

COUNSELOR CONNECT

A Publication for Louisiana's
Professional School Counselors

April 2021

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Counselor Spotlight: Samantha Manning



The scope of responsibility for a school counselor is broad, sometimes overwhelmingly so. With that broad responsibility comes lasting reward, and one of the most rewarding feelings is watching our students accomplish their goals and continue along a well-planned path toward a successful future. This time of year is the season for graduations, and it's one of the times I can clearly see the results of fostering those plans.

A key component of a comprehensive, school-wide plan to support middle and high school students through to graduation is the reviewing and updating of [Individual Graduation Plans](#) (IGPs). In all of the business of the spring semester, IGP review can seem like just another thing vying for our attention, but the process really is the cornerstone of the work we do to help students meet the goals.

At Jena High School, my IGP process includes guidance sessions in classrooms, presentations for parents, and online postings of this information. Though I realize not all schools can facilitate classroom IGP sessions, I have found that small group meetings work best for our needs. Our students update their IGPs on paper, and take them home for signatures. I provide a step-by-step guide to help parents and guardians review the IGP with their student and spark conversations about their opportunities. After the actual forms are completed and signed, we file them with other important records so the same forms can be reviewed year after year. Information on graduation requirements, TOPS guidelines, Jump Start pathways, and career counseling sites are among the resources we use in the planning process. The resources provided in the [Counselor Support Library](#) outline the requirements and expectations for IGP completion. To help us complete the Career Goals section of the IGP, students use online resources such as the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#); [My Life, My Way](#); and [Unlock My Future](#). Also, the class seminars provided throughout the year by our Career Compass Coaches have been helpful in providing graduation pathway guidance and Jump Start information that lay a foundation I can build upon during scheduling and IGP sessions.

Many schools have not had the same opportunities for face-to-face connection with their students during this trying year. Last spring our creativity was certainly tested as we sought new ways to connect and plan. By moving guidance sessions to presentation videos that I posted online for students and parents and utilizing Google forms for scheduling, I was able to provide relevant information in an appropriate format, and even found more efficient ways to complete scheduling.

Whether one-on-one for special cases, small group classroom guidance, or video presentations and online forms, the important thing to remember is our connection with students. In every scenario, it has been those connections that make the difference. The individual graduation planning process is invaluable in forming them.

Samantha Manning
School Counselor, Jena High School

Student Opportunities

Community Service

There is still time for students to earn the [Community Service Endorsement](#). Please share the [Community Service Opportunities document](#) with students to offer ways they can volunteer safely and assist their community prior to graduation. Please email questions to megan.thompson2@la.gov.

Professional Opportunities

LSCA School Counselor of the Year Award Nominations

[Nominations](#) for the Louisiana School Counselor Association (LSCA) School Counselor of the Year Awards are being **accepted though Monday, April 27**.

The School Counselor of the Year Award honors the best of the best: elementary, middle, and high school counselors who are running top-notch, comprehensive school counseling programs. In addition to the recognition given to the recipient of the award, positive public attention is focused on school counseling and thus provides an opportunity to educate others about school counseling programs.

The purpose of the other four awards is to recognize professionals in the areas of advocacy, school-based administrator/supervisor, legislator, and writer. Please visit louisianaschoolcounselor.com for more information.

2021 Data Summit Series from the U.S. Census Bureau

Data literacy has become increasingly important to compete in the 21st Century. Designed for the novice data user, the upcoming webinar, "Statistics in Schools" is a free virtual event that will teach data users how to explore the Statistics in Schools (SIS) website and the easy-to-use lessons for K-12 students. Participants will gain an increased awareness of the vast data products available through U.S. Census Bureau and come away better equipped to utilize the free resources available on census.gov. **The session is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. this Thursday, April 22.**

Please use the [online registration page](#) to sign up for the Thursday session; visit the [Upcoming Webinars page](#) for more information about this session and other webinar opportunities.

NCCER Online Testing

Please share this information with CTE Supervisors, Principals, Counselors, Secondary Supervisors, and Testing Coordinators.

NCCER will move to online testing only starting August 1. NCCER will no longer charge for online retests starting on June 1. The [instructor online testing system webinar](#) provides information on accessing the online testing system.

NCCER Proctor Certification will be held virtually on various dates from April 28 to May 26 at a cost of \$65 per person. Carl Perkins and Career Development Funds are eligible funding sources for registration. Per NCCER, all virtual classes will be four hours in length. For more information about proctor certification, please visit [NCCER ATS Guidelines](#). Class dates and times can be found in the [2021 Super Summer Catalogue](#).

For more information, please contact troy.borne@la.gov.

Scheduling and Best Practices Guidance

The [Staffing and Scheduling Best Practices Guidance](#) and kick-off webinar were released last month. This guidance provides systems and school leaders with best practices, staffing and scheduling models, cautions and tips for implementation, and information about ongoing implementation support.

As part of the release of the Staffing and Scheduling Best Practices initiative, school systems will be offered a variety of implementation supports this spring, summer, and fall at no cost. Please see the guidance document for a detailed list of supports. School counselors are encouraged to attend both upcoming training sessions. Registration is required.

Date and Time	Session and Registration Link
May 5 at 1 p.m.	Staffing and Scheduling Best Practices Webinar
May 12 at 11 a.m.	Job Alike Session: Counselors and Counselor Leadership

Please visit the [School System Support Library](#) to download the kick-off webinar presentation deck; contact em.cooper@la.gov with questions.

Harbor Freight Prize for Teaching Excellence

[Harbor Freight Tools for Schools](#) is a program established by Harbor Freight Tools to advance excellent skilled trades education in public high schools across America. In 2021, Harbor Freight will award over \$1 million in prizes to public high school skilled trades teachers for tools and equipment. **Three grand prize** winners will receive \$100,000, with \$70,000 going to the public high school skilled trades program and \$30,000 going to the eligible individual skilled trades teacher or teacher team. **Fifteen prize winners** will each be awarded \$50,000, with \$35,000 going to the public high school program and \$15,000 going to the eligible teacher or teacher team.

[Harbor Freight Tools for Schools Applications](#) are due by May 21, 2021. Eligible applicants are those who apply solo and teach any of the following skilled trades:

- Agriculture Mechanics

- Carpentry
- Construction Electrical
- HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning)
- Manufacturing
- Plumbing
- Transportation
- Mechanics and repair
- Welding

Please contact troy.borne@la.gov for more information.

IGP Webinar Presentation

Thank you to all who were able to attend the Spring 2021 IGP Webinar on March 31 or April 7, and apologies to those who did not receive support in that timeframe. Please visit the [LDOE Counselor Support Library](#) for a [PDF version of the presentation](#). Topics include an overview of IGP policy, a summary of updates to Act 238, and resources to support the legislation.

Please email leslie.gilliland@la.gov with questions.

Middle and High School News

Financial Aid Planning

The FAFSA is the form for state and federal financial aid for postsecondary endeavors. As a requirement of the IGP planning process throughout high school, every senior, as a requirement for graduation, must complete a FAFSA or have a waiver in place. Louisiana is currently ranked third nationally. If you would like your school's rate you can visit the LOSFA [Compete to Complete](#) site, contact the LDOE or ask your System Relations staff. For assistance with financial aid planning, please contact ldefinancialaid@la.gov.

NCAA News

COVID-19 Automatic Waiver Enrollment

Given the continuing impact of COVID-19 on the educational environment, the NCAA Eligibility Center has partnered with the NCAA membership to identify adjustments to the initial-eligibility certification process for students who initially enroll full time in a collegiate institution during the 2022-23 academic year. Please refer to the [NCAA Eligibility Center COVID-19 Response FAQ document](#) to learn more about these important adjustments.

Spring Webinar

Join the NCAA Eligibility Center at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 6 to learn about the latest initial-eligibility news and requirements as you assist college-bound student-athletes who aspire to compete at an NCAA Division I or II school. Please visit the [registration page](#) to sign up for the webinar for high school administrators, athletic directors, counselors, coaches and principals.

The Eligibility Center is also hosting a separate webinar for student-athletes and their families on Thursday, May 13. Please share [this message](#) with college-bound student-athletes and encourage them to attend.

In Case You Missed It

[US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS LOUISIANA TUTORING ENDEAVOR AS NATIONWIDE MODEL](#) (Louisiana Believes)

[GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOCUSED ON FAIR ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL LOUISIANANS](#) (Office of the Governor)

[HOW EDUCATORS CAN HELP STUDENTS NAVIGATE CAREER PLANNING AND THEIR COLLEGE CHOICE DURING COVID-19](#) (MultiBriefs)

[LOUISIANA ANNOUNCES NEW LITERACY INITIATIVE TO HELP SPARK A READING REVIVAL ACROSS THE STATE](#) (Louisiana Believes)

[IN SCHOOLS, FINDING HOPE AT A HOPELESS TIME](#) (Edutopia)