



# Graduate Student Newsletter

Winter 2016

## On Your Radar

- ❖ **WSCA Graduate Student Committee Meeting #3:** Sunday, January 15<sup>th</sup> at UW-Whitewater from 9:30 – 11:30. Check with your school's WSCA Graduate Student Representative for more information on how to get involved! You can attend our meetings virtually!
- ❖ The **2017 WSCA Conference** is approaching quickly February 21<sup>st</sup> – February 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Monona Terrace in Madison! Don't forget to register! If you volunteer for 4 hours, your conference registration fee is **reimbursed!** (Not including pre-conference.) Contact Amy Sylvester-Knudtson ([SylvesteAM19@uww.edu](mailto:SylvesteAM19@uww.edu)) to sign up!
- ❖ **Committee Representatives Needed** for Marquette University, UW – River Falls, and UW – Superior. Committee Representatives are responsible for bringing information from WSCA and the Graduate Student Committee back to their campus. If you are interested in filling a student representative spot for any of these schools, please reach out to Holly Kortemeier.

## Co-Coordinator's Corner – Conference Update

- ❖ **Poster Presentations:** Are you looking for a way to get more involved with WSCA, one way to network with other professionals is to share the amazing learning you have done with other school counselors through a poster presentation! All applications are due **January 6th, 2017**. Please email Amy Sylvester-Knudtson at [SylvesteAM19@uww.edu](mailto:SylvesteAM19@uww.edu) for a submission form or check with your school representative!
- ❖ **How to become a WSCA Member:** Visit [www.wscaweb.org](http://www.wscaweb.org) and fill out the "Membership Application". All first year students receive free membership with a signature from a professor at their University.
- ❖ **The Grad Pad:** The Wisconsin School Counseling Association will be hosting *The Grad Pad* this year at the 2016 - 2017 Annual Conference! *The Grad Pad* is the "home base" for graduate student attendees. Light refreshments, resources, coloring books, and fidgets can all be found at *The Grad Pad*! Additionally, we will be using this space to sell WSCA T-shirts and as the check in location for all graduate student volunteers. Come into Ballroom A to check out *The Grad Pad* today!
- ❖ **Grad Student Sectionals at the WSCA Conference –**
  - *Future Employment for Grad Students: Mock Interviews & Networking*
    - Forget about your iPhone's FaceTime, get really face time with administrators, school counselors, and other personnel who can provide feedback during this mock interview sectional.
  - *I'm in Grad School to be a School Counselor, now what...*
    - So you were accepted into Graduate School and now you're looking to get involved... check out this sectional for tips, tricks, and pointers from two overly involved graduate students on how to maximize your graduate student experience!

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## Mixing It Up at Lunch

During the first week of my internship experience, a teacher asked if I would be willing to help organize a *Mix It Up at Lunch* event at our elementary school. *Mix It Up at Lunch* is a national campaign, hosted by Teaching Tolerance, which encourages students to sit with someone new at lunch to learn more about themselves and others. We all are both different and similar in so many ways, and personal and educational opportunities present themselves when we go outside of our comfort zone. I realized taking on this responsibility would also encourage me to step outside of my comfort zone, so I walked with the fear and said yes!

I researched *Mix It Up at Lunch* events to start planning right away, and luckily the pupil services team volunteered to help. We delegated tasks and scheduled meetings every three weeks to regroup and plan next steps. Teaching Tolerance presented an abundance of resources on its website, so we felt confident with our preparation before the big day. I valued the motivation and dedication of our team; everyone went beyond their assigned tasks to make this day fun and inspirational.

On Tuesday October 25, Benjamin Franklin joined more than one million students across the country to mix it up at lunch! Students were encouraged to pack a lunch that might be unique to family tradition or culture, and dress in mismatched clothing. Before lunch, teachers distributed colored squares to each student. The students' squares matched balloons at the table in which they were supposed to sit. Students reported to the table and sat with someone new! Selected fifth graders facilitated conversations for all grade levels during the lunches. Administration,

teachers, education assistants, lunchroom aids, and other school personnel also participated.

Overall, the *Mix It Up at Lunch* event was a success, and the students agreed! Students participated in positive interactions with individuals outside their social circles, they became more comfortable interacting with different kinds of students, and they had the opportunity to make new friends. This event also affected the school community as a whole; it increased awareness around social boundaries and divisions within the school. Participants' sensitivity heightened toward tolerance and social justice issues and encouraged them to have empathy for others. Personally, it reminded me the significance of modeling inclusivity.

The students continue to ask when we are going to have another *Mix It Up at Lunch* event, and we cannot wait to host another! Moving forward, I will remember what worked best for our elementary school. The diverse planning team included energetic and open-minded individuals who brought different perspectives to the group. Incorporating older students into plans decreased adult resources, and more importantly motivated them to model appropriate behaviors and take pride in their work. We also asked the students to be the experts; they gave us suggestions for future events. Finally, remember that events like *Mix It Up at Lunch* can be uncomfortable. One event is not going to change the culture of the school completely, so start small, but keep on dreaming.

"Dream big. Start small. But most of all, start." – Simon Sinek

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## Group Counseling – Positive Outcomes for Students and Counselors

Group counseling is an efficient and effective way of providing direct services to students struggling with academic, career, social/emotional development issues as well as situational needs. It is recognized as a valuable part of the school counseling program and involves a number of students working on shared tasks while developing supportive relationships (ASCA, 2012). Right now I am running a variety of groups during my first internship placement on topics such as social skills, worry, and divorce.

Honestly, I was a little nervous at first for not only running the groups, but for the process of developing them as well. Usually a student is assessed through survey data and/or through referrals where the referrals are often based on the individual student, school, and community needs (ASCA, 2012). I began by communicating with teachers and administrators to inform them of what small group counseling is and to let them know that I would be starting groups soon. I then asked them for recommendations of students who would be a good fit for the groups I was planning to hold weekly for approximately 6 weeks. From there, I divided the students and groups accordingly. The last (and most complicated step) is scheduling times that the groups will meet because everyone has a different schedule. I found that sending out a Google Form with my available times each day and having the teachers “check” which times would work for them made it easier to put the puzzle pieces together.

It is truly eye opening to watch each individual group member grow as a result of peer interaction in a small group setting. The students genuinely enjoy having a support system at school and most are enthusiastic about being picked for a small group. As counselors it helps us more efficiently provide services to our students. For example, I have two separate divorce groups running right now totaling 16 students who need services for coping with the changes of a separated family. Without a small group, it would not be as realistic to see all of those students individually on a weekly basis and give them the tools and skills to navigate through those changes. Group counseling is a positive way to deliver direct services to students and makes it possible for more students to achieve healthier personal adjustment, communication and cooperation with others, and ways to cope with the stressors of daily life. As a graduate student, take up on the opportunity to run a group (or multiple) within your internship settings. It is a great way to develop relationships with the students, teachers, and parents!

Stacy Nehring & Shaelyn Schoen  
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## 15 Minute (or less!) Self Care

As a graduate student like each of you, I have very little time on my hands, especially during the week. I work, I go to class full time, I'm at my practicum site, I volunteer, and I'm at two different service learning sites. Between homework and chores around the house, I barely have time to see my family and friends, let alone focus on self-care as my professors routinely encourage. They often say that if we do not focus on self-care now, we will neglect it throughout our career.

If only there were more hours in the day, right? But, last week, I was working with a student that really hit this issue home for me. We have been talking about self-care in our sessions a lot lately, since she has been dealing with the emotional and physical effects of neglecting her own wellness. I remember saying, "Self-care doesn't have to take an hour!" Later, when I was reflecting on the session with a supervisor, I recognized how much of a hypocrite I was. I've taken whole weekends off to go backpacking or spend time at my parents' cottage in the pursuit of self-care, but during the times that I've needed it the most, I don't make time. I've neglected my own well-being on many stressful nights in order to read one more chapter or write one more paragraph.

I strongly believe that counselors should practice what they preach. I have seen that it not only builds rapport, but also sends a message that we believe in what we're saying and in the counseling process in general. Needless to say, I quickly sought out a way to incorporate small self-care moments into my most difficult days. I didn't just want to find a list of options for my client, but also use the activities regularly in my own life. Here are a few that I came up with! I hope you find them to be beneficial in your life as well...especially as the end of the semester approaches!

### Start a Gratitude Journal

According to Robert A. Emmons, who studies gratitude, this practice can help you to deal with stress, increase your self-confidence, and even increase your resilience!

### Use a Mindfulness App

I recommend Calm, where you can do a quick body scan in only ten or fifteen minutes! There are so many free options available today.

### Take a Walk in Nature

I've found that even taking a ten-minute walk can help me to feel less stressed and less overwhelmed. You can even take a longer path to your class or internship site!

### Laugh

Though I know how hard it is to just watch one, I recommend watching one of the adorable kids on Ellen on YouTube. I recommend Tre, the "Exasperating" kid! Laughing can always turn my day around.

### Give a Compliment

According to Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky, people who regularly do something kind are happier. That seems pretty intuitive doesn't it? Share the love, everyone!

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