

KNOWING OUR PURPOSE

BY TAHNEE BOWEN



Spring is in full force! It is hard to believe that the school year is more than three quarters over. This also means that the counseling profession is in overdrive. Just like you, I have been preparing for the impending end of the school year—upcoming testing, academic advisement, course selections, conflict resolution, and the list goes on. However, two events have caused me to reflect on my role as a school counselor.

First, I was honored to meet Governor Asa Hutchinson as he recognized the work school counselors do by signing a proclamation designating February 1-5, 2016, as National School Counseling Week in Arkansas. This special week honoring school counselors provides recognition for our role in implementing comprehensive school counseling programs, which are a vital part of the education process for all students. While at the capitol, our newly elected Governor asked us to tell a little about our role in education and said that he imagined we had a lot to do with primarily preparing students for careers. I do not mind telling you, dear colleagues, I was a little gobsmacked. Those of you who know me well may find this hard to fathom but...I had trouble finding words. It had been one of those weeks, and career preparation was the furthest from my mind. I tried to recover and express that career education was only a fraction of a school counselor's role. I began to describe the vast array of needs our students face daily and the multitude of directions in which we are pulled. Listening to myself, one word came to mind: triage.

Fast forward one month. I am working with my district's counselors on the Student Services Plan. As my colleagues and I ponder our daily activities, that day at the capitol and that word come to mind again—triage, a cringe-worthy word, indeed. School counselors are so much more than triage. We are a key resource in the prevention of triage. We are so much more than career preparers, schedulers, test administrators, etc. Yet is that the perception parents, teachers, administrators, legislators, the community, and, most important, our students, have of us?

I encourage you to look at your school counseling program and your role within your school and community. What is your purpose? What part do you play in the success of your students? One thing is evident: we must be advocates for our profession and explain to all what a valuable role we have in student success. Maybe that day in the capitol, my momentary speechlessness was due to being star struck, maybe there just wasn't enough time to explain everything a school counselor does, or maybe I had not truly taken a good look at my role as a school counselor. Regardless of the reason, I assure you, I will be prepared the next time I am asked. ■■■

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