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Teaching and Learning

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction



FEBRUARY 2026

School Counseling Newsletter



We kicked off this month celebrating and highlighting school counselors from across the state for the AMPLIFIED work they do to impact student success. Pillar 2, "Revere Public School Educators" and Pillar 4, "Celebrate the Excellence in Public Education" was captured our NCDPI Celebrate the Good blog during National School Counseling from a guest post by *Tuere Dunton-Forbes of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*. Take a moment to read below as we close out February and continue to celebrate our work:

[Elevating Student Support: Creating Intentional Spaces and Celebrating the Professionals Who Make It Possible!](#)

Dr. Kisha Bryant

Recognitions & Celebrations

National School Counselor of the Year Finalist SBE Recognition During National School Counseling Week

Annie Goldberg, one of five finalists for school counselor of the year nationwide, was recognized at the February State Board of Education Meeting. Annie currently serves as a middle school counselor at Broadview Middle School in Alamance-Burlington Schools. (pictured to the right of State Superintendent Green).



National Black History Month

The [NC African American Heritage Commission](#) believes that "This February, and every month we continue our work to preserve, protect, and promote North Carolina's African American history, arts, and culture for all people." Check out the [NC Freedom Park Virtual Tour](#)

National CTE Month

Thank you to our Career Technical Education partners. As school counselors we appreciate your partnership to help student with postsecondary success in and out the classroom. Take a moment to review the [proclamation](#) from our state governor, Governor Josh Stein.

SEL DAY

SEL Day is a global, grassroots campaign for social-emotional learning to support children's academic recovery, mental health, and well-being. Since its inception in 2020, #SELday has reached over 40 million views. In 2025, over 7,000 SEL champions representing all 50 U.S. states and 80 countries made 4,600+ commitments to showcase, promote, advocate, and support SEL. Advocacy efforts have resulted in SEL Day proclamations in eight states. Make your commitment today to showcase SEL in your community, promote it to your personal and professional networks, advocate for it with your policymakers, and support it in your local schools, organizations, and community.

School Social Work Week - March 1-7, 2026

Thank you to our school social work colleagues for all that you do to support students, staff and your school community partner. You are indeed vital links who impact student success. We hope that you will be celebrated for your valuable work. Special shout out to our state level consultant, Pachovia Lovett, for leading with fierce passion for the school social workers! [iView resources provided by The School Social Work Association of America.](#)

Policy, Practice & Legislative Updates

JROTC Update

The SY2025–26 CTE Course Inventory officially included the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) pathway, following approval by the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) at its June 6, 2024 meeting ([Minutes of the Monthly Meeting SBE 06/06/2024](#)). In essence, JROTC courses have been incorporated into the CTE Course Inventory in a manner similar to AP/IB/CIE courses. Please note, however, that JROTC courses do **not** count as options for CTE credit.

Based on Public School Unit (PSU) scheduling, students may enroll in JROTC I–VIII. To be identified as a CTE concentrator, a student must complete JROTC I through JROTC III during high school. Course numbers, recommended enrollment guidelines, and course descriptions are available beginning on page 70 of the [North Carolina Career and Technical Education Course Inventory](#).

The NOCTI *JROTC Leadership and Employability Skills* assessment—an industry-recognized credential opportunity—is aligned to JROTC III. Instructors will coordinate test administration through their respective CTE district office. A list of CTE Administrators is available in the [CTE Administrators District List/Map](#).

For additional information regarding the JROTC pathway, please review [Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps \(JROTC\) Pathway in Career and Technical Education \(CTE\) FAQs](#) document, or contact Assistant CTE Director Angela LeMay (Angela.LeMay@dpi.nc.gov) or State Military Consultant Howard Lattimore (howard.lattimore@dpi.nc.gov)

NC College Connect Press Release

More than 23,000 public high school seniors have accepted direct admission offers from North Carolina colleges and universities through the NC College Connect program. Between August 2025 and January 2026, students accepted more than 88,000 offers from participating colleges and universities in the second year of the direct admissions program.

The program is a collaboration between the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the University of North Carolina System, the North Carolina Community College System, North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority and College Foundation, Inc. Read the [press release](#) for more in-depth testimonials.

PSU SMH Plan Template

As a reminder, the SMH plan template is required for reporting. This template includes all additions to the policy and is in an easier-to-follow format. Downloads of the template are available on the webpage in PDF and Word. Please prepare to submit your new SMH plan by September 15, 2026.

[SMH Policy Components Webpage](#) [2025 PSU SMH Plan Template](#)

Career Development Plans

Visit the [career development plan website](#) to review our updated guidance document, planning tool and the 2025-2026 office hours (see dates below).

- [Monday, March 16, 2026](#), 1:00-2:00 p.m.
 - [Friday, April 17, 2026](#), 1:00-2:00 p.m.
 - [Monday, May 4, 2026](#), 1:00-2:00 p.m.
 - [Monday, June 1, 2026](#), 1:00-2:00 p.m.
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ACTE's NEW National Modernized Career Cluster Framework and NC

North Carolina is updating its Career and Technical Education (CTE) framework to align with a new national model, transitioning to fourteen from sixteen clusters. For more information, [watch the session](#) facilitated by Amy Schroeder this month on the new updates.

Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities

SEL Summit & SEL4NC Events

Attend the SEL Day Summit—your registration includes access to the free online event showcasing SEL best practices from states across the country and around the globe. Detailed agenda coming soon! Watch for additional ways to engage with #SELday in your local community from our SEL4US state alliances and global partners! [Register here](#)

We encourage you to register for and attend our NC-hosted events during SEL Week and invite your teams and partners to join as well. These sessions are designed to showcase best practices, elevate local voices, and strengthen our statewide SEL ecosystem. Find more information here: [SEL4NC SEL Week 2026 Events](#)

11 Principles of Character Education: Building School Cultures Where Every Student Thrives

Join NCDPI, **March 25th**, for an engaging, interactive workshop focused on the **11 Principles of Character Education**. Participants will explore practical strategies, review North Carolina success stories, and gain tools to strengthen school culture while supporting the **School of Character** application process. This full-day session is designed for educators and school leaders committed to fostering environments where character development and student success thrive. [Click here for more information and to apply.](#)

Rescheduled Regional Trainings for Jewish and Antisemitism Today

RESCHEDULED in Northwest and Western regions in March. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is offering a series of full-day regional trainings focused on **Jewish Identity and Antisemitism Today**. Designed for administrators, counselors, and teachers, these sessions will engage educators in critical conversations to support safe, inclusive, and respectful school communities. Participants will explore Jewish identity, examine how antisemitism has evolved over time, consider the impact of global conflicts on K-12 schools, and learn strategies to foster understanding and empathy among students of diverse backgrounds. Trainings will be held across regions throughout February 2026 in partnership with the Stan Greenspon Holocaust Education Center. [Click here for more information.](#)

Promising Practices

Promising Practices generally include innovative approaches that promote a particular character strength (or several), engage multiple stakeholders (such as students, staff, caregivers, and community members), and align with the core values of a school or organization. Each Promising Practice must also align with at least one of the 11 Principles. Many of the practices highlight the importance of relationship building, fostering a sense of belonging, promoting service learning, improving behavior, amplifying student voice and leadership, and engaging parents and the community. **Deadline is March 22, 2026.** Apply [here](#).

Alliance for Inclusion & Prevention Free Courses

AIP is offering a FREE two-part course, **Treating Trauma in Schools: Foundations and Practical Applications for Professional Practice**, which focuses on treating trauma in youth populations. Participants can [earn up to 20 CEUs](#) and will also be invited to participate in a university study of the effectiveness of the course as it will aid in improving resources for practitioners. [Register here](#)

Rural School Counseling Webinar Series

Join us for a virtual professional development series designed for North Carolina's rural school counselors. In partnership with higher education professionals, each session offers practical strategies and fresh ideas to support your work. [Click here for more details.](#)

- [March 18, 2026](#), 10:30-11:30
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NTAC Youth-Driven Change: Centering Youth as Experts for School Transformation

Join us March 4th for an exciting event! During this interactive event, we will engage in a deep dive of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and youth advisory boards as powerful approaches for positioning youth as partners in shaping school and district efforts. We will cover guiding principles, implementation strategies, illustrative examples, opportunities and challenges, as well as developmental and programmatic considerations for youth engagement. A key feature of this session will be a youth panel, where young people will share their perspectives on the benefits and considerations of authentic and meaningful youth engagement. Submit a question for our youth panel when you register if you have specific questions about youth engagement!

Registration is limited to staff at education agencies, consortia, and NGOs funded by the following CDC/DASH cooperative agreements: CDC-RFA-DP-24-0139, CDC-RFA-DP-23-0002, and

CDC-RFA-DP-22-2203. Registration for this event will be limited to 50 attendees. Register [HERE](#) to save your spot. Questions? You can reach us at ntac@etr.org.

Carolina Hunger Initiative Nutrition Education Virtual Series

Carolina Hunger Initiative Nutrition Education is excited to announce an upcoming virtual nutrition education series, Nutrition for the New Year, using the Food Smarts curriculum! Food Smarts uses discussion and activities to empower you to create healthy habits and make nutritious food choices. Each lesson will include peer discussion, interactive activities to teach participants about different nutrition topics, and a recipe demonstration. This series will focus on learning how to make healthy choices on a limited budget during times of celebration, discussing strategies for eating healthy away from home, setting realistic goals for the New Year, and more! **Please complete this form for yourself/your household only. If someone you know is interested in the series, please send the [registration link](#) to them.** Lessons will be held on Zoom and the Zoom link will be sent out after registration.

CTE Lunch & Learn Series

Join us for an engaging Lunch & Learn series designed for school counselors, career development coordinators, and special populations coordinators. Each session will spotlight topics, tools, and best practices enhance career and postsecondary readiness support for students. [Click here to register and attend the sessions.](#)

NCSCA Spring Regional Drive-Ins

Join NCSCA for spring regional drive-ins, providing professional development sessions for school counselor on a variety of topics that enhance their school counseling practices. You may register [here](#) for your region or a nearby region.

Evidence Based School Counseling Virtual Conference

Dear NC School Counseling Leaders and Colleagues,

Join us for this year's online 2026 conference: March 13 & 14, 2026. In today's schools, evidence-based school counseling strategies have never been more important. That's why the EBSCC brings together practitioners, scholars, and leaders committed to student-centered and equity-driven school counseling. EBSCC is designed to help you:

- Bridge the research-to-practice gap with actionable, research-based strategies
- Advance student wellness, opportunity, and liberation in schools
- Learn from nationally respected researchers and practitioners
- Collaborate in a welcoming, action-oriented professional community
- Earn NBCC hours for live session attendance and evaluations
- Access session recordings through June 2026

[Register here](#)

SHAC Learning Collaborative

NC Healthy Schools hosts monthly opportunities for a SHAC Learning Collaborative. **These monthly meetings are the last Monday of each month at 3:00pm (unless scheduled otherwise, due to holidays, etc.)** and are open to all SHAC representatives (or those considering joining a SHAC) to come learn more about what other PSUs are doing, hear about various resources, and share about your activities. These meetings will primarily focus on SHACs and the *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child* model. There will be opportunities to discuss general questions, e.g., building the team, partnerships, use of data, action planning, and questions relevant to your WSCC efforts. [Meeting link](#) for monthly meetings.

RISE 2026 Registration

[Registration](#) is now open for the **2026 RISE Back to School Safety Summit!** The Center for Safer Schools' largest event will be held from **Tuesday, August 4 to Thursday, August 6**, at the **Greenville Convention Center** in Greenville, N.C.

Join us for sessions including bullying prevention, suicide prevention, critical incidents, and threat assessment.

National Forum to Advance Rural Education Call for Proposals

The National Forum to Advance Rural Education is one of the nation's premier gatherings dedicated to addressing the distinct challenges and opportunities facing rural schools and communities. This year's conference theme, **Ready, Set, Rural: Creating Opportunity Everywhere**, reflects the readiness and resilience of rural educators and the growing momentum across rural schools and communities.

The [call for proposals](#) is open and due March 27th. If you would like assistance with submitting a proposal, Dr. Tameka Grimes of Wake Forest University has volunteered to give support. You may contact her at grimest@wfu and must put in the subject line NREA proposal.

Resources

- [ASCA National Model Fifth Edition](#)
 - [Mental Health Literacy](#)
 - [NC Careers](#)
 - [Work Together NC](#)
 - [College Foundation of NC](#)
 - [NC Student Success Standards Resource Hub](#)
 - [UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center Resources for Educators](#)
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**CONTACT****Ellen Essick****Heidi Austin****Kisha Bryant****Megan Cardin****Jennifer Corso****Shwety Goswami****Burt Jenkins****Pachovia Lovett****Lillian Pinto****Lisa Queen****Susanne Schmal****Les Spell****EMAIL**Ellen.Essick@dpi.nc.govHeidi.Austin@dpi.nc.govKisha.Bryant@dpi.nc.govMegan.Cardin@dpi.nc.govJennifer.Corso@dhhs.nc.govShwety.Goswami@dpi.nc.govBurt.Jenkins@dpi.nc.govPachovia.Lovett@dpi.nc.govLillian.Pinto@dpi.nc.govLisa.Queen@dpi.nc.govSusanne.Schmal@dpi.nc.govLes.Spell@dpi.nc.gov**AREA**

Section Chief

Project AWARE

School Counseling

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