



Northwest Missouri School Counselors Association

Counselors Helping Counselors

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February 2015



Presidential Perspective

Glenda Fine
NWMSCA President

Holding on to Hope

I don't know about you, but to me it seems that this school year is flying by. We're well into second semester and gearing up for state testing and even graduation (scholarships, transcripts, class credits). Maybe it's because my oldest son is a senior that I feel the end of the school year is coming all too soon. So, I take a step back and try to look at things more clearly – reframe my perception. We actually still have more than three months left to work with our students. Three months to continue breaking barriers and instilling hope.

This reframing of how I look at the remainder of the school year helps me in many ways. There is still time to get things done. Still time to break barriers. Still time to offer hope. Still time to make an impact – as long as I remain committed to my goal. A year or two ago I wrote about the difference between interest and commitment. As Kenneth Blanchard pointed out, "There's a

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Donate Now for a Great Cause!

by Laura Shelton, President-Elect/Program Chair

Big plans are already brewing for our 2015 MSCA Fall Conference! One of those is to collect new board games for our conference project – "Cherish Kids of Missouri." If you would like to bring a donation, you are welcome to bring it to the Administrator's Breakfast if you are not attending the Spring MSCA conference. There will be more opportunities to donate before next fall. For more information, go to:

www.cherishkids.org or www.moschoolcounselor.org

Recruit Your NW Missouri Peers

by Ashlee James, Membership Co-chair

Northwest Missouri School Counselor Association membership has been on a declining trend. While some fluctuation is to be expected, it could be that there are some counselors in our region who do not yet know about the "Great Northwest"! Get the word out and encourage school counselors in our area to give membership a try. We all know this is a great organization with a lot to offer.

Some recent membership numbers show the trend –

2011-12 SY: 104 members	2012-13 SY: 131 members
2013-14 SY: 117 members	2014-15 SY: 99 members

NEW COUNSELOR MENTORING MEETING

For 1st Year Counselors and Mentors

Immediately following the Spring Meeting Luncheon

For questions contact: Rachel Peek
(rpeek@savannah3.com)

Perspective . . .

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difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when it's convenient. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses; only results." So, if we are committed to helping give our students hope, we stay with it for the long haul. We act on it daily. Nothing can get in our way of holding steady to our commitment. That's how I'm planning to spend these next three months – committed to helping my students.

I am also committed to working with other professional school counselors in the Northwest Region and throughout the state. We recently celebrated School Counselor Appreciation Week. I hope that you enjoyed special days and a time set aside for you. Some of you received a bonus day or two at home because of the weather. Regardless of what your celebration looked like, I hope you know that the role you play in the school settings is essential. What you do is so important and beneficial to students and staff long after school days end.

One morning during that grey winter week I was feeling a little sluggish – a little slow getting around – a bit overwhelmed by all on my to-do list for the day. That's not the best way to begin a day, so I reached into my bag-of-tricks (as a counselor – your bag is larger and runs deeper than most) and decided to put on some music to help my mood. I chose Mandisa's *Good Morning* song. One part of the song says:

You give me strength - You give me just what I need

And I can feel the hope that's rising in me.

That's when it hit me. The hope we provide to our students does more than give them something to look forward to. The hope we instill in our students gives them the courage and the confidence to anticipate a better place or situation than they are currently facing. We help give them the strength they need to challenge themselves – to press forward – to remain committed to their plans and dreams. We can offer this same hope to the staff and parents with whom we make contact. How amazing is that?! My day made a quick turnaround. What an awesome responsibility is set before us each morning!

So as we remain committed to the hope-instilling task before us these next few months, look for opportunities to offer up strength and support. There are also opportunities to gain support yourself. We have some excellent professional development opportunities coming up. On the state level, the Take Ten conference near the end of February will help you re-brand and rejuvenate yourself and your program. Regionally in March, we will have our spring conference at the emPowerU building. (Look for more on the spring conference in this newsletter.)

Another way I would like to encourage you is to ask you to start thinking about your role, not just in your school district, but also within our region. Is there something you have to offer or a desire you have to become more involved? Consider becoming a part of the governing board. Visit with members of the board and find out just how much strength, support and hope you can gain by serving others through serving on this board. I'm not asking for a **commitment** right now – just think if you might be **interested**. I'm **hoping** for many great ideas and leaders in the future of NWMSCA!



Helping Other People Excel

This newsletter sponsored by:

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Get Connected to Technology: Guidance Ideas from Around the Nation

by Lani Clayton, Technology Chair

Technology is the way of the future and many school counselors are at a loss on how to incorporate this trend. There's always the use of technology in data collecting and tracking of student academic paths, but how do we balance the integration of technology use in the classroom while maintaining the communication flow and team building features we strive to instill in the students? Here is a list of ideas that other school counselors are doing across the country:



1. "Email" Pals. Just like the old fashioned method of pen pals but in a quicker pace. One school counselor used email to connect at risk students with outside mentors. She established a big-brother-big-sister type of system with a college group and had her students become email pals. Another school counselor used email as a way to keep transfer students connected with their prior school.

2. Movies or Vines. Role playing is something that most school counselors incorporate into their curriculum. Some teachers are taking it a step further and having students create a short movie or vine.

3. Smartboards. Instead of using paper sorting games, charts, flashcards, etc., place the content on an interactive board and have individual students or groups work on the task. One teacher put items on a cloud drive so that students could use tablets while he used the interactive board.

4. PowerPoint and the Internet. Everyone has guidance lessons for each particular topic and grade level. One school counselor in Ohio has started putting her high school lessons in PowerPoint format and then uploading them to her link on the school webpage. This way a student can refer back and parents can access the information. She has found it beneficial when discussing graduation requirements, careers, and scholarships.

5. Commercials and advertising. We have college representatives and military recruiters come to schools throughout the year to promote their path. One school counselor in San Francisco took a direction of promoting the school counseling role with a unique twist. She created several short commercial type videos covering topics such as character trait of the month and graduation requirements. These videos were played by teachers at the beginning of the day during announcements as well as on the televisions in the cafeteria and open areas.

There is an abundance of great ideas out there!

**SAVE THE
DATE!**

**NWMSCA
Spring Meeting**

**Friday,
March 20**

emPowerU
St. Joseph, MO

Second Year Mentoring News

I hope this finds you well!! The 2nd year mentoring pairs will not be coming together during the NWMSCA Spring Meeting, but please look for email updates regarding assignments and progress. If you have questions at any point, please contact me at mveasey@nwmissouri.edu

Stay warm....spring is near! :)

Help for the Grieving Student

by Casey Arambula, Treasurer and Corrine Allee, Newsletter Editor

In light of recent student deaths in the NW region and the Kansas City area at large, it's a good time to review tips for helping students deal with loss. Below is information that can be shared with students and/or teachers in your buildings. Information was gathered from the MSCA Crisis Response Manual, helpguide.org, and www.sptsusa.org.

There is also a website to check out: <http://grievingstudents.scholastic.com>. Hopefully, these are resources you will never need at your school, but it is definitely better to be prepared.

What are the stages of grief?

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

**Not everybody goes through all five stages, and there's no set order to the stages. The time frame also varies for everyone – it can take weeks, months, or years. Bottom line – if you're feeling any of these things, it's ok!

Common symptoms of grief:

Shock and disbelief

- Hard to accept what happened
- Feel numb

Sadness

- Most universally experienced symptom
- Emptiness, despair, deep loneliness

Guilt

- Regret or feel guilty about things you did/didn't say or do
- Not doing something to prevent the death

Anger

- Feel angry or resentful, at yourself, doctors, the person who died, anybody

Fear

- Triggers other fears or worries you may have
- Makes you feel helpless, insecure, or anxious
- Face your own mortality

Physical symptoms

- Fatigue, nausea, lowered immunity, insomnia

Differences between grief and depression:

(symptoms that suggest depression, not just grief)

- Intense sense of guilt
- Thoughts of suicide or a preoccupation with dying
- Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness
- Slow speech and body movements
- Inability to function at work, home, and/or school
- Seeing or hearing things that aren't there

Coping strategies after you have experienced a loss:

Get support

- Turn to friends and family members
- Draw comfort from your faith or beliefs
- Join a support group
- Talk to a school counselor or therapist

Taking care of yourself

- Face your feelings
 - You can't avoid it forever – and avoidance prolongs the grieving process
- Express your feelings in a tangible or creative way
 - Journal about your feelings
 - Scrapbooking or making a photo album
 - Get involved in an activity or cause that was important to the person
- Look after your physical health
 - Don't use drugs or alcohol to numb or dull the pain or lift your mood artificially
- Don't let anyone tell you how to feel – and don't tell yourself that either
 - Your grief is your own
 - It's ok to be angry, to yell, to cry or not to cry, to laugh, to find moments of joy
- Plan ahead for grief triggers
 - Birthdays, holidays, milestones (such as graduation) can reawaken memories and feelings
 - Have a plan in place to honor the memory of your loved one

What do I do if I'm concerned about my friend?

A - Acknowledge there is a problem; **C** - Care; **T** - Tell a trusted adult

Tips for Students in Crisis:

1. Remember that everyone reacts to pain and stress in different ways. Don't expect everyone to act or feel the same. Also, don't expect the pain to last the same amount of time for everyone.
2. In the case of death, remember that friends and family will need your care and concern long after the funeral is over.
3. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you aren't sure if you can cope.
4. Take care of yourself. Eat well; get plenty of sleep and exercise.
5. Try some of these ideas to help you handle stress and grief:
 - Talk to someone
 - Get a massage
 - Cry
 - Write a letter
 - Ride a bike
 - Keep a journal
 - Clean your room
 - Dance
 - Help someone else
 - Listen to music
 - Run
 - Rearrange your room
 - Read a book
 - Create something
 - Go for a walk
 - Draw
 - Plant something
 - Dig in the dirt
 - Yell at your pillow
 - Set some goals

Tips for using social media after a loss:

- Memorial pages through Facebook or other sites should be set up only with family permission
- Be careful about posting sensitive content
 - It can be a great way to reach out and find support from others who knew the deceased
 - But people who barely knew the person may post well-meaning but inappropriate comments or advice, attracting internet trolls
- It can't replace the face to face support and connections you need at this time

What types of memorials are appropriate to remember your loved one?

Create a memorial that is life-affirming and encourages coping skills and resilience, especially in the face of difficult life events:

- Make donations to a local crisis center
- Participate in an event that raises awareness about suicide prevention
- Buy books for the school library or host school programs that highlight resilience
- Create community-based service activities in the school that emphasize the importance of students taking care of each other and provide opportunities for taking an active role in helping others
- Write notes to the family to encourage the "gift of memories"
- Implement a suicide prevention program in the school
- Collaborate with community agencies and groups that promote good mental health



Be involved
Be successful
Be a Bearcat

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