

The Alberta Counsellor Letter

March 2019



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Editorial



The executive team of the Council of School Counsellors (CSC) has undergone some changes since the last newsletter. Vincent Mireau has stepped down as president. I would like to thank Vincent for his hard work and unwavering commitment to the council for the past five years. Erin Luong, a long-time member of the CSC, is our new president. Please read the *Canadian School Counsellor Magazine's* interview with Erin to learn more about her. I would also like to welcome the

new Edmonton regional representative, Ger VanderMeulen.

This issue of the *Alberta Counsellor* includes regional and executive reports, an introduction of our new president and a few special interest articles.

Check out our website (www.ataschoolcounsellors.com) for resources, conference information, past issues of the newsletter and information about the journal. If you have any feedback or questions for any executive member, contact information is also available on the website. Please contact us with your ideas or submissions for the journal or newsletter!

Nicole Drysdale

Outgoing President's Report

Hello everyone! I begin my short entry with gratitude. As I move forward, I would like to thank the council for five excellent years—four years as treasurer and one as president. I would like to thank the conference team for a great conference, and I would like to thank the delegates. It was a pleasure to meet many new friends, and it was amazing to connect with old ones.

2018/19 Executive

President	Erin Luong
Vice-President	Koreen Trefanenko
Treasurer	Joanne McHugh
Conference Chair	vacant

President-Elect	vacant
Past President	Mary Frances Fitzgerald
Newsletter Editor	Nicole Drysdale
Associate Journal Editor	Vincent Mireau
Journal Editor	Jeff Chang
Webmaster	vacant
Calgary Regional	Tonya MacGillivray
South East Regional	Leah Steiner
South West Regional	Cathy Kitagawa
Central Regional	vacant
Edmonton Regional	Ger VanderMeulen
Fort McMurray Regional	Natalie Doucette

We have a few vacancies. If you are interested in a rich professional experience, please reach out to Erin Luong through our website: www.ataschoolcounsellors.com.

I would also like to add a note about our financial year. We ended up with a surplus, which is helpful since our 2018 conference ran at a deficit. We forecast running in the year ahead at a modest deficit, which is fine because the council has a healthy operating surplus.

Vincent Mireau



Join us on Facebook at ATA Guidance Council for updates on the conference, regional events and information!

The Importance of High School Counsellors

In the interview below, Erin Luong, president of the Council of School Counsellors, discusses the importance of high school counsellors with Jackie Fritz of the Canadian School Counsellor Magazine.



Erin Luong

1. Please provide me with your name and job title.

Erin Luong, school counsellor and mental health literacy teacher for the Calgary Catholic School District

2. Can you please provide me with a brief description of your professional biography?

I am a school counsellor and mental health literacy teacher with the Calgary Catholic School District. I am also the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association Council of School Counsellors. I have been a practising school counsellor for the last 14 years and have experience counselling at all grade levels from kindergarten to Grade 12, with the majority of my time spent working at the high school level. I was also the proud recipient of the 2016 Murray Jampolsky Memorial Award for Outstanding Practising School Counsellor.

3. How would you describe the role of guidance counsellors in high schools?

High school guidance counsellors provide educational, personal and career counselling. Counsellors offer direct and indirect services to students and their families. They also work closely with school district personnel, district programming and community agencies to provide additional assistance as required.

4. What are the most important services guidance counsellors provide to students?

Educational

- Provide support with high school course selection.
- Assist with postsecondary and scholarship information.

Personal

- Provide individual and group counselling.
- Coordinate and provide services in minor and major crises.
- Coordinate wraparound school and community agencies and service providers for education, mental health, justice, newcomers and health care.

Career Counselling

- Explore university selection and application process.
- Support students in exploring career options.

5. What are some of the challenges facing guidance counsellors in your province, territory or region?

We would like school jurisdictions to be aware of the value of investing in school counsellors. "In Alberta, school counsellors are certificated teachers who have received additional professional development or graduate-level training that prepares them to support students' personal, social, educational and career development, as well as promote students' mental health and well-being" (ATA 2017). Employing teacher counsellors has a positive effect on student achievement because teacher counsellors understand both the students' and the school system's developmental needs. University of Alberta representative Noorfarah Merali's (nd) research, *Briefing on Social Return on Investment for School Counselling*, recommends that the optimal student/school counsellor ratio would be one counsellor for every 250 students.

6. What additional resources could assist guidance counsellors?

As students' needs become more complex, guidance counsellors must use evidence-based approaches when working with students. Opportunities for lifelong learning, networking to share best practices and mentorship are important for both urban and rural school counsellors.

7. What are some of the most rewarding aspects of a guidance counsellor's job?

The best things about being a school counsellor is helping students launch. First, you teach students the skills they may need to manage anxiety, a relationship or university selection. Next, you coach them through using those tools. Finally, you know that you have done your job when you witness the students applying their skills independently.

8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Guidance counsellors are some of the luckiest people in the world. We have the privilege of meeting students at their level and helping them to soar.

References

Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). 2017. *The Social Value of School Counselling*. https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/c0e3ce_3a1a4f04556346e58afc9384ed25e82b.pdf (accessed January 11, 2019).

Merali, N. nd. *Briefing on Social Return on Investment for School Counselling*. https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/c0e3ce_6a2f954ab7b246cebd7ac47185791995.pdf (accessed January 11, 2019).

Regional Reports

Calgary

Greetings from your Council of School Counsellors (CSC) Calgary regional representative! We are still gathering membership e-mails and planning for 2019, but to hold you over we have some resources and opportunities at our fingertips!

Facebook followers know that we have a community of practice zoom meeting one Wednesday per month from 3:45 to 5:45 PM. Keep an eye on Facebook for the link to join. Feel free to contribute or simply listen to add valuable tools to your toolbox.

Twitter is another way to connect with counsellors worldwide. Use the hashtag #SCCrowd and either ask a question or gain valuable feedback from others in the profession. On the third Wednesday of the month from 6:30 to 7:30 PM is a live chat on #SCCrowd. Tune in to read posts, ask a question or share an inspirational experience.

Are you doing something unique in your school that you want others to know about? The Calgary Catholic School District emphasizes the idea that every student needs a champion – a trusted adult students can turn to if they have a problem, need encouragement or want to share exciting news. In a recent health class, we reminded the junior high students what a champion is. We asked them to identify an adult champion at school and tell him or her something they felt would be helpful to know. The school staff were so touched by the responses that included everything from “I like pineapple on my pizza” to “My dad is too dangerous to stay with.” It helped the adults understand that there is usually way more to students than what they see in the classroom. As well, the champion was able to reach out and remind the students that they are important and that they matter.

Stay tuned for professional development opportunities coming your way.

Tonya MacGillivray

Edmonton



I am excited to be the Edmonton regional representative and to learn all about the council's involvement. I have taught at all grade levels for over 20 years. In 2015, I received my master of counselling from the University of Alberta and have been

involved in counselling in the elementary, junior high and high school settings. I am currently counselling and am department head of student services at W P Wagner High School.

I am working on increasing my basic knowledge of Canadian First Nations history to build a culture of reconciliation and acceptance in our school. Also, I took part in an ATA Leadership Academy in the summer of 2018 that looked at effective learning spaces and a program called Learning Sprints. I am writing a paper related to that learning for next summer's university class.

I look forward to meeting all of you who work in the Greater Edmonton area. Let me know if I can be of service.

Ger VanderMeulen

North of Edmonton



Hello fellow school counselling colleagues, and congratulations to almost being at the halfway mark of the school year! In November, I attended the Voices of Counselling conference held in the breathtaking landscape of Canmore. I left feeling refreshed

and inspired, and looked forward to the coming new year for our northern region. Potential professional development opportunities on topics like working with high conflict families, supporting anxiety in schools and supporting

grieving students are in view, as I compile the wonderful resources and talented speakers' messages from the conference, and plan for this year's northern region get-together. Seeing our schools take on Leader in Me programming, my school expanding this to our families this year as I attend training to facilitate this along with my administration team, I have already seen great empowerment and an increased sense of community among students as they create and take on various leadership roles throughout their schools. Our elementary school counselling staff have also just completed training in Bounce Back programming, targeting students who have undergone traumatic experiences, expanding our skill sets and offerings to young students. I also had the privilege of sharing my recent training in play therapy with colleagues at the conference, and this approach has truly changed me as it has forever reshaped my work with children. Aware that elementary school counselling is something unique to the Fort McMurray and Northlands regions, I feel so lucky to be a part of this essential work, knowing the deep impact that working with this impressionable population truly has on later development.

Last May, I became vice-president for the CCPA School Counsellors Chapter, allowing me regular contact with school counsellors nationwide as we share about our varied experiences in schools. We have also been planning for this year's annual conference to be held in Moncton, NB, this coming May, boasting an international flavour with speakers and counsellors joining from across the globe. Discussions surrounding our profession and its complexity across schools, districts, provinces and Canada have led us to reflect on our roles in schools and ways that we can come to feel more united across these domains. I look forward to connecting and networking through this position and will be sure to relay relevant news and events through our executive as they arise.

Natalie Doucette

South East

Hi from the sunny southeast! Here's a quick update on what's been going on.

The school year is going by so fast and is as busy as ever. Five members from our region attended the Voices of Counselling conference in Canmore in November. It was such a great weekend to reconnect with colleagues, meet new people, learn practical strategies for our everyday work and enjoy the Rocky Mountains! I'd like to thank Erin Luong and the conference committee for their work in organizing all aspects of the weekend. Sessions covering a wide variety of topics were relevant and engaging. I'm looking forward to 2020!

Regarding professional development, we met on December 17 for a lunch and learn at the Medicine Hat High School. We shared information, resources, materials and session notes from the Voices of Counselling conference. We often go to conferences but don't have time to reflect on all of the new information or discuss how to move forward. Those who couldn't attend the conference received new resources and strategies available to school counsellors. Topics included Kelly Schwartz's information on the adolescent brain and social media, Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre online modules, improving school attendance concerns (www.attendanceworks.org) and the Alberta Health Services protocol for nonsuicidal self-injury. As a group, we called the Kids Help Phone and Distress Centre line to hear more about how they can help students in need. Our next session will be held during the Southeastern Alberta Teachers' Convention in February 2019.

Now that our South East Regional contact list has been updated, I will be e-mailing more information. Our geographic region covers a large area in this corner of the province, so it's difficult to meet in person. My goal is to stay connected with colleagues across the region, especially those in smaller communities who may be the only school counsellor for multiple

schools. This is tough work, and we need to support each other!

At Medicine Hat High School, we have developed a team to address school wellness. We have been brainstorming ideas to improve a positive, more resilient culture. Please feel free to e-mail me at southeastregionalpresident@ataschoolcounsellors.com if you have ideas or questions. Take care.

Leah Steiner

South West



We are partway through the 2018/19 school year. Have the days ever flown by.

Recertification clinics, planning, team meetings and professional learning opportunities filled the start of the school year.

A notable one is a two-day intensive training offered in the south by Shelley Moore. Shelley is an inclusive education champion, and she is working with many education professionals to spread the message of inclusion both nationally and internationally. Especially in the south, we have had the opportunity to participate in the first day of a two-day training on inclusion. Shelley is a master storyteller and leaves participants inspired to dig deep and consider opportunities to truly embrace inclusion and teach to diversity. I encourage everyone to check out her book *One Without the Other: Stories of Unity Through Diversity and Inclusion* (2016) and her blog at <https://blogsomemoore.com>.

I am still working diligently on my mailing list. If you are in the southwest zone and want to be added, please contact me at cathy.kitagawa@lethsd.ab.ca.

Cathy Kitagawa

2018 Conference Reflection

November 15–17, 2018, was a magical time at the beautiful Coast Canmore Hotel. Laughter, hugs and fellowship abounded as about 80 delegates from across the province gathered in person to attend the CSC 2018 conference, *Voices of Counselling: Owing the Story!*

Our provincial conference, which takes place every two years, brings together likeminded professionals from across western Canada, including school counsellors, school administrators, teachers, career practitioners, mental health professionals, psychologists, and family/school liaison staff.

This year's theme, *Voices of Counselling: Owing the Story*, paid tribute to the notion that everyone (both professionals and students) brings their own history, background and experiences into a session. These stories must be heard and acknowledged as they have an impact on how to best understand and support the needs of the children we serve.

Our goal as a council was to offer a wide variety of special interest workshops and mini sessions for attendees that enhance, support and celebrate the work of child advocates. We were extremely pleased to offer the following sessions:

- *Sharing Our Stories*, Sheldon Kennedy
- *Are the Kids All Right? The Current State of Adolescent Mental Health*, Kelly Schwartz
- *Social Media and the Adolescent Brain: What We Know, What We Don't Know, and Why That Matters to What You Do*, Kelly Schwartz
- *Lead With Your Heart so You Don't Lose Your Mind*, Larry Tomiyama
- *A School's Role in Keeping Kids Safe*, Kim Campbell
- *An Introduction to the Therapeutic Power of Play*, Natalie Doucette
- *Beginning Counsellor? Let's Talk*, Mary Frances Fitzgerald
- *Improving Student Attendance: What's a School Counsellor to Do?* Kristy McConnell and Chris Pawluk

- *From Mental Health Screening to Support Planning*, Michael Zwiers and Babi Rosch
- *CommUNITY*, Evans Yellow Old Women
- *Supporting Transgender Youth in Schools*, Ashleigh Yule
- *Mindfulness Practical Session*, Mary Frances Fitzgerald
- *Hearing the Story: A Conversation About School Experiences in Alberta from the People Who Lived It*, panel discussion
- *Drama Production: A Starry Starry Night*, Calgary Schizophrenia Society
- *Failure to Launch, Unsticking the Stuck for Young Adults*, Vincent Mireau
- *Nonsuicidal Self-Injury in Schools: There's a Protocol for That*, Aleta Ambrose
- *Grief and Loss in Our Schools: Creating a Compassionate Environment*, Laura Coatsworth, Hospice Calgary
- *Effective Responses to Anxiety in the School*, Michael Zwiers and Babi Rosch
- *Pushing the Pendulum: Risky Play Competence for Emotional Regulation*, Stacey Hannay
- *Active Bodies, Thriving Minds: How Moving Fuels Mental Health*, Christine McKernan
- *Skills Canada Alberta: The Future Is Now*, Randi Tajcnar

Connection with our community is key to our success. Our goal for 2019 will be to offer a provincial training opportunity next November in conjunction with our annual general meeting. Please keep your eyes open for more details.

In addition, we are planning to offer monthly community of practice zoom sessions. Check out our Facebook page for more details.

As well we host a monthly international school counsellors Twitter chat, #SCChat, which takes place the first Wednesday of the month from 6:30 to 7:30 PM. Follow us at @ATACounsellors for more details.

Finally feel free to reach out to your regional president for more information on local events going on in your area.

We look forward to building our connections and writing our stories.

Erin Luong

Active Bodies, Thriving Minds: How Moving Fuels Mental Health

*This 2018 Conference session was presented by
Christine McKernan.*

Using information from the 2018 *ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth* (ParticipACTION 2018), Alberta Health Services presenters informed us that Canadian children need to move more to boost brain function, learning and mental health. They cited research that showed the following:

- Children are caught in a vicious circle. They don't get enough movement during the day to feel tired enough to sleep well, and they don't sleep well or long enough to have the energy to move during the day.
- Children who are physically active have better attention, focus and concentration.
- Children with neurodevelopmental disorders and those who are least active show even greater gains when physical activity increases.
- Physical activity has a positive effect on mental health through the release of feel good chemicals when children are physically active.

To encourage movement in children, ParticipACTION has designed 24-hour movement guidelines that focus on increasing physical activity throughout the day. They recommend the following daily guidelines for children:

- Sweat for 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity.
- Step for several hours of light physical activity.

- Sleep for ages 5–13: (9–11 hours); for ages 14–17 (8–10 hours).
- Sit time broken up as consistently as possible with limited recreational screen time daily.
 - 0–2 years: screen time is not recommended.
 - 2–5 years: less than one hour of screen time per day.
 - 5–11 years: No more than two hours of screen time per day.
 - 11–17 years: No more than two hours of screen time per day.

Presenters issued a call to action to schools to assist students in achieving their 24-hour movement guidelines to boost learning and behaviour, and to improve mental health by embedding movement into all subject areas through brief, inclusive activities that raise the heart rate multiple times daily. Presenters shared examples of such brief inclusive movement and mindfulness activities for

- classrooms
 - stretch breaks
 - energizers to increase heart rate
- whole schools
 - schoolwide fitness drills
 - drop everything and move.

Resources

Be Fit for Life. <http://befitforlife.ca/resources/> (accessed January 21, 2019).

ParticipACTION. 2018. *2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth*. Toronto: ParticipACTION. www.participaction.com/en-ca/resources/report-card (accessed January 21, 2019).

SHAPE America (Society of Health and Physical Educators). www.shapeamerica.org/publications/resources/teachingtools/teachertoolbox/activity-calendars.aspx (accessed January 21, 2019).

Bonnie Knoll

Bonnie Knoll is a consultant with Comprehensive School Health and Diversity Education, Edmonton Public Schools.

ME LaZerte Career Day: What's It All About?

ME LaZerte School in Edmonton hosts a full-day career event for students. Now in its fifth year, career day has become a day of excitement, school spirit and community connectedness! Students have the opportunity to learn first-hand from professionals employed in various fields and then use that information to guide their future actions. Our career day arose from Edmonton Public School's career pathways concept, which encourages students from kindergarten to Grade 12 to explore and plan for life beyond school.

Learning from current professionals helps students have a broader definition of success; it allows them to go beyond our societal notion of acceptable occupations and see that the world of work is multifaceted and ever evolving. It allows students to investigate careers in line with the talents, skills, knowledge and attitudes that they possess, deepening their self-awareness and agency. By the end of the day, it should leave students reflecting on what's next, considering what experiences and training they might need and wondering who can support them moving forward.

How to Get Started

A core team prepares and plans for career day, but whole staff involvement ensures a successful day. The day starts with a keynote speaker in the gym. Then students attend four career sessions and one wellness session throughout the day. Last, students meet in homerooms to reflect on the day. This year, students chose from over 80 presenters and career sessions! The whole staff is encouraged to invite presenters, and the core team vets all

entries. The core team creates the presenter schedule and follows up with presenters. The team also creates a staff supervision schedule to ensure that every presenter has an assigned staff member in the room in which they are presenting. Leadership students show presenters to their assigned rooms. The intense organization pays off with a successful day and positive feedback!

How to Prepare for the Big Day

Help students prepare for the day by encouraging them to reflect on their strengths. Do they see themselves as helpers? Are they communicators? Do they have entrepreneurial spirits? Do they come alive in the arts? Are they constantly in motion, and do they thrive in hands-on environments? Where do their academic strengths lie? These questions, which lead to self-reflection and awareness, help students narrow down the list of presenters. A week before the event, homeroom teachers show students a video of what to expect during career day and provide them with a link to select the sessions. This is a mandatory day for students; attendance is taken during each session.

Go Beyond Doctor, Lawyer and Engineer

Although the above careers are honourable and admirable, the world of work and careers are far more diverse and layered. We use the term *pathway* to help capture a cluster of careers associated with common traits. It can be helpful for students to choose one or two pathways in line with their own strengths and tendencies and investigate those.

Career Pathways Legend

- ADC: Art, Design and Communications
- BIT: Business and Information Technology
- CMT: Construction, Manufacturing and Transportation

- HEH: Health, Education and Human Services
- NES: Natural Resources and Environmental Science

Reflect

When it's all said and done, don't let the momentum of the day die! Ask students to reflect on their next steps. What happened and what now? Who can help you on this journey? What volunteer, work or extracurricular opportunities can support your growth? What CTS classes can help you gain additional skills? How can you develop leadership, interpersonal and advocacy skills needed for success? How can you ensure you have the necessary academic requirements?

Career day has been very successful at M E LaZerte School, and students have left the day with greater knowledge of the next steps in their career development. November is career month. What will you do in November 2019?

Nicole Drysdale and Thom Gillard

U of A Master's Program in School Counselling Accepting Applications

Deadline March 1, 2019, to Begin Program in Summer 2019

The University of Alberta Master's Program in School Counselling aims to prepare trainees to implement individual, group and class/school-based interventions to (1) promote students' personal and social development; (2) enhance students' academic achievement; (3) facilitate students' career decision making; (4) engage in school-based crisis management; (5) coordinate linkages between families, the school and the community; and (6) identify students at risk for program development or referral purposes. This program was intended to be responsive to the needs of teachers working in Edmonton and area schools who wished to pursue graduate-level training in counselling. The program is designed to enable teachers to continue working in the school system full-time while they pursue their master's degree. Therefore, it is a two-year, part-time degree program with course instruction beginning in the summer months for three to six consecutive weeks at a time on-site at the University campus when school is out and courses occurring every alternate Saturday during the months of September to June. For further information on eligibility criteria and the application process,

please see our School Counselling Program website: www.ualberta.ca/educational-psychology/graduate-programs/school-counselling/masters-program.

Use the right-hand panel of the website to find answers to frequently asked questions, view required courses in the Program Schedule and program handbook and find out how to apply through our online application system. The online system is accepting applications until the deadline of March 1, 2019.

Check Out What's New in Your ATA Library

Have you ever borrowed a book from your ATA library? If you work outside of Edmonton, I bet you wondered how you could get the books and return them on time. Did you know that we send the books to you by mail and **we prepay the return postage**? So there is never a cost to you for using your ATA library. You can drop the books off in any Canada Post box—you don't even need to stand in line at the post office!

And take a look at these great new titles we've just added to our collection. Doesn't one of them sound just perfect for an issue at work? Why not contact us at library@ata.ab.ca to learn how to get your library account up and running? You could have one of these books in your hands in a matter of days!

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how to get your library account up and running? You could have one of these books in your hands in a matter of days!



Beyond the Behavior Contract: A Practical Approach to Dealing with Challenging Student Behaviors

Novick, B J. 2018. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield (371.1024 N943).

Child and Adolescent Development for Educators

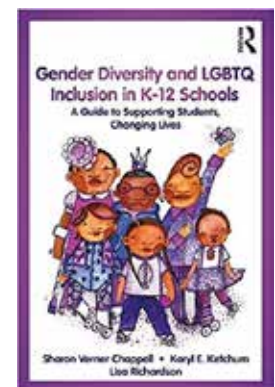
McCormick, C B, and D G Scherer. 2018. New York: Guilford (371.152 P935).

Clinical Practice of Cognitive Therapy with Children and Adolescents: The Nuts and Bolts

Friedberg, R D, and J M McClure. 2015. 2nd ed. New York: Guilford (618.928912 F899).

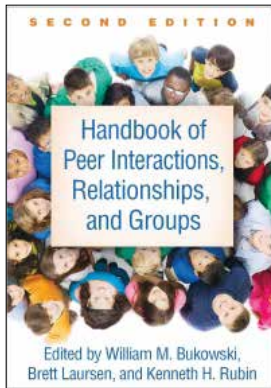
Gender Diversity and LGBTQ Inclusion in K-12 Schools: A Guide to Supporting Students, Changing Lives

Chappell, S V. 2018. New York: Routledge (371.11 C467).



Handbook of Evidence-Based Practices for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: Applications in Schools

Walker, H M, and F M Gresham, eds. 2014. New York: Guilford (371.93 W179).

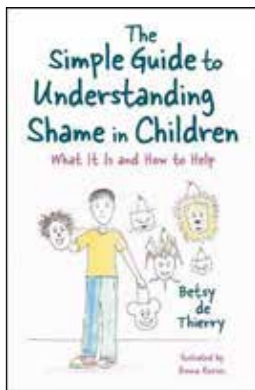


Handbook of Peer Interactions, Relationships, and Groups

Bukowski, W M et al. 2018. 2nd ed. New York: Guilford (303.327 R896).

School-Based Observation: A Practical Guide to Assessing Student Behavior

Briesch, A M et al. 2018. New York: Guilford (371.711 B853).



The Simple Guide to Understanding Shame in Children: What It Is, What Helps, and How to Prevent Further Stress or Trauma

De Thierry, B. 2019. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley (362.5 T436).

Using Restorative Circles in Schools: How to Build Strong Learning Communities and Foster Student Wellbeing

Follestad, B, and N Wroldsen. 2017. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley (371.5 F667).

Sandra Anderson, ATA librarian

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Complete information regarding the Council of School Councillors executive is available on the council's website at www.ataschoolcounsellors.com/executive.

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