

7:30-8:00	Registration: Please join us for breakfast! A big thank you to Forest Hills Public Schools for providing the Fine Arts Center for our conference today!				
8:00-9:00 Multipurpose Room Welcome & Keynote	Welcome <i>Teresa Miller, MA, LPC, WMCA President</i> <i>Sisu Counseling and Wellness</i> <i>Northern Hills Middle School Counselor</i> Nick Bayer, Associate Director of Clinical Services LMSW CAADC CCS-DP Wedgwood Christian Services The Why Beneath the Use: Trauma-Informed Approaches for Adolescents <i>1.0 General SCECH</i>				
Time/Room	Multipurpose Room 1	Multipurpose Room 2	Room 120	Room 200	Dance Studio
Breakout Session #1 9:15-10:15	Nick Bayer Wedgwood The Why Beneath Substance Use: Approaches <i>1.0 General SCECH</i>	Karen Ketterer Ele's Place Supporting Grieving Students <i>1.0 General SCECH</i>	no session	Brittani Hyde, Megan Heath, MEd Pine Rest Silent Struggles, Saving Lives: Unmasking Eating Disorders in Our Kids <i>1.0 General SCECH</i>	Sergeant First Class Ian Devaney Army National Guard <i>1.0 Military SCECH</i>
Break 10:15-10:30	Please Visit our Sponsors - Gold - Grand Rapids Community College, MCAN Silver - Wedgwood Christian Services, Pine Rest, Human Kind Counseling				
Time/Room	Multipurpose Room 1	Multipurpose Room 2	Room 120	Room 200	Dance Studio
Breakout Session #2 10:30-11:30	Samantha Jackson Kent ISD Beyond the Law: EDP Uses for Data-Driven Decisions <i>1.0 General SCECH</i>	Kasey Peters Wayland Union High School Fostering Resiliency in Postsecondary Career Exploration <i>1.0 Career SCECH</i>	Philip Dezern Gilda's Club Grand Rapids Talking with Kids about Grief and Cancer <i>1.0 General SCECH</i>	Brittani Hyde, Megan Heath, MEd Pine Rest Silent Struggles, Saving Lives: Unmasking Eating Disorders in Our Kids <i>1.0 General SCECH</i>	Sergeant First Class Ian DeVaney Army National Guard <i>1.0 Military SCECH</i>

11:30-12:35	Lunch Graciously Sponsored by Army National Guard				
Time/Room	Multipurpose Room 1	Multipurpose Room 2	Room 120	Room 200	Dance Studio
Breakout Session #3 12:35-1:35	Samantha Jackson Kent ISD Making Career Assessments Meaningful: Interpreting Results and Engaging Students <i>1.0 Career SCECH</i>	Kasey Peters Wayland Union High School Fostering Resiliency in Postsecondary Career Exploration <i>1.0 Career SCECH</i>	Philip Dezern Gilda's Club Grand Rapids Talking with Youth about Grief and Cancer <i>1.0 General SCECH</i>	Ashlynn Howe The Recovery Barre Leveraging the Power of Movement and Community in Substance Recovery <i>1.0 General SCECH</i>	Sara Schultz, Shelby Mangan, Pam Schwallier West Ottawa Public Schools From Enrollment to Graduation: Building Counseling Systems for Multilingual Learners <i>1.0 General SCECH</i>
1:45-2:45 Keynote Multipurpose Room	Renee Hartman, MA, LPC, WMCA President-elect <i>Fireside Counseling, LLC South Christian High School</i> Gena VanderMeulen, MA Ed, ACC Certified Professional Academic Coach ADHD Center of West Michigan Why do students freeze, shut down, or scroll - even when they have the skills to succeed? <i>1.0 General SCECH</i>				
2:45-3:30 Multipurpose Room	Wrap-Up and Prizes				

Mark your calendars for the WMCA Spring Banquet:
Friday, April 24th at KCTC
Scholarship applications due March 27th

Keynote Speakers

Nick Bayer, Associate Director of Clinical Services LMSW CAADC CCS-DP

Wedgwood Christian Services

The Why Beneath the Use: Trauma-Informed Approaches for Adolescents

This keynote presentation will educate and inform attendees on the situations and environments youth are experiencing as it relates to substance use both within and outside of the educational school structure. Education on current statistics, will inform attendees on the rationale behind adolescent substance use as it relates to the presence and interaction of youth trauma and early childhood experiences. A primary goal of this education will be to shift ideas that at risk youth utilizing substances is typically not a form of delinquency but often as a methodology of coping with past and current trauma; oftentimes a coping skill taught outside of the classroom.

Attendees will gain the skills to view adolescent substance use through a trauma-informed lens, emphasizing for many young people substances serve a purpose. Whether numbing overwhelming emotions, managing hyperarousal, fostering social belonging, or momentarily escaping painful realities, use is often an adaptive response to adverse experiences rather than a simple act of defiance or poor decision-making. Understanding this “why” is critical to engaging adolescents in meaningful, lasting change. The goal is to shift a mindset away from at-risk youth utilizing substances from “What is wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”

Educators will be informed on the assessment and screening process through the treatment planning and interventions current substance use counselors implement when working with Substance Use Disorder diagnosed adolescents. The criteria for diagnosis will help inform counselors with identifying if the at-risk teen meets criteria for an addiction diagnosis as it relates to a substance, or if the issue is mental health related to being self-medicated by the substance.

Experiences and information gained from Wedgwoods adolescent Intensive Outpatient peer groups will be shared and presented to attendees. These peer groups are intensive three hour group sessions taking place three days a week with a focus on trauma processing, substance use management, and harm reduction. Case studies of past participants will be presented to educate on the struggles teens and adolescents face, and how different interventions can prevent increased harm or promote alternate coping skills rather than illicit substance use.

This presentation will ultimately challenge professionals to move beyond surface-level interventions and embrace a more humane, effective approach to adolescent substance use. By understanding the function of use and responding with empathy, curiosity, and evidence-informed care, providers can foster connection, reduce harm, and support adolescents in building safer, healthier ways to cope. **1.0 General SCECH**

Gena VanderMeulen, MA Ed, ACC, Certified Professional Academic Coach

ADHD Center of West Michigan

Why do students freeze, shut down, or scroll - even when they have the skills to succeed?

Gena VanderMeulen is an academic ADHD coach at the ADHD Center of West Michigan who draws on over 30 years as a high school English teacher. She specializes in supporting middle school, high school and college students as they navigate academic systems, build confidence, and rediscover joy in learning. Gena is a Certified Professional Academic Coach, an ICF Associate Certified Coach (ACC) and holds advanced credentials in executive function, study strategies, and applied neuroscience. She also holds post-baccalaureate certificates from Landmark College in Executive Functions and Supporting Autistic Students. Gena is currently pursuing a doctorate in Cognitive Diversity in Education at Bridges Graduate School. Gena VanderMeulen is an academic ADHD coach at the ADHD Center of West Michigan who draws on over 30 years as a high school English teacher. She specializes in supporting middle school, high school and college students as they navigate academic systems, build confidence, and rediscover joy in learning. Gena is a Certified Professional Academic Coach, an ICF Associate Certified Coach (ACC) and holds advanced credentials in executive function, study strategies, and applied neuroscience. She also holds post-baccalaureate certificates from Landmark College in Executive Functions and Supporting Autistic Students. Gena is currently pursuing a doctorate in Cognitive Diversity in Education at Bridges Graduate School.

In this Keynote, we will explore in more depth how emotional regulation shapes learning, motivation, and engagement. Through case studies and insights from neuroscience, we'll examine what blocks student progress and how to respond with practical, compassionate strategies. Participants will leave with a deeper understanding of the factors that impact student motivation and tools to support the emotional regulation required for effective learning.

Presenters and Session Descriptions

alphabetical order last name

Sergeant First Class Ian Devaney

Army National Guard

Career and Training Options in the Army National Guard

These sessions will provide educators and counselors with a comprehensive overview of the valuable opportunities the Michigan Army National Guard offers to students and schools in West Michigan. As a partner in your students' success, the National Guard is committed to providing pathways to higher education, rewarding careers, and personal growth. Participants in these sessions will gain a thorough understanding of the extensive benefits available to soldiers and the innovative programs we can bring directly to the schools.

For students, the Michigan National Guard is a powerful resource for making higher education more accessible and affordable. We will detail the significant financial assistance available, including the Michigan National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program (MINGSTAP), which provides over \$14,000 annually for undergraduate studies.

When combined with Federal Tuition Assistance and the GI Bill, students may have 100% of their college expenses covered.

*Beyond financial aid, we offer hands-on training in over 80 career fields, such as aviation, cyber security, engineering, and healthcare, providing students with transferable skills and a competitive edge in the civilian job market. **1.0 Military SCECH***

Philip Dezem, LLMSW, Youth Team Leader

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids

Talking with Youth about Grief and Cancer

This presentation offers practical, hands-on activities that professionals can use when supporting children through grief and other challenging life events. The content is organized into three key dimensions of support. Dimension one is helping children build insight. Participants will learn activities that guide children in verbalizing and reflecting on their emotions, exploring their life stories, and gaining insight into how grief and adversity have shaped their experiences. Dimension two is enhancing coping and resilience. Activities will focus on helping children apply their insights in meaningful ways. Professionals will gain tools to strengthen coping skills and support children through difficult situations. Dimension three will be supporting the helper. This dimension will help professionals to reflect on the emotional impact of working with children navigating life-altering events. Activities promote self-awareness and self-care so that practitioners can sustain their work, maintain personal well-being, and continue to find fulfillment in supporting youth.

1.0 General SCECH

Ashlynn Howe, MEd Counseling

The Recovery Barre

Leveraging the Power of Movement and Community in Substance Recovery

This session explores the power of blending physical movement with community connection as a supportive tool for individuals in substance use recovery. Participants will learn about the brain-body benefits of movement and key physical and emotional considerations for creating safe, accessible movement experiences that can be adapted to any space. This session also emphasizes how incorporating body-neutral language and choice-based movement rebuild body trust and self-efficacy in recovery, particularly in communities with higher rates of co-occurring or past eating disorders.

Attendees will leave with a deeper understanding of the benefits of integrating movement and community into the recovery journey, direct insight into how non-traditional options support diverse preferences and sustainable paths to sobriety, and a free local resource to share with clients seeking community-based support.

This session is ideal for professionals looking for additional tools to offer clients or ways to integrate movement and peer connection into their recovery programming. It is also relevant for school counselors looking to broaden their network of local substance use resources or explore ways to incorporate movement into small-group programming. Participants will walk away with practical skills, actionable knowledge, and meaningful resources to enhance both their professional practice and their clients' recovery journeys.

1.0 General SCECH

Brittani Hyde, LMSW, MBA Supervisor of Adolescent Partial Hospitalization Programs. **Megan Heath, MEd, RDN** Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

Pine Rest Christian Services

Silent Struggles, Saving Lives: Unmasking Eating Disorders in Our Kids

This presentation unveils the hidden epidemic of eating disorders in our youth, with the staggering reality that approximately 10,200 youth in the US will die this year from eating disorders, often due to medical complications or suicide. Through gripping statistics and real stories, learn to spot signs, explore evidence-based treatments, and gain practical tools to start life-changing conversations. Be the voice that saves a child because every question counts. **1.0 General SCECH**

Samantha Jackson, College and Career Readiness Consultant

Kent ISD, WMCA Board Member

Making Career Assessments Meaningful: Interpreting Results and Engaging Students

Career assessments can provide valuable insights, but interpreting the results in a way that resonates with students and motivates them to take action can be challenging. In this 45-minute session, participants will learn how to effectively analyze career assessment results and present them in a student-friendly way that connects with individual interests, skills, and values.

Through a combination of theory, practical tips, and real-world examples, counselors will gain the confidence to guide students through the often-complex process of interpreting career assessments. The session will also introduce assessment activities that go beyond traditional tools, helping students better understand themselves and the world of work.

*By the end of the session, participants will have a toolkit of strategies to help students better interpret assessment results and connect them with potential career paths. Whether you're working with middle school students just beginning to explore careers or college students narrowing down their focus, this session will offer valuable insights for counselors at every stage of the career development process. **1.0 Career SCECH***

Samantha Jackson, College and Career Readiness Consultant

Kent ISD, WMCA Board Member

Beyond the Law: EDP Uses for Data-Driven Decisions

Educational Development Plans (EDPs) are often seen as a compliance tool required by the state, but they have the potential to be much more. This session will focus on how counselors can use the data collected in EDPs to gain deeper insights into student interests, career aspirations, and academic strengths. By leveraging EDPs as a tool for data-driven decision-making, counselors can create more personalized, meaningful pathways for students, helping them make informed choices about their future.

During this presentation, attendees will learn how to:

- Interpret Key EDP Data – Understand how to use EDPs to analyze student interests, strengths, and aspirations, helping to create a holistic view of each student's potential.
- Personalize Counseling Support – Learn how to tailor academic, career, and social-emotional support by using EDP data to identify areas where students may need additional guidance or resources.
- Empower Students with Data – Equip students with the tools to actively engage in their own career and academic planning, fostering a sense of ownership and direction in their educational journey. **1.0 Career SCECH**

Karen Ketterer, LMSW

Ele's Place West Michigan

Supporting Grieving Students

One in 11 Michigan children will experience the death of a parent or sibling before age 18. In this presentation you will learn the impacts grief has on children and teens and their emotions, behavior, and ability to learn. You will be provided practical ways to talk to and support grieving children, including cultural considerations and ways to discuss stigmatized deaths. An activity that can be used with students to explore their grief will also be presented. **1.0 General SCECH**

Kasey Peters, MA, LPC, SCL, NCC

Wayland Union High School

Fostering Resiliency in Postsecondary Career Exploration

When embarking upon a career path, it's likely that most students will encounter many twists, turns and, possibly, bumps in the road before they reach their final career destination. Many of our own professional journeys led us to places that we didn't originally envision. By harnessing ambiguity and accepting that the path is not always straight, we can empower our students to be resilient and adaptive lifelong learners.

1.0 General SCECH

Sara Schultz, School Counselor (with Shelby Mangan, ESL Teacher & Pam Schwallier, School Counselor)

West Ottawa Public Schools

From Enrollment to Graduation: Building Counseling Systems for Multilingual Learners

Supporting multilingual learners requires a coordinated, student-centered approach that begins the moment a student and their family enters the school system. This session will introduce a practical, adaptable framework that districts with both low and high EL populations can implement to strengthen services across enrollment, placement, academic support, and long-term language development. The session will highlight processes and tools that foster equitable access and meaningful connection for multilingual learners and their families.

The presentation will begin with the foundational elements of an effective intake process. This includes strategies for welcoming new families, gathering essential background information, administering the WIDA screener, and evaluating international transcripts to determine appropriate credit, placement, and graduation pathways. Presenters will share common challenges schools encounter—such as incomplete records, unfamiliar grading systems, or variations in previous schooling—and offer practical solutions that can be scaled to fit the resources of any district.

From there, the session will shift to placement and ongoing support. Participants will explore methods for scheduling students in ways that promote both language development and academic progress, as well as collaborative practices that strengthen communication between EL specialists, counselors, teachers, and mental health providers. The session will also address the unique needs of long-term English Learners, who benefit from intentional planning, targeted intervention, and sustained social-emotional support. Emphasis will be placed on building systems that help multilingual learners feel connected, understood, and supported across school environments and community settings.

Throughout the session, attendees will receive adaptable tools they can bring back to their practice, including sample intake questions, transcript review considerations, placement guidelines, and strategies for partnering with families in culturally-responsive and trauma-informed ways. The session will conclude with a Q&A, giving counselors space to ask questions tied to their specific setting—whether they support one multilingual student or work in a district with hundreds.

Participants will walk away with practical resources that strengthen their ability to create a welcoming, equitable, and supportive experience for multilingual learners from day one. **1.0 General SCECH**

THANK YOU to the following for their support of WMCA!



