

April Issue

In this Issue

[Counselor Spotlight](#)

[Student Opportunities](#)

[Professional Opportunities](#)

[Middle and High School News](#)

[Well-Being](#)

[Ask CoCo](#)

[Reminders](#)

Counselor Spotlight: Angela Watts



The fundamental hypothesis of restorative practices is that human beings are happier, more cooperative, and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things **with** them, rather than **to** them or **for** them.

I first fell in love with restorative practices during the Fall of 2016 and became a licensed trainer in Spring 2018. Training and providing consultations to other educators interested in restorative work is my passion. Witnessing participants discover there is a safety and commonality found during the peace circle process fills my spirit with joy. In my experience as a Licensed Restorative Practices Trainer of Trainers and School Counselor; I have learned that behavior/s are responses to

events learned over a lifetime. Why can't we take that same thought process and apply it in our educational communities? Learning new responses to events that may occur in our educational communities. Circles form community, "The Universe is circles within circles, and everything is one circle, and all the circles are connected to each other. Each [educational community] is a circle...and those circles connect and make a community... [The Educational Community] cares for that part [of the Earth] but cares for it as a circle – which is to say in a cooperative and egalitarian way, where everybody is cared for, and everybody is respected." Black Elk. Where do we begin to change behavior? Change the mind, change the culture. We have all heard this in our professional careers as educators. Think of it this way, Mindset- set of personal experiences which have shaped your view of the world. The first step toward culture change is a shift in mindset. When developing educational communities' barriers of mistrust, hurt, disappointment, fear of the unknown must be removed and rebuilt. Restorative Practices is about building community, strengthening relationships, and repairing harm.

Building Community

“We plant the seed that one day will grow; we may never see the end result.” Romero Prayer. Implementing Restorative Practices within an educational community takes time and patience. Seed planting began by asking schools to identify Restorative Practices team members. The team received training, and in turn began to share knowledge acquired with others in the educational community. Empowering the community whereas all members are speaking the same language with clear goals. Leadership buy-in and support is of utmost importance when developing a restorative environment within educational communities. When leadership shows a belief in the restorative work, the rest of the team tends to believe in the work. “If people stand in a circle long enough, they’ll eventually begin to dance.” (George Carlin, Comedian). As the seed planted began to grow, more educational communities were added. I have been fortunate enough to train all district Social Emotional Learning Specialist, Social Workers, RESET (formerly TOR) Moderators, School Nurses, Child Welfare and Attendance Specialist, Community Partners, and countless faculty and staff members. Change YOUR mind, then change the CULTURE. None of this would be possible without support from leadership. It is important when developing a restorative educational community to keep a few things in mind such as: Identify and assemble a Restorative Practices Team, Implement Tier 1-3 strategies, develop a plan when transitioning from a Punitive to Restorative Approach, regular meetings, common goals, peer review, working across boundaries, and relationship building

School Climate and Strengthening Relationships

One central idea of restorative practices is that everyone has a desire to be treated fairly, “...individuals are most likely to trust and cooperate freely with systems – whether they themselves win or lose by those systems – when fair process is observed”. When creating a restorative environment, first establish expectations. Begin with staff and ask the question, what will this educational community look like, sound like, and feel like? As a community create expectations, the beauty of this work is that all voices are welcome, all are treated equally. “Circles create soothing space, where even reticent people can realize that their voice is welcome.” (Margaret J. Wheatley). In turn, staff create a restorative environment in the classroom, by asking students for input regarding classroom community expectations. Asking students and staff to provide input regarding expectations, plants the seed for connection. Connection before content is of utmost importance and one way I strengthen and build relationships. A simple check-in prior to content delivery is important. Are your students ready to receive the material, you might simply ask how are you feeling? What do you need? I encourage educators to use affective language (I feel ___ because ___) allow your students to know how you are feeling. Those in leadership positions should also check in with staff, asking the aforementioned questions. Restorative work does not just happen in the classroom, it happens in the breezeway, cafeteria, teacher workroom, the front office.

Whole School Implementation

Reaching from the tree to the grass does not come without barriers. Receiving Restorative Practices training answers our What, implementation after training answers our Why. Restorative Practices is a wonderful tool to pair with other Social Emotional Learning tools and interventions readily available such as Second Steps, Tier I-III interventions, and Aggression Replacement Training to name a few. Utilizing Restorative Practices as a model to develop a student inclusivity framework is beneficial to educational learning; examples include Homeroom Check-In, Community Circles, Written Impact Statement-Using Restorative Questions, Restorative Re-Entry, etc. When thinking of transitioning from a punitive to restorative educational environment, think of the 3R’s; respect, relationships, and responsibility. **RESPECT** -Receiving **respect** from others **is important** because it helps us **to feel safe** and to express ourselves. Being respected by **important** people in our lives growing up teaches us how to be respectful toward others. **RELATIONSHIPS**- **Respect** in your **relationships** builds feelings of **trust, safety, and wellbeing**. **RESPONSIBILITY** -The **relationships** formed **between students and school staff** members

are at the **heart** of **school** connectedness. The first barrier to overcome is understanding YOU do not have to sit in a circle to be restorative. Restorative Practices is more than sitting in a circle discussing feelings and concerns. Restorative practices can be used to deliver content, create connections with families/community partners, build relationships, repair harm. Students and staff may be hesitant regarding the use of the practices or question the benefits of the practices. Students who perceive their teachers and **school** administrators as creating a caring, well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear and fair are more likely to be connected to **school**. Which increases academic performance and attendance, decreases suspensions and expulsions. Change YOUR mind, then change the culture.

Ms. Angela Watts, M.A., M.H.C.
School Counselor Re-Engagement Programs
IIRP Licensed Restorative Practices Trainer of Trainers
Founder Circlworks Restorative Practices Training and Consulting

Student Opportunities

Community Service Seal

Graduation is around the corner for Louisiana's seniors. There is still time for seniors in Louisiana to earn the community service endorsement by completing and documenting 80 hours of community service prior to graduation. The [Community Service Endorsement Overview](#) outlines the requirements and the action steps for those involved..

For additional information, please contact Megan.Thompson2@la.gov.

Jump Start Construction Scholarship Opportunity

The Jump Start Construction Connect Scholars Program is accepting applications for up to forty one-time \$1,000 scholarships. [Jump Start Construction Connect Scholarship Applications](#) are due May 20.

Applicants must:

- Have a Jump Start TOPS Tech Career Diploma.
- Have a National Center for Construction Education and Research credential.
- Have a plan to enroll in an LCTCS campus on a construction pathway or in an Associated Builders and Contractors training program.

Please contact megan.thompson2@la.gov with questions.

Professional Opportunities

Child Welfare and Attendance

Child Welfare and Attendance (CWA) directors, supervisors, and all attendance stakeholders meet monthly. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 4, 2022 at 8 a.m.

CWAs are provided with relevant professional development, resources, and tools to support students and families within their systems. As members of the Louisiana Attendance Alliance, CWAs are afforded evidence-based, best-practices to address chronic absence and encourage family engagement during these meetings.

Date: Wednesday, May 4, 2022, 8 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Link: <https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/98911091852?pwd=eHg2YXQrTGxHTnRsQUEzWFN0TEIPQT09>

Webinar ID: 989 1109 1852

Passcode: CWAMAY

Phone Number: 470-250-9358

Please contact shelneka.adams@la.gov with questions.

Aspiring Principal Fellowship

In order to prepare future principals for success in their first year as a principal, the Aspiring Principal Fellowship will support the development of aspiring school leaders across the state. APF cohort participants will meet throughout the year to explore best practices with regional experts, participate in school visits, and have an opportunity to reflect. Participants will exit this fellowship with a robust leadership portfolio, the guidance of Louisiana's most successful principals, and a strong network of lifelong colleagues.

Applicants must hold a current EDL1 certification in Louisiana. School systems need to cover the cost of the \$1000 tuition for presenters and materials, as well as travel costs. Interested candidates should complete the [Aspiring Principal Fellowship Application](#) no later than **April 30**.

Additional information can be found in this [overview](#) of the Aspiring Principal Fellowship.

Please contact louisianaleaders@la.gov with questions.

Middle and High School News

Financial Aid Planning

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) opened on October 1. Completing the application early is imperative to ensure students get the maximum aid available to them. Schools/school systems can get live, phone or online assistance with FAFSA completion events from the Department. FAFSA completion or having a waiver on file is a requirement for graduation and to count in the graduation cohort.

Please contact ldefinancialaid@la.gov for more information or to set up an assistance visit.

TOP 5 Parishes

Catahoula Parish	100%
Union Parish	87%
Sabine Parish	83%
Caldwell Parish	82%

Madison Parish 80%

TOPS 5 Schools

Sicity Island High School	100%
Harrisonburg High School	100%
West St. John High School	100%
Elton High School	100%
Evans High School	100%

Well-Being and Healthy Communities

LDOE Virtual Therapy through Ochsner for Educators

Ochsner Anywhere Care is a secure virtual visit tool offering appointments with licensed psychologists or therapists through your smartphone, tablet or personal computer—so you can get care where and when you need it! Schedule an appointment with the provider of your choice.

What can be treated? Addiction, Adolescent Counseling, Anxiety and Panic Attacks, Attention Deficit, Disorder (ADD/ADHD), Depression and Mood Disorders, Eating Disorders, Grief and Loss Counseling, Insomnia, Marriage and Family Counseling, Postpartum Depression, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Work-related Stress

Convenient virtual therapy appointments are available Monday – Friday until 8 p.m., with additional appointment times on Saturdays.

Sign up at www.ldoe.ochsneranywherecare.com and enter Service Key: LDOE; Coupon Code: TEACH

Please email anywherecare@ochsner.org for 24/7 technical support, call 855-667-9711.

Please contact rachel.bunch@la.gov with questions.

Well-Being Monthly Call

The Well-Being team hosts monthly calls on the 3rd Wednesday of the month for professional development opportunities that focus on evidence-based, best practices around the well-being of school communities. April will focus on building Well-Being Advisory Councils.

Date: Wednesday, April 20, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

Link: <https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/94796444215>

Webinar ID: 982 3443 7320

Passcode: 303150

Phone Number: 3126266799

Please contact rachel.bunch@la.gov with questions.

Upcoming Webinar Opportunity: Understanding Childhood Obesity

Please share with school administrators, teachers, child nutrition program staff, health and wellness coordinators.

The Department, in conjunction with Pennington Biomedical Research Center will host a free webinar for teachers, school administrators, guidance counselors, child nutrition professionals and other interested stakeholders. The third webinar in the ***Understanding Childhood Obesity*** series will take place Wednesday, April 6, from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Online registration is now open. The webinar will feature a panel of experts from Pennington as well as Seattle Children's Hospital, and discuss prenatal influences on childhood obesity, treatment of childhood obesity in medical settings and opportunities for intervention. A panel discussion will follow, during which audience members will have the opportunity to ask questions.

Please contact melissa.campbell@la.gov with questions.

Ask CoCo

Q & A With COounselor COnnect!

Do you have any questions and you're not sure who to ask? CoCo is here to support her fellow counselors! Send all your counseling related (or unrelated) questions to CoCo and she will respond in this section. Questions will be reposted anonymously then answered. Some answers may require research, so they may not always be answered in the order in which they are received. All questions will be acknowledged; here or directly to your inbox!

Please email shelneka.adams@la.gov CoCo's assistant, all questions. The subject line should read: ASK COCO!

Reminders

Information from past Counselor Connects that you may have missed.

Trauma Demonstration Recovery Grant

Provides funds to pay for trauma specific therapy sessions provided by a state licensed mental health professional for students identified as "low income" that have suspected trauma that is negatively impacting the student's learning and cannot access public and/or commercial health insurance to pay for these services. Students may be enrolled in Louisiana's public, charter or private schools to be eligible for these services.

For additional information, please email traumarecoverygrant@la.gov.

highschoolacademics@la.gov	General questions about the office and about graduation requirements
ldefinancialaid@la.gov	Questions related to the financial aid policy or for assistance with FAFSA completion
SCA@la.gov	Questions related to Supplemental Course Academy/Course Choice
jumpstart@la.gov	Questions related to Jump Start
PPP@la.gov	Questions related to pupil progression
collegereadiness@la.gov	Questions related to dual enrollment or Advanced Placement