

# RISCA Newsletter



Fall/Winter 2011

President's Message, Russ Paone

I am so excited to be writing my first newsletter article as your Rhode Island School Counselor Association (RISCA) President. I am happy to report that our annual fall conference at the brand new New England Tech location in East Greenwich on Wednesday, September 28, 2011 turned out to be quite a worthwhile event. Upon check-in, members were greeted with a RISCA coffee mug complete with our fairly new logo and our website address. Next, thirty minutes of networking with fellow school counselors throughout the state was quite tasty with refreshments, cheese, crackers, vegetable, and scrumptious cookies all courtesy of our friends at New England Tech.

This year's keynote speaker was Elana Rosenberg of Youth Pride, Inc. Elana is currently serving as the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Coordinator there, and has presented advocacy programs to meet the social, emotional, and educational needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students for many years. Elana provided RISCA members with valuable information, videos, and hand-outs to help move from *toleration to acceptance* of our LGBTQ youth.

After a visit from RIDE's Sharon Lee who dispersed drafts of the Career and Tech. Ed. Regulations, members were asked to report to one of five breakout sessions. Each of these were implemented from past conference evaluations and feedback from the RISCA Governing Board. I won't go into detail, but I would like to point out that a concerted effort was made to provide timely breakout sessions that met the current needs of all of RI's K-12 school counselors.

Finally, our dinner started out with greetings from The Coalition of Advocates for Student Opportunities (CASO), and as we enjoyed the tasty food from the wonderful buffet, we honored this year's SPARCri winners as well as Dr. Patricia Nailor, our Lifetime Achievement Award winner.

Once again, I would like to invite each of our members to attend monthly board meetings held on the second Thursday of each month (please refer to list-serv updates for specifics), and to think about joining a committee so that you may one day partake in the planning and implementation of professional development (such as the fall conference) that helps to improve school counseling in our very own state.

Russ Paone, RISCA President

# RISCA Newsletter



Fall/Winter 2011

## **Making the Transition from School Counselor to Administrator**

**By Elizabeth Fasteson**

*Assistant Principal of Jenks/JMW School for  
the Arts*

*Former Guidance Chair at Shea High School*

Being a school counselor at Shea High School for six years was the best experience and training I could have asked for as I began my career as an administrator in Pawtucket last year. The counseling skills I learned have been invaluable as I deal with students, teachers and parents. As the assistant principal at Jenks / JMW School for the Visual and Performing Arts, I find myself dipping into my toolbox of counseling skills on a daily basis.

On the personal/social level, many of my interactions with students include mediations, which ultimately prevent fights and suspensions. Because of my counseling experience, I'm comfortable acting as a mediator and am able to quickly ascertain and dispatch problems. Other times I'm working with students on behavior modification. When students are sent out of class, I revert to various counseling theories as I work with students to reflect upon and change their behavior. Usually when students are acting out in class and being disruptive, there are underlying factors to their behaviors. I've made a number of appropriate referrals to our support staff from my office, comfortable in understanding the specific roles of school counselors, social workers and school psychologists.

There are also times when students and parents bring academic issues to me. Again, knowing the role of the school counselor allows me to include that person in the discussion and eventual solution.

Through the various RISCA workshops I've attended, I learned the importance of collecting and analyzing data. At the end of my first year as an administrator, I immersed myself in data reports on discipline and compared that year's reports to those of the previous year. When I presented my findings at the first faculty meeting this fall, I was able to announce that the suspension rate had declined, attendance had improved, and various types of infractions from the previous year had also improved. Not only did my data review allow me to reflect upon my practice, it buoyed the staff and validated the efforts they had made with our students.

I owe many of these successes to being a former school counselor and the collaboration with the support staff in my building. Because our students come with an array of personal and family issues, it is difficult to educate them until their mental health needs are addressed. The work done by our school counselors is an asset to the students and the school and makes the job of administrators much easier. From my perspective, a strong administrator and school counselor relationship, forged by collaboration and communication, is key to a successful school.

# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011

The Issue with Undocumented Students:  
Implications for School Counselors  
By Cindy Lancaster, School Counselor,  
McCourt Middle School, Cumberland

It seems you can't open the newspaper or watch the news without hearing something about undocumented students and "illegal immigrants." It is certainly controversial, and arguments from both sides tend to get passionate. But what about the school counselor faced with a student who does not have legal status? How should we respond as a profession? Both the ethical guidelines of the American Counseling Association (ACA) and ASCA indicate that counselors set aside their own personal and political views when counseling students. These guidelines have seen the profession through other controversial topics, such as LGQT issues and abortion. The issue facing counselors involving undocumented students is no different. We need to advocate for this marginalized population and help them achieve their goals.

On September 26, Rhode Island made the national news when the RI Board of Governors for Higher Education (RIBOG) allowed eligible undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at our state colleges, making the Ocean State the 13<sup>th</sup> state to do so. Undocumented students are eligible for in-state tuition if they have:

- Attended an approved Rhode Island High school for 3 years or more and continue to live in Rhode Island
- Graduated from a Rhode Island high school or received a GED
- Filed an affidavit stating that they have filed an application for lawful status or will do so as soon as he or she is eligible

Undocumented students, who were often brought to this country when they were very young, have broken no laws. Under the 1982 Supreme Court decision Plyler v. Doe, these students are entitled to a public education from K-12. When the decision was made, the Court held that educating children, regardless of immigration status, is essential for creating individuals who can function in society and contribute to the development of the United States. However, as they get close to graduating from high school, undocumented youth are faced with extreme challenges despite having lived in the United States for most of their lives and having adopted our culture, language, and values. They are unable to obtain financial aid, unable to obtain a driver's license, unable to join our military, unable to work legally. This recent policy change is a huge step which would make it more affordable for these students to further their education while seeking legal status, a complicated process that can take many years.

Some telltale signs that a student may be undocumented:

- Uses passport as a form of identification
- Refuses to complete the FAFSA, even though he or she is low income
- Reluctant to apply to college despite high achievement
- Fails to get driver's license
- Refuses to go on field trips out of the country

However, some students do not know their legal status and are shocked to learn they are without papers.

# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011

Here's how you can help:

- Be open minded. Avoid stereotypes about undocumented students. Don't make assumptions about which students are undocumented. They are not all Latinos, Spanish speaking or enrolled in ELL classes.
- Create a "safe zone" for your students to help foster a dialog. For good reason, undocumented students are fearful to disclose their legal status. Safe zone stickers are available free of charge from CASO, the Coalition of Advocates for Student Opportunities.
- Learn about private scholarships and loans in the Resource Guide available at CASO's website: [www.caso-ri.org](http://www.caso-ri.org). In it, you will find information about loans, private scholarships, as well as referrals for legal advice from an immigration attorney.
- Refer students to a reputable immigration attorney. Each case is unique and laws can be complicated.
- CASO also offers monthly support meetings for students and their families at the International Institute of Rhode Island, located at 645 Elmwood Avenue, Providence. Undocumented students can feel isolated. It is empowering for students to realize that they are not alone, that there are ways to become legal residents and that they can attend college. Plans are in

place for creating a support group in the Blackstone Valley area.

- Consider getting more involved. Contact CASO or me if you would like to participate in a committee of school counselors to help advocate for this population. Come to one of the monthly support group meetings and give the voice of school counselors.

Lastly, this is not an issue facing only urban schools. Undocumented students are all over Rhode Island. Many students have been given inaccurate information from their schools and have even been denied enrollment, which is against the law. Here are some contacts for even more information:

Contact Information:

- For more information on CASO , scholarships, and free "safe zone" stickers:
  - Marta V. Martínez,  
*César Chávez  
Scholarship Fund*
  - [marta@cesarchavezscholarshipsri.org](mailto:marta@cesarchavezscholarshipsri.org)
  - (401) 486-9095
- For information on monthly student support group:
  - Michelle DePlante,  
*International Institute  
of Rhode Island*
  - [mdeplante@iiri.org](mailto:mdeplante@iiri.org)
  - (401) 784-8644

# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011

- For legal questions:
  - Roberto Gonzalez, Esq.
  - [rgonzalez@robertogonzalezlaw.com](mailto:rgonzalez@robertogonzalezlaw.com)
  - (401) 432 - 7500
- For information on the DREAM Act:
  - Professor Kara Cebulko, Providence College
  - [kcebulko@providence.edu](mailto:kcebulko@providence.edu)
  - (401) 865 - 2515
- For information on ways to get more involved:
  - Cindy Lancaster, School Counselor, Cumberland
  - [cynthia.lancaster@cumberlandschools.org](mailto:cynthia.lancaster@cumberlandschools.org)
  - (401) 725-2092 x107

Sources: CASO; *Journal of College Admission*, Winter 2010; images from Google images



# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011



## Vocabulary Builder and Test Prep

Did you know WaytogoRI has Test Prep and a vocabulary builder for your students?

The Test Prep feature, one of our favorite tools on WaytogoRI, is located in the College Planning tab of WaytogoRI.org. There, students, their parents and teachers can prepare for the SAT, the ACT and the GRE. Test Prep also offers a vocabulary builder that can be used by students even if they are not going to take one of the standardized tests.

Here's a brief description of the features of Test Prep.

- Vocabulary Builder: it allows the students to build their vocabulary and to test themselves by storing the words and making them available for review. It can be used by all grades, even though it's stored in the College Planning section, because it offers words of ranging difficulty, as well as the definition, and the use of the word in a sentence.
- Word of the Day and Question of the Day: can be use in conjunction with the test prep, as preparation for an upcoming test or as a fun tool for a whole school or a group of students.
- Coaches: students can send an email to a teacher, advisor or parent so they can monitor their progress and support them in studying. Coaches receive periodical updates

on the student's progress for support and guidance.

- Time-sensitive: if a student enters a test date, the system will regulate to allow the student to work faster or slower depending on how much time he/she has.

## Getting off to a good start

If your students were in a different school last year, you will not be able to see their WaytogoRI account until they change their "connection" and add your school to their account.

For example, students were are in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade this year and used WaytogoRI in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at their middle school must change their profile before the high school team can see their account. The same is true if a student came from a different district.

By taking these easy steps to change the connection, you will be able to see the work the student did in previous years without losing any information or having to create a new account.

Follow these easy steps and help your students change their school on WaytogoRI.

1. Log in to the WaytogoRI account
2. Click on the **Your Portfolio** tab
3. Click on **Your Profile**
4. Click on **The Basics**

In the first box, you will see the name of the school the student is connected to and, below it, the link **Add Another Connection**.

5. Click on **Add Another Connection**

# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011

6. Find the current school's name and click on it
7. Click on **Continue**

Once the student is back to **The Basics** page, the student can delete the former school by clicking on the word **Remove** to the right of the school's name.

If a student has more than one connection, remember to make your school the Primary Connection.

## **Paws in Jobland Curriculum and Activities**

Are you looking for activities to do with your elementary school students? The Paws in Jobland curriculum can provide you with a wide array of ideas.

The curriculum, split for grades K-2 and 3-5, offers you over fifty lessons and activities appropriate for elementary school students. Many of the activities can be modified to accommodate students' learning styles and abilities.

Paws in Jobland, similar to WaytogoRI, is correlated to the ASCA standards and provides useful examples of ways to incorporate the standards into your work on Paws in Jobland.

If you would like a copy of the Paws in Jobland Curriculum, call us at 736-1100 or email us at [waytogori@riheaa.org](mailto:waytogori@riheaa.org).

## Book Review

By Belinda J. Wilkerson

This new resource for the college admissions process will do anything but put you to sleep! *College Admission: From Application to Acceptance, Step By Step* is a comprehensive, user-friendly resource by Robin Mamlet and Christine VanDeVelde. Sections, such as *Getting Organized, Becoming College-Bound, Where to Apply, and Applying*, help to alleviate the heart palpitations experienced by prospective students and assist their families with making informed decisions.

Mamlet, a former dean of admissions (Stanford, Swarthmore, and Sarah Lawrence) and VanDeVelde, a journalist, interviewed over 50 deans of admission and numerous other people involved in education (moi, included). Chapters on *Timing* (when to do what), *Paying* (more important than ever in today's economy), and *Deciding* round out the book ending with a section on *Special Circumstances* (e.g., athletes, learning differences, and undocumented students). Their web site, <http://collegeadmissionbook.com/> is full of added bonuses to complement the book; learn more about the college admissions process through their blog or newsletter and download some free

# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011

worksheets for your school counseling department.

Overall, this book is a valuable resource for the professional library of every school counseling department.



# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011

## Thank You

Friends and Colleagues,

I offer my heartfelt gratitude for the amazing honor RISCA bestowed on me at its Annual Fall Conference: A Lifetime Achievement Award! In my mind I still feel young, but this award helps place my career as a professional school counselor in perspective.

A very long time ago, during my first year of teaching, I visited Rhode Island College to speak with someone in the graduate office to decide in what area I should get a Masters' Degree. I have to admit, I had little knowledge of the process and no plan for my future as a professional (ILP's were not around at that time). I was very fortunate to be introduced to the school counselor program of study as I had gone to a parochial school with no guidance counselors and had no knowledge of this as a career pathway. Selecting school counseling as a profession was one of the most significant and rewarding choices of my life.

During my career I have met so many students who benefitted from my career choice. I met Destiny who had just re-entered public school from her stay at a residential treatment facility. She was unsure of how she would be accepted by her peers. I met Guillermo who had passed a man in the gutter and checked to see if he was dead or drunk (turned out to be the latter). Then there were the boys from Silver Lake who acted like thugs but were really kind and funny. I remember Janeesha who wanted to go to the high school with the science magnet, not because she liked science (she hated it) but because that school had baton twirlers and she wanted to be one. I wonder about them and how interacting with them made a difference in their lives.

The span of forty years has included a fulfilling career as a professional school counselor and has expanded my capacity for interacting with others. I have deepened my understating of the profession and the needs of students from the best minds in school counseling in the country. What an honor that has been. I have met school counselors in Rhode Island, across the United States and from around the world who have shared their stories and modeled good professional practice. I have been inspired by their passion for the profession I love.

I am humbled and honored to have been selected to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award, and recognize that so many of you are equally as worthy of recognition for the work you do to help our students grow and succeed. Again, I offer my deepest and most sincere thanks!



# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011



## What do Americans think about the public schools?

- We would favor our children becoming teachers, and having more science teachers is just as important as having more scientists.
- Half of us believe that unions are hurting public education; however, we're more likely to support union leaders than governors in disputes over teacher collective bargaining.
- Quality teaching is important; we prefer larger classes with more effective teachers over smaller classes with less effective teachers.
- We like charter schools, but not vouchers.
- Lack of money is the biggest problem of schools; poor discipline and drugs are not as significant as in the past.
- We're proud of our local schools, but are critical of schools nationally.
- We rate teachers higher than school administrators, administrators higher than school boards, and all of these higher than how well parents of public school children bring up their children.

These opinions and more are from the 43rd annual poll of Phi Delta Kappa (a professional education organization) and the Gallup Poll. Respondents were asked 41 questions, and

# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011

responses are often broken down by parental status, political affiliation, or other demographic group.

Although none of the questions directly address counseling, all have some general relevance to counselors, and some such as the two questions on support of military families are of greater interest to counselors.

Details on results of the poll are available at [www.pdkpoll.org](http://www.pdkpoll.org). A free app is also available at the iTunes store. In mid-August C-Span carried an excellent extensive discussion of the poll results and their implications which can be viewed by going to [www.cspan.org](http://www.cspan.org) and searching for "Public Opinion and U. S. Education." One of the commentators on this program was Anthony Carnavale, a well known expert and author on education and the work force, whose comments are very pertinent to those concerned with career education.



# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011



## **Overtures and Finales**

Here are some names from Cumberland:

retired from McCourt Middle School - Patricia Dias

newly hired at McCourt Middle School: Kerry Carlson and Cindy Lancaster (but I moved from one school to another, not sure if I should be included)

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I am a new counselor at Barrington High School this year. I replaced Guy Azza, who retired in June. I was a teacher in the math department at Barrington HS for the past 8 years.

Thank you,  
Stefanie

Stefanie Mezzanotte  
Guidance Counselor  
Barrington High School

# RISCA Newsletter



Fall/Winter 2011

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New Counselor Pattee Dipollino (replacing someone who moved to an elementary teaching job)

Chariho Regional School District, 455A Switch Road, Wood River Junction, Rhode Island, USA, [www.chariho.k12.ri.us](http://www.chariho.k12.ri.us)

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Debra Mancuso (retired from ??) is the new .4 school counselor for grade 5 @ Broad Rock Middle School in the South Kingstown school district.

Rose

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Cranston Public Schools

New elem counselor-Shelley Tragar (1.0FTE for ½ year)

New .4 FTE counselor at NEL/CPS Charter School- Jack Kelly (Retired from N. Prov HS Dir of Guidance after 40+ years)

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Lisa Borges...Tiverton High School...Lisa started last year at the high school and is doing great!  
Former math teacher.

# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011



## RISCA Board 2011-2012

<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>			<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>		
<b>President</b>	Russ Paone			<b>Middle Level VP</b>	Onna Mechanic-Holland		
<b>Past-President</b>	Don Labossiere			<b>Middle Rep</b>	Cynthia Lancaster		
<b>President-elect</b>	Dr. Tom Dukes			<b>Secondary VP</b>	Bill Pepin		
<b>Secretary</b>	Karen Carnevale			<b>Secondary Rep</b>	Linda Holliday Moitoza		
<b>Treasurer</b>	Carol Zimmerman			<b>Post-Secondary VP</b>	Erin Flynn		
<b>Elementary VP</b>	Laurie Garrity			<b>Post-Secondary Rep</b>	Barbara DiSaia		
<b>Elementary Rep</b>	Jillian Smith						

### Chairpersons 2011-2012

<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>			<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>		
<b>Budget</b>	Carol Zimmerman			<b>By-Laws &amp; Ethics</b>	Rose Majeika		
<b>Communications</b>	Leslie Conley Bill Izzi			<b>Data Management</b>	Vacant		
<b>Consultant &amp; Grants</b>	Ad Hoc			<b>Historian</b>	Arthur Lisi		
<b>Membership</b>	Michelle Kelley			<b>Nomination Committee</b>	Level Reps (see above)		
<b>Partnerships in the Community</b>	Cindy Lancaster			<b>Professional Development</b>	Tom Dukes Russ Paone		
<b>Public Policy, Legislation &amp; Professional Relations</b>	Bill Izzi			<b>Strategic and Annual Planning</b>	Arthur Lisi		

# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011

<b>Technology</b>	Bill Pepin		<b>Co-Executive Directors</b>	Jean Greco Pat Nailor	
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## Friends of RISCA

Karl Squier	Donna Tobin	
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# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011



# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011



# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011



# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011



# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011



# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011



# RISCA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2011

