

Students, parents see changing role of guidance counselors in local schools

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — “I go to see her because I want the problem fixed,” says Dorenzo Cowan.

A 6th-grader at Choctaw County Elementary, Dorenzo understands the role of his school counselor. His counselor, he says, is there for him if he has a problem that needs to be discussed.

Dorenzo is one of many students in Choctaw County schools who has chosen to use his counselor for just that purpose — to fix a host of problems that may arise. At his school, the counselor he talks to is Mrs. Nona Anderson.

“If they have a problem,” says teacher Henrietta Gibson, “these students hand me a note that says ‘I need to go talk to Mrs. Anderson.’”

Last week, local schools honored their counselors as part of National School Counselors’ Week. The national observance is set aside as a time to raise awareness among students, parents, and the public about the role of counselors in the lives of the students.

Although school counselors were formerly seen when students had serious behavioral or academic problems, the role of counselor has changed in recent years. Today, their roles include helping students with such issues as peer relationships, family-related problems, and poverty-related issues, as well as the traditional academic and behavioral difficulties.

Many parents of local students have already seen

the role of counselor as one that offers a place for students to go to discuss problems, whether those problems concern academics, behavior, or other issues.

Angenetta Ford, the mother of a student at CCES, says that Mrs. Anderson’s door is always open when there are problems.

“You can talk to her about academic problems,” says Ford. “If there is a problem, she’s there for that.”

“I’ve seen teachers have to come and get her for other reasons, too,” she adds. “Maybe a child is having other problems and they need someone to talk to.”

Other parents cite differing roles that the school counselor plays in the education of children, with some of those roles less noticeable than others.

“I’ve noticed that if a child has a problem with buying uniforms, Mrs. Anderson makes sure they get them,” says Santonia Eddie, whose son Antonio attends CCES. “Or if they need school supplies, she makes sure they have what they need.”

Regardless of the problem or the issue that needs addressing, students, parents, and faculty members are choosing to visit the counselor’s office for an increasing number of reasons.

“It’s amazing to see how these students understand what their counselor is there for,” says Gibson. “They may need to talk about a problem they are having with another student, or a problem with their grades. But they see her for more reasons than just if they are in trouble.”



Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell

Champion awarded gift

TOXEY -- County Spelling Bee Champion John Downey was honored with a gift bag from Alabama Southern Community College on Monday. He was presented the gift by ASCC Director Angie Williams in honor of his achievement. A student at South Choctaw Academy, Downey took first place in the county competition last Tuesday evening. He will be traveling to Birmingham to compete in the state Bee in the near future.



Photo by Emerald Kirksey/SCHS

Happy iPod® winner

GILBERTOWN — Shequita Causey (left) was recently awarded an iPod® by Mrs. Gwendolyn Foster (right) for her participation in the Star Sportsmanship Program. Shequita is a student at Southern Choctaw High School. Congratulations, Shequita!



Submitted photo

SCES gets award from STAR Sportsmanship

GILBERTOWN — Southern Choctaw Elementary School was recently awarded a \$300 check by the Alabama STAR Sportsmanship program in recognition of successfully reaching its goal of all students completing the STAR Sportsmanship character-building program. The money was awarded from a random drawing of schools who had completed the program. Coach Jeremy Noland was responsible for SCES’s successful completion of the program which gives students the chance to practice character traits that we all embrace — kindness, courtesy, respect and authority. The funds will be made available for Coach Noland to use in the physical fitness program.



Submitted photo

PEPE training session held in Butler

BUTLER -- Administrators and principals from Choctaw County Public Schools attended a training session on the Alabama Professional Education Personnel Evaluation Program (PEPE) on February 6 at Choctaw County Elementary School. The session included training on technology to be used in evaluating teachers and central office personnel and principals. Conducted by Tammy Starnes (pictured in foreground) who handles PEPE at the state department. The training was to ensure that those trained could evaluate teachers and central office personnel through the technology online offered by the State Department of Education. Superintendent of Education Sue Moore said that the training was to make sure that the school system was in line with what the state required this year. Also discussed by administrators in the sessions were such topics as confidential correspondences, applications and interviews for new teachers, alternative school procedures, ISS documentation, early dismissal dates for students, Alabama Math and Science Technology Initiative training, competitive technology grants, and character education.



Submitted photo

WCPL hosts science tours

CHATOM — The Washington County Public Library recently hosted several classroom field trip tours of the Ciba Science Center’s “Astronomy — The Science of Space” exhibit. Classes from Solid Rock Christian School in Jackson, Chatom Elementary School fourth grade, and Cub Scouts Troop #53 visited the exhibit to experience the Woodmen of the World “StarLab” Planetarium. Inside the “StarLab,” students learned about the use of stars by our ancestors to determine directions over sea and land, and the use of constellations to tell stories of heroes and legends in other cultures. They also enjoyed IMAX videos about craters, asteroids and comets and their impact on Earth and the environment. Students participated in a “Crater Drop,” dropping rocks of different sizes into pans of flour and cocoa to make craters and measure the “rays” of contrasting colors made by material ejected from the crater. Each visitor was given a sample of Astronaut Ice Cream (INSET PHOTO), which is dehydrated, “like Lucky Charms marshmallows,” as one student described, so that it can travel safely into space with the astronauts. The Library would like to thank Larry Hubbard and Woodmen of the World for providing the “StarLab” during the astronomy exhibit.

Discovery
at Patrician
Coming up Friday in
The Choctaw Sun!