

COUNSELOR CONNECT

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Professional School Counselors



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Counselor Spotlight: Tirza Fernandez-Brazier



March 2020 changed our lives forever. The fast and furious COVID-19 virus was an imminent global threat, and we did not yet know the impact it would have on our lives and the well-being of our students. The role of school counselors shifted in a moment.

The Transition Begins

We shift. As we began to understand that the pandemic was not going away anytime soon, school counselors, the heart of the brick and mortar school, observed the abrupt closure of schools and our precious students were gone within a blink of an eye. As days went by, we held on to the notion that this global scare would be over soon and normal activities would resume. But more days, weeks and months went by without physical interaction with students. As we school counselors began to realize that students and staff would not return to the school building for quite some time, we began to think of creative ways to connect with students and to conduct wellness checks. Was it easy? Of course not, but the well-being of students was definitely necessary, especially during the uncertainty of a global pandemic.

The Transition Continues

We adjust. As the pandemic continues to wreak havoc over our daily interactions, we remain steadfast in our concern for the well-being of students. We have transitioned from triage to sustainable support--virtual counseling sessions, virtual check-ins, virtual lessons, virtual safe places for students to log in. Personal phone calls and emails back and forth feature even more prominently our daily schedules. A new way, a new day, a new facet of the profession. In this time, the role of school counselors has shifted from the familiar consistency of paperwork and test coordination so that the emotional needs of students could take its rightful place as the nucleus of our work. Hence, we evolve.

The Transition Evolves

We evolve. The shift in the school counseling profession has occurred and is quite noticeable. It has become known that school counselors are advocates for all students. Of course we are unable to predict the future, but for now we continue to evolve in our roles as good stewards of our students, utilizing our professional skills and knowledge and continuing to promote and support the health of our students. I am reminded that we all may shift at different intervals, rates of speed and time. One thing that remains true, a shift has occurred. Be ENCOURAGED. You are VALUED. So, keep PUSHING, keep STRIVING, keep BELIEVING. Because I BELIEVE IN YOU and so do your STUDENTS.

Tirza Fernandez-Brazier
Director of Counseling
East Baton Rouge Parish School System
LSCA Bylaws Chairperson
2021 LCA Presidential Award Recipient

Student Opportunities

Louisiana 811 Scholarship

The mission of Louisiana One Call (LA 811) is to support the protection of facilities, the public, and the environment by providing excellent damage prevention services in a cost-effective manner. Through its “Call Before You Dig” program, this organization promotes damage prevention through innovation, education and technology while providing excellent customer service. To advance this mission, the organization is awarding four \$811 scholarships to four Louisiana high school seniors.

- Applicants must be Louisiana residents and attend an accredited public or private Louisiana high school.
- Applicants must be graduating seniors.
- Applicants must be planning to attend either a community college, an accredited trade school, or a four-year accredited college or university by the fall following graduation.

Guidelines: The student will submit their application in pdf format. The student will combine sections 1-4 in one file, with a title for each section. The student is to be the sole contributor to and creator of the submission document. Please note that all submissions will be the property of Louisiana 811 and used at their discretion.

Student Introduction: In this section the student introduces him/herself. The student should concentrate on hobbies, favorite academic subjects, and any information supporting that the student works with others as a team, demonstrates leadership skills, and/or has contributed to improving the community.

Education/Extracurricular Activities/Work Experience: Students provide the following information.

- Name of school the student is currently attending
- Name of schools to which the student is applying or planning to attend
- Indication of the kind of scholarship the student is seeking--academic or technical
- List of sports, clubs, and civic organizations in which the student has participated
- Description of the volunteer work in which the student has participated during high school
- Summary of the student's employment history

Essay: In 300 words or less, describe how you can explain to your peer group and/or family the importance of the 811 message, “Call Before You Dig.” Explain how you will deliver that information.

Transcript: In addition to the application submission, students must provide a scanned copy of their official high school transcript(s).

All applications must be submitted by 5 p.m., Friday, March 18, 2021. Please email Cole Vanderlick at cole@laonecall.com with questions about this opportunity.

Professional Opportunities

Fall 2021 Counselor Institutes

This week, school counselors and school system leaders from across the state participated in the biannual LDOE Counselor Institutes. For those who were not able to participate, the presentation decks will be available in the [Counselor Support Library](#). Please email questions to leslie.gilliland@la.gov.

Jump Start Convention 2021: Save the Date

Save the Date for the 2022 Jump Start Convention

- January 25, 2022
- Raising Cane's River Center in Baton Rouge
- A curated series of sessions will be livestreamed
- Registration opens October 26
- Hotel blocks have been secured at nearby hotels

More details coming soon. Please email jumpstart@la.gov for more information.

Louisiana Fosters Virtual Summit

The Louisiana Fosters Virtual Summit takes place on Thursday, October 28 from 1 until 3:30 p.m. Sponsored by [Louisiana First Foundation](#), the focus of this year's work is creating partnerships with teachers and counselors in building trauma-informed schools. Please register at <https://bit.ly/3ms74am> to attend this important event. For more information on Louisiana Fosters, please visit <http://www.louisianafosters.la.gov>.

Middle and High School News

Fast Forward

[Fast Forward](#) is a program that allows students to earn an associate degree or participate in a state approved pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship in high school. There are currently [39 BESE-approved pathways](#) which can be used statewide with the approved postsecondary and apprenticeship organizations. Assistance is available for schools/school systems that want to adopt a currently approved pathway or begin developing new pathways to present for approval. There are regional webinars the second week of each month for schools/school systems.

Please contact stephanie.marcum@la.gov with questions or to get the links for technical assistance sessions.

Louisiana ACT® Now

The Louisiana ACT® Now initiative program provides funding to purchase pre-billed registration ACT test vouchers for eligible students in grades 12 and 10 as described in the application. This will expand opportunities for students to take the exam to assist them with reaching their educational goals. School systems with carryover funding from Spring 2021 ACT Now programming may utilize that funding to provide for paid ACT exam vouchers for students to use for a Fall 2021 ACT exam administration. Please contact meredith.mcgovern@la.gov with any questions.

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.

In Case You Missed It

[YOU DON'T NEED A BACHELOR'S DEGREE TO LAND A HIGH-PAYING JOB \(NPR\)](#)

[LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RELEASES ACT RESULTS FOR CLASS OF 2021](#)

(Louisiana Believes)

[LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NAMES EAST FELICIANA SCHOOLS "MODELS OF EXCELLENCE" RECIPIENT](#)

(Louisiana Believes)

[LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LAUNCHES SOCIAL STUDIES COMMENT PORTAL](#)

(Louisiana Believes)