

COUNSELING CONNECTION

New Mexico's School Counselor Newsletter



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DEDICATED WEBSITE FOR NM SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Designed specifically to support New Mexico school counselors, <http://careercounselors-nm.com/> is now live!

Features of this Community of Best Practice website include:

- access to online training courses on the use of labor market information in educational practices (coming soon) and a direct connection to <https://careerpathways-nm.com/>;
- regularly updated links to research, academic websites, articles, videos, and more, related to best practices in school counseling;
- information regarding upcoming events;
- timely access to news, announcements and information from the NMPED College and Career Readiness Bureau and national sources;
- access to current and archived newsletters; and
- a password-protected discussion forum where you can share resources, ask questions of colleagues and support one another.

From time to time, additional resources will be included. For example, we have currently included a page dedicated to remote learning resources for counselors.

At the top, you will find a *Contact Us* link. Please feel free to provide feedback on the site so that we can better support you. We also invite you to recommend or share resources you feel others would find helpful.

NEW MEXICO SCHOOL COUNSELOR OF THE YEAR FETROW ON “THE GREAT PAUSE”



*Counselor of the Year
Elesha Fetrow*

Leave it to a school counselor to take the crisis out of the current COVID climate.

“I call it the Great Pause,” says Rio Rancho Public Schools counselor Elesha Fetrow, with a smile that lights up her square on Zoom. “While we’ve had challenges left and right as educators, we’ve also seen some

amazing things that aren’t always what we talk about at the end of the day. I have really had to slow down in the middle of a crazy busy day and reflect on positive things.”

Fetrow, named the New Mexico School Counselor of the Year by the New Mexico School Counselor Association (NMSCA), cites some positives:

- “A student found a way to text me from her mom’s cell phone to let me know she had the ability to help her health compromised parents and two health compromised younger siblings,” said Fetrow.
- “A food service provider who said he would find a way to pack bulk food that can be delivered twice a week instead of every day for a family in need.”
- “The parent who calls me for guidance and then winds up telling me that her family is having dinner together every night when they hadn’t been able to do that before.”

The Great Pause, says Fetrow, made these things happen.

Fetrow, who is in her seventh year as a counselor at Eagle Ridge Middle School in Rio Rancho, said the accolades are not easy for her to wrap her mind around.

“As a counselor, my job is lifting others up,” she said. “Being recognized for doing my job is wonderful, but also a little uncomfortable. I am truly honored.”

The NMSCA bestows this honor on counselors who are nominated by their peers, or by administrators and teachers, for going above and beyond to improve all ancillary services to students.

“We ask counselors to wear so many hats,” said NMSCA President Rhonda Harper. “This state has so many counselors who do everything they are asked to do, and then go beyond that. Elesha is certainly in that category.”

Prior to her career as a school counselor, Fetrow was a behavioral health therapist and substitute teacher, primarily working with special education students.

As part of the receiving the award, Fetrow must now complete an application to be in contention for the National School Counselor of the Year award. “That in itself is no easy feat,” said Fetrow, who equated the application to a 20-page dossier.

“Having this platform is something I want to do now to elevate our profession and to show students how much we want to do for them,” Fetrow said.

During COVID, Fetrow said the challenges to get resources to students have been plentiful. She said the disparities make it difficult to serve all students and get them the resources they need. Still, she has been pleased with the entire educational teamwork being done in her school district and many others.

Working in the virtual school environment is difficult, especially for counselors who interact with students often in times of crisis. Still, Fetrow has been pleased to see the resilience of the students.

“They figure out a way to connect with me,” she said. “I’m so proud of them for recognizing how rock solid they can be when they put their minds to it in difficult situations.”

Fetrow knows there still are students who are struggling. For them the school building has been a safe zone, a secure place when their

(continued on next page)

“THE GREAT PAUSE” (CONT.)

own family home is not at peace. She worries about those students, but hopes educators are doing all they can to reach out to every student.

Fetrow said she is more dedicated than ever to her profession during these challenging times. “For a long time, I’ve been thinking how the world has been moving too fast,” Fetrow said. “It was too fast for our kids, and too fast for the world in general. There are way too many demands being placed on adults and on students.”

“Then came The Great Pause,” she said. “It has created an opportunity to slow down, to take a breath. It’s created a time for some families to be together when they hadn’t been able to before. Maybe there are more family dinners, more hanging out and being outside to just enjoy the day.”

Leave it to a school counselor to turn a crisis into a much-needed pause.

CLOSEGAP.ORG FOR KEEPING IN TOUCH VIRTUALLY

There are several free resources available to help counselors provide a daily virtual check in for students to share their emotional experience and build a safe space to feel nurtured, cared for, and connected. One of those resources is [closegap.org](https://www.closegap.org).

With this resource, students do a daily/weekly emotional check-in, teachers and parents get the info in real time, and students connect with an adult for support and/or participate in self-guided activities.

<https://www.closegap.org/>

Click the link below to see a sample of the check in students fill out:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1UzXhLWoL9DJZQIaZAixsoZbAZ_PqwLGJkfsBQVvmtM8/edit

SAT FEE WAIVER CODES AVAILABLE

To ensure eligible students have access to fee waivers for the SAT®, fee waiver codes are available to schools through the [College Board K–12 reporting portal](#).

Here are some reminders about accessing and distributing fee waivers:

- Paper fee waiver cards will no longer be mailed to schools.
- Fee waiver codes will be available in the [K–12 reporting portal](#) download center—you’ll need detail or summary level access to get your school’s fee waiver codes.
- Fee waivers delivered to the K–12 reporting portal can be used starting with the September 26 SAT administration. August SAT 2020 fee waivers were delivered in your 2019-20 allotment. Any unused codes from last year’s allotment are still valid and never expire.

As part of ongoing efforts to support you as you navigate the uncertainties due to the coronavirus and beyond, the College Board is offering these resources to help you access and distribute fee waivers:

- [SAT Weekend Fee Waivers—What Counselors Need to Know](#)
- [Electronic Fee Waiver Access Overview](#)
- [From the Field: Strategies for Using Electronic Fee Waiver Codes](#)
- [Managing Electronic Fee Waiver Codes for SAT \(download\)](#)
- [Student Fee Waiver Tracking Form \(download\)](#)

For more information about the K–12 reporting portal, visit the [help page](#). You can also view the [requesting fee waivers page](#) for more details about eligibility and benefits. For additional assistance, please call Customer Service at 888-SAT-HELP.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT FEE WAIVERS

The College and Career Readiness Bureau is pleased to announce the continuation of the AP exam fee waiver program for the 2020-2021 school year. Full-priced Advanced Placement exams are \$95 this year. The College Board reduces the cost for students who qualify for the National School Lunch Program, and PED will once again contribute an additional \$50, reducing the cost to just \$3 per exam for qualifying students.

[See the complete fee-waiver memo for more details.](#) Questions should be directed to New Mexico's Advanced Placement Coordinator Alexandra Lutz at Alexandra.Lutz@state.nm.us or 505-827-6417.

GOVERNOR'S STEM SHOWCASE

NM high school students and teachers are invited to participate in the 2020 Governor's STEM Showcase. Students will practice collaborative problem-solving, while applying engineering practices to construct model projects that address this question: ***How can you combine New Mexico's natural resources with technology to address regional/global needs?***

Full details, including support for mentor teachers and awards for winning teams, are available [here](#). All STEM classrooms may participate, but schools will choose one team of up to 10 students and up to two mentor teachers to submit a proposed solution. Here are the important dates:

- Sept. 18: Team registration deadline.
- Nov. 13: Prototypes due.
- Dec. 5: Teams will present projects at a Statewide STEM Showcase in Las Cruces.

REPORT EXAMINES STANDARDIZED TESTING IN THE TIME OF COVID AND BEYOND

Last week, the National Association for College Admission Counseling Chief Executive Officer Angel B. Pérez released the culmination of a year's work by members of the Task Force on Standardized Admission Testing for International and US Students. The final report entitled, "Ensuring All Students Have Access to Higher Education: The Role of Standardized Testing in the Time of COVID-19 and Beyond" is available for [download](#).

The Task Force was charged by the NACAC board of directors with investigating access to testing, alternatives for assessment, customer service and communication with testing stakeholders, barriers for students needing accommodations, and availability of fee waivers for the ACT and SAT college admission exams.

This task force was created after several years of disruptions to international test administrations and disadvantages faced by test-takers outside the US, for which other efforts to enact change resulted in limited responses from the testing organizations, minimal awareness by higher education institutions of the challenges students faced, and the recurrence of the same issues on an annual basis.

You may read about reactions to the report in [Inside Higher Ed](#) and [Chronicle of Higher Education](#).

NS4ed reviewed the report and had a few key takeaways surrounding access and equity in standardized testing. In admission decisions, institutions should:

- be student-centered, recognizing that barriers remain and will likely be exacerbated for certain populations,
- focus on multiple factors that contribute to student success,
- be transparent and clear in expectations and application of admission requirements,
- conduct frequent reviews of data to inform policy.

We encourage you to review the report.



CTSO SPOTLIGHT: FAMILY, CAREER AND COMMUNITY LEADERS OF AMERICA (FCCLA)

The Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) Career Technical Student Organization (CTSO) is a dynamic and effective national student organization that helps young men and women become leaders and address important personal, family, work and societal issues through family and consumer sciences education. Chapter projects focus on a variety of youth concerns, including teen pregnancy, parenting, family relationships, substance abuse, peer pressure, environment, nutrition and fitness, teen violence and career exploration. Involvement in FCCLA offers members the opportunity to expand their leadership potential and develop skills for life—planning, goal setting, problem solving, decision making and interpersonal communication—necessary in the home and workplace.

The New Mexico FCCLA team is here to help you start a chapter, grow a chapter and improve the lives of FCCLA student members. State Director, Christine Phipps, can be reached at 575-562-4729 or Christine.phipps@enmu.edu.

The program emphasizes many aspects of a leadership development organization. FCCLA is the only in-school student organization with the family as its central focus. FCCLA is a CTSO that functions as an integral part of the family and consumer sciences education curriculum and operates within the school system.

Most importantly, FCCLA provides opportunities for active student participation at local, state, and national level competitions that are based on career development and employability models of success.

For more information visit:
<http://nmctso.com/fccla/>.



UPCOMING EVENTS

September 14

- New Mexico CTLP Advisor Academy

September 14-16

- New Mexico ACTE Annual Conference

October 19-21

- New Mexico CTLP Fall Leadership Rallies

CONTACT US

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CLICK [HERE](#) TO VISIT WEBSITE