

President's Letter

The school year is well underway. I had 3 days prep time before the students returned to my four schools. I have a new elementary secretary and three new principals. They are running as fast as they can to get up to speed. I am running as fast as I can.

The new secretary is calm and talks softly. The clutter in the main office from last year is gone. There are silk flowers over the cabinets. There is a framed painting hanging above her desk with lots of bright colors in the flowers; a kindergarten student's work. The atmosphere in the elementary office is pleasant and inviting to the little and big people who will come and go so many times during the day with so many needs.

The secretary is the administrative assistant and the health office associate. She is enrolling students in power school, making lists of all the students and teachers, keeping teacher's schedules, answering phone calls, making copies for the students and teachers, talking with students, parents, and teachers, giving first aid, administering medicines and calling me when she needs further assistance in thinking through and caring for a child. Big responsibilities! She looks at me and says, "It's a little scary; actually really scary." She was happy that I had come to say hello and introduce myself before the first day of school. I am at the school most days of the week but not always.

On the first day back at school at a meeting of school staff (AEA social workers and psychologists, school nurses, family resource staff, and school counselors) and community mental health providers (who provide skills counseling and therapy) the speaker asked a quiz question about the primary purpose of schools. Everyone got the answer; to improve student learning.

Information was also presented that the term mental health includes social, emotional, attention, and substance abuse issues. Of course this is not new to school nurses.

Another quiz question inquired about the primary purpose of the school nurse role. The speaker wanted to hear that no matter your title, your job is to improve student learning. The answer reflects the ISNO vision and mission statement, "To ensure students are healthy and ready to learn."

The ISNO vision and mission statement supports the primary purpose of a school in increasing student learning; "The ISNO improves the health and educational outcomes of children by strengthening the practices of the professional school nurse to promote the delivery of quality health programs in schools and communities."

So here we are back at school helping students with barriers to learning; most have none, some a few and some students many.

Back to school in the fall is such a busy time of the year; however, ISNO/NASN invites you to stop and join your school nurse organization. Effective September 15th, 2010, the first 350 brand new to NASN nurses will receive a 2007 School Nurse Certification Review Book.

About 25% of school nurses are members of the ISNO/NASN. We want to reach the 75% of school nurses who are not yet members. Congress and other policy makers ask, "What percent of school nurses are members of NASN?" We need to directly represent more nurses in order to have a strong voice for school nursing. ISNO/NASN strategic plan includes educational programs, research, public relations and advocating for issues important to school nursing and ultimately the children. All nurses can come together around the fact that "Every child deserves a school nurse."

The Iowa School Nurse Organization Conference will be held at the West Des Moines Sheraton Hotel, April 7th and 8th, 2011. Mark your calendar and plan to attend. We are excited about the plans for speakers.

I wish you a healthy, happy and productive school year.

Barb Fleckenstein, RN, MSN
ISNO president
10-10-10