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BY THE BOOK
Books can be a powerful way to help students address a variety of needs. Consider using bibliocounseling in your program, regardless of the age of your students.

By Jami Parsons, Ed.D., and Cheryl Nord

LITERACY LESSONS
Use your bibliocounseling lessons to also promote literacy skills for elementary school students, and you’ll discover how willing teachers are to let you into the classroom.

By Diana Gruman, Ph.D., NCC, and Chris Owings

SOCIAL SPIES
Middle school can be a quagmire for those socially awkward students. Bibliocounseling can help.

By Christy A. Clapper, Ph.D.

BOOK GROUPS: NOT JUST FOR KIDS
Parent book groups are a great way to build community – and help parents address issues their children are facing.

By Nicole Scott

POWERFUL STORIES
By forming a book club for incoming African-American ninth-graders, one Florida school helps them ease the transition into high school.

By Anne Thomas, Ed.S.
A NOVEL IDEA

As an undergraduate English major and later as an English teacher, literature was my life. When I met and started dating another English teacher, I was certain I had found my soul mate.

I pictured cold winter nights by a warm fire, a carafe of wine, Rimsky-Korsakov gently serenading us in the background as we read, talked about the books we were reading and shared each other’s books. It would be paradise with another English teacher, just like me.

Maybe not just like me. Beverly and I are soul mates, but we’re also very different readers. For me, reading fiction is an almost clinical examination of the work of a skilled tradesman, an analysis of the craft of writing. Through reading, Beverly finds entertainment, escape and enlightenment.

Despite our different reading styles, we were pretty certain our children would be good readers, and they are, but we didn’t expect our son Alex to do what he did in high school.

One fall, Alex spent more time in his room than usual. Knowing what can happen when a teenager secludes himself in his room with a computer, we asked what he was doing. He announced he was writing a novel as part of National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), a program that challenges aspiring novelists to write a novel during the month of November.

Participants can update their word count on the NaNoWriMo website throughout the month and post excerpts for others to read. At the end of the month, they can upload their novel for verification, and if they’ve written 50,000 words or more, they’re added to the winner’s page to bask in the satisfaction of a major accomplishment. There are no tangible rewards, although many NaNoWriMo writers have had their novels published, including Sara Gruen, whose NaNoWriMo project, “Water for Elephants,” became a bestselling novel and a movie.

More than 2,000 elementary, middle and high schools participate in the program including, apparently, Alex’s high school. Alex didn’t finish his novel the first year he participated, so last year he created a strict regimen for himself, writing more than 1,600 words each day. Even when he came home from college for Thanksgiving, he spent hours on his computer. I asked him why he would spend his break from college writing when he must spend hours at school writing papers.

“I’ve always loved writing, and I have all these great ideas in my head so why not get them down on paper?” he said. “As I write, I feel like I’m able to learn things from my characters that I didn’t know before, even though I’m creating them.”

Alex finished writing his novel last year. It was the first of a three-part series, so we expect he’ll be writing frantically during at least the next two Novembers. I hope he lets us read them when he’s finished. Maybe Beverly and I will sit by the fire and read them together.

Kwok-Sze Richard Wong, Ed.D.
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ASCA’s award-winning journal, *Professional School Counseling*, is published online four times a year and is included with membership. The journal is available for members in a fully searchable database-driven format or a “flip PDF” format. The next issue, which releases late spring, is a special issue and focuses on school counselors and K-12 students with mental health needs.

Access from—> www.schoolcounselor.org/psc

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Access from—> www.schoolcounselor.org/philly

**Magazine Web Exclusives**

Book club suggestions:
- Get member-suggested books for student book groups (boys, girls or co-ed).
- Get member-suggested books for bibliotherapy in the schools and share your ideas as well.
- Download a complete lesson plan for “Jarvis Clutch, Social Spy,” which complements the article “Social Spies” by Christy Clapper on p. 22.

Access from—> www.ASCASchoolCounselor.org
DO YOU KNOW SARAH?

Sarah is a high school senior who dreams about a career in health care. She is eager to find a job that doesn’t require a college degree and allows her to put her passion for helping others to use after graduation. She’s heard about a job where she could work alongside a pharmacist, assisting patients. She wants to learn more, but doesn’t know where to start.

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**Scenario:** One of your students, Rachel, comes to you distraught that she was being called a “slut with herpes” by her classmate Sarah online. Sarah asked others to join her online in humiliating Rachel. You assure Rachel that something will be done to help her. You take her case to the principal, who expresses concern for Rachel and disciplines Sarah with in-school suspension. Rachel and her parents are tremendously relieved and thank you and the principal.

OR

You take this case to the principal, who expresses concern for Rachel but is quick to tell you her hands are tied as far as being able to discipline Sarah. The principal explains that Sarah has a right to off-campus free speech unless her cyber-speech causes a substantial disruption to the educational environment or such a disruption can be predicted. The principal says all she can do at this point is bring Sarah and her parents in and request they cooperate and remove the offending material. You are distressed to think there is no recourse for this student other than hoping the bully will behave.

Legally, which of the previous actions is the correct response?

Currently, the courts don’t agree on this issue, and administrators do not have a clear-cut standard they can use to regulate and punish online speech. Principals take a risk regardless of which way they choose to go. However, in January 2012, relief was on the way when three student cyber-speech cases made it to the U.S. Supreme Court: *Kowalski vs. Berkeley County School District in West Virginia, J.S. vs. Blue Mountain School District and Layshock vs. Hermitage School District*.

In the *Kowalski* case, Kara Kowalski was disciplined for beginning a MySpace page that successfully invited others to make offensive comments and bully a student who was called a “slut” with “herpes.” When Kowalski sued the school district, the Fourth Circuit court supported the school district’s discipline of Kowalski, citing *Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (393 U.S. 503, 1969), a U.S. Supreme Court case on a student’s First-Amendment rights.

As established by *Tinker*, the school district successfully argued that school officials have a compelling interest in regulating speech that interferes with or disrupts the work and discipline of the school. The court in the *Kowalski* case determined that it was reasonably foreseeable that the speech would reach the school, so it was “satisfied that the nexus of Kowalski’s speech was sufficiently strong to justify the action taken by school officials in carrying out their role as the trustees of the student body’s well-being.”

However, in direct contrast to the *Kowalski* case was the ruling in *J.C. vs. Beverly Hills*. In this case a 13-year-old girl was being cyberbullied. The district tried to intervene and discipline the bully, but the courts sided with the bully and found the district violated the student’s First-Amendment rights. As a result of the cyberbullying, administrators had to dedicate time to address the victim’s concerns and the concerns of her parents, five students missed portions of classes, and the victim remained fearful of the gossip spreading. However, the courts did not consider this to be a substantial disruption.

In *J.S. vs. Blue Mountain School District*, a Pennsylvania middle school student created on her home computer a spoof MySpace profile page for her principal calling him a hairy slut who hit on students, as well as other vulgar personal attacks. According to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, the school district failed to demonstrate it could reasonably forecast that the student’s words would cause substantial disruption in school, and, therefore, the student’s suspension was a violation of her First Amendment right to free speech.

The companion case, *Layshock vs. Hermitage School District*, also involved...
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\(^1\) For 2010, UTI had approximately 11,200 total graduates, of which approximately 10,500 were available for employment. Of those graduates available for employment, approximately 8,900 were employed within one year of their graduation date, for a total of 85%. UTI cannot guarantee employment.

\(^2\) Awarded to enrolled students who apply and are selected.

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a Pennsylvania high school student who created a profile of his principal on MySpace that was disrespectful and lewd. The Third Circuit Court found that the school district should not have punished the student “for expressive conduct which occurred outside of the school context.”

Eight education associations, including ASCA, filed an amici curiae brief with the Supreme Court explaining how school officials needed court-established standards to be able to regulate off-campus speech that in the reasonable, professional judgment of school officials interferes with maintaining a safe and effective learning environment for all students. The organizations sought, through court resolution, clarity and guidance for online conduct. In January 2012, the much-anticipated relief that was to come from the Supreme Court in the three student cyber-speech cases did not happen. The Supreme Court announced it was unwilling to accept the cases and allowed the lower courts’ decisions to stand, dealing a decisive blow to educators across the country who are struggling to help victims of cyberbullying.

The substantial disruption test will continue to burden school officials who have the responsibility of evaluating the level of disruption occurring or that might occur on campus as a result of off-campus online speech. School district officials are obligated under federal law to seek to remedy bullying and harassment that is severe, pervasive and objectively offensive. These statutes do not distinguish between whether bullying happened on or off campus.

School counselors do not have to decide if cyber-speech has met the criteria of substantial disruption, however. School counselors are the educators who are picking up the pieces. School counselors often receive the first outcry from students being harmed by cyber-speech and have to comfort and address students’ emotional trauma. Where do we go from here? With 800 million Facebook users, more than the population of the North American continent, we have to hope the courts begin to understand that cyberbullying is about disruptive conduct and not free speech.

Carolyn Stone, Ed.D., is a professor, University of North Florida, and ASCA’s ethics chair. She can be reached at cstone@unf.edu. Contact the author for references to this article.

To submit your questions for a future column, e-mail them to ethics@schoolcounselor.org.
The National Guard is part-time, so naturally, it can fit into your students’ lives, no matter where they are headed after high school. But how can they learn where they fit in the Guard? That’s what the Right Fit is for. Students go to the site, enter their skills and interests, and find what part-time Guard careers are good matches. The site also has important information about benefits that can pay for college.

See it for yourself. Then show your students. It’s at NATIONALGUARD.com/RightFit.
Ever lost yourself in a good book? Or read a book that helped you look at something in a whole new light? You can help your students look at challenges in a whole new light as well through bibliocounseling. Some may think bibliocounseling is just for elementary school counselors, who read their students children’s books about recess bullies, taking turns and the like. While bibliocounseling can be extremely beneficial in an elementary school program, it also has a valid place in middle and high school counseling programs.

Books are highly engaging tools to use when delivering messages that might otherwise come across as dry or instructive. Characters bring the message to life and give you the chance to talk about the character’s problem or discuss a delicate issue without calling attention to individual students. There are several different types of bibliocounseling, each with its own goal, you can use in your school counseling program regardless of the age of your students.
**Developmental bibliocounseling:** helps children understand problems, perhaps before they arise in their lives, using stories to acquaint them with issues and solutions.

**Self-help bibliocounseling** is what the name implies. There are many self-help books you can recommend to students, parents or teachers on a given topic that will allow them to work through a problem and learn new strategies at their own pace.

**Informal bibliocounseling:** allows school counselors or librarians to suggest books relevant for certain groups or individuals on particular topics that may be helpful for group discussions in processing current events or problems as they occur.

Both general education students and those with special needs are excellent candidates for bibliocounseling strategies. As a tool, bibliocounseling is highly versatile. You can use it with individuals, small groups, classroom lessons or even in large-group assemblies.

And, best of all, books are cost-effective tools you can add to your office or the school library for relatively little money.

**What to Pick**

When choosing books for bibliocounseling, look for those with engaging characters, relevance, interest and relatable themes. Some common themes often addressed include: divorce, bereavement, anger management, friendship, bullying, ADHD, learning disabilities, fitting in, self-awareness, problem-solving, empathy for others and so many more. This tool offers a nonthreatening way for students to clarify feelings, validate emotions and objectively experience and cope with current and future issues relevant to their lives. It offers school counselors and students a way to initiate dialogue on a difficult topic when characters in the book are facing and overcoming the same problem students may be facing. Students are often more apt to discuss an extremely painful situation when it is happening to another person, especially if that other person is a fictional one, such as the main character.

What is also powerful is that students can see in a short period of time, perhaps in one counseling session, how the character overcomes the problem by implementing realistic solutions that the student may not have considered. Bibliocounseling also provides validation that the student is not the only one facing this problem.

In choosing books, it’s important to match the book’s developmental level with your students’ reading level and age group and identify the appropriate topic most closely matched to your student’s concern. Be sure you’re completely familiar with the story before introducing it to your students so you can anticipate what questions or concerns might come up.

Younger students may be more inclined to relate to picture books or stories with animals as the main characters, while upper elementary and middle school students may be drawn to more realistic and concrete stories with characters around their same age. Young adult novels, pieces of literature and poetry ranging from concrete to abstract may be best for students at the high school level.

In classroom guidance or in large-group assemblies, you can select a book reinforcing certain character traits or behaviors the school would like reinforced.

**Lesson Plans**

No matter the size of the audience, bibliocounseling in schools typically involves guided reading to or with students to facilitate dialogue and increase awareness about new ways to cope with issues and problems. It is important to note that bibliocounseling is not just reading the book. It is critical to facilitate discussion allowing the students to identify with the characters and storyline, express emotions and reactions and gain insight that translates to their own lives. Successful application relies on the student’s investment and ability to relate to the main characters.

Before setting up your first bibliocounseling classroom lesson or small-group, there are a number of things to consider:

- How will you use the book with the students?
- Will this be one-on-one or a small or large group?
- Will you and the students read it together?
- How will you use the illustrations?
- Will you lead the discussions, or will you let students lead the discussions based on your prompts and/or their reactions to the story?

A good bibliocounseling lesson plan includes standards, learning objectives, materials, procedures, opening and closing activities, discussion prompts and suggested follow-up ideas. Classroom lessons using bibliocounseling may require follow-up visits to the classroom to assess whether lessons were learned and applied and to encourage students to continue using new strategies.

Books are interesting, creative devices for your school counseling program. Make sure you use them in interesting,
creative ways. Consider having students rewrite or retell the story in their own words using their friends as the main characters. Have students role play the action between the main characters in the books, and ask other students for their reactions. The creative applications are endless and limited only by your imagination and that of your students.

Bibliocounseling also gives you another avenue for supporting parents and teachers. There are so many pressing issues today that it is impossible to be an expert on every topic. But you can still become an effective resource for book recommendations about a variety of parent or teacher needs such as parenting difficult children, students with special needs, mental health disorders, behavioral concerns, eating disorders, addiction and various traumatic events such as grief, loss, natural disasters and violence.

You can help parents participate through a variety of strategies. Give parents a list of books or an annotated bibliography on a given topic to consider, or suggest a particular book for parents to read for themselves or with their child at home. This method maximizes the impact of counseling outcomes by creating a shared language between parents, students and school staff. Work together with the school librarians to maintain annotated bibliographies of books on hand in the library for teachers and parents to check out.

Books are powerful tools. Learn to use them in your school counseling program regardless of the age of your students. You – and your students – will reap the benefits.

Jami Parsons, Ed.D., is an elementary school counselor at Laguna Beach Unified School District in Laguna Beach, Calif., and an adjunct faculty member at Chapman University in Orange, Calif., whose favorite book is “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe” by C.S. Lewis. She was a 2010 School Counselor of the Year finalist and can be reached at jparsons@lagunabeachschools.org.

Cheryl Nord is a school counselor at Canyon View Non Public School in San Dimas, Calif., whose favorite books are “The Wind in the Willows” by Kenneth Grahame and “Lord of the Flies” by William Golding.
LITERACY
LESSONS
When Grace got home, she seemed sad.  
“What’s the matter?” asked Ma.  
“Raj said I can’t be Peter Pan because I’m a girl.”  
“That just shows what Raj knows,” said Ma. “A girl can be Peter Pan if she wants to.”  
Grace cheered up, then later remembered something else. “Natalie says I can’t be Peter Pan because I’m black,” she said.  
Ma looked angry. But before she could speak, Nana said, “It seems Natalie is another one who don’t know nothing. You can be anything you want, Grace, if you put your mind to it.” – “Amazing Grace,” by Mary Hoffman & Caroline Binch

Put a piece of children’s literature in front of an elementary school counselor, and the avenues for social and emotional development seem endless. The book quoted above, “Amazing Grace,” lends itself to a lesson on discrimination to help children recognize and handle gender and racial bias. Or, you could use Grace’s story as part of a lesson on self-advocacy, identifying personal strengths or exploring points of view. Alternatively, the range of emotions described in “Amazing Grace” could lead to a discussion of feelings and conflict resolution strategies.

Most elementary school counselors know stories can increase a sense of belonging,
build social skills and normalize the feelings children have when faced with challenging circumstances. What might be less clear is how to use children’s literature to reinforce language arts skills. Unfortunately, without such knowledge, we might find the classroom door closed.

As teachers react to more stringent learning standards for their students and more rigorous performance evaluations for themselves, they become more reluctant than ever to share class time. To gain credibility, you must learn to integrate effective teaching strategies and academic targets into your school counseling curriculum lessons. One way to accomplish this is with high-quality children’s literature.

Why use published children’s literature rather than workbooks or self-help books? Literature lets you promote key literacy skills and support social-emotional development at the same time. When we teach using literature, we expose children to rich vocabulary and colorful characters. We increase textual understanding by examining wonderful artwork and illustrations. Literature also allows us to stimulate the analytical and critical thinking skills necessary in all academic content areas.

While we are building literacy skills in the classroom, we are also modeling school counseling content and strategies we hope teachers will also adopt and use. In this way, teachers can learn to validate children’s feelings and uniqueness, guide problem-solving exercises, settle small skirmishes and conflicts or empathetically connect with a child experiencing difficult life situations.

You can use a book in your school counseling curriculum lesson to introduce a topic, provide the whole content focus or recap/reinforce a lesson from a standardized social skills curriculum. Regardless of how a child’s book fits into your planned lesson, you can approach the sharing of the book with the same research-based reading strategies most classroom teachers use. An interactive read-aloud is a perfect opportunity to demonstrate these critical teaching skills.

Obviously you won’t necessarily use all of the following literacy development strategies with every book you share. However, by being more intentional and skilled in our presentations, we will support student learning in the same ways strong teachers teach.

**Interactive Read-Alouds**

Even before you read the book, direct students to look closely at the cover. Read the title, author’s and illustrator’s names. “From the cover of this book, what do you think this story might be about?” Build students’ background knowledge by encouraging them to recall what they already know (familiarity with the author, words/ideas in the title, pictures, etc.). In our example book, “Amazing Grace,” some children may be familiar with the song “Amazing Grace.” Some may be proud to identify with Grace’s ethnicity or gender. Being literate includes the ability to recognize a personal connection between the material and oneself, other texts and/or the world in which we live.

As you share the book, you can use other strategies to support students’ literacy by pausing along the way. Model thinking strategies for students by speaking your thoughts aloud as you read to them. “I don’t know who Joan of Arc is but she must be a girl soldier because Grace has a shield and a sword in the picture.” “Auditions. That’s a word I don’t hear very often, but I know it has something to do with being in a play.” “I’m wondering what Nana wants Grace to notice about the picture.”

Asking students to guess or predict about where the story is going has the built-in expectation that they work with the information they have acquired so far from the story. “What do you think might happen next?” “Who in the story of Peter Pan do you think she wants to be?” By asking for the supportive evidence that led them to make their prediction, we engage them in the process of clarifying. “What makes you think that? What do we know about Grace when she is playing make-believe?”

Another skill of good readers, inferring, requires the reader to construct meaning beyond what is literally stated, such as, “Ma looked angry. What do you think she was thinking about? How do you know?” When we continue to promote the students’ interactions with the text and illustrations, we are at the same time able to guide them toward the counseling objective for the lesson whether it is self-advocacy, awareness of discrimination or recognizing a collection of emotions.

After you’ve shared the book, encourage students to engage with the story in a more reflective manner. Literacy skills then extend to the ability to summarize what was shared. “What happened at the end?” “If you were to sum up the story for someone who hasn’t read it yet, what would you say?” We also require students to evaluate by asking them to think about the story and ask them questions like, “What was your favorite part? Why?” “Were you surprised by anything?” “What message is the author is trying to get across?”

**Gaining Access to the Classroom**

As you choose your books and plan your lessons, there are a number of ways to make a strong case for implementing literacy-based school counseling curriculum lessons in your school.

**Align your lessons with learning standards:** All school counselors should become familiar with the guiding set of student learning standards in your district. The Common Core Standards (CCS), www.corestandards.org, have been adopted in 45 states and four territories. It might be easier than you think to align school counseling curriculum lessons with CCS or other local
mandates. Start by learning which skills the teachers in your building have been asked to target. Then seek out ways to support the development of certain standards through a school counseling curriculum lesson.

For example, one of the CCS English Language Arts Anchor Standards is, “Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.” If this is a target area for your teachers, a lesson on resilience and bullying might include a comparison of the main characters in “Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon” (Lovel & Catrow, 2001) and “The Recess Queen” (O’Neill & Huliska-Beith, 2002).

**Know your audience:** It is important to select developmentally appropriate books that match your target classrooms. Consult with teachers, brainstorm with librarians, and pilot books with small groups to help you try out new options. Consider the students’ reading levels and the presence of English-language learners, disabled students, and the gifted.

English-language learners in particular need support in acquiring not only the content and ideas from the books but must also gain proficiency with “academic language.” Academic language includes words used to describe complex ideas, higher-order thinking processes and abstract concepts. Examples include words used to describe a sequence (first, then, next, finally, last) or compare/contrast words (same, different, greater, smaller) or even ones to perform an academic task (list, describe, explain).

To reach emerging readers, consider using wordless books as part of your focused lessons. They, by their nature, are inclusive of children with limited language skills. They offer opportunities for peer discussions and expression of ideas and can be “read” using the same literacy skill strategies. One award-winning option is “The Lion and the Mouse” (Pinkney, 2010), which beautifully illustrates how one can overcome fear and show compassion.

**Create solid lesson plans:** You’ll need to be knowledgeable about building a high-quality school counseling curriculum lesson. Seek out teachers and mentors who use best practices in lesson planning and assessment. There are myriad formats, but most thoughtful lesson plans include the following elements:

**Learning objectives or targets:** Clearly define the pivotal points upon which your guidance lesson is focused.

**Key vocabulary:** Identify words you want students to be able to understand and use. Write these on the board at the beginning of the lesson, and reinforce them as you move through the lesson.

**Discussion questions:** To optimize your group sharing time, craft some key questions to promote student understanding. Be flexible; students may guide the discussion to a wonderful place you never expected.

**Activities:** Seek ways to increase peer interaction and ignite creativity. Students learn more if they are involved in constructing their own knowledge.

**Time allotments:** List the segments of your lesson, and block out time for each part of the lesson. Know ahead of time how to condense or extend to fit your time frame. You show respect to teachers by ending on time.

**Assessment strategies:** Check for understanding during the lesson to help you adjust your pacing and clarify instructions. Assess gains in student knowledge and skills at the conclusion of your lesson to ensure you hit the learning targets.

**Lesson expansion:** Offer extension activities for teachers and students who want to push further in the topic. Invite artwork to add to a school counseling bulletin board. Ask students to explain their new knowledge to a parent/guardian, or offer a similar book for the teacher to read as a follow up. If you read “Amazing Grace” to explore the topic of discrimination, “The Other Side” (Woodson, 2001) illustrates how two children learn to break down societal barriers on their backyard fence.

**Improve your teaching skills:** The craft of teaching is complex and involves a set of skills in which many of us are not extensively trained. When school counselors view themselves as educators and demonstrate a commitment to improvement, they can gain much-needed credibility in the eyes of the regular teaching staff.

- Observe and interview great teachers.
- Schedule structured teaching observations with an instructional mentor and meet to discuss the feedback.
- Practice using new technologies such as SMART Boards, document cameras and tablets to maximize your reach (and avoid snafus).
- Seek out workshops on areas of personal growth (e.g. classroom management, teaching to the multiple intelligences or English-language learners sheltered instruction).
- Make a habit of reflecting immediately following the lesson and use your notes on timing, materials, high points and low points to improve your practice.
- Create measurable learning targets, and develop informal and formal methods of assessing student gains in skills and/or knowledge.

The skillful use of children’s literature within a planned school counseling curriculum lesson is a great way to promote literacy skills. When school counselors show a commitment to effective teaching practices, we gain professional respect. When we pay attention to learning standards, we build a strong connection between school counseling topics and academic development. Most importantly, when we are viewed as collaborative supporters of student learning, teachers will be more likely to invite us into the classroom.

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Chris Owings is a former elementary school counselor and parent educator in Bellingham, Wash., whose favorite book is “The River Why” by David James Duncan.
POWERFUL STORIES
By forming a book club for incoming African-American ninth-graders, one Florida school helps them ease the transition into high school.

BY ANNE THOMAS, ED.S.

The broad spectrum of a K-12 school counseling degree and the everyday challenges educators encounter in a competition for a teenager’s attention in our electronic-device-driven society lead most secondary school counselors away from bibliocounseling at the high school level. Typically high school students enter with a love or hate attitude for reading. Unfortunately, even the students who love reading often can’t find the time in high school to select reading materials beyond classroom textbooks and standardized test preparation materials.

As a teacher, mother and school counselor I have always surrounded myself with books. In my office now, there are more than 50 adolescent novels for students to borrow.

Once Upon a Time
In 2000, I was hired as an English teacher for a brand new public, nonprofit, municipally-run charter school in Pembroke Pines, Fla. I worked toward my school counseling degree and transferred to the school counseling department by 2002. The system currently includes four elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school. Our system educates more than 5,000 students in grades K-12. Our high school enrollment is 1,720 students, and our bell schedule is a traditional six classes a day with 30 minutes of silent sustained reading (SSR) incorporated into the third-hour class schedule. Our school counseling department is divided by grade level. School counselors “loop” with the students from ninth through 12th grade.

With the start of a new freshmen class and the concern from administration that our lowest growth in adequate yearly progress (AYP) was our African-American students, I considered ways to be proactive with the incoming ninth-grade class. I approached the principal with the idea of starting an SSR book club for incoming African-American freshmen. He was interested and gave initial approval. Books share stories, elicit emotions and are springboards to so many topics and life events.

I was excited to see how using novels could help these incoming freshmen with their transition into high school.

We didn’t disaggregate data by individual student results but decided to open the book club to these students regardless of their previous academic
achievement. In my experiences with small-groups, having a mix of students with varying academic levels generally makes group discussions run smoother than grouping all students of like ability. Using our school demographic database, all incoming grade ninth-grade African-American students received a book club survey.

I’ve read hundreds of adolescent novels, reviewed current teen book award lists and solicited ideas from the school’s media specialist. Using this information, I selected novels written by minority authors with topics that could lead to many group discussions. The students were surveyed on the following adolescent novels: “The Skin I’m In,” “The Contender,” “Tears of a Tiger,” “Monster,” “Slam,” “We Beat the Streets: How a Friendship Pact Led to Success,” “Emako Blue,” “A Lesson Before Dying,” “Who Am I Without Him?,” “Like Sisters on the Homefront” and “The Legend of Buddy Bush.” The survey asked students to read the synopsis of each book and select one option for each novel. The options were:

• I have read this novel already.
• This novel seems interesting; I would read it.
• I would not be interested in this novel.
• Undecided; maybe I would read this novel.

We selected four novels based on the students’ responses. After compiling survey results, we sent the students a personalized letter inviting them to the book club and asked them to select, in order of preference, the books they’d like to read if they joined the book club. Also, the invitation gave students the opportunity to decline by checking, “Although this is a great opportunity, I am not interested.” We also mailed a letter to the parents of the interested students, allowing parents to opt out their children if desired.

Based on the interest from students, we decided we needed four groups, each with its own facilitator. The principal asked one assistant principal and a ninth-grade English teacher to join us in the groups.

Our groups began with a total of 59 students, who we divided based on book interest and a male-female balance among the groups. We gathered pre-group data based on the students’ first-quarter grade-point averages (GPAs) and eighth-grade scores on Florida’s Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) Reading Exam.

The media specialist ordered a dozen copies of each novel, and students checked out the novel as they would any other textbook. With four groups running simultaneously, the books could be rotated between groups so each group would eventually read: “Monster” and “Slam” by Walter Dean Myer, “We Beat the Streets: How a Friendship Pact Led to Success” by Three Doctors and “Tears of a Tiger” by Sharon Draper. It took most of the first nine weeks to plan, prepare and schedule the book club. For the second quarter, groups met every Tuesday and Thursday. Unfortunately, due to administrative schedules, the group moved to once a week for the third and fourth quarters of freshmen year.

In the first meeting, we established group rules and reinforced them at every meeting. Each week, facilitators received a “beginning, middle, end” sheet to initiate discussion and to guide students to stay on task. We developed reading schedules as some reading had to take place outside of the group meeting time and created activities based on chapters read and the individual needs of students observed by each facilitator.

Happily Ever After

Four students transferred after sophomore year and graduated from local area high schools, and one student moved out of state. The additional 55 book club members all graduated with a standard high school diploma. The students’ GPAs fluctuated, but at graduation more than half the students maintained a 2.5 or higher unweighted GPA. Data on the 10th grade FCAT Reading Exam provided positive results too. Only nine students scored below the minimum 300 and were required to retake the test during junior year. All 55 students met the testing requirements outlined by the Florida Department of Education.

As an added bonus, all four facilitators found group members were more likely to approach them outside group time and ask for assistance regarding peer-to-peer conflict mediations or to discuss postsecondary planning. Additionally, book club students were positive and respectful should their facilitator need to correct their behavior in hallways or the cafeteria.

Although the book club was not the only factor in the students’ success, it definitely helped in a positive transition to high school and provided the students consistent, individual attention in a freshmen class of 499 students.

At the end of their freshman year, the book club students completed a post-group survey. Overwhelmingly they asked to continue the book club in their sophomore year. The second year, the same group facilitators and students met once a week, in second and fourth quarters only. The book club transformed from novels to weekly small group topics ranging from study skills, stress, peer pressure, dating violence, gambling and postsecondary planning. In the second year, we organized a field trip to tour the University of Miami campus. The field trip was motivating and allowed students to have first-hand experience on a college campus. The students renamed the book club and even asked the principal if they could be in the yearbook under clubs and activities. It was a beneficial experience for the students and the facilitators.

Anne Thomas, Ed.S., is the guidance director at the City of Pembroke Pines Charter High School in Pembroke Pines, Fla. Her favorite book is “Stop Dressing Your Six-Year-Old Like a Skank: A Slightly Tarnished Southern Belle’s Words of Wisdom.” She can be reached at athomas@pinescharter.net.
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Middle school can be a quagmire for socially awkward students. Using bibliocounseling can help.

By Christy A. Clapper, Ph.D.
Middle school students are, by nature, awkward. Those most vulnerable to the ravages of the unpredictable environment of the middle school are those who fall high on the autism spectrum or those who are insecure in their social management skills. These children often fall prey to their more astute peers, who sniff out these weaknesses with blind abandon.

As school counselors, we see the socially awkward students frequently in our offices. Frustrated with how others treat them, they often cannot explain what they do not understand. They miss the nuances of relating and interpret many things literally. So their confusion is both evident and real. It gets in the way of their functioning in the classroom, the cafeteria and in every social experience. It sets them apart from others and makes them targets of untoward behaviors and comments. They feel rejected and hurt; they inappropriately respond, often making themselves bigger targets and more vulnerable to a cycle of mistreatment. School becomes an unfriendly place.
These kids know they are different. Yet their goals, aspirations, feelings and desires are really not so different from their peers. They are simply unable to respond in a typically appropriate manner because it’s just not natural for them. This is the missing piece for most kids in this population.

After years of collaborating with speech and language pathologists to deliver prescriptive social skills programming to autistic children, I heard about the book “Jarvis Clutch, Social Spy,” by Mel Levine. This book is fun and engaging for middle school readers, and I decided it might help us to address the underserved population of students who need a different type of social skills instruction.

The book is fiction but based on research and tells the first-person story of Jarvis, an eighth-grade student. Jarvis helps readers interpret the middle school world in which he lives every day. Dr. Levine, (the teaching voice) helps to explain this “world” to Jarvis, whose inquisitions become the topics of their interactions. As part of this process, Jarvis becomes a “social spy” in his school, journaling his experiences, noting what he sees others doing in different social situations. Through observation, “talking” to the reader, discussion with Dr. Levine and practice, Jarvis begins to develop more astute social skills. The highly engaging book is available with companion materials, as well as a Social Self-Spying Survey of Jarvis, an eighth-grade student.

Students were identified for the group either by their educational diagnosis or because teachers, administrators or I noticed they exhibited impairment in social relationships. It was their time away from the fray. Actually became friends with each other. It was an opportunity to help them gain attention and received it – right in the moment. It was an opportunity to help the students modify their interactions. As part of this process, Jarvis becomes a “social spy” in his school, journaling his experiences, noting what he sees others doing in different social situations. Through observation, “talking” to the reader, discussion with Dr. Levine and practice, Jarvis begins to develop more astute social skills. The highly engaging book is available with companion materials, as well as a Social Self-Spying Survey of Jarvis. It came as no surprise to us that the majority of the learning occurring in the group was “in-group training.” We seized every opportunity to teach about appropriate interaction in our insulated setting, from the student who monopolized every conversation, to the student who couldn’t stop shouting out, to the student who kept hitting to interact. Each observed behavior needed attention and received it – right in the moment. It was an opportunity to help the students modify their interactions in a safe setting.

During our school’s twice weekly scheduled intervention period, every student in the building was assigned to an intervention location and teacher for instruction, study or assistance. The Jarvis Group became an intervention period for these students once a week. We rotated the meeting locations between the school counseling office and the library so as not to stigmatize the group. We met once a week for eight weeks.

**Group Structure**

In our initial session, we established group rules and communicated how we would remind members of the Jarvis Group with a weekly reminder pass. We began with the initial survey, had students self-score them and identify a social goal from their own data they would like to improve upon through group participation. We kept their information secure to protect their privacy.

Group lessons always centered on a theme from the book and defining social concepts with examples and illustrations. We invited students to share their own experiences relative to these topics, and as a group, we would problem solve and practice strategies to help them be more socially astute in those situations. I developed weekly lessons and activities designed to couple Jarvis’ concepts with teaching skills needed by group members.

We learned quickly that getting group members to read independently would not be easy. I tried recording the book’s weekly readings to save time and sent them to the students electronically, to no avail. Because several of these students were struggling learners, we decided to use part of each session for reading selected parts of the story aloud and discussing the concepts. Although we gave the students journals for the students to record their observations (like Jarvis), they rarely did. Therefore, I designed activities for the meetings that would elicit their observations and combine the new concepts with skill practice. Then we discussed how they could incorporate the ideas into their own experiences. We reviewed previously learned content each week and encouraged them to be “social spies” in their own school.

It came as no surprise to us that the majority of the learning occurring in the group was “in-group training.” We seized every opportunity to teach about appropriate interaction in our insulated setting, from the student who monopolized every conversation, to the student who couldn’t stop shouting out, to the student who kept hitting to interact. Each observed behavior needed attention and received it – right in the moment. It was an opportunity to help the students modify their interactions in a safe setting. As time elapsed, they actually became friends with each other and looked forward to our meetings. It was their time away from the fray. In their own way, they had established unexpected trusting relationships with

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**DOWNLOAD**

peers and had learned how to interact appropriately with each during group time. And as facilitators, we became the social spies in the group.

After several weeks together, it was time to part. We reviewed members’ goals and had them elaborate on ways they could apply what they learned going forward. But before we parted, they wanted to plan a celebration. We felt it was in the group’s best interest for them to plan the event. It was amazing to watch their excitement. My co-facilitator and I provided very little guidance except to balance the overabundance of favorite junk food. It was a smashing success. The best part, however, was that we did “rounders.” I modeled this for the students by going around the table and complimenting each student for what he or she offered the group. Then it was their turn. What they had to say to each other was incredibly touching and sincere. They had come a long way in several weeks, learning from Jarvis, from each other and from us that there are solutions to the social issues they face in middle school, and they can manage them.

They also learned to appreciate each other as individuals, a gift they received in the group experience. Mostly, however, they learned how to relate to peers in a small-group setting and had reportedly begun to transfer new behaviors to other situations. It also helped that our co-facilitator spent daily time with most of the students in the classroom environment. She could observe them and encourage the use of new behaviors.

**What Jarvis Taught us**

“Jarvis Clutch, Social Spy” gave us a chance to address the social issues mildly socially challenged middle school students typically encounter. By developing an understanding of social concepts, practicing interactive skills, considering examples and models and incorporating them into real-life experiences, these students were able to improve the quality of their relationships.

Facilitators planning to use this book, or a similar one, for bibliocounseling should be flexible but have a plan. Time for practice and assimilation of new behaviors is important for this group; I recommend scheduling at least 45 minutes for group meetings to be most effective. The group’s needs should guide meeting frequency and duration.

And finally, because it is not a tightly structured experience and based mostly on student-reported data, this intervention should be reserved for a mildly impaired population of students, not those who need a highly prescriptive approach. All in all, the students and I found this intervention particularly helpful – and fun too.

Christy Clapper, Ph.D., is a retired elementary school counselor in Pennsylvania whose favorite book is currently “Broken for You” by Stephanie Kallos. She can be reached at christyclapper@gmail.com.
As a school counselor who works in two schools, I am always looking for new ways to support my students, their parents and the community. I believe building relationships with parents is as important as building them with students, and I want parents to know I am also a resource for them.

Last year during a monthly “idea swap” gathering of local school counselors, another school counselor shared the idea of hosting parent book clubs. I had belonged to book clubs in the past and enjoy reading and thought hosting a book club with parents at my schools was a great idea. I also believed we could select books that would help guide parents and prevent issues from becoming problems in the classroom. I learned a lot from having the courage to step out of my comfort zone – working with kids – and step into the world of parents.

Step one in starting this new adventure was getting both my principals on board. My plan was to do the book club during my regular working hours. I wasn’t sure if they would see the benefits of taking time away from the kids to work with the parents. I was pleasantly surprised when both of them were excited about the project and felt it served an important need at both schools. Our current parent education program consists of one-night events. A book club would give us and the parents a chance to delve deeper into various topics.

Book Selection
Picking the book was both fun and hard. There are so many great books out there that I was a little overwhelmed. The first year I picked “Raising Happiness,” by Christine Carter, the same book my fellow school counselor had used in her book club. She had talked about how great the book was, and it seemed interesting to me too. The 10 steps outlined in the book meshed perfectly with our planned five meetings, allowing us to discuss two steps per meeting. And, serendipitously, the school district foundation selected the author to speak at a donor event that year and included all the book club participants on the guest list.

Times and Locations
One of the biggest hurdles in starting the parent book club was figuring out when and where to have the meetings. I wanted parents from both of my schools to be able to attend, and I wanted to attract as many parents as possible. Selfishly, I did not want to do it at night. I’m a working mom and did not want to take that time away from my family. So the first year I held the book club I did a morning meeting at one school and an afternoon one at the other school and invited parents to come to whichever meeting worked best for them. The morning one had much larger and more consistent attendance. I usually had about 10 parents at each meeting with a core of seven who came every time. The afternoon had about 10 parents who came to at least one meeting, but we averaged only five parents at each meeting.

The second year, we partnered with a local book store and held the meeting there in the morning. It was a win-win. The bookstore had an increase in traffic, and I had a big room for the meeting. Some bookstores will let book groups register as an official group with them and then offer discounts on the books purchased for the book group. Public
libraries are another location option for the meetings.

Advertising the club was also important. I placed event notices on the school district website and in the newsletters, but I did most of my marketing via e-mail. I e-mailed parents I already had a working relationship with and invited them to come. Additionally, parents who heard about it through the grapevine or via the school district website or newsletter would e-mail me for more information. Once I had parents on my list, I continued to e-mail them each week regardless of whether or not they attended the meetings. I used these follow-up mailings to recap the meetings and share additional articles and resources I’d run across that meshed with that week’s meeting topic.

The Meetings
The actual meetings were pretty easy. The first year I brought coffee to the morning meetings and sometimes a parent might bring a snack. The second year when we had it at the bookstore it was next to a coffee house so most people brought their own. I would write down important phrases or topics I found interesting that might spark a good discussion. I started off each meeting by asking the parents what part of that week’s reading selection they liked. This gave everyone a chance to share opinions and be heard. But it is important for you to share and give the parents your insight as well. The parents are coming because they view you as the expert; they want to know what you think. Finding the right balance of allowing the parents to talk and share your thoughts is probably the hardest part of running the meetings.

Right from the beginning the book club was making connections with people in the community. I felt like it was paying off before I even started. My superintendent then asked me to do an in-service on happiness to our instructional aides. Then I was asked to do a class as part of a staff development with teachers. I had no idea doing a book club was going to lead to so many opportunities to work with my district as a whole.

The second year I picked “Mindset” by Carol Dweck. The book’s theme had come up in the classrooms, in parent discussions, at staff meetings and was becoming part of our daily dialogue. I really believed in the message – that we can all learn anything if we’re willing to work hard – and thought the parents would too. One of the school psychologists in our district really had a passion for the topic and asked if she could co-facilitate the book club. This was great news as she was a long-time district employee and had many parent connections.

Once again, book club participants were able to hear the author speak in person. One of my schools had built a strong relationship with the local public library, and when the library needed an author for its Friends of the Library author talk, we suggested the author of “Mindset,” who just happened to live in the area.

The best part of the book club was the sense of community that this brought for those that attended. They felt more connected to other parents. They learned from each other and gained some new skills. I also enjoyed that they got to know me so if they had any needs in the future I was an easy phone call or e-mail away. All in all, a community-wide parent book group proved to be a win-win situation. One I heartily recommend other school counselors try.

Nicole Scott is a school counselor with Menlo Park City School District, Calif., whose favorite book is “Where the Red Fern Grows” by Wilson Rawls. She can be reached at nscott@mpcsd.org.

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...we partnered with a local bookstore and held the meeting there in the morning.

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Do you plan on applying for Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) status this fall? Do you wish you could have an expert look over your in-progress application and tell you what’s good and what needs attention? Sign up for a RAMP Intensive Review session at the ASCA Annual Conference, June 30-July 3, 2013, in Philadelphia. This review session gives you and your colleagues two hours with a RAMP reviewer, going over the details of your application. The fee is $99 per school; that means you can bring your entire team that’s working on the application for one price. To register, download a registration form from www.schoolcounselor.org/files/RAMP preview.pdf. Please note, you must be a registered conference attendee to take advantage of this intensive review.

FREE MATERIALS FROM PROJECT UNIFY

People with intellectual disabilities are part of most schools but are often ignored and left out. Join us in a special pre-conference session on Sunday, June 30, 2013, in Philadelphia to discover the resources available through the Special Olympics Project UNIFY. These resources can be used as part of a school’s bully prevention efforts and school counseling program and improve the school’s climate and culture. Learn more about the service-learning-based lessons, online interactive games, campaigns, clubs and whole-school activities for after-school programs, leadership classes, recess or P.E. classes. Free materials will be distributed. There is no additional fee, but you must register in advance at unify@schoolcounselor.org. This special opportunity is only for registered conference attendees.

CORRECTION

In the article “Meant for Mentors” in the March/April 2013 issue, Kim Kelleher was incorrectly identified as being from Georgia. She is with New Hope Elementary School in Chapel Hill, N.C. Additionally, in the article “Keep the Fires Burning,” data about how implementing the ASCA National Model can lead to lower levels of burnout was miscited; the data are actually unpublished and from a presentation at the Southern Association of Counselor Education and Supervision. ASCA regrets the errors.

ASCA MEMBERS TESTIFY ON CAPITOL HILL

Three different ASCA members have recently testified on Capitol Hill on behalf of the school counseling profession.

On Feb. 27, 2013, Vincent Pompei from San Diego, Calif., testified in front of the U.S. House Education and the Workforce Committee in a hearing on “Protecting Students and Teachers: A Discussion on School Safety.”


In April, Nicole Pfleger from Smyrna, Ga., testified in front of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions in a hearing on “Safe and Supportive Schools: Lessons From the Field.”

Learn more or read some of the testimonies at www.schoolcounselor.org/legislative.
A FRAMEWORK FOR SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

ASCA and a number of other education organizations have called on Congress and the administration to enact school safety policies that will genuinely support the well-being and learning of students over the long term. These organizations released “A Framework to Safe and Successful Schools,” their joint recommendations for improved school safety and access to mental health services for students. Learn more or access the document at www.schoolcounselor.org/legislative.

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National Safety Month

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14 Flag Day
19 Emancipation Day

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June 30–July 3, 2013
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For information on advertising in ASCA School Counselor or in ASCA’s electronic publications or online, contact Ad Guidance at (877) 965-7492.
What's the one most important thing you’d tell other school counselors considering adding bibliocounseling to their program?

Choose good stories with embedded lessons rather than those that deliver predictable or moralized lessons. We want students to unearth and discover the lessons rather than having them forced upon them. If the story isn’t good, the message won’t be remembered.

–Karen Griffith, Berkeley Lake Elementary School, Duluth, Ga.

Use your librarian. Your school media staff should have access to multiple copies of titles through interlibrary loans. This makes it affordable and saves you the trouble of tracking them down. Further, this person can be a great resource for more ideas on titles and even students who might benefit from this type of group experience and are avid readers. Having some of those students in your group is essential.

–Cassie Poncelow, Fort Collins High School, Fort Collins, Colo.

Don’t be so intent on getting the book read that you don’t allow discussion as you read. Some things will be sparked that need to be explored. The book can always be finished later, conversations cannot.


This is a great opportunity to collaborate with other professionals. Work with your library media specialist, and co-lead groups on topics relevant to your students.

–Sara Williams, Unioto High School, Chillicothe, Ohio

Do not lead the students. Allow the students to garner their own meaning from the reading.

–Julie Merriman, Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas

Focus on the message/issue you want group members to benefit from, and encourage them to do a written reflection.

–T’Wana Warrick-Bell, Oxen Hill High School, Oxen Hill, Md.

Read the book, and get to know it well before you make any effort to present it to kids.

–Paula Stewart, Mountain City Elementary School and Doe Elementary School, Mountain City, Tenn.

Establish a good library of books. You will need many different reading levels and content areas.

–Amanda Fisher, Jefferson Elementary School, Dickinson, N.D.

Be sure to be completely familiar with the book and any themes that may come from the book, even if they are not what is expected. As students read, discuss and reflect themes may come forward that no one has been expecting.

–Louann Krogman, White River Elementary School, White River, S.D.

Students learn more from book characters than they ever do from “listening” to you.

–Laura Lee Kinard, Bryceville Elementary School, Bryceville, Fla.

Since I loose track of books easily, I have begun to place several copies of my favorite books for student use on reserve in the library. The students may access the books by asking for them by name at the desk. This saves me from having to do the awkward hounding routine to get them returned. The bonus is that the library will submit a book order for additional copies from its budget.

–Jill Stephenson, Aberdeen Central High School, Aberdeen, S.D.
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ASCA ANNUAL CONFERENCE LIVE WEBCAST

Can’t make it to Philadelphia June 30–July 3, 2013, to attend the ASCA Annual Conference, in person? Now you don’t have to miss out on the valuable professional development opportunities. You can watch selected conference sessions online from the comfort of your own home or office – in real-time or later on-demand.

ASCA will offer live webcasts of the following keynote addresses, pre-conference workshops and breakout sessions:

SUNDAY, JUNE 30, 2013
9 a.m.–12 p.m.
Pre-conference Workshop:
ASCA National Model I
0.3 CEUs/3 Contact Hours

1–4 p.m.
Pre-conference Workshop:
ASCA National Model II
0.3 CEUs/3 Contact Hours

5–6:30 p.m.
*Opening Keynote Address:
Chef Jeff Henderson, “From the Streets to the Stove”
0.15 CEUs/1.5 Contact Hours

MONDAY, JULY 1, 2013
9–10:15 a.m.
Liberty and Social Justice for All
0.125 CEUs/1.25 Contact Hours

10:45 a.m.–12 p.m.
School-Family-Community Partnerships
0.125 CEUs/1.25 Contact Hours

1:30–2:45 p.m.
Gain School Board Support
0.125 CEUs/1.25 Contact Hours

3:45–5 p.m.
Unleashing the Power of SMART Goals
0.125 CEUs/1.25 Contact Hours

TUESDAY, JULY 2, 2013
9–10:30 a.m.
*Keynote Address: David Marcus, “A is for Acceptance”
0.15 CEUs/1.5 Contact Hours

11:15–12:30 p.m.
Districtwide Student Support Services Teams and Accountability
0.125 CEUs/1.25 Contact Hours

1:30–4:30 p.m.
Tie Evidence-Based School Counseling to Mission and Goals
0.3 CEUs/3 Contact Hours

WEDNESDAY, JULY 3
9–10:15 a.m.
Tools to Increase Time With Students
0.125 CEUs/1.25 Contact Hours

10:30 a.m.–12 p.m.
*Keynote Address: Rachel Simmons, “The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls”
0.15 CEUs/1.5 Contact Hours

*keynote addresses only available live, not later on-demand

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• Located in the heart of Boston, Wentworth is surrounded by co-op opportunities, arts, music and cultural events.

• U.S. News & World Report ranked in the top 100 for “Best Colleges Specialty Rankings: Best Undergraduate Engineering Programs” for the second year

• Named a “Best in the Northeast” College by The Princeton Review on its website feature, “2012 Best Colleges: Region by Region” for five consecutive years