



March 2009

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Important Dates

- MT Assoc. of School Nurses
March 26-27, 2009
Helena, MT
- MSCA Conference
April 16-17, 2009
Bozeman, MT
- MT Indian Ed. Assoc.
April 16-19, 2009
Helena, MT
- Mental Health of Amer. MT
Conf. April 24-25, 2009
Great Falls, MT
- Why Try Regional Training
May 4-5, 2009, Hardin,
MT, Sheri Koyama, 665-6357
- ASCA National Conference
June 28-July 1, 2009
Dallas, TX

Sharing One Vision, One Voice Philosophy

By Kristy Savaria, MSCA President

School counselors have a model, a vision and a mission to be advocates for children and others in their schools and the community. School counselors share the dream of seeing every single child succeed with the continued progression in education- towards post-secondary options – to increased intelligence and understanding- to personal adult fulfillment and feelings of success- to personal actualization, autonomy and well being along with other professionals in the field of education. So why do we still look at each other and say where do we go next? The answer isn't simple- it is in the complexity of situa-

tions that people seek out our expertise which makes us leaders in many ways, partnering with our superiors to support children of today.

There are many leaders in education, many groups who have aligned and incorporated associations and various interest groups. We have state and federal leaders and international leaders. Together we all make a difference in these children's lives. The Montana School Counselor Association is the nationally recognized chartered division of ASCA; we work to provide all of our state school

counselors quality professional development. As professional school counselors the relationship with our administrators and principals is becoming more closely aligned as we enter another year of change. Our role is really evolving with new expectations as standards and benchmarks are being reevaluated. School Counselors are integral parts of the school leadership team in many areas, collaborating in support of student success and achievement on a different level than others employed in the school, often times partnering with upper management. It's not on a

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Dr. Lapan to be Keynote Speaker

It is with pleasure that we welcome Dr. Richard T. Lapan to deliver this year's Keynote: Strengths-Based Career Development through Comprehensive Guidance & Counseling Programs.

Dr Lapan comes to us from the University of Massachusetts Amherst where he is Professor and Department Chair of Student Development and Pupil Personnel Services (SDPPS). He earned a Ph.D. with Distinction from the University of Utah

in 1987 and is a licensed psychologist. Dr. Lapan is a leading authority on comprehensive counseling and career guidance programs.

Dr. Lapan has served as Editor of the leading journal on school counseling, *Professional School Counseling*. He has published several books and has received several awards including the Counselor Educator of the Year-2006 from the American School Counselor Association.



Dr. Richard Lapan will be speaking to Montana School Counselors at the Spring Institute in April.

MSCA Board Elections—Leadership Opportunities, One More Time!

By Carrie Stefanatz, President Elect

“The sustainability and growth of MSCA depends on the continual renewal of leaders.”

Happy Spring Montana School Counselors! I hope this newsletter finds you planning for the MSCA Spring Conference! We have some exciting and enriching activities planned. I am looking forward to seeing everyone and catching up.

MSCA is pleased to announce the following upcoming vacancies: MSCA President Elect, Secretary and Treasurer, Middle School Level Vice President, and K-12 Level Vice President. We invite all MSCA members to apply or nominate someone that would be qualified for the position.

I know that many of you are thinking about the possibility of running for one of our open leadership positions. I wanted to give you one more reminder with a few words of encouragement. Now, more than ever, MSCA is asking for leadership involvement from its members. This important call for leadership comes at a time when veteran board members are completing their service for the MSCA Board. This year would

represent a possible turnover of 5 of the 8 Board positions. This level of change is huge for MSCA. The sustainability and growth of MSCA depends on the continual renewal of leaders. We need to be able to cycle new leaders and give more opportunities to our members. MSCA needs fresh ideas, energy and enthusiasm from new leaders coming onto the board. So, I offer the following top 5 reasons for running for one of the five open leadership positions with MSCA: Drum roll please....

5. The opportunity to log many miles travelling across the beautiful Big Sky State. Remember people pay money to see the gorgeous views in our state.

4. The opportunity to passionately debate ideas with fellow board members and to reach positive consensus for the benefit of all Montana School Counselors.

3. The opportunity to write scholarly journal articles for the MSCA Newsletter, and poten-

tially other School Counseling Journals.

2. The opportunity to know, grow, learn and share with other peers and professionals.

1. The opportunity to be part of the bigger picture of school counseling in Montana through advocacy, accountability, and empowerment.

Please join us by going to the MSCA website: www.mtschoolcounselor.org to download full nomination applications for the President Elect, K-12 Vice President and Middle School Vice President. Members interested in the Treasurer or Secretary position need to send a letter of interest and resume to Kristy and myself. All members are encouraged to apply by March 30, 2008. Mail to me at St. Ignatius High School, POB 1540, St. Ignatius, MT 59865, or email me at cstefanatz@stignatiusschools.org



Consider running for a position on the MSCA Board in April, 2009—Serves Oct. 2009-2011.

Open positions are : President-Elect, Middle School Vice President, K-12 Vice President

Treasurer & Secretary will be open by appointment by President. **Go online for more information.**

Staying Fresh in the Profession

By Renee' Schoening, Elementary School V.P.

As we all know, counseling can be a demanding, even draining profession. It can be hard to give continuously and feel like our cups are running empty. The good news about school counseling, especially in elementary schools, is that there are many opportunities daily to refresh and renew if we make them happen. We should "play" some during the day if we are working with kids.

I always encourage my university students to infuse the passions of their life into their jobs. This includes sports, hobbies, musical interests, artistic pursuits, or anything that will float their boat, fill their cup, keep them fresh and loving their jobs.

Elementary students benefit greatly from learning new things and developing interests in what we model for them. My predecessor, beloved "Mr. D.," is a master fly fisherman. There are all kinds of young adults who have left this community as excellent fisherman and who can tie a mean fly as well, due to Mr. D.'s influence. They also learned patience, perseverance, and developed a healthy relationship with a caring adult while learning these skills. Mr. D. was a school counselor for nearly two decades and continues to work with the youth in our community. I know he would tell you that part of what keeps him "in it" is the integration of his passion and his work.

What do you love to do? What do you look forward to doing when you get home from work? Is there a way those things could be done as part of your daily work with the students you serve? I am very much looking forward to our Elementary Level sharing time during April's conference and am hoping that some of you will share your passions and ideas for how to integrate the things you love into your work with kids. It would even be fun to have some live demonstrations so start thinking now! Until then - smile, laugh and enjoy those precious students you encounter each day.



**"We should
play some
during the day
if we are
working with
kids."**

Join us at the 2009 MSCA Spring Institute

"So Far, So Good, Now What?"

Your MSCA Spring Conference will offer a wide variety of sectionals to compliment what you do!

April 16-17, 2009

Holiday Inn Bozeman

Bozeman, Montana

Call 1-800-366-5101 to reserve your room now.

Registration Form & Conference Brochure are available online.

Be a part of the

**MSU-Bozeman Tour
this Year!**

Wednesday, April 15th
2:30-6:00

Includes transportation
from hotel and dinner.

Contact Jennifer Dunn to
RSVP—1-888-MSU-CATS
jendunn@montana.edu



Does It Seem Like a Chaotic World that's Getting More Chaotic?

By Elaine Schoyen, Middle School V.P.

Recently, I was engaged in a conversation with John Platt, a clinical psychologist from Bozeman, after a rather stressful week at school. I asked if he thought there were “more” problems now than ever before regarding mental health issues with children. Dr. Platt thought about my question and replied, based on his personal experiences and not a representation of empirical findings, that it was his impression that while he personally did not see “more” problems he did seem to think that the number of severe problems had increased. He added that a contributing factor in the appearance of “more” likely results from parents, teachers and health professionals having greater awareness of emotional problems in children. So, for about two weeks I kept replaying our conversation in my head and found myself pulling out my notes from a conference I attended in 2006 with Bruce Perry, MD, PhD on “Effects of Child Neglect in the Community”. Dr. Perry is recognized internationally as an authority on child trauma and the effects of child maltreatment. His work has provided an understanding of the impact of traumatic experiences and neglect on the neurobiology of the developing brain. As a school counselor, I am always trying to broaden my perspective.

Dr. Perry’s lecture provided a roadmap of one of his articles, *The Neurosequential Model*, to increase awareness of human brain development of various neural systems and more importantly what happens when adverse developmental experiences result in abnormal functioning.

Key Principles of Neurodevelopment and Neurobiology

Principle 1. The brain is organized in a hierarchical fashion, such that all incoming sensory input first enters the lower parts of the brain.

s e n -

Principle 2. Neurons and neural systems are designed to change in a “use-dependent” fashion.

Principle 3. The brain develops in a sequential fashion.

Principle 4. The brain develops most rapidly early in life.

Principle 5. Neural systems can be changed; some systems are easier to change than others.

Principle 6. The human brain is designed for a different world.

This enormous topic has long been of great interest to me and I will *apologize* now for my lack of expertise. Hopefully, my genuine passion will support my decision to select this topic for my article. Before I continue, I need to clarify that I certainly do not mean to be insensitive to anyone’s situation where their child has been born with a learning disability/difficulty, mental health issue, or other neurological involvement. We all realize that the miracle of birth is incredibly complicated and often presents challenges to our children and their parents. Dr. Perry’s focus was on the child that has been subjected to chronic trauma, neglect, abuse, and/or chronic chaos. During the summer of 2004, I spent two weeks at the University of Washington attending an institute held in conjunction with the School of Nursing and the UW Medical School on “The High-jacked Brain”. My classmates and I were in classes from early morning to as late as 10:00 being totally emerged in various facets of neurobiology...from actually dissecting brains (sheep) to being privileged to lecture after lecture from some of UW’s top scientists and their latest brain research and other related topics. Simply stated, I learned that we, as a society vested in the future, need to always understand...man’s earliest experiences will forever impact their lives.

While we have invested billions over the years in programs designed to address the social, emotional, and educational needs of our maltreated children, we continue to fail them miserably when you look at the staggering numbers that are in special education (currently around 7% and predicted to be 18% during this next century), therapy, probation, and incarceration. These costly services are often a direct result from living in violent/dysfunctional homes. Dr. Perry provided clear research regarding the effect of chaos, threat, traumatic stress, abuse, and neglect on the neurodevelopment of our children not only as a newborn through adulthood, but also prenatally. The *Neurosequential Model* provides an explanation that those life experiences on the brainstem (0-9mos), diencephalon (6 mo to 2 yrs.), limbic (1-4yrs.), and cortex (3-6 yrs.) are responsible for the organization system and influence brain development. There have been literally hundreds of studies that have documented these adverse effects on the developing brain that alter the individual child’s emotional, behavioral, cognitive, social, and physical systems (Perry & Pollard, 1998; Bremner & Ver-

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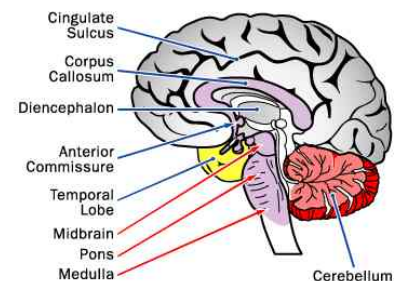
Chaotic World contd. From P. 4

metten, 2001; Read, Perry, Moskowitz, & Connolly, 2001; Teicher, Andersen, Polcari, Anderson, & Navalta, 2002; De Bellis & Thomas, 2003; Bremner, 2003; Anda et al., 2005). The research clearly indicates that true trauma and neglect during the fragile timeline 0-2 ½ -6yrs. (more profoundly 0-2 ½ - 3 Yrs.) significantly effects abnormal organization and function of important neural systems in the brain, which interferes with the development of an individual's cognitive and emotional potential. Sadly, it is the lost genetic potential of millions of children each and every year whose ability to self-regulate, to communicate receptively and expressively, to execute critical thinking skills, and to connect emotionally to others that has resulted in horrendous situations requiring the establishment of agencies to protect children from their parents.

Dr. Perry shared that when he interviews a child's parent for developmental history, he no longer is able to be satisfied with those usual milestones of birth weight, walking, talking, etc. Now, he wants to know specific factors about each of the child's primary caretakers during the first 3 years of life. It is imperative that we provide positive repetitive interactions, rewarding relational interactions, and stress regulating interactions. The child becomes more and more at risk when they are not experiencing these healthy patterns resulting, for an example, in a 10 yr. old only having the social rewarding experiences of a 5 yr. old. Then, when you throw in relational poverty, we increase a population that is fundamentally unhealthy and susceptible for a host of negative behaviors. We know that our young prosper and benefit from repetition (i.e. language acquisition peaks around 2 ½ to 3 yrs). It is our individual history that allows our very own genetics to be either "turned on" and orchestrate our development in numerous ways.

We must increase our awareness of how our brains are developmentally constructed and appreciate the complexity; it is like multiple organs rolled into one. The brain mediates movement, processing, meets our complex needs (safety, food, threats...), and proves to be an adaptive organ, as it is designed to change to responses from an outside and inside world. Nervous tissue allows us to adapt and respond to repetitive stimuli resulting in the storage and recording of experiences, simply referred to as memory. As an organism, our drive to stay alive originates in the lower brain (brainstem) and moves up. Infants that are subjected to a chronic violent/dysfunctional environment will produce negative brainstem development resulting in abnormalities in the other higher parts of the brain. It is easier to change (therapeutic intervention) the top part of the brain where the cortex has millions and millions of neurons. If you kill one million cells in the brainstem, you will die. *If you kill one million cells in the cortex, it goes unnoticed. During the time span of birth to 2 ½ or 3 yrs., we have a critical transformation, which would be like me becoming the size of IOWA in 2 ½ years.* (Perry) Amazingly, 60% of an infant's caloric intake goes to the development of the brain. The brain of a 4 yr. old is 90% developed to the size of an adult and early neglect during this time span is often impossible to overcome. The most beneficial thing to give a child (neurologically) would be a relationship where they are able to learn to read and respond to relational cues to their outside world. It is this outside sensory information that is translated into patterns of neuro-activity that co-occur and are stored by associations.

Major Internal Parts of the Human Brain



In conclusion, not only as school counselors, but also as caring and responsible members of society, we must work to increase not only our own awareness, but that of the general public. Through PSA's, public education, and the legislative process we have to inform and educate our current and future parents about true prevention in order to slow and eventually reverse the acceleration of our neurologically damaged children. We can change the dismal predictions about the rise of developmentally damaged children, but to do so we have to be willing to truly understand and believe the importance of man's earliest experiences and how they do command our greatest attention *for the long haul*.

Dr. Bruce Perry, author of [A Boy Raised as a Dog](#), will be the keynote speaker for the Mental Health America Montana Conference (formerly Montana Mental Health Association) to be held in Great Falls, April 24 - 25, 2009. For more information and registration go to: www.montanamentalhealth.org

Counseling Native American Students

By Vicki Smith, High School Vice President

As Montana School Counselors there's a very good chance you will have the opportunity to work with Native American students if you don't already work with some. According to the "2008 Facts about Montana Education" on the OPI website, approximately 11.4% of all students in our public schools are Native American. We have 7 Indian Reservations and 12 Tribal Nations; in addition we have many other Native American students who come to our schools from tribes in other states.

I have had the privilege to work with Native American students for over 10 years now and am also an enrolled Native American; my father was part Assiniboine and my mother was part Chippewa and Canadian Cree. I was born and raised on the Fort Peck Reservation and graduated from Poplar High School which has over 95% NA student enrollment. I currently work as a K-12 Career Counselor in the Wolf Point Schools and we have approximately 78% Native American student enrollment.

Through my education and experiences I feel there are things I've learned that can be helpful for school counselors to know. As I write this I may refer to Native Americans as "Indians" because that's how I was raised but in my travels, I've found that some tribes do not like to be referred to as "Indians". I use these terms interchangeably with no intention of disrespect.

I've been in several situations, at meetings or conferences, where I've been asked, "How do you think Indians feel about that", or "What is their (Indians) belief about...". Those questions, often asked in a group of non-Indians, always left me without any answers. I've since come to realize that I can't possibly say how Indians feel - I can't possibly speak for every Indian. There are 562 federally recognized Indian tribes (and more have filed for recognition). The point is this, as we discuss counseling Native American students, please remember that every Native American student will be different. Their personal experiences, their parent's experiences, and their grandparent's experiences will all have a reflection on who they are as an Indian student.

I attended a workshop once that described three differences in Indians based on traditional cultural practices. On one end of the spectrum you have Indians who are raised very traditionally: they speak their native language in the home, they actively participate in pow-wows and other ceremonies, make traditional foods, and may have several generations living together. On the other end of the spectrum is an Indian who wasn't raised with traditional cultural beliefs, hasn't been on the reservation (often referred to as an urban Indian) and has com-

fortably assimilated to the "European" way of life. In the middle is the Indian who may practice some Indian traditions yet be assimilated to some of the "European" ways. As professional school counselors, it's important to discard any stereotypes and support each student as an individual and in a culturally acceptable manner.

So what can school counselors do that are generally acceptable for the majority of Native American students? Below is a list of suggestions, some of which will apply regardless of the color of skin.

- Have sincere respect for Indian students.
- Have high expectations of Indian students.
- Assess where students are on a cultural continuum.
- Use indirect methods for criticism and correction of Indian students.
- Realize that Indian students have varying learning styles – they do not all learn the same.
- Provide an atmosphere and décor that recognizes and respects Indian culture.
- Be sensitive and knowledgeable of cultural backgrounds, values, and traditions of local tribe(s).
- Share what you have as this is a major value

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"...please remember that every Native American student will be different."

Sharing One Voice contd. from P. 1

graph or a model on a piece of paper anymore, it's real and we are action packed, but we don't wear tights and we are not superhero's. We are redefining the parameters of the relationship into one that clearly supports higher standards of accountability towards that same student success and achievement. Today's school leaders have a shared mission. Administrators really do count on us to offer professional information that will support them and their student population. Close relationships are being formed with all players in

the school. Our job descriptions have become fairly complex over the last ten or so years. The roles for school counselors and principals are separate however, many areas cross over and the two compliment one another because of both job's complexities. I have yet to see many situations as I travel the state where the administrator does not hold the school counselor in the highest regard. We have come a long way! So, where do we go from here?

"Where do we go from Here?" is the name of our Spring conference this

April 15, 16 and 17th, 2009 in Bozeman, Montana. The focus is to continue with professional development that supports aligned goals within the school structure and with the expertise of the school counselor in collaboration with others. We continue with post-master level training. We show up for work happy and well grounded in the model. We advocate for ourselves in an assertive and non aggressive way and we love our students with all of our hearts guiding them to be a bigger part of their vision with expertise and humbleness.

That's who we are. What do we do? We continue to receive further training. Registration forms are online and conference brochures for this Spring's training should be out. I'm sure you've heard, MSCA's conferences really are the best! Please plan on attending every year. It's for You!



Counseling Native American Students contd. from P. 6

in family life.

Whenever we went into a home they always wanted to feed us. The school is your domain and what you feel comfortable sharing will be up to you. We keep hot chocolate, candy, gum, paper, pens, pencils, and granola bars handy.

Get to know the families as family is extremely important. Find out who their relatives are, where they are enrolled, if they have brothers and sisters, etc.

Do not push your value

system onto the Indian student; theirs may be very different yet just as appropriate.

Use test scores as rough indicators and use in conjunction with other measurements.

Help the student become what he/she wants to be while still remaining Indian.

Be knowledgeable about community services available to Indian families.

Use humor and maintain a sense of humor; Indians tend to have a great sense of hu-

mor. Avoid using sarcasm or being condescending.

Find time to go where Indian families go or participate in their activities; attend a local Indian Education meeting.

I encourage counselors to take a Native American Studies class through your local community college or nearby university. Indian Education for All is sponsoring a wide array of activities to support educators across the state. OPI has great resources and lesson plans on their website related to Indian Education.

Thank you - and best

wishes with all students. Please contact me if you have comments or other great ideas for supporting Native American students.





MSCA Spring Institute

April 15-17, 2009

Bozeman, Montana

Registration

Name: _____

Email: _____

Home Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

School: _____

School Address: _____

School Phone: _____ School Fax: _____

Membership Category: Professional Student Auxiliary Retired

Counselor Level: Elementary Middle High K-12 College Other

REGISTRATION FEES:

Postmarked by April 3rd— \$ 145.00 (includes 2009-10 MSCA Membership)

Postmarked after April 3rd—\$ 170.00 (includes 2009-10 MSCA Membership)

Student & Retired Members—\$ 80.00 (includes 2009-10 MSCA Membership)

METHOD OF PAYMENT: Check Enclosed Purchase Order Enclosed

YES, I will attend the Thursday Annual Meeting and Counselor of the Year Luncheon (no add'l charge)

YES, I will attend the Friday morning continental breakfast being offered by MSCA (no add'l charge)

YES, I would like to make an additional donation of \$_____ to support MSCA's purpose and vision.

MAIL to: Laura Simpson, Treasurer, MSCA, PO Box 117, Geraldine, MT 59446

MSCA 2008-09 Board Members



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Do you know any members who relocated? Please
take a moment to let us know their new address:
lsimpson@geraldine.k12.mt.us

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. (Full P. 1X=\$150, 1/2 P. 1X=\$125, 1/4 P. 1X=\$75, 1/2 Column 1X=\$50; see additional options). We reserve the right to edit copy or reject advertisements that do not meet the mission of MSCA. If you have questions please contact the Editor, Vicki Smith.

Disclaimer: Information printed in "Making a Difference" does not represent an official MSCA policy or position, and the acceptance of advertising does not constitute an endorsement or approval by MSCA of any advertised service or product.