Montana model

Watch for continuing information on the P-20 Counseling Leadership Initiative in future newsletters. School

Career Training For High School Graduates Has MANY Advantages

Is Career Training only for students who are not college bound? No. Career Training can provide a foundation of skills that enables high school graduates to be gainfully employed in a short amount of time—either full-time or while in college. Nearly two-thirds of all high school graduates of career and technical programs enter some form of postsecondary program.

Because of Montana's limited availability of Certificate, 2 and 4 year programs, many colleges have waiting lists to enter their programs. SkillTrain offers programs several times each year in various locations around the state, eliminating the need to wait to enter desired programs and gets you "work ready" in a shorter amount of time.

Success Story: 19 year old Jessica from the Missoula area took a job at a local pizza place, making \$5.75/hour after graduation. She was considering going on a 1 year waiting list for the local Pharmacy Technician program at the college (1 year wait + 18 month program). She chose to enroll in an upcoming Pharmacy Technician Career Training program instead. Within 6 months of starting her program, she became a Certified Pharmacy Technician, working at a Missoula pharmacy, making \$11.54/hour with full benefits. She accepted the position at 30hrs/wk but her hours have since increased to full-time within just a matter of months. Her employer has a tuition reimbursement program and may pay for her tuition to further her education at the University of Montana's School of Pharmacy. Jessica's final grade in the Pharmacy Technician program was 93. She scored a 92 on the national certification exam. Jessica is thrilled!!!!

Many high school juniors and seniors are still undecided what their career path may be. They are bombarded with a multitude of choices. Add to that the fact that making a decision may include a commitment to attend college for 2, 4 or more years. Changing majors later on can further delay completion. And with tuition costs rising every year, its no wonder students are under tremendous stress. Career Training is an excellent option to get short-term, low cost entry into desired fields.

Once employed "in the field" in entry level positions, they will get first-hand experience to decide if that is indeed the field they want to be in. They will have the opportunity to work side-by-side other practicing professionals, engaging in career discussions. They will have the option to stay in that field, move laterally and/or further their education at a later time by entering a higher education degree program and/or other career/technical program. If they choose to continue their education in that field, they will be better students, having had "real world" experience and they will have the ability to better understand the concepts being presented to them. Plus, they will be more motivated and dedicated because they *know* they want to be there! As a bonus, these higher education costs could even be paid by their employer! It's a win-win for everyone.

SkillTrain is currently offering many training programs via the internet and will begin offering healthcare programs this summer (2005) in classrooms across Montana. Many programs lead to industry recognized, venter certifications. Watch our website at www.SkillTrain.net for programs offered, dates and locations.

Congratulations to our Counselors of the Year!

The Montana School Counselor Association was very pleased to recognize the following outstanding individuals in our profession. Each one of them stood out as someone who demonstrates all we would want in our profession.

Once again, we offer our congratulations to them.

High School Counselor of the Year: **Beth D'Atri**, counselor at Park High School in Livingston.

Elementary Counselor of the Year: **Alison Schmaltz**, counselor at Elrod School in Kalispell

K-12 Counselor of the Year: **Alan Kratz**, counselor at Heart Butte schools

Adminstrator of the Year: **Dr. Jerry Pauli**, Superintendent of the Thompson Falls Public Schools.



L—R: Alan Kratz, Beth D'Atri, Joy Jonrs, Allison Schmaltz,

Dr. Jerri Pauli

MSCA Elementary Vice President Position Opening

Congratulations to Kristy Savaria on being elected MSCA's President-elect-elect! What does this mean for MSCA? Well, for starters, it means we have great leaders who support us! Secondly, it means that the elementary vice president position will be open beginning this October when the presidency shifts from Joy Jones to Barb Holden and Kristy moves from elementary vice president to president-elect. So, we need you! Please consider filling this opening or nominating a colleague who would be willing to fill this opportunity.

Elementary Vice President Nomination Criteria

Nominations and Elections of Officers:

The Vice Presidents shall be elected every 2 years by secret ballot, distributed to and so returned by voting members of the Association. Grade Level Vice Presidents must be a current member of MSCA; they are strongly encouraged to be members of ASCA and MCA.

The Elementary Level 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 employed as a school counselor in the work setting to be represented; or be retired from the work setting to be represented.
5. be a person of high stature within his/her profession.
6. have made a significant civic, community, or professional contribution.

Duties of the Grade Level Vice-Presidents:

The Vice-Presidents of the Association shall be responsible for generating interest and activities within their respective work settings. They shall also perform other duties as directed by the Executive Board, including informing their grade level membership about issues in the field of Professional School Counseling.

PLEASE NOTE: The Vice President who is selected should be prepared that this role will require a two-year commitment.

To nominate an Elementary Level Vice President, or to self-nominate, please send the following information to:
Joy Jones, MSCA President

5602 Old Hwy 93
Florence, MT 59833

- Name of Candidate
- Home Address
- Work Address
- Home Phone
- Work Phone
- E-Mail
- Name of Person Nominating
 - ◇ Address
 - ◇ Work phone
 - ◇ E-Mail
- A letter of recommendation from the person(s) nominating the individual or a letter of intent if self-nominating.

Please include a statement indicating educational background; professional employment; academic and/or professional honors; professional, community, or civic contributions; and any other information pertinent to this nomination.

Nominations are due by September 30, 2005

*"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."
Mohandas Gandhi*