



## WCSA Updates

### Summer Academy 2015

Data Boot Camp  
Offering Beginner,  
Intermediate, and  
Advanced Learning  
Levels

Tuesday, July 28, 2015  
from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00  
p.m. (includes lunch)

CESA 6 Conference  
Center, 2300 State Road  
44, Oshkosh, WI 54904

Co-Sponsored by CESA  
6 Safe and Healthy  
Schools Network

Registration Fee:  
Grad Student - \$40

**SAVE THE DATE:**  
Fall Summit 2015

Mental Health in  
Schools or WSCPAR  
Training and Work  
Session

Thursday, Oct. 22, 2015  
from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00  
p.m. (includes lunch)

Turtle Lake, WI

Registration Fee:  
Grad Student - \$40

*To the 2014-15 Graduate Student Committee:*

*I would like to send an enormous 'Thank You' to all representatives and regional co-chairs for your fantastic work on the committee this year. Being involved in a professional organization while in graduate school is no easy feat. You successfully managed your responsibilities on top of balancing your school work, practicum and internship work, and the many other responsibilities of real life. For your dedication, I will be forever grateful. It has been an honor getting to know you, through emails, texts, Skype, and in person. I have no doubt you are all going to be amazing school counselors, ready to effect positive changes in the lives of countless students. Best wishes in your future endeavors!*

*~Liz Singer, UW-Whitewater, 2014-2014 Graduate Student Representative*

## **WCSA Committees (Still) Need Your Help!**

If you would like to continue doing great work for WCSA and stay updated on current school counseling issues, join a committee! Here's a brief overview of the committees you may want to consider joining:

### **Education and Professional Development Committee**

Tasks: Non-conference professional development for members, including Summer Academy and Fall Summit; WSCPAR Sub-Committee.  
Contact: Paula Haugle at hauglep@elmwood.k12.wi.us

### **Government Relations Committee**

Tasks: Day at the Hill pre-conference sectional, building connections with state agencies, and creating partnerships for school counselors.  
Contact: Nate Rice at ricen@wawm.k12.wi.us

### **Professional Recognition and Scholarship Committee**

Tasks: Read high school and graduate student scholarship submissions, compile electronic database of all school districts in the state.  
Contact: Kaila Rabideau at kaila.rabideau@gmail.com

### **Public Relations Committee**

Tasks: Help promote National School Counselor Week, develop promo materials for school counselors, share great work done by WCSA members statewide.  
Contact: Lisa Koenecke at lisa.koenecke@gmail.com

### **Technology Committee**

Tasks: Connect school counselors through social media and develop other mediums for online networking.  
Contact: Katrina Eisfeldt at keisfeldt@spencer.k12.wi.us

## **Transitioning from Intern to Full-Time School Counselor: What I Have Learned**

Paige Lathrop, Mount Mary University

This year I have been presented with the amazing opportunity to transition from the school counseling intern into the full-time counseling role. In addition to serving as a school counseling intern I have also served at my school as an educational assistant for the 2 years prior to my internship. While this has been an amazing opportunity, it has not come without its challenges. Throughout my journey towards my career in school counseling, I have found the advice of my colleagues to be very helpful. I am hoping that what I have learned throughout this transition can also be helpful to those of you looking forward to a transition into your career.

One of the biggest challenges I faced was reestablishing my role in the school and handling role confusion with students, teachers, and other staff. For me, the easiest group to overcome role confusion with was the students. While I did play a different role for them before, my natural way of interacting with students was very empathetic. The students knew that I was someone that they could come to in order to problem solve rather than playing the role of a ruthless disciplinarian. A few students questioned why they did not see me at lunch duty any more or in their classroom as regularly as before, but after a few conversations, the transition with students was relatively seamless. The transition for the adults in the building seemed to be a bit more challenging as they began to (and continue to) see me in a new role. With this challenge I have found it helpful to know my own boundaries and stick to them so that when I am asked to cover a duty that would have been an appropriate duty for an assistant to cover, but not for a school counselor, I am able to turn the request down with grace and an appropriate explanation. Lastly, I have had to work on stepping out of my “behind the scenes” comfort zone in order to make sure that I am speaking up in staff meetings, etc., in order to help the staff build awareness about the knowledge and areas of expertise that I have to offer the school. I have found this to be beneficial in helping teachers feel more comfortable with reaching out to me when a concern arises.

Another challenge was setting up a therapeutic space and obtaining supplies necessary for working with my students while on a tight budget. I am not sure about all of you, but paying off student loans and taking care of other financial responsibilities that adulthood brings can be daunting, especially when you are also looking forward to setting up your new office. While we have small personal budgets, our schools tend to have minimal budgets as well. Due to these financial restrictions, I have learned a few tricks to obtain the resources I need without breaking the budget. The first thing that I did was reach out to family and friends to see what they could offer me for free or for a minimal cost. Social media came in handy with this and people came out of the woodwork to donate things for my office. It really was amazing to see all of the great items that can be used therapeutically that my friends and family just had collecting dust in their basements. In addition to this I have made a wish list on Amazon with postings of all of the books that I would like to have in my collection to use with students. I have let my family know about this list so that if they feel the need to get me a gift for a holiday, birthday, etc. and are unsure of what to get, they can refer to the list and know that they are going to be investing in something that I hope will continue to be a gift to many children through the lessons learned. Though this does not fulfill my needs immediately, it has been a fun way to keep my library growing. As a more instantaneous option I have also found the public library as well as my school library to be amazing resources.

Throughout this transitional journey, I have found my most valuable resource to be my network of professional school counselors. I have started following various school counseling blogs and social media groups and have attended local professional consultation meetings, WSCA events, supervision with my internship site supervisor, and supervision with my Mt. Mary cohort. I have found the time, conversations, and sharing of ideas with these professionals through various outlets to be invaluable. I have felt exceptionally lucky to have the support of so many brilliant minds, and hope to maintain these professional relationships far beyond grad school. My greatest advice is to seek out the assistance and input of the professionals in our field around you. We are all entering an incredibly challenging yet rewarding career and we all have lessons to learn from each other’s experiences. Take advantage of the opportunity to move your practice forward by bouncing ideas off of your professional peers. I wish you all the best of luck along your journey toward becoming a school counselor and look forward to remaining in contact with many of you as we grow together in our practices.

## From ACEs to Resiliency

Lorice Ratas, UW-Whitewater

I recently took a course about the impact chemical dependency and addiction have on children, adolescents, and adults within a family system. This course also focused on how to work with students who are involved in these situations, within a school setting. Though this topic was nothing new to me, for some reason, my rose-colored glasses were telling me that this didn't happen that often, and as a counselor in the middle school, I certainly wouldn't encounter it. However, when an 8<sup>th</sup> grade boy came into my office with a tough look on his face and his head hung low, I learned I was wrong.

As he entered my office, he kept looking around the room. He looked through the things on my shelf, what was hung on the wall, through the paperwork on my desk...perhaps borderline nosy! He finally sat down and even then remained to be fidgety. As I began to talk to him, he proceeded to look at his phone and even started playing music. He then got up and closed the blinds. My immediate reaction was I had no idea what was going on. My schoolbooks never told me what to do when that happened (again, something I never expected)! But I continued. Considering this was my first time meeting with him, I proceeded to ask him questions. I played it safe (or so I thought). I started with academics. We talked about his grades, what he liked about school, and what he didn't. During this 10-minute period of questioning, he didn't make eye contact with me once! I noticed him becoming quieter, so I paused for a moment. Then, from his slumped-over position, his head popped up and he exclaimed, "I hate being at home. I'd much rather be at school." Again, I was not expecting that. Though the person-centered counselor in me wanted to "go there", I wanted to keep him safe, so I gently offered him the opportunity to expand on that statement. And he did. However, knowing that this was my first time sitting with him, we closed our session by talking about other social supports as well as the other positives of being at school (instead of looking at it as a way of being away from home). During the following weeks, I learned that his father is in jail and his mother not only denies him all forms of positive interaction and support, but also drinks heavily.

When I learned this, I immediately thought back to the chemical dependency course. I was reminded of how even one adverse childhood experience (ACE) can lead to alcohol or drug use. Knowing this, I wasn't sure if I should approach the topic with him (as a way to be preventative and not to assume) or let him reveal it to me. Sure enough, a week later, he told me that he had been at a party with his older brother where they were using and drinking. After processing this information, we developed a list of alternate ways to stay busy, how to stay involved with supportive friends, and places to go that were safe and enjoyable.

The content of this course really opened my eyes, literally and figuratively. This course helped me to understand the relation between ACEs and the increasing probability of alcohol and other drug usage among teens. It also helped me to see the effects it can have on a student if the issues are occurring within the family system. It doesn't have to be the *student's* usage for it to be a problem. A student with the same experiences as this 8<sup>th</sup> grade boy is 2.8 times more likely to initiate alcohol use by the age of 14 (Shin, Edwards, Heeran & Amodeo, 2009). He is 13. Altogether, this course helped me to know the signs and symptoms of usage on the family system and gave me the opportunity to develop strategies to help the student.

From the first time I talked to this student, one word came to mind: resiliency. In spite of his father being in jail, he gets up every day and goes to school. In spite of having no support from his mother, he makes every effort to stay involved in basketball. And in spite of being in a negative home environment and having a lack of resources, he continues to hold on to his dreams. Helping a student discover a sense of resiliency is one of the key protective factors in helping a student overcome adverse situations and establishes a greater sense of confidence. And though this young boy has many things he still needs to deal with and work on, the instillation of hope is something that can carry him through. Knowing this, I wanted to make sure I told him how proud of him I was. I said, "Do you know how resilient you are?" and then explained what resilient meant. I continued, "Most kids wouldn't bother coming to school or participating in sports if their parents weren't around to take them, let alone come watch their game. But you do! And you have a coach that really cares about you!" He replied, "Yeah, I guess you're right." I added, "By the way, how was your game this past weekend?" He popped his head up and looked me right in the eyes and said, "You remembered? My mom never asks me that." The Search Institute (2014) recently published information about the importance of developmental relationships and the effects they have on the overall development of a child. These types of relationships are a necessity for overcoming adversity and overall success. From this I learned that if there is ONE thing we can do it is build caring and supportive relationships with our kiddos. The basics of human existence—to love and be loved—can go a long way. Though I may never know the full story of this 8<sup>th</sup> grade boy, I will always remember seeing his eyes and the way he looked at me when all I said was, "I'm proud of you."

## **Putting What I Learned Into Practice: Not As Easy As It Seems**

Courtney McGraw, UW-Platteville

In my group counseling class at UW-Platteville, students took turns facilitating group sessions each week. It was one of my favorite classes, as I brought in activities about gratitude, self-care, and other topics I enjoy discussing and love getting others' views on. When it came time to run my first group at the high school where I am doing my practicum, I was thrilled. I believe in the power of group therapy and saw positive results first-hand in my class. I chose to start an at-risk girls' group for a handful of girls in the alternative education program. The first session went well, except for one member who did not talk much, so I figured she would be the hardest to reach. The first activity I brought in was about gratitude. The girls' faces were blank when I introduced the lesson, and no one wanted to talk about it. It occurred to me that they didn't know what gratitude meant. I worked with that and we discussed being thankful, and what we are thankful for. In the next session, the activity I proposed was supposed to be goal setting and identifying the steps it takes to reach a specific goal. When I introduced this activity, none of them could come up with a goal. I had to explain it and talk about realistic goals, which led to a discussion about what goals are and what goals would be practical for them. While both of these activities turned into appropriate lessons, I felt as if I had failed my group of girls after our first couple of sessions. I was so used to doing activities that benefited my classmates and me that I assumed that a version of those would be fun and helpful for my students. While it may seem wildly obvious that I should have defined terms before beginning the activities, I let my own advantage get in the way, which is something I told myself I'd never do. Luckily, I was able to keep the group going and see positive results. The biggest improvement was with the girl who didn't talk much at first, who now talks to me outside of group and trusts me. This was a great learning experience for me because I now pay closer attention to my lessons and who the participants are, being mindful of their backgrounds and knowledge and not making assumptions.

## **Supporting Transgender Youth in Public Education**

Jamie Fait, Lakeland College

During my internship, I met a young man who made an appointment with the counseling office secretary and did not give any information about why he wanted to talk. When I met him, he told me that he had recently found himself after a long internal battle and realized that he identifies as a female and wanted to know what locker room and what restroom he should or could use. My response was completely honest: "I really do not know the answer to that question. I will have to consult with administration and do some research before I can give you an informed answer." This conversation opened up a whole new unknown area for me. Through my research, I have learned a great deal about how public school districts are working to best support transgender students.

In 2013, the WIAA (Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association) approved a transgender policy that outlines the steps a student/parent can take to allow a transgender individual to participate on a sports team that does not match the child's birth certificate gender. This policy states: "The member school needs to determine the student's eligibility, which includes school registration information, a written statement from the student and parent(s) affirming gender identity and expression, written verification from a health professional, and medical documentation." The full gender participation policy can be found at the link below. Multiple Wisconsin public schools have taken this policy and have used it as a starting block, going much further in policy creation regarding their district's transgender population.

Most recently, Menasha's school district has made headlines for considering a policy that would allow transgender or gender nonconforming students to use restrooms and locker rooms and to be referred to by pronouns for the gender with which they identify. The proposal states that students can use the restrooms for the gender they identify with if they have "held the belief deeply, followed the belief consistently over a period of time, [are] supported by (a) parent or guardian, and...[have] sought guidance or counseling in coming to the decision." In the following article (link below), the Janesville School District outlines similar policy regarding transgender students' use of locker rooms and restrooms. These are just two examples of the many districts that are developing policies that would create a more equal and safe learning environment for students. The amount of information and resources for school districts and counselors around the topic of supporting transgender youth in schools is growing rapidly. As graduate students, it is an exciting time to be entering the field of counseling during this era of change as schools begin to show support for a population of students who has historically faced discrimination and judgment.

## References

*From Lorice Ratas' article:*

Shin, S. H., Edwards, E., Heeren, T., & Amodeo, M. (2009) Relationship between multiple forms of maltreatment by a parent or guardian and adolescent alcohol use. *The American Journal on Addictions*, 18, 226-234.

Search Institute (2014). A research update from Search Institute: Developmental relationships. Retrieved from [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org).

*From Jamie Fait's article:*

<https://www.wiaawi.org/Portals/0/PDF/Eligibility/WIAAtransgenderpolicy.pdf>

<http://www.fdlreporter.com/story/news/local/2014/09/05/janesville-school-board-adopts-transgender-policy/15130437/>



### **~ Graduate Schools with WSCA Student Chapters ~**

**Concordia University, Lakeland College, Marquette University, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Mount Mary University, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, University of Wisconsin-Platteville, University of Wisconsin-River Falls, University of Wisconsin-Stout, University of Wisconsin-Superior, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Winona State University.**