

20th Annual School Nurse Conference: Celebrates the Past While Envisioning the Futures

By Brenda Nickel, Child and School Nurse Consultant

Over 350 school and public health nurses convened in Wichita July 21 – 23 to discuss issues and initiatives related to school health in Kansas. Additionally, 54 professional nurses attended the orientation session for new school nurses July 20 – 21. Practicing school nurse experts presented information on infectious diseases, immunizations, delegation of nursing tasks and planning and management of school nurse practice.



Pictured: Tammy Jo Schmidt, RN, USD 239, Minneapolis.

Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips, Kansas State Health Director, opened the conference with a keynote presentation celebrating the collaboration between local health departments, medical homes and school nurses. The importance of nutrition, physical activity and development of healthy lifestyles in young children was emphasized as critical in addressing the increasing morbidity related to poor health habits.

Ileen Meyer, Director, Children and Families at KDHE; Christine Tuck, President of the Kansas School Nurse Organization and Director of Health Services, Seaman School District and Kathy Hubka, Coordinator of Health Services, Wichita USD 259 followed the opening keynote presentation with a historical perspective of school nursing, current challenges and opportunities for school nurses, and the future of school health.

An evening banquet was held to honor the Kansas School Nurse of the Year (see article on page 6), as well as the School Administrator of the Year. Special guests at the banquet included Donna Travis, past-President of the Kansas School Nurse Organization and the National Association of School Nurses and Joyce Markendorf, retired Kansas School Nurse Consultant. Several other nurses were present who had originally planned and provided the first conference in 1989 as a venue to educate and highlight the role of professional school nurses.



(Pictured: Ileen Meyer and Joyce Markendorf)

The conference provided additional learning opportunities related to adolescent health, early childhood populations, health promotion and prevention activities, leadership development, and a H1N1 Influenza update. Pre- and post-conference sessions were offered for CPR re-certification, vision screening and oral health screening in schools.

The 2010 conference will be held at the Wichita Hyatt July 20 – 22, 2010.

2009 Kansas School Nurse of the Year: Darla Denny Shawnee Mission School District

By Brenda Nickel, Child and School Nurse Consultant



The 20th Anniversary banquet at the Kansas School Nurse conference honored Darla Denny, RN, BSN, MET, a fifteen-year veteran of school nursing. A nomination letter sent to the Kansas School Nurse Organi-

zation (KSNO) recognized Denny as a nurse who, “exemplifies excellence in school nursing and is respected and admired by her students, school staff, parents and her school-nursing colleagues. She has been a long-standing member of Kansas School Nurse Organization.”

Denny’s notable contributions to the health of young Kansans includes:



Health promotion of middle school students throughout Shawnee Mission



Community and Youth Coalition



Serves as a preceptor for student nurses



Assisting school nurses in developing a web page



Serves as a Spanish translator between families and school staff

To read more about Denny’s accomplishments and view additional conference photos, visit KSNO at www.ksno.org/.

The Kansas School Nurse of the Year award is designed to annually recognize an exemplary school nurse that demonstrates excellence and professionalism in school nursing practice.

“Preparation Prevents Panic”

By Chris Tuck, Health Services Director Seaman USD #345, Kansas School Nurse Organization President

As the school year begins, you can already feel the “energy and excitement” of learning and collaboration throughout our schools. Planning and preparation for each school year is a continuous process and the success of each year is dependent upon looking to the future and planning for what may transpire.

Natural disasters such as fires and tornados can strike a school or community with little or no warning. The current situation with the H1N1 virus has shown that an influenza pandemic can spread from person-to-person causing serious illness across the country or around the world, in a very short period of time. School shootings and other acts of violence do occur and create catastrophic outcomes, including death. Terroristic events, such as 9/11, have ushered in a new age of terrorism for schools to contemplate.

School districts recognize their responsibility to take all reasonably practical steps to secure the health and safety of students, staff and others who are using school premises or participating in school-sponsored events. Each school district’s emergency preparation and response begins with “planning” to create a safe environment where all students and staff know how to respond quickly and effectively in various situations. Their system-wide plans are continually reviewed and updated and take into account that each school is unique and requires planning of its own. The plans are designed through collaboration of administration, school security staff members, as well as local law enforcement, emergency management and public health officials.

In the fall of 2006, Governor Kathleen Sebelius created a “Commission on Healthy and Prepared Schools”, whose purpose was to “define challenges that limit schools in uniformly providing healthy, prepared and safe learning environments... and to identify resources, training and standards that when implemented will assist schools in creating a learning environment better prepared to meet 21st century challenges to Kansas’ schools.” I have the privilege of being appointed to this commission as the Governor acknowledged the importance of the school nurse in emergency preparedness

and planning in schools. Over the course of the past three years through guidance from the Commission and leadership from Major General Tod Bunting, Kansas Adjutant General, the Kansas Center for Safe & Prepared Schools (KC-SPS), has evolved and is located in the Kansas Division of Emergency Management. Dr. Bob Hull, is the Director of the KC-SPS and is a past assistant superintendent from the Olathe school district with years of experience and expertise in school emergency preparedness.

All school based emergency response plans should be based on the four phases of emergency management: mitigation/prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. School nurses should be involved in all aspects of emergency preparedness in their schools, as through their professional educational training they are experts in the nursing process, which includes, assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation, all steps that closely parallel the phases of emergency management.

Mitigation/Prevention comprises actions that reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from disasters, such as addressing the safety and integrity of school buildings, security, culture and climate of schools to prevent violence. The school nurse conducts safety and training programs to students and staff, which might include CPR/First Aid/AED, Bloodborne Pathogen, Indoor Air Quality, etc. The school nurse identifies and promotes safety and security measures and assists with policy development of these measures. Identification of health and safety threats, by the school nurse, assist with policies and procedures toward ensuring students and staff are safe while attending school.

Preparedness focuses on the process of planning for the worst-case scenario. Many school nurses collaborate with district administration and local community emergency management agencies to assist with development of their district wide plans. They are also leaders in the creation and review process of their district plans and can assist with participating and evaluating the plan through drills and scenario type trainings. The school nurse also has the knowledge to identify

unique emergency preparedness for all students and staff with identified special health care needs and chronic health problems, which is documented through Individual Health Care Plans and Emergency Action Plans.

Response is devoted to the actual steps taken to save lives and prevent further damage during a crisis. It is very important for the school nurse to be familiar with their own specific role during the crisis event. Most likely this will include triage, coordination of emergency response teams and direct hands-on care to victims of the emergency. This should also involve serving in a broader capacity with the development of local community and county plans that might encompass a role with the schools in the event the crisis involves more than just the school (s).

Recovery entails methods to restore the learning and teaching environment after a crisis has occurred. The school nurse will assist with this process through direct support and being a liaison between community agencies and resources that can assist those in need, including themselves in the aftermath of a tragedy or emergency event.

Children spend much of their waking hours away from their parents in school. They rely on and find great com-

fort in the adults who protect them. Schools nurses are instrumental in assisting with the development of school building and district emergency preparedness plans which assist teachers and staff on how to help their students through a crisis. Following these plans can be the difference between calm and chaos, and life and death. School nurses believe that the prevention of accidents, injury or loss is essential to the efficient operation of school and is part of the educational process. We continue to plan to ensure all our schools are safe and secure environments for learning to occur. The time to plan is now. If you do not have an emergency preparedness plan in place, develop one. If you do have a plan in place, review, update and practice it regularly.

To assist you with planning for emergency preparedness in your school district, plan on attending the 2009 Safe Schools Conference, which will be held on September 28 and 29, at the Webster Conference Center, 2604 North Ohio Street, in Salina, Kansas. Registration is \$25 per person, and the deadline for registration is September 21.

For more information and to register visit the Kansas State Department of Education website at: <http://conferences.ksde.org/Default.aspx?alias=conferences.ksde.org/safeschoolssummit>.

BEGINNING THE YEAR WITH ENHANCED STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS

Don't Wait for Referrals:

Enhance Schoolwide and Classroom Practices to Prevent and Address School Adjustment Problems Now!

It is only a matter of weeks (sometimes days) after students enter a new school or begin a new year that it is clear to most teachers which students are experiencing difficulties adjusting (e.g., to new content and standards, new schools, new teachers, new classmates, etc.). It is particularly poignant to see students who are trying hard, but for various reasons aren't keeping up.

When school adjustment problems are not well-addressed, student motivation for school dwindles, and behavior and learning problems increase. And, a flood of requests for special services and special education assessment are certain to follow.

The growing emphasis on Response to Intervention (RtI) is expected to be a positive step in stemming the tide of referrals. However, RtI is still a "waiting for problems" approach. Prevention is the first concern.

Prevention

Every school and classroom needs a well developed approach for welcoming and providing social support at the beginning of the year (as well as for all newcomers who subsequently enroll). While the focus of welcoming programs is on all students and their families, special attention must be given to those who appear to have difficulty negotiating enrollment and/or joining in the routines and culture of the school. These students and/or family members need to be connected with potent social support mechanisms (e.g., student peer buddies, family peer buddies, mentors.)

Special attention must be directed at providing front office staff with training and resources so they can create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere to everyone who enters the school. Teachers must be prepared and given assistance with establishing classroom welcoming and social support procedures and materials.

Specific examples of welcoming and social support practices are available from the Center's Online Clearinghouse – see the Quick Find search topic Transition Programs/Grade Articulation/Welcome at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm

Rapid Response to School Adjustment Problems

School adjustment problems manifest as a range of behavior, emotional, and learning problems (e.g., including students who are easily distracted, need extra direction and guidance, and/or are having difficulty finishing tasks; those who are very anxious, extremely shy, or frequently misbehave). It is essential to be proactive and to address any problems in the earliest stages.

The push for Response to Intervention represents the long-standing practice of trying new strategies in the classroom – based on growing understanding of what is causing the problem and information about best practices for addressing the problem. Special attention is paid to enhancing student engagement through (a) an emphasis on learning and enrichment options that the student indicates interest in pursuing and (b) a temporary de-emphasis on areas that are not of high interest. This is a critical, and too often ignored, first step.

A brief set of guidelines and strategies for addressing school adjustment problems are highlighted in a set of Center Guidance Notes – see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/adjustmentproblems.pdf>.

To Accomplish the Work

In the short run, the school can enhance use of all staff, aides, peers, family and community members and other volunteers to enhance welcoming and social support networks and address adjustment problems. It can also encourage structured staff discussions and staff development about what teachers can do and what other staff (student support staff, resource teachers, etc.) can do to team with teachers in their classrooms to enable school adjustment before problems become severe and pervasive and require referrals for out-of-class interventions. This type of work requires a resource-oriented (rather than a case-oriented) focus. This can be accomplished by establishing a Learning Supports Resource Team – see:

- <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/resource%20coord%20team.pdf>
- http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Report/resource_oriented_teams.pdf

The following free resources will be helpful for structured staff discussions:

- Enabling Learning in the Classroom – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/enabling.htm>
- Re-engaging Student in Learning – www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/quicktraining/reengagingstudents.pdf
- Support for Transitions to Address Barriers to Learning (Training Tutorial) - http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/transition_tt/transindex.htm
- Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/transition_tt/transindex.htm
- Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/websrch.htm> – start with Classroom Focused Enabling – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/classenable.htm>
- Motivation – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>

In the long-run, system development and capacity building are critical to the sustainability of effective

rapid response and the reduction of unnecessary referrals for special assistance. As aids in developing proposals and plans that emphasize development of a comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students, see the following brief discussions:

Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching
Access: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/towardnextstep.pdf>.

School Improvement? . . . fully addressing barriers to learning and teaching is the next step!
Access: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/schoolimprovement.pdf>

Those preparing Race to the Top proposals would do well to include a strong section on developing such a comprehensive system of learning supports. Transforming how schools address dropouts and close the achievement gap is imperative in effectively pursuing key facets of the four Race to the Top priorities.

School Emergency Train the Trainer Program

Chris Tuck, Seaman USD #345 Health Services Director, was one of 10 school nurses from across the nation selected to attend the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) "School Emergency Train the Trainer" (SETT) program in Boston, MA this past summer.

The program provided these 10 school nurses an opportunity to offer the training to school nurses across the country.

SETT educates school nurses in the principles of multicasualty incident (MCI) triage and how MCI differs from non-disaster triage.

Chris has begun communication and collaboration

with Jane Stueve, Adolescent and School Health Consultant from KDHE and Sarah House Emergency Medical Services for Children Coordinator, Injury and Disability Prevention Program at KDHE, to provide training for Kansas school nurses in conjunction with the Kansas School Nurse summer conference in July of 2010.



Chris is pictured 4th from the left.

H1N1 School Guidance Released by CDC and KDHE

By Brenda Nickel, Child and School Nurse Consultant



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released new guidance to limit the spread of flu in school settings on Friday, August 7. The new guidance gives schools clear recommendations for 2009-2010 that will avoid

unnecessary school dismissals and the negative consequences that such dismissals could have on parents and the wider community. To view the new guidance, go to:

- <http://flu.gov/plan/school/schoolguidance.html>
- <http://flu.gov/plan/school/k12techreport.html>

KDHE supports and is endorsing the plan through educational presentations to school officials. These were held on August 11 - 12 at the Kansas Department of Education, the Kansas Association of School Boards. Presenters had traveled across the State from August 24-September 3 to present at the regional school administrator meetings.

The State Health Director, Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips, MD, MPH, believes "the guidance will be a useful tool for Kansas public health departments and school districts alike, as we all gear up for the start of school and the probability of increased pandemic flu transmission in the weeks and months ahead . . . control of pandemic flu in school settings must be a collaborative effort between local public health departments and the school districts and other education providers in their counties." (KDHE PH Connections, 2009, August 10, www.kdheks.gov/olrh/H1N1/H1N1_081009.pdf)

The new guidance emphasizes the importance of keeping schools open for well children and staff, while keeping those who are ill at home.

Collaboration will be essential as H1N1 vaccination initiatives move forward. Target groups identified as being at an increased risk for infection and transmission include children age 6 months through 24 years of age, thus vaccination efforts will be directed to this group, as well as other targeted groups.

For more information on the H1N1 vaccine and targeted groups, go to www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.

Resources to assist practitioners in educating and implementing strategies to reduce the risk of influenza can be found at:

- KDHE
www.kdheks.gov/H1N1/index.htm
Provides an update for H1N1 in Kansas and is a portal to guidance related to all aspects of H1N1, including weekly updates from KDHE, news releases and guidance for various groups, including individuals, businesses, schools, universities and child care, as well as others. Links to the CDC, U.S. Health and Human Services and the World Health Organization are available.
- Kansas Association of School Boards
www.kasb.org/panflu/
This Action Kit is designed to provide practical tools that you and your staff can use to prepare for the pandemic flu as well as seasonal flu. While designed specifically for schools, these resources should also help parents and families begin their preparations for dealing with the flu pandemic.
- KDHE Educational Campaign
www.kdheks.gov/flu/FluBugU.htm
An educational program that provides printed materials, videos and links to other websites is available.