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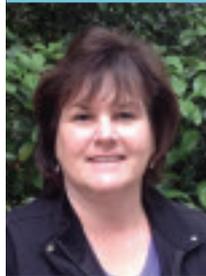
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LETTER FROM THE
ACTING PRESIDENT

SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS' PLANS

BY RUTH CARRIGAN



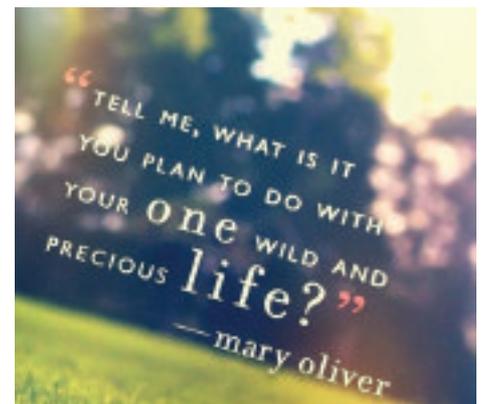
As a former college admissions director, I must admit that my favorite part of my job as a school counselor is college and career planning. I love helping the students with whom I work discover their strengths, talents and abilities as they navigate the career exploration process. I often think about the quote, "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" by Mary Oliver, when I think about working with my students. I love helping them make a plan

for life after high school. I believe it really is a privilege to help students find their way as they progress through high school and on to postsecondary education and training.

In Massachusetts, there are important developments in the area of college and career planning that will affect school counselors and their students. Recently, the Secretary of Education released the report and recommendations of the Advisory Committee studying the development and implementation of six-year career plans. The Advisory Committee, made up of a number of diverse stakeholders, recommended building capacity for implementing six-year career plans for students in grades 6-12 across the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts was recently awarded \$2 million through the New Skills for Youth initiative to improve career education in the Commonwealth. One focus of the grant will be to develop a comprehensive career advisement system in partnership with MASCA so that all students can make more informed college and career choices.

MASCA leadership is currently in consultation with partners at the Office for College, Career, and Technical Education at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on both of these initiatives. We have had some great discussions already, and we hope to announce some exciting collaborations in the future. MASCA leadership will keep you informed as more information becomes available. We look forward to being part of this exciting work to increase college and career readiness for all students in the Commonwealth. ■



In Massachusetts, there are important developments in the area of college and career planning that will affect school counselors and their students.

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ADDRESSING CAREER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY LITERACY

BY CLAIRE BRANTLEY & ANNA RIGG

Consider how often you use technology throughout the course of your day: corresponding with parents and teachers, tracking program data, planning classroom lessons or group activities...the list goes on. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, 96 percent of working Americans report using communication technology daily, and 62 percent report the Internet as essential to their work.

It may seem as though our students have an inherent knack for navigating all things digital that would serve them well as future employees, but research suggests otherwise. Young people's use of technology is often limited to communication, thus they tend to lack skills in work-based tech tools like spreadsheets and word processors and struggle on tests of usability. Not surprisingly, research also indicates that nine- to 16-year-olds often lack basic technology safety skills.

So, technological literacy is a product of exposure, education and experience rather than age. If we are to prepare our students for work in the 21st century, then technological literacy is an unarguable requirement. How might technological literacy fit into our scope of practice as school counselors? Our job is to deliver a comprehensive program that contributes to students' academic, social/emotional and career development. We are skilled in identifying and confronting barriers to student growth and success. At Dozier Middle School, in urban southeastern Virginia, we noticed that the gap in technological resources available to some of our students was taking a negative toll. We wanted to learn more so we could respond effectively through counseling interventions.



If we are to prepare our students for work in the 21st century, then technological literacy is an unarguable requirement.

THE GAP

In a national survey of children ages three through 17 in 2015, 21 percent did not have access to a home computer, and 43 percent were without home internet. Furthermore, access is distributed unequally in society. Black and Hispanic populations are less

likely to have home computer/ internet access than White and Asian populations, and low-income households are also less likely to have access.

A NEGATIVE TOLL

What are the implications for our students? These students are unable to complete computer assignments or check grades online at home. We learned through our review of the literature that students who don't know how to use devices for academic purposes earn lower GPAs and test scores. The digital divide can also influence students' views about their future. Students who are aware of inequity

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

ties related to social class and race believe society has lower expectations for them, and they also worry they may not be ready for higher education.

This notion is supported in social cognitive career theory, which posits that low personal expectations can limit goal-setting and, ultimately, performance. The same is true for high personal expectations: they result in expanded goal setting and greater performance levels.

RESPONDING THROUGH COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS

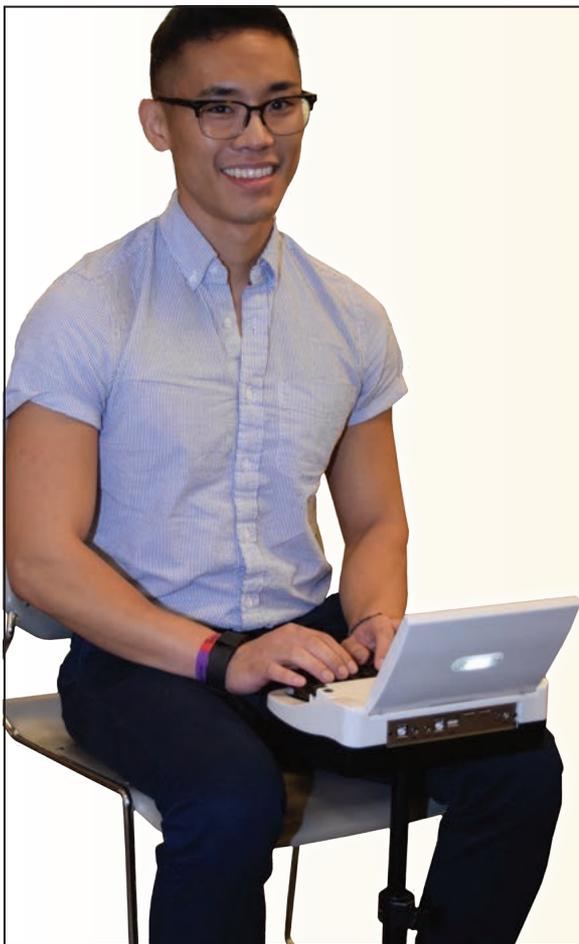
Curious about how to turn this negative feedback loop around for our students, we studied a variety of career and technology literacy programs conducted in community and school settings. Programs with

the most successful results had the following aspects in common: the opportunity for self-expression, a multicultural focus, social support, and leadership and resiliency skill building.

Armed with this information, we looked to ASCA for guidance in structuring a similar program using the Closing-the-Gap action plan. Our goal was to interrupt the negative feedback loop associated with this digital divide and foster students' career development through tech-based small-group activities. To identify students who would benefit most, we developed a school-wide needs assessment using Google Forms. Students completed the survey on tablets during PE as a part of a larger initiative to collect data for multiple school programs.

IDENTIFYING THE TARGET GROUP

We filtered the results to focus specifically on seventh-grade students. In Virginia, this is the first year high school credit classes are available and the year students first create their Academic and Career Plan. Next, we narrowed the data further to those who did not have access to internet on a home computer. (We felt it was important to include students regardless of smartphone access because these devices do not have the same abilities to run work-based software as computers.) Our initial recruitment sample totaled 70 out of 307 seventh graders, a statistic comparable to the national trend. We screened this list, considering highest need, interest, availability to participate and general suitability for our group.



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DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

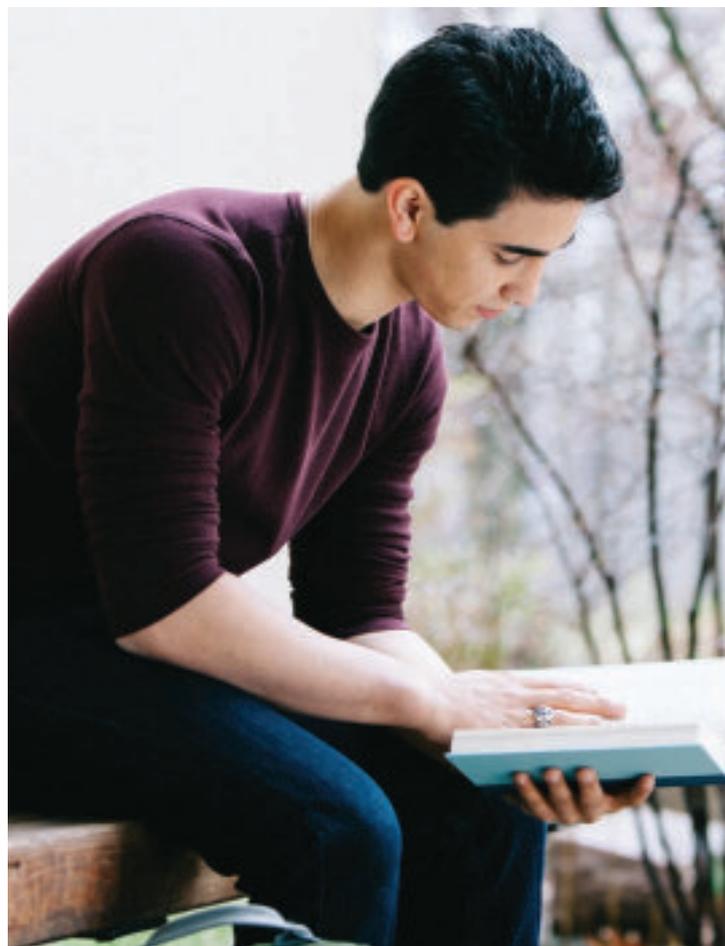
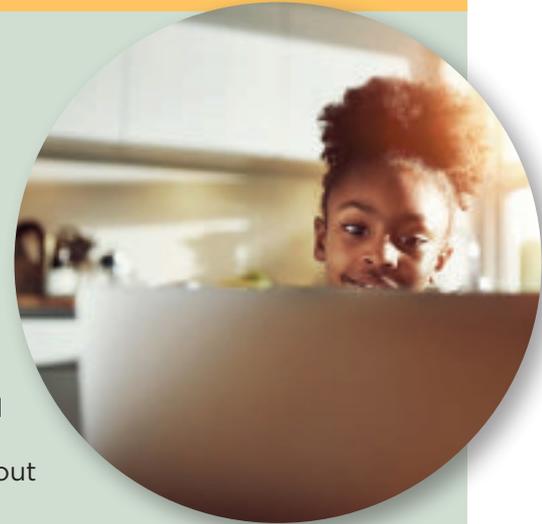
Our design process was built upon ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success. The group consisted of eight weekly sessions with each small-group session following the same format. We began with an interactive opening activity to set the tone for student engagement. Students then moved to an independent module where they learned specific software skills (e.g., Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint) and practiced applying them first through self-expression and then through a career-related project. (For group plans, modules, activities and more, visit cashlab-programs.weebly.com.)

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SAMPLE NEEDS ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Check the device(s) you have at home...
Of the device(s) you have at home, check the one(s) that have internet access...
- How would you rate the quality of your internet at home...
- Have you ever taken a computer class at school...
- Do you know what career you would like to have...
- How much do you feel you know about this career...
- Are you interested in a group that helps you learn more about computers, internet, and careers...

We understand that reporting self-identifying info (e.g., name and grade) might impact students' answers, so we collected these items at the end of the survey.



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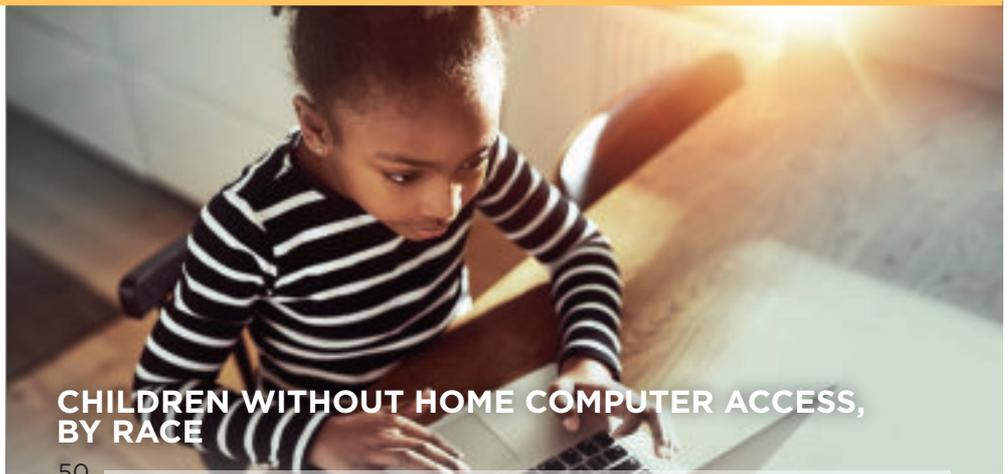
RESULTS

We evaluated the group in three areas of perception data: awareness of software, identifying uses for software and confidence in software skills. A skills check for each software was conducted as a measure of outcome data. Our intervention boasted an increase in all data points, with students' largest growth coming from the sessions on Microsoft Excel. Most rewarding of all, we saw a change to the feedback loop as our students' awareness of career options expanded and they eagerly shared plans to continue career exploration beyond the group setting.

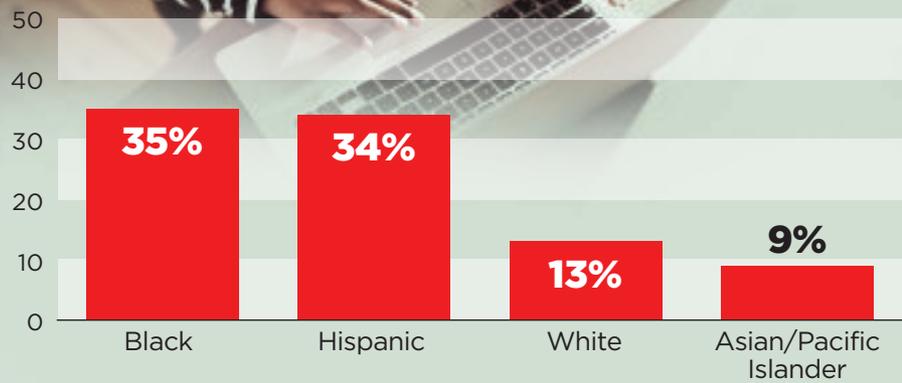
PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Here are the greatest takeaways we learned from our mission to incorporate technological literacy and improve gap group career development.

- Computer/internet access isn't enough. Formal training and education are necessary.
- When students make personal connections, they retain material better and make more meaning of the lesson.
- Establish an open dialogue around diversity, understanding that cultural competence plays a role in technological literacy and student success.
- Social support from you and other students counteracts barriers to education. The group format provides students an opportunity to participate in peer-to-peer learning.
- Learning about technology and careers doesn't have to occur sitting in front of a screen for hours. The brain likes novelty – keep things interactive!
- Last, keep things simple. Already bogged down with small-group referrals? Here are some other simple steps you can take to make a difference.



CHILDREN WITHOUT HOME COMPUTER ACCESS, BY RACE



CHILDREN WITHOUT HOME COMPUTER ACCESS, BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME



SOURCE: CHILD TRENDS DATABANK, 2015

- Use tech-based activities in your classroom guidance lessons.
- Connect students with career- and technology-related resources.
- Inform other educators about this issue.
- Collaborate with other school personnel and community assets.

Claire Brantley and Anna Rigg presented on this topic at the 2016 ASCA Annual Conference. Claire Brantley is a National Certified Counselor (NCC) and school counselor at Stonehouse Elementary School in Williamsburg, Va. Anna Rigg is a school counselor at Dozier Middle School in Newport News, Va. Reach them at jcbrantley@email.wm.edu. Please contact the authors for a list of references used in this article.

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CRAYONS TO CAREERS: A K-12 APPROACH TO COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

BY LINDA BINION

Studs Terkel had the ideal job. He traveled the country in the 1970s and spoke with people about their occupations. His interviews always ended up in a conversation about the interviewee's hopes and dreams. "Everyone has a secret dream job; what they imagine they'd rather be doing; where things would be better somehow," he wrote.

This same sentiment is expressed in workplaces all over America in 2017. Many of us know people who are working in positions they don't enjoy, just hoping that something better comes along. As a K-12 counseling department, we realized that this was not the future we wanted for our students. Instead, we envisioned a future where our students were knowledgeable about their work values and the wide variety of options available to them so that they would be empowered to make informed decisions. For this to occur, our school counselors needed to be more purposeful K-12 with our work as it pertained to college and career choices. This is where Spotsylvania County school counselors began their journey in college and career readiness.

GETTING STARTED

Our journey was made a little easier because the College Board Office of School Counselor Advocacy had already identified the *eight components of college and career readiness* every counseling program needs. These are a great tool, but they should not be viewed by grade levels in isolation or the end result would be a series of fragmented activities (random acts of guidance). Therefore, we formed work groups that included counselors from all three levels (elementary, middle and high school) to provide a comprehensive understanding of students



throughout their educational career. Gone are the days when all things career and college rested with high school counselors.

We reviewed each of the eight components and always began by asking for the high school counselors to share their insight. We needed to build a K-12 approach, and in order to do that, every counselor needed to envision what students had to know, understand and be able to do at the point of graduation. We had to identify our successes and growth areas in order for continual growth to occur.

For example, one of the eight components pertains to college affordability. Our high school counselors shared that some families had not saved anything for college. This was not something our elementary counselors had thought much about because these are not daily conversations they are engaged in. After hearing about these student challenges, the elementary and middle school counselors began to develop action plans. Elementary counselors provided college affordability workshops to parents so that they could appreciate the importance of early planning and ways to save even when they had few resources. Middle school counselors delivered lessons on financial aid and college comparisons so students were aware of their options and knew resources

were available for low-income students. We gradually moved from a high-school-only concern to a comprehensive K-12 approach.

In another conversation, high school counselors talked about students who had the ability to succeed in postsecondary education but did not have college aspirations. College aspiration is perhaps the most important of the eight components. Our department began to say that elementary counselors plant the seed (awareness), middle school counselors water the seed (exploration) and high school counselors harvest the crop (readiness). We have a collective responsibility to every student, from kindergarten through high school graduation and beyond.

In an attempt to "plant the seed," our elementary counselors talked with teachers, who began to divide students up into groups based on college mascots, made graphs for math that used teacher faces and the college they attended, lined our halls with college pennants and even provided opportunities for students to try out careers through activities with our vocational center.

We found that we had to be more strategic with our first generation students and their parents. Counselors K-8 collaborated on the creation of a program called *Adventures Await*. We provided the *Adventures Await* cohort group of parents and students with college, career and financial aid information, and with school-based opportunities. The program was highly successful because we differentiated the information to meet the needs of those whose exposure may have been more limited. One session featured a panel of first-generation students currently enrolled in college and their parents. An audience member asked the panelists, "What do I need to do so

that my child will one day be sitting where you are?" This cohort grew well beyond information sharing – it became a networking opportunity and a support system.

ENGAGEMENT AT ALL LEVELS

We began to increase programming and curriculum, but we also recognized that every experience we provided must be meaningful and engaging if students were to internalize the content. Instead of one lesson on job skills, counselors at the elementary level established a job for every fifth grader – students were matched to a job within their school. They had to apply and interview for their position, supervi-

sors provided weekly feedback and students were paid in school store dollars according to their performance. Students learned the importance of being on time, having a positive attitude, completing work accurately and accepting feedback. This was a school wide-initiative in which everyone participated. We also had community partners who volunteered to teach and supervise students in their area of expertise.

At the middle school level, students learned about personal and work values through a classroom auction. At the beginning of this lesson, students were provided with a limited amount of imaginary money with which they could bid on items of interest (such as graduate from

college, be a millionaire, have a job they love). Students were able to engage in conversation surrounding the auction items they bid on. Those with remaining money at the end of the auction could select from one of three secret futures that allowed for further dialogue and even a little bit of mystery.

At the high school level, counselors sent a large cutout of Champs, the high school mascot, around the country and alumni took pictures with Flat Champs at their college, work, or job site. Champs has a social media account and this project has served as a way to connect current students with alumni working

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



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in their field of interest. High school counselors also created several board games to provide students with interactive learning experiences.

In addition to engaging curriculum, counselors also started to teach lessons in a Response to Intervention format. We believe that college and career readiness is everyone's responsibility; not just the school counselor's. Therefore, counselors wrote a comprehensive college and career curriculum that was shared with teachers. The week before teaching each lesson, counselors modeled the lesson and supported teachers in its implementation. At the conclusion of a

unit, students were assessed and any student who scored less than 80% received additional counseling support.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Prior to establishing our K-12 college and career plan, we provided administrators with training on growth mindset, non-cognitive skills and the role of the school counselor in college and career readiness. We also developed a comprehensive counseling plan, a list of essential counseling services and a new evaluation tool that coincided with the role of a school counselor in the 21st century.

These activities and others have resulted in a positive change to the position of school counselor. Instead of managing 504s and serving as test coordinators or master schedulers, we are providing our students with a comprehensive school counseling program that has a strong college and career readiness component. ■■■

Linda Binion is the Supervisor of Counseling Services K-12 at Spotsylvania County Public Schools in Fredericksburg, Va. A special thanks to Lois Colbridge, Cheryl Gallelo and Emily Hall who presented this topic with me at ASCA and to Erica Holt who created our job for every 5th grader program.

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PROMOTING SUCCESS FOR PREGNANT TEENS AND TEEN MOTHERS

BY NATALIE F. SPENCER, ANGEL RIDDICK DOWDEN AND SHIRLENE SMITH AUGUSTINE

One of the most exciting and anxiety-producing aspects of high school is transitioning to work or college after graduation. Many teens have an idea of what they want to do and seek out their counselor for recommendations in regard to colleges, work options or military support, but some are left wondering what is next. One group that often finds themselves wondering is pregnant teens and teen mothers.

Many teen mothers struggle as they navigate typical teenage development while also learning how to care for a child. School counselors can provide support and guidance to encourage pregnant teens and teen mothers to persevere and not only graduate from high school, but also find fulfilling postsecondary plans to promote success. Pregnant teens and teen mothers are at risk and should be on the radar of school counselors. A few of the risk factors associated with this group include dropping out of school, lower educational attainment and repeat pregnancy.

CREATING A GROUP

One approach that school counselors can use to work with pregnant teens and teen mothers is facilitating an intervention group. Screening and recruitment for the group will be very important. Some pregnant teens and teen mothers are easy to identify, while others are not. Some girls within your school may keep their pregnancy hidden. To find potential group members, it is best to partner with school support staff such as the school nurse.

After you have secured the names of potential participants, contact the girls to see if they are interested. If you encounter girls who are not interested, remain in contact with them to offer individualized support.



Group work can build college and career readiness among teens whose futures face many risks.

GROUP TIMELINE AND SUGGESTED TOPICS

Group 1: Opening/Goal Setting, Long Term and Short Term

The first session sets the tone by providing an overview of the group, developing group rules and starting the relationship-building process. The school counselor should review confidentiality and an overview of group plans. A good practice is starting the group with goal setting and helping the girls create goals that are personal to them and future work, career or college.

Group 2: Stress Management

Pregnant teens and teen mothers must learn to manage stress since they are likely to encounter many stressful situations. Not only are they responsible for their school work, but also the care of their child, doctor's appointments and family and friends. Stress management activities can include stress reduction techniques such as deep breathing, time management, and organizational and life skills development.

Group 3: Career Interest Inventory

Some of the girls participating in the group may not have considered their career and work options. Taking a career interest inventory can help those unaware of their talents find careers that best fit their personality and those already aware confirm what they know. Many free inventories are available online and many can be completed within the group time. The College Board offers *an inventory that lets students explore careers, college majors, etc.*

Group 4: Healthy Relationships

Developing healthy relationships – with friends, significant others or parents – can make a difference in the success of pregnant teens and teen mothers. Without support and appropriate communication skills, many of these girls will find limited success. This session can include information about “I” statements, personal wants, personal responsibility, decision making and basic communication skills.

Group 5: I Can Do This – Confidence Building

Building confidence in pregnant teens and teen mothers can promote their career and college readiness. Confidence building can include using confidence boosting statements, celebrating diversity, and praising small accomplishments (grades, attendance, filling out college applications, completing work applications or meeting with military recruiters).

Group 6: Academic Success

Maintaining and developing academic success is paramount for pregnant teens and teen mothers. During this session, group members review time management skills, study skills and where to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

seek help (from counselors and key teachers at school).

Group 7: Wrap Up – Celebration

The final group is the time to re-view past sessions, celebrate group progress and discuss goals for the future. A celebration with snacks and certificates of achievement will help to terminate the group.

WEEKLY REFLECTIONS/ JOURNALING

Encourage weekly reflections and journaling. Weekly group exercises will promote reflection between group meetings and keeping track of goal development. Consider providing participants at the start of

the group with a small, spiral-bound notebook for writing their reflections.

GROUP FOLLOW-UP

The school counselor's continuing assistance to pregnant teens and teen mothers after the group has ended is imperative. Continued follow-up can include monthly check-ins; periodic one-time, open small-group sessions; and academic support from teachers and administrators. Ending the group with no follow-up can lead to feelings of abandonment and any positive gains can be lost due to lack of support.

Overall, small groups offer many benefits for students – and for school counselors. Supporting

pregnant teens and teen mothers provides additional support not only to students, but to their families and children. Promoting academic success goes beyond what is taught in the classroom. School counselors are leading the way in helping all students achieve and promote positive self-image. ■

The authors are with the Department of Counseling at North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University. Contact Natalie F. Spencer, PhD, LPC, NCC, assistant professor, at nfspence@ncat.edu; Angel Riddick Dowden, PhD, LPC, NCC, ACS, assistant professor, at amdowden@ncat.edu; and Dr. Shirlene Smith Augustine, NCC, associate professor, at saugusti@ncat.edu.

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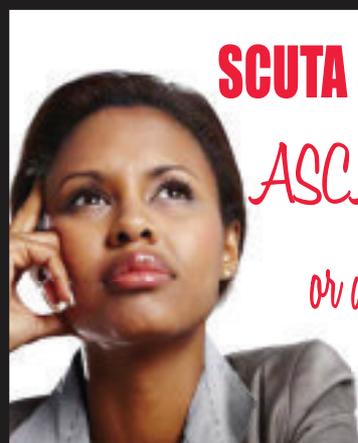


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COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS OF STUDENT ATHLETES

BY PAUL HARRIS

What does it mean to be college and career ready? Four keys to college and career readiness, include: 1) key cognitive strategies, 2) key content knowledge, 3) key learning skills and techniques, and 4) key transition knowledge and skills. Although school counselors can contribute to the development of each of these keys in students, transition knowledge and skills (i.e., postsecondary career awareness, postsecondary costs, matriculation, role and identity, self-advocacy) has particular relevance for our role. This is especially true when it comes to serving the needs of student athletes.

Attention is appropriately given to the NCAA eligibility rules and the meeting of such standards by high school student athletes with potential to compete at the collegiate level. Ensuring that these student athletes are aligning with NCAA's guidelines is critical if they are going to realize their dream of playing their sport at the next level. At the same time, though, eligibility does not always equal readiness. School counselors must be particularly aware of the student athletes who ascribe a disproportionate amount of their identity to their athletic role, and especially those who do so to the detriment of their academic identity.

What can school counselors do with this potential challenge? Numerous interventions, delivered through a comprehensive school counseling program guided by the ASCA National Model, are available to address this concern. One particular intervention that has been proven effective is small group counseling. Men Passionately Pursuing Purpose (MP3) is a small group experience designed particularly for Black male student



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athletes, but it can be amended for any student athlete. The goal of MP3 is to increase the positive identity of student athletes both in and out of their sport. To accomplish this through the small group process, the sessions focus on 1) discovering strengths, 2) helping student athletes understand who they are without the ball, 3) engaging the student athletes on what it means to pursue purpose, 4) discussing the process of mental contrasting, and 5) self-regulation.

Discovering strengths. Have the group members create a genogram, going back at least two generations. Have them include siblings, parents,

aunts, uncles, etc., and direct them to note strengths within individual family members. Then, have each student share his or her genogram, addressing the following questions during that time: What was the process like for you? What surprised you? What strengths do your family members possess? Do you see those strengths in yourself? Engaging the small group participants in this way highlights those strengths that the student athletes may or may not have even realized they had. If they were aware, then it reinforces strengths that the student athlete possesses both in and out of their sport.

Who am I without the ball? Have the group members write a response to this question in written expression, either in session or for homework. Then, have each member share their perspective, while also following up with questions on the topic of athletic identity.

Passionately pursuing purpose. Have the group members discuss what they think the number “720”

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represents for them. After they share ideas, confirm that 720 represents the number of days they have in high school. Keeping the focus on what is in front of the students, school counselors should use positive language about the progress they can make, regardless of the number of days they have left. Encouraging the student athletes to begin with the end in mind – and clarifying what their “end” is – can be critical for these student athletes looking beyond their sport interest.

Mental contrasting. Have the student athletes draw two circles on a large sheet of paper, one repre-

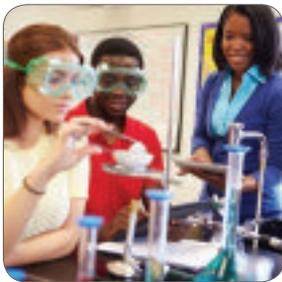
senting what they do have control over, and the second representing what they do not. It is important to acknowledge the “out of control” elements as real and influential on participants’ pursuing purpose. At the same time, it is critical to note what is within their control, emphasizing traits such as character, integrity and strong work ethic.

This list does not encompass everything necessary for student athletes to thrive in and out of their sport, but it lays the foundation for the work to be done with these young men and women. Sport is an incredible mechanism for positive

growth in student athletes, yet it also remains a potentially exploitive mechanism if athletic pursuits are not tied to a solid educational agenda. Small-group counseling allows for accountability, encouragement and transparency as student athletes engage and deploy the many strengths they embody. ■■■

Dr. Paul Harris is a school counselor educator at the University of Virginia. He was previously a high school counselor in Newport News and Loudoun County, Va. He is president of the Virginia School Counselor Association and on the ASCA Board of Directors.

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CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT: LINKING COLLEGE DUAL CREDIT TO HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION

BY REGINA J. WILLIAMS

In my 18 years as a middle, junior high and high school counselor, one change that has positively influenced students is the opportunity to obtain college credit while still in high school. At many high schools, students taking dual credit classes can graduate from high school and earn an A.A. degree at the same time.

Concurrent enrollment (or dual credit) has become an effective means to raise academic preparation for a wider range of students. One recent study found that completion of 20 credit hours before the end of the first year of college is a strong predictor of timely college graduation. Another showed that students in dual enrollment courses performed at or above the level of non-dually enrolled students in subsequent courses. The students also benefited from access to advanced instruction, university labs and other facilities that could not be supported financially by traditional high schools. Those students taking introductory college courses were better prepared for more advanced courses upon entering college.

Students' coursework in high school is perhaps even more important than grades for college success. High school curriculum has been shown to influence the attainment of a bachelor's degree more than test scores and class rank. Furthermore, dual credit enrollment combats senioritis by providing senior students with challenging coursework and incentives to maintain a high level of motivation and commitment.

Concurrent credit provides an inexpensive way for students to earn college credit. In fact, participation is free in some states, which helps offset the inability of financial assis-



For states, concurrent credit enrollment offers a significant financial advantage over Advanced Placement (AP) credits.

tance through government funded Pell Grants and merit-based aid to keep up with the rising cost of college tuition. The state of Florida has made it clear in its statutory language that dual credit students from Florida are exempt from the payment of registration, tuition, laboratory fees and instructional material assigned for use.

For states, concurrent credit enrollment offers a significant financial advantage over Advanced Placement (AP) credits. While dual

credit enrollment was associated with an estimated \$452,000 loss for the state of Florida in 2006, untransferred AP courses and exams were associated with substantially larger \$5,236,000 loss for the state that same year. About 90 percent of unused accelerated learning credit is AP-based, while only 8 percent is dual enrollment-based. These figures mean that the state would pay more than \$2 million for students making up foregone AP hours but less than \$200,000 for dual enrollment hours.

In the high schools familiar to me, lower income students do not participate in dual credit classes as often as higher income students despite the growth of concurrent credit programs. This disparity may be due to two factors: parental encouragement and cost.

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Studies have shown that parent-child discussions regarding college and other academic issues influence the likelihood that a student applies to and participates in a postsecondary education. Likewise, many students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are not encouraged by their parents to take advantage of dual credit classes. Students from high SES environments often receive carefully planned efforts that guide them towards academic credentials that include dual credit enrollment, admissions and prestige. Low-SES parents tend to exert less influence on guiding their children through the college choice process and, therefore, enrolling in dual credit classes. Dual credit often does require a financial contribution on the part of the student. In the

district where I work, Three Rivers College pays one third, Poplar Bluff Schools pays one third, and the student's family pays the remaining third. Without the aid of the Pell Grant for dual credit classes, a tremendous number of our students simply could not afford to enroll in dual credit college classes even at the considerably reduced rate.

Policy-makers seek alternative means such as dual credit to increase college access and to improve college success for low-SES students. Dual credit advocates argue that these programs better prepare students for college coursework than traditional high school programs. Educating all parents, especially low-SES parents, about the advantages and importance of dual credit classes is a significant requirement of institu-

tion leaders. Unfortunately, in many districts, including my own, programs to inform the public of such advantages have not been well attended by parents and the issue of cost is still a major deterrent.

In October 2015, the U. S. Department of Education issued a national register to all colleges announcing the start of an experimental program that will allow low-income dual credit students to access their Pell Grant while still in high school. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said:

A postsecondary education is one of the most important investments students can make in their future. Yet the cost of this investment is higher than ever, creating a barrier to access for some students, particularly those from

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If this experiment is successful, students will be able to use a Pell Grant to pay for dual credit classes. This would allow low-income students to begin investing in their future during high school. By bringing administrators from both educational systems together to form a high school-college partnership, the expansion of dual credit programs could potentially translate into even greater school funding.

The U.S. Department of Education provides a guide to apply for resources from the Race to the Top Fund. Created by the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, this fund offers explicit

instructions to increase students' participation in rigorous advanced courses, particularly dual enrollment in postsecondary credit-bearing courses. The grant represents a financial incentive for dual enrollment on the federal level.

Successful dual credit programs will require keeping high school counselors trained in college educational guidance at the postsecondary level. This training is especially necessary because dual credit classes affect both high school and collegiate academic standing. All states also need to offer workshops for high school students and counselors to educate them on the advantages and disadvantages of dual credit. Another beneficial step would be state articulation agreements between high schools and colleges, specifying that dually

enrolled students be provided with collegiate advising.

As the availability of dual credit course work has expanded over the past 25 years, many more students are receiving college credit while still in high school. The recommendation by the U.S. Department of Education to expand dual credit programs so all high school students can enter college having completed six college credits will, we hope, encourage policy-makers to find alternative ways to fund these classes so all student will have the opportunity to participate. ■

Regina Williams is a school counselor at Poplar Bluff High School in Missouri. For references for this article, please contact the author at reginawilliams@pb.k12.mo.us.

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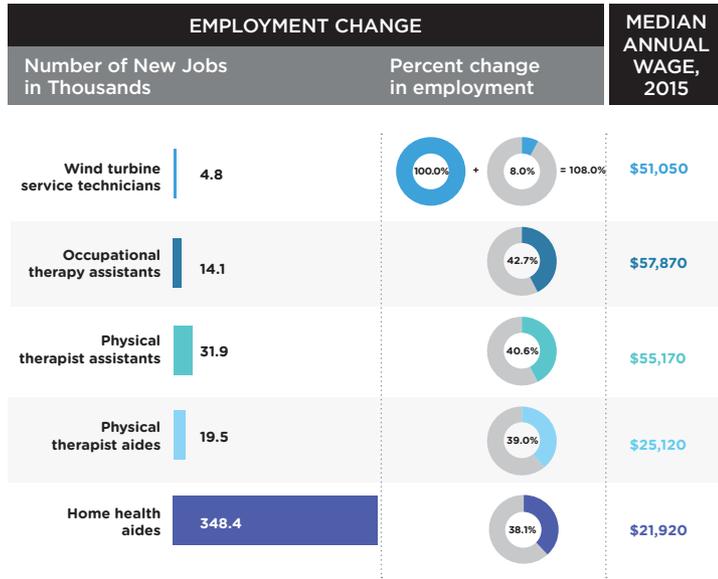
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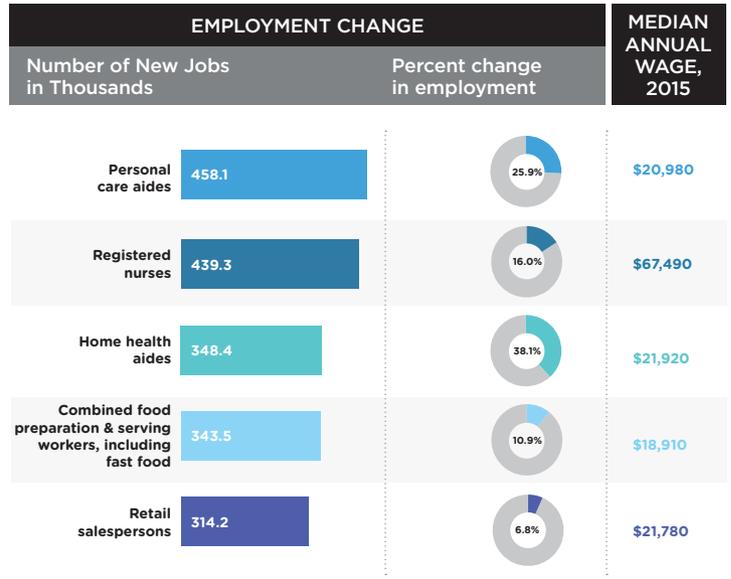
FASTEST GROWING OVERALL

Fast-growing occupations show how the economy is changing: 4 out of 5 fastest growing occupations are related to healthcare.



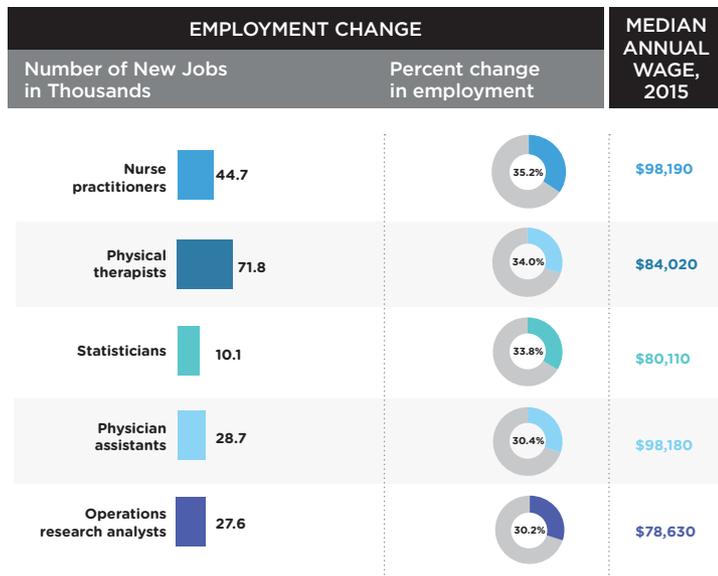
OCCUPATIONS WITH MOST NEW JOBS

Occupations adding the most jobs show that there will be more opportunities for employment in healthcare, retail trade, and food service.



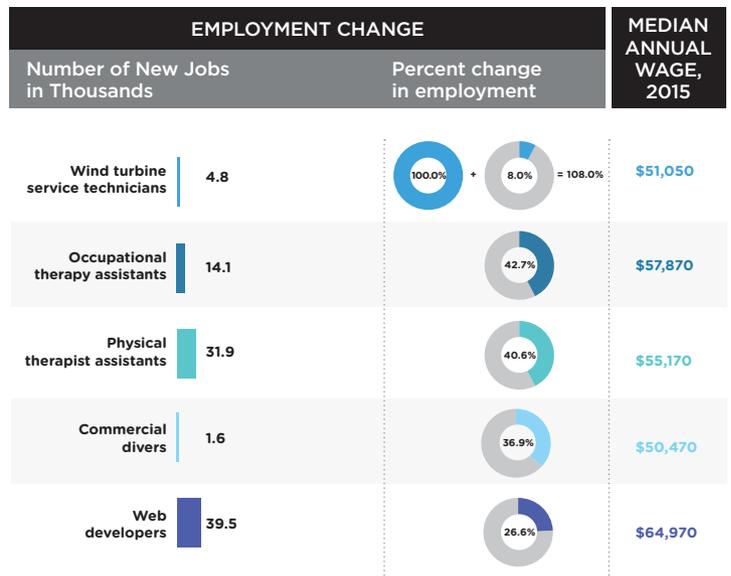
FASTEST GROWING OCCUPATIONS, BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER REQUIRED

Occupations that typically need a bachelor's degree for entry tend to pay well.



FASTEST GROWING OCCUPATIONS, SOME POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION REQUIRED

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SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

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