

The Alberta Counsellor

February 2016



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GuidanceCouncil
of the Alberta Teachers' Association



The Alberta Teachers' Association

Editorial



Happy New Year!

It is always symbolic when we begin a new year and, theoretically, start fresh. 2016 has started out to be a wonderful year with regard to advocacy and advances in counselling practices in Alberta. This

edition of *Counselletter* includes reports and articles from our council's regional presidents, and from our 2016 conference director about the divergent professional development opportunities available to helping professionals around our province. It always excites me to see such a plethora of avenues for counsellors to access training in the 21st century, perhaps because I work in a somewhat isolated part of the province. If you have any questions or information regarding upcoming professional development opportunities, please pass along the information so we can inform our members via our website and newsletter.

Along with a fresh start, a new year often also brings about changes and growth. This year brings about many changes within the Guidance Council, many of which will be discussed in this newsletter. One of these changes will be a new editor for *Counselletter*. Nicole Drysdale offers much experience to our council. She is welcomed to the Guidance Council executive, and I know I speak for everyone when I say we look forward to collaborating further with her and with the other new executive and council members who have recently joined us.

My position within the council may be changing; however, I look forward to advocating for counsellors, students and teachers in a different capacity. My hope for the year is that we all continue to be energized and inspired to see the beauty in the small things, and pay that forward to everyone we encounter daily.

Krista Bernard



Greetings, colleagues!

I am excited to introduce myself as the new *Counselletter* editor, beginning with the June 2016 edition. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Krista Bernard for her time and energy as the past newsletter editor, and I

wish her well in her new position as vice-president of the Guidance Council executive.

I am currently a full-time counsellor at W P Wagner High School, in Edmonton. I am quite new to the profession of school counselling, being in my third year in the position of a school counsellor. Before moving into this position, I was an educator for many years, mostly at the high school level. I have worked in large high schools and in smaller junior high settings; my most recent teaching experience was with high school outreach. It was while I was working with outreach students that I realized how impactful a positive relationship can have in a struggling student's life. I also felt, at times, very inadequate at meeting some of the very complex needs of some of the students I interacted with. I felt that specialized training could increase my skill set and allow greater job effectiveness. I have since completed an MEd in school counselling at the University of Alberta.

Being relatively new to the profession, this is also my first experience with being part of the Guidance Council executive. My interest in being part of the executive is to maintain and cultivate collegial ties. One of the most valuable learning experiences I obtained from my master's program was the opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues. It was critically important when working with highly complex cases. I believe that having a team to generate ideas and give feedback and suggestions both benefits a counsellor's practice and increases positive outcomes for students.

I also look forward to hearing from you. Any suggestions or ideas for submissions to the newsletter will be gratefully accepted.

Nicole Drysdale

President's Message



Hello ATA Guidance Council members, and Happy New Year!

I would like to introduce myself as the new president of the ATA Guidance Council. I have been involved with the Guidance Council as president-elect, regional

president and conference director.

Professionally, I have worked as a school counsellor at the elementary and junior high levels and will now be embarking on a new role as a high school counsellor with Calgary Catholic School District. Previously, I have also been an assistant principal, and a coordinating teacher for special needs; I started out my journey as an elementary teacher.

I am looking forward to working with our executive as we move forward on some exciting initiatives, including a council name change, handbook and constitution revision, and planning Conference 2016 in Canmore. If you have recently visited our website, you will note that we have a new look. In addition, we have new e-mail contacts for all executive members. Please see www.guidancecouncil.ca for more information as well as for information about our executive's handbook and ongoing details regarding the 2016 conference, "Voices of Counselling: Agents of Change."

As many of you know, we held our annual general meeting on November 21, 2015, via videoconference in Edmonton and Airdrie at our miniconferences. We passed a motion to change our name; this will be going to Provincial Executive Council for approval. We also incorporated the position of associate journal editor into our executive. Elections were also held; since this meeting, we have successfully filled all positions and currently have no vacancies. We have a variety of newcomers to

the executive: Erin Luong (Calgary Regional) comes to us from Calgary Catholic and is a high school counsellor at a self-directed high school. Kevan Bryant (South West Regional) is a teacher-counsellor at a middle school in Lethbridge. Nicole Drysdale (newsletter editor) is a high school counsellor with Edmonton Public Schools. Farah Merali (university representative) comes to us from the University of Alberta; finally, Sandy Gillis is our new ATA staff advisor, and he has a variety of experience in schools and administration, including school counselling.

One of our priorities for the council is to increase the profile of school counsellors in Alberta and speak to the vital role that we play in the lives of students, families and school counsellors. Another priority will be to evaluate and address how we can become better as a council to meet the needs of practising school counsellors. Finally, we recognize that just as in counselling and teaching, relationships are paramount to the work that we do as a council. We will be seeking new ways to forge relationships with community agencies, organizations and services. Our next meeting was scheduled for January 23, 2016, in Calgary, where we planned to create the initial framework for these priorities; action plans will be further advanced during our strategic planning retreat in the spring.

In a variety of ways, counsellors are affected by events that occur outside of the walls of a school. Given recent world events, the state of mental health in our country, our rapidly evolving economy and increasing pressures placed on a variety of people-serving sectors within the province, the role of a school counsellor is even more vital to ensuring that students and families are supported, so that students can become well-rounded, engaged citizens who make positive contributions to society. Yet, we know that school counselling positions are at risk in our province.

The ATA Guidance Council executive cannot go at this alone. We need all of our members to speak up for the role of school counsellors, and speak to the need for comprehensive school counselling programs in all schools. Be mentors for beginning school counsellors; talk to your administrators about the work that you do;

speak about the value that you add to the school and the school community. Go beyond the confines of your office and represent what it is to be an exemplary school counsellor. Give sessions at your school or within your district or at the 2016 conference – proposals are now being accepted. Attend online events for school counsellors that connect school counsellors from across the world. School counsellors need to share their extensive knowledge and expertise with others! If you are passionate about the role that school counsellors play in the lives of children, youth, families and school communities, do something about it. Because Canadian School Counselling Week took place on February 1–5, now would be the perfect time to gear up your advocacy of the school counselling profession. As John E Lewis said, “If not us, then who? If not now, then when?” Go to www.ccpa-accp.ca/chapters/school-counsellors for more information about ways to advocate for school counselling.


Best wishes for a wonderful 2016!

Jennifer McIntee-Leinweber

Your annual no-cost specialist council membership will no longer expire in August. Instead, it will continue year after year until you change it. To register or change your council membership, log in at www.teachers.ab.ca with your username and password.

Specialist councils are your source for conferences, networking, publications, resources, workshops, online communities and professional development.

**Join us on Facebook at ATA
Guidance Council for updates on
conference, regional events and
information!**



Please check out our website at
www.guidancecouncil.ca
for more information on the advocacy
work of the council.

Message from the Past President

I would like to thank all of the Edmonton and area counsellors and those from Grand Prairie and Fairview who attended our November Guidance council conference in Edmonton, at Victoria School of the Arts. I was excited to see new-to-me counsellors and introduce our new split-city format for the conference. I am already thinking of Conference 2017 and what we can do. I would also like to thank our wonderful Guidance Council journal editor and University of Athabasca professor, Jeff Chang, for his insightful full-day session. Our council members are talented!

On January 26, 2016 I attended an organizing meeting for all associations/organizations who are interested in regulating the profession of counselling in Alberta. The meeting was held from 1–4 PM in both Edmonton and Calgary, the two sites connected by video conferencing. I attended the Edmonton session, and Jeff Chang attended in Calgary – he was also attending in the interests of three specialist associations. We were given information related to the regulation of counselling in Alberta and also the current status of regulation across Canada for this profession. During the regulation process it is important that all groups within a province are fully informed of the actions being undertaken in a unified approach. This is critical to approaching the government.

The associations that were represented are Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA), Canadian Professional Counsellors Association (CPCA), the Career Development Association of Alberta (CDAA), Professional Association of Christian Counsellors and Psychotherapists (PACCP), Alberta Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), Adult Education Counsellors' Association of Alberta (AECAA), Alberta Association of Music Therapy (AMFT), College Art Therapy Association (CATA), Alberta Association for Drug Addictions (AADA) and the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). Other

associations expressed their interest but did not send a representative. There were approximately 25 people in attendance.

Barbara Allen, the CEO of CCPA, was the guest speaker and is instrumental in supporting Nova Scotia, Ontario and British Columbia in the quest for regulating counselling in Canada. Although many Alberta counselling associations have expressed their individual association's interest to the Alberta government, there has been lack of action on this front. However, after a meeting in August with the new Alberta minister of Health, it was suggested that the associations must come together and present as a united front. Following the work of British Columbia, where the Federation of Associations for Counselling Therapists in British Columbia (factbc.org) has been established, it was suggested that in Alberta we create an alliance similar to that in British Columbia.

It was also stated that the Alberta government would like to see the regulatory body have member association based on competencies, and not necessarily levels of education. Factbc.org suggests "Counselling therapy is a diverse profession; the therapies that counsellors learn and apply are varied, but all have the same ultimate goals and objectives. The profession is united by a common set of competencies that all counselling therapists should be required to meet. Counselling therapists acquire their competencies through a variety of educational and training pathways that may include degrees, diplomas, certifications, internships, and other forms of supervised and evaluated experience." See the competencies at www.factbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2007CompetencyProfile.pdf. The Guidance Council is grateful for the work of Thomas Holmes and other counselling professionals who created *Informed Consent and Records Management*, published and approved by the ATA.

On January 23, 2016, I represented the Guidance Council at the University of Alberta for Meet the ATA Specialist Councils and ATA Association Instructors workshops. Also, on January 15, as an association instructor I was able to share the Learning with the Brain in Mind workshop with teachers who will be doing their practicums this second semester.

Mary Frances Fitzgerald

Message from the President-Elect

We were thrilled with the response we received from the regional miniconferences in November. Many positive comments were made about the movie *The Mask You Live In*—it seems this was a highlight of the day for most. On a personal note, thank you to all who stepped into my place when, at the last minute, I was unable to attend; it was a true testament of the power of collaboration and the strength of our council and planning committee.

Conference 2016 planning is in full swing, and the bulk of the fall was spent negotiating and finding a venue and putting together a committee to assist in planning. We are thrilled that “Voices of Counselling: Agents of Change” will be held at the Coast Canmore Hotel on November 18 and 19. We are currently accepting online speaker proposals—you can access the proposal form through our website. We are looking forward to opening up registration on March 1; registration can also be accessed through our website. If you know of any organizations that would like to exhibit or sponsor our conference, please contact Krista Bernard. We can’t wait to see you all for Conference 2016 and look forward to learning, resting and connecting as a professional community.

As the president-elect I look forward to supporting Jen in her new role and learning from her, especially as we look at the handbook and roles within the Guidance Council. I always feel blessed that I am able to network and collaborate with so many school counsellors from across the province.

Sara Dean

16 Counsellor Resolutions for the Year 2016

1. To practice self-care at least 5 per cent more than last year and remember that my health and well-being come first.
2. To model mindfulness in all that I do and catch myself when I step out of mindful moments.
3. To teach others that humour and laughter are as good as a healthy cry.
4. To reach out to new and old colleagues and build my personal resources network.
5. To keep current with new resources, locally, nationally and internationally.
6. To date and record all the online professional development that I do.
7. To share great websites and articles with my colleagues near and far and send my list to the Guidance Council newsletter.
8. To understand and investigate the ATA website and all it has to offer for my school and community needs.
9. To set up professional development by looking at the roster of the ATA association instructor sessions that cost only \$100 for fabulous speakers and resources for staff and community, catered to my school and community needs.
10. To contact my MLA about the educational and mental health needs in my community as well as on behalf of other communities.
11. To not be frustrated by the lack of “just-in-time resources” for students in need, and to help students develop their own resource and support systems.
12. To use my mouth guard at night time, and to take time for food as well as thinking and washroom breaks.
13. To give myself permission to realize that compassion is a gift that sometimes needs replenishment.
14. To congratulate myself more often on the small things that have made a difference for me and for others.
15. To articulate my transferable skills and talents and know the world has so much to offer.
16. To learn and be open to all of the newness that awaits.

Regional Reports

Calgary Regional



Greetings and Happy New Year! My name is Erin Luong and I am a high school counsellor at Bishop Carroll, a self-directed high school in Calgary. I am a Canadian Certified Counsellor and have been

working in the field since 2004. I have experience in junior high, high school and crisis counselling. I also have international experience, having spent a year with my family in Japan as a representative of CSSD during the 2013/14 school year. I have an amazing husband and two great kids (a son age 10 and a daughter 7). My children are both into fencing, so I've spent my fall learning a lot about the sport. I am also excited to have moved into the executive as the Calgary Regional president.

The ATA regional miniconference, as well as our annual general meeting (via Skype between Airdrie and Edmonton), was held in Airdrie on November 21, 2015. This was a great, convenient and affordable event which provided members with a variety of professional development sessions. The day ended with the screening of *The Mask you Live In*, which most participants agreed had a very powerful message about the pressure our boys go through when learning how to be men.

On December 9, 2015, all members of the ATA Guidance Council were invited to participate in the monthly #SCCcrowd Twitter chat which I was happy to comoderate with the assistance of fellow school counsellors Susan Spellman Cann and Bridget Helms. Our topic for that chat was "Coping and Self Care," and we were excited to connect with counsellors from across Canada and the USA. Live #SCCcrowd chats occur monthly on the second Wednesday of the month. Counsellors are also welcome to post questions to the hashtag #SCCcrowd between events in order to promote collaboration and community.

On January 16, I was happy to work at the Mount Royal preservice teaching meeting to promote membership in the council.

Upcoming events for the Calgary region include a professional development opportunity with Hospice Calgary. This session will take place on February 23, 2016, from 1–4 PM, at Bishop Carroll High School, 4324 Richard Rd SW, Calgary. A representative from Hospice Calgary will start the first hour focusing on services in the Calgary area, and the second half of the session will be focused on supporting teens and children through grief. Many thanks to Bishop Carroll, who has agreed to let us host the event, and to Sara Dean, who has offered to help me order catering for the event. I will send out invitations to members of the Calgary region shortly.

Erin Luong, President

South West Regional



Greetings from your new South West Regional rep! Some of my favourite things include yoga; my chocolate lab, Finley; tea; and travelling. I love my role as teacher-counsellor at Wilson Middle School, in Lethbridge. I have

learned the importance of interventions, as well as how to implement universal, targeted and individual interventions. I learn every day from the students I work with, and I am grateful to them for sharing their stories and having the courage to better themselves and the world.

My background has contributed to my approaches in school counselling. I finished my BA and BEd degrees from the University of Lethbridge in April 2012. I taught at Chinook High School in Lethbridge for a year before completing my MEd (counselling psychology) program at the University of Lethbridge in April 2015. I also am a certified yoga instructor and have been teaching yoga in the community since 2011.

I take an integrative humanistic and holistic theoretical approach to counselling. I see great value in cognitive behavioural approaches to increase awareness and promote positive changes; however, I believe that mindfulness can cultivate

acceptance and take people deeper internally within both cognitive and affective domains.

I care for my own mental health by practicing yoga and mindfulness on a regular basis. I enjoy daily walks with Finley. I also have a strong support circle of friends and family. I am looking forward to sharing some information at the South Western Alberta Teachers' Convention Association (SWATCA) in my session titled "Self-Care Strategies for Teachers."

Wilson Middle School is a great school that always puts kids first. My excellent administrative team and staff have supported initiatives the counselling team has wanted to implement. For example, I developed and ran a yoga program for adolescent girls, which focuses on improving mental, emotional and physical health. I have also had the opportunity to be a part of starting and facilitating a Positives Spaces Club (gay-straight alliance) in the school. In December 2015, I organized a schoolwide Day of Mindfulness that provided students with the chance to learn about and engage in mindfulness. Students listened to a local expert speak about mindfulness and then rotated through six stations, including creating mandalas, practicing yoga and breathing, doing a body scan, eating mindfully, learning about stress, and writing gratitude letters. I have amazing experiences at work on a daily basis.

As a new professional in the field of school counselling, I am finding that having specialized training, being flexible, keeping my focus on building relationships with students, taking a team approach with staff and parents, and establishing strong self-care practices are beneficial. Despite the potential challenges of counselling in education, school counsellors can help youth develop important skills at a critical age.

I am very excited to be starting a new experience with the Guidance Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association. I am in my second year as a teacher-counsellor, so I am ready to contribute more to the field of school counselling now that I am more settled in my own position. I look forward to getting to know more counsellors in the South West Regional and sharing information about professional development offered in our area.

All the best in 2016!

Kevan Bryant, President

South East Regional



Greetings from the South East Regional! It has been a very busy first semester, with counsellors attending counsellor updates at the ELAA (Educational Liaison Association of Alberta) event in Canmore in

September and a counsellors' update from Medicine Hat College in October. As well, counsellors also participated in a variety of webinars in Medicine Hat, including a lunch and learn on "Cutting: What Every Teacher Needs to Know."

Counsellors in the Southeast region held their first regional meeting and PD event on November 26 at Medicine Hat High School. The meeting was followed by a counsellors' conversation/sharing session and a presentation on Zentangle, by McMan Youth Services. This relaxation therapy did prove to be very relaxing, and counsellors found the session valuable.

We are planning more professional development opportunities in the new year and hope to finalize our presenters and meeting dates. So far we have been in contact with Mental Health on presenting a one-day Mental Health Literacy Go-To Educator workshop. Other sessions include Marv Hackman, ATA executive staff officer, presenting in February 2016 on the topic of "Confidentiality in Counselling."

The counsellors in the South East Regional are spread out over a very large geographical area, so it can be difficult for everyone to meet. We have a counsellors database and e-mail list so information is always sent out about upcoming PD opportunities and regional meetings. If you are new to the region and have not received any information from the regional, please contact me at southeastregionalpresident@guidancecouncil.ca.

I hope you all have a great 2016!

Sheldon Wilman, President

Central Alberta Regional

Happy New Year from not-so-sunny central Alberta. What we lack in ambient warmth we make up for in our lively spirit! Way back in October, Red Deer's Alberta Family Works hosted a conference on the theme "Healing, Trauma and the Brain," with special guests Gabor Maté, Theo Fleury, Kim Barthel and others. All of the guest speakers brought their own unique perspectives to this important conversation, which made this conference very worthwhile to those who attended. I observed many of my school counselling colleagues benefiting from the discussions that occurred over the two days.

I was pleased to see a number of my counselling colleagues in Calgary a month later for one of two very successful ATA Guidance Council conferences. A number of counsellors attended a day-long inservice on motivational interviewing, which is a great skill for any counsellor's toolbox. At the end of day, the group got together for a viewing of *The Mask You Live In*, a documentary uncovering some of the disservice we do to male children in the way they are socialized. I think everyone there would agree this documentary is a must watch for anyone raising or educating a boy. Soon after, I also had the opportunity to view *Miss Representation*, another documentary about the socialization of our girls, which was equally powerful. This film is available on Netflix and worth a watch. An inservice group in Red Deer has bought the rights to show these two documentaries in our district, and the QSA group at Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School is hoping to get a showing for our community.

On the same topic, two of Red Deer's middle schools have started QSAs in their facilities, and we are looking at sharing information to assist all these groups in evolving to best meet the needs of their students. Kris Wells paid a visit to Lindsay Thurber's QSA to provide them with a history of the GSA/QSA movement in Alberta. It was a very informative afternoon for these students.

Counsellors in Red Deer have been offered inservicing on a number of important topics, such as reading a level B assessment (we are currently looking at the Woodcock-Johnson IV [WJIV] as our instrument of choice), how we can assist our increasing refugee population and assistance in keeping up with all the new educational technologies. We live in a fast-paced world and self-care has also become increasingly important, so inservicing on mindfulness practices is also being offered to staff. Red Deer Public Schools continues to offer wellness groups such as yoga, too.

The day-to-day work of counsellors in central Alberta continues to be very busy. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the changing Alberta economy is challenging for our families and, consequently, our students. One positive outcome is that many of our students are recognizing the need for a postsecondary education and are coming to ask about academic requirements and funding for postsecondary programs. School counsellors continue to be advocates for our students, ensuring that they are getting the help they need in diverse circumstances.

Alyson King, President

Spotlight— Thomas Holmes

Mental Health Crusader

Thomas Holmes is the system psychologist for the Sturgeon School Division. He spends most of his time working at central office as coordinator of learning support. He also is the principal of two outreach schools.

A former special education teacher and school counsellor, Holmes is now a registered psychologist and is currently involved in a pilot project aimed at measuring students' brain activity, then taking steps to ensure they are in the right frame of mind for learning.

"You can have the best teacher in the world in the best school equipped with the best technology, but if you've got children suffering from anxiety or depression, or having some challenges at home, their basic needs aren't being met—both from an emotional and a physical point of view—so they're not going to learn."

It was Holmes's ongoing efforts to improve students' mental health that ultimately earned him a spot on the top-40 list.*

"It was a nice honour. It's a bit embarrassing too, but it was a nice honour, for sure," he said. "I think it's the same thing as teaching; it's not work that we're doing to get recognition."

Holmes has been active with the Alberta Teachers' Association in several capacities over the years. He's the past president of the Sturgeon Local no 27, just ended his term as past president of the Guidance Council and serves on the Teacher Development and Practice Advisory Committee (TDPAC).

In 2008, Holmes's passion and community engagement earned him the Teacher Award of Excellence, part of the School-Community Public Relations Awards.

Cory Hare

**Editor's note: this article is excerpted from "Teachers Crack Magazine's Top-40 List," by Cory Hare, originally published in the ATA News vol 50, no 7. Hare's article included the following introduction:*

A prominent Edmonton magazine has named two teachers to its annual list of high achievers under 40 years old.

Avenue Edmonton magazine's November issue outlines its seventh annual "Top 40 Under 40" list. It includes highly successful entrepreneurs, doctors and dentists, chefs and engineers, as well as teachers Melissa Hladyshevsky, 33, and Thomas Holmes, 36.

Hladyshevsky teaches music at Académie Saint-André Academy, in Beaumont, and Holmes is the learning support coordinator for Sturgeon School Division, based in Morinville.

Minor amendments have been made in accordance with ATA style.



A Time of Change: Calgary Catholic Answers the Call

School counsellors provide students with supports that help them become resourceful, independent, caring members of our society. This past year has been a time of change in politics, economics and social awareness. Mental health and wellness have been on the forefront as illustrated by the staggering rate of students of all ages affected by mental health concerns. Additionally, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer) awareness and gay-straight alliance (GSA) policies in schools have put many school boards and schools themselves under the social microscope. Rates of fentanyl and other drug use have been alarming as drug use broadens to include people from all socioeconomic backgrounds in all parts of the province. Domestic violence rates are increasing at a startling rate. Gang violence and major crimes are hitting our cities and towns hard. Workers from a variety of backgrounds are faced with unemployment or impending layoffs. Food banks are being faced with usage rates not seen for decades. Students are facing harsh and often discouraging realities when deciding on postsecondary options. Suicide levels have been reported to have increased by 30 per cent over last year's numbers. Social agencies that serve children and youth are struggling to keep up with demand. Fortunately, school counsellors can make an expansive impact for the approximately 670,000 children and youth in Alberta schools.

Certificated teacher-counsellors are not limited by caseload maximums, since their mandate is to work with any student in the school in which they serve. Since teacher-certificated school counsellors have formal training in education and specialized training in

counselling, they are able to work with any school-aged child in the classroom, in small groups and in one-on-one counselling. Rather than waiting for difficulties to become enmeshed problematic behaviours or full-blown disorders, school counsellors can support students when they begin to experience difficulties. Early interventions can lessen Alberta's already overburdened emergency departments. Reasonably, most parents and educators would agree that issues do not begin solely when a student enters high school. Domestic violence and poverty can have long-term adverse effects on the development of children and youth. The fallout from parental drug use and alcohol abuse is far-reaching and affects infants, children and youth. Those struggling with sexual identity or who have questions about their sexuality are not just 15 years and older; they have often started to recognize their individualities in elementary school years. Parents who are struggling with their own mental health issues can put their own children at deleterious risk for a variety of issues unless they have the support they need.

In order for school counsellors to have an impact, they need positions in schools. And yet, the ATA provincial Guidance Council has heard from counsellors across the province that many school districts have chosen this time to make drastic cuts to school counselling programs or to hire non teacher-certificated staff in place of qualified teacher-certificated school counsellors. Indeed, school counsellor positions are dwindling in all divisional levels at a time when they are most needed. Across the province counselling positions have been cut at junior high levels, and the cuts have even begun to infiltrate high school positions. Elementary counsellors are, and have been for years, difficult to find in any Alberta school.

In the past two years, as Albertans and as Canadians, we have heard and experienced views promoting change, especially from Premier Notley and Prime Minister Trudeau. Now is the time for policy developers to act beyond what has been done in the past, to what could be done and should be done to better address the needs of our students and families. Children and youth need those who can effect change to do so. One school district that has

taken long-term substantial steps to better support students through their school counselling program is the Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD). As the president-elect (and now president) of the ATA Guidance Council, I had the opportunity to interview Jody Primeau and Jodie Heywood, CCSD guidance counselling consultants, about their school counselling program.

Can you provide us an idea/overview of what district structures you have in place for school counsellors?

We have two consultants who support school counsellors within CCSD. They are available to all school counsellors for consultation and collaboration. As well, there is a supervisor who oversees all school counsellors and the consultants.

Each of our junior high and senior high schools are staffed with qualified counsellors. Many of these schools have elementary students who also benefit from the counselling program. High schools may have up to four counsellors, depending on their population. In addition, we have a KARA counsellor who supports pregnant and parenting teens throughout the district. There is also a CCSD counsellor protocol in place to guide school counsellors in their practice.

Given the ever-changing economic and political climates in our province, how has your department been able to sustain school counsellors and even grow the counselling program?

School counsellor positions are based on our school enrollment and part of the allocation formula for both junior and senior high school. As a response to an identified need to focus on mental health and student wellness, CCSD has expanded counselling programs by restructuring how we allocate school counsellors and diverse learning teachers. This has allowed us to balance the needs of our diverse learners.

We know that across the province, many school counsellor positions have been substantially decreased or have melded into other position titles. Why do you think it important to have certificated teachers as school counsellors?

All of the counsellors in CCSD are certified teachers because we believe that it is important

for counsellors to have an understanding of the systems and protocols within schools. A school counsellor with an educational background is better able to meet the educational and personal counselling needs of students in an educational setting, and work with the teachers who support them.

CCSD has brought in several programs to systemically address mental well-being and mental health. Please describe these programs.

CCSD has developed a plan to address student wellness within the district, the *Student Wellness: Resiliency and Mental Health Strategy*. This document outlines the programs our district will focus on to ensure success for all students, such as

1. Mental Health Literacy Go-To-Educator and the Mental Health Literacy Resource. This is based on the work of Dr Stan Kutcher and his collaboration with the Canadian Mental Health Association. We are actively involved with providing professional development in the area of mental health literacy to school staffs as well as providing teachers with the training to deliver a module-based resource to students in junior high. The goal of the Mental Health Literacy Project is to reduce stigma and create better pathways to care for our students. More information about the Mental Health Literacy programming can be found at <http://teenmentalhealth.org>.
2. The Fourth R Healthy Relationship Plus Program teaches students to practise practical ways to manage healthy relationship skills. There is also a classroom resource for Grades 7–9, which some schools are using, that aligns with this program. More information can be found at <https://youthrelationships.org>.

One of the key aspects, certainly of high school counselling, is career/vocational counselling; can you provide some insight on how CCSD has addressed this need within the school counselling program?

CCSD high schools have career practitioners who support students in their investigation of career choices and postsecondary options. As well, each high school has an assigned work experience teacher who supports students with

accessing employment in the community and supervises them for work experience credits that can be used towards their high school graduation diploma.

CCSD students at the high school level have access to a number of career exploration opportunities, including summer career internships, health internships, dual-credit programs with postsecondary institutes, access to centres of excellence in a variety of CTS areas and RAP programs.

CCSD also publishes a resource for students new to Alberta high schools, *Footprints to Your Future*, which provides information on CCSD and Alberta high school courses and requirements, as well as career and postsecondary information. This resource is provided to all of our Grade 9 students.

Two issues that are continually mentioned as problematic for new and seasoned school counsellors across the province are related to feelings of isolation and lack of support. How has CCSD addressed this?

As mentioned, there are two consultants for guidance and counselling in our district. One of our primary roles is to offer support and consultation to all of our district counsellors. We hold monthly school counsellor meetings for all district counsellors that focus on current trends, professional development, networking and planning. As well, several school counsellors plan meetings within their demographic area to discuss relevant needs and share counselling resources.

We match our new counsellors with a mentor for support and provide them with training specific to CCSD process and protocols.

We also utilize technology in the form of an ePD site. This site serves both as a communication tool and a resource for counsellors to access information and resources.

In many school districts across the province, the development and reassessment of a comprehensive school program each year by school counsellors is a new or even unheard of idea. What is your view of the comprehensive school counselling plan?

Each school counselling program follows a comprehensive counselling program plan

(CCPP) that is driven by a school-based needs assessment. This plan serves as a long-range plan for the year and outlines goals to address the needs and creates action plans to achieve the goals. The CCPP is also aligned with the school's three-year plan for success of all students. The CCPP is developed in collaboration with school administration, staff, students and parents each year. It is a vital component in a successful counselling program.

As schools and school district, we work with other community agencies. How have CCSD and CCSD school counsellors been able to work effectively with these supports to better support students while at the same time respecting the integral role of certificated school counsellors?

School counsellors meet the day-to-day and emergent needs of the students. However, when a student is in need of more extensive resources, it is important to collaborate with various district-based and community agencies to provide the best support to students and their families.

The Alberta *Children First Act* supports communication among all partners who provide services to children and youth so that we are better able to work together in the best interest of the child.

As former school counsellors, what advice would you give to beginning school counsellors? Seasoned school counsellors?

As a former school counsellor, the best advice I would give to new counsellors is to consult often with colleagues, know the resources that are available to you and your clients and access those resources. Our roles are complex and challenging, and we can't exist in a bubble.

As a counsellor in a school, it is also important to get to know the staff with whom you work on a daily basis. The positive relationships you build within a school are essential in order to establish trust with colleagues, allowing you to better support and advocate for the students.

The advice I would give to seasoned counsellors is exactly the same, with the exception that in order for our new counsellors to learn, it is very important for seasoned

counsellors to offer mentorship, PD, advice and support to those who are just starting out.

Finally, for all of our counsellors, don't forget self-care. Spending time with friends and family, taking care of your health and doing activities that you enjoy will allow you to continue to be a great support to your students.

If you could give advice to school administrators in best practices with working with school counsellors, what would you say?

We would advise school administrators to treat the school counsellor as part of your team. Cultivate a trusting relationship built on open, honest communication. Our roles are intertwined, and when we work together and respect one another's role, the students reap the benefits.

Why do you think your district has developed such a great school counselling program?

CCSD recognizes the role that counsellors play as an integral part in supporting success for all students and ensures that the structure and resources are in place to support counselling programs.

All of the school counsellors are both teachers and counsellors. In addition to a bachelor's degree in education, they have received specialized training in the form of a master's degree in counselling or a related field. We are fortunate to have extremely knowledgeable, hard-working, passionate, dedicated counsellors serving our students.

What is in the future for the school counselling program at CCSD?

CCSD is always looking for innovative ways to improve our school counselling program. We will continue to focus on recruitment of qualified counselling staff in order to maintain and grow our counselling programs.

After reading the interview, you will notice that the CCSD actively encourages schools to hire certificated teacher-counsellors at all divisional levels through innovative staff planning. In fact, the school district has recently held an information session for teachers interested in becoming school counsellors, and more than 100 teachers were reported to have attended the session. CCSD has made the needs of its students, families and schools a priority. CCSD's planning model demonstrates remarkable political educational planning that supports prevention, intervention and postvention. As president of the Guidance Council, I am swiftly learning that the CCSD model is one from which other school boards could learn. School boards in the province need to take action to support our students, parents and educators within our Alberta school communities. As a council we will advocate for provincial action to support our students with appropriate teacher-certificated school counsellors.

*Jennifer McIntee-Leinweber
Jennifer McIntee-Leinweber, BEd, MA, is
president of the ATA Guidance Council.*

Resources from Your ATA Library

Did you know that our ATA library has great resources for counsellors and that library staff will mail them out to your school with prepaid postage? If you haven't used your ATA library before, now is the time! You can contact the friendly staff at library@ata.ab.ca to set up your library account and then start requesting resources through the library catalogue (<http://library.teachers.ab.ca>).

Wondering what kinds of materials we might have that will interest you? Take a look at a sample of our library collection below:

Books

Achieving Excellence in School Counseling: Through Motivation, Self-Direction, Self-Knowledge and Relationships

Squier, Karl L. 2014. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Corwin.

Brief Counseling That Works: A Solution-Focused Therapy Approach for School Counselors and Other Mental Health Professionals

Sklare, Gerald B. 2014. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Corwin.

Child and Adolescent Suicidal Behavior: School-Based Prevention, Assessment, and Intervention

Miller, David Neil. 2011. New York: Guilford.

Culturally Proficient Collaboration: Use and Misuse of School Counselors

Stephens, Diana L. 2011. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Corwin.

Expressive Arts Interventions for School Counselors

Degges-White, Suzanne. 2015. New York: Springer.

Identifying, Assessing, and Treating Self-Injury at School

Miller, David N, and Stephen E Brock. 2010. New York: Springer.

Working with Traumatic Brain Injury in Schools: Transition, Assessment, and Intervention

Jantz, Paul B. 2014. New York: Routledge.

The Use of Data in School Counseling: Hatching Results for Students, Programs, and the Profession

Hatch, Patricia A. 2014. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Corwin.

Supporting Transgender and Gender Creative Youth: Schools, Families, and Communities in Action

Meyer, Elizabeth J. 2014. Oxford, UK: Lang.

DVDs

Exploring Cyber-Bullying in the 21st Century: What Every Counselor Needs to Know, and What Young People Really Think

Taylor, Joshua, and Lucy Vail. 2012. Alexandria, Va: Microtraining Associates. 30 min.

Group Counseling with Children: Celebrating Cultural Diversity

Bauman, Sheri, and Sam Steen. 2009. Alexandria, Va: Microtraining Associates. 180 min.

It's All about Me: Gen X + Y + Z = Gen ME

Gaber, Antoine. 2012. Orangeville, Ont: Blue Ant Media. 99 min.

The Realities of Sexting (You Can't Unsend!)

McCarthy, Kari. 2011. Chicago, Ill: Learning Seed. 15 min.

SextED: Inside the Sexting Subculture of Teens

Rinaldo, Sandi, and Lloyd Robertson. 2012. Ottawa, Ont: CTV Television Network. 20 min.

Suicidal Signs: Depression, Self-Mutilation, Reactive Attachment Disorder

2014. Venice, Calif: Tell ME Why. 21 min.

Your Role in Advocacy: Alberta Government Mental Health Review 2015/16

Counsellors, Alberta Health plays an integral role in supporting mental health for students, school communities and their families. In September 2015, under the auspices of Health Minister Sarah Hoffman, all stakeholders, including counsellors and school personnel, were invited to participate in the new Alberta Government Mental Health Survey.

The Mental Health Review Committee is cochaired by MLAs Dr David Swann (Calgary-Mountain View) and Danielle Larivee (Lesser Slave Lake). The review's public and stakeholder engagement phase has now concluded. The Mental Health Review Committee would like to thank Albertans for the more than 2,800 submissions to the public online questionnaire that was available from September 1 to October 23, 2015 (www.health.alberta.ca/initiatives/mental-Health-Review.html). If you responded to the survey, the ATA Guidance Council, too, thanks you for your advocacy.

There were also approximately 400 stakeholders in attendance at dozens of group meetings and presentations throughout the province, including input from First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal people and communities. The committee deeply appreciated the positive response, enthusiasm and passion of participants during these meetings. The mental health review will build on previous reviews of Alberta's addiction and

mental health system, as well as information, research and best practices from Alberta and around the world (www.health.alberta.ca/initiatives/mental-Health-Review.html).

The review focused on

- increasing access to addiction and mental health services, including
 - school-based programs for children and youth,
 - community-based services and
 - preventative services;
- improving continuity of care across an integrated service delivery model;
- inpatient support services;
- addiction;
- geographic challenges; and
- ensuring that services are inclusive of, and culturally appropriate for, Alberta's diverse population.

On January 12, 2016, the *Edmonton Journal* reported that Dr Swann "wouldn't detail the review's findings, but said the mental health system needs strong leadership, more resources [and] clarity around the roles of the Alberta health department versus Alberta Health Services." He also noted that that "6 per cent of the health budget is targeted to mental health and addictions issues" (<http://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/alberta-mental-health-review-now-in-health-ministers-hands-wildrose-calls-for-system-boost>).

The challenge to all ATA school personnel and others, especially those who work with student mental health, should be to champion the needs of our students by becoming (or continuing to be) active and vocal mental health advocates. If you have any interest in championing the needs of our students, please contact your MLA. You can find the entire list at www.assembly.ab.ca. If you do succeed in contacting your MLA, please share your conversation with the Guidance Council and your local. We need to be concerned that prevention and just-in-time and on-time supports are provided by certificated teachers who have specialized training in mental health.

Mary Frances Fitzgerald, MEd

Below is a list of important phone numbers from the Alberta Health website (<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Pages/emergency-Phone-Numbers.aspx>):

Emergency Services 911

Ambulance, Fire, and Police

Addiction Services Helpline 1-866-332-2322

Help for problems with gambling, alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

Alberta Quits Helpline 1-866-710-7848 www.albertaquits.ca

(NB: available from 8 AM to 8 PM)

Tobacco cessation counsellors can help you make a plan to quit, manage cravings and stay on track.

Bullying Helpline 1-888-456-2323 www.bullyfreealberta.ca

Advice or support on bullying.

Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-387-5437

Call if you think a child is being abused or neglected by a parent or guardian.

Family Violence Info Line..... 310-1818

Call if you (or someone you know) are going through family violence or abuse or if you have questions or want to find out about programs, resources and services.

Health Link 811 www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/link/index.html

Free nurse advice and general health information for Albertans.

Income Support Contact Centre 1-866-644-5135

Financial help for Albertans who don't have resources to meet their basic needs (eg, food, clothing, shelter).

Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868 www.kidshelpphone.ca

Free, anonymous, confidential telephone and web counselling for youth in Canada.

Medication & Herbal Advice Line 1-800-332-1414

Advice and information about medicines and herbal products from pharmacists and nurses.

Mental Health Helpline 1-877-303-2642

Offers help for mental health concerns for Albertans.

Poison & Drug Information Service 1-800-332-1414

Confidential advice about poisons, chemicals, medicines and herbal products.

Except as noted, all services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Eating Disorder Support Network of Alberta



Eating disorders are categorized as mental illnesses and affect males and females of all ages and backgrounds. It's

estimated that up to 5 per cent of the total population is currently struggling with an eating disorder. Eating disorders appear to be on the rise, with children as young as seven being diagnosed; sadly, anorexia has the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. And yet, eating disorders are surrounded in myths, shame and feelings of isolation. The Eating Disorder Support Network of Alberta (EDSNA) is determined to change that. EDSNA is a new nonprofit organization focused on providing meaningful support to those affected – both directly and indirectly – by eating disorders. It was founded by Moyra McAllister, who also serves as EDSNA's president.

"When my daughter was diagnosed, I didn't know where to turn or what to do. I spent hours on the Internet looking for answers and I felt very alone, very panicked," remembers Moyra. "When my daughter got better, I vowed that no family should have to go through that experience alone and so I created EDSNA."

Thanks to funding from Alberta Health, Mental Health and Addictions, EDSNA is able to provide professionally facilitated support groups in both Edmonton and Red Deer. In the fall, EDSNA will begin offering support groups in Calgary and hopes to begin offering online support for other parts of the province in the future. "The need is great," says executive director Sue Huff. "I regularly receive calls and emails from people who are desperate and need help." EDSNA's website, www.EDSNA.ca, receives hundreds of visits every week.

Support groups are offered multiple times throughout the year and are typically six weeks long. Each group is facilitated by a professional (ie, registered psychologist, registered dietitian, registered psychiatric nurse etc) who has an extensive background in eating disorders. The groups are kept small to allow for dialogue. There is no need for a referral, and registration is through EDSNA's website. All participants are asked to read and adhere to the group guidelines, and participants must be 18 years of age or older.

To learn more about EDSNA's support groups, visit www.EDSNA.ca/support-groups-by-edsna.html.

In addition to providing support groups and acting as a resource hub, EDSNA also hosts Eating Disorder Awareness Week every year and offers presentations to raise awareness. "This year, we have events planned for every day of the week, including a full-day symposium on eating disorders called ED-ucate," says Sue.

ED-ucate offers educators, counsellors, fitness instructors, healthcare professionals, parents and others the opportunity to learn more about eating disorders. "EDSNA was very fortunate to receive a Field Law Community Grant and have the support of the ATA for ED-ucate," remarks Sue. "This support has made it possible to offer this incredible symposium affordable and accessible for all."

If you have any questions, contact Sue@EDSNA.ca.



Sue Huff, EDSNA executive director, and Moyra McAllister, EDSNA president

Guidance Council Publications

To support and inform the work of school counsellors, the Guidance Council has two publications: our professional journal, the *Canadian School Counselling Review*, and our newsletter, *The Alberta Counsellor*. Guidance Council members are encouraged to submit articles for these publications. Editorial advice and assistance will be provided.

The Alberta Counsellor

The Alberta Counsellor contains information about council activities, school counselling programs, reports of regional meetings, and announcements of and reports on professional development opportunities.

We want to hear from you!

Tell us about guidance and counselling projects or initiatives at your school. Everyone would like to read about your approaches to improving high school completion, dealing with bullying, improving your students' academic and social/emotional adjustment and achievement – in fact, anything from the wide world of school guidance counselling.

Framework for a Counsellor Article

To help you, here's an outline:

- What is your name, your school's name and your teaching/counselling assignment?
- What is your project/initiative? What are your practices?
- What was the impetus for your project?
- What did you hope to achieve?
- What did you need to do to put the project in place?
- Where did you get the time/funding for your project?
- Who else in the school/community is involved?
- What has been accomplished by your project?
- What is the future of your project?

We are also interested in publishing book, film or resource reviews; sample lessons; or reports on professional development activities you have attended.

The newsletter is published three times per year – winter, spring and fall – so please send your submission soon to Krista Bernard at kbernard@lcsd150.ab.ca. Deadlines for submissions are **September 15, January 10 and May 1**.

Canadian School Counselling Review

The *Canadian School Counselling Review* is a professional journal for guidance counsellors and related professionals. The journal publishes research and practical articles; book reviews; case studies; discussion of trends, issues and policies; and reviews of new programs and materials. The *Canadian School Counselling Review* is peer-reviewed.

Guidelines for Authors

- Manuscripts may be up to 3,000 words long.
- Follow the author-date style for citations.
- Manuscripts should be submitted electronically, in Microsoft Word format.
- For photographs and diagrams, black and white is preferred.
- Obtain permission for the use of photographs and diagrams.
- Identify people in photos.
- Include photo credit.
- Manuscripts and photographs will be returned at the author's request.

For more information, please contact Jeff Chang at jeffc@athabascau.ca or 866-901-7647.

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TBA

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