

COUNSELOR CONNECTION

THE MDE COUNSELOR NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2023

[COUNSELING AND SUPPORT SERVICES WEBPAGE](#)

MARCH

Say Something – March 13-17

FEATURED [LAUDERDALE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT](#)

The mental well-being of students and the learning environment are negatively affected by the lingering effects of the pandemic. Mental health support from a professional school counselor is in high demand; the shortage of counselors has grown along with demand. The paradigm shift from a guidance counselor to a professional school counselor involves an undefined understanding of a counselor's scope of practice. Through a comprehensive school counseling program, there is evidence that school counselors play an integral role in student success.

The Lauderdale County School District, led by Superintendent Dr. John Mark Cain, is our featured district this month. In the Lauderdale County School District, students PK-12 have access to a comprehensive school counseling program. There is no doubt that Dr. Cain has acknowledged the crisis and that unmet needs of students can hinder students' academic, college/career, social/emotional, and mental well-being. Dr. Cain saw the value in retaining his counselors across his district and one way he did this was to move their pay scale to that of an administrator.



Dr. John-Mark Cain is the Superintendent of the Lauderdale County School District and is in his fourth year. Born in Natchez, MS, Dr. Cain grew up in Holmes County, where he graduated from Durant High School in 1998. After a successful high school baseball career, Dr. Cain attended Holmes Community College to play for the Bulldogs. After earning his AA from HCC, he attended Mississippi State University, earning a B.S. in Elementary Education. Working as a teacher and coach at Kosciusko Junior High School, John-Mark Cain earned his M.A. in American History from Mississippi State University.

Next, Dr. Cain entered the world of school administration while at the Kosciusko School District serving as an assistant principal, elementary principal, and high school principal. While principal of Kosciusko Middle Elementary, the school was recognized as a 2010 National Blue Ribbon School and the Mississippi Department of Education Champions of Change Award in 2012 and 2013. All the while Dr. Cain earned his Ed.S. and Ph. D. at the University of

Mississippi in Educational Leadership where he earned top academic honors.

Dr. Cain transitioned to the central office becoming the Deputy Superintendent in the Scott County School District in charge of school improvement. While there, Morton High School earned its first-ever "B" rating under Mississippi's School Accountability System. After two years, Dr. Cain was selected to serve as Lauderdale County's first appointed superintendent. In 2020, Dr. Cain was recognized as Top 40 Under 40 (Top Ten Finalist) by the Mississippi Business Journal and in 2022 he was named MASA Superintendent of the Year. He has been featured in books on successful leadership and has spoken at various conferences and with civic organizations on the challenges of being a superintendent. Lauderdale County School District is currently rated an "A" under Mississippi's School Accountability System.

► **In what ways has the pandemic affected students' social emotional and mental well-being? During this time, how has the school counselor supported students?** The manifestation of social/emotional issues in our students today is alarming. The pandemic created an extended period of social isolation. A regression in social interaction in my opinion has impeded natural maturation in our students. An over dependency on social media for affirmation during this time has also exasperated various social/emotional issues in our students' counselors are facing and combating each day. In Lauderdale County, we have our counselors meet with each other and discuss issues across all the grade bands. We

brought in outside consultants to provide supports for new and veteran counselors as well. We incorporated the MTSS screener and used it to help us identify those students may not populate traditionally. Our district has also partnered with our local WEEMS mental health provider in addition to working with other practitioners for other more severe cases that require a total team effort and wrap around supports.

► **What are the ways administrators and counselors work together to produce positive student outcomes? What is your school/district rating? In our opinion, can a comprehensive school counseling program increase student achievement, ensure social/emotional support, and promote mental health?** Administrators and Counselors must work together in a plethora of areas. There must be a clear understanding of expectations, roles, and an agreement for continuous professional growth. From the primary grades to Senior year, counselors and admins are working together to create character programs that meet the needs identified from a variety of feedback mechanisms. In LCSD, it may look different from one zone to the other as the socio-economic configurations can be extremely diverse from one community to the next. Our "A" rated LCSD understands the investment in quality counselors is extremely important and continuing to provide professional support is vital. By maintaining a comprehensive school program schools introduce students to a variety of coping skills, employability attributes, and positive outlooks in handling situations. Many understand the importance of "Maslow before Blooms" and in LCSD we understand that too. We truly embrace "it takes a village mentality" and use various resources as in people and programs to help address our students' needs in order for them to be academically successful.



► **What advice could you give other schools/districts in understanding the professional identity of school counselors and the benefits to the school?** It has to be about having quality people vested in being true advocates for our students. We must attract/train/retain the best counselors we can to do one of the most important jobs within a building.

► **How do you perceive school counselors as trained and highly qualified mental health professionals?** Counselors are often the first advocate for our student in K12. They are the first to help students recognize feelings and emotions, handle tragedies, feel less anxious about big decisions, and/or link students and families to broader supports when needed. A quality school counselor can be the best support for our students in need and parents seeking answers.



► **What did you do to convince your superintendent or principal to invest in school counselors and allow them to focus on both direct and indirect student services?** Our superintendent attended conferences and heard about the need for counselors to be more active and supported. Dr. Cain was a part of some state level PD that spoke on admin/counselor relations and providing the supports needed.

► **What other comments do you have for schools/districts that may not have counselors or don't utilize them properly?** If our students are not in the emotional mindset to learn we cannot expect them to do so. Our counselors must be supported to do the job that is required to reach our students where they are emotionally and be the advocate and resource to bridge other services when needed.



MONTHLY T.I.P. (THEORY IN PRACTICE)

Wow! February was a month of celebrations. We celebrated Black History Month, National School Counseling Week, and Random Acts of Kindness Day. As we transition into our second semester, it's a great time to pause and reflect on how far we have come. Sometimes it can be easy to focus on how busy we are, non-counseling duties, student overload, and how much we have to do every day. We tend to forget to celebrate what we have already accomplished. We create meaningful connections with our students every single day. We build our school counseling programs with innovation and creativity. We have all the patience for all the things. We literally save lives. School counselors are superheroes. You are a superhero.

- Dr. Chancey Fort

Professional School Counselors are Superhero's!

TIME'S RUNNING OUT: APPLY TO BE AN ASCA CONFERENCE AMBASSADOR

Deadline March 15: [Apply](#) to be a conference ambassador

NATIONAL DRUG AND ALCOHOL FACTS WEEK 2023

The National Institute on Drug Abuse and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism are gearing up for National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week (NDAFW) 2023 to be held **March 20-26**. NDAFW is an annual, weeklong [health observance](#) that inspires dialogue about the science of drug use and addiction among youth. NDAFW offers educators, prevention specialists, counselors and other youth intermediaries flexible programming to [identify topics](#) of greatest interest to their community. In addition, they offer science-based information and resources that help improve knowledge and awareness, while also promoting skills that support informed decision-making, healthy coping and other skills that are critical to the prevention of substance use among youth.

2023 ELVIS SCHOLARSHIP

Please see [flyer](#) for more information.

NEW WE WANT TO HIGHLIGHT YOU IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER

Do you have a comprehensive school counseling program that is aligned with the ASCA National Model? Does your district understand and support the role and responsibility of a school counselor as a school-based mental health profession?

Does your school/district have a school counselor for students in grades PK-12? Has your school counseling program impacted student outcome?

We would like to feature you, your school/district, and your administrator in our next newsletter!

[Apply Today!](#)

NEW CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

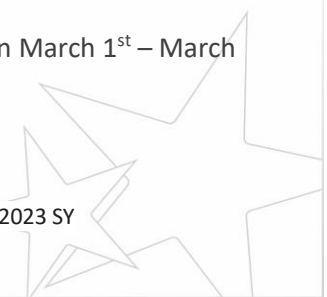
Is there a vacancy in your school or district for a school counselor? We're here to help! We will advertise the school counselor position on a national and state level if you fill out this [form](#).

Job Opportunity		
Clarksdale Municipal School District George H. Oliver Elementary School	Grade: PK-4	Contact Person and Information Rosalyn Griffin, Director of Personnel Email: rogriffin@cmsd.k12.ms.us Phone: 662-627-8500 District website: www.cmsdschools.org

MAGNOLIA STATE SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

School Counselor of the Year

Nomination and Applications for the 2024 Magnolia State School Counselor of the Year will be open March 1st – March 31st.





To nominate or apply, please visit: <https://magnolia.schoolcounselorawards.org/scoy/>

Questions can be directed to Nominations and Elections chair, Dr. Ebonee Dorsey at ebonee.dorsey@magnoliaststeschoolcounselor.org

MAGNOLIA STATE SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

Magnolia State School Counselor Association Annual Conference

Call For Proposals Is Open Now



The Magnolia State School Counselor Association is soliciting proposals for an in-person conference October 2-4, 2023 at the Sheraton Refuge in Flowood, Mississippi. Submit your proposal by April 28, 2023. [Submit Call for Proposals](#)

MAGNOLIA STATE SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

Board of Directors Election

Are you a passionate school counselor advocate interested in helping shape the future of the school counseling profession? Consider applying to serve on the Magnolia State School Counselor Association Board of Directors. The application will be open March 13 -27. [Submit Board Application](#)

UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

SCHOOL COUNSELOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH SYSTEM (PGS) DEEP DIVE TRAINING



FUTURE PGS TRAININGS: April 6, 2023, at 9:00 am
May 4, 2023, at 9:00 am

SCHOOL COUNSELOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY



This is an informal time for school counselors from across our great state to come together for celebration, collaboration, and continued growth. We look forward to you joining us!

Topic: *Creating Data-Driven School Counseling Programs*

Date: April 4, 2023 - *Creating Data-Driven School Counseling Programs*

Time: New School Counselor (9:00 am – 10:00 am)
Counselor Supervisor (10:00 am – 11:00 am)
School Counselors (PK-12) (11:00 am – 12:00 pm)

[Registration link](#)

FUTURE PLC DATES: May 2, 2023 – *The School Counselor's Role in Student Mental Health*

SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH VIRTUAL LEARNING SERIES

The School Mental Health Virtual Learning Series has returned for 2023! This free webinar series runs from January-May and is hosted in collaboration with our partners at the [Danya Institute](#) and the [Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network](#). Each webinar is held on the second Tuesday of each month from 3-4pm ET.

Learn more about the [School Mental Health Virtual Learning Series](#) and register for future webinars below. **The recordings and slides from all previous webinars in this series can be found online at www.SchoolMentalHealth.org.**



SMART CENTER 2023 VIRTUAL SPEAKER SERIES: EQUITY-CENTERED MTSS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH – [Registration link](#)

MISSISSIPPI ASSOCIATION PLAY THERAPY (MSAPT) CONFERENCE

Date: March 24-25, 2023

Location: Mississippi College

[Flyer](#) and [Tickets](#)

MAGNOLIA STATE SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION



Topic: Empower Your Practice

Date: March 30, 2023

Location: Virtual Professional Development

[Flyer and Registration](#)



LUNCH AND LEARN!

Youth Mental Health First Aid!

This introductory seminar is for anyone who works with or mentors children!

We explain common mental health challenges youth face and how you can help!

Every Wednesday, February 22nd - March 29th at 11am-12pm

If you have questions about the information

covered in this seminar,

please email Dr. Montgomery at emontgomery1@umc.edu.

SAVE THE DATE

MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL OF THE ARTS (MSA) GRIEF RETREAT

Date: April 1, 2023

Time: 9:00 – 3:30 pm

Place: MSA

[Flyer](#) and [Registration](#)

41st Annual F.E. Woodall Conference

Date: April 14, 2023

Time: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

[Registration](#)

Anna Weems for more information at aweems@deltastate.edu



2023 ASCA ANNUAL CONFERENCE



ASCA Annual Conference 2023: Get ready to dream big. [Registration](#) for the ASCA Annual Conference in Atlanta is now open. Check out [the full schedule](#) including the keynotes from Henry Winkler and Dr. Bernice King. If you're fishing for an overwhelmingly good time, don't miss out on the [Night at the Aquarium](#) evening party.

