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For more information, go to [sat.org/ASCA2013](http://sat.org/ASCA2013).
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The cost of attending college continues to skyrocket, and far too many students are graduating with debt that can cripple them financially for decades.

As it becomes more difficult and confusing for consumers to negotiate the multitude of for-profit websites and other programs offering conflicting information about financial aid, the National College Finance Center (NCFC) is a free, first-stop, unbiased resource to help educate students, prospective students, graduates and families all across the country about their options for financing a college education and repaying student loans.

The NCFC is powered by the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC). The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) is conducting a national public service announcement campaign to help those in need procure unbiased college financing information via the NCFC.
Greetings ALSCA Members! ALSCA is having an eventful year. In January, Dr. Annette Bohannon, Shelly Johnson, and I joined Governor Bentley as he signed the National School Counselor Week 2013 Proclamation (see photo). The signing of this proclamation is very important for school counselors in Alabama. It is one of many ways that ALSCA is advocating for and bringing recognition to our profession.

This was also our first year launching the ALSCA Art and Essay Contest. Students across Alabama used drawings and essays to show the impact of school counselors. We congratulate all art and essay contest winners and their school counselors. We also thank Dr. Monica Mack and her committee for leading this initiative and we look forward to having this contest again next year. Please see page 7 for the list of winners.

ALSCA continues to focus on meeting our members’ needs by offering workshops. In January, we co-sponsored the Alabama Career Development Conference. In February, we collaborated with Chapter VII to offer a workshop titled, “Ethical Concerns, Considerations, and Best Practices” at Alabama State University. The workshops were enjoyed by all who attended.

We have been very busy this year, but we continue to “shine.” Remember to “be brilliant” in all that you do.

Please visit our new website at www.alabamaschoolcounselor.org for more ALSCA information and photos.

Contact Dr. LaWanda Edwards, ALSCA president, at lawandaedwards@hotmail.com.
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WELCOME, NEW OFFICERS

Results are in! Congratulations to all of the newly elected ALSCA Officers for the 2013-2014 school year. They will assume their officer roles on May 1, 2013. These newly elected officers will serve under the leadership of our new president, Dr. Monica Mack, the president-elect, Shelley Johnson, and our immediate past president, Dr. LaWanda Edwards.

President-Elect: Deborah Grant
Secretary: Emily Rich
Treasurer: Margaret Fox
Historian: Amanda Lea

ALSICA ART AND ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS

K - 2ND GRADE
1st Riley Edwards, 1st grade
Geraldine Elementary, Kathy Brown, Counselor
2nd Hannah Chandler, Kindergarten, Geraldine Elementary, Kathy Brown, Counselor
3rd Caleb Rowell, 1st grade
Geraldine Elementary, Kathy Brown, Counselor

3RD - 5TH GRADE
1st Sharon Kang, 4th grade
Wrights Mill Road Elementary, Sheryl Smith, Counselor
2nd Anna Louise Wages, 5th grade
Wrights Mill Road Elementary, Sheryl Smith, Counselor
3rd Ayana Veal, 4th grade
Rock Quarry Elementary, Gretta Johnson, Counselor

6TH - 8TH GRADE
1st Kabrian Head, 6th grade
J.S. Abrams Elementary, Melba Johnson Shanks, Counselor
2nd Erin Martin, 7th grade
Discovery Middle School, Melissa Butler, Counselor
3rd Bonnie Dickerson, 7th grade
Discovery Middle School, Melissa Butler, Counselor

9TH - 12TH GRADE
1st Sydnee Holliday, 12th grade
Boaz High School, Becky Boddie, Counselor
2nd Tyra Griffin, 12th grade
Pike County High School, Sharon Sullivan, Counselor
3rd Sarah Haygood, 12th grade
Boaz High School, Becky Boddie, Counselor

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June 30–July 3, 2013
Pennsylvania Convention Center
Philadelphia, PA

We’ve lined up more than 100 breakout sessions for your education and professional development. Not to mention amazing speakers and networking opportunities galore—all under one roof in beautiful, historic Philadelphia.

Keynotes:
- Chef Jeff Henderson: “From the Streets to the Stove”
- David Marcus: “A is for Acceptance”
- Rachel Simmons: “The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls”

Register today at www.schoolcounselor.org/philly
In 2012, an estimated 2.9 million students graduated from high school, and about half of them will pursue an undergraduate degree, according to the Chronicle of Higher Education. Behind these students are thousands of school counselors who help them reach the American dream of attending college. But did these school counselors use the data available to them to facilitate these transitions, or did it just happen by chance?

College admission data is perhaps one of the most prolific types of data available in our secondary schools today. So if school counselors have been gathering this data for years, other than filling out a report for the state or the school board, does the data do anything to influence the school counseling program’s delivery services and school curriculum?

Although school counselors face issues of time availability, role definition, and adequate training, the bottom line is that students and families still need access to college information and assistance. This is certainly the case for families of first generation college-going students, who accounted for roughly 20% of the entering freshman class in fall 2011. The key to ensuring college-going success for all students is using available data to improve delivery services and provide necessary program interventions, not just those programs we think students and families need.

Data related to college can be collected and organized in many ways. One option involves a traditional database such as Microsoft Access, which is easy to set up. You can import basic demographic data (name, school counselor, etc.) from the school’s student management database. Once a student requests a transcript, enter the information for that school into the database. Such a record can be set up as a shared file that school counselors and clerical staff can then view, analyze, and use to create reports.

Once students receive their admission decisions, they self-report this information to the school counseling staff, who then add the information to the database. As part of the annual senior check-out right before graduation, seniors must have the signature of the school counseling department secretary, who verifies that all of the needed data was provided.

A second option for schools is a commercial program such as Connectedu, or Naviance. Such programs offer more than just a way to organize data. They often include career and college search options, application checklists, scholarship listings, and resume builders, to name just a few enhancements. Some of these programs are free while others charge a user fee. Your choice to use a standard database or a commercial program makes no difference in regard to collecting data. The most important thing is that you are collecting it in an efficient manner to use later.

Once you’ve gathered your data, you can analyze and convert it into several reports. A placement report gives both school counselors and future students an idea of what GPA, class rank, and test scores were necessary to gain admission to a particular college. This is particularly useful when students might be trying to reach for a highly visible school; data from previous students may help them see the likelihood of admission. One caution to keep in mind when working with placement data is that the profile of accepted students at a particular institution may drastically change from year to year, especially if that institution has had a significant increase in applicants. Therefore, only reference placement data for the past one or two years to reflect the most recent admission decision history.

MINING THE DETAILS
Another report you can produce from the data is a scattergram. This report displays students’ GPAs and combined critical reading and math SAT scores...
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The National Guard is part-time, so naturally, it can fit into your students' lives, no matter where they are headed after high school. But how can they learn where they fit in the Guard? That's what the Right Fit is for. Students go to the site, enter their skills and interests, and find what part-time Guard careers are good matches. The site also has important information about benefits that can pay for college.

See it for yourself. Then show your students. It's at NATIONALGUARD.com/RightFit.
on an XY graph and shows whether that student was accepted, denied, or placed on the wait list. You can easily produce a scattergram in Microsoft Excel with the data from Access, or it can be automatically generated by commercial programs such as Naviance.

Not only does data collection help future students learn about their chances of admission, it also provides the school counseling staff an opportunity to make programmatic changes. In my school, the data revealed a large number of students seeking a community college option. The school counseling staff worked with the two local community colleges to come to the high school to conduct a “Decision Day,” where students who have completed their application and requested a transcript are accepted on the spot. This is done in early December at a time when students applying to four-year colleges have yet to apply. Decision Day gives these students a feeling of importance in having a confirmed decision far sooner than many of their peers. Students accepted through this format also get to take their placement test and pick courses much earlier than other first-year students.

Our school counselors also sponsor a field trip each April to both of the local community colleges. For many students, if we did not organize this trip during the school day, their first visit to the community college would be when they go for their placement test. Far too many students have a negative image of community college, and this visit can help change some of those perceptions.

Our recent data also indicated that, more than half of each graduating class matriculates to at a public school (two- or four-year college), which is consistent with previous graduating classes. School counselors discussed this phenomenon and concluded that cost and financial aid concerns were the major factors affecting where students apply and ultimately attend. Some of the most academically talented students had been accepted into a private four-year school, yet chose to attend a public one. As a result of this data, we’ve improved our financial aid awareness programs beyond the typical senior financial aid night. We have also worked very hard with the federal government to keep track of FAFSA completion rates, since completing the FAFSA is highly correlated with students actually attending the college.

Collecting data does require some caution. In my school, one concern is that the data is self-reported, meaning that a student reports the admission decisions to the school counseling staff. Although in most cases they are accepted and are proud of this fact and are willing to report it, some students may not report the correct admission decision. Most college admission offices will not share this data with high schools, thus some of the data may be erroneous.

A second limitation in my school is the limited sample size and limited number of and variety of colleges to which seniors typically apply. Use caution any time a sample has fewer than 10 students to protect the identity of the students.

In the future, our school counseling staff would like to provide additional programming for those students and families in which the student is the first to attend college. When compared with the control group (non-first-generation students), data collected over a few years from first-generation college-going students will yield important information about the trends and college-going behaviors of first-generation students in this community. We can then use the data to implement specific interventions for this target group. This will be particularly helpful if first-generation students do not choose to pursue a postsecondary education or may not apply to more academically challenging institutions. These two trends are typically of concern for school counselors from communities with high incidences of first-generation college-going students.

For school counselors, data can be a very powerful tool to improve student performance, eliminate the achievement gap, provide quality programming, or improve college-going rates and college application services. However, if school counselors file to gather the data or, worse yet, fail to analyze it and reflect on how it can improve services, then it becomes a wasted resource.

Any school counseling department, regardless of size, can easily gather college-related data, analyze it, share it, and use it to improve programs and services.
Understanding a child’s anxiety is an important step to successful treatment. The MASC 2™ uncovers important details about emotional, physical, cognitive and behavioral symptoms of anxiety that broadband measures and screening tools often miss.

Untreated anxiety can impede social development and educational success, or lead to other impairments. The intervention suggestions, authored by Dr. John March, can be integrated into a treatment plan for monitoring and guiding the youth’s progress.
School Counselors, like many educators, are finding an abundance of available apps (short for applications) for their mobile devices (phones and tablets). Although perhaps not designed specifically for school counselors, many apps have been adapted to assist with a variety of guidance and counseling activities. From information lookup, to data management, to digital storytelling, school counselors are adding their tablets and phones to their counseling tool boxes. Here is a starter list of some of our favorites.

**USE WITH YOUR STUDENTS**

**Scribble Press (free):** This is a story-creating app that students really enjoy. It offers a variety of pre-made stories to choose from in which students can fill in the blanks with their own information, pictures, and drawings. Or, a blank version lets students create the story themselves. This app can be used as a “getting to know you” activity in both individual and group settings, especially for school counselors that have school sets of iPads.

**Puppet Pals HD (free; with option of paid version):** Another story-creation app, this lets students take pictures of themselves from the iPad camera and then “roll and insert themselves” into a story.

**Skype (free):** With this app, you can connect your kids and your classrooms with others from around the world.

**Flashcards (free):** Create and share flashcards to assist students in studying any material you want.

**Teacher’s Pick ($.99):** gives you the ability to randomly and uniquely choose students without having to rely on memory, cups of craft sticks, or flash cards. Just add your class names and the students in each class.

**iReward lite (free; with option of paid version):** If you’ve ever used a sticker chart to keep track of student behaviors and offered a reward once they earned a certain number of stars, you’ll love this app. You can take a student’s picture and then easily keep track of his or her stars. The iReward app is also great to use in groups because it can be synched across several devices.

**TIME MANAGEMENT AND OFFICE TOOLS**

**Teacher Kit (free):** This app will help you to organize and manage your groups, especially in the areas of attendance, grades, and behavior.

**inClass (free):** Organize your class schedules; record and share notes.

**Voicethread (free):** Add your voice recordings to images, text or drawings. You can also share your recordings and post to via social media.

**Google Drive (free):** Similar to Dropbox, you can store all your files in one place, so you can access them from anywhere and share them with others.

**Dropbox (free):** If you already have a Dropbox account, this app will give you another way to access your files. For those of you not familiar with Dropbox, it’s free online storage for pictures, files, and documents that allows you to share with others and synch-chronize across multiple devices.

**CloudOn (free):** This app allows you to open, edit, create, and save Microsoft office documents. CloudOn also synchs with your Dropbox account so you can easily access your files on your iPad or Android tablet.

**Any.DO (free):** Any.DO makes it easy to capture all the things you want to do and helps you in getting them done. This app syncs with all your devices, so you can easily stay on top of just about anything. With Any.DO, you can also share your to-do’s with friends, family, and colleagues to get even more things done.

**Stopwatch and Timer (free):** Great for classroom activities and more.
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<td><strong>Dragon Dictation (free):</strong></td>
<td>Need a break from typing on the smaller (and sometimes difficult) iPad keyboard? Just speak and this app will convert your voice into written text. Some counselors have found this app helpful for recording notes and reminders for themselves using. With Dragon, you can easily also edit, save, and e-mail those notes.</td>
<td>iTunes, Android</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CamScanner HD (free):</strong></td>
<td>Use your phone camera as a scanner. Teachers and students can register and log in CamScanner with .edu e-mail address for upgrading CamScanner to the full version freely.</td>
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<td><strong>Pulse News (free):</strong></td>
<td>Read all your favorite news feeds, tweets and blogs in one spot.</td>
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<td><strong>Book Crawler ($1.99):</strong></td>
<td>Keep inventory of your school counselor books by simply scanning the book’s bar code. Categorize, sort, and even keep track of books you’ve loaned out through this app!</td>
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<td><strong>Goodreads (free):</strong></td>
<td>Read thousands of book reviews by your friends and other Goodreads members, keep a virtual bookshelf of what you’ve read, and build your to-read list as you discover great books on the app.</td>
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<td><strong>OverDrive Media Console (free):</strong></td>
<td>Download eBooks and audiobooks from your library directly to your device!</td>
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<td><strong>CARING FOR STUDENTS (AND OTHERS):</strong></td>
<td><strong>First Aid (free):</strong> From the Red Cross, this is a handy app to have when in doubt about how to handle medical situations. This app provides videos, descriptions, and signs to look for during an emergency.</td>
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<td><strong>Breathe2Relax (free):</strong></td>
<td>This app is a portable stress management tool that you can use to help students relax and calm down.</td>
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<td><strong>You Can Handle Them All ($1.99):</strong></td>
<td>Based on the bestselling book by the same title, this app assists in handling children’s inappropriate behaviors. You Can Handle Them All is a quick-action resource for managing 124 student behaviors at school and at home.</td>
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<td><strong>Sesame Street for Military Families (free):</strong></td>
<td>This fantastic app will allow you to access engaging videos, articles, storybooks, parent guides, and more to help you support your preschool and school-aged children as they encounter transitions common to military families. Content (in both English and Spanish) deals with topics such as separation/deployment, homecoming, self-expression, injuries, and grief.</td>
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<td><strong>PTSD Coach (free):</strong></td>
<td>This app provides users with education about PTSD, information about professional care, a self-assessment for PTSD, opportunities to find support, and tools that can help users manage the stresses of daily life with PTSD. Tools range from relaxation skills and positive self-talk to anger management and other common self-help strategies.</td>
<td>iTunes, Android</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban Dictionary (free):</strong></td>
<td>Keep up with what the kids are talking about.</td>
<td>iTunes, Android</td>
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### COLLEGE PLANNING

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<td><strong>NextStepU (free):</strong></td>
<td>This app, a digital version of NextStepU print magazine, provides information, videos and guides about planning for college.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>College FAFSA Finder (free):</strong></td>
<td>College and financial aid reference.</td>
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For more apps and info on using the iPad, check out the school counselor iPad wiki and the ASCA Scene.

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**Russell A. Sabella** is a professor of counseling in the Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Technology, Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, Florida. Learn more about Russ’s online resources. Contact him at rsabella@fgcu.edu.

**Andrea J. Burston** is the school counselor at JY Joyner Magnet Elementary School in Raleigh, NC. She loves to incorporate the use of technology into her school counseling program. She is the author of the JYJ Counselor Blog; contact her at jyj counselor@gmail.com.
10 Tips for Career Day Success

Elementary school career days can take myriad directions and sizes. Regardless of the day’s scope or how involved it is, these 10 tips will help lead to a stellar day.

By Jamie McHale

All school counselors want to provide their students with an amazing education about the world of work. But, let’s face it; we can’t always have helicopters landing in our school yard. This actually happened at one of my career days, but they can’t all be that exciting. The point is, even doing a small career day can change the course of a child’s life, and that is what it’s all about. Success is all in how you prepare and plan. If you are feeling a little lost, follow these 10 steps for a successful elementary school career day.

1. Start preparing early. Each spring, I look at the master calendar for the following school year and figure out what days are available for career day. Mid-January tends to work well—it avoids testing, holidays, and high-stress times. Before committing to a date, ask all teachers whose schedules will be affected if the date works for them. A little bit of consideration goes a long way.

Begin actively searching for presenters in September or October. This gives you enough time to scope out some really interesting professionals and find a back-up if a scheduled presenter falls through. It also gives potential presenters enough time to request time off and prepare what they are going to discuss and show the students.

2. Limit the age group. Although I teach career exploration to all grade levels, I limit career day to fourth- and fifth-grade students. It’s a great age, because they have begun to think about pursuing careers based on their strengths, have a greater understanding of the content shared by the presenters, and often ask insightful questions.

3. Cover all career areas. It’s important to cover all six of the career clusters. Having kids see only professions from the business path or the helping path is limiting, so why not present an occupation from each path? This can also reach more students or may spark interest in an area a child had not previously considered.

4. Think outside the box. The reality of life is that many students decide to take a path that doesn’t include attending a four-year university. Not every student grows up to be a teacher, lawyer, or a doctor, yet many career fairs are littered with individuals in these occupations. Kids, even young ones, need to know their post-secondary options include college, technical schools, and training programs.

At last year’s career day, we included a presenter who did concrete stamping after laying sidewalks and driveways. I was worried as to whether the kids would be interested, but they loved it. It’s an out-of-the-ordinary job, and it requires employees to have scientific knowledge and artistic ability, which the students ate up.

I have had dog trainers, invisible fence installers, a farrier, real estate agents, artists, musicians, and other careers that don’t require a four-year degree. It’s critical for kids to explore and be exposed to a variety of occupations, and the students are always most interested in unique occupations.

Try to drive home the fact that every career plays a vital role in our lives, and attempt to do away with the stereotype that glamorous, high-paying jobs are the most important.

5. Know your audience. When choosing presenters, consider your audience. What interests them, and how can you pull in kids who aren’t interested in that profession? It’s not possible to please everyone with every presenter, but if I can excite a child about a career, I’ve done my job.

Choose presenters based on at least one of the following:

- Is there a large group that would be interested in this profession?
- Would the indifferent student be interested?
- Would you be interested in watching this presenter?

At my school, we have a number of young ladies very interested in fashion and the latest trends, but I have yet to meet a young man who is a budding fashionista. If I went with a clothing designer, it could severely limit the interest. I ended up finding a student’s father who owned a business that designed uniforms for area sports teams. It drew in the fashionistas, the artists, the business-minded kids, and the

Continued on Page 16
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I encourage presenters to get the kids involved, because that is how they truly learn and experience that profession.

Be specific with presenters. Instead of just asking presenters to tell kids about their job, be specific. Ask them to explain how and why they chose their profession, what schooling or training was necessary for their job, and any academic skills they use in their job (such as public speaking, writing, math, etc.). It takes the broad topic and narrows it down for them. They’ll know exactly what you want, and it avoids those deer-in-the-headlights moments after they have given a brief description of their job and don’t know what to talk about next.

Kids also like to be involved as much as possible. During past career days, our students have been able to pet dogs, look at babies and broken bones on a mini ultrasound machine, sing along to songs, dance, and wear various pieces of uniforms. I encourage presenters to get the kids involved, because that is how they truly learn and experience that profession.

Make the schedule foolproof for teachers and staff. My fourth- and fifth-grade colleagues have started to look forward to career day, because I take care of everything. We have always had six presentations but eight classes, so two teachers are “off” each year. I rotate who is relieved of their class, divvy their classes up into the remaining six classes, and provide them with a list telling them where each child goes. Involved staff members receive a schedule of events at least two weeks ahead of time that covers who is presenting in each room (presenters stay in one classroom), the time of each presentation, and which teacher will be in the teacher’s room should career day conflict with specials (music, art, or PE).

The teachers know what to expect, and they get to stay in their classroom while groups of kids rotate through their rooms to see the featured presenter. I even go so far as to give presenters a two-minute warning prior to the kids needing to rotate to the next classroom so the teachers don’t have to worry about watching the clock. Chaos is not fun on days like this, so avoid it at all costs.

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A trusted profession. Pharmacists are consistently ranked as one of the most highly trusted professionals because of the care and service they provide.*

*According to data by Gallup Worldwide and Edelman International.
Don’t overwhelm the kids. I could probably talk about what I do for at least an hour, and that would be just scratching the surface. However, no one, specifically fourth- and fifth-graders, wants to sit through an endless discourse about my occupation. My first career day included six different presentations at 20 minutes each. At about the 15-minute mark most kids were starting to get that glazed-over look. Now I limit the presentations to 15 minutes, and it has helped everyone. More kids stay interested, and it aids in avoiding the possibility of presenters running out of things to say after they’ve covered the highlights of their profession.

Expect and prepare for the worst. There is nothing worse than having someone call the day before or the day of career day to tell you he or she can’t present. I have learned to always prepare for a career day catastrophe. Two days before the event last year, I still only had half of the presenters I needed. I called my mom and my husband, and although they couldn’t present, they both had colleagues who could. I then went through old e-mails and found a presenter who’d been recommended by a parent a few years earlier and got my final commitment.

Colleagues also can come through in a bind with spouses, relatives, or friends who might be able to help out. There are many people who would drop everything in an instant for this opportunity. You just have to knock on the right doors.

Reflect and get ready for next year. At the conclusion of each career day, I walk back to my office, plop down in my chair, and exclaim, “Holy cow!” (OK, not “cow,” but you get the idea.) After I’ve decompressed a bit, I reflect on what was awesome and what wasn’t quite so awesome about that year’s career day. I talk to the students and teachers about what the day looked like from their perspective. I make notes and print off e-mails to put in my career day file for next year.

And then I let it go. I don’t dwell on the kid who asked the police officer if she had ever used her taser on anyone. Or the student who turned to her friend and loudly exclaimed about a guitar-playing presenter, “He’s hot!” It’s all over with until the fall when I start planning once again.

Career day can feel like a huge task, but it can be straightforward and fun and is one of my favorite times of the school year. The stress is always worth the joy of seeing both students and staff excited about the presentations—and learning about careers they may otherwise never have considered.

Jamie McHale is a school counselor in Rockwood, MO, and can be reached at mchalejamie@rockwood.k12.mo.us.

I came to Keene State thinking about engineering. But the SPDI program gave me an opportunity to work with 3D programs and computer controlled machines. I gave it a try and by the first class I was hooked. I got completely involved in my first two projects. The internships really make a difference and the opportunities are endless. It’s nuts.

—Henry Bendel, sophomore SPDI major

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We’ve all seen them: the kids who would experience great success in college but have never even considered applying. Perhaps their parents aren’t college educated and have convinced their children a college degree isn’t necessary. Perhaps financial issues are involved and they don’t think there’s any way they could afford it so they don’t even consider it. Or perhaps their self-esteem is low and they think they’d fail at college.

Helping these students realize that yes, they can attend college should be a school-wide effort, one the school counselor is uniquely positioned to lead. One of the best ways to accomplish this is by creating a college-going culture in your school.

The term “college-going culture” is ubiquitous in today’s school environment literature. What isn’t as common is a definition of exactly what this term means, why it’s important, and how schools can achieve it. Without this information, schools struggling to get students to perform at grade level are unlikely to discover how raising expectations can actually help, not hurt, their students’ performance.

School counselors can help transform their schools’ cultures in ways that will significantly improve student’s lives.

**What is a college-going culture?**
The College Board in “CollegeEd®: Creating a College-Going Culture,” defines a college-going culture as an environment “that builds the expectation of postsecondary education for all students—not just the best students. It inspires the best in every student.” A school with a college-going culture is one where the goal for students is not simply to graduate from high school but to obtain a college degree. In such a school, all students are engaged in a rigorous curriculum that adequately prepares them for the academic demands of postsecondary education.

**Why don’t schools have a college-going culture?** In many schools, faculty and administrators believe college advocacy and planning should be done at home. Unfortunately, many students who have the potential to succeed in college don’t receive this type of encouragement and support at home. Research has shown repeatedly that a family’s income and experience with college are better predictors of a student’s enrollment in college than the student’s academic performance. Creating a college-going culture can go a long way toward reducing the achievement gap between rich and poor students.

Some schools don’t have college-going cultures because many of their students aren’t performing well in less-challenging courses, and they fear increasing the rigor will only result in more failing students. Just the opposite occurs. According to the Education Trust, schools that raise academic standards find that student performance improves.

Other schools are too focused on other priorities, such as testing or addressing drop-out rates. What these schools fail to realize is that these things are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, having a college-going culture can actually help schools achieve many of their other objectives.

**How does a college-going culture help schools meet their goals?** Simple. By emphasizing the many lifelong benefits of a college degree, schools can shift students’ focus from the short term to the long term. In doing so, schools help students see the value of their performance in middle and high school and why it’s in their best interest to do well and work hard.

Students who believe a college degree will increase their standard of living in life and see the connection between doing well in school and getting into college are much more likely to care about their performance on state and national tests. They’re also more likely to improve their attendance and grade-point averages. A college-bound student sees the value of staying in school, and is more interested in a more rigorous curriculum.

**Assess Your Culture**
To get an accurate picture of its existing culture, a school should evaluate itself both quantitatively and qualitatively.

A quantitative measurement of a school’s college-going culture should include an analysis of its performance in the following areas:

- College application rate
- College acceptance rate
- Percentage of students who take the SAT or ACT
- Average SAT or ACT score
- Number of students who take the PSAT/NMSQT or PLAN
- Number of college-level or AP classes offered
- Number of students who take AP classes
- Number of school improvement goals related to college
A qualitative assessment of a school’s college-going culture should involve surveying key stakeholders about their attitudes toward college. Topics covered should include:

- Students: plans to attend college, type of college they plan to attend, ways they are preparing for college academically, plans for financing college
- Parents: Whether or not they attended and/or graduated from college, their interest in encouraging their children to obtain a college degree, their knowledge of the preparation and application requirements
- Faculty: their beliefs that all students have the potential to earn a postsecondary degree, their agreement with the need for a college-going culture at school, their knowledge level about college admission requirements, their willingness to incorporate college advocacy messages into their classroom lessons

**TAKE A STAND**

Once you’ve determined your school’s existing college culture, you can help improve the culture using a five-step process.

First, a school should establish specific, measurable, and time-sensitive goals. In other words, it’s not enough to say, “Increase the number of students who take the SAT.” A more specific goal would be, “By the end of the 2013-2014 school year, increase the number of students who take the SAT by 25 percent.” The latter is a much more specific objective because it includes a deadline and is quantifiable.

Second, schools must establish procedures for tracking and measuring their progress toward goals. This step includes deciding who will be responsible for maintaining and updating this data. Many schools don’t realize until they attempt to measure their existing college culture that they have poor systems in place for measuring many key metrics. For example, it’s not uncommon for schools to have no way of knowing how many of their students apply to or get accepted to colleges and to not know who at the school is responsible for collecting this data.

One way to obtain this type of information from students is to simply ask them for it. Schools should con-
Many schools don’t realize until they attempt to measure their existing college culture that they have poor systems in place for measuring many key metrics.

- Starting or increasing the number of AP classes offered
- Establishing the curriculum required for admission to local four-year colleges as the curriculum required for high school graduation
- Offering free SAT and/or ACT prep courses
- Providing the PSAT free to all 10th-grade students
- Providing professional development in college counseling
- Integrating college topics into the curriculum. For example, students in pre-algebra could be given the following ratio/proportion problem: “If two-thirds of the students at U of I are in the School of Engineering and U of I has 35,000 students, how many students are engineering majors?” English language arts students could be asked to write a college admission essay.
- Implementing a college-awareness and planning curriculum such as the College Board’s CollegeEd program, which is a classroom-based curriculum for students in grades 7-12 that is aligned with ASCA’s National Standards for Student Competencies.
- Partnering with national, federally funded programs promoting college readiness for low-income and first-generation college students. Two such programs are TRIO and Gain Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEARUP). Both programs serve students in grades 7-12.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)
A college-preparation program for underperforming students in grades 4-12 www.avid.org

TRIO and GEAR UP
National, federally funded programs promoting college readiness for low-income and first-generation college students, grades 7-12.
TRIO: http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html
GEAR UP: http://www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html

The College Board’s CollegeEd Program
A classroom-based college-awareness and planning curriculum for students in grades 7-12 www.collegeboard.com/collegeed

ACT
Provides a wealth of information and databases online for college searches, financial aid calculators and more. www.act.org/path/secondary/college.html
Implementing a college-preparation program such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). An elective for underperforming students, AVID promotes rigorous coursework and provides tutoring for students in grades 4-12.

The fourth step in creating a college-going culture is measuring the school’s progress and continually revising and improving its strategies. Using the methods outlined in earlier steps, schools should, on a regular basis (annually, at a minimum) monitor their progress toward their goals. A thorough review of a school’s progress should include answering the following questions:

- Which goals has the school met?
- Which goals has it not met?
- Which strategies and/or tactics were most effective in helping the school meet its goals? Why?
- Which strategies and/or tactics were least effective? Why?

After the school has answered these critical questions, it can begin to set new goals and establish more effective strategies for the following school year.

The fifth and final step is to communicate the school’s results. Unfortunately, many schools overlook this critical step. If a school previously communicated its college-going goals to faculty, students, and parents, those key stakeholders will be expecting to hear from the school on the status of these goals. Schools shouldn’t disappoint them by failing to keep them updated or, worse, send the message that the school no longer considers having a college-going culture a high priority. Instead, the school should take every opportunity to report on its progress, even if it didn’t meet all goals. An honest and open report is more likely to result in a more successful year next year.

Creating a college-going culture in a school is not easy, but its rewards are worth the effort. Schools having difficulty meeting goals such as improving standardized test scores and decreasing drop-out rates have found that creating a college-going culture can help. Many schools are also finding that creating a college-going culture can help reduce the achievement gap between rich and poor students. School counselors can, and should, play a key role in establishing such a culture. As advocates for students, they are often in the best position to serve as a change agent in school.

Kris Harvey was the executive director of the Blossom Project, a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the number of first-generation college students, and associate director for the College Board. This article is a summary of the free College Board publication “CollegeEd® Creating a College-Going Culture.”

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Why does college cost so much?” asked Anthony, a rising senior. He sat in my office inquiring about the steps to begin searching for the perfect college. His task became even more cumbersome as he wondered how he would pay for college. How can you, as a school counselor, help students like Anthony find the money needed to pay for college? The answers to five fundamental questions will aid you in helping students find and apply for the financial aid they need.

What is financial aid? Financial aid is assistance given to students and parents to help pay for college or vocational training. Although its generic terminology encompasses many forms, there are two basic types of financial aid: gifted and self-help. Gifted aid comes in the form of grants and scholarships. This type of financial aid does not have to be paid back but may have stipulations regarding qualifying and maintaining eligibility. Self-help comes in the form of loans and work study. Students may take loans from banks, educational institutions, and credit unions.

Which students should learn about financial aid? Learning about financial aid isn’t just for high school seniors. College is an expensive commodity, and you can help students from elementary school on by explaining about the expenses of college during their career/college preparation lessons or during parent information sessions. This proactive approach for students will explain the importance of earning good grades, being civically involved, and participating in extracurricular activities that could qualify them for scholarships. Educating parents early about financial aid is critically important because it will inform them about the realistic expenses associated with earning a degree or certificate and encourage them to set up a college savings plan early in their child’s educational life.

How should you explain financial aid to stakeholders? It’s important to collaborate and form relationships with all stakeholders, including students, parents, faculty, administrators, and community representatives, to educate them about the expenses of college/vocational training and the need for financial resources, as well as to tap into any resources they have. Begin your collaboration with local colleges and universities and include the people who work in the financial aid office so you have a financial aid expert who can provide answers to questions and assistance in completing financial aid forms.

Develop a financial aid awareness workshop for students and parents, and find a financial aid expert to lead the workshop. This gives students and parents a venue to ask questions, express fears regarding confidential information, and receive instructions on how to begin the process. This will also provide a platform for the financial aid expert to explain the college award letter, which students, parents, and even school counselors often misunderstand. Hold the workshop at school during hours convenient for all stakeholders. Provide resource materials for completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), applying for student loans, securing institutional funds, and searching for scholarships.

When/where/how should students begin the financial aid process? The financial aid process should begin as early as elementary school. When developing your college and career days,
include an age-appropriate explanation of how to pay for college. Share a comparison chart of average costs for attaining a college degree or vocational certificate from a public vs. private school, four-year vs. two-year school, and degree vs. certificate.

Seventh grade is an appropriate time to begin more detailed conversations about financial aid. All high school seniors should also complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. This will produce a Student Aid Report (SAR), which will determine the amount of federal, state, and some institutional financial awards. (See “Don’t Fear the FAFSA, page 25.) Seniors and parents should apply for a PIN during the early part of the school year, and you should make sure they realize deadlines are a crucial part of the financial aid process. Students may begin completing the FAFSA on January 1 of their senior year. March 1 is a standard priority date for submitting the SAR to colleges/vocational institutions. Be aware that some scholarships require students to complete and submit a SAR to the awarding agency even if the student is ineligible for federal or state financial assistance.

Why should you assume the role of informing stakeholders about financial aid? As a school counselor, it’s your job to help all students achieve and ensure that every student has access to an equitable education. This access involves being cognizant of avenues to secure post-secondary education while avoiding the financial roadblocks that would prevent it. The more you know about financial aid, the more you can help your students achieve the post-secondary education they need and want.

THE CHICAGO WAY

According to “From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College,” a report from the University of Chicago’s Consortium, “while the rising costs of four-year colleges have made it increasingly difficult to deliver on the dream of a college education for all low-income students, the research also suggests that high schools and universities can take concrete steps to improve college enrollment and match more students to the right colleges.” For this reason, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system created the Department of Col-
School Counselors Say Great Things About Salisbury University

“There is a focus on student success at Salisbury. I also see an emphasis on experiential learning and real-world applications.”
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Application Deadlines
■ Early Action: December 1
■ Regular Admission: January 15

A Maryland University of National Distinction
AFSA...five letters that change lives for millions of students each year across the United States. Government grants make up 74 percent of the $185 billion financial aid pool, so it’s no surprise that the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a source of stress for students and their families.

It doesn’t have to be that way. The College Board offers eight steps to help educators help students work through FAFSA.

1 GATHER DOCUMENTS FIRST
Here’s a list of documents students should have in hand before they begin to fill out FAFSA. Also steer students to get a U.S. Department of Education personal identification number (PIN).
Access the PIN application

2 THINK ABOUT TAXES
Parents’ taxes are an important component of the FAFSA process. Getting taxes done by February 1 may be unrealistic, so the previous year’s taxes and this year’s paystubs can help create estimates. After February 3, the IRS Data Retrieval Tool becomes available, allowing students and parents to access the IRS tax return information needed to complete the FAFSA and transfer the data directly into their FAFSA from the IRS website. Plus, remind families that they can complete taxes without actually filing. So if they owe money, they don’t have to immediately cut a check to Uncle Sam.

3 FIND QUIET TIME
Although many of us work with FAFSA every year, families don’t have that familiarity. Encourage them to break down this large application into smaller pieces.
- Don’t sprint. Take questions one at a time.
- Do read each question carefully and out loud. It improves question comprehension.
- Don’t multi-task. Turn off cell phones, music players, and televisions.
- Do find a quiet place where FAFSA will have your full attention.

4 STAY STUDENT FOCUSED
Parents often forget that the student always provides information. Parents are required to provide their information if the student is a dependent.
When parents see a question that refers to “I,” remember that “I” is the student. “You” is also the student. When questions address parents, the questions refer to “your parents.” That is where parental information goes.

5 AVOID PARENT TRAPS
When you see “parents,” FAFSA is referring to the student’s biological or adoptive parents. When the parents are married, then the student and both parents complete the FAFSA.
If the parents are not together, things can get confusing. View details about parent information on FAFSA.

6 KEEP TRACK OF DEADLINES
Every college has a different set of deadlines based on priority, merit, early decisions etc. BigFuture by the College Board helps families sort through these deadlines with detailed college profiles and a free, customized action plan. And just as a students should raise their hands with a question in class, encourage them to call a college with specific questions.

7 CSS/FINANCIAL AID PROFILE®
FAFSA opens the doors to federal aid. But almost $50 billion in non-federal aid is also available from colleges, states, and private institutions. Some colleges and programs use the College Board’s CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE to help award these monies.
CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE is an online application that collects information used by almost 400 colleges and scholarship programs to award financial aid outside sources from the federal government. Families must complete the application and the College Board sends it to the colleges and scholarship programs they have chosen.
Here’s a list of colleges that use CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE and the online application. One CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE report costs $25. Additional reports are $16 each. Fee waivers are available for low-income families.

8 A HELPING HAND
To provide support, a free FAFSA webinar from the College Board walks students, section by section, through an actual FAFSA application. Families can access the free webinar any time, and the link also provides several other resources for parents.

Susan McCrackin is senior director of Financial Aid Methodology at the College Board, www.collegeboard.org
Winning a sports scholarship is a dream of many high school athletes. But the truth is that the percentage of high school players who go on to be National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) student-athletes in popular sports is very low—from about 3% for men’s and women’s basketball to about 10% for men’s ice hockey.

For those students who wish to pursue Division I college play in spite of these numbers, the NCAA has very specific eligibility requirements regarding course selection throughout high school and minimum GPA. To help student athletes begin and complete preparation for NCAA eligibility, school counselors can arm themselves with the facts about NCAA rules and take advantage of NCAA’s extensive online resources for students, families, and educators.

Download the NCAA presentation for high school counselors, which details the eligibility process and the role of the high school.

Access the Eligibility Center, NCAA’s portal site for comprehensive information.

For students entering college in August 2016, NCAA’s initial-eligibility standards are changing. These students will need to meet new academic rules in order to receive athletics aid (scholarship), practice, or compete for a Division I college or university during their first year.

Students fall into one of three categories:

1. **Full Qualifier:** A college-bound student-athlete who may receive athletics aid (scholarship), practice and compete in the first year of enrollment at the Division I college or university.

2. **Academic Redshirt:** A college-bound student-athlete who may receive athletics aid (scholarship), practice, and compete in the first year of enrollment.

3. **Nonqualifier:** A college-bound student-athlete who cannot receive athletics aid (scholarship), cannot practice, and cannot compete in the first year of enrollment.

Katy O’Grady is a freelance writer from Fairfax, VA, whose son has participated in high school soccer and track. She is also the editor of the ASCA state newsletters; contact her at katy@docreative.com.