Student and Faculty Research Confidentiality Ethics

By Susan Pizzolato

Dr. Patrick Akos and Susan Pizzolato, a school counseling student, recently submitted a paper entitled “Defining the School Counseling Relationship: Confidentiality Revisited” to the journal Counseling and Values.

Akos and Pizzolato began working together on this project in the summer of 2015 after Pizzolato expressed interest in completing an independent study. Pizzolato had just finished taking Akos’ course on counseling ethics and was excited to have the opportunity to put her newfound knowledge to work. Akos had started writing a paper focused on issues surrounding confidentiality in the school counseling profession, and he wanted Pizzolato to help him formalize his ideas, continue to research the topic, and produce a paper reflecting their findings and a new proposition.

As often happens in research, the topic of the paper quickly shifted as Akos and Pizzolato began exchanging ideas and delving into the relevant literature. The paper discusses the counseling relationship in professional and school counseling and how the definition of the counseling relationship dictates policies regarding informed consent and confidentiality. Due to the school counselor’s varying role, the literature is unclear as to when a school counselor and student enter an official counseling relationship. In professional counseling, the client must give informed consent and enter an official counseling relationship with their counselor before confidentiality is guaranteed. However, school counselors rarely obtain informed consent and enter formal counseling relationships with their students. Thus, according to certain ethical standards, school counselors are technically not required to provide their students with confidentiality until they do so. In response, we propose that the counseling relationship start as soon as a student is assigned to a school counselor’s caseload in order to provide clarity and ensure confidentiality for each student.

Akos and Pizzolato await a decision regarding whether or not their paper will be accepted and published by the journal. Pizzolato commented that she learned a lot from this experience and enjoyed the opportunity to work on this project. “I liked reading what others had to say about ethical issues in school counseling,” added Pizzolato, “and I liked being able to challenge existing ideas while presenting new ones.”
School Counselor of the Year

UNC School Counseling alumn Kim Reykdal and professor Dr. Patrick Akos attended the 2016 School Counselor of the Year ceremony at the White House on January 29th. Reykdal, currently a school counselor at Olympia High School in Olympia, Washington, was one of six national finalists invited to attend. The event, which was also attended by First Lady Michelle Obama, recognized Katherine Pastor, counselor at Flagstaff High School in Flagstaff, Arizona, as the 2016 School Counselor of the Year. The honor is awarded to one counselor each year by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) for exemplifying exceptional advocacy, innovation, and leadership in the field. In 2012, Nicole Pfleger, UNC School Counseling alumna from the class of 2006, was named School Counselor of the Year.

Dr. Akos was involved in the event at the White House for the second time through his role as a member of the ASCA Board of Directors. This year marks the final year of his three year term as a board member. The ASCA Board of Directors meets approximately five times a year. Responsibilities of the board include establishing ASCA policies, monitoring the progress of the executive director, budgetary planning, and preparing for special events such as the School Counselor of the Year ceremony.

Kim Reykdal, 2016 School Counselor of the Year Finalist

Upcoming Events

- Applied Investigations Poster Presentations
  9:30 AM
  April 25, 2016
  Peabody Hall 02

- School of Education Reception for Candidates and Guests
  6:00-8:00 PM
  May 6, 2016
  George Watts Hill Alumni Center

- School of Education Commencement
  1:00 PM
  May 7, 2016
  Dean Smith Center

- UNC Spring Commencement
  9:00 AM
  May 8, 2016
  Kenan Memorial Stadium

- New Student Orientation and Awards Ceremony
  6:00-8:00 PM
  May 25, 2016
  Carolina Center for Educational Excellence

- Leadership Development Day for 2015-16 Cohort
  10:00 AM-5:00 PM
  July 15th, 2016
  Carolina Center for Outdoor Education

- 2015-16 Cohort End of Year Party
  3:30-7:30 PM
  July 16th, 2016
  Lochmere Highlands Club House, Cary

- Site Supervising Training for 2016-17 Cohort
  9:00 AM-12:00 PM
  August 19, 2016
  Carolina Center for Educational Excellence
Creating Effective Family-School-Community Partnerships to Serve Minority Populations

By Elisabeth Arriero

The American School Counselors Association’s National Model couldn’t be clearer: The most effective school counselors are those who know how to collaborate.

This winter, I explored the effectiveness of family-school-community partnerships when I launched a Latino empowerment program at my high school. My goal: To create a program that enhanced Latino pride, improved academic performance and increased college-going rates among Latino students by harnessing the powers of parental involvement, cultural identity development and community engagement.

The weeks leading up to the orientation were incredibly stressful. I wanted everything to be perfect before the program’s orientation night. My supervisor said the reality, however, is that most school initiatives are like that commercial where the engineers are building the plane while it’s already flying.

And to a great extent, that’s been my experience. I started with a blueprint for how I wanted the program to look but there were some things for which I couldn’t plan. What’s amazed me, however, is how the family, school and community partnerships have filled in those gaps along the way.

Here are some takeaways I have from the experience:

- **Start with your allies in the school and then branch out.** My friendship with the school’s career development coordinator led to a referral to a teacher whose class could provide meals for us. My chat with the ESL teacher led to my meeting another teacher who could donate toys to our childcare services.

- **Use data to support your programming and get buy in from administrators.** I used school data about how Latino students had the lowest graduation rates in order to get buy in (and funding) from my principal.

- **Don’t forget that the families are a resource.** I gave the parents a needs assessment to help inform my programming for their children and also scheduled two family potluck nights to create vested interest.

- **When you’re looking for donations, skip the email and pick up the phone.** Emails that I sent almost always went unanswered. When I picked up the phone and asked for a restaurant manager, however, I usually had a donation extended to me within a couple of minutes.

- **Remember your passion is your best advocate.** Let your passion for your students shine through and you’ll find it’s easy to recruit allies.
Students Facilitate Transitioning Together
Support Group for Parents of Teens with ASD

By Rachel Krauza

Over the fall and spring semesters, Bryce Gibbs and I, Rachel Krauza, have been participating in a program sponsored by Center of Secondary Education for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (CSESA) called Transitioning Together. Transitioning Together is a project designed to support parents of high school students who are preparing for the post-secondary transition. First, parents are contacted to participate through the school and facilitators meet with parents individually to learn more about their family, student and what their experience has been like raising a child with ASD.

Once the facilitators have met the families, they meet once a week for approximately eight weeks to discuss topics related to their student and to collaborate through problem solving sessions. The topics of the group sessions vary from the history and background of ASD, legal issues surrounding adulthood, vocational rehabilitation services, and more. The problem solving sessions are designed with a solution-focused model where parents decide on a common issue they face with their students and then collaborate on solutions that they have tried already or think of during the session. This part of the group allows for the parents to choose the area that they need the most help with, and then allows other parents to assist in providing potential answers or solutions. This solution-focused problem solving model is very similar to solution-focused counseling because it does not dwell on the problem or the past and it implies that the parents already have all of the answers based on their own knowledge and experiences.

Being a part of this program allowed us to see into the lives of families who are passionate about seeing their children succeed in life after high school. Participating in this group also helped us to see the daily problems that parents face raising teenagers with ASD. Many parents felt that after elementary school, the supports that they had for their children with ASD disappeared and they were left to figure out parenting on their own. It was sad to see how frustrated some parents were, but it was so rewarding to see them receive that support again from this program. I felt inadequate at many times to be teaching parents about how to work with their own children when not only am I not a parent but I am also not an expert in the Autism

Continued on next page
Continued from Page 4

field. The parents in this program, however, were very receptive of every presentation I gave and I was able to use my counseling skills to listen to them and learn from them as well.

Overall, I would recommend this program to anyone who wanted to be a part of it! Whether a parent interested in joining or a volunteer interested in facilitating, it is such a rewarding experience and such a desperate need in our community. Partnering with parents of high school students with ASD who are preparing for the post-secondary transition is just another way to connect stakeholders with resources so that students can have equitable access to the education and opportunities that are available to them.

New Summer Courses Offered

The school counseling program is introducing two exciting new courses this summer. The incoming 2016-17 cohort will enroll in College Access and College Counseling which will explore the role of the school counselor in creating a college going culture and advocating for college access in elementary, middle, and high schools. Students will become familiar with the multitude of academic, social, and emotional components of transitioning to postsecondary education and ultimately design an intervention that could be implemented in their internship. Professor Gwen Rouhlac, a new addition to the program’s non-core faculty, will teach the course. Professor Rouhlac brings enthusiasm and acumen to the topic. During her tenure as a school counselor she was readily involved in college related services such as post-graduation planning, college visit field trips, application week events, and financial aid assistance. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) showcased UNC's school counseling program in their social media "spotlight" campaign in January for their efforts in training school counselors to be leaders in college access and college counseling.

Outgoing students in the 2015-16 cohort will have the option to take a Special Topics course taught by Dr. Dana Griffin. This course will cover the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-V, giving special attention to the most common disorders diagnosed in minors. This new offering is in response to the growing number of students with diagnoses and the need for school counselors to have a working familiarity with mental disorders. The course will prepare students to provide appropriate interventions for all students, including those with mental disorders, in the context of a school counseling program. While the course contains serious topics, Dr. Griffin expects it to be a lot of fun and even hints that movie buffs will not be disappointed.

For additional information and contacts visit: http://soe.unc.edu/academics/med_sch_counseling