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Resources are available in both English and Spanish at the SAT Counselor Resource Center.

sat.org/ASCA2012

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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.
I enjoyed seeing many of my fellow Alabama school counselors at the Alabama Counseling Association Annual Conference this year. The conference was held November 16-18 in Montgomery, and many counselors from across the state attended. The ALCA Awards Breakfast and the ALSCA Awards Luncheon were also well attended. Many of our ALSCA members were honored during the ALCA Awards Breakfast.

ALCA AWARD RECIPIENTS
ALCA Emerging Leader: Emily Rich
Research Grant: Dr. LaWanda Edwards
Individual Publication Award: Dr. Joy Burnham
Chapter/Division Publication Award: ALSCA (Dr. Stephanie Howard and Sheryl Smith)
Jean H. Cecil Distinguished Counselor Educator Award: Dr. LaWanda Edwards

ALSCA AWARD WINNERS
Asa Sparks New Counselor of the Year Award: Dr. Angela Stowe
Counselor Supervisor of the Year: Donna Clark
Counselor Advocate of the Year: Hampton Cove Middle School PTA
RAVE Silver Awards: Mary Ward, Melba Shanks, and Cindy Davis
RAVE Bronze Award: Valerie Love-Simmons

I congratulate all of the award winners. It is evident that Alabama school counselors “shine brightly” as we work with students, administrators, parents, and community members to implement programs and activities in our schools.

National School Counseling Week will take place February 4-8, 2013. You can find resources to help you have a “brilliant” National School Counseling Week at the ASCA website (www.schoolcounselor.org). I encourage all school counselors to plan activities to celebrate this important week. ALSCA is having our first National School Counseling Week Art and Essay Contest. We will announce the winners during the first week in February on the Alabama School Counselor Association website (www.alabamaschoolcounselor.org). The contest will help to advocate for our profession and inform stakeholders of the importance of school counselors. ALSCA will also be collaborating with ALCA Chapter VII to offer a workshop on legal and ethical issues in counseling. The workshop will be held at Alabama State University in February or March 2013. This workshop will focus on counselors’ ethical and legal issues when working with different populations, including adults and children. All counselors can gain something from this valuable workshop.

In closing, I leave you with a reminder to “be brilliant” in all that you do!

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

Please visit the NEW Alabama School Counselor website!
www.alabamaschoolcounselor.org
The Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children 2nd Edition™ (MASC 2™) assesses the presence of symptoms related to anxiety disorders in youth aged 8 to 19 years.

- Aids in the early identification, diagnosis, treatment planning and monitoring of anxiety-prone youth
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- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) Index differentiates children with the disorder from the general population

www.mhs.com/MASC2

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Provides scores on:

- Attention
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Normed on a sample of 3,500 youth who represent the U.S. population:

- Race/Ethnicity
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- Parental Education

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Offers a fresh practical approach to teaching struggling students in the K-12 grades. Applying their expert knowledge of how children learn, the authors have incorporated a short questionnaire for school psychologists and 75 intervention handouts to assist teachers.
The Alabama School Counselor Association Division Meeting at the ALCA Conference in Montgomery, AL.

2013 NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING WEEK ART & ESSAY CONTEST

ELIGIBILITY & GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Participants should be students in grades K-12.
- Artwork should be submitted for grades K-5. Artwork should describe how your school counselor has had an impact on you.
- Essays should be submitted for grades 6-12. Essays should not exceed one page, and should provide detailed information on the impact your school counselor has had on you.
- ALL artwork and essays must be submitted with a National School Counseling Week Art and Essay Contest Entry Form (below).
- Prizes for each of four categories: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12. The district coordinator or school counselor supervisor of each district should submit the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners to Dr. Mack.

1st prize - $30.00
2nd prize - $20.00
3rd prize - $10.00

The counselor of each 1st prize winner will have his or her registration fee paid for the 2013 ALCA fall conference. The counselor must be a member of ALSCA.

DEADLINES

- January 18, 2013 – Deadline for submissions (All submissions must be postmarked by this date)
- February 5, 2013 – Announcement of Winners

PLEASE RETURN ENTRY FORM AND ARTWORK/ESSAY TO

Dr. Monica Mack
7207 Greenfield Road
Montgomery, AL 36117
Or, e-mail PDF to:
mpmack23@gmail.com

Please submit your original artwork or a 1-page essay on the impact your school counselor has had on you.

Your Name ______________________________   Grade Level _________
Full Address ______________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
E-mail _____________________________________________
Phone # __________________________________________
School ___________________________________________
County/District ____________________________________
School Counselor’s Name ____________________________

I understand that the art work/essay I am submitting is the property of ALSCA. I grant permission to ALSCA to publicize my name, photo, school, artwork and/or essay.

Signature of Student: __________________________________________
Signature of Parent/ Guardian: ________________________________

ALL artwork and essays MUST be postmarked no later than January 18, 2013.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Mack at mpmack23@gmail.com

Assisting members at the ALSCA Awards Luncheon registration table were Scharona Grimsley (left) and Meagan Vick (right).

Receiving the 2012 Counselor Advocate of the Year Award on behalf of the Hampton Cove Middle School PTA were (left to right) Dr. Debi Edwards, principal, and Yvette Coley-Smith, school counselor. ALSCA president-elect-elect Shelly Johnson presented the award.

RAVE Award Winners 2012 (left to right): Cindy Davis, Mill Creek Elementary School; Mary Ward, Brighton School; and Melba Shanks, J.S. Abrams Elementary School.
Kai is a ninth-grade student who has just lost his grandfather to cancer. He has come to the school counseling office because he “doesn’t feel like” being in school, and doesn’t know what the point is to being in school.

CREATED TO BE SPIRITUAL
Just like Kai, most students will experience some sort of loss in their lives and may require counseling. During the challenging times of adolescence, spiritual questions such as “Why am I here?” and “What is the meaning of life?” are vital for teenagers to work through and even come to some tentative conclusions. The grief and depression that accompany severe loss frequently produce feelings of “hopelessness” and “that nothing in life has any meaning.” Students should be able to discuss their existential concerns with school counselors who are sensitive and knowledgeable about such confusing issues and emotions. However, the troubling reality is that many school counselors are unwilling or lack the skills to address competently the dimensions of faith and spirituality.

What exactly is spirituality? Is it the same as religion? Briefly put, spirituality is an innate human feature that strives toward something greater than oneself. Unlike religiosity that focuses on religious elements, experiences, and a deity, spirituality is individualized to each person. It is the practice of enriching, meaning-making activities that move towards one’s own individualized and deeper values, beliefs, mission, awareness, experiences, and sense of purpose and meaning in life. It is a critical source of strength for many students, and is the bedrock for meaning making that is instrumental in promoting healing and well-being.

The notion of “spirituality” can feel like a taboo topic that may scare educators from discussing it. Many have the misguided notion that there is something illegal or unethical about addressing this topic, and fear negative consequences. However, spirituality is integral to the holistic being of students and, thus, a necessary component to adequately meet the needs of students. In other words, not validating the spiritual dimension of students is actually unethical. As stated in the Ethical Guidelines for School Counselors (ASCA, 2010). “Each person has the right to be respected, be treated with dignity and have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that advocates for and affirms all students from diverse populations including religious/spiritual identity.” In short, the spiritual is part of human functioning and is a development pathway for students, impacting their cognitive, psychosocial, and moral development.

SPIRITUALITY IN SCHOOL COUNSELING
Individual counseling. As suggested earlier, when students deal with a crisis situation, they encounter the spiritual concepts of loss, hope, perseverance, and coping. In the case of Kai, his reaction and coping strategies should be seen as his struggle for meaning and purpose during this period of grief. So what should a school counselor do? First, he or she can create a non-judgmental, open climate that encourages discussions of feelings, emotions, respect, and diversity. Empathetic listening and understanding in itself is an opportunity for students to share and use their spirituality as resource to promote healing. When students voice spiritual or religious ideas, school counselors don’t need to shy away; instead, listen attentively and support the importance of the student’s spirituality in his or her life.

For Kai, the school counselor should be curious, asking open-ended questions to gain further understanding of Kai’s spirituality and how he processes his loss. During a counseling session, act as the student’s biggest cheerleader when he or she strives for positive meaning seeking and making. Always avoid potentially biasing comments or suggestions, speak at the students’ level of faith development, encourage their desire to understand how and why things happen to them, and answer students’ questions with questions that will facilitate the search for their own answers. Try to appreciate students’ viewpoints by using related language and imagery in conceptualizing problems and finding solutions. For example, you could say a variety of things to Kai that reflect his faith tradition and how it applies to the dilemma he’s facing. For example, “If I heard you right, I think I understand how important your faith has been to you. What...
have you learned that might help you resolve this issue?” Or, “You mentioned you talk to God regularly and that helps you feel better; is that a practice that might help you in this situation?” Other techniques that could help him explore his spirituality include art, play, motivational interviewing, reflective listening, biblio-counseling, and logotherapeutic approaches.

The school counselor could also help students reframe instances of struggle and trauma towards opportunities for spiritual growth and for resolving existential concerns. Counselors can guide students such as Kai to find outlets for practicing healthy spirituality and people who can support students’ spirituality. Practicing spirituality does not look the same for everyone. Long strolls in the woods, reading evocative poetry or narratives, creating artwork, conversing with a spiritual mentor, attending a worship service, performing a dance, meditating, and praying are all examples of the wide variety of spiritual acts. For students like Kai who are going through a tragedy, guiding them to find sources of strength is important. These should assist with processing the loss of his grandfather.

Classroom guidance. How can school counselors address spirituality to the broader school community, fostering healthy spirituality for all? The most important initiative that the counselor can take is to adopt an inquiry-based approach to large group guidance instruction. This student-centered and counselor-guided instructional approach engages students in investigating real-world issues and seeking information by questioning. It produces genuine student interaction that encourages deeper thinking on issues of meaning making and purpose in life.

To foster this special environment, school counselors should nurture an educational atmosphere that is responsive to students’ emotional and social needs. Developmental guidance activities should be appealing, collaborative, and genuine (imitating real-world concerns and issues). They must support the sharing of dreams and attitudes, openness, and problem solving. School counselors are not only coaching students about their emotional health, educational goals, career exploration, cultural sensitivity, and so on, but also facilitating learning activities that help students think more deeply and create meaning and purpose for their lives.

In guidance lessons for children in the early elementary school years, try...
to cultivate a sense of trust, wonder, and symbolizing. To do so, lessons must encourage self-trust and trust in others. Early elementary-age students need to experience caring and reliable adults, so school counselors should model genuineness and warmth. Through hands-on activities, explore meaningful values such as honesty, respect for life, and tolerance. Creating a sense of wonder can be shown through magical and imaginative storytelling and dramatizations, outings to a range of exciting places, puppet plays, and creative art and music activities.

For older students, ethically touch upon adolescents’ reflections about their own traditions, values, and individual and social meaning making. For example, have adolescents converse about significant topics like racial challenges, character development, effective coping, and respect for self and others. Students with a healthy spirituality are open to new perspectives, express hope for the future, and are courageous. They show love for the seemingly unlovable, loyalty, compassion, and respect for human dignity. Teaching methods can include school-appropriate films (via YouTube), music, literature, and fine arts. Panel discussions representing a wide range of convictions, use of examples and counter-examples, field trips, and group projects are possible approaches. Find online resources by simply searching key words and phrases like “teaching tolerance,” “spiritual activities,” and “holistic learning.”

School counselors need to understand the developmental process by which students make sense of their life experiences and crises, how they formulate and sort out their value and belief systems, and find a purpose/goal for life. Rather than deflecting or redirecting concerns that relate to spirituality and faith development, you can ethically support students as they work through their deeper concerns and, as a result, foster their spiritual and personal well-being. In short, if you really aim at helping students flourish, why not address the dimension that cultivates their purpose in life?

Christopher Sink, Ph.D., NCC, LMHC, is a professor of Counselor Education and Research at Seattle Pacific University and is on the editorial boards of Counseling and Values and Professional School Counseling. Contact him at csink@spu.edu for resources to address student spirituality. Justine Chun is a doctoral student in counselor education and is interested children’s spirituality.
THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

BY DAVID ALLYN

n schools throughout the U.S., hard-working, low-income students face unique challenges because of their families’ financial situation. The global recession has increased the numbers of families who feel economic anxiety and students who cannot afford to keep up with their peers.

Students from low-income backgrounds need greater attention and support than their middle- and upper-class peers. Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, child psychologists at the University of Kansas, found that 3-year-old children whose parents were professionals had vocabularies of about 1,100 words, while children whose parents were on welfare had vocabularies of about 525 words. The types of words used—and their emotional content—tend to differ in middle-income and low-income homes. By age three, the average child of a professional has heard almost half a million expressions of encouragement and 80,000 expressions of discouragement. For children of parents on welfare, the situation is reversed: they hear, on average, about 75,000 expressions of encouragement and 200,000 expressions of discouragement.

As the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation has reported, 3.4 million K-12 students with family incomes below the national median score in the top quartile for academic achievement. Unfortunately, as these students continue in school, their achievement declines relative to their peers. And numerous studies have shown that SAT scores are closely correlated with family education and income, and students are less likely to go to college if their family resources are limited, regardless of their grades.

At New Jersey SEEDS (www.njseeds.org), we work with low-income students to prepare them for long-term success. We provide Saturday and summer academic programs, then work with independent secondary schools and four-year colleges to secure placement and scholarships for our students. We work primarily with the highest achieving students from low-income families, and have learned ways to intervene to support them.

What is it like to be a student from a low-income family? And how can school counselors best address their needs?

THE HIDDEN COSTS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Maria was one of the top students in her ninth-grade class at a boarding school in Massachusetts. But then her grades began to slip. Her teachers noticed a change in her mood. Her school counselor tried to intervene, but couldn’t find out what was wrong. Maria’s parents, who spoke very little English, weren’t much help.

One day, her school counselor happened to see Maria after school. “Didn’t you go with the Debate Team to Washington, D.C.?” the counselor asked. Maria shook her head. “Was it the money?” the counselor asked. Maria nodded. She hadn’t been able to afford the $250 for the trip, and the counselor realized financial concerns had been the source of Maria’s plummeting self-esteem and grades.

Adolescence is filled with expenses. Class trips, uniforms, and special events can pose a real burden for low-income students and their parents. Then there are movies, clothes, food, gifts, etc. Low-income students often feel isolated because they cannot afford things that their peers take for granted.

School counselors should watch for sources of financial strain. Being aware of the economic pressures that students face makes it easier to initiate meaningful discussion with students, parents, and teachers. Pay attention to the price of field trips, sports programs, and other school-sponsored activities. If you notice that a student has drifted to the social sidelines, consider the possibility that it may be related to money.

Counselors also can help students navigate school bureaucracies and tap into any little-known funding sources that exist. At all schools, students need encouragement to speak up when they cannot afford school related expenses.

The more low-income students realize that someone in the school community is looking out for them, the less alone they will feel.

DIFFERENT CULTURES, DIFFERENT STYLES

Many low-income students are also first generation Americans and have an additional set of challenges due to language barriers and cultural differences.

Lin had the highest test scores in the 2011 SEEDS class, but she received very low grades from her teachers. Teacher comments said Lin was shy, needed to speak up more in class, and rarely volunteered her opinions.

Americans place a high premium on extroversion. But such habits are often frowned upon in other cultures where young people are taught to be deferential and soft spoken, or to avoid looking others in the eye.

Susan Kain’s Quiet: The Power of Introversion in a Culture that Can’t Stop Talking addresses the reality of different communicative styles. Sometimes very thoughtful students simply don’t function well in socially sped-up environments. Recent immigrants may be extra shy as they navigate a new culture and cope with the burden of having to learn the social codes of a foreign country.

School counselors can help by going on hallway walks with students. Side-by-side conversation is often much less threatening than face-to-face interaction. Counselors can also gently offer communication tips for success: making eye contact, nodding, and raising one’s hand in class. Finally, school counselors can encourage students to participate in activities that are suited to their academic talents and social dispositions, such as writing for the school journal or helping build sets for the school play. The more students get involved, the more comfortable they will feel in socially demanding situations.

LIVING IN TWO WORLDS

Low-income students typically live in two worlds. Friends who are not academically focused may dismiss studying as a waste of time. Family members may not understand the value of education. In some communities, being studious shows weakness or impracticality. I have seen students turn down college

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
scholarships because their parents wanted them to stay nearby to help raise siblings. Low-income families face so many day-to-day challenges that the good of the family can eclipse the value of ambition or personal success.

Meanwhile, teachers may not understand the pressures that a young person is under at home. He or she may be needed to help support the family financially. Drug abuse or domestic violence may be issues at home, or the student may have no quiet place to study. Mom might work all night and be too tired to make breakfast.

For low-income students, academic achievement may be viewed with suspicion in one world, while its value may be taken for granted in another. Teenagers can find it very hard to focus on their studies when neighborhood friends and family members don’t see the point of doing well.

**GOOD COLLEGE GUIDANCE IS CRUCIAL**

Esther grew up in a predominantly black community. Through SEEDS, she was able to attend a primarily white independent school, but the transition from her elementary school was something of a shock.

Esther worked hard. Senior year she earned straight As and was elected president of the school’s academic council and vice-president of the senior class. She began looking only at local universities, but with guidance and support from her school counselor, she applied and was accepted to Princeton. During her junior summer, she went to Ghana to do research and to London for a global seminar on transatlantic slavery and modernity. Princeton paid for both trips.

College counselors who work with high-achieving, low-income students need to become familiar with college diversity initiatives and financial aid programs. A student may get a much better financial aid package at an Ivy League school or a small, liberal arts college than at a large, urban university.

The obstacles to success for low-income students are high but not insurmountable. School counselors can play a key role in helping students realize their full potential. It begins with empathy. The more we know about the realities of growing up with less, the more welcoming our schools will become for students from the lower half of the socioeconomic spectrum.

David Allyn, Ph.D., is the director of education for New Jersey SEEDS, an organization that provides high-achieving, low-income students academic opportunities. Contact him at dallyn@njseeds.org.
As many as 10 million females and one million males in the United States are fighting a life-and-death battle with an eating disorder, experts estimate. Affecting both physical and mental health, eating disorders are complex illnesses with biological, genetic, psychological, social and developmental roots.

As a school counselor, you need to be familiar with the different types of eating disorders, signs and symptoms, early intervention, and preventative education. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental disorder, and you are in the unique position to detect early onset and guide the student and his or her family towards life-saving treatment.

DEFINING EATING DISORDERS
The development of an eating disorder never has just a single cause. Rather, underlying causes involve interactions of biological, psychological, and social factors unique to each person. People are especially vulnerable to developing eating disorders during transition periods, such as moving from middle to high school. Clearly, these are not challenges that body shape or size can solve, but mastering body shape and size can become the go-to strategy for trying to cope with emotions and psychological issues, as eating disorders are often a vehicle to express control when the rest of one's life feels out of control.

The most common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder.

Anorexia (clinically known as anorexia nervosa) is self-imposed starvation. Adolescents with anorexia are often profoundly dissatisfied with their body image and usually express a strong desire to lose weight. One of the key features of this disorder is denial. Although obsessed with food, they continually deny their hunger and are not able to recognize that they are physically and emotionally fragile.

Bulimia (clinically known as bulimia nervosa) is the repeated cycle of out-of-control eating followed by some form of purging. The purging associated with bulimia may be self-induced vomiting, excessive use of laxatives or diuretics, or obsessive exercising. Adolescents with bulimia are preoccupied with their shape, weight, and body image as a source of self-esteem.

Binge eating disorder (also known as compulsive overeating) is uncontrolled eating or bingeing followed by periods of guilt and depression. A binge is marked by the consumption of large amounts of food, sometimes accompanied by a pressured, “frenzied” feeling. Unlike bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder does not involve purging, excessive exercise, or other compensatory behaviors.

These disorders are serious and potentially life-threatening illnesses that affect every body system. Several of the most common risks include digestive disorders, osteoporosis, and dental and esophageal erosion. Electrolyte imbalance—a common symptom—can lead to cardiac failure, even in people who are not underweight. Many physical symptoms resolve with treatment; others can be irreversible. Early identification and treatment increases the chances for full medical and psychological recovery.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS
Below are some of the warning signs for the different eating disorders. A student may have symptoms of more than one diagnosis or may not fully meet the diagnostic criteria for one specific disease but may still need help.

**Anorexia**
- Thin and continues to get thinner
- Diets even though not overweight
- Distorted body image
- Loss of or thinning hair
- Excessively discusses food, cooking, or dieting

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
Excessively exercises, even when tired or injured
Overemphasis of the importance of body image to self-worth

**Bulimia**
- Engages in binge eating
- Uses the bathroom frequently after meals
- Engages in vomiting, laxative or exercise abuse
- Reacts to stress by overeating
- Experiences frequent fluctuations in weight
- Overvalues weight as a basis for self-esteem
- Calluses on back of hands

**Binge eating disorder**
- Eats large amounts of food when not physically hungry
- Turns to food as a way of coping with feelings
- Eats rapidly or excessively throughout the day
- Eats to the point of feeling uncomfortably full
- Often eats alone because of shame or embarrassment
- Shows signs of depression and withdrawal and has extreme feelings of guilt and shame after eating
- High blood pressure

Other signs that you may notice at school could include social withdrawal, irritability, grade changes, and repeated absences.

**EARLY INTERVENTION**
Research shows the sooner an eating disorder is diagnosed and addressed, the more likely it is that treatment will lead to sustained recovery. Don’t shy away from expressing your concerns, but recognize that a trusting relationship will make this easier.

Curb your impulse to comment on weight or appearance; even alarmingly underweight students are sensitive to any talk about their weight or shape and this may derail your interaction. Express concerns about general well-being first and then name the behaviors that trouble you. For example: “I’ve noticed you don’t seem happy and I’m concerned something’s bothering you. You seem tired and distracted. I haven’t seen you at lunch for a while. Have you been having some problems eating?”

Remember, denial and shame accompany eating disorders. Remain non-judgmental, avoid pressing too hard, leave the door open for future conversations, and continue to be aware of the student’s behavior at school.

Depending on your level of concern, and taking into account both regulations and professional ethics, you should consider contacting parents. With full-blown eating disorders, the stakes are too high to keep quiet.

**TREATMENT**
When deciding on the best course of treatment, parents and referring healthcare professionals should select a program or combination of programs that specialize in treating eating disorders and allow the student to thrive. As a counselor, you should

- Be aware of local providers and make referrals to therapists, psychiatrists, and nutritionists.
- Be familiar with the different levels of treatment: Inpatient or residential facilities are the most comprehensive programs with 24-hour care. Day programs provide intense structure and support during the day and allow the patient to return home in the evening. Intensive outpatient services offer a structured environment for students to seek treatment in the evenings. Some treatment centers, such as The Renfrew Center, offer all levels of care within their network, allowing the patient to easily transition from one level to another.
- Coordinate educational needs with providers when appropriate, particularly if a student requires residential or day treatment and will be away from school for a time.

**RECOVERY**
Recovering from an eating disorder is a process. When the student is at school, you can help facilitate their recovery by

- Providing the student a safe environment (perhaps the nurse’s office) to eat lunch and snacks.
- Allowing frequent access to in-school support services while not enabling school avoidance.
- Consider implementing a 504 Plan to help a student meet academic goals if frequent absences for treatment are required. For example, it may help to decrease course load, minimize homework when a student attends an evening treatment program or extend time for testing if test anxiety exists.

Furthermore, school counselors should also be involved in providing preventative education.

- Educate teachers and staff about eating disorders and the importance of promoting healthy body image. Some schools have used in-services or faculty meetings.
- Help nurses use discretion in discussing weight with students. If your school requires BMI notices, people of all shapes and sizes need to be approached with sensitivity.
- If resources are available, consider starting a student group to explore issues related to appearance, body image and self esteem. Publicize outside groups and programs of interest, such as National Eating Disorder Awareness Week held each February.

Eating disorders can be a matter of life or death. Knowing the signs and symptoms and providing early intervention can give students the opportunity to fully recover and lead a successful eating disorder free life.

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Lindsay Breeden, PhD, is a residential clinical supervisor at The Renfrew Center (http://renfrewcenter.com), a nationally renowned eating disorder treatment facility. Angela Marchesani, MA, is a school counselor and education coordinator at The Renfrew Center.
I was six years old when my best friend, Karen, told me her parents were getting a divorce. Karen was a constant fixture in my everyday life. She lived on the same street as me, just four houses away. We had spent countless hours playing at each other’s homes, sharing family meals together, and walking to and from school. But when her parents decided to divorce, that all changed. I was confused. What did divorce mean? If it could happen to Karen, could it happen to me?

A wise friend once described divorce symbolically as a rock being tossed into a pond. When the rock hits the surface of the water, an epicenter forms, and then concentric rings ripple outward. The epicenter represents the immediate family involved in the divorce, where the impact of the divorce hits hardest. The concentric rings rippling outward represent all the people the divorce affects outside of the immediate family: relatives, friends, co-workers, etc.

I was one of those ripples.

I began relentlessly to ask my mom and dad if they were getting a divorce. After all, if it happened to Karen, I knew it could happen to anyone. I remember one family dinner in particular. When we were all seated with heaping plates of spaghetti in front of us, I chose to pose the now infamous divorce question. The next thing I knew, my mom pushed her chair away from the table, threw her hands up in the air, and stormed out of the dining room, yelling, “I AM NOT GETTING A DIVORCE...PERIOD!” I stopped asking the question.

Karen and I remained friends, but our friendship changed. Karen’s parents sold their house and the restaurant they had owned together. Her mom moved into a small apartment on the other side of town. Her dad eventually remarried and moved into a larger home in our old neighborhood several blocks away. Karen switched schools. She had a difficult time accepting her new stepmom and stepbrothers. At times, she seemed angry at the whole world, and our friendship became more distant. When we eventually reunited in high school we were no longer close friends, merely good acquaintances.

Thanks to the wonder of Facebook, Karen and I have recently reconnected. She is now a divorce attorney and a loving mother of two boys. To me, it is no mere coincidence that Karen has dedicated her career to a field that so deeply affected her.

Divorce is not a one-time event for children. It is an ongoing entity in their lives. With that in mind, how children cope and heal while living with divorce is incredibly important. As a child, my definition of divorce was created through witnessing and listening to Karen’s story. Her experience had much more of an impact on my understanding of divorce than my parents’ attempts to explain it to me or console me.

I consider this concept to be an example of children teaching children. Karen was educating me about divorce through her experience. She was reinforcing ideas and expressing knowledge that she had gained from her situation. She became my teacher. Karen taught me in a way that was deeper and more profound than an adult telling me about divorce because I was able to witness how her divorce story affected her whole being.

“While we try to teach our children all about life, our children teach us what life is all about.”

—Angela Schwindt

When working with children and divorce, I encourage children to tell their story and begin thinking about their experience by asking them to share their definition of divorce. Their definition can tell me a lot about how they are coping with divorce. For many children, divorce means that their parents don’t live together anymore and something has happened to cause that. But often I hear a definition I’ve never heard before. When asked what divorce meant to Sophia, age eight, she replied,

“Well at the beginning it meant sadness, but I found a way to live with it. I’d prefer it never happened, but it’s just a part of life.”

Sophia’s sentiment differs from that of Canon, age 13. He had this to say,

“Divorce means to me that my parents weren’t happy being married to each other and that they split apart so that they could be happy again.”

Divorce affects children in different ways. Some children view divorce as a positive change in their life, while others, like Sophia, wish their parents were still together. Although both children express a different sentiment in their definitions of divorce, they both bring up the topic of change. Divorce represents change. I witnessed this firsthand through Karen. When her parents divorced, she lost her home, changed schools, gained a new parent in her life and two new brothers. The concept of change and how children feel about change is something I encourage children to share while telling their stories.

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“I think that divorce has changed me as a person a little bit, because I think it’s made me stronger and more emotional at the same time.”

—Mackenzie, 11

Mackenzie also offered this insight about divorce and change,

“I’ve gotten to know a little bit more people I would say because of my step-mom and my step-dad and their sons and daughters and their friends. So it’s sort of been a fun experience to learn more about people and meet more people than I think I would if my parents weren’t divorced.”

Mackenzie’s comment inspired me to create a new activity that I now use with children in dealing with any life-changing event. In this exercise, I begin by having children share what change means to them. What do they know about change? I encourage them to access their experiential knowledge of change, not just recite a textbook definition. What does it look like? Feel like? Smell like? What color is it? I then ask children to go through magazines and cut out pictures and words that represent change to them. We use the pictures and words (along with any artwork they wish to add) to create collages. The collages are a visual representation of change that the children can access and refer to when telling their divorce stories and educating their peers in the process by sharing their experiential knowledge.

Children teaching children has made a profound difference in my practice. By giving children a voice and allowing them to share their story, I am honoring them, validating their experiential knowledge, and giving them a sense of control over a situation in which they often feel little to no control. Children are their own best experts. When children teach children, I listen. I listen to their stories and an amazing thing happens... I become the student, and they become my teacher.

Sharon Richards, LCSW, is co-founder of Professor Child, LLC, which produces educational films and workbooks in which children teach children about challenging life events through sharing their personal stories. Professor Child recently released their first film, Children and Divorce. To learn more and watch a trailer of the film, visit www.professorchild.com.

Not your average group project

It all started by studying prescription drug abuse among area adults. Now we are working with regional professionals to address the problem. Our group research project will help to identify local needs and develop a strategic plan.

— Faith Durnford, Health Science and Shelby Hall, Nursing

Check out KSC’s opportunities for undergraduate research at www.keene.edu/wisdom.
While a GSA can allow students to express themselves openly and receive group support, it is also a doorway for delving into some challenging areas.

As school counselors, we often experience ever-increasing demands on our time. This may mean we have less energy to commit to our students, so being cautious about adding an activity is wise. However, being the faculty advisor of this invaluable group is both a worthwhile commitment and an opportunity to address the needs of a very deserving student population. Our members get so much out of our meetings that they would prefer to meet every week. However, we adhere to the schedule of every other Tuesday for 45 minutes to ensure that I can attend every session. This is necessary due to the often serious nature of our discussions.

While a GSA can allow students to express themselves openly and receive group support, it is also a doorway for delving into some challenging areas. Controversial topics like religion, politics, sex, and bullying are common in our meetings. Some of your members may find that this club is the first place they have been able to fully be themselves. They may have family and friends who are unready or unwilling to accept them as they really are. Providing this is quite a profound service, but, equally, a huge responsibility. Things may well surface in a GSA meeting that require immediate processing. Therefore, you must make sure your members are aware of the parameters of confidentiality and well informed of available school counseling services. Overall, sponsoring this club at your school can tremendously benefit a very worthy group of students eager to pursue some of the goals you share: safety and equality for all.

Towards the end of last school year, we gathered the GSA on a week when we typically would not meet. The occasion was the North Carolina vote on Amendment One, which established in the state constitution that marriage was between one man and one woman. Sixty percent of those who voted did so in favor of the amendment. But worse was the 65% of eligible voters who decided that this issue did not merit their input. The day we learned those results, we sat together in a circle on the floor. Several new students joined us, as did several faculty members, gay and straight alike. We all needed perspective and a place to try to process our thoughts out loud. That day, we heard from people of various ages and positions, unified by a simple belief: people deserve to be valued. In closing, each person said their name and a summary of their thoughts on the day. My name is David Naff, and I am very proud to be on this side of this issue.

David Naff is a school counselor at Mount Tabor High School in Winston Salem, NC. Contact him at davidnaff@gmail.com.
A school counselor posed a problem to me, a school librarian, a few years ago. Her curriculum included teaching character values, but she found few materials on this subject, especially at the middle school level. Time was one challenge; she had only a 45-minute period with classes. Another challenge was funding—many of the materials available came at a substantial cost.

Then I had an idea. Why not use picture books to discuss character traits such as courage, patience, and honesty? I had already done this at the elementary level. Although I was unsure how effective this would be with middle school students, I read and discussed with them “Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World’s Fastest Woman,” by Kathleen Krull. To my surprise, these cool customers were attentive—enraptured even—in our discussion. After the lesson, our school counselor and I worked together to formulate a series of character education lessons using picture books. These lessons provided a solid foundation for dialogue on displaying worthy character traits; they linked acceptable behavior to concrete examples.

WHY TEACH CHARACTER EDUCATION WITH PICTURE BOOKS?
The national movement to infuse character education into public schools responds to growing concerns about violence, drug use, gang activity, and victimization at school. Character education aims to encourage ethical values such as responsibility, courage, self-discipline, tolerance, perseverance, and respect. A basic tenet of character education is that a child who feels safe and calm will learn and succeed academically, while a child who is anxious about being bullied or is suffering from low self-esteem is not focused on learning.

Character education assumes that schools are responsible not only for academic subjects, but also for helping students cultivate basic moral values to guide their behavior throughout life. Children can internalize attitudes by reading literature that inspires a socially responsible mindset.

Many programs exist for instruction in character education, such as the Character Counts program created by the Josephson Institute (charactercounts.org/sixpillars.html). This can be a useful website but may not always fit a school’s needs. Other programs can be costly and difficult to implement. But children’s picture books are a handy resource right on our library shelves. While teaching character education, picture books also can address social studies curricula and state standards related to students’ appreciation for individual and cultural differences. With vivid illustrations, captivating storylines, and a short investment of time for reading, picture books appeal to students from elementary through middle school.

VISUAL REPRESENTATION FOR ABSTRACT CONCEPTS
How do we teach the meaning of bravery? How do we teach the meaning of endurance in the face of adversity? To illustrate the idea of personal sacrifice for the good of others, consider “Uncle Jed’s Barbershop” by Margaret King Mitchell.
Uncle Jed is an African-American in the pre-Depression South who saves money to open his own barbershop. However, Sarah Jean, his niece, needs an operation; Uncle Jed saves her life by giving the money. Then, the bank in which his money is kept fails. But Uncle Jed never loses sight of his dream; he finally starts his own business at age 79.

DIFFERING READING LEVELS

We can explore the theme of fortitude using a variety of books with a similar message. For example, “Starry Messenger” by Peter Sis has a Lexile level of 830L. It tells the story of Galileo, a man of principles and conviction, who would rather sit in jail than agree that the earth was the center of the universe. Similarly, “Henry’s Freedom Box: a True Story from the Underground Railroad” also features a very determined protagonist, but has a lower lexical measure of 380L. Henry Brown is a slave who fantasizes about freedom but is separated from his family and forced to labor in a warehouse. As an adult, he marries, but again is heartbroken when his family is sold at the slave market. An idea comes to Henry one day as he lifts a crate at the warehouse. He puts himself in a tiny crate and mails himself to the North, to freedom. Both stories illustrate bravery and conviction, but may appeal to two diverse audiences and reading levels.

TEACHING WITHOUT PREACHING

Condescending materials that send messages in an over-moralized way can alienate children. Instead, picture books use arresting plots and characters to convey messages of model personality traits. Using library resources to teach character education does not support or encourage particular religious or political views. It simply uses an inexpensive, enjoyable method to tie literature to counseling, social studies, and health curricula. It provides an opportunity for librarians to collaborate with teachers and school counselors in the classroom or the library. We have a powerful resource right on our library shelves: picture books.

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THE ASCA NATIONAL MODEL

Third Edition

The ASCA National Model reflects a comprehensive approach to the design, implementation and evaluation of a school counseling program that improves student success. The publication defines the school counselor’s role in implementation of a program based on the principles of leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change and provides step-by-step tools to build each component of the program including foundation, management, delivery and accountability. This third edition has been revised to reflect current education practices and enhanced to include additional templates that will assist school counselors in developing an exemplary school counseling program.

ASCA members: $34.95 nonmembers: $44.95
Order online at www.schoolcounselor.org or by calling (800) 401-2404. Available in print or digital versions. Digital versions must be ordered online.
Helemano Elementary is in Wahiawa, a small town on the island of Oahu. The frequent rains often result in breathtaking rainbows that inspired us to develop “The RAINBOWS in Me,” our school’s values and character education program.

RAINBOWS is an acronym: R stands for respect for yourself and others; A is for appreciation: hunting for the good stuff; and I is for integrity: honesty and walk the talk. N is for namaste: the light inside of me sees the light inside of you; B is for belly breathing and mindfulness; and O is for oh, the great things you will do (BeSMART goals). W is for when it rains, use your umbrella (coping skills) and look for the rainbow (having a positive and resilient attitude). S stands for service to your community.

During classroom guidance lessons on respect for yourself and others, we read Carol McCloud and David Messing’s “Have You Filled a Bucket Today?” (2006). We add our own rainbow touch by using phrases such as “rainbow bucket” and “being a rainbow bucket filler.”

We then discuss feelings and introduce our catchphrase, “All rainbow feelings are okay, BUT stay in control!” Rainbow feelings refer to colors and their designated feelings: red stands for angry feelings, orange represents worry/anxiety, yellow symbolizes happy feelings, green stands for envy/jealousy, blue is for sad feelings, purple for proud feelings, and pink for embarrassment. Black is for scared feelings, white for confidence and calmness, and gold represents compassion.

We have written song lyrics (sung to familiar melodies) and created games and rhythmic chants with body movements to engage our students. We even perform magic tricks to further reinforce learning.

Our guidance lessons for the other seven letters of the RAINBOWS acronym are presented in a similar fashion, and our students have enthusiastically embraced the program and they shout when they see a rainbow appear in the morning sky. Their calls of “rain” (then a second later) “bows”—verbally, with hand motions, or both—are fun and contagious.

The rainbow also symbolizes a wonderful aspect of Hawaii and the United States: people gathering from all over the world and living together in relative harmony.

Our wish is to have RAINBOWS remain with our students long after they leave Helemano School. The rainbows in our Hawaiian skies will make sure our former students remember the RAINBOWS in their hearts and minds and provide them lifelong guidance and inspiration. Of course, lovely rainbows adorn the skies across the USA, and our vision is for RAINBOWS to be a part of the school counseling landscape in all 50 states. To share our program, we have begun organizing a student workbook for “The RAINBOWS In Me,” a compilation of our classroom guidance lessons.

Cheryl Iwasaki-Chun and Stephen Chinen (aka Sgt. Rainbow) are school counselors at Helemano Elementary in Wahiawa, HI. Contact them at cheryl_iwasaki-chun@notes.k12.hi.us or stephen_chinen@notes.k12.hi.us.