



# Northwest Missouri School Counselors Association

*Counselors Helping Counselors*

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February 2017



## Presidential Perspective

**Becky Houtchens**  
NWMSCA President

### Are You Busy?

If your day runs like mine as a school counselor, this is a question you commonly get asked throughout your workday. It might come from a student standing in your office doorway with tears welling up in her eyes. It might come from a teacher popping into the counseling center during his planning period to address a student concern, or just to vent about the daily struggles in his classroom. It might come from a mom on the phone, seeking a few minutes to ask for parenting help. When we come to work on any given day, we never know exactly what will transpire, but can almost certainly know that we'll be called on to help others. At the same time, we often feel buried in other tasks requiring our full attention – emails, paperwork, testing, and documentation.

So when someone asks, "Are you busy?" we feel conflicted. Our minds may be shouting, "Yes, of course I'm busy! I have 15 emails to reply to, a small group to plan,

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## Recognizing Great Accomplishments in NW Missouri

by Nicole Messick, Professional Recognition Chair

On behalf of NWMSCA and the Professional Recognition committee, we would like to congratulate **Ann Becerra**, Juvenile Officer at Bode Middle School, as the 2017 Counselor Advocate of the Year Award. Thank you to her counselor, Natalie Adkins, for nominating her. Also, thank you to many of you who nominated an advocate! Here is what people at Bode say about Ann: The most impressive asset Ann brings to our students at Bode is building relationships. She does this by getting to know the students. Ann is often seen talking with students in the halls or during their lunches. She makes the extra effort to find out what makes each student tick. What impresses me most about Ann working with our students is that when she becomes involved with a student, she will always go the extra mile in getting services the child needs. Involving them in the legal system is not the first thing she looks at for a student. I have to say that she actually sees "the whole student" and looks for ways to assist him/her in becoming a successful student."

We would also like to congratulate **Becky Arway** for being recognized at the state level for the Multi-Level School Counselor of the Year at MSA in the fall. Additionally, the **St. Joseph School District** counseling program received the Norm Gysbers Award of Distinction.

Congratulations to everyone who was nominated and recognized! Stay tuned for the April newsletter with the 2017 Counselor of the Year recipients.

### First and Second Year Mentoring Pairs

Happy spring, and thanks for your hard work this year!!! We will not be meeting during the NWMSCA Spring 2017 Meeting and will continue to communicate via email. Please let us know if you have questions or concerns.

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## Perspective . . .

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three students to meet with, and an IEP meeting to attend!" But while our minds are shouting this, our hearts are whispering, "...but what if...?" What if this student has no one else to turn to? What if this parent was working late, then up half the night worrying about her child's adjustment to her recent divorce? What if this senior desperately wants to attend college but has no idea how to go about getting there? What if this first year teacher is feeling like she wants to give up? And the worst...What if this student is contemplating suicide and this is his last cry for help?

And so we answer, "No, I'm not busy. Come in, let's talk." It's what we do; we are there for everyone in our schools and communities. We have an important job. The paperwork and emails can wait. We have hearts to tend to, children to listen to, and people to love.

A school counselor colleague recently shared her favorite quote with me, "To know that one life has breathed easier because you have lived, this is to have succeeded." – Ralph Waldo Emerson. Thank you, school counselors, for the work you do each day. You are appreciated and you are making a difference.



### Do you have any historical information for NWMSCA?

If you do, please contact Lani Clayton, Technology Chair to get it on the website.

[lclayton@craigr3school.org](mailto:lclayton@craigr3school.org)

## Networking, Learning, and Celebrating

by LeAnna Wilcox, Advocacy Co-chair

The Administrator/Counselor Appreciation Breakfast was a success! It was held on Friday, Feb. 10, 2017 at Missouri Western State University with over seventy administrators and counselors in attendance. Dr. Rene' Yoesel, DESE Director of School Counseling was the speaker. Special thank you again to Dr. Yoesel and Peggy Payne from Missouri Western for all your help in making the breakfast such a success.

## Grafting a Positive Psychology Perspective on to your School Counseling Practice

by Dee Anna Kelley, NWMSCA President-Elect

I am pleased to announce that Dr. Dan Wilcox will be our guest speaker for our spring meeting on Friday March 10th. Dr. Wilcox is a professor at K-State in the Department of Special Education, Counseling and Student Affairs. He has over 35 years of experience in higher education and has extensive training in the field of positive psychology. Dr. Wilcox has presented to various school counseling organizations about his research in positive psychology. He will share with us the benefits of weaving positive psychology into our school counseling programs. Hope to see everyone there!

### ***SAVE THE DATE!***

## **NWMSCA Spring Meeting**

**Friday, March 10, 2017**

**EmPower U, 518 S. 6th St., St. Joseph, MO**

Registration/Networking/Breakfast 8:00-9:00 a.m.

Business Meeting and Counselor of the Year Awards 9:00 a.m.

***This is a great celebration event! Join us in congratulating the Counselor of the Year recipients.***

## Learn to Relax

by Corrine Allee, Secondary Vice President

I recently attended the 2017 Northland Prevention Conference, with a focus on the Road to Resilience. Among the many breakout sessions, I attended a workshop by Elise Bennett, MS, LMFT entitled "Hacking Your Happy Chemicals." She provided a great list of strategies that we can implement in schools with all age groups to help our students relax.

### 1. Stethoscope

We are very calmed by the sound of a heartbeat-ours or someone else's. Keep a stethoscope in your office to help calm a student in crisis.

### 2. Music

Whatever music helps your student feel better is fine!

Look for bi-lateral music on YouTube – it engages the left and right brains and helps calm down the amygdala.

### 3. Meditate

**Tip:** Focus on your breathing. As you inhale, silently say to yourself, "I breathe in" and as you exhale, silently say to yourself, "I feel peaceful." Continue for 10 minutes.

**Fun Fact:** You can continue to grow gray matter in the brain after development is done if you practice meditation regularly!

### 4. Exercise

### 5. Progressive Muscle Relaxation

### 6. Tapping/Bi-Lateral Stimulation

To engage both the left and right brains, tap the left foot, then right foot repetitively, or tap the thumb and forefinger of the right hand, then the left hand. As long as you alternate from left to right (or right to left), you help calm the amygdala.

### 7. Begin and end your day with a routine

### 8. Grounding Strategies

Be present-take your shoe off and rub your foot on the carpet, or focus on an item close to you and then an item far away.

### 9. Utilize all 5 Senses

Think mindfulness!

## Exciting Legislation

by Kim Hill, Government Relations Chair

Exciting things are in the works for legislation in Missouri related to School Counseling.

Again, this year, Representative Kathy Swan (R-Cape Girardeau) filed the comprehensive counseling bill per request from MSCA. When the council discussed potential legislative priorities for 2017, it was decided that the passing of this legislation would be the first necessary step in addressing ways to improve the jobs of school counselors.

**HB 187** creates an incentive recognition program for schools who implement comprehensive school counseling programs. Last year, this legislation came very close to passing, but was unfortunately held up by a Senate early adjournment marking the end of session.

The language introduced this year is identical to last year's legislation. MSCA members were very active in supporting this legislation and moving it forward and will continue such efforts this year. The bill was recently referred to the House Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education.

NWMCA and MSCA members

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## Send newsletter submissions to:



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# Legislation....

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should watch for updates on this bill and be ready to write letters of advocacy or letter of thanks to Representative Swan and her office related to the pending passing of this important bill.

Also noteworthy are recent developments on HB 138, the Virtual Education Bill. Penman-Winton lobbyists Scott Penman and Kaycee Nail have been busy working on behalf of MSCA and school counselors in Missouri on an amendment to this bill. This is a bill on the Missouri Course Access Program and is like one proposed last year. It allows students to take virtual courses that are currently part of a school district's course offerings. As happened last year, the bill's language originally said that the school counselor «shall» approve or disapprove the course for the student. Scott and Kaycee, on behalf of MSCA, took serious issue with such language maintaining that the school counselor never approves or disapproves courses. Instead it is the parent who approves or disapproves courses. School counselors are available as a resource, as they always can be, but should not be mandated «approvers/disapprovers.»

Scott testified on behalf of MSCA, saying the association supports access to virtual education courses but has concerns about school counselors

being gatekeepers. He offered to work with the bill's sponsor to adjust the language in an amendment.

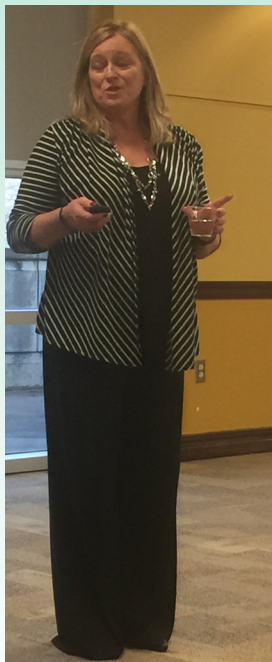
On February 9th, this amendment was passed with the following wording:

*The school counselor or a person designated by the school district shall advise any student who requests to enroll in a Missouri Course Access Program course. The advice of the school counselor or the person designated by the district shall be based on his or her assessment of whether participation in the program and enrollment in a particular course are based in the student's best interest.*

MSCA Interim Advocacy Director Dr. Shari Sevier says, "The bill still has a long way to go before becoming law. But the language is much more appropriate for school counselors and the role they play in this process."

As school counselors, we are fortunate to have MSCA, Dr. Sevier, and Penman-Winton watching out for us to protect our needs as school counselors as well as working diligently to ensure continued implementation of Missouri Comprehensive Counseling Programs.

## Administrator/Counselor Breakfast - February 2017



# Testing Strategies

by Becky Whitmer, Multi-Level VP

It's almost that time of year that most of us dread. We schedule, plan, practice, and pray that our students put forward their best effort on hours of testing. Depending on your district, you may have a very active role in testing or you may be asked to help with accommodations for students. Either way, we are all affected by the testing in one way or the other.

For my district, I serve as the Testing Coordinator. For those of you that share this responsibility, I'm sure you love the hours of webinars watching trainings and then instructing our test examiners on everything they need to know. If you are new to this role, here are some tips:

1. Watch the videos, print out the slides if possible, and make sure you write down when you watched the information. If you are called for a Quality Assurance Visit, you will want that information.
2. Get your calendars and manuals out as soon as you can.
3. Ask for PD time to train your examiners.
4. Make sure to test your technology. Use the readiness tests or do some mock testing.
5. If you have a question, don't hesitate to use your resources and contact someone.

Like last year, the Grade-Level Assessment (GLA) and the End-of-Year (EOC) testing systems are set up for some pretesting capabilities. The GLA system will process scores immediately after testing is complete, whereas the EOC system will process the scores overnight. Unfortunately, the GLA system only breaks the scores down into categories but it is still better than nothing. Our students really seemed to respond well to getting feedback about their scores. Some even felt empowered to show that they knew more than what their scores showed. I am excited to see if giving our students this opportunity will make a difference.

## **Recommendations for Examiners**

1. Practice with online tools training or practice tests early. This will help with some testing jitters!
2. Know your manuals! Don't procrastinate and then feel bad about asking for help late in the game. Your Test Coordinators will thank you for being prepared!
3. Test your technology ahead of time.
4. Talk to your students about the test.



**Be involved**  
**Be successful**  
**Be a Bearcat**

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