



# ROME

CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

**SPOTLIGHT STORY** - December 2019

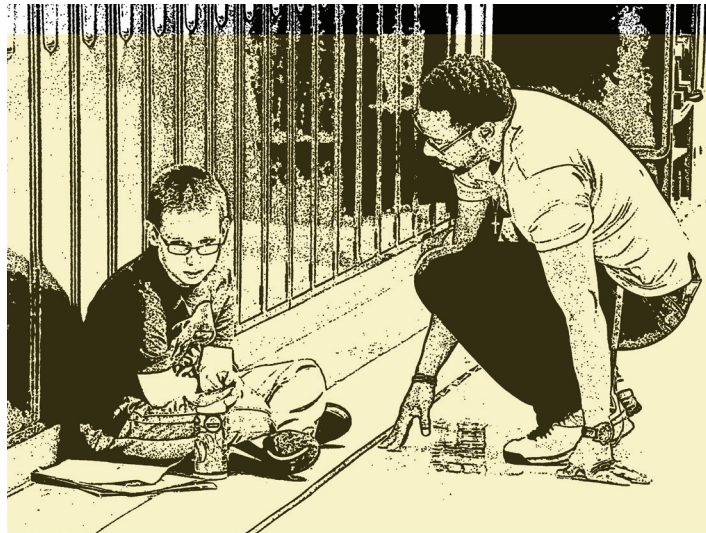
## HOW THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR HAS SHIFTED

**G**one are the days of school counselors sitting in their office simply handing out college applications, making schedule changes for students who want to drop a class or waiting for a crisis to occur. Today's school counselors help all students in the areas of academic achievement, career, and social/emotional development, ensuring today's students become the productive, well-adjusted adults of tomorrow.<sup>1</sup>

"The School Counselors of today are not functioning in the same way as the Guidance Counselors of 20+ years ago. Today School Counseling departments must develop an annual comprehensive counseling program where focused interventions and efforts are based on data and assessed for effectiveness and impact. The work of school counselors focuses on academic, career, and social-emotional development," said Amanda S. Jones, Director of Counseling Services.

Among her roles as the Director of Counseling Services in the Rome City School District, Amanda is responsible for coordinating a comprehensive counseling program for pre-K to 12th-grade students; developing community partnerships to assist student social and/or emotional development; overview of the school district's social workers; and coordinating the district's alternative education program.

Rome City School District counselors are an important part of our educational team and provide valuable support to our students, our teachers and



our families throughout the district. Rome is very fortunate to have school counselors in every school, and as you will read in this article, they play an important role in the lives of our children.

School counselors are faced with different challenges every day. The handful of counselors that were interviewed for this article all agreed that there

isn't really a "typical day". "Most of my day is spent working with students or working on their behalf. I teach classroom lessons on self-esteem, problem-solving, conflict resolution, friendship, communication skills, and character. I also meet with students individually and attend meetings as needed," said Carol Miller, Counselor at Staley Elementary.

There are similar issues at all grade levels as well. Students at the high school are waiting as soon as the counselors come in. "The day is busy from the moment I walk in the door until I leave... from meetings with students, parents, and Committee on Special Education (CSE)," said Kristin Frawley, RFA school counselor. For Bellamy counselor, Kareem Jones the day begins with the "Breakfast Club," a group of students who come down to the guidance space in his and Joseph Renzi's classroom. "We talk to students who may be out of control and just need someone to listen to, who want to come down to our space to eat lunch or talk. We also work with classrooms on topics, including problem-solving", he said. He organizes and teaches classroom guidance lessons as well as small social groups.



For veteran School Counselor, Maureen Nash her day might include meeting with students about college and career preparation, schedule changes, and classroom visits to talk about various topics, (upcoming PSAT tests or preparing for the college fair or National Junior Honor Society).

“School Counselors spend a great deal of their time assisting students (and their families) with the stresses of being a teenager in today’s society. The mental health and emotional health needs of our kids is significant! School Counselors work daily with students, parents, administrators, teachers, and various outside agencies to assist in overcoming personal and family obstacles that impede a student’s life,” said Nash. She has been a school counselor for 24 years, working with elementary, middle school and now high school students.

Staley counselor, Brooke Kopek experienced a lot of changes in the last 6 years, including the reconfiguration of a 5/6 building to K-6 a couple of years ago, and several building administrator changes. Asked what inspired her to become a school counselor, she said she has always loved working with children. “I feel I have a great connection with them. I like the fact that I am helping to mold their future in some way,” she said.

Strough Middle School counselor, Joann Mecca sees the role of counselors as the nucleus of the school. “If I’m not working directly with them, I am indirectly advocating by collaborating and consulting with staff, parents and service providers,” she said. Mecca also pointed out one of the challenges at the middle school is chronic absenteeism and how the school is working to combat that. For veteran school



counselor, Deb Daskiewicz, her experience started in elementary counseling and transitioned through middle and high school. Now in her 23<sup>rd</sup> year, she found education to be a way out of a difficult childhood and wanted to help encourage students to take ahold of the opportunities education can provide for their life. “The counselor is the person that they seek out for any situation, whether it is a struggle to open their locker to struggling with something at home,” she said.

Gansevoort Elementary School Counselor, Susan Bentley decided to pursue a degree in school counseling after working with adults in the field of mental health for 15 years. “I wanted to return to working with children again, rather than adults, as I had a desire to make a difference in the lives of children,” she said. In her 19<sup>th</sup> year, she said that we are fortunate with the RCSD to be valued for our ability to make a lasting positive difference in children’s lives. My role as a school counselor is to attend to the social/emotional/behavioral needs of the students at my school. To this end, my daily tasks include; counseling students, providing Second Step classroom lessons, providing consultations and attending meetings, and program/service coordination. The demands of working in



high poverty, high needs school creates the need to prioritize daily tasks as various situations arise, interrupting my ability to focus only on scheduled tasks.

Early Childhood School Counselor, Tina Campos provides resources and support to families. In addition to classroom lessons focused on social/emotional growth and child safety, she also works with children individually and in small groups focusing on any



concerns you may have, or sometimes during crises. “I work on social skills through play therapy and watch these young caterpillars learn great skills that make them blossom into beautiful butterflies. The skills they learn will be used for their continuous success throughout their lives,” she said.

The Rome City School District is fortunate to employ at least one full-time School Counselor at each of our 10 school buildings. Their names are listed below. Having access to a School Counselor puts your child(ren) on the right path to overall success! If you have questions about how your child is benefiting from working with a School Counselor, please feel free to reach out to one of them working in your child’s school.

# 1. American School Counselor Association.



## SCHOOL COUNSELORS:

### RFA (7-12 grade) Counselors

Mike Gzik, Maureen Nash, Michelle (Shelley) Skibitski, Ryan Tuggey, Jennifer Meisenhelder and Kristin Frawley.

### Strough Middle School (7-8) Counselors

Deb Daskiewich, Ona Cimbalo and Joann Mecca

### Elementary School (K-6) Counselors

**Gansevoort:** Susan Bentley

**Staley:** Brook Kopek, Carol Miller and Melinda McCabe

**John E. Joy:** Erin Maurer

**Denti:** Susan Amoroso and Ashley Wood

**Ridge Mills:** Ashley Lewis

**Stokes:** Amy Doolen

**Bellamy:** Kareem Jones and Joseph Renzi

**Clough Early Childhood Pre-K:** Tina Campos

