

# COUNSELOR CONNECT



A Publication for  
Louisiana's Professional  
SCHOOL COUNSELORS

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October 2018



## October Spotlight: Kesha Simmons



### Breaking the Barriers to Parent Communication

Five years ago, my office was a revolving door of panicking parents looking for answers to their most important questions: "How can I schedule a conference with the teacher?" "When is the best time to take the ACT?" "How do we qualify for TOPS?" "What is an IGP, GPA, and the difference between the PSAT and the ACT?" "How do I know if my child is on track to graduate?" My day was spent, mostly, comforting parents of freshmen and sophomores on transitioning into high school. At some point I thought, "There has to be a better way."

On a search to find solutions, I began researching my notes and consulting with peers. Of course most of the aforementioned questions were addressed during parent orientation or through a handout of some sort. But there was still a large group of parents not getting it, and I needed to know why in order to fix the problem. As it turned out, some working parents were unable to attend orientation, there were a number of parents who didn't use technology or had limited access, and another group of parents were victims of the infamous backpack that looks like a tornado turned it upside down, resulting in them never receiving what was sent home.

Considering these issues, I set out to create tools that would address the need of the working parent who prefers emails and electronic communication, the technologically challenged parent, and the parent with the child who struggles to stay organized.

Using the [American School Counseling Association \(ASCA\) model](#), I decided to create a website for those parents who prefer communicating electronically. Titled [School Counseling at Your Fingertips](#), the website is constructed according to the three domains of school counseling: Academic Development, Social/Emotional Development, and Career Development. Under each tab, I list resources from Louisiana state agencies as well as those offered by our school. Parents are able to subscribe to the website and receive email alerts about grade-level specific announcements.

I created the planning guide [Make It Count!](#) for those parents who prefer something tangible to read. This handbook is a comprehensive guide for 9th and 10th graders contains important dates, pertinent requirements, and successful tips I collected from sources such as ACT, College Board, Louisiana Office of Student Financial Aid (LOSFA), Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), Louisiana Board of Regents, and the Caddo Magnet High School website. Families receive the handbook during the

annual Freshman/Sophomore Parent Information Night, and it is also posted on the website. It is also used during freshman orientation when I make my first visits to classrooms.

Both resources have been a huge hit. Parents, teachers, and administrators have complimented the work, and peers throughout the district have requested a template. I keep a copy at my desk for a quick reference. The once-revolving door now gets a break.

It is quite comforting to know that I have resources that meet the many needs of parents and enhances the school counseling department at my school. At this point, my job is to make sure that the website and the handbook remain updated. This is quite minimal compared to stress associated with worrying about whether or not parents are getting what they need.

Kesha M. Simmons, M.Ed.  
Professional School Counselor  
Freshman and Sophomore Students  
Caddo Magnet High School

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## Professional Opportunities

### **Counselor Collaborations in Monroe and Marksville**

There are still seats available for the Fall Counselor Collaboration events in Monroe and Marksville. Topics for the fall 2018 collaboration include reminders for school testing coordinators, individual graduation plans, and policy updates. Please secure your spot by registering in [Wisdomwhere](#) for one of the collaboration events listed below.

- [October 29 at Monroe City School Board](#), 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
- [October 30 at Avoyelles Parish Media Center](#), 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Please email [emily.bradley@la.gov](mailto:emily.bradley@la.gov) if you have questions about these events.

### **Save the Date for the 2019 Jump Start Convention**

The 2019 Jump Start Convention will be held at the Raising Cane's Convention Center in Baton Rouge on January 29, 2019. Registration will open in early November.

For more information, please e-mail [jumpstart@la.gov](mailto:jumpstart@la.gov).

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## Middle and High School News

### **IGP Webinar**

Did you miss the September IGP webinar? You can download the [2018-2019 Individual Student Planning and Diploma Pathway Selection](#) slide deck for an overview of the [IGP process](#), updates on the [fillable form](#), and a summary of the [2018-2019 guidance document](#).

Please email [leslie.gilliland@la.gov](mailto:leslie.gilliland@la.gov) for support.

### **Now Available: High School Planning Guide**

The online version of the 2018-2019 High School Planning Guidebook is now available in the [Principal Support Toolbox](#) and on the LDOE [Louisiana's Guidebooks](#) and [Graduation Requirements](#) web pages. This year's updates include newly approved course requirements and sections on behavioral interventions and the new career exploration course.

The print version of the guidebook is being distributed at the Fall Counselor Collaborations.

### **Recent Updates: Financial Aid Events**

**Financial Aid Resources from Louisiana Education Loan Authority (LELA)**

LELA has released updated **free** resources for the Class of 2019:

- [Lela's FAFSA Completion Guide & Workbook](#)
- [Lela's Parent Guide to Planning & Paying for College](#)
- [Senior Checklist for College Planning](#)

### Financial Aid Support from the LDOE

The LDOE wants to hear about **your** financial aid events! Please email us a short description of the activity and the date and time it is taking place. Also let us know if any outside organizations are assisting. Example:

02/29/19	9:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	FAFSA Fun Day	FAFSA completion event for friends and families of Sample High School	Sample High School 3911 Louisiana Lane Oyster, LA
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### **ACT College and Career Readiness Champion Awards**

Applications for the [ACT College and Career Readiness Champion Awards](#) are now open. This award program recognizes individuals' exemplary efforts in advancing college and career readiness in four categories:

- **Student Champion** (student in the graduating class of 2019)
- **K-12 Champion**
- **Postsecondary Champion**
- **Workforce Champion**

**Applications close October 31, 2018.** One Champion per category will be selected in each state. All Champions receive individual certificates and recognition by the Louisiana ACT Council. Additionally, **Student Champions receive a \$500 non-renewable scholarship.**

Visit [www.act.org/readinesschampions](http://www.act.org/readinesschampions) or email [ccrc@act.org](mailto:ccrc@act.org) for more information.

### **American College of Cardiology Young Scholars Program**

The American College of Cardiology's Young Scholars Program is a one-year program introducing budding scientists to the world of cardiology and research. Students have begun submitting their applications and essays, which are currently being reviewed. When accepted, students will be paired with a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology for a dedicated year of mentorship and growth in science. Students will work directly with a mentor on a research project suited to their level of experience. The program will also include regularly scheduled webinars for students to learn more about current research in this extensive medical field. This one-year program begins in March 2019 and will extend until March 2020. The ACC is thankful for all submissions and will follow-up with a list of accepted students soon.

Please share the [program flyer](#) with potential applicants and visit the Young Scholars Program [web page](#) for more information.