Director’s Message

I am excited about this edition of the newsletter! It offers another opportunity to highlight the important impact that student support services have on the growth and performance of all students and, specifically, to highlight some of those services in Florida school districts.

Prevention and early intervention supports are high-priority student support services. Important research in the development of early warning systems enable schools to identify students at risk early and to provide effective and more cost-efficient services to support students getting back “on track” for school success. Brian McMahon’s article, “Early Warning System–Bridging the Gap!” (page 4), reflects the importance of this service.

The importance of attendance may seem obvious to most people, but the research clearly tells us that academic-engaged time is the best predictor of student growth. Donna Sicilian’s article, “Improving Student Attendance in Pinellas” (page 6), highlights the efforts of student services professionals in Pinellas County Schools and how they are addressing issues critical to school attendance.

Knowledge and skills in “trauma-informed” services and interventions is becoming more critical in our society and student support services personnel have significant skills to bring to these conversations and services. Curtis Jenkins’ addition to the newsletter “Trauma-Informed Schools” (page 11), focuses on trauma-sensitive schools and the impact they can have on student success. Speaking of student success, the stories from the field that highlight student services professionals and their activities that support students provide organic exemplars of what student services is all about—supporting student success! Enjoy and share this newsletter with others.

Dr. George Batsche
Co-Director
Student Support Services Project

Did you know...
The four partnership disciplines of Student Services are School Social Work, School Counseling, School Nursing and School Psychology.
How We Celebrated Student Services Week

Thank you... for joining us in celebrating Student Services Week!

We asked Florida Student Services Directors to share stories from their districts that highlight the impact of the work student services professionals do every day that contributes to the success of our students. Not only did these stories help us celebrate throughout the week, they provided a way for districts to see what their colleagues are involved in across our state.

In case you missed any Stories from the Field, click on the links below:

Day 1: https://spark.adobe.com/page/Whn4sHvR2jJjAoM/

Day 2: https://spark.adobe.com/page/EwudMRgiHIdY7/

Day 3: https://spark.adobe.com/page/VwzhQb2TSTpbl/

Day 4: https://spark.adobe.com/page/M18AFWn8YwN5R/

Day 5: https://spark.adobe.com/page/tYOKtE76oBbTP/

On behalf of the entire Student Support Services Team, we THANK YOU for your dedication to each and every student in Florida!

Keep reading for more Stories from the Field and please continue to share your stories with us. Stories from the Field are highlighted in our newsletters throughout the year.

Your Student Support Services Team!
A note from Jayna...

In the following article, you will hear from Brian McMahon, Performance Data Analyst, from Indian River County Schools. I had the pleasure of working with Brian and Dr. Christina Jacobs (previous district multi-tiered systems of supports [MTSS] contact) when I was a regional coordinator. I always enjoyed the positive collaboration and solution-oriented approach when we worked together. In recent years, improvements in technology and data systems have resulted in convenience for school leaders but have also introduced additional challenges (readily accessible data to all stakeholders, training for staff, etc.). I observed how helpful it was to have the support of Brian at the problem-solving table, providing ongoing insight and assistance related to early warning system (EWS) indicators in the data system.

Brian's article explores practical answers to the following questions:

1. How can our school leadership teams take EWS data and translate it to positive educational changes that effectively re-engage students before they drop out?
2. How can our district leadership team make the complex dropout problem we are facing in today's schools easily accessible to school leadership teams so that they can effectively intervene and re-engage students?

Enjoy the article and the newsletter!

Jayna Jenkins, Coordinator
Student Support Services Project

Did you know...

Dropping out of school is usually the culmination of a gradual process of disengagement from school. This means that by using EWS data, educators can intervene before it is too late!

Early Warning System–Bridging the Gap!

Brian McMahon, Performance Data Analyst
Indian River County Schools

Throughout education we endeavor to make the complex accessible and attainable. Whether the current buzz word is scaffolding, spiraling, differentiating or one of the myriad of others we frequently use, educators strive to create an instructional atmosphere that provides the framework for students of all abilities to succeed. Through my work with early warning indicators, I’ve found this same mantra holds true. Research has shown attendance, behavior and academic performance (among others) can predict drop out as early as sixth grade, with some suggesting predictive power in behaviors exhibited as early as first grade! But with every student unique in how they approach their educational career, every school diverse in their resources and staff, and each leader distinct in their abilities for data-based problem solving, how can school- and district-based leadership teams take early warning data and translate it to positive educational changes that effectively re-engage students before they drop out? How can we make the complex drop-out problem we are facing in today’s schools accessible to leadership teams so that they can effectively intervene and re-engage students?

A few years ago, I was afforded the opportunity to scale up this philosophy of making the complex accessible throughout my school district. I was given the job of a performance data analyst and was tasked with two primary goals: increase the access to appropriate measures of performance data and increase the capacity for using this data in problem solving. Having been involved in multiple “data committees” at both the school and district levels, I found the capacity for true data-based problem solving to be sporadic. There were times where I found leaders approach problem solving with a “Would you look at that??!” mentality. That is, problem solving would start with stakeholders staring at the data, but would quickly set the charts aside so the “real work” could begin. The extent to which data informed decision making was severely limited to gross generalities...

...continued
EWS–Bridging the Gap! (continued)

Whether this approach found its genesis in historical organizational norms or from a true lack of understanding of how to use data in problem solving, I found my passion for early warning indicators through working with school and district leaders on data-based problem solving. Here was an avenue in which I could use tangible data to highlight and identify students who were showing early signs of disengagement in order to guide leadership teams on data-based problem solving.

Three years ago, my superintendent at the time asked a few of us to deliver a training on data-based problem solving to school and district leaders at her “Superintendent’s Summit,” a two-day summit occurring each summer designed to set the tone for the upcoming school year. Mindful of both John Dewey’s ideas of learning as a social and interactive process and Jerome Bruner’s work on spiraled curriculum, we knew we needed to have the participants “work” through this training while centering the content on a situation that was both applicable and accessible. We decided to bridge the gap between two topics that had been, previous to this point, treated somewhat separately in our district: reading proficiency and student engagement. We paired student-level state and local proficiency data with three measures of engagement: attendance, discipline and course failures. The results were refreshing as leaders made data-based connections between academic achievement and behavioral engagement. I remember one leader in particular making the conclusion, “Before we look to change our reading curriculum, we need to get kids to come to school to see if it really works in the first place!”

Building off of the success of this training, our district expanded our access to early warning indicators and the ability to match these indicators to academic achievement data through a partnership with Performance Matters, our Automated Data Management System provider. Through this partnership, we were able to effectively engage a variety of stakeholders to refine how our district approached early warning indicators and design interventions to effectively and efficiently re-engage students before they drop out.

So how are we doing? In a world of educational accountability, I realize it’s not enough to say we are making improvements, we need to show them. Well, in Indian River, our graduation rate has improved from 79.1 percent in 2013-14 when we started using an EWS, to 87.2 percent in 2015-16, an 8.1 percent increase over three years! That translates to an additional 85-95 students graduating each year! While we still have a long way to go, I believe our work on early warning indicators will continue to be refined and used in data-based problem solving.

For more information on how we implemented an EWS, there are two articles published on Indian River’s process:

Improving Student Attendance in Pinellas

Donna Sicilian
Executive Director, Student Services
Pinellas County Schools

There have been many efforts made to improve student attendance this school year. In late July we launched the Attendance Awareness Campaign with the support of the Juvenile Welfare Board. Every school has an icon that families can simply click on to report a student’s absence, and usage reports show this is being frequently utilized in many schools.

We have added codes in Focus (district student information system) that will provide useful data for school teams to problem solve attendance issues in their Child Study Team and School-Based Leadership Team meetings. We have been recognizing the schools with the most-improved attendance quarterly at the Superintendent's Leadership Meeting and will have most improved overall awards at the end of the year. We made changes to attendance letters that schools send to families, aligning them to what research has proven to be the most effective strategies. Every school has been given problem-solving rubrics that will facilitate identifying Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions, thus freeing up resources to focus on fewer individual students. There is now a form to allow elementary and middle schools to withdraw students for whom all efforts to locate have been exhausted, but there is no request for records from another district.

Student Services and other staff have been involved in ongoing training around problem solving for attendance and many of us put great effort into researching and learning what is working around the country to reduce student absences. Several schools in the district have implemented some very impressive incentive programs and many have held attendance pep rallies that have included speakers and performers.

So the question on the table is, “Are we seeing any results?” The answer is YES! At the end of November 2016, we had 72 out of 123 schools that had improved student attendance from November 2015. That is 63.4 percent! Also, we had the highest number ever of schools in the “green,” meaning schools with fewer than 10 percent of their students missed 10 percent of school to date. We would love to have all students attending every day but we know there are some legitimate reasons for absences. Our goal is to maintain a district attendance rate of 95 percent for all schools, and implement an attendance incentive program and conduct attendance monitoring for students missing 10 percent or more days in order to reduce the number of students with absences of 21 or more days.

At the district level, our work is to support your efforts at schools. It is time to think outside the box; no idea is too far fetched! With this focus on student attendance, district leadership is eager to align and distribute resources to these efforts. Let us know your ideas and what we can do to help. We will be visiting school teams whose data shows some additional support is needed and we are glad to come to other schools as requested. Contact Student Services or your MTSS area specialist for further information. Together we can achieve our goal and increase student success!
Kindness “Rocks” in Santa Rosa County

Adapted from an article by Sue Straughn
WEAR TV

During National School Counseling week, Student Services Director Sherry Smith highlighted how counselors work with students to send positive messages throughout the town. Stacey Price, an elementary school counselor, brought the “Great Kindness Challenge” to Dixon Primary School by having her students paint inspiring messages on rocks to give away that will bring joy to someone and a smile to someone’s face.

Also encouraged by Ms. Price, students are working their way through a list of ways they can meet the goals set forth by the Great Kindness Challenge in their community. Some ideas on the list include: smile at 25 people; take a treat to your local firefighters; do a household chore without being asked; and pick up trash in your neighborhood.

Price beams with pride over what these children are doing, saying “I would love for the kindness starting here with kindergarten through second grade to advance as they grow and mature into older adults.” According to Price, this “makes our community better and if you do little things, it can make big changes.”

To view the full article by Sue Straughn, visit http://weartv.com/features/angels-in-our-midst/students-take-part-in-great-kindness-challenge.

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Celebrating Student Services Week in Indian River County Schools

Shared by Keondra Eberhardt
Student Support Specialist
Indian River County Schools

Students helped celebrate the support Ms. Eberhardt offers by decorating her door during Student Services Week!

Keondra Eberhardt, in collaboration with the staff at the Alternative Center for Education, provides several activities to support students. These activities include:

◊ **Winters Walk Tall** Every Thursday a deputy from the Indian River County Sheriffs office speaks to all students regarding a character trait that we focus on in homeroom each week. It ties the character traits into real-life situations with the students. This is profound for our students, as 90 percent of them are on probation, so they have issues with law enforcement and it gives them the opportunity to speak and be heard.

◊ In homeroom class, we focus on a character trait each week such as: perseverance, goal setting, self-control, respect, courage and caring.

◊ This year, we started a homeroom project with the Pelican Island Audubon Society. Each homeroom has a garden where they grow and nurture plants.

◊ **The Substance Abuse Council** had a therapist who came in and had a “tea party” with all middle and high school girls. After counseling with the girls, they all informed me they never had experienced a tea party before, so we made it happen! The therapist used all the different kinds of teas and related it to the social/emotional pressures young teens face in today’s society.
**Evaluation and Eligibility Components Coming to PEER**

The Student Support Services Project is pleased to announce some exciting new features being developed within PEER, also known as the Portal to Exceptional Education Resources. PEER is the online application provided by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) to develop individual educational plans, which are used by more than 52 school districts throughout Florida.

PEER is developing four new features that will be available to users for the purposes of conducting evaluations and determining eligibility. They include the following components:

◊ Notice and Consent for Initial Evaluation
◊ Notice and Consent for Re-evaluation
◊ Notice of Eligibility/Ineligibility
◊ Notice and Consent for the Initial Provision of Exceptional Student Education Services

These items will be available for review in our TEST environment in the near future. To learn more about the new features, or to view them in the TEST environment, please contact PEERSupport@fldoe.org or call Bethany Mathers, policy and program analyst, at 850-245-0923.

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**Florida Virtual College Week: Online, Free, State-Sponsored, Expert Advice**

FloridaShines will host its first ever Virtual College Week. The live three-day event will feature presentations from experts in the areas of college preparation, admissions, financial aid and more. Representatives from the Florida College System, State University System, FDOE and others will participate.

**High School Counselors: Guidance for Guidance**
Tuesday, April 4, 2017, 4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)
Get the latest information from FDOE, including resources and services from FloridaShines and MyCareerShines, and academic advisement strategies from the field, to help you support your students with the education and career-planning process.

**High School Students: College 101**
Wednesday, April 5, 2017, 4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m., EDT
Get insight on the admissions process, find out how to earn college credit while you are still in high school, and learn what resources are available to help you succeed in college.

**Parents: Surviving College with Your Student**
Thursday, April 6, 2017, 4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m., EDT
Learn how to pay for college without breaking the bank and how to help your student successfully transition to college.

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Who Should Attend:
Florida High School Juniors, Seniors, Parents, Counselors and Educational Professionals

Visit VirtualCollegeWeek.org for more information.
What's New?

U.S. Supreme Court Case Regarding Service Animals

In a unanimous decision, the U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled that exhaustion of administrative procedures is unnecessary when the essence of the complaint is something other than denial of a free appropriate public education. Fry v. Napoleon Community Schools, 2017, No. 15-497, may be viewed at http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/15-497.html. As noted in this service animal case, as well as Alboniga v. School Bd. Of Broward, Fla., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is not the only federal law that pertains to students with disabilities. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) are two antidiscrimination laws that cover adults and children with disabilities in both public schools and other settings.

“Updated Guidelines for the Use of Service Animals by Students with Disabilities (2015),” available at http://sss.usf.edu/resources/topic/section504/index.html, outlines required components to consider regarding policy, practices and procedures pertaining to parent requests for a service animal to accompany the student to school.

2017-18 Financial Aid Deadlines for the Class of 2017

The 2017-18 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Deadlines includes deadlines for all states.

Federal Deadline
Online applications must be submitted by midnight Central Daylight Time (CDT), June 30, 2018. Any corrections or updates must be submitted by midnight CDT, September 15, 2018.

State Deadline
Florida - May 15, 2017 (date processed)

College Deadline
High school students should be encouraged to check with the college that they are interested in attending. Students may also want to ask their college about its definition of an application deadline - whether it is the date the college receives their FAFSA or the date their FAFSA is processed.
The American School Counselor Association provides professional development webinars throughout the year. Upcoming are two webinars your student services professionals may like to participate in. Please visit 2017 Webinar Series for registration information and to view other webinars you may be interested in.

**College Readiness Support for Homeless Youth**  
**Date:** April 13, 2017, 2:00 p.m., EDT

Learn more about a new requirement under Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for school counselors to assist homeless youth with college readiness and preparation. Hear specific strategies school counselors can use to encourage a college-going mindset among homeless youth and help these youth cover college application expenses.

Upon completion of this webinar, attendees should be able to:

◊ Discuss the dynamics of family and youth homelessness, including the causes of family and youth homelessness, the effects of homelessness on education, and the educational supports needed by homeless youth
◊ Explain the new ESSA requirement for school counselors to assist homeless youth with college readiness and preparation
◊ Identify support available for homeless youth to cover college application and tuition expenses, including available waivers and federal financial aid assistance
◊ Recognize how to connect with the local homeless education liaison in their school district

**Trauma-Informed Care**  
**Date:** May 4, 2017, 3:00 p.m., EDT

Learn how you can improve academic achievement, school climate, teacher satisfaction, new teacher retention, reduction of student behavioral outbursts, office referrals, and stress for staff and students. Discover how you can lead the effort as a school counselor.

Upon completion of this webinar, participants should be able to:

◊ Discuss the prevalence and impact of trauma;
◊ Brainstorm ways to develop a leadership role within your district regarding trauma-informed care;
◊ Brainstorm ways to collaborate with local agencies;
◊ List the benefits of professional development on trauma-informed care; and
◊ Identify the benefits of every employee using trauma-informed care.

You do not have to be a school counselor or a member to participate. Nonmember fee is $5.00.
Medicaid Certified School Match Program Funding for Services Provided in Private and Charter Schools

The 2016 Florida Legislature appropriated funding to be used for state match for services outlined in the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration’s Medicaid Certified School Match Program. Currently, charter schools may only participate in the program through the charter school’s local school district. Private schools have not been eligible providers in the program. The state Medicaid agency has submitted a Medicaid state plan amendment to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to add private and charter schools as providers in the program. Districts will be notified when the state plan has been approved and policy adopted.

Trauma-Informed Schools

Research is clear that adverse childhood experiences affect a person’s brain development and can lead to a lifetime of physical and mental health problems, including alcoholism, depression, heart disease and diabetes. In children, the experiences may manifest themselves in developmental delays, behavior problems, and a lack of concentration and memory. These barriers can make learning extremely difficult unless school personnel are knowledgeable of childhood trauma and its effects.

A trauma-sensitive school is a safe and respectful place that helps students with trauma to build relationships with adults and peers, self-regulate their emotions and behaviors, and ultimately succeed academically. School counselors are in an excellent position to get schools started with trauma-informed supports. They can begin by expanding their knowledge about the topic, introduce it to leadership and develop a plan for additional staff training.

According to the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (traumasensitiveschools.org), trauma-sensitive schools have six core attributes:

◊ Shared understanding among all staff and a whole-school approach to being trauma sensitive
◊ Safety for all children – physical, social and emotional, and academic
◊ Consideration of their relationships, self-regulation, academic competence, and physical and emotional well-being when addressing students’ needs
◊ Connection of students to the school community and opportunities to practice new skills
◊ Embraced teamwork and shared staff responsibility for all students
◊ Leaders’ and staff members’ anticipation of and adaptation to students’ ever-changing needs

Changes to create a trauma-informed school benefit all students. By helping students learn self-regulation, impulse control, self-control and deep-breathing exercises to ease the effects of trauma, schools will also help students do better academically. Ultimately these efforts will engage students, help reduce suspensions and increase graduation rates, making the whole school more productive.
Reminder!

The Section 504 Online Introductory Course is free, available to all professionals and can be used toward partial completion of the 20 in-service points required for recertification for teaching students with disabilities!

The Section 504 Online Introductory Course is a 10-module, self-paced study that provides an overview of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The course is designed to assist student services professionals and other individuals responsible for the education of students with disabilities.

The course modules cover a variety of topics including the definition of a disability under Section 504; child find; evaluation requirements; eligibility determination; development and implementation of a Section 504 plan; medical conditions and individual health care plans; procedural safeguards; and disciplinary protections. The online course also includes a chart that illustrates similarities and differences between Section 504 and IDEA and a module addressing the application of Section 504 to postsecondary programs and activities, including career and technical education.

The online course modules provide an opportunity for individual or group professional development. Participants completing the online course, which includes pre- and post-tests and suggested readings, will be awarded a certificate and three in-service points. If approved by the district, the in-service points may be used toward partial completion of the 20 in-service points required for recertification for teaching students with disabilities.

The Section 504 Course is available on the Student Support Services website at http://sss.usf.edu/resources/topic/section504/504course/index.html.

Did you know...
The Section 504 Online Introductory Course is free and available to all professionals.
What’s Happening

The 2017 Florida Regular Legislative Session began on Tuesday, March 7, 2017, and will be in session until May 5, 2017. The 2017 Legislative calendar is published at http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Calendars/2017

Florida School Health Association Annual Conference and Training

May 17-19, 2017, the Rosen Centre Hotel, Orlando, Florida. For additional information and to register for this conference, visit http://fsha.net/conferences/

National Association of School Nurses 49th Annual Conference

June 30-July 3, 2017, the Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina, San Diego, California. For additional information and to register for this conference, visit https://www.nasn.org/

American School Counselor Association Annual Conference

July 8-11, 2017, the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel, Denver, Colorado. For additional information and to register for this conference visit, https://www.ascaconferences.org/

State University System Fall Directors of Admissions Tour 2017

Week 1
Tuesday, August 29
University of South Florida

Wednesday, August 30
New College

Thursday, August 31
Florida International University

Friday, September 1
Florida Atlantic University

Week 2
Wednesday, September 6
Florida State University (Panama City)

Thursday, September 7
University of North Florida

Friday, September 8
University of Central Florida

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