



# The M.Ed. In School Counseling Newsletter



## About the program

The UNC M.Ed. in School Counseling Program trains professional school counselors in a unique 14-month cohort model and is based on the innovative Strengths-Based School Counseling framework pioneered by the program's faculty members.

### MORE INFORMATION

To get the latest and greatest in graduate news, check out the [Carolina Graduate School Magazine](#)

## Congrats to the 2018-2019 cohort!

As the cohort members finish the program, they've reflected on some of the most meaningful experiences at their internship sites. See more, Pages 3 and 4.

### Lennox Balog (far right)

**This has been a year of tremendous growth.** Between the classes, the cohort, and the internship, I have had the opportunity to learn from some incredible individuals. The cohort model has really made this year what it was for me. I gained new friends of different ages and from backgrounds different from my own. I took away valuable lessons from every single cohort member and am appreciative for the relationships I have formed. I know I have a team supporting me and at least 15 people I can turn to when in need.



## Faculty corner

### Catching up with Dr. Dana Griffin

A lot of exciting things have happened this school year. David Ansong, assistant professor in the School of Social Work, and I have been awarded a small grant to do research in the Galapagos Islands, so we will be traveling there in May to explore families, schools, and communities in San Cristobal.

I was also provided a small grant to work with schools and families, so I will be working with a nonprofit soccer program to build a college-going culture for low-income African American and Latinx elementary aged children in Durham. I was also elected to be Chair of the Faculty, serving this year as Chair-Elect, and I will be stepping into the role of Faculty Chair in a few short months.

I also have published several pieces this year, including articles on how school counselors can facilitate school-family-community partnerships and how community asset mapping can increase college and career readiness for rural Latinx students. I also have contributed a chapter in an upcoming book on the uses of qualitative research methods in school counseling.

However, above and beyond all these great things, I have most enjoyed getting to know our counseling students outside of the classroom and I look forward to more opportunities to hang with the students around Chapel Hill and Durham before they graduate and start their awesome careers as school counselors!



Griffin

## Future counselors in the field

During the spring semester cohort members Billy Lane and Selena Pruitt completed independent study projects with the Marion Cheek Jackson Center, which is a nonprofit organization that seeks to “honor, renew, and build community in the historic Northside and Pine Knolls neighborhoods of Chapel Hill through organizing and advocacy, education, and story preservation.”

To promote community partnerships and enhance student and family engagement, Selena developed curriculum for elementary school students that focused on the themes of storytelling, neighborhood histories, community, family, and empowering diverse youth voices. She then piloted the curriculum at the Boys & Girls Club Afterschool Program held at Northside Elementary School.

*“My independent study was a really great opportunity to work with a younger age group than I normally do, while also being able to get to know the Northside neighborhood and community around UNC. Most of my students are recent immigrants, so I really enjoyed creating lesson plans that celebrated their diversity, lives, and stories and that amplified and empowered their voices.”*

Billy created an educational seminar called “Black & Blue – The Police & You” to provide high school students in the Chapel Hill area with a forum to have their own conversations about community-police relations. He interviewed four local African-American police officers about what it is like, in the current climate, to balance their identities as black men and women with their duties as police officers.



During the interviews, the officers shared their views on the current state of relations between law enforcement and black communities, and they discussed their own personal experiences and interactions with police. Officers also addressed broader topics such as trust, authority, and compliance, as well as the seemingly opposing viewpoints of the “Black Lives Matter” and “Blue Lives Matter” movements.

*“My hope was to engage students in crucial conversations about race, law enforcement, and the relationships between communities of color and the officers who protect and serve those communities. Though the seminar will allow students to engage in conversations about difficult and sensitive topics, I wanted it to remain focused on finding positive outcomes, on advancing the conversation.”*

## My biggest takeaways

### Rachel Cox

A few things that stick out to me are the friendships I've made, the students I've connected with, and the ways I have grown as a professional. When I began at Eno River Academy, I wondered how I would make a difference in the lives of the students. I have appreciated the support from my cohort, our professors, and my supervisor. Because of what we learned in the program and my field experience at my internship site, I am ready for whatever comes my way in August 2019!

### Kalie Halpin

I'm most proud of the groups that we've facilitated at JM this year. A few things I've done with my freshmen include having members of the Gay Straight Alliance create trusting relationships with each other and spend a lot of time outside of school and conducting three groups for freshmen girls on healthy relationships. All of the students have shown increased social skills and I'm so excited because I always see them together outside of school supporting and encouraging each other!

### Derek Marion

I work primarily with the juniors and seniors at DSA. When I first started in the fall, the counseling office was inundated with seniors who were stressed about the college application process. Throughout the fall and winter we met with many students to help them with this process. It was a stressful time for the students and the counselors. In late January when admissions decisions started coming in and those students we worked with all fall started getting accepted, that was affirmation of hours of hard work for the students and the counselors.

### Reem Tabet

I had a lot of fun doing the family workshop this semester. We did a session on the transition to middle school for fifth-grade students and their families. We had a really big turnout and I got to use a microphone, which was very exciting. The parents were all wonderful and gave encouraging and helpful feedback. Helping the students register for middle school electives during this meeting was a wild time as well - pure chaos, but it was a lot of fun seeing their excitement about the classes that they're going to be taking next year. **Also, on the whole other end of the spectrum**, special shout out to the handful of sweet kindergartners who never quite got the hang of my name and have been calling me Ms. Cabbage all year.

### Sam Weissler

One of the most amazing parts of my time at Shepard Middle School has been the career and college readiness component of our school counseling program. Our first major event was called Reality Store, and was delivered to all of our 8th graders. Reality Store seeks to provide students with career and financial decision-making skills, and gives them a taste of the financial decisions that adults face on a daily basis, as well as the influence of higher education on income. It was amazing to see students make connections between education and higher income, as well as the decisions that their own parents have to make each month.

## Professional development

### ASCA National Conference

“Revolutionary Ideas”  
June 29-July 2, 2019,  
Boston, MA. Click [here](#)  
to register.

### NCSCA Conference “Preparing Together for Tomorrow”

November 13-15, 2019,  
Charlotte-Concord.  
Click [here](#) to register.

### Did you miss any professional development opportunities this year?

View the [NCDPI](#) archived webinars from 2018-19

[April](#) featured “Social Emotional Learning: Build School Wide Compassion, Leadership & Character with EVERFI”

### NCSCA Summer Academies

Eastern Academy, June 28, Cape Fear Community College.

Western Academy, July 12, Appalachian State University.

Participants will earn 7.5 clock hours. Click [here](#) to register.



## Sand therapy experience

Dr. Walter led our internship class in a discussion on the use of sand trays as a counseling technique. The cohort members enjoyed learning about this client-driven approach and even had a chance to construct their own sand trays!



## My biggest takeaways

### Shaily Shah

**One of my favorite experiences was co-facilitating a group** with my supervisor with third-grade students. The original group topic was coping with changing family situations; however, when word got out, other students who did not necessarily have changing family situations but were coping with living with one parent or going between two homes asked if they could join. We left the decision up to the students in the original group and all of them agreed that they would like to include their peers with differing family dynamics in the group. Over the course of seven weeks, it was really neat to see how the students connected with one another, listened to each other's stories, and provided support and shared strategies to help each other cope.

### Hannah Jeter

**This semester, I facilitated a changing families group** with the social work intern at my site. This experience was a formative part of my internship experience because it gave me the opportunity to see how the elements of group counseling play out in a real setting. I witnessed members take ownership of the group, share personal experiences, and connect with other group members in things they thought they were alone in. It was a privilege to be a part of and I look forward to using group counseling as a regular component of my practice as a school counselor.

### Kaia Bednar

**It is hard to pick just one favorite moment**, as I have accomplished so much and grown immensely as a counselor in the past seven months. However, one standout moment comes to mind. Earlier in the year I taught a character trait lesson on kindness to kindergartners. Since then I have one student from that class who does not call me by my name, instead he calls me "The Kindness Teacher." I cannot help but smile whenever I think about this student and the sweet title he gave me.

### Melissa Letzler

**At the end of college and career week**, we held a college panel at E.K. Powe for all our 4th and 5th grade students. Participants included students from underrepresented groups, including first-generation students, African American students, and Latinx students. The panelists all introduced themselves and then students were able to ask questions for 90 minutes. Panelists included college students from Duke and NCCU, engaged our students by sharing valuable experiences and wisdom. One of the most profound questions asked by a student was, "Why can someone like you go to college?" The panelists all answered this question and I was moved by their responses. In a high-needs elementary school such as ours, I was very happy this event could happen and communicate to all our students that they are indeed college-material!

## Professional development

### Looking for Some Ideas to Help Effectively Wrap Up Your School Year?

Check out program alumna Rebecca Atkins' "[Counselor Up](#)" blog for a great "End of the Year Counselor To-Do List"

More ideas from [Confident Counselors](#)

**Summer PD on College & Career Readiness** Click [here](#) to register for online sessions designed specifically for school counselors.

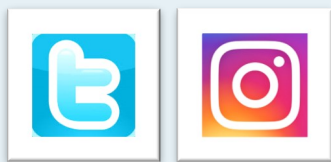
Topics include:

College-Going Culture

College, Career & Academic Planning

College & Career Advising for Middle Grades

College & Career Counseling for Special-Population Students



### Follow along

Check out UNC School Counseling goings-on on Twitter and Instagram at [@uncschcounsm\\_ed](#)

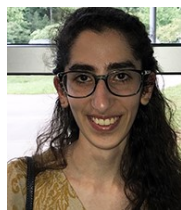
## The 2018-2019 cohort: The Final Four



### SELENA PRUITT

BA in American Studies, Macalester College • **Internship site** Smith Middle School

• **Previous position** AmeriCorps member with City Year DC • **Why school counseling?** I love working with students and want to help them break down barriers and be their best selves • **Greatest strength** Active listening • **Favorite book** Harry Potter • **Favorite musical act** Ariana Grande • **Fun fact** I can solve a Rubik's Cube • **Favorite restaurant or college hangout** AG Kitchen (NYC) • **Favorite vacation spot** London • **Fun thing you've done** Traveled to London to see Harry Potter & the Cursed Child



### REEM TABET

B.A. in Psychology & French and Francophone Studies, UNC-Chapel Hill • **Internship site** A.B. Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School

• **Previous position** Intervention program teaching self-regulation skills to first- and second-grade students • **Most looking forward to** getting to know all my students! • **Why school counseling?** I really like working with kids and helping them to realize their full potential for academic success and socio-emotional well-being • **Greatest strength** Open-mindedness • **Fun fact** I did martial arts growing up, and I earned a black belt in karate and taekwondo before stopping just after middle school • **Favorite book** Just Kids • **Favorite restaurant or hangout** Bandido's • **Favorite musical act** Paul Simon



### SHAILY SHAH

BS in Early Childhood Education, Winthrop University • **Internship site** Carrboro Elementary School

• **Why school counseling?** I have a background in education but I am passionate about getting to know students holistically and supporting all domains of their development. It's important that students feel safe and supported in schools • **Greatest strength** Being genuine and truly invested in kids' development • **Favorite musical act** Maroon 5 • **Favorite book** Tuesdays with Morrie • **Favorite restaurant** Babalu • **Fun thing you've done** A road trip to Nashville, TN, with my close college friends



### SAM WEISSLER

BA in Psychology, Johns Hopkins University • **Previous position** Tennis Pro

• **Internship site** J.E. Shepard Magnet Middle School • **Why school counseling?** I want to remove barriers that prevent students from achieving success emotionally, socially, and academically • **Most looking forward to** building relationships with students • **Fun fact** I played tennis in college • **Greatest strength** Patience and dedication to providing students with the resources they need • **Favorite book** Harry Potter • **Fun thing you've done** Got a puppy last year! • **Favorite vacation spot** Asheville, NC • **Favorite hangout** Al's Burgers