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From Your GSCA President
Julie Spires

Hello Georgia Professional School Counselors,

It is with great pleasure that the Association presents you with the 20th annual GSCA Journal. GSCA proudly offers the Journal as our research based publication for our organization. In it you will find many informative articles that will allow you to advocate for success in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of your comprehensive school counseling programs.

A special thank you to Dr. Karen Rowland, Editor, and her editorial board for their endless hours of soliciting and editing articles for this publication. They have worked incredibly hard to provide Georgia school counselors, graduate students, and counselor educators with a wonderful opportunity for professional growth and development based on counselor identified needs.

I would also like to thank the authors who were published in the Journal. Their articles are informative, and enlightening. I know you will enjoy the GSCA Journal as you continue to advocate for success!

Sincerely,

Julie Spires

Julie Jordan Spires
2013-2014 GSCA President

From Your GSCA Journal Editor
Karen D. Rowland, PhD, NCC, LPC

The theme, "Advocating for Student Success" chosen by our president, Julie Spires for GSCA for this year, is one that is not only relevant to school counseling today but also greatly needed in the schools. Advocacy, involves school counselors intentionally seeking to change existing or proposed policies, practices, and learning environments on behalf of their students and sometimes their students' families in order to see positive results in student achievement. In order to demonstrate our value-added worth to the school, school counselors are now being asked to be intentional in showcasing how their work contribute to the overall mission of schools – student achievement.

I believe that I am correct in stating that Julie Spires in choosing her platform during her tenure as president is to encourage school counselors to advocate for and encourage change within their school community so that all of their students can feel safe and are well-served academically and socially with full access to career and college development information and curricula throughout their educational experience. What an excellent theme to choose during my first term as editor, so kudos to President Spires!

While it was not intentional in publishing articles that demonstrate ways that school counselors can be advocates for their students, many of the featured articles allude to achievement advocacy. It is my honor and pleasure to share with you the work that your colleagues are doing and to encourage you to write and share what you are doing too as you continue to advocate for all students success.

Karen D. Rowland
2013-2014 GSCA Journal Editor

A Gift for the Gifted: School Counselor Advocacy for Representation of Latino Students in Gifted Education

Lisa Bessman and Rosylia Carr, Georgia Southern University and Lee Edmondson Grimes, Valdosta State University

Abstract
Many children from the Latino community require support from school counselors to achieve greatness in academics. Barriers preventing accurate gifted and talented nominations for Latino ELL students presently exist in school systems. Existing barriers can be broken down for student success. This study explored current literature to examine issues facing Latino ELL students with gifted and talented nominations. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory is used to outline the influences from different systems (microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems) on Latino students' lives. The ecological theory creates a framework to understand the social context of Latino gifted ELL students. The authors explain how school counselors can incorporate theory and the ACA advocacy competencies into their work to assist Latino students at the individual, community/school, and social/political levels to increase their representation in gifted education.

Paloma is a Latino female who is currently enrolled at a Georgia elementary school. She completed two years of an English Language Learner (ELL) program at a neighboring school. Although Spanish is her primary language, by working through the ELL program, she is able to speak and understand English well. Paloma seems to be adjusting to her new school. She is well-liked by her peers, but her language arts teacher asked the school counselors to speak to her. The teacher states that Paloma is reluctant to participate in class discussion, rarely takes initiative to go above and beyond as many of her peers do, and overall seems sad and lethargic. The teacher fears it would be best if Paloma were placed back in the ELL program stating she just might not be ready for the regular-ed classroom setting.

Upon speaking to Paloma, it is apparent that returning to the ELL classroom is not an option. Paloma is quite proud of her Latino heritage, but has embraced the English language whole-heartedly, working very hard to complete the ELL program. She states there are still a few things she may have trouble understanding, but she is willing to do what it takes to be successful. Her counselor also learns that Paloma loves to draw, sing, and play guitar for her family and church. Her favorite subject is math, and she shared that her math class is very different from her other classes. She feels as if she can learn so much so quickly in math. When asked what her concerns are about school, she states that she feels she is not treated as her peers. She feels that her peers are encouraged to challenge themselves and stretch their thinking, whereas her teacher just expects her to do what she can to get by. Her teachers do not call on her as they do the other students, and she is never asked to help around the classroom or take on special tasks. She truly feels as if she is just taking up space. She often wonders if her teachers will ever see her as more than a student of color who cannot compete at the level of her English-proficient classmates.

Paloma's counselor feels she has the potential and determination to be successful. Also evident are Paloma's strengths in math, her creativity, and her willingness to participate and excel, but she is not demonstrating these strengths in class. Her counselor speculates if the language barrier is creating the apparent disconnect between Paloma and her teacher, and if the seeming passivity displayed in the classroom may be indicative of her culture. Questions also arise concerning how well Paloma understands her role in the classroom, her parent's awareness of her educational experiences, and her teacher's knowledge about working with ELL students. In short, Paloma's experience is much like that of many potentially gifted Latino students, students marginalized by a system that does not recognize their gifts.

The Marginalization of Latino Students
For the purposes of this paper, Latino refers to "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (U.S. Census, 2010). English Language Learner (ELL) refers to a student whose native language is a language other than English, and/or a student who comes from an environment in which another language prevails over English. The term nomination refers to the process in which an individual is put forward for consideration for a particular recognition. The term gifted and talented will be defined in regard to the following consensus from the Federal government:

> Gifted and talented students are defined as children and youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities. (U.S. Department of Education, 1993)

According to the United States Census conducted in 2010, the Hispanic/Latino population grew at a rate of 43% from the year 2000 (U.S. Census, 2010). Yet, even

with the rapid growth, research clearly shows an underrepresentation of Latino children in comparison to children of other races in gifted programs:

> Latinos continue to be underrepresented in Gifted and Talented Education programs, even though their overall enrollment rates have increased over time. Latinos and Blacks are underrepresented in Gifted and Talented programs in comparison to their white counterparts. In 1994, elementary and secondary school population of Hispanics reached 12.7%; however, Latinos accounted for only 6.4% of the gifted and talented student population. (Hispanic Education Fact Sheet, 2008, p.1)

Since the passing of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, education for all, including Latino students, has been mandated. With the mandatory screening of ELL students when they register for school, the hiring of ELL teachers, and the creation of ELL classrooms, Latino students have been afforded opportunities to adapt to and better learn the English language and the rigors of American education, but are these efforts making a significant difference in the achievement possibilities of Latino students? Despite what programs are currently in place, ELL students still perform below the mark in comparison to English proficient students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). They often score lower on high-stakes testing, have lower grade point averages, often drop out of school all together, and certainly fail to reach academic levels proportionate to their ability (Denbo, 2002; Shaffer, Ortman, & Denbo, 2002).

The state of Georgia, the state chosen for this example, outlines guidelines regarding the evaluation and eligibility determination for the gifted and talented program. Students may qualify in either one of two ways. In Option A, students must achieve a score of 99% (Grades K-2) or 96% (Grades 3 -12) or higher on a nationally age-normed mental ability test, and score in the 90% or higher in a nationally-normed achievement test. In Option B, students must qualify in three of four areas, including; the above-mentioned mental ability and achievement, and/or creativity, and motivation. For creativity, students must score in the 90% or above on a nationally-normed creativity test. In regard to motivation, grade point average is used to evaluate students in grades 6 through12, and rating scales are used to assess younger students (Georgia Department of Education, 2012). Although these measures appear fairly comprehensive, the process often begins with teacher or parent referral and has a strong reliance on standardized tests and grades, which may negatively impact the opportunities for ELL students to be successful (Ramos, 2010, pp. 152).

All students, including individuals like Paloma, deserve a quality education. This statement is equally valid when a student is being considered for gifted placement. Discovering students' giftedness creates a more extensive and unique educational experience for them. They may be given opportunities to work more creatively, at a faster rate, and delve more deeply into topics than students in a regular education setting. Ensuring that all students learn is top priority for educators, and this should include students reaching their optimal potential as they learn.

When determining gifted and talented eligibility, appropriate measures should be in place, particularly for ELL students. However, current testing procedures in conjunction with potential cultural and/or language barriers may be prevent ELL students from demonstrating their true abilities. Educating students, teachers, and the community as a whole increases the opportunities for Latino children to find success in their academics. Although gifted education proves to be less readily available for Latino ELL children (Ramos, 2010, pg. 151), there is indeed a need for change, and the research to support that change is outlined in the following section.

Selected Review of the Literature
The following section presents current literature indicating the academic, social, and personal status of Latino English Learner (ELL) students and their success within gifted education programs. The review discusses motivation among Latino English language learners, initial nominations of gifted students, gifted programs identifying protocols, and successful strategies that may be used for ELL students found in literature. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory provides a cohesive framework to understand the context of Latino ELL students in the community.

Theoretical Orientation
Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory illustrates the influences from different systems (microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems) individuals encounter. The

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ecological theory creates a framework to understand the social context of Latino gifted ELL students. Bronfenbrenner (1979) states the following about the theory:

> Thus within the a given society or social group, the structure and substance of micro-, meso, and exosystems tend to be similar, as if they were constructed from the same master model, and the systems function in similar ways. Conversely, between different social groups, the constituent systems may vary markedly. Hence, by analyzing and comparing the micro-, meso- and exosystems characterzing different social classes, ethnic, and religious groups, or entire societies, it becomes possible to describe systematically and to distinguish the ecological properties of these larger social context as environments for human development. (Bronfenbrenner ,1979, pp. 8)

According to the theory, educators must know the different social contexts of the Latino ELL student. The immediate setting, the microsystem, includes understanding the student experiences in their respected immediate families or classrooms. The meso-system involves two microsystems interacting with one another. Genuine and effective interaction between schools and family is crucial for this system. Schools must initiate effective communication with families in order to provide necessary assistance to children. The exosystem involves a broader context of culture that influences the student (e.g., parent's workplace, community as a whole, church).

The ecological theory's implementation to gifted nominations is practical and benefits students. The theory helps in providing an understanding of the importance in incorporating all factors in the Latino student's life. After incorporating all factors, an informed decision about gifted nominations can be given. The purpose of Gifted and Talented programs is to nurture the developing dimensions of the most promising students. Rigorous learning opportunities

provide students an opportunity to achieve higher levels of thinking and problem solving (Ramos, 2010).Unfortunately, Latino children and their families are frequently not aware of resources available to them in the school system. Communication between the school and home is essential in providing the necessary resources to the families. Meso-system effectiveness is key for this step. It is imperative for families to have gifted nomination information to move forward in the process. Furthermore, the community as a whole may not be educated about the available resources. Implementing Bronfenbronner's theory provides structure and effectiveness when implementing interventions and communicating throough each domain in the ELL student's life. School counselors must take a holistic approach by expanding their efforts to all areas of the student's social context and including as many contexts of each system as possible.

Motivation Among Latino ELL students

Lack of motivation from Latino students decreases the chances of receiving gifted nominations. Fortunately, the Latino community itself can communicate the importance of motivating students. Motivation for academic success may originate from many different social contexts. Lopez (2010) explains how motivation affects academic performance. Cultural expectations such as learning English create an environment for the student not to thrive. Students may view their native language as a barrier to achieve academic success. Lopez (2010) examined Latino communities and student personal motivation and determined that the social context of the student either decreases or increases the Latino student's motivation to achieve in school. The student's micro and meso systems must communicate with students the importance of becoming an engaged learner. Lopez indicated prolonged effort without the validation of different social contexts (e.g., family, classroom) will result in the disengagement of the student. Families and communities must be informed about opportunities and the expectations of gifted education so that they guide students to achieve their full academic potential.

Nominations of Latino ELL students

The initial steps for children to be involved in gifted education programs are referrals and nominations. Individuals who are familiar with the student's academic abilities can make nominations. The 2012-2013 Georgia Gifted Resource Manual (2012) states students may be referred for gifted curriculum eligibility by teachers, counselors, administrators, parents/guardians, peers, self or others who may have the personal knowledge of the student's academic abilities. Mcbee (2006) compared the referral process across socio-economic and racial lines (e.g., Black, Latino) and indicated teacher and automatic nominations held the most 'weight' for gifted identification. Parental and self-referrals are used less frequently. Black, Latino, and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds were nominated less than their White peers. Classism, racism, and cultural ignorance may be the cause of low teacher nomination of Black and Latino students. Furthermore, the low incidences of parent nominations may indicate distrust and the feeling of alienation from the school culture due to a lack of knowledge and resources. Different resources can be

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used to combat distrust and establish rapport with the student and their family. For instance, bilingual/bicultural social workers can provide information to parents about the gifted nomination process. In addition, school counselors can learn about Latino culture and effective communication tools to communicate with families about gifted nominations. However, Ramos (2010) found self-identification nominations in the Latino community as ineffective due to the nature of the collective culture. Latino children culturally are taught the individual is less important than the group collectively. Therefore, it is imperative for educators to be taught the cultural values and beliefs of the Latino society. The exo-system of the ecological theory may be applied on this level because of the consideration of the community, classroom, and the student's immediate family's culture.

Ramos (2010) indicated teacher recommendations pose problems in the nomination process because of the lack of available professional development on giftedness to increase the improvement of nomination skills. Teachers sometimes lack formal training on identifying cultural characteristics and their associated behaviors. The lack of cultural awareness leads to negative impacts for students of color including the Latino population (Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005). Nevertheless, as will be discussed further, communication between the school and household must convey the option of parental and self-nomination for gifted education. School counselors must advocate for gifted nominations for all students.

Identifying Protocols used for Gifted Nominations
Mcbee (2006) also indicated a bias in standardized tests used for the identification of gifted students as a cause of low teacher nominations among lower SES, Black, and Latino children. Ramos (2010) offered a discussion of bias in identification protocols used for gifted students. Identification protocols have recently been developed by Latino educators to address the increasing issue and provide more equity for minority students' giftedness. The Naglieri Non-Verbal Ability Test was normed with 20,000 majority white students. The measure did not reflect a cultural bias between White and Latinos students with scores not yielding a statistically significant difference. Furthermore, Ramos (2010) indicated an additional instrument implemented by Cooper, The Classroom Observation Instrument, in the assistance in identifying Latino gifted students. Both instruments yield positive results for the population. Having proper identifying protocols for Latino ELL students remove language barriers from the nomination process. Giftedness for students can be properly measured to ensure correct identification. To be discussed further, school counselors may advocate by communicating the availability of testing alternatives for Latino ELL students.

Successful Strategies Used for ELL students
In addition to using culturally competent protocols for ELL students, various techniques and strategies hold promise for effectiveness with the ELL Latino students (Williamson 2012; Gray & Fleishman 2005; Ramos 2005). Effective instructional strategies for culturally diverse students are simple extensions of approaches that work well with all students (Gray & Fleishman, 2005). Williamson noted learning techniques taught to parents in their native language if possible is most effective. Furthermore, working with ELL students individually during class time builds a relationship with the students. Students also benefit when teachers and classmates have an opportunity to learn about each other's backgrounds. Williamson stated that using bio poems creates a classroom community that increases academic achievement and student motivation. Bio poems are self-narrative poems children compose describing different facts about themselves and were developed by ReadWriteThink.org. Bio poems help peers learn more about other classmates' cultural background and increases morale and motivation in the classroom.

The use of visual aids (e.g., flash cards, videos, posters computers, graphic organizers) as clarification for the curriculum is a vital asset to help reinforce the primary language to ELL students (Williamson, 2012; Gray & Fleischman, 2005). Gray and Flesichman noted reinforcement, repetition, and modeling are key components for retention of material for the ELL students. Students who display gifted potential thrive when educators and counselors work with them through effective strategies and techniques to further their success.

Educators and school counselors must understand the collective viewpoint of the Latino population and how to use suitable teaching techniques. Cultural norms for the Latino community are collective: the family is placed before the needs of the individual. It is unusual for an individual to draw attention to him/herself. The norm is to act humble and not openly demonstrate one's gifted abilities within the classroom (Ramos, 2010). Ramos (2010) found group work such as group projects or group portfolios represent the group collective efforts. Group performance projects such as murals, skits, and group reports are examples of activities aiding the collective worldview of the Latino community.

Clearly, Latino ELL students may not be properly identified for gifted programs because of inappropriate identifying protocols. However, innovative identification protocols and teaching methods to aid the process do exist (Ramos, 2010). But the need to represent Latino students in gifted education must expand beyond the teachers. School counselors must consider theoretical and practical interventions to increase Latino ELL student gifted numbers. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory

and the ACA Advocacy Competences (Ratts, Toporek & Lewis 2010) are roadmaps for the school counselor in providing step-by-step guidance to respond to this concern. The ACA Advocacy Competencies call for all counselors, including school counselors, to operate from a social justice counseling perspective, one that focuses on equity instead of equality. The following section explains how the ACA Advocacy Competencies can be followed by school counselors to increase Latino student representation in gifted programs in the sample state of Georgia.

A Call to Action

If a marginalization of a community hinders greatness, the barriers must be broken down so true success can occur. Is this the case for the children of the Latino community? Are children of Latino descent under-represented in gifted and talented programs due to language, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers? Have Latino children, and their parents, been equipped with the necessary knowledge and unwavering assurance of what it takes to be successful in American schools? Are the current laws and programs designed to assist English Language Learner (ELL) students creating high achievers? Can school counselors, working as advocates, significantly address these limitations? School counselors are in the perfect position to address the needs of individual students for whom trending educational procedures place them at a disadvantage. By working through the steps outlined by the ACA Advocacy Competencies, school counselors can advocate for and empower students like Paloma and other Latino students to reach their full potential.

Student Advocacy

Although advocating for ELL students of Latino descent encompasses reaching out to many, according to the ACA Advocacy Competencies, school counselors begin by advocating on behalf and with the individual. School counselors can lead in the identification of interventions for helping individual Latino students improve their educational experiences and achievement.

The example of Paloma illustrates each level of the advocacy competencies. At the student advocacy level, Paloma's school counselors take numerous opportunities to advocate on her behalf, including assigning Paloma to a mentor, establishing a peer helper in the classroom, and creating a small group to work on study skills. Using the mentor program which the school counselor sets up with local community volunteers, Paloma works with a member of the community once a week. This experience provides her with the opportunity for one-on-one, individualized attention to boost her self-concept and understanding that she is an important individual. The peer helper works as a cheerleader, a comrade, a close-knit support system for Paloma in the classroom. The study skills small group focuses on learning concepts in the areas that require more reading, such as, language arts, science, and social studies. Paloma develops skills that help her to focus on the overarching essential questions within a unit which in turn help her to not to get bogged down in the language, but see the big picture for quicker, deeper understanding.

Student Empowerment

In regards to advocacy with the individual, school counselors are charged with the task of identifying ways to empower students and help them improve their educational experience. Utilizing the benefits of individual counseling, school counselors work to build student confidence, self- efficacy, and provide in this example Latino students with resources to express themselves in the classroom.

The use of individual counseling services provides a boost in self-esteem, self-motivation, and self-confidence which help to increase Paloma's confidence, both emotionally and academically. Paloma creates a map recording the highlights and pitfalls of their life. The purpose of the map is to visually understand the different journeys taken throughout a lifetime and how the current struggles will be overcome just as past struggles have been. Both short and long term goals, including making a new friend, joining a club at school, or being a more active participant in class are created. During the process, Paloma develops a personal, clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in all facets of her life (academic, social/personal, and career). Equally important, Paloma's school counselor encourages Paloma to discuss her culture and to share stories about her life and the people and community places that offer her support. Encouraging Paloma to take pride in her culture and to share aspects of it with her class – coordinated with Paloma's teacher – empowers Paloma by pointing her toward the strengths she already has. Her school counselor also encourages the strategy of journaling, asking Paloma to record her thoughts and feelings about her school day and her home life. Journaling allows all students to begin to make connections between their feelings and their thoughts about their context.

In addition to the peer-mentoring program within the school, school counselors may choose to work with counselors at nearby middle and high schools to develop a big brother/big sister mentoring program. Students are recruited through interest meetings and

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Beyond the schoolhouse, school counselor advocacy efforts must reach into the community. It is essential that the parents of Latino students are brought alongside educators to become more knowledgeable themselves, increase and improve communication with the school, and hopefully begin to take steps to advocate for their own children.

are then paired with other students who have similar cultural backgrounds. Mentors and mentee meet typically once a week at the local elementary school to discuss various topics important to their specific culture such as food, music, academics, and other forms of entertainment. Mentors encourage the newer students in the program to develop their skills among areas of interest and encourage involvement within extracurricular activities within the school. As stated previously, the Latino culture strives to have a sense of community, and it is imperative to mirror as much as possible that cultural aspect within the school.

Advocacy at the School Level

To truly see a change in academic achievement among Latino students, school counselor advocacy efforts must extend throughout the school building and into the Latino community itself. As established in the selected review of the literature, teachers not only need to be educated on the best strategies to use with ELL students and to extend their knowledge of identifying giftedness, they must also understand the importance of "comprehending the worldview of the Latino student" (Ramos, 2010, p. 152). The cultural differences that exist between Latino students and their peers is vast, and to truly know a child and what they are capable of accomplishing in the classroom depends on a teachers' knowledge of the culture. "Educators must be given extensive professional development on giftedness to improve their identification skills. In addition, professional development experiences should also address cultural sensitivity and an understanding of how giftedness might appear in other cultures" (Ford & Trotman, 2001). Well-planned, purposeful, and thorough teacher training is essential to advocate for this Latino students as steps are made towards more notable inclusion in gifted and talented programs. School counselors can provide this training.

Continuing the example of Paloma's school system, the school counselor works with the county gifted coordinator and local ELL teachers to create a power point presentation viewed by the faculty during a regularly-scheduled faculty meeting. Throughout the

presentation, current research and data as well as the characteristics and qualities of gifted children are explored and explained. Several student examples provide knowledge about the creative thinker, the perfectionist, students who are twice exceptional, the underachiever, and students from diverse populations, giving teachers a clear understanding of what to look for when considering nominations for the gifted and talented program. The presentation concludes with a question and answer session, led by school counselors, administrators, the gifted coordinator, and ELL educators, and the distribution of a handout for teachers to use for quick reference when considering a student for nomination.

Advocacy Through Community Collaboration

Beyond the schoolhouse, school counselor advocacy efforts must reach into the community. It is essential that the parents of Latino students are brought alongside educators to become more knowledgeable themselves, increase and improve communication with the school, and hopefully begin to take steps to advocate for their own children. Educating parents about different resources available for their children is imperative for success. Cultural barriers would certainly begin to shatter if Latino parents felt comfortable and certain that working with schools would improve the children's future.

Again in the example of Paloma's school and community, joining advocacy efforts with a local church community expressing a desire to expand their outreach, weekly English classes for Latino parents are held. School counselors eagerly work to create a cohesive relationship with parents and use this forum as an opportunity to educate parents on the public school system. Using English and Spanish resources, including, handbooks, newsletters, homework agendas, etc., parents are informed on everything from classroom procedures, the grading system, extracurricular activities, and services available to all students, including the gifted and talented program and the process it entails.

School counselors also visit the local businesses frequented by the Latino families from heir school to meet business people and to distribute information about school resources such as the gifted program. Connecting with local leaders is a powerful way to connect with local families.

Public Information

Changes in gifted and talented identification need to occur, extending current methods of testing to reach those of varying cultural backgrounds and language deficits (Gray & Fleischman, 2005; Ramos, 2010). It is imperative that school counselor advocacy efforts include informing the public of up-to-date research, methods of testing for gifted and talented programs currently in place, and the distinct cultural differences among Latino students that may possibly cause the tests to be inequitable. Using detailed research from McBee (2006) that outlines the staggering differences in the nomination process for students of color compared to their white peers, Paloma's school counselor prepares a fact sheet and public service announcement distributed to educators, administrators, parents, and students to

inform stakeholders in the community through an editorial to the local newspaper. Using these types of public media works to bring awareness to the need of opening up the opportunity of the gifted and talented programs to a more diverse population.

Social/Political Advocacy
Focusing on the final step of the ACA Advocacy competencies, in this example, Paloma's school counselors enact change at the political level which in this case means addressing the need to make changes to the required testing for the gifted and talented program. Focusing on the use of other potential measures, including, English language proficiency tests acculturation scales, parent interviews, prior academic performance, portfolio and performance-based assessments, and teacher, parent, self-nomination process, Latino students can begin to demonstrate their abilities in new ways that help all to see they truly are gifted individuals.

Again, working with gifted and ELL personnel at the school district level, Paloma's school counselors' efforts reach the school board. With PowerPoint, fact sheets, and public service announcement in hand, the school counselors seek to educate the board as well as propose that changes be made to the current measures used to test students for the gifted and talented program in Paloma's school. In response to the presentation, the board agrees to begin looking at different options for assessing students nominated for the gifted and talented program.

Conclusion
The ACA Advocacy Competencies provide the framework for how school counselors can reach and improve the lives of their marginalized students at the individual, school, community, and political level. Latino children such as Paloma often need the educational and cultural expertise of school counselors to reach their true success. Paloma, along with other Latino students, deserve equity in their education experience, especially as it includes gifted and talented status. School counselors advocating in the different systems that affect their lives can help bring greater equity to the educational experiences of students such as Paloma.

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School Counselors Improving Attendance

LaWanda Edwards, Alabama State University

The purpose of this study was to determine the outcomes of interventions implemented at a middle school located in Southern United States. The school has been experiencing an increase in attendance rate. For the purpose of this study, the attendance rate is defined as the percentage of students who missed 15 or more days of school during the school year. The attendance rate is important in schools because it is one of the areas in which schools are evaluated when looking at Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). Improving the attendance rate will not only assist the school with making AYP, but students will also improve academically. Improving student attendance also helps them to feel a sense of connection to the school and decrease the dropout rate.

Importance of Attendance

It is important for schools to monitor attendance due to the many areas that attendance impacts. Educational leaders are familiar with the impact of attendance and included it in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. As a result of NCLB, schools must make AYP, which includes attendance guidelines. It is evident that poor attendance negatively impacts other areas of a student's academic success. If a student has poor attendance, it contributes to low achievement (Gottfried, 2009; Lehr, Hansen, Sinclair, & Christenson, 2004). This includes a negative impact in different subject areas, including math (Balfanz, & Byrnes, 2006) and reading (Gottfried, 2010). This also contributes to a student not passing exams (Nichols, 2003), which leads to not being promoted (Neild, & Bafianz, 2006). When a student has poor attendance and they return back to the class, they feel alienated from teachers and other peers (Johnson, 2005). With attendance impacting academic success, it is important for schools to implement programs that focus on improving attendance.

Factors that Impact Attendance

There are multiple factors that impact attendance. Baker, Sigmon, and Nugent (2001) identified four categories that truancy fall into: family factors, school factors, economic influences and student variables. Family factors include lack of parental guidance, poverty, drug abuse or domestic violence in the home. Elizondo, Feske, Edgull, and Walsh (2003) agree that family factors such as abuse and neglect can impact student attendance, along with physical and mental health disorders. Physical and mental health disorders, lack of social competence, and, drug use and abuse can be classified as student variables (Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001). School factors include the attitudes of the teacher, other students, and administration and the inability to meet the needs of different learning styles (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Eneau & Dafinoiu, 2009). Economic influences include single parent homes, parents with multiple jobs, lack of affordable childcare or transportation, and financial difficulties (Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001; Elizondo, Feske, Edgull, & Walsh, 2003). School counselors and administrators want to be aware of and address these factors to prevent or decrease absenteeism. This may also include collaborating with community resources to help improve student attendance (Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent; Chang & Romero, 2008).

Attendance Interventions

Administrators, teachers, community leaders, and other stakeholders are aware of the impact attendance has on the academic achievement of students. Numerous interventions have been implemented in schools to help improve attendance. This study will focus on interventions implemented by school counselors. These interventions include a school monitoring program, incentive programs, and counseling interventions.

Abstract

This study examined the outcomes of interventions used to address attendance issues at a middle school located in the Southern United States. School-wide interventions were implemented to address absenteeism of all students and individual interventions were implemented to address absenteeism with targeted students. An explanation of each intervention is provided. Post-intervention data indicated that the attendance rate improved. For the purpose of this study, the attendance rate is defined as the percentage of students who missed 15 or more days of school during the school year.

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The Check & Connect program was developed to increase student engagement in school (Sinclair, Christenson, Lehr, & Anderson, 2003), which will decrease the risk of a student dropping out of school. The Check & Connect program is data-driven and focuses on a monitor building a relationship with the student and monitoring the student's grades, attendance, and suspensions (Sinclair, Christenson, Lehr, & Anderson). Check & Connect received positive effectiveness ratings from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) What Works Clearinghouse (IES, 2006). The report supports the studies conducted with elementary (Lehr, Hansen, & Christenson, 2004) and high school students (Sinclair & Kaibel, 2002). After implementing the Check & Connect program at the elementary schools for 2 years, 86% of the students participating in the program were getting to school on time and were successfully engaged in school (Lehr, Hansen, & Christenson, 2004). When the Check & Connect program was implemented with high school students, 65% of the students participating in the program had no incidents of failing courses and were successfully engaged in school (Sinclair & Kaibel).

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Incentive programs have also been used to improve attendance in schools. The Perfect Pals program was implemented by an elementary school counselor, to increase student attendance (Peek, 2009). The Perfect Pals program monitored students' attendance monthly and if they achieved perfect attendance during the previous month, they were invited to a lunch and received a small treat during the lunch. The students' pictures were also placed on a bulletin board designated for the Perfect Pals program. The school also developed an Attendance Review Team to monitor attendance at the school. The number of student absent 15 of more days during the previous school year decreased after the implementation of the Perfect Pals program and the Attendance Review Team.

Operation SCATT is another incentive program implemented by a school counselor to address poor attendance (Cole, 2011). Similar to the Check & Connect program, Operation SCATT included a daily check-in system, with the addition of a rewards program to help students improve attendance. This program targeted ten elementary students who missed seven to fourteen absences during the first semester. Seventy percent of the students who participated in the program improved attendance during the second semester.

Bickelhaupt (2011) is another school counselor who implemented a program that addressed poor attendance with incentives. In contrast to the aforementioned programs, this program also added a counseling component. The researcher used small group counseling to help students improve attendance. This program targeted six elementary students who had 10 or more unexcused absences from the previous school year. There was a 12% increase in attendance for the students who participated in the program.

Similar to Bickelhaupt's (2011) study, other research suggests that counseling can help students improve school attendance. Enea and Dafinoiu (2009) use motivational interviewing and solution-focused counseling to help decrease truancy rates for high school aged students. Nineteen students were in the experimental group, which met eight times over a four month period. Truancy rates for the experimental group decreased 61%, while there was not a decrease in the truancy rates for the control group.

METHOD

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of the study was to address the high attendance rate at the school. The school's second indicator for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) was the attendance rate. The attendance rate for the previous school year (2007-2008) was 26.9%. This meant 26.9% of the students were absent from school more than 15 days. The principal was concerned with the high attendance rate and asked the author to develop and implement a program to address this issue. After researching literature on what has been successfully implemented in other schools, a program was developed to decrease the attendance rate. The program focused on multiple interventions that focused on incentives, group counseling, and individual counseling.

Participants
The program was implemented at an urban middle school in the Southern United States. The participants included the entire school population of 470 students. The student population was composed of African-American students (97%) and other students (3%). Twenty-one percent of the students were identified as Students With Disabilities (SWD) and ninety-nine percent of the students were identified as Economically Disadvantaged (ED). The author collected attendance data from the previous school year, from the computer program used by the school system. The attendance data was monitored weekly and reported to the principal.

Procedures

After reviewing the attendance data from the previous school year, I started researching outcome studies to identify interventions used in other schools to address attendance issues. After reviewing the literature, I identified two different ways that I was going to address the attendance issue: incentives and individual counseling. Incentives would be used to motivate students individually and at each grade level. Individual counseling would be used as an intervention for students who missed five or more days the current school year. Each intervention was used throughout the year to help students stay on track.

Most of the research identified incentives as an effective way to improve attendance. After reviewing the literature, it was decided to offer incentives to students individually and as a grade level. Students were involved in the planning process to ensure that the incentives would be well received. The effectiveness of the program depended upon its impact on the students. Students were informed that their attendance would be monitored on a regular basis and incentives would be given out bi-weekly to all the students who were present every day and not tardy for the previous two weeks. The Monday following the end of each two weeks, the grade level team leader would be given a printout of the students with perfect attendance. The team then identifies which teacher(s) would monitor the students with perfect attendance and how the other students would be divided amongst the other teachers. The incentives included game day, movies and popcorn, homework pass, treats in the cafeteria, treats in a bag, and ice cream. Each incentive was alternated 2-3 times throughout the year. The resources needed for the incentives were provided by local partners in education.

In addition to individual incentives, students also received incentives as a grade level. Every Monday morning, during the morning announcements, the school counselor would announce the results of attendance for each grade level for the previous week. The number of students absent for each grade level during the previous week was announced. The grade level with the least amount of students absent during the previous week won the grade level competition for the week. The results of the grade level competition were also posted throughout the school, each week, to show students the number of students absent for each grade level. The grade level at the end of the year with the least amount of absences won a pizza party.

Students were also given quarterly incentives to improve attendance. The quarterly incentives included pizza, ice cream, movie gift certificates, restaurant gift certificates, department store gift certificates, and mp3 players. All students who had perfect attendance for the quarter were given pizza and ice cream. The gift certificates and mp3 players were given out after a drawing from all the students with perfect attendance each quarter. The students who won the drawings were recognized on the morning announcements. In addition to all the previous incentives, students with perfect attendance for the entire school year were recognized on the morning announcements and their names were placed in a drawing for gift cards and bikes. The gift cards for the yearly perfect attendance were valued at $50.

Another intervention was used to address students individually. When a student missed five days of school, the student was referred to the counselor. The counselor met with the students on a weekly basis for eight weeks. The counselor met with these students individually to identify reasons for absences and discuss ways to avoid future absences. Students were assisted in identifying the negative impact of absenteeism and taught the steps in the decision-making process.

Results

Overall, the interventions seemed beneficial and helped to improve the attendance rate. When comparing the attendance rate for 2008 to the attendance rate for 2007, there was a decrease in the attendance rate. At the end of the 2006- 2007 school year, before any interventions were implemented, the attendance rate was 26.9% for the entire student body, 39.2% for SWD, and 26.5% for ED. At the end of the 2007-2008 school year, after the interventions were implemented, the attendance rate was 19.6% for the entire student body, 27.3% for SWD, and 19.2% for ED. That data shows a decrease in attendance rate for all three areas.

Limitations

There are some limitations to the present study. The study did not address the impact of the individual counseling sessions and the school wide incentives separately. Knowing the impact of each intervention would help school counselors identify the best interventions to implement in their counseling programs. Additionally, the administrators, teachers, and students did not evaluate the program. The administrators and teachers verbally informed the counselor of the positive impact of the program, but there was not a formal evaluation of the program. Perception data and feedback about the effectiveness of the program would help to make improvements in the implementation of the program in future years.

Implications

The roles of the professional school counselor at the school were changed during this school year, which allowed more time for the school counselor to focus on guidance duties. The school counselor did not have to serve as the testing coordinator or the 504 coordinator during the 2007-2008 school year. These were duties that were given to the school counselor the previous school year. The success of the program be attributed to the collaboration and support of the administrator

during the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program. The relationship between the school counselor and administrator built the foundation for the school counselor to implement a counseling and incentive program that improved school wide attendance.

Future Research

It is imperative that school counselors work with administrators, parents, and teachers to implement counseling programs that focus on improving student attendance. Future research on different counseling theories that work best with students, to improve attendance is needed. It is also recommended that counselors conduct research to see what counseling interventions would work best with students depending on the reason for absenteeism. Finally, school counselors want to increase research that not only focuses on the impact of counseling interventions on attendance, but also the impact of counseling interventions on grades, test scores, and behavior.

Discussion and conclusion

The results of the study demonstrate that using incentives and individual counseling approaches to improve student attendance was effective. The use of incentives to reward students individually and as a grade level positively impacted attendance. When comparing the 2006-2007 attendance rate of 26% to the 2007-2008 attendance rate of 19%, it is evident that the attendance rate dropped seven points due to the implementation of new interventions. The review of the literature shows that absenteeism is mainly caused by four different factors: family factors, school factors, economic influences and student variables. When students' attendance declines, it negatively impacts promotion rates, exam scores, achievement in math and reading, and relationship with peers and teachers. Early identification and intervention of these factors will not only improve attendance rate, but it will positively impact student achievement and overall school success.

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Sisters of Nia: A Social Justice Advocacy Intervention for School Counselors in Their Work with Adolescent African American Females

Lee Edmondson Grimes, Valdosta State University and Breyan Haizlip, Tiffany Rogers, and Kimberly D. Brown, Georgia Southern University

Abstract
Adolescent African American females face multiple obstacles that hinder their educational success. High school completion and college attendance rates remain lower for African American females than those for other racial and gender groups, while pregnancy rates for African Americans teens are higher. Group work holds promise for meeting the developmental needs of adolescent African American females, particularly group work focused on cultural and ethnic relevance. School counselors are called by their professional organizations to respond to the needs of disempowered students through social justice advocacy interventions (ASCA, 2005). The program of group work Sisters of Nia (Belgrave et al., 2004) uses cultural and ethnic values to empower adolescent African American female students. Sisters of Nia is introduced as an advocacy intervention at the student/client level of the ACA Advocacy Competencies. Implications for further school counseling advocacy efforts at the school/community/systems and public/social/political levels are included.

Lauryn is an eighth grade, African American student in middle school in a small city in Georgia. After her parents divorced, Lauryn and her mother moved to their current home from an urban setting in New York where Lauryn's classes and her neighborhood were very racially and socioeconomically diverse. Her new school is predominately White and middle class and is far from the closest urban area. Lauryn misses her extended family in New York and has been reluctant to become involved in activities at her new school. With her grades suffering, Lauryn has begun to skip school, and when she is in class, finds herself at odds with classmates. In the past month, Lauryn has received three discipline referrals regarding behaviors with

other students and her teachers. Lauryn reports that no one at her school thinks she matters.

On the surface, Crystal's life is very different from Lauryn's. Crystal lives in a rural area in Georgia where the demographics are changing rapidly with an increased growth of students at her school of Asian and Latino descent. Crystal's family has lived in the farming community for generations, and Crystal and her extended family have watched the community go from a busy agricultural center to a dwindling factory town. Like Lauryn, Crystal is an eighth-grade African American student. Recently her grades, attendance, and discipline have diminished while the time she spends with her boyfriend has increased. Crystal reports that she sees no reason to attend school because people like her cannot be successful at her school.

The Marginalization of Many African American Female Students

Unfortunately for students such as Lauryn and Crystal, research and statistics appear to support their beliefs. Mickelson and Green (2006) state that African American adolescent females are affected by their culture and socioeconomic status in critical ways. Adolescent African American females face a complicated array of societal hurdles that can prevent or deter their ultimate success in life as these hurdles lead to marginalization. It is very likely that African American adolescent females will be exposed to hurdles that are detrimental to their academic success (Ogbu, 2003). These difficulties include high teenage pregnancy, decreasing high school completion, and lower college enrollment rates than adolescent Caucasian females. During the 2007-2008 school year, African American females attended high-poverty public elementary and secondary schools at a greater percentage than Caucasian students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics reported that in 2009, 77% of African American females graduated from high school in the United States (2010). Also in 2009, only 47% of African American females ages 18-24 were enrolled in college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Although more African American females enroll in college than African American males, African Americans females on average still have a lower median income than their African American male counterparts and of both Caucasian males and females (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

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The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy reported in February 2012 that over the last decade African American females have a higher rate of teen pregnancy than for teens overall. African American teen females have a pregnancy rate that is approximately three times that of Caucasian teen females (Kost & Henshaw, 2012). The National Campaign also reports that the rate of African American teen females who become pregnant at least once before the age of 20 is almost twice the national average (Kost & Henshaw, 2012). According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the state of Georgia has the 13th highest teen pregnancy rate in the United States (2009). The Georgia Department of Community Health reports that the rate of African American teen female births is 58.3 per 1,000 (2010). This rate is nearly double the 31.9 per 1,000 for Caucasian teen females (2010). In 2009, African American teen females had the highest proportion (47%) of teen births in Georgia (Georgia Department of Public Health, 2010).

A Call to Action

Meeting the needs of students such as Lauryn and Crystal, students whose futures deserve greater promise as evidenced in the struggles of many adolescent African American females, requires interventions from educators who respond to student marginalization. School counselors are perfectly positioned to address the needs of all students in schools, and as professional educators, possess skills particularly attuned to address the needs of individuals who have been marginalized and disadvantaged (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Education Trust, 2003; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). Throughout the school counseling literature, discussion centers on the need for social justice advocacy in school counseling (Bailey, Getch, & Chen-Hayes, 2003; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Field & Baker, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Mitcham-Smith, 2007; Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007; Uehara, 2005). Experts in the field contend that social justice advocacy and a focus on multiculturalism are key for professional school counselors as they attempt to remove barriers for marginalized students.

Advocacy, Social Justice, and Multiculturalism in School Counseling

From a historical perspective, significant changes in the counseling profession began with the introduction of the multicultural competencies in 1992 (Sue, Arrendondo, & McDavis). Defining the multiculturally competent counselor, Sue, Arrendondo, and McDavis urged counselors to adopt a multicultural focus so that clients benefitted not only from the counselor's helping skills but from a heightened perspective of respect and acceptance for the cultural influences of race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, and sexual orientation. In the years following, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and the American Counseling Association (ACA) adopted the multicultural competencies as a part of their standards. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) issued the call as well and encouraged school counselors to "take action to ensure students of culturally diverse backgrounds have access to appropriate services and opportunities which promote the maximum development of the individual" (ASCA, 2005). Throughout the past decade, counseling and school counseling have changed

and expanded to include a perspective far beyond the White, middle-class worldview that dominated counseling for decades. Often called the fourth force in counseling, multiculturalism paved the way for the next major force in counseling—social justice.

In terms of school counseling, a social justice perspective "acknowledges the role that dominant cultural values have in shaping the educational success and failure of youngsters" (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007, p. 18). Challenging the status quo and dominant cultural values while attempting to remove systemic barriers to success for all students at the individual level, the school/community level, and the political level characterize the work of the school counselor with a social justice advocacy orientation. Dahir and Stone (2009) stated that school counselors "must accept responsibility as social justice advocates, focus strategic and intentional interventions to remove barriers to learning, and raise the level of expectations for students for whom little is expected" (p. 18). The authors suggested that the key to a thriving future for school counseling lies in social justice advocacy (Dahir & Stone, 2009, p. 18). School counselors acting as social justice advocates hold the key to a thriving future for marginalized students as well.

Social justice in school counseling is built in part on the American Counseling Association Advocacy Competencies (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2003). Within the three ACA Advocacy domains, counselors work to confront inequity at the individual student/client level, the community/systems level, and the political/social/public information level, as shown in the following table:

When counselors use the advocacy competencies to conceptualize their work with students or clients, they recognize that the problems individuals face are not isolated in the lives of the individual, but that individuals are products of and are affected by systems, communities, and society as a whole. Most recently, the third edition of the ASCA National Model (2012) aligned itself with the ACA

Advocacy Competencies, urging school counselors to use advocacy efforts that address barriers and marginalization. As evidenced through the growth of the profession in terms of multiculturalism, social justice advocacy, and in the calls from their professional organizations, school counselors must provide interventions that empower students and challenge oppressive forces in the systems in which individual students learn and live.

Group Work as a School Counseling, Social Justice Advocacy Intervention

With social justice advocacy in mind, school counselors respond to the needs of marginalized students with a broader perspective than the traditional counseling models espoused. Rather than focusing on the problems in a student's life and how the student can change to adapt to problems, a social justice advocacy perspective calls for working with students and advocating on their behalf to determine strengths already present in the student's life and community. In terms of the ACA Advocacy Competencies and the Advocacy Components of the ASCA National Model, the approach stresses the use of "Student Empowerment—Efforts that facilitate the identification of external barriers and development of self-advocacy skills, strategies and response to those barriers" (ASCA, 2012, p. 5). At the student level, group activities are suggested in the Advocacy Component of the ASCA National Model as a delivery method to increase student empowerment. Group work has been identified as being particularly helpful for working with groups made up of culturally diverse individuals (Merta, 1995). Group work provides an ideal

method for empowering students faced with marginalizing and defeating factors that hinder their success.

The Power of Group Work to Meet Developmental Needs of Students

As individuals transition from childhood to early adolescence, they experience physical, cognitive, and social changes. Adolescents search for their identity outside of their families, discovering how they fit into the world, and discovering what they want out of their life in terms of their career, romantic relationships, and responsibilities (Powell, 2004). According to Erikson (1968), adolescents experience a crisis of "Identity versus Identity Confusion;" without being given opportunities to explore their identity and follow a positive route, they will continue to experience uncertainty about their identity. Self-concepts begin to develop and adolescents create more abstract characterizations about themselves, defining who they are by their personal views and standards rather than by social comparisons (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). While both male and female adolescents experience a decline in self-esteem during this developmental stage, self-esteem for adolescent females is twice as low as boys' self-esteem during this time (Santrock, 2001), and the individuation process is more conflicting for females (Powell, 2004). When adolescents are in social environments that do not fit their psychological needs, they are likely to experience decreased motivation, interest, and performance, as well as a decline in positive behavior (Eccles et al., 1993). Simmons and Blyth (1987) further this argument by adding that adolescents need a safe yet challenging environment that contributes to their

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personal growth and helps them to adjust to change. Group work can serve as that safe environment in which adolescents can develop the sense of autonomy they are seeking.

Cultural Values to Empower Adolescent African American Females

Culturally relevant values and beliefs are positively associated with psychological and social indices among ethnic minority females, and the promotion of culturally relevant beliefs and values may provide a mechanism by which adaptive and positive behaviors are conveyed to children (Belgrave, Brome, & Hampton, 2000; Belgrave, Chase-Vaughn, Gray, Addison, & Cherry, 2000; Stevenson, 1995; Warfield-Coppock, 1992). Thus, efforts to develop program interventions that focus on cultural identity development from a values framework may hold the key offering support, coping skills, and advocacy to ethnic minority females. Cultural beliefs and values are viewed as resiliency factors for the target population and thus are expected to directly and indirectly protect youth from internal and external stressors. This is particularly relevant for African American females who must learn to navigate the systematic oppression related to race and gender simultaneously. The importance of cultural variables is seen in recent prevention and intervention programs that infuse cultural elements in programs for children and adolescents. Although cultural sensitivity and cultural congruence have been acknowledged as important in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs for ethnic minority youth, less attention has been devoted to intervention programs

specifically designed to increase cultural beliefs and values from a counseling paradigm. Similarly, far less attention has been paid to utilizing culturally relevant approaches to address the needs of "at-risk" ethnic minority youth, suggesting that culturally-responsive curriculum has the potential to be a catalyst for empowerment for African American females.

Sisters of Nia, How it Works

For girls in particular, participating in activities such as sports, psycho-education programs (i.e., groups), and social affairs creates a sense of camaraderie (Hirsch et al., 2000), which is often absent in peer relations amongst African American females due to relational aggression (Gomes, Davis, Baker, & Servonsky, 2009). For minority adolescents, increased self-esteem and self-efficacy are associated with a strong sense of ethnic identity (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Thus, group work which focuses on ethnic identity can be a significant approach in meeting the developmental and cultural needs of adolescent African American females. *Sisters of Nia* (Belgrave et al., 2004) is a group work-based program built on fostering the cultural and ethnic identity of African American females. The *Sisters of Nia* intervention is a 15-session cultural activity program that focuses on strengthening three cultural variables among adolescent African American

females. Specifically, the program is aimed at: (a) enhancing ethnic identity, (b) promoting an androgynous gender role, and (c) strengthening mutually positive relationships and decreasing negative relationships girls have with their peers.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity appears to be a particularly salient issue for adolescent African American females who may be confronted with racism or the isolation of "minority" status (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Several studies have shown that ethnic identity is positively and favorably related to psychological and social variables. High ethnic identity has been associated with higher achievement and self-esteem among African American youth (Phinney & Chavira, 1992), increased prosocial behaviors and efficacy beliefs (McCreary, Slavin, & Berry, 1996; Romero & Roberts, 1998), and decreased use of violence (Arbona, Jackson, McCoy, & Blakely, 1999).

Androgynous Gender Roles

The *Sisters of Nia* intervention also seeks to enhance both feminine and masculine gender role beliefs by promoting androgynous gender roles. Unlike the sex role socialization of female adolescents in other ethnic populations, African American females are socialized to possess both masculine characteristics (e.g., assertiveness, self-confidence, and nonconformity) and feminine characteristics (e.g., nurturance, emotional expressiveness, and a focus on personal relationships) (Basow & Rubin, 1999; Binion, 1990; Harris, 1996). Research suggests that an androgynous gender role is predictive of positive social and psychological outcomes for adolescent girls (e.g., Evans, Whigham, &Wang, 1995; Lau, 1989) and that androgynous gender roles are especially adaptive for African American girls (Townsend, 1999).

Relational Aggression

Parallel to gender issues, relational theory holds that relationships and interpersonal connection are important to females and form the core for the development of their personal identity (Giddings, 1984; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986). This theory suggests that females need mutually positive relationships with others, including their peers, to develop a positive sense of self. Research with adolescent girls has consistently shown a link between relational aggression and higher levels of social maladjustment and perceptions of hostile intentions (Crick, Bigbee, & Howe, 1996; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). The *Sisters of Nia* intervention encourages a relational orientation that promotes positive and respectful interpersonal peer relationships and discourages negative interpersonal relationships, such as relational aggression, that will serve the girls well as a resiliency factor.

The *Sisters of Nia* program is a small group intervention that provides fifteen 1.5-hour sessions focusing on the cultures of being female and of African descent. As part of the *Sisters of Nia* curriculum, girls are exposed to an African American

female intervention staff called "mzees" (Kiswahili for respected elders) that serve as role models of what females can do. The program format for the sessions creates a routine that reinforces the program objectives.

Format for Sisters of Nia

Each program session begins with a unity circle in which mzees and girls stand in a circle and hold hands to represent the connectedness of the group. While in the unity circle, the girls conduct a libation, an African ritual of pouring water onto a plant to remember one's ancestors. Mzees and girls take turns calling out the names of their ancestors, which may include relatives, friends, celebrities, and historical figures. After each name is called, the girl in the middle of the circle pours a drop of water into a plant and in unison everyone says, "Ah-shay" (or "and so it is"). Libations acknowledge that African American progress is due to the struggles, sacrifices, and accomplishments of the girls' African American ancestors.

After libation, the girls break into small groups of about twelve girls with two mzees per group. Within their small groups, jamaas ("families"), girls are selected to read the African proverb and Nguza principle for the session. The principles of Nguza Saba are guidelines for healthy living developed by Ron Karenga (1965) to celebrate Kwanzaa, an African American holiday. These principles are Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith).

The mzees then ask the girls how the principle and proverb are related and introduce the session discussion topic. For example, the principle and proverb for the orientation session is Nia (purpose) and "Before shooting, one must aim." This principle and proverb prompts girls to consider the trajectory of their actions, thoughts, and behaviors for the program—a focus of the session.

Another component of each session is a team-building activity that is either before or after the jamaa discussion. Finally, when the small group discussion ends, the girls and mzees reconvene to recite the Sisters of Nia creed, which emphasizes positive ways of interacting with others. Using the described format, the curriculum guides the girls through the three program phases.

The group Sisters of Nia shows great potential for empowering adolescent African American females; however, the same potential for the empowerment of other racial groups is not as clear. Considerable research has been done with regard to racial identity and racial for African American youth, while far less research has focused on racial salience and racial identity development for White and European American youth. Many researchers have pointed out that there are significant differences between Whites and members of other racial/ethnic groups in terms of how they define their own identity. (Diemer, 2007; Grossman & Charmaraman, 2009; McDermott & Samson, 2005; White & Burke, 1987). According to Knowles and Peng (2005), White racial identity has been an under-investigated construct, perhaps because race and ethnicity play a less salient role for

White adolescents simply because they are in the majority. Many Whites do not believe they have a race at all (Jackson & Heckman, 2002). Nonetheless, according to Arroyo and Zigler (1995), a strong racial identity has been shown to facilitate the development of competencies among African American adolescents and can serve as a suit of armor to protect youth from negative environmental influences (Miller & MacIntosh, 1999) - factors that all youth regardless of their race and ethnicity, tend to face. Thus, such group work has the potential to be a catalyst for healthy cultural identity development in White students as well.

Further Interventions Beyond Group Work

The group Sisters of Nia provides a powerful tool for school counselors to use to empower marginalized students. As an intervention at the ACA Advocacy Competencies (Lewis et al., 2003) level of working with students/clients, this group has the potential to set into motion significant challenges to the individual, systemic, and societal forces that negatively affect adolescent African American female students. However, Sisters of Nia is only a first step for school counselors operating from a social justice advocacy approach. Interventions and collaborations beyond the individual level are necessary as well. At the school/systems/community level, school counselors must "take action where the school counselor and community collaborate to address [a] problem and devise an advocacy plan" (ASCA, 2012, p. 5). School counselors might consider initiating community partnerships with churches and recreational organizations to provide support for adolescent African American females outside of the school. Additionally, school counselors might partner with local clinical mental health counselors to provide culturally relevant groups for students outside of school. Systems advocacy also entails "identifying systemic problem[s], gaining information and insight from those most

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affected and implementing advocacy at a systems level" (ASCA, 2012, p. 5). School counselors must, for example, use school-wide data to determine if African American females are represented equitably in rigorous courses and if discipline practices in the school show that African American female students are over-represented. As empowering as a culturally focused small group can be, if school-wide policies negatively impact students, school counselors must take their advocacy to the level of addressing systemic forces that prevent equity and access for all students. Collaboration is paramount at this level, as stakeholders in the school and community must have input on systemic change efforts to believe that they are connected and have viable contributions for bringing about positive changes for students. Finally, at the public information level, school counselors facilitate "collaboration between school counselor[s] and the community in effort to alert the public to macro-level issues regarding human dignity" (ASCA, 2012, p. 6). At the social/political level, school counselors have the ability for "recognizing when student problems must be addressed at a policy or legislative level and advocating for change within those areas" (ASCA, 2012, p. 6). Efforts at this level of social justice advocacy often take the form of district committee meetings, school board presentations, involvement at the state and national levels of professional associations, and even in legislative interactions (ASCA, 2012, p. 6).

Ultimately, students must be empowered to advocate for themselves and can be supported to do so through culturally-relevant interventions such as *Sisters of Nia*, but sometimes professional power must be exerted by the school counselor as well. Professional school counselors acting as social justice advocates who work with students in their schools, communities, and at the public and political levels are key players with the knowledge and skills to make a difference for students such as Lauryn and Crystal, and for all students who struggle to be successful in school.

> Ultimately, students must be empowered to advocate for themselves and can be supported to do so through culturally-relevant interventions such as *Sisters of Nia*, but sometimes professional power must be exerted by the school counselor as well.

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Sisters of Nia is a group work-based program built on fostering the cultural and ethnic identity of African American females. The *Sisters of Nia* intervention is a 15-session cultural activity program that focuses on strengthening three cultural variables among adolescent African American females. Specifically, the program is aimed at: (a) enhancing ethnic identity, (b) promoting an androgynous gender role, and (c) strengthening mutually positive relationships and decreasing negative relationships girls have with their peers.

College 411: Get the Scoop
A Small Group Plan to Promote College Success for First-Generation College Students
Christy W. Land, Cobb County School System and Jolie Ziomek-Daigle, University of Georgia

Abstract
First generation college students have more difficulty preparing for and succeeding in post-secondary institutions. Informed by the literature review and relevant research the school counselor presents a small group design for high school students in their junior year. This small group plan for first generation college students addresses issues of access, goal setting, career exploration, the college admissions process, and the financial aid application process. Systemic considerations are also discussed.

First-generation college students (FGCS) refers to students whose parents have no formal education beyond high school who pursue a post-secondary education (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 82% of students whose parents earned a bachelor degree or higher enrolled in college immediately after completing high school (Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007). In comparison, only 54% of students whose parents had completed high school but not college, and 36% of students whose parents had less than a high school degree went on to pursue a post-secondary education (Inkelas et al., 2007). Therefore, FGCS may need additional support, assistance, and interventions in their pursuit of post-secondary education.

Influences on College Bound FGCS
Ethnic and Class Considerations
First-generation students are disproportionally low-income, non-White, and female (Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005). Many ethnic minority first-generation students families hold the expectation that the student continue to live at home and carry out family duties while attending college, resulting in conflict of desire as students struggle to meet home and academic demands. Therefore, many first-generation students are viewed by their family as breaking and not continuing tradition (Olive, 2008). Moreover, the choice to attend college for first-generation students not only involves great gains but also loss of the familiar past and intergenerational continuity.

First-generation college students often lack the resources, advantages, and support that could make them more competitive as a college applicant (Smith, 2008). First-generation college students compared to students, who have at least one parent with a college degree, are significantly less likely to attend college, and once on campus, less likely to graduate due to poor academic preparation, have lower educational aspirations, lack support, and have difficulties adjusting to the academic, social, and cultural norms of academia (Orbe, 2008). Furthermore, first-generation students make choices based on different worldviews than continuing generation students. These worldviews frame how first-generation students perceive and value college, thus, first-generation students may have lower educational aspirations (Olive, 2008).

Colleges have become more expensive, affirmative action admission programs have weakened, and federal grant programs have diminished, therefore, marginalized groups such as FCGS and individuals from a lower socioeconomic status (SES) have experienced dramatically lower access to higher education (Orbes, 2008; Gandara, Horn, & Orfield, 2005; St. John, Paulsen & Carter, 2005). Scholars who have considered the intersection of race and SES have found that while such young people may have the potential for college success, they are often derailed by the perception that college costs are insurmountable (Orbes, 2008; St. John, Paulsen & Carter, 2005).

Parental Influence
Parental involvement is one way to combat some of these barriers to equality and access to post-secondary education for first-generation college students. Parental involvement is a critical component in the success of FCGS preparing for, gaining access into, and graduating from four-year colleges or universities (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). Research findings support that working class and parents from low SES backgrounds are not as engaged in their child's education as parents

82% of students whose parents earned a bachelor degree or higher enrolled in college immediately after completing high school. In comparison, only **54%** of students whose parents had completed high school but not college, and **36%** of students whose parents had less than a high school degree went on to pursue a post-secondary education.

from high SES status (Orbes, 2008; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). Providing encouragement, setting aspirations, and active support are three broadly defined categories that capture parental involvement in college preparation and choice process (Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper, 1998; Orbes, 2008). Involvement may include college visits, summer camps, tangible financial planning, and investments of time to help their children complete college applications and financial aid forms (Orbes, 2008).

Unfortunately 'access' to education does not necessarily translate into success. First-generation college students and their parents must be involved in the college choice process in ways that acknowledge multiple barriers such as structural, race, class, and economical. To ensure access and equality for FCGS and their parents every effort needs to be made to help them negotiate such barriers (Orbes, 2008). Stanton-Salazar (1997) emphasized that connections with caring adults within the school environment may lead youth to manage stressful borders and institutional barriers to academically succeed in school and pursue college. Intentional programming for helping FCGS succeed does not only include influential professionals in K-12 but those in the higher education community through outreach, access, and support.

Through the development and implementation of intentional, college access programs in P-16, first-generation students will receive needed support to ultimately transition from high school to college, maintain a capacity to access academic and social support while in college, and sustain a college going identity (Saunders & Serena, 2004). Intentional programming for FCGS not only addresses academic concerns, but also the social, cultural, physical, and emotional needs of these students. Academic advising, counseling, mentoring, relationship building, and educational programming can positively impact student retention, graduation rates, and academic performance (Olive, 2008).

College 411: Get the Scoop Small Group Session Plans

Rational
Potential FCGS may need additional support to be academically, socially, and emotionally able to pursue their goal of obtaining a post-secondary education. A small group plan designed for first-generation students will not only impart information but instill hope and a sense of connectedness among group members that they are not alone with their fears and challenges (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). The goals of this small group plan is to enhance college aspirations and readiness, aid

with the college application process, and support transition to a post-secondary institution for first-generation college students. This group plan is designed for first-generation college students who are juniors in high school. It should be noted that this group curriculum has not been implemented and evaluated. However, research outcomes found in the literature related to the challenges of FCGS were used to design this small group plan. Group members are recruited for the group based on teacher and counselor recommendations and self-referral. Upon receipt of the referrals, the school counselor meets with potential group members to determine if they meet the criteria for the group. For individual students that meet the criteria of being a first-generation college student, a parental permission form is signed prior to the start of the group.

Session One: Taking Charge of MY Education
Group goals and objectives. Group members will understand the purpose and goals of the group and complete a pre-test (See Appendix A). Group members will identify concerns, challenges, and successes they have as potential first generation college students. S.M.A.R.T. goal will be described to guide their journey as potential first-generation college students. S.M.A.R.T. goals are goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (American School Counselor Association, 2012).

Materials needed. The following materials are needed for this session:
- Computer with internet connection
- Projector, screen, and speakers
- Folders for each group member
- Yarn
- Pre-test

Procedures. Group participants are welcomed to the group and the purpose/goals of the group will be discussed. The counselor discusses group rules, norms, and confidentiality. Members are be given a pre-test to assess their knowledge, skills, and attitudes as first-generation students planning to pursue post-secondary education. Next, an icebreaker activity will be presented. The counselor places a strip of masking tape on the floor that will serve as a line. The counselor reads statements and if group members agree with the statement read they will step forward to the line. The group processes this icebreaker activity and discusses what participants learned about other group members and their selves through this activity.

Additionally, group participants are introduced to the high and low 'check-in' that will start each group session. Group members are encouraged to share one 'high' (something positive) and one 'low' (something that is a struggle)

as a way to 'check-in' at the beginning of each group session. Folders are provided to each participant and they are asked to write their name and personal mantra on the folder. An example of a personal mantra might be: "I am smart, capable, and will achieve my goals". The folders are used for group resources and are kept by the counselor until the group concludes. The group members watch personal testimonies of first-generation college students that include concerns, challenges, goals, and successes of the students (See Appendix B). They next participate in a connected web activity. The facilitator provides one member a ball of yarn and instructs that member to share something that is a challenge or a success as a potential first-generation college student. Group members are instructed to ask for the yarn if they can relate to that statement and are instructed to then share their own challenge or success and then pass the yarn on to a member who can relate, ultimately creating a web of shared concerns and successes amongst the group. Finally, the members are introduced to goal setting using the S.M.A.R.T goals format and construct S.M.A.R.T goals to guide their journey as first-generation college students.

Closure. The group members are asked to journal and reflect on their first group experience. They share round robin style one of their S.M.A.R.T goals as a first-generation college student.

Session Two: Georgia College 411 and Career Exploration
Group goals and objectives. The group participants are introduced to Georgia College 411 and understand how the site can serve as a resource to them (Georgia College 411, 2009). Participants create a log in to Georgia College 411 and take the interest profiler, career cluster survey, and the career key's inventories located on Georgia College 411 (Georgia College 411, 2009). Participants will also gain an understanding of the education requirements, salary, and job requirements of careers of interest.

Materials needed. The following materials are needed for this session:
- Computer with internet access
- Georgia College 411 log in
- Career matching cards created by the school counselor

Procedures. Group participants are welcomed and asked to share their highs and lows for the week. Participants then create a login and portfolio for Georgia College 411. A tour of the site is included to better understand the free resources available on Georgia College 411. The resources include: discovering career interests, planning high school courses, tour local colleges, financial aid assistance, and preparing for the SAT or ACT. Next, members take the interest profiler to help identify their interests and match to careers. A basic skills survey is completed to help discover what basic skills are required for given careers. Group participants then process their results by sharing "popcorn style" (encourages member participation) a career of interest and the matching skills needed. Finally, group members participate in a career matching card game. Four different sets of cards, created by the school counselor prior to the session, are presented with the following listed on the cards: title of job, estimated salary, education required, and job responsibilities. The cards should contain a variety of careers to include: manual labor, trade school jobs, and careers that require a college education. Participants try to match the cards to further learn about various types of careers and the education required, job responsibilities, and salaries.

Closure. Group members are asked to journal about careers of interest. A 'check out' is followed by stating a career that they are interested in pursuing and the education needed for that field. The counselor checks for an understanding of realistic careers goals and an understanding of what is needed to achieve that career goal.

Session Three: A Tale of Three Transcripts
Group goals and objectives. Group participants will understand how to recognize key components of a transcript such as G.P.A. and course selections. Members will understand the criteria needed for the college application process for a variety of colleges and universities. Participants will be able to identify appropriate colleges to pursue based on their transcript.

Materials needed. The following materials are needed for this group session:
- Various transcripts with identifying information blacked out
- Various college informational brochures
- Personal transcripts of group members
- Computers with internet access
- Georgia College 411 log-ins

Procedures. Group participants are welcomed to the group and share their highs and lows for the week. A transcript is presented to identify key components such as G.P.A. and course content. Next, the counselor facilitates a discussion around what

types of colleges or universities that a student with a given transcript might want to apply to. The school counselor highlights college or university criteria for a variety of schools and passes around brochures and application information for various schools. Three different transcripts are reviewed and group members discuss possible college or university matches. To end with, the members log on to Georgia College 411, explore different colleges or universities, and save schools of interest to their portfolios. Members are provided a printed copy of their own individual transcript and instructed to identify colleges where they meet the admissions criteria.

Closure. The group members are asked to journal about colleges or universities of interest. To 'check out' members will share three colleges or universities of interest based on a match of transcript and entrance requirements.

Session Four: The SAT and ACT: Which Test is for you?
Group goals and objectives. Group participants will understand the difference between the SAT and ACT and identify which test is best for them and meets the admission criteria for schools of interest. Members will explore test preparation opportunities through Georgia College 411 for either the SAT or ACT.

Materials needed. The following materials are needed for this session:
- College Board employee/ volunteer to speak
- Computer with internet access
- Georgia College 411 log in

Procedures. Group participants are welcomed to the group and share their highs and lows for the week. There is a guest speaker from the College Board to provide an overview of the SAT and ACT. Next, the group members log on to Georgia College 411 to further explore the differences between the SAT and ACT and identify the admissions requirements for schools of interest. The counselor highlights the free test preparation offered through Georgia College 411 and the links to register for the SAT and ACT. Finally, participants are instructed to begin to explore test preparation for either the SAT or ACT on Georgia College 411.

Closure. Group members journal about possible test preparation methods for either the SAT or ACT. They then share which test they plan to take, when it will be offered, and the registration date.

Session Five: The College Application Process: Power of the Essay and Recommendations
Group goals and objectives. Group members will understand the college application process and the power of the essay and recommendations in the application process. Financial aid information and forms are also introduced during this session.

Materials needed. The following materials are needed for this session:
- Computer with internet access
- Georgia College 411 log in
- Sample recommendation letters written by the counselor in previous years with names removed
- Sample essays written by previous students with names and specifics removed

Procedures. Group participants are welcomed to the group and share their highs and lows for the week. The school counselor facilitates a discussion about the college application process. Next, the counselor highlights the importance of the essay and recommendations in the application process. Sample recommendation letters and essays are reviewed and members are provided examples to place in their folder for reference. Group members then log on to Georgia College 411 and practice completing a college application. A graphic organizer is discussed to help represent and categorize their ideas of possible points to include in the essay. Examples of graphic organizers include: Venn diagrams, story web, and flow charts. A discussion of who to ask for letters of recommendations and why this should be a thoughtful process is included. Finally, the counselor talks about financial aid and shows the members where they can access financial aid forms on Georgia College 411. If possible, the school counselor invites a college financial aid officer to co-facilitate this group session. The counselor points out on the website how to access information about the HOPE scholarship and FAFSA information. Group members also complete the financial aid 101 form and financial aid calculator on Georgia College 411 (Georgia College 411, 2009). A timeline is developed to guide the student through the college application process and will include important due dates related to financial aid.

Closure. Group members journal about possible essay topics. Members then share round robin style the people they plan to ask to write them letters of recommendation. They also reflect on a few of the best college options for them based on financial needs.

Session Six: College Life: Are You Ready?
Group goals and objectives. The group members will understand what it means to be a college student. They will understand academic, social, and personal expectations for post-secondary education, participate in a closure activity, and complete a post-test.

Materials needed. The following materials are needed for this group:
- Panel of people to include: college students who were first in their family to attend, school counselor, college counselor, parent of a first-generation college student, and college professor
- Paper plates
- Markers
- Post-test

Procedures. Group participants are welcomed and encouraged to share their highs and lows for the week. Parents and family members of the group are invited to attend this session to hear the panel. The school counselor utilizes the school website and/or newsletter to recruit volunteers to participate as a panel member. Panel members introduce themselves to the group. The group members have a chance to ask questions to members of the panel. Each panel member shares from their perspective the academic, social, and personal expectations for college students. After the large group discussion, each panel member takes a small group of students and parents to answer more individualized questions. Next, the panel members and parents are dismissed from the group and members participate in 'pass the plate' closing activity. Each group member is given a paper plate and asked to write their name in the center of the plate. They are instructed to pass their plate to the right where the receiving group member will write a message on the plate related to success in college. The plates are passed through the group so that each member writes a message on all members' plate. Finally, the group members are asked to take a post-test (See Appendix C). The plates and their folder with resources are sent home.

Closure. The group members share "popcorn style" one new fact about college expectations that they learned from the panel during the session.

Evaluation of the Small Group Plan
The school counselor should administer a pre-test, developed by the authors, (See Appendix A) based on a Likert scale during the first session to assess the group member's attitude, knowledge, skills, and beliefs about college as a first generation college student. The same test (See Appendix C), developed by the authors, is administered during the last group session. Comparing the pre and post test will help determine the effectiveness of the group and if there was an increase in the group member's attitudes, knowledge, skills and beliefs about college as a first generation college student. An informal check-in at the conclusion of each group session is included to assess if the content for the group was understood and applicable to the group members. Monthly check-ins with the group members will also be completed. The school counselor should also checks to see if the group members are following their timeline that they created to assist them with the college application process.

Ongoing Support for Group Members
The school counselor should offer ongoing support to group members in a variety of ways. First, individual check-ins should be arranged with members based on the college application timeline that was created during session five. Next, workshops should be held during the student's senior year on relevant topics related to the college application process and overcoming barriers facing first-generation college students and members will be specifically reminded to attend these. Additionally, pertinent information should be posted on the school's counseling website. Classroom guidance lessons should be presented to all students on quarterly basis during their junior and senior year related to post-secondary education options, planning, and resources. Finally, the school counselor should offer parent workshops on the college application and financial aid process for all students. These workshops should be videotaped and available to students to take home on CD. The counselor will also be available to meet with group members on an individual basis as needed.

Summary

Orbes (2008) noted that first-generation college students are significantly less likely to attend college due to poor academic preparation, lack of support and knowledge in regards to the academic, social, and cultural norms of academia. The small group plan presented offers support to first-generation college students and is designed to enhance college aspirations and readiness, aid with the college application process, and support transition to a post-secondary institution. Marginalized groups such as first-generation college students and individuals from a lower socioeconomic status have experienced dramatically lower access to higher education as colleges have become more expensive and federal grant programs have diminished (Orbes; Gandara, Horn, & Orfield, 2005; St. John, Paulsen & Cartern, 2005). Therefore, an important component of this group intervention is an understanding of college costs and access to financial aid information and applications. Finally, Stanton-Salazar (1997) emphasized that connections with caring adults within the school environment may lead first-generation college students to manage stressful borders and institutional barriers to academically succeed in school and pursue a post-secondary education. Through participation in this small group intervention, group members will build connections with the school counselor, college counselors, and other first generation college students.

There are numerous challenges facing first-generation college students including lack of parental support, socioeconomic challenges, and family expectations. Such challenges make college access and equity difficult for many first-generation college students. Counselors must advocate and offer support to first-generation college students to ensure that they have equal opportunity, access, and resources available to pursue a post-secondary education. Interventions, programming, and support must be offered across P-16 to first-generation college students and their families in order to optimize the pursuit of post-secondary education for this group of students.

> Counselors must advocate and offer support to first-generation college students to ensure that they have equal opportunity, access, and resources available to pursue a post-secondary education. Interventions, programming, and support must be offered across P-16 to first-generation college students and their families in order to optimize the pursuit of post-secondary education for this group of students.

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Appendix A

College 411: Get the Scoop Pre-Test

Please answer the following questions by circling the statement that best represents your answer.

1. I understand the obstacles I could face as someone who may be the first in my family to attend college.

[Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

2. I know what my goals are for after high school.

[Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

3. I understand how to set and achieve realistic goals for myself.

[Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

4. I know what career(s) I am interested in pursuing after high school.

[Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

5. I understand what type of education and skills I need to have to pursue my career(s) of interest.

[Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

6. I understand how to read and interpret a high school transcript.

[Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

7. I have an understanding of the college admissions requirements for colleges that I am interested in.

[Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

8. I know what colleges I am interested in applying to.

[Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

9. I am familiar with SAT and ACT.

[Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

10. I know if I plan to take the SAT or the ACT.

[Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

11. I understand the financial aid application process.

[Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

12. I understand the academic and social responsibilities of a college student.

[Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

Pre-Test Developed by Land & Daigle

Appendix B

Web Links to Personal Testimonies of First-Generation College Students for suggested use during Group Session One

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyJRiCWy7xo

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2MQu5SsQZQ&list=PL472EC4C32DFDF25E

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOic7MNyhDc

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PuQrDb_ji7E

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-bEb7mUwpI

Appendix C

College 411: Get the Scoop Post-Test

Please answer the following questions by circling the statement that best represents your answer.

1. I understand obstacles I could face as someone who may be the first in my family to attend college.

   [Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

2. I know what my goals are for after high school.

   [Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

3. I understand how to set and achieve goals for myself.

   [Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

4. I know what career(s) I am interested in pursuing after high school.

   [Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

5. I understand what type of education and skills I need to have to pursue my career(s) of interest.

   [Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

6. I understand how to read and interpret a high school transcript.

   [Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

7. I have an understanding of the college admissions requirements for colleges that I am interested in.

   [Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

8. I know what colleges I am interested in applying to.

   [Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

9. I am familiar with SAT and ACT.

   [Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

10. I know if I plan to take the SAT or the ACT.

   [Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

11. I understand the financial aid application process.

   [Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

12. I understand the academic and social responsibilities of a college student.

   [Strongly Agree]   [Agree]   [Undecided]   [Disagree]   [Strongly Disagree]

Please list three things that you learned from participation in this group:

_____

_____

_____

I wish the school counselor would have talked more about:

_____

_____

_____

My plans for after high school are:

_____

_____

_____

Post-Test Developed by Land & Daigle

Jump to Article:

Using Dance Therapy with High School Students: A Strategy for School Counselors

Julia S. Chibbaro, Charleta Reshae Holland, University of West Georgia

High school is a time when many adolescents struggle with social, emotional, and physical issues (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). inth through twelfth grades are critical years of any teenager's life, and can also be challenging times for them to openly express their feelings. Research indicates that 12-30% of students in the United States experience at least moderate behavioral, social, or emotional problems (Juvenon, Le, Kaganoff, Augustine, & Louay, 2004). Schools are microcosms of society and are reflective of societal issues. Problems and issues that children and adolescents struggle with often become the school's problems and issues. As such, schools assume responsibility and treatment to help students become more socially and emotionally healthy (Baker & Gerler, 2004). According to the ethical standards of American School Counseling Association (ASCA), professional school counselors are concerned with the total needs of students – educational, academic, career, personal, and social (2010).

Professional school counselors are challenged to meet the needs of all students and need a variety of interventions enabling them to meet those needs (Cormier & Hackney, 1999). The use of creative strategies such as play, art, and music enhance the counseling relationship by offering students various methods of communication (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012). Dance and movement therapy allows adolescents to express themselves in a behavioral form that is acceptable and active. It is often easier for adolescents to express themselves physically than verbally, especially when communicating conflict and/or emotional turmoil (Gladding, 2006).

Abstract

Professional school counselors are challenged to meet the needs of all students and need a variety of interventions enabling them to meet those needs. High school is a time when many adolescents struggle with social, emotional, and physical issues (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). Ninth through twelfth grades are critical years of any teenager's life, and can also be challenging times for them to openly express their feelings. Dance and movement therapy allows adolescents to express themselves in a behavioral form that is acceptable and active. It is often easier for adolescents to express themselves physically than verbally, especially when communicating conflict and/or emotional turmoil (Gladding, 2006).

Dance/Movement Therapy

Dance therapy, sometimes referred to as dance and movement therapy, can be used to connect one's body, mind, and soul together simultaneously. According to the American Dance Therapy Association (2009), "dance/movement therapy is defined as the psychotherapeutic use of movement to further the emotional, cognitive, physical and social integration of the individual." Each movement in some way expresses an emotion that the individual may currently be experiencing, or has experienced in the past.

Dance therapy has been shown to help those suffering from developmental, physical, medical, social, and psychological maladies (Strassel, Cherkin, Steuten, Sherman, &Vrijhoef, 2011). The use of dance therapy has also been effective in reducing test anxiety in college students. (Erwin-Grabner, Goodill, Hill, & Nelda, 1999). Dance has also been shown to decrease depression and increase vitality and positive affect in patients diagnosed with depression (Koch, Molinghaus, & Fuchs, 2007). With dance/movement therapy, individual and/or group sessions are allowed, and the therapist or instructor is only present to observe the session.

Panagiotopoulou (2011) also points out that with dance/movement therapy, one must "take into consideration the participant's dance identity, which is described as the special characteristics of each dance, namely structure and style, steeped in each participant's cultural identity" (p. 94). Through using the dance/movement therapeutic approach, participants are able to become involved more, become empowered (internally and externally), and expand his or her role in life.

Incorporating Dance/Movement Therapy in High School

Dance and movement therapy offers adolescents the opportunity to express themselves in a behavioral form that is an acceptable and active. The opportunity to communicate conflict and emotional turmoil physically rather than verbally is beneficial and developmentally appropriate for high school students (Gladding, 2006). Adolescents who are struggling with feelings of anger and confusion can express themselves in a safe and dynamic form that is more often than not accompanied by music.

Physical growth during the high school years is significant. High school students are very conscious of their physical size and are entering into sexual maturity (Rowley & Hart, 1998). Body size and being in shape physically begins to be a concern to high school aged students. Dance and movement therapy helps adolescents explore the radical changes their physical bodies are going through while also exploring feelings of depersonalization that may occur during this growth process (Emunah, 1990).

One way to incorporate Dance and Movement Therapy into a high school setting would be to bring this technique into the school system as an elective course offered to students. Either a drama or performing arts course would allow the school counselor to come into class and conduct small group counseling sessions. These small group sessions would be voluntary and only for those students who are interested. A session may consist of yoga dancing to clear the mind, expressions

Dance and movement therapy can be used in the high school setting to help students become more aware of their physical bodies, express themselves physically, and integrate their emotional selves into their physical selves. Through the use of dance and movement, students are freed to talk about their situations and to become actively involved in the therapeutic process.

with flags, or even group dancing with a large parachute or other creative objects.

Dance/movement technique could also be used in individual sessions with students. For some students, small groups may limit what the student wishes to openly address with the counselor. Individual sessions are conducted the same as group sessions. An individual session allows the student and school counselor to form a closer therapeutic relationship, which in turn could result in a greater benefit to the student.

School counselors could encourage physical education teachers to incorporate some dance/ movement therapy techniques in their physical education classes. Some high schools offer personal wellness classes and dance/movement therapy would fit into such a curriculum. School counselors may have to appeal to administrators for such additions to curriculum.

Because dance/movement therapy has been shown to reduce test anxiety in college students (Erwin0Grabner, Goodill, Hill, & Nelda, 1999), it is possible the same would hold true for high school students. Prior to standardized testing, end of course exams, or other major high school exams, school counselors could teach dance/movement therapy techniques to testing coordinators, administrators, monitors, and teachers who would employ thes techniques on the testing dates.

Finally, school counselors could also teach various dance and movement therapy techniques' to faculty and administrators. Since dance therapy has been shown to increase vitality (Koch, Molinghaus, & Fuchs, 2007), teachers and administrators who find themselves overwhelmed and tired may benefit from the use of dance therapy techniques. Students would also benefit from faculty and administrators' increased levels of energy.

Limitations

Although using dance and movement therapy in a high school setting has its benefits of allowing students an alternative way of expressing their feelings, there may also be some limitatioons faced with this technique as well. Unlike other forms of play therapy (sand trays, puppetry, dollhouse, and drawing), dance therapy requires an unoccupied room or a large opened space. This could be an obstacle for the school counselor and students if every room in the current school is occupied. If an administrator does not approve a room for the school counselor, this could possibly be problematic.

Another limitation as it relates to dance therapy could be the struggle with students opening up to this different and possibly unfamiliar style of therapy. Some students may find it a challenge to relate to dance therapy, being that this is a non-traditional therapeutic technique. This technique may be difficult for students to relate to with physical disabilities. Dance and movement therapy requires one to express themselves physically and emotionally through body movement, physical disabilities may hinder a student's performance within the session.

In group sessions, confidentiality may be a problem in dance therapy. Students may begin expressing themselves through dance and verbally explain what certain moves mean to them, or what they may currently or in the past have experienced. Understanding what is discussed or presented in the group could possibly be leaked out of the room may be a limitation. Knowing that information is not confidential within a group could possibly cause students to limit their disclosure in sessions.

Conclusion

Dance and movement therapy can be used in the high school setting to help students become more aware of their physical bodies, express themselves physically, and integrate their emotional selves into their physical selves. Through the use of dance and movement, students are freed to talk about their situations and to become actively involved in the therapeutic process. In addition, dance and movement may be paired with other creative arts such as drama, drawing, and music to promote positive and healthy growth and change for adolescents.

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Advocating for the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Act: The Role of Professional Counselors

Sandra I. Sosa, Sarah Peek, Sharien Muhammad, Ty Gonder, Janice Cook, Jessica Bolton, and Mark S. Parrish, University of West Georgia

Introduction

"There is a lot that happens around the world we cannot control. We cannot stop earthquakes, we cannot prevent droughts, and we cannot prevent all conflict, but when we know where the hungry, the homeless and the sick exist, then we can help". This quote by Jan Schakowsky (Quin, 2012), the U.S. Representative for Illinois's 9th congressional district, speaks about an issue that has become prevalent in today's society. Mrs. Schakowsky is correct; we cannot prevent the natural disasters that affect our country, our cities, and our towns. In those situations we are forced to be reactive and assist when and where disaster strikes. However, in the case of the homeless, hungry, and sick, we, as a civilized society must take great effort to alleviate the suffering. We must all be proactive in our personal and professional lives to bring relief to the situation.

In the education arena, the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Act (MCKV) was developed to eliminate the discrimination of homeless students by protecting their rights and ensuring they receive the same quality education as all other students.

The definition of "homeless student" has garnered much debate through the years. Is the student homeless if they appear well dressed and attends school on a regular basis? What about if the student chose to leave home or was "kicked out"? Is the student homeless if they live with another family? A variety of factors must be considered when identifying homeless students and providing appropriate services. Data

Abstract
Homeless youth in the United States is rapidly increasing with more children living in unstable or temporary environments. They may encounter difficulties meeting enrollment requirements, have poor attendance, low academic performance, and experience behavioral and emotional issues. The reauthorization of McKinney-Vento Act (MCKV) in 2002 was created to overcome these obstacles. However, many school districts are not implementing these regulations and very little research exists on the effectiveness of MCKV, which this paper will explore.

is very scarce regarding how effective MCKV is in truly aiding homeless students. An extensive review of the literature was conducted with very little true data being presented.

This paper advocates for MCKV and other supportive services to strengthen its intention to ensure academic success of homeless children despite their extenuating circumstances. It will discuss the role of educators, specifically professional counselors, in ensuring homeless students have equal and supportive access to a successful education. Finally, the paper will call for more empirical studies to aid in the evaluation of MCKV's implementation and effect on academic achievement of students identified as homeless.

Literature Review

Several authors cited increases in homelessness throughout the United States, with children and youth homelessness on the rise (Cunningham, Harwood, & Hall, 2010; Duffield, 2001; Hendricks & Barkley, 2012; Gargiulo, 2006; Grothaus, Lorelle, Anderson, & Knight, 2011; Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; James & Lopez, 2003; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Petersburg, 2008). Homelessness is caused primarily by a lack of affordable housing and low family incomes (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). Cunningham et al. (2010) further revealed low-income families are more prone to residential instability (e.g., frequently moving), which is associated with poor academic outcomes among children. When looking at data from the National KIDS COUNT Program, 23% of children experienced poverty in the United States in 2011 In Georgia, 26% of children experienced poverty, slightly above the national average. Five years ago only 18% of children experienced poverty in the United States, and 20% in Georgia (National KIDS COUNT Program, 2006). Thus revealing a 5% increase in national poverty and 6% increase in state poverty within a 5 year span; this data relates to what many authors have cited, an increase in poverty and homelessness among children is visibly noted and continues to rise.

The McKinney-Vento Homelessness Act was created and reauthorized in response to residential instability, in order to increase academic performance by assisting with transportation and school enrollment (Cunningham et al., 2010; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; James & Lopez, 2003). According to this Act, homelessness is defined by "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (Department of Education, 2002). Once identified as homelessness, residency and documentation requirements are waived, in order to ensure immediate school enrollment; homeless students have access to all programs and services as their non-homeless peers; and students may continue to attend their school of origin, or school of choice, as transportation is provided. With the reauthorization of MCKV, policymakers and advocates hoped to see increases in academic performance and outcome by assisting homeless families with transportation, thus creating stability in the school environment.

When reviewing the literature for academic outcomes based on MCKV assistance, very little is found. However, research on how MCKV aided in higher attendance rates based on school mobility/transportation assistance is found (Cunningham et al., 2010; James & Lopez, 2003; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). These studies revealed an increase in school attendance based on transportation assistance. Other articles on MCKV highlight the severe lack of the identification of homeless students in order to receive such aid (Duffield, 2001; Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; James & Lopez, 2003; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Petersburg, 2008); yet none was found on how to better identify and track homeless students. Instead, articles providing recommendations for homeless liaisons (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006; James & Lopez, 2003; Petersburg, 2008), for educators and community members (Gargiulo, 2006; Grothaus et al., 2011; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Knowlton, 2006) is available on how to better assist homeless families.

On the other hand, an evaluation directed by the Planning and Evaluation Services of the United States Department of Education (U.S. DOE, 2002) revealed gradual, consistent progress from most states after surveying MCKV state coordinators and conducting site visits to local school districts. These states made changes and adjustments to their policies and procedures addressing some of the obstacles impeding on the equal educational rights of homeless children. The study also found more efforts are necessary and significant barriers to education of homeless children still exist. These barriers include costs relating to transportation of homeless children to and from their schools of origin, enrollment obstacles due to lack of proper verification of guardianship, school and immunization records, and a continued lack of understanding from school personnel in reference to the educational needs of homeless children (Cunningham et al., 2010). The above mentioned evaluation by the U.S. DOE points out homeless students also face continued challenges accessing federal and state education programs such as gifted and talented, Head Start, special education, and bilingual/ESL (U.S. DOE, 2002).

This paper advocates for MCKV and other supportive services to strengthen its intention to ensure academic success of homeless children despite their extenuating circumstances. It will discuss the role of educators, specifically professional counselors, in ensuring homeless students have equal and supportive access to a successful education.

One of the primary goals of MCKV is to improve academic achievement by removing barriers to equal educational opportunities for homeless students. Prior to the reauthorization of MCKV in 2002, data in the area of academic performance of homeless children was lacking due to states and districts not collecting and providing disaggregated student achievement data of homeless students. According to findings of the U.S. DOE (2002), the lack of reporting was due to states not identifying homeless students in their database systems, therefore, not being able to measure their performance and track their progress over time.

In 2002, these data reporting issues improved greatly with the reauthorization of MCKV. States are now required to submit "verifiable" and "school-based" data on homeless children and include them in local and state accountability systems (U.S. DOE, 2006). This strict federal data collection and reporting requirement applies to all states beginning with the 2006-2007 school year and allows for a more accurate picture of the state of homeless education. Data now includes the number of homeless students targeted under MCKV, the specific types of services provided by subgrantees, any obstacles to education, and student achievement reports in reading and mathematics. In addition to the required data collection and reporting of homeless education, the reauthorization legislation mandates all school districts designate a local liaison, traditionally the school social worker, to oversee the implementation of the Act, ensure enrollment of homeless students, and

to raise awareness of issues relating to homelessness and homeless education (U.S. DOE, 2006).

According to a report by the National Center for Homeless Education (2012) for the school year 2010-11, 52% of homeless students enrolled in grades 3-5 who took the state reading test, met or exceeded proficiency standards in reading. Forty-nine percent of homeless students in high school who took the state reading test met or exceeded the proficiency standards in reading. In mathematics 51% of students in grades 3-5 and 44% of high school students who took the state mathematics test met or exceeded proficiency standards. This data represents big increases from prior years, but it also represents the continued need to address academic achievement of homeless students.

The McKinney-Vento Act has been around for over two decades. In order to find accurate evidence of increased academic performance two things must occur: (1) better identification and tracking of homeless children and youth, and (2) studies of academic performance and outcomes for students receiving MCKV aid. As James and Lopez (2003) stated, "this lack of data presents major obstacles for researchers attempting to determine the extent to which districts are carrying out the law and the extent to which the provision impacts student performance" (p. 138).

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Advocating for the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Act: The Role of Professional Counselors

Many researchers and advocates focused their studies on the prevalence of homelessness in the American population and its negative consequences on individuals and families. Burt and Aron (2000) reported 3.5 million people will experience homelessness annually. Consistent to this theory, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (2012) revealed more than 3 million people reported as homeless each year. While this number may appear to be low given the total population of the United States, it is important to acknowledge homelessness may be underreported in general as many individuals often counted live in shelters, receive government assistance or participate in the national census. However, many individuals do not meet the aforementioned criteria. For example, a homeless individual may be homeless temporarily, may not apply for services, or may not be living in a shelter but rather living with friends, family or on the street.

According to recent research, the rate of homelessness increased since the 1980s. In the past, the majority of the homelessness was considered to be men or people living in urban cities. However, current statistics show an increase in children, women, and families becoming homeless. In 2012, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty revealed 1.3 million children reported as homeless and one third of the homeless population consisted of families. Homelessness seems to be a growing epidemic with implications for cost of living, healthcare and lack of affordable housing. In relation, severe poverty and lack of affordable housing are the two main contributors to homelessness (Duffield, Heybach, & Julianelle, 2009). Possible contributors are increasing housing costs, lower or constant wages, and unemployment. Increasing housing costs are impacted by supply and demand, where prices increase based on greater demands for housing than supply available.

Homelessness impacts children at high rates; out of 41% of those living in extreme poverty, 36% are homeless families (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2000). With more children reported as homeless and not succeeding in schools, Congress created the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in 1987 to help homeless students achieve academically in schools (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). The Act was amended and renamed the McKinney-Vento Act (MCKV) in 2002 to expand the definition of homelessness and to ensure access to education and other supportive services is given to homeless children and youth. The amended reauthorization of MCKV focuses on identifying performance barriers to homeless students' education and outlines the services or rights educators are obligated to provide to this population (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006).

In order to determine who qualifies for services under MCKV, Congress defined homeless children and youth to include students who do not have a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (Department of Education [DOE], 2004).

According to Title VII-B of MCKV (DOE, 2004), the definition of homelessness expands to include children living in the following conditions:

a) sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
b) living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
c) living in emergency or transitional shelters;
d) abandoned hospitals;
e) or awaiting foster care placements;
f) children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
g) or children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
h) and migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

While MCKV focuses on the needs of the homeless population in general, Title VII-B focuses solely on the education of children and youth. It waives enrollment requirements to ensure immediate access to education and other supportive services for homeless students. It also requires state educational agencies (SEAs) provide homeless children and youth with the same education provided to non-homeless children and youth. This education must be free, appropriate and adequate, so homeless children and youth are able to meet State achievement standards. Homeless children and youth are not to be segregated from the mainstream school environment; services should be based on their needs, not their residential status. More specifically, Title VII-B expresses the following requirements:

(a) homeless students may not be segregated from other students in the school population by being sent to another school or placed in a separate program within the school due to them being homeless;
(b) transportation must be provided to homeless students to and from their school of origin as requested by the parent or guardian;
(c) homeless children and youth should be enrolled in school immediately pending resolution of any dispute the guardian may have with the school;
(d) local education agencies (LEAs) must make school placements for children based on the best interest of the child and must attempt to keep children in their school of origin unless this is against the wishes of the guardian;
(e) all school districts or LEAs are required to have a local liaison for homeless children and youth even if they do not receive a sub-grant from MCKV;
(f) any state receiving allocations greater than the state minimum allotment must competitively sub-grant to LEAs at least 75% of its allocation.

A state that receives the minimum state allotment must competitively sub-grant to LEAs at least 50% of its allocation.

Program Implementation

McKinney-Vento Homelessness Act was created to eliminate discrimination of homeless students by protecting their rights and ensuring they receive the same quality education as all other students. To achieve successful implementation, schools must follow certain protocols to identify such students in order to provide needed services to the students and their families, and to maximize grant effectiveness. Grant requirements ask each state to have an Office of State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth that oversees grant implementation, while "providing technical assistance, resources, coordination, data collection and overseeing compliance for all local educational agencies" (Duffield et al., 2009). The state office must also guarantee all school districts, within the state, are implementing MCKV effectively (Duffield, 2001). In addition to the state office, local educational agencies (LEAs) or school districts must have a homeless liaison. The main responsibility of the liaison is to ensure homeless students are identified, enrolled, and attending school (Duffield et al., 2009). The district liaison should be well educated on the provisions of the Act, the definition of homelessness under the Act, and possible indicators of homelessness. This information should be disseminated through trainings to all schools within the district ensuring administrators, counselors, office staff and teachers have all been educated. Increasing awareness of MCKV will strengthen its implementation and increase accurate identification of homeless students.

Determining whether a student is living in a homeless situation can be difficult. Duffield et al., (2009) encourages educators to look for the following signs:

(a) changes in a student's behavior and appearance, such as wearing the same outfit several days consecutively or appearing unclean;
(b) the student appears hungry and no longer brings a snack or lunch, in addition to having little or no lunch money even after parent(s) has been notified;
(c) increased tiredness beginning to affect academics and/or behavior;
(d) noticeable changes in attendance or tardiness in school.

These examples may all be signs of possible changes in a student's living situation. If one of these indicators is

> Overall, MCKV has been developed as a system of care to support homeless students and their families by providing resources and knowledge of community agencies, which will hopefully encourage and promote stability.

identified, the district liaison or assistant to the liaison, such as a school social worker, need to be notified of the concern(s) immediately. This liaison may verify whether or not the student qualifies as homeless based on the following provisions of MCKV:

(a) sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up);

(b) living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;

(c) living in emergency or transitional shelters;

(d) abandoned in hospitals;

(e) awaiting foster care placement;

(f) a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

(g) living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(h) migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above (McKinney-Vento Act [MCKV], 2002).

These examples of living conditions qualify as homelessness and would allow the opportunity for identified homeless students to receive certain services under this Act.

Liaisons rely heavily upon the help of school staff in identifying possible homeless students, although they must also educate the community to maximize the effectiveness of this Act. Liaisons must post information about MCKV and the U.S. DOE's definition of homelessness in schools and throughout community agencies. Such agencies include shelters, soup kitchens, housing departments, and any other community providers that may help in the identification of these students (Moore, 2005). With the help of local school systems and the community, the liaison is able to qualify students and provide services such as

(a) immediate enrollment in school, even if the family cannot provide all required enrollment documentation;

(b) continued school enrollment when disputes arise regarding school selection or enrollment until the dispute process is complete; and

(c) access to qualified educational services, such as gifted programs, special education, English language learners, vocational education, Title I, and school nutrition programs (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003).

Additional services include transportation to the student's school of origin, procurement of enrollment documentation such as a birth certificate, social security card, or immunization records, clothing and food vouchers, school supplies, medical assistance, tutoring, community resource information, and ongoing education of the grant and its provisions to all involved, especially the families of the homeless students (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). All of these tasks seem impossible for only one MCKV liaison to perform; therefore, many school districts involve their school social workers in the process of assisting the liaison. Such responsibilities of the school social worker may include persistent outreach and support of homeless families, with the goal of helping them achieve housing for the betterment of their family and children's educational stability.

The key to the most successful implementation of MCKV includes education of its provisions and a sufficient staff to carry out all requirements to meet the needs of the homeless student population. Israel, Toro, and Jozefowicz-Simbeni (2003) suggested developing clear and systematic plans to identify homeless students in order to provide support for them and their families. As stated earlier, continued education of MCKV to all school personnel, providing updated information and modifications of the Act, is necessary to prolong effective implementation. Also reaching out to community agencies for support is very beneficial to best meet the needs of homeless students and their families. Overall, MCKV has been developed as a system of care to support homeless students and their families by providing resources and knowledge of community agencies, which will hopefully encourage and promote stability.

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations
A review of the literature has shown a need for more empirical data on the effect MCKV has on academic achievement and the influence professional counselors have on its effectiveness. We know MCKV has served to increase attendance, provide basic school supplies and appropriate school clothing for students identified as homeless (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012). Additionally, since the U.S. DOE's 2006 legislation mandating the identification and data collection of our homeless population, there has been a significant increase in academic achievement for homeless students. This paper calls for professional counselors to evaluate related data to determine MCKV's influence on academic achievement.

In addition, the efforts of MCKV would be enhanced by the implementation of a crisis intervention protocol in the school enrollment process, which extends beyond identification and classification to the assurance of the dissemination of needed services to improve academic success. This crisis intervention protocol would include an academic needs assessment and guidance toward additional supportive services beyond those provided by MCKV, in order to guarantee access to the same equal educational opportunities as those not qualifying as homeless. The need for a crisis intervention approach is evidenced by the rising prevalence of homelessness due to catastrophic events including natural disasters Hurricane Katrina, Rita and Sandy and a myriad of compounding effects influencing academic progress. The recent economic crisis resulting in increased exposure to trauma, stressed induced mental illness, untreated preexisting mental and physical illnesses (Rosen, Mattthieu & Norris, 2009; Pospichel, 2013), learning disabilities and delayed development due to frequent interruptions in education and adjustments to learning new environments, and available resources are among the compounding effects influencing academic progress (Moore & McArthur, 2011).

The crisis intervention protocol would ensure families identified as homeless are made aware of the available resources and means of accessibility. Care would be given to allow for smoother transitions into classes, extracurricular activities, tutoring, mentoring, etc. regardless of time of enrollment. Homeless students tend to experience higher levels of stressful incidences when compared to their residentially stable peers, therefore in need of stress reduction and coping interventions. They tend to have lower scholastic abilities due to a number of factors from learning disabilities, emotional dysfunctions, lack of stability, and limited access to supportive educational environments. Professional counselors utilizing a crisis intervention model, inclusive of partnerships with other stakeholders, may immediately recognize and service the needs of students identified as homeless with referrals to appropriate resources. Students identified in need of tutoring, therapeutic counseling for existing mental illness or current trauma related stressors, would be appropriately referred. These students would be afforded the opportunity to join extracurricular activities and peer groups to help foster a sense of connectedness (Moore & McArthur, 2011).

Also, professional counselors would have to collaborate with various personnel in a variety areas. Professional counselors would work closely with social workers and parent liaisons to assist parents with alternatives to frequent relocations and transfers from school to school by encouraging a search for within district housing,

educating on the effects of frequent mid-school year relocations. Ideally, parents would be encouraged to obtain stability for the duration of their students' education. Professional counselors would create staff development lessons raising awareness to other educators and the community about the needs of the homeless children and youth, encouraging sensitivity, emphasizing the importance of providing a structured environment and the ability to have flexible expectations meeting the student where they are to bring them to standard (Knowlton, 2006). With the implementation of a crisis intervention protocol aiming to assist MCKV with eliminating obstructions to learning by connecting families identified as homeless to available resources, and the evaluation of the effectiveness MCKV has on academic achievement, this study calls for the professional counselor's role in the process in the identification of best practices.

Conclusion

Homelessness is a significant problem which can impede student success. In this paper we reviewed the current literature on homeless students and discovered a lack of empirical data regarding the implementation of MCKV. We demonstrated the importance of informing all educators, community members, and stakeholders on the key concepts and services available through MCKV. Many students that can benefit from MCKV services are under-identified and, therefore, may lack free and appropriate education which is a right to all students. We encourage all educators and concerned individuals to become proactive, especially professional counselors, in identifying students in need and strive to provide them the necessary services.

> The only difference between those who threw in the towel and quit and those who used their energy to rebuild and kept it going is found in the word "HOPE".
>
> ~ Author John Maxwell

Conclusion

Homelessness is a significant problem which can impede student success. We encourage all educators and concerned individuals to become proactive, especially professional counselors, in identifying students in need and strive to provide them the necessary services.

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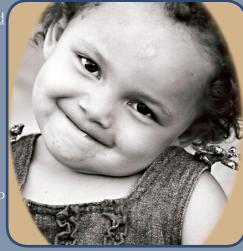
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An Examination of New Counselor Mentor Programs

Erin Bass, Ed.S., Lauren Gardner, MA, Chika Onwukaeme, M.Ed., Dawn Revere, Ed.S., Denise Shepherd, MS, LPC, Mark S. Parrish, Ph.D., LPC, University of West Georgia

Introduction
Mentoring is defined as "the process of one person supporting, teaching, leading and serving as a model for another person" (Buell, 2004, p. 56, as cited in Armstrong, Balkin, Long, & Caldwell, 2006, para. 2). This type of guidance is particularly important for beginning school counselors. In some settings, a counselor may begin his/her career without the presence of other counselors in the work place (Armstrong et al., 2006).

These situations may become overwhelming as counselors must adapt to the various aspects of school counseling to be addressed such as classroom guidance, parent communication, teacher collaboration, and meeting administrative expectations (Armstrong et al., 2006). These descriptors are most ideally modeled by a person who has experience in the profession with the willingness and availability to answer questions and address concerns. This manuscript examines the structure of four new counselor mentor programs.

Literature Review
Available literature regarding new counselor mentor programs is limited. Nonetheless, there are similarities throughout the research. In particular, a significant need for programs that provide support for beginning counselors is consistently addressed (Duncan, Svendsen, Bakkedahl, & Sitzman, 2009; Loveless, 2010; Armstrong, et al, 2006). Mentors can be instrumental in assisting new counselors

Abstract
An analysis of current new counselor mentor programs reveals the need for such programs, but information regarding established programs is limited. A review of the literature addresses program characteristics and data obtained from existing mentor program participants. An overview of four programs explaining the framework outlined for mentoring new counselors is provided. Each counselor mentor program uses various strategies to implement their framework. This analysis highlights the benefits of participation in new counselor mentor programs.

with becoming acclimated to the culture of an unfamiliar environment as well as helping them become familiar with role expectations (Loveless, 2010).

Loveless (2010) conducted a qualitative study with new elementary school counselors that examined perceptions of their experiences in a mentoring and induction program. Three mentors and eleven new counselors, either first year or new to the district, were selected for the study aimed to determine program effectiveness. The program participants attended mentor led monthly meetings that covered various topics related to the profession, and mentors were available to address the individual needs of new counselors as they arose (Loveless, 2010).

> Learning strategies from experienced mentors improved classroom management and decreased lesson preparation time for some mentees.

In this study, data was collected through the use of interviews, observations, and document review. The program studied by Loveless (2010), was found to be helpful to mentees "through sharing of resources, demonstrations, consultation, exploration of materials, and mentor support" (p. 28). Classroom guidance is another area that mentees found to be positively influenced by program participation. Learning strategies from experienced mentors improved classroom management and decreased lesson preparation time for some mentees. Other benefits included

"networking opportunities with other new counselors, advice from mentors, case consultation, peer support, and motivation" (Loveless, 2010, p. 30). Although overall positive perceptions of the program were obtained from the data, there were inconsistencies among responses to interview questions about the peer consultation component.

Participants were also asked to share their perceptions of a highly effective program and program areas in need of improvement. Mentees were relatively pleased with their experiences in the mentoring and induction program. Their ideal program would be structured, with access to resources and consist of support from mentors. While their program entailed these descriptors, some suggestions included extending the program to two years, separating mentees who were new to the district from those new to the profession, and increasing mentor participation (Loveless, 2010).

Duncan et al. (2009) described a different type of mentoring program which was implemented at the University of South Dakota for counseling students as opposed to those who were new to counseling positions. It was designed to pair "school counselors-in-training with professionals in the field" (Duncan et al., 2009, para. 8). Counseling students, who were selected for the program based on interest, were paired with select, experienced school counselors. Responses to a survey instrument were utilized in determining the pairs. The authors state that benefits of the program include helping "to reduce the student's frustration and anxiety, while increasing motivation

and confidence" (Duncan et al., 2009, para. 16). A structured system was developed to evaluate the program including the use of contact logs, a program effectiveness survey, a questionnaire, and individual interviews (Duncan et al., 2009).

Peer support can be crucial for new counselors who are uncertain about role expectations. A study that examined factors related to role stress among practicing counselors in various school settings found that "peer consultation added to lower role incongruence" (Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, and Solomon, 2005, p. 64). For middle school counselors, specifically, data suggested lower role ambiguity was predicted as a result of participation in peer consultation (Culbreth et al., 2005). Not only are mentors for new counselors recommended, but peer consultation for school counselors with varying levels of experience has also generated positive feedback (Benshoff & Paisley, 1996). In general, programs designed to nourish the professional growth of counselors, including beginning and experienced counselors, are strongly supported in the literature. Table 1, on the following page, provides an overview of new counselor mentor programs that exemplify some of the effective components discussed previously.

Comprehensive Overview of a New Counselor Mentor Program
Like some of the programs already discussed, the state of Delaware's New School Counselor Mentoring Program (NSCMP) is a program that formally pairs new school counselors with experienced school counselors for a period of three years. For this state, the NSCMP must be completed in order to obtain a license as a school counselor. The program is modeled after the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) National Model. Goals of the program include acclimating the new counselors to state and local expectations and available opportunities, preparing new counselors to successfully complete the state's evaluation process, guiding

A study that examined factors related to role stress among practicing counselors in various school settings found that "peer consultation added to lower role incongruence" (Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, and Solomon, 2005, p. 64).

Table 1. Overview of counselor mentor programs			
	Missouri Career Education Mentoring Program for New Counselors (Missouri Center for Career Education, 2011)	**NCSCA Mentoring Program** (The North Carolina School Counselor Association, 2013)	**OCA Mentoring Program** (Ohio Counseling Association, 2013; Ohio Counseling Association, 2011)
Mentee Description	New and returning school counselors	New school counselors (0-3 years of experience)	New OCA members and new counselors
Mentor Identification Process	District mentor chair identifies and trains mentors	Application required	Application required
Type of Mentor/Mentee Assignment	Individual	Individual	Individual
Number of Required Contacts	-One on site visit -Regular communication throughout program	-Minimum of two times per month (in person, by phone, or through email)	-Contact determined by the mentor and mentee
Contact Hours Documentation	-Use of quarterly logs -Four mentor experiences completed per year to be documented on a mentor review form	Unknown	Unknown
Program Characteristics	-2 year commitment -Individual Mentoring Plan is developed (may include mentor sharing resources, tips for guidance lesson plans and classroom management, attending a workshop)	-1 year commitment -Possible activities include "attending professional conferences/development activities together, sharing resources, insights, career path decisions, meeting for coffee/lunch when available, sending motivational/inspirational stories" (The North Carolina School Counselor Association, 2013, para. 8)	-1 to 3 year commitment -Some recommendations include providing resources, defining goals, and monitoring progress through communication
Determining Program Effectiveness	Online evaluation for all participants	Mid-year evaluation and final evaluation	Semi-annual review and end of mentoring relationship review forms

new counselors to self-assess their job performance and recognize potential areas for growth, and assisting new school counselors in operating a guidance program based on the ASCA National Model and the needs of the students (Delaware Department of Education, 2013a).

Each district has a lead mentor to oversee implementation of the NSCMP at the local schools. The lead mentor undergoes training each year and disseminates that information to the local mentors. They also play an integral role in pairing new school counselors with their mentors. The lead mentor must work for a minimum of 45 hours in ensuring the program is executed with fidelity. For their role as a lead mentor, counselors are paid a stipend of $1500 (Delaware Department of Education, 2013a).

Both lead mentors and school-based mentors are charged with three main roles in the NSCMP. Each is expected to act as a "role model," a "helper," and a "colleague." Mentors train mentees to assess their own performance and make evidentiary decisions based on that assessment (Delaware Department of Education, 2013a).

School-based mentors are assigned up to three new school counselors. They are responsible for meeting with their mentees and documenting those meetings. Progress goals are written based on feedback received from initial observations. After an appropriate amount of time passes, the mentor observes their mentee again and provides feedback based on their goals. A minimum of 30 contact hours must be documented for each mentee. A stipend of between $750 and $1250, depending on the number of mentees a mentor has, is paid to the mentors upon submission of necessary documentation (Delaware Department of Education, 2013a).

The NSCMP is divided into four cycles. During the first cycle, the mentor assures their mentees become familiar with "the themes of the ASCA National Model, Foundation and Management Systems, …school counselor program standards and state binder requirements" (Delaware Department of Education, 2012a, para. 1). After they are acclimated to these policies and procedures, the initial observation takes place. Goals are set based on feedback provided and reassessed a short time later. Once the mentor pair decides the counselor is prepared to progress, cycle two begins (Delaware Department of Education, 2012a).

Literature on mentoring in related fields suggests that while women tend to mentor both men and women, male professionals tend to mentor same gender mentees. An advantage of a structured program could be the promotion of diversity. In addition, there is considerable literature on mentorship in psychology, which may help guide questions for the research of mentoring in counseling.

In cycle two, the ASCA National Model's Delivery and Accountability components are reviewed in depth. In addition, the mentor reviews the Making Data Work process of data collection, Design, Ask, Track and Announce. The Delaware State Binder Requirements are discussed and the Verification of Services Form must be completed prior to the completion of cycle two. Once the first four components listed are addressed, another observation takes place. In their post-observation meeting, the pair discusses the status of the new school counselor in successfully completing the second component of the Delaware Professional Appraisal System II (DPAS II). The mentor provides constructive criticism and assistance to his mentee. One of the goals of cycle two is for the new school counselor to become more introspective in his professional progress (Delaware Department of Education, 2013a).

Cycle three typically takes place during the new school counselor's second year. The mentor gives the new school counselor a reading task to highlight "leadership advocacy for a growth directed opportunity" (Delaware Department of Education, 2012b, para. 1). Mentors assign appropriate activities for mentees to complete in conjunction with their reading task. The new school counselor is responsible for completing 30 hours independently in relation to this assignment and must turn in a log documenting their activities (Delaware Department of Education, 2012b).

The final cycle is characterized by a focus on refining the new school counselor's self-analysis skills. Based on discussions with their mentor and the lead mentor, mentees develop an official "professional growth plan" that outlines long-term goals (Delaware Department of Education, 2013b, para. 2). In order to identify their goals, the new school counselors work for a minimum of 30 hours to complete activities addressing goals of the Department of Education Annual School Review and the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP). Once all four cycles are complete, the new school counselors are eligible

for a permanent certificate in the state of Delaware and should be well equipped to continue self-analysis of their professional progress in implementing an effective school counseling program (Delaware Department of Education, 2013b).

Conclusions and Implications

As stated earlier, mentees have indicated helpful strategies of new counselor mentor programs include "sharing of resources, demonstrations, consultation, exploration of materials, and mentor support" (Loveless, 2010, p. 28). Research on the efficacy of mentorship in counseling, both formal and informal, should be more widely conducted, disseminated, and promoted, while existing research in related disciplines could be used as a guide for new counselor mentor programs. As time progresses, further data on the efficacy and longer-term outcomes of mentor programs should become available. This data could provide the evidence necessary for counselors to advocate for their profession and for the development of new counselors in the future.

It is important to note the ways in which a mentorship can be rewarding for the mentors as well. From a developmental perspective, serving as a mentor allows one to give back to the profession and feel a sense of fulfillment (Borders, 2002; Studer, 2007). As both a mentor and a mentee, school counselors are uniquely positioned to benefit from mentorship initiatives that bring experienced and novice counselors together.

Recommendations for Further Study

As a field dominated by women, discussion of cross-gender mentor pairs in counseling is relevant (Burxe, McKeen & McKenna, 1990). Literature on mentoring in related fields suggests that while women tend to mentor both men and women, male professionals tend to mentor same gender mentees (Gilbert & Rossman, 1992). An advantage of a structured program could be the promotion of diversity. In addition, there is considerable literature on mentorship in psychology, which may help guide questions for the research of mentoring in counseling. Over time, more data will likely become available on the benefits of mentoring for stakeholders, mentees, and mentors across disciplines and site placements.

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people seldom **IMPROVE** when they have **no other MODEL** but themselves **to COPY**

A mentor empowers a person to see a possible future, and believe it can be obtained.

~ Shawn Hitchcock, Professor of Chemistry

~ Oliver Goldsmith, Irish Writer (1728 - 1774)

Steps Toward Understanding: Teacher Perceptions of the School Counselor Role

Priscilla Powers and Susan R. Boes, University of West Georgia

Abstract

Successful school counselors have many stakeholders supporting their comprehensive program. Classroom teachers are vital members of the counseling team, so it becomes essential to periodically review their perceptions of the school counseling program and the role of the professional school counselor (PSC). In recent years, school counselors have experienced much change within the field. Many of these changes are due to the implementation of the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) national model, the Transforming School Counseling Initiative, the No Child Left Behind Act, the College and Career Readiness Index (CCRPI), and other national and state programs. Additionally, ASCA (2004) redefined the role of the PSC. Examining teachers' perceptions of PSCs may be helpful for understanding teachers' support for the ASCA supported PSC role. This action research study was conducted as a review of one school counseling program by teachers and staff.

According to Gysbers & Henderson (2012), leading school counseling theorists, guidance and counseling in the schools continues to undergo reform, changing from a position-services model to a comprehensive program firmly grounded in principles of human growth and development. Therefore, it becomes beneficial for professional school counselors (PSCs) to regularly assess their programs for needed change and make improvements. Role ambiguity can occur when a PSC has no clear understanding of function, is considered quasi-administrative, or lacks support to adequately complete a task. Role conflict and confusion creates stress and conflict for both the PSC and the program stakeholders (Thompson, 2002), thus the importance of assessing for clear roles. Role mutations have seriously distorted the professional image of PSCs. Only when PSCs can collectively describe their role and function will they be able to respond to criticisms and develop comprehensive models of accountability. Moreover, what are frequently defined as school counseling functions often arise from these inaccurate views and do not require the minimum of a master's level degree and special skills training. Usually these tasks can be handled by most of the paraprofessional or administrative staff currently utilized in the schools (Thompson, 2002).

While there are numerous studies on the relationship between PSCs and administrators, there is limited research in the area of teacher perception of the ASCA -defined PSC role (Reiner, Colbert, & Perusse, 2009). Because there is need for further related research, this action research study (ARS) reviews the school counseling program at one rural high school in Northwest Georgia by focusing on the perception of the PSCs role according to ASCA standards and as viewed by the classroom teachers. Through a review of recent literature, the foundation for this ARS was established. Six independent studies reviewing educators' perceptions of the PSCs role are presented below.

Review of the Literature

Role Definition

According to ASCA (2005), the role of a PSC includes implementing three pillars of the ASCA model. These consist of delivery, management, and accountability. The role of the PSC within the delivery system includes providing culturally competent school counseling services to students and parents within guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support. PSCs are also held accountable through data driven, standards based, and research proven programs; as well as the completion of periodical program evaluations which help manage and improve the comprehensive program. Stakeholders in school counseling programs include parents, students, teachers, administration, and community members and all perceptions need to be consistent. Aside from Gsybers & Henderson, many school counseling programs are based on the widely accepted theories of child development from Adler, Sigmund Freud's behaviorism, and Carl Rogers' Person Centered concept (2012). Their considerations for PSCs' roles are congruent with their respective theories.

Current Studies on Perception of School Counselor Roles

There appears to be a gap in the current literature in teachers' perceptions of the PSCs' role. In searching the keywords "teacher perception" in ASCA's online version of their journal Professional School Counseling, 148 results were returned. Only one of these was a nationwide survey of this topic, which is reviewed below. The other 147 studies resulted in principal and/or administrators' views, or did not concern the PSC's role. Upon an advanced search in ERIC, using keywords "school counselor" and "teacher perception" only 22 results were obtained and nearly all were about the school psychologists' role or teachers' perceptions of another topic.

A qualitative study (Amatea & Clark, 2005) examined the perceptions of the roles of PSCs by 26 school administrators. The respondents included 11 elementary school administrators, 8 middle school administrators, and 7 high school administrators who were individually interviewed. While not classroom teachers, administrators are usually former teachers who bring with them prior knowledge and experiences

related to PSCs. They also work within the school and collaborate within the school counseling program. The purpose of the study was two-fold: to generate ideas for PSCs to improve their programs, and provide guidance for their development of professional goals. The study was based on a grounded theory of symbolic interactions which is designed to build deeper awareness between groups. An assumption of this theory is that "reality" is susceptible to different interpretations by both individuals and society. The data was analyzed based on similarities and differences and found role conceptions fell along three major dimensions: valued role activities (innovative school leader, collaborative care consultant, responsive direct service provider, and administrative team player), extent of role specialization, and style of role coordination (Amatea & Clark, 2005).

"Administrators reported that they expected their counselors to work directly with students experiencing difficulties, to offer classroom guidance, and to consult with teachers about students, the role this group appeared to value most highly was that of the counselor as an innovative leader" (Amatea & Clark, 2009, p. 22). In other words, these administrators insisted PSCs lend their unique qualifications not only to students, but to other stakeholders as well. PSCs were also found to be valuable for collaborative student case consultation because of their training and knowledge of social, psychological, and academic needs of students. They are presumed to function in this capacity at two levels: collaboratively and directly. Direct service to students through classroom guidance, within small groups, or individually was also found to be highly desired among school administrators. Limitations of this study include the small sample size and the emphasis on what job duties administrators preferred their PSCs to do (Amatea & Clark, 2005).

The implications of this study are important for collaboration between administrators and PSCs. It helps PSCs reexamine existing roles and define necessary changes to move forward (Amatea & Clark, 2005). Ultimately, PSCs are responsible for educating their administration and staff about their appropriate roles, services offered, and specialties and skills they might offer their schools and staff. Furthermore, Amatea and Clark's (2005) findings might have implications when designing counselor education programs with the needs of schools and the role of PSCs in mind.

A nationwide study of teacher perceptions of school counselors' responsibilities according to the ASCA model was conducted to investigate teachers' knowledge and expectations of the school counselor's role (Reiner, Colbert, & Perusse, 2009). The conclusions were believed to be helpful for PSCs in obtaining support from teachers. Participants were high school teachers from every state in the nation. High school teachers were the focus due to the lack of conformity in elementary school counseling positions. The sample sizes were proportional to the size of each state. The majority of participants was female, working in a suburban school, and had been teaching in their current school between 6-10 years. Most of the respondents had one to five or more PSCs working in their school (Reiner et al., 2009).

A 56-item Likert-type questionnaire adopted from the ASCA National Model was developed listing appropriate and inappropriate PSC activities for the purpose of illustrating the best use of time for a PSC. Limitations were noted because the participants were restricted to high school teachers only, and those employed only in public schools. The study revealed that for 13 of the 16 appropriate responsibilities, the mean participant response fell between agree and strongly agree that PSCs should engage in that duty (Reiner et al., 2009). A few of the responsibilities that teachers rated highest were as follows: assist students with academic planning, assist students with career planning, and assist students with personal/social development. For 5 out of 12 items of inappropriate PSC duties, teachers reported they agree or strongly agree that PSCs should be spending time on these activities. Most teachers agreed that PSCs should be registering and scheduling new students, administering tests, calculating GPAs, maintaining records on students, and working with one student at a time in a therapeutic, clinical mode. So again it appears there is a need for school staff to be educated on appropriate tasks for PSCs.

These findings propose that high school teachers agree that PSCs should engage in the tasks that ASCA states as appropriate responsibilities, but they also disagree with nearly half of the inappropriate activities (Reiner et al., 2009). The results indicate high school teachers would be supportive of PSCs who want to engage in tasks suggested by ASCA, particularly assisting students in academic, career, and personal/social development.

These results support the belief that PSCs are responsible for educating their colleagues about their role within the school. The study also suggests that teachers believe that counseling is an important role for school counselors, and it is important for PSCs to advocate for the time and resources to provide this service to students.

"Administrators reported that they expected their counselors to work directly with students experiencing difficulties, to offer classroom guidance, and to consult with teachers about students, the role this group appeared to value most highly was that of the counselor as an innovative leader" (Amatea & Clark, 2009, p. 22)

This study promotes the idea that PSCs should conduct their own research, not only to further their data driven program, but to allow their stakeholders a chance to be heard.

A recent Canadian study (Joy, Harris, Hesson, & 2011) was conducted on 90 pre-service teachers before graduating from their educational programs to assess their knowledge of school counseling and what they perceive counselors' roles to be. Since teachers and students spend a great deal of time together, they become a critical referral source for PSCs. Therefore, pre-service teacher perceptions of the responsibilities and roles of PSCs influence the likelihood of them making referrals as they enter the profession. According to Joy et al. (2011), the formation of teachers' attitudes surrounding school counseling begins early in their education. The survey asked a few simple questions: what tasks the teacher considered to be important for school counselors, and what areas they feel school counselors need to be more involved in. The results were as follows: 72% of respondents felt they had moderate knowledge of school counseling, 19% reported very little knowledge, and 9% felt they had strong knowledge. Thirty seven percent of pre-service teachers had contact with a PSC for personal reasons, and 33% had contact for professional reasons. When asked to imagine working as a teacher, 99% said they would refer a student to a PSC, and 93% felt they would consult with a PSC. In reference to perceptions of PSC job duties, 61% felt that academic/career counseling is a typical job duty. Fifty six percent reported personal counseling to be a job

responsibility, 37% found administering student assessments was a task, 27% and 26% considered Individual Education Plan (IEP) collaboration and teacher collaboration respectively. Other responsibilities noted were consulting with parents (13%), organizing psychoeducational activities (13%), and making outside referrals (11%). Ultimately, pre-service teachers reported high respect for PSCs, citing their special skill set and expertise (Joy et al., 2011). While they had a favorable opinion of PSCs, more education is needed for pre-service teachers concerning the roles and responsibilities of PSCs as revealed by the reported data.

The results suggest it would help student teachers if educational preparation programs require student teachers to work with a PSC during internships, as well as offer a course in the area of school counseling. Limitations of this study include a relatively small sample size and the lack of attention about the teachers' perceptions of time allotments.

An action research study of a North Georgia elementary school counseling program determined the staff perceptions and utilized this information to make program improvements (Sherwood, 2010). This school has a diverse racial and socioeconomic population that makes for an interesting study. The researcher distributed 50 surveys, and 31 were completed and returned. The survey consisted of 10 items to be answered with a 4-point Likert scale, as well as 3-open ended sentence completion questions.

In addition, nine respondents were selected based on their willingness to volunteer for an interview with the

researcher. The researcher was careful to interview a representative sample of staff members to gain insight from various grade levels and content areas concerning the needs of students (Sherwood, 2010). These conversational interviews lasted approximately 15-30 minutes. Interviewees were asked to evaluate the overall school counseling program, noting areas of improvement as well as strengths.

The data indicated the PSC received mostly positive (strongly agree or agree) reviews in the areas of meaningful and regular classroom guidance lessons, timely and appropriate referral responses, meeting with parents when requested, and recommendation of services to students. The results of the 3 open-ended survey questions ranged from personal praise for the PSC to suggestions for time management. Some of the new program areas suggested by staff members included: more individual counseling for students with significant needs, parenting workshops, meeting with grade level teachers on a monthly basis, and conducting classroom guidance in individual classrooms. Results from individual interviews suggested several common themes for improving services, such as more classroom guidance, follow-up guidance lessons, and collaborating with teachers on the guidance topics to allow for reinforcement in the classroom. Two teachers expressed frustration for the PSC being used to handle discipline or administrative issues (Sherwood, 2010).

While helpful, this study was limited due to its inclusion of only one school, minimizing the generalizability of its results. The researcher recommends the use of a pilot survey before administration to the entire staff so as to dismiss items that were faulty. Furthermore, the measurement tools utilized in this study were not psychometrically tested. Finally, while Reiner, et al. (2009) note the need for PSCs to do research the interviews were conducted by the PSC in the role of researcher, which may have altered the responses of the participants. The results indicate that most teachers at this elementary school perceive the school counseling program to be operating successfully. The ARS also points to a need for future program evaluations to survey other stakeholders to determine their awareness and accessibility of the school counseling program (Sherwood, 2010).

A similar small ARS was conducted to collect data that would provide a better understanding of how parents view the school counselors at another suburban elementary Atlanta school. Surveys, interviews, and archived data were utilized to gain insight into parents' conceptions of the school counseling program. The data was analyzed according to frequency counts as well as common themes within interviews. Twenty-five percent of surveys were returned completed to the investigator. Fifty percent of parents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that elementary PSCs are valuable assets. The findings further indicated that while most parents are aware of the PSCs' role, there are also many who do not realize the scope of importance of the PSC within the school (Gillilan, 2006). During interviews, the publication of a brochure was suggested for parents to identify services offered and the main job responsibilities of PSCs. Many parents mentioned that their children have discussed classroom guidance lessons with them. In conclusion, while this study was small and limited to one school, the emphasis on communication

and role definition between parents and PSCs could be further reaching.

A study was conducted (Munro, 2007) to investigate teacher perceptions of career guidance programs at one high school because the researcher was concerned that some did not appreciate this value. A 14-item survey was created asking teachers to rate their opinion on the importance of each career development activity presented by PSCs. A 5-point Likert scale was used for data collection. Seventy percent of surveys were returned completed. Post-study interviews were conducted to assess teacher understanding of the results. Munro (2007) found teachers ranked parental/familial influences as most important to students when making career decisions, with the Georgia College 411 program being ranked second. Career fairs, GCIS (Georgia Career Information Systems), job shadowing, counselor-led groups, Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), teacher presentations, classroom discussion, and career films ranked 3-10, respectively. These results are interpreted as possibly due to the cultural influences from the large Hispanic population of the school. Overall, teachers at this school appear to understand and agree with the importance of each student's completion of a career plan as they work with the PSC.

Taking the findings from this study, PSCs can learn to better communicate to teachers the importance of career assessments, as well as more parental involvement. It is crucial that students understand the correlation between education and career, while involving teachers and parents in the post-secondary career readiness process.

Summary and Conclusions

While these studies varied in their methodology, participants and data analyses, the results were largely similar. Overall, while teachers, administrators, and parents are supportive of PSCs and school counseling programs, many of them would benefit from further education and clarification where school counseling roles are concerned. Action research focusing on teacher perceptions of school counseling programs at the school level would help PSCs to promote their programs more fully. Utilizing and understanding teacher perceptions will build bridges between the school counselors and one of the primary stakeholders of their operation.

Results of these studies are helpful, but more research is needed. According to ASCA (2005), successful implementation of the ASCA National Model requires the support of teachers. In order to accomplish this task, input from classroom teachers becomes paramount. Only by communicating and clarifying their viewpoints can school counselors continue to grow their programs. The benefits of this particular action research study are twofold; first, the assessment of the school counseling program was expected to lead to its advancement. Secondly, research is truly a proactive professional activity which contributes to the accountability, advocacy, and advancement of the school counseling profession (Allen, 1992).

Method

A mixed methods approach was conducted for this action research. AR allows PSC's to examine their programs to determine effectiveness and bring about change (Sherwood, 2010). According to Mills (2010) action research allows the investigator insight into a program from the data collected. Although AR studies may be limited in their generalizability to other programs, they are enormously helpful in demonstrating accountability for the program under evaluation. School counselors may be better able to justify and market their programs if they demonstrate that research has indicated their effectiveness (Mason & Uwah, 2007). Declarations of appropriate and inappropriate school counselor roles and responsibilities were utilized from the ASCA Executive Summary in the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005). The purpose of this ARS was to reveal (a) the teachers' perception of current PSCs' role, (b) understand how teachers perceive the ASCA approved appropriate counseling tasks, and (c) discover the perception of how PSCs time is spent. The hope was the findings would generate a greater teacher understanding of the school counseling program and provide clearer guidance in the design of program improvement.

Participants

The study was conducted at a rural high school in Northwest Georgia comprised of 1050 students, 68 certified teachers, and 2 PSCs. Qualified participants consisted of certified classroom teachers who held an interest in expressing their perception of the PSCs' role within their school. All staff members were informed of the ARS and its purpose prior to distribution of questionnaires via flyers and email. Surveys were placed in each teachers' mailbox. Informed consent denoted participation was voluntary and with no pressure to participate. Inclusion criteria were a valid teaching certification and agreement to participate.

Instrumentation

The survey was developed after reviewing the literature and information on how to develop Likert scale survey items (Boynton & Greenhalgh, 2004). No validity or reliability data was conducted on the survey assessment. A 4-point Likert scale rated 9 questions on the expectations of PSCs, followed by a 4 question local needs assessment, and finally teacher perceptions of PSC task importance. In addition to demographic data there was also an optional comments section. The comment section gave participants the opportunity to express additional feedback to the PI concerning the school counseling program. Participants were instructed to review

only the program and not the individual personalities of the school counselors or the counseling department staff. Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire honestly and return it to the PI's mailbox within one week. No names were included on the surveys.

Data Analysis

For this ARS, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the PI developed survey, open comments section, and field notes from informal conversations with teachers by the PI. Descriptive statistics from teacher surveys were calculated to determine what teachers perceive the PSC role to be within the school. The first 4 survey questions asked teachers for demographic data such as their age, years of experience, highest degree achieved and subject area taught.

To organize quantitative results within the Expectations of School Counselor section each item was assigned a 4 point value: 4 = consistently, 3 = most of the time, 2 = rarely, 1 = never. Results were tallied on 3 different occasions, percentages and central tendencies were calculated for each question.

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Field notes were used to triangulate the data collection so as to cross check the data by informal discussions with teachers. Comparing a variety of data sources adds to the richness of action research (Mills, 2010).

Results of Data Collection

Of the 68 surveys distributed, 28 were returned with a return rate of 41%. Results were entered into Excel and the percentage, mean and standard deviation (SD) determined for each question. The total responses from demographic data (items 1-4) were placed in rank order from lowest to highest. The majority of respondents (n = 12; 42%) reported between 6 and 15 years of teaching experience. Eleven teachers (39%) reported being between 41 and 50 years of age. Nine teachers each reported having a master's (32%) or a specialist degree (32%). Subject areas taught averaged 4 participants per area. Some teachers chose not to answer all the survey questions.

Expectations of School Counselor

As shown in **Table 1**, the expectations that rated the highest in frequency were as follows: assisting students with academic planning (68%), collaborating with teachers to identify and solve student needs problems, and concerns (50%), assisting the principal with identifying and resolving student needs, issues and problems (42%), and assisting students with academic (68%), and personal/social development (39%).

Table 1

Expectations of School Counselor Results: Likert Scale Statements

Statement	Consistently	Often	Rarely	Never	N/A
1. Design individual student academic programs	28%	32%	28%	7%	3%
2. Counsel students with excessive tardiness/absenteeism	7%	57%	28%	3%	3%
3. Interpret cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests	7%	50%	32%	0%	7%
4. Counsel students with disciplinary problems	21%	46%	28%	0%	3%
5. Assist the principal with identifying and resolving student needs, issues, and problems	42%	50%	3%	0%	3%
6. Assist students with academic planning	68%	39%	7%	3%	0%
7. Assist students with personal/social development	39%	42%	14%	0%	3%
8. Assist students with career planning	39%	46%	7%	3%	3%
9. Collaborate with teachers to identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems	50%	32%	17%	0%	3%

Note: Responses for "In your opinion, what services do the school counselors in your school provide?" were on a 4-point scale (4=consistently, often, 2=rarely, 1=never). Response percentage/*n*=28.

Table 2

Perceptions of Importance Results: Likert Scale Results

Statement	Extremely Important	Important	Not Important	Not At All Important	No Response
1. Counsel individual students for the purpose of personal/social development.	64%	32%	3%	0%	0%
2. Counsel individual students for the purpose of career planning.	78%	21%	0%	0%	0%
3. Counsel individual students for the purpose of academic planning.	67%	35%	0%	0%	0%
4. Work with one student at a time in a therapeutic, clinical mode.	21%	42%	35%	0%	0%
5. Collaborate with teachers to identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems.	46%	67%	3%	0%	0%
6. Interpret student records.	32%	67%	17%	0%	0%
7. Disseminate information to parents and students about colleges.	60%	39%	0%	0%	0%
8. Assist in preparation for the implementation of Common Core and CCRPI.	14%	21%	60%	7%	0%
9. Design academic master schedule and/or individual student scheduling.	67%	35%	14%	0%	0%
10. Administer aptitude, achievement, or cognitive tests.	14%	46%	39%	0%	0%

Note: Responses for "Ideally, what do you believe is the most important use of a school counselors time?" were on a 4-point scale (4=extremely important, 3=important, 2=not important, 1=not at all important). Response percentage/*n*=28. Statements in **boldface** correlate with ASCA's definition of inappropriate

Perceptions of Importance

Teachers' perceptions correlated at 67% to the statement that counseling students for academic planning purposes was extremely important. Interestingly, **Table 2** shows 67% teachers also reported that designing a master schedule and registering individual students was of extreme importance, which according to ASCA (2005), is an inappropriate task for PSCs. The percentages of responses for perceptions of highest importance were as follows: counseling students for career and academic planning (78%), disseminate college information to students and parents (60%), and collaborating with teachers to identify and resolve student problems (46%). Similar to the results of the inappropriate responsibilities, a few of the expectations of PSCs were also what teachers perceive to be important tasks, such as administer aptitude, achievement, or cognitive tests (46%), and work with one student at a time in a therapeutic, clinical mode (42%).

Qualitative data was obtained from the optional comments section. This provided an opportunity for staff opinions on the improvement of the counseling program. Of the 28 responses, 5 teachers left comments. One participant did not provide responses for the expectations of school counselor section. This responder commented that he or she did not know what PSCs did and did not have enough information to answer the questions. Three comments concerned the description of testing related job tasks. These comments indicated they would like to see a school member other than the PSC test and appropriately place students; two felt the school psychologist should be responsible for administering and interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests. One respondent questioned whether counseling students with excessive absenteeism "is done by someone else?" Another comment indicated that PSCs need constant contact with students, especially those experiencing problems. A final comment noted the importance for PSC to communicate often with parents and teachers.

Local Needs Assessment

The results of the local school needs assessment are displayed in **Table 3**. Teachers indicated a need for academic advisement (50%) and student small group counseling (39%). Classroom guidance (17%) or teacher/staff guidance (14%) were seen as unnecessary services for this school.

Table 3

Local School Needs Assessment Results

Service	Definitely want	Want	No opinion	Don't want
Classroom guidance	17%	32%	28%	21%
Student advisement	50%	35%	14%	0%
Teacher/staff guidance	14%	21%	50%	14%
Student small group counseling	39%	35%	17%	7%

Note: Responses for "What types of counseling services would you like to see implemented at your school?" were on a 4-point scale (4=definitely want, 3=want, 2=no opinion, 1= don't want). Response percentage/n=28.

Discussion

The ARS, designed to evaluate the school counseling program at a rural high school, indicates that teachers perceive the role expectations and services of PSCs as important. Their perceptions also correlate to the importance of meeting the needs of students. A large majority of teachers perceive the role of the PSC as a collaborator and a problem solver, as well as resource for student academic, personal/social, and career success. Teachers appear to conceptualize the PSCs served students with ASCA endorsed services most of the time. Teachers at this high school "agreed strongly" that PSCs should engage in 3 of the inappropriate tasks, most specifically designing a master schedule and/or individual student scheduling (85%). PSCs who devote a large percentage of time to making schedule changes, planning programs, and sorting paperwork function as guidance administrators (Thompson, 2002). In the past, many school counselors had little sense of their role within school, so they turned to clerical and administrative duties (Wittmer, 1993). The ARS results also revealed that teachers are under the impression that it is suitable for a PSC to operate in a therapeutic, clinical mode with students (63%). While it is important for PSCs to foster the social/emotional health of students, teachers mistakenly believe that clinical mental health services are an essential piece of the school counseling program. ASCA supports the role of the PSC as the most appropriate educator to advocate for the mental health needs of children. However,

this is increasingly difficult to do given the large number of students served by a single PSC (Thompson, 2002).

These findings suggest that while teachers are supportive of ASCA endorsed tasks, they also support unsuitable uses of the PSCs time. These results correlate with an earlier study conducted by Reiner et al. (2009): they found PSCs engaged in the following inappropriate activities: registering and scheduling all students; administering cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests; maintain student records, computing grade point averages and acting in a clinical therapeutic role

Interventions

The outcomes of this ARS offered many valuable considerations for evaluating and improving the school counseling program. Future interventions include following the suggestions of the local needs assessment by implementing more student small group counseling and classroom guidance. Considerations may be made for better assisting teachers as advisors. However, due to the large size of the student population and the availability of 2 PSCs, initiating a full school counselor advisement program may be challenging at best. Based on previous and current research, PSCs are advised to continually educate their administration and staff as to their appropriate job responsibilities and use of time. PSCs may benefit by demonstrating their effectiveness in appropriate responsibilities and tasks by following the guidance of the ASCA National Model (Reiner et al., 2009). Perhaps in-service activities during the opening meetings of the school year would be an appropriate time

to reorient teachers and staff to the roles and responsibilities of their PSCs. Additionally, posters or pamphlets reporting the tasks of school counselors might be prepared for faculty and staff to share with parents and in turn help them understand the roles and responsibilities of the school counseling professionals. Creating a website and social media networking are an increasingly important source for information dissemination. By celebrating and promoting National School Counseling Week with a focus on the value and role of school counseling programs and utilizing other school-wide events and announcements over the public address system can also lead to better understanding of the school counseling programs (Thompson, 2002). Lastly, meeting with each department within the school to explain programs, offer services and resources that the school counseling program may offer can improve awareness.

Limitations

There are several limitations with regard to this ARS. First, the data from the study only included one mid-sized rural high school. While this ARS could be replicated in other schools, these results are specific only to the school counseling program in this school. However, the many interventions suggested may be employed in other programs with positive results. Secondly, the responses were collected only from public high school teachers. Responses were voluntary and may be limited to those teachers who held strong opinions regarding the school counseling program and who were willing to share their ideas for improvement. Another

limitation might include the perception of the individual personalities of the PSCs and/or counseling staff within this particular school. While the avoidance of this perception was discussed this constraint was not within the control of the PI. Finally, one of the participants admitted he/she had little to no knowledge of the role or tasks of a PSC, and therefore felt he/she was unable to accurately assess a school counseling program.

> Although some adjustments and improvements were suggested for the school counseling program at this high school it seems that classroom teachers who responded to this ARS largely perceive the PSCs to be a vital part of the school's successful operation

Conclusions

Although some adjustments and improvements were suggested for the school counseling program at this high school, it seems that classroom teachers who responded to this ARS largely perceive the PSCs to be a vital part of the school's successful operation. This research provides the PSCs empirical information regarding teachers' perceptions of the PSCs' roles when implementing and endorsing their school counseling program.

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Commentary and Reflection

School Counselor Supervision - College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI): It's Not Just About Accountability for the Students!

By Susan G. Atkins, Forsyth County Schools in Cumming, GA.

At the dawn of the 21st century ASCA introduced the school counselor model that included for the first time an emphasis on the counselor's use of data analyses to indicate the success of programs and initiatives and to demonstrate the value of the work of school counselors in supporting the achievements of all students. Accountability is an ongoing issue for school counselors and most believe that evaluation of school counselors' work and effectiveness is here to stay.

In order to offer many possibilities to all of our students, the emphasis in schools is on early and consistent education and preparation in both college and career awareness. In the state of Georgia elementary, middle and high school students are expected to learn and demonstrate mastery of the Common Core academic standards and career awareness standards.

In 2010 the Building Resourceful Individuals to Develop Georgia's Economy (BRIDGE) Act became law. BRIDGE mandates educational and career counseling and planning for all students in grades 6 – 8. During the 8th grade year each student must complete an individual graduation plan that leads through a successful high school career. BRIDGE also mandates systemic, comprehensive and developmental advisement continuously for all students grades 6 – 12. One of the goals of the BRIDGE Act is to help students see the relevance of education to their own future plans and dreams.

House Bill 186 mandates that our students' education align with the federal Career Cluster framework. Students in grades 8 – 11 are counseled about dual enrollment coursework and opportunities and learn about 'soft skills' that are necessary in all employment fields. Beginning in 9th grade each student, working with the school counselor, chooses a career pathway, a coherent, articulated sequence of rigorous academic and career/technical courses that leads beyond high school to college and career readiness.

In 2012-2013 the Georgia Department of Education released the first College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) scores for all schools and districts in the state. The CCRPI is the logical extension of the comprehensive focus on preparing the 'whole child' for success beyond high school. The CCRPI measures academic achievement as well as age appropriate career awareness, exploration and learning experiences.

School counselors are valuable members of their schools' faculties and have specific training, knowledge and expertise in helping students integrate their aptitude, their abilities and their attitudes so that they are successful throughout their school careers. In Forsyth County Schools we use GAcollege411 as our tool to accomplish the mandated activities in all grades 6 – 12. Our middle and high school counselors have collaborated with each other to create lesson plans, to design manageable schedules for students to get to computer labs and to teach, monitor and evaluate students' completion of the mandated BRIDGE activities. The counselors then collect, review and study the data to determine the value to the students as well as to continuously improve their service to the students.

With the release of the elementary career awareness lessons from the Georgia DOE in January 2013, the elementary counselors became involved in the focused instruction of career awareness for their students, too. Our elementary counselors collaborate with their administrators and teachers to design a master calendar that works well with their own school, population and schedule. As the teachers teach the academic Common Core standards-based lessons throughout the year, the counselors co-facilitate and teach aligned career awareness and soft skill lessons. The collaborative effort works well for the students who can begin to see that the academics they are learning have applications in 'real work' opportunities. Reinforcement of how ideas and activities connect is always a good teaching strategy!

Students have always known that they are held accountable for their work and their behaviors. That accountability comes to them via report cards and conduct grades. Schools have, for at least the last decade, been held accountable for reading, language arts and math scores that are interpreted to reflect the success of the teachers and the administrators. But now there is a renewed emphasis on the development of the whole child that intertwines positive, interpersonal behaviors, i.e., soft skills, real life activities and experiences and rigorous academic course work. Counselors are certainly an important factor in the accountability circle and can and do shape and influence young lives.

Some have wondered if the current focus on career awareness means that school counselors are being viewed only as vocational or guidance counselors. Some have viewed the assignments of these multiple mandates to counselors as additional responsibilities. But what is our counselor calling? Our mission is to meet the children and youth were they are and to lead and guide them to become successful, achieving, well-rounded, positive, personable and capable citizens of the world. What better way to do that than to collaborate with other professional educators and community members to open doors for all of our students! We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the success of our students and we continuously improve as we are held accountable. CCRPI accountability is a valuable score card for counselors.

Counselor Education: A Personal Reflection on a Professional Journey

Pamela O. Paisley, The University of Georgia

I find it difficult to believe, but I graduated from college forty years ago. As I left that fine institution in North Carolina, I knew that someday I wanted be a professor. I was just not sure a professor of what. I loved history and English and political science and was not all that crazy about the one psychology course I took. Then I taught language arts and social studies for three years in a rather unique middle school housing grades four through nine. While I found that I certainly enjoyed the presentation of content, what I loved more were the opportunities to build relationships with students and to provide support for them as they continued their educational and life journeys. I returned to graduate school in counseling and subsequently worked for seven years as a professional school counselor. I was fortunate to have an opportunity to work at all three levels and was privileged to follow a group of students from middle school to high school graduation. The last year that I worked as a high school counselor, I decided what exactly I wanted to be a professor of - - counselor education.

The choice to leave school counseling was not an easy one for me. I knew that I wanted to return to graduate school and work on my doctorate; but I also loved what I was doing for a living. In fact, a story that I often share with graduate students is about the night of my last high school graduation as a counselor. I worked in the Appalachian region of North Carolina, and many of the students from that particular high school who went on to college were first generation college students. That night

after the ceremony, I stood in the parking lot talking with a group of seniors who I had worked with as peer helpers and who had last minute questions about their upcoming transition. As they left me and walked toward their waiting families, I stood in the dark and cried. I cried because I was not sure that I would ever do anything for a living that I believed would matter as much. I had listened to their stories and supported their journeys, and they had touched my life in remarkable ways.

As I enter my twenty-seventh year as a faculty member, I feel equally fortunate to have found my own path in counselor education. It is an extraordinary privilege to be involved in the preparation of the next generation of counselors who will work in schools and communities to improve the lives of children and adolescents and their families. I have come to believe that this work also matters. I have watched graduates from both Appalachian State University and the University of Georgia leave our classrooms and their clinical sites to become exceptional counselors and leaders and advocates. I appreciate the ripple effect that being in counselor education can have. I treasure the opportunities to interact with and help prepare a wonderful group of school counselors who design more innovative and responsive programs, who address more challenging issues, and who take on more risks in order to change systems than I might ever have done myself.

Across my own journey, I have come to believe that professional school counselors are in the unique position of being both counselors and educators. My colleagues and I at UGA have made a focus on these dual roles, anchored in an overarching commitment to social justice, central to the mission of our preparation program. This position is contrary to the debate that sometimes occurs in the field, or more accurately in our professional associations, which forces us to choose counselor or educator representing, from my perspective, a false or at least unnecessary dichotomy. In fact, daily in every school building across this country,

It is an extraordinary privilege to be involved in the preparation of the next generation of counselors who will work in schools and communities to improve the lives of children and adolescents and their families.

professional school counselors serve as both mental health specialists and front-line educators.

I have also come to believe that it is critical that we, as counselor educators, prepare our graduate students for these dual roles as well as the multiple other roles involved in the best practice of school counseling including serving as team-builders, advocates, and system change agents. Some would argue that it is asking too much of one group of professionals, but I do not agree. First, we are not asking them to carry out these roles in isolation. In fact, trying to be the lone ranger offers a certainty of failure. Positive outcomes for children and adolescents can only come with collaboration among all stakeholders including others in the school building, in families, and those within the community. The second reason I do not believe it is too much to ask is because I have seen so many excellent school counselors tackle all of these roles simultaneously with passion and style and grace and humor across my forty years in counseling and education.

A second discussion within the profession of counseling that I would also challenge relates to the variations in focus of school counselor roles over time. Many see it as a weakness that we cannot seem to agree on a clear and predictable and never-changing description of the specialty. I have tended to view at least part of that on-going debate as one of our professional virtues indicating a responsiveness to the contexts in which we find ourselves and the needs of the students with whom we work. Life and society and the needs of children and adolescents change over time. Failure to struggle with those changes and make adjustments in our focus could make us quickly become obsolete. However, having said that, I do believe that there are themes that have actually been fairly consistent over time. School counselors, both traditionally and currently, have focused on three primary domains and have sought to promote academic success, career preparedness, and personal/social development. The difference now

is that as social justice advocates and system change agents, professional school counselors are required to make sure that those efforts are on behalf of all students not just some.

I would be remiss in any reflection on counselor education if I did not acknowledge how much I have learned from all of the graduate students who I have had the privilege to teach and the practicing counselors with whom I have collaborated. I cannot imagine a career that would be more challenging, stimulating, or rewarding. Every class I have taught or workshop I have conducted has been co-constructed with the students and participants. Much as in school counseling, no two days are the same. I also cannot imagine a profession in which who we are would matter more. There are career choices we could have made in which who we are would not be quite so critical. We just would have needed to simply do the job. In counseling, teaching, and supervising, who we are matters. In fact, who we are as a person is what matters most; more than theory or strategy or technique. So I suppose my closing reflection is one of gratitude to the students and counselors and colleagues who continue to challenge and support me to more fully understand what it means to be human and to become a better counselor, teacher, supervisor, and person than I would ever be on my own.

So I suppose my closing reflection is one of gratitude to the students and counselors and colleagues who continue to challenge and support me to more fully understand what it means to be human and to become a better counselor, teacher, supervisor, and person than I would ever be on my own.

Book Reviews:
Just One Friend by Lynn Hall

Whitney Adams and Dr. Karen D. Rowland, Mercer University

"It wasn't that I didn't want other people to have friends, it was that I wanted me to have one like everybody else did" (Hall, 1985, p. 29). *Just One Friend* by Lynn Hall is a story that follows the transition of sixteen-year old Dory Kjellings into mainstream public school. As the main characters in the story are all female, this book is most appropriate for girls in seventh and eight grades of middle school. Although published in 1985, *Just One Friend* is an applicable book to use in bibliotherapy today because it addresses themes of fear, uncertainty, insecurity, and unforeseen consequences.

Author Lynn Hall tells the story of *Just One Friend* from the perspective of Dory, the main character. Dory is a sixteen-year old girl who lives in a relatively small town named Nordness. Socioeconomic issues arise immediately as Dory describes her home and family, "I hated living like we did. We were the only poor family in Nordness" (Hall, 1985, p. 28). Throughout the book, Dory struggles with her negative self-image, describing herself as fat, dumb, and dirty. Dory's negative concept of self led to much insecurity in which Hall explores. The two major catalysts that arise out of Dory's insecurities are her desperation to have one true friend and her fear of being mainstreamed from special education classes back into regular public school classes for her eighth grade year. The majority of the book is saturated with Dory making one poor choice after another.

The driving emotion that leads to Dory's poor choices is fear. Dory is, understandably, anxious about being mainstreamed this new school year. She fears she will get lost in the new school, be teased by others, and unable to keep up academically. Being successful in school is important to Dory because she understands that in order to achieve her goal of becoming a waitress, she must earn a high school diploma. Unfortunately, Dory's fear of not being capable of graduating from high school and pursuing her dreams results in her making poor choices that have unforeseen consequences. Dory decides, in order to survive school, she needs a best friend to help her through the first day. Dory choses another student who lives down the street and who has always treated Dory with kindness, a girl named Robin, to be her best friend. The problem is that Robin already has a best friend, Meredith. Because Dory is desperate to have Robin help her during her first day at this new school, feelings of jealousy arise as Dory plots plan after plan to breakup Robin's and Meredith's friendship.

Just One Friend comes to climax when Dory devises a plan to keep Meredith away from Robin on the first day of school. Hall (1985) has Dory justify her plot against Meredith by stating the following:

"It wasn't my fault I got born into the family I did, and it wasn't any credit to her [Meredith] that she got born in the family she did. She had all the advantages from the word go, and yet she made herself be a snotty, mean person. She didn't have to do that. I didn't have any advantages, and I would never treat either people the way she treated me" (p. 100).

In the heat of the moment Dory loses control, "All of a sudden my mind went blank but my body was moving. Fast. It was out of control. It went to the car door and pulled it open and my arms shot out and my fist started hitting" (Hall, 1985, p. 101). At first Dory feels triumphant, her plan is successful; Robin remains with her all through the first day of school. Dory, however, soon realizes that she doesn't need Robin as much as she once thought. Dory is no longer afraid of being mainstreamed and is, in fact, confident she can survive school without Robin's help every step of the way. Sadly, Dory comes to this realization too late. Due to her earlier choices to keep Meredith from school, an unforeseen consequence occurs that changes all three girls' lives forever.

Just One Friend is a good book to use when working with seventh and eighth grade female students because it offers an opportunity for dialogue about themes such as insecurities, self-image, jealous, choices, and consequences. Lynn Hall does an excellent job of illustrating cause and effect throughout the book. This is beneficial when working with adolescents because it provides an opportunity for the student to understand a situation from multiple perspectives. As a school counselor, this book can be used in individual counseling and is particularly useful when using solution-focused brief counseling techniques, such as flagging the minefield. When using this book, flagging the minefield can be accomplished by discussing with students the choices that Dory made throughout the book, while having students identify other ways

Contact regarding these book reviews can be sent to Dr. Karen D. Rowland at rowland_kd@ mercer.edu.

in which Dory could have handled the situation. Additionally, *Just One Friend*, is a compelling demonstration of how having a goal, without a positive plan for achieving the goal, may have unforeseen consequences. This is important in solution-focused brief counseling where goal setting and creating a plan of action are the first steps toward achieving any solution.

The most realistic use for this book in bibliotherapy is when one is conducting individual counseling. Due to the time constraints a school counselor faces and the length of this book, it is not the most appropriate bibliotherapy resource for classroom guidance. However, *Just One Friend* is a relevant resource for small group counseling, specifically for groups emphasizing the importance of treating one another with kindness, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, intellectual abilities, or socioeconomic background.

What Am I Doing In A Step-Family?
by Claire Berman

In *What Am I Doing in a Step-Family*, Claire Berman writes, "…divorce is something that happens to millions of real-life families. In Los Angeles, California, for example, there are more than 1,000 divorces a year…" (p.7). In the United States, being a part of a blended family has become a cultural norm. As a professional school counselor, one must understand that the school is a microcosm of its society. It is important that the school counselor address issues that may negatively impact a student's academic performance as he or she adjusts to changes that occur when a step-family is created. *What Am I Doing in a Step-Family*, is an excellent book that addresses the questions and uncertainty a student may experience when part of a blended family. This book is an appropriate bibliotherapy tool for fourth and fifth grade, male and female, students who are dealing with changes in family dynamics. *What Am I Doing in a Step-Family* addresses questions such as, "What will my step-parent be like? Where will I live?" (Berman, 1982). The simplistic, yet direct, approach used throughout the book compliments well with the "WDEP" steps of Reality counseling. Due to the variety of blended families discussed, this book would be an excellent resource for both individual and small group counseling.

Author Claire Berman begins *What Am I Doing in a Step-Family* by addressing what happens when a mother and father are no longer together and what the direct impact is on the child. Berman (1982) takes a realistic approach to divorce by using simple, yet direct, statements:

> "Remember: They didn't divorce you! Your mother is no longer your father's wife, but she is still your mom. Your father is no longer your mother's husband, but he is still your dad. Both are still your parents, and always will be. You will always be their child. The divorce didn't change that." (p.11).

I found this approach to be appropriate because it is both informative of the student's current reality and, yet, reassuring to the student that he or she does not necessarily have to lose a parent as a result of this family transition. The goal is for the school counselor to help the student achieve academic success, helping a student focus on the aspects of his or her life that are not changing, can help provide a small sense of stability in unstable circumstances. Throughout the book, Berman encourages the reader, or student, to talk to their parent. I think encouraging communication between student and parent is

important. As the school counselor, it is important that one does not inadvertently offer family counseling. The role of the professional school counselor is to help all students achieve academic success. By emphasizing the role of communication between student and parents, Berman is reaffirming that the counselor should not be involved in conversations regarding who the student should live with, what the family rules should be, or how the student relates to the stepparent.

After addressing what may have happened to the student's family that has now made a blended family a possibility or reality, Berman addresses questions that may arise out of being a part of a blended family. These questions address issues regarding what to call your stepparent, where do you belong in your new family, and will your mom or dad be mad if you like your new stepparent (Berman, 1982). Each of these questions is addressed with ideas of ways in which the student may approach these issues with his or her parents. In this section of the book, Berman discusses topics about the importance of each member of a stepfamily respecting one another. Berman dedicates a section of the book to the importance of compromise. Compromise is emphasized to reiterate that every member of the family must adjust to the changes that accompany a blended family, if a tolerable home environment is to be achieved.

The final pages of the book are used to address specific issues that arise when a blended family forms after the passing of one of the student's parents. This is an important scenario to address because sometimes students are dealing with the grief of losing a loved one, in addition to adjusting to new family dynamics. In this section, Berman reassures readers that it is normal and "ok" to miss the parent he or she lost, while still becoming a part of the step-family (Berman, 1982).
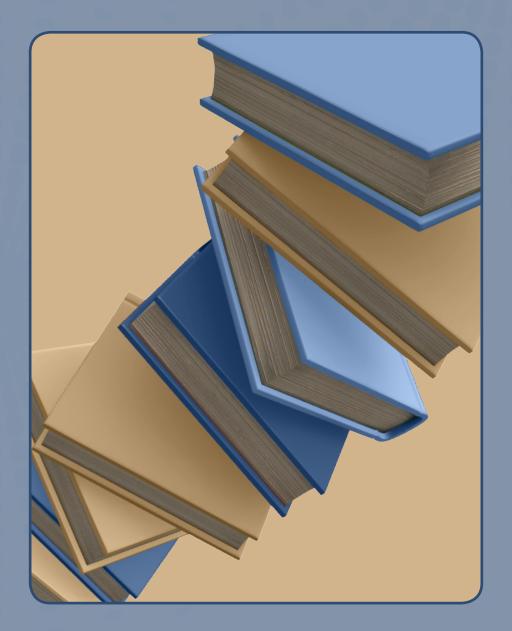
The layout of this book makes it excellent for small group and individual counseling. This book is appropriate for any students who may be struggling with their parent's divorce and face the possibility of becoming a blended family, or for any students who are already part of a blended family, but are struggling to adjust. In the first week of counseling, the school counselor would read *What Am I Doing in a Step-Family*, in its entirety, with the student. The book lends itself to many different dialogues with students. Each week, the school counselor will focus sessions on one of the question Berman addresses in the book. For example, when discussing "where is my place in this new family?" the school counselor could use Reality techniques to gather more information on the student's quality world. This can be achieved by addressing the "wants" of WDEP; questions such as "What do you want your role to look like in your new family" may be good topic questions for group discussion. Just as the book progresses, each time the school counselor meets with the student, another topic from the book will be addressed as the counselor uses the WDEP method to move the student towards their goal.

Resources

Berman, C (1982). *What Am I Doing in a Step-Family?* New Jersey: Lyle Stuart Inc.

Hall, L (1985). *Just One Friend*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

GSCA Journal Submission Guidelines

Editor: Karen Rowland
Email: journal@gaschoolcounselors.com

Submissions

All manuscripts submitted for publication must fit into one of the following categories:

1. Research and Practice

- **Research Based**
  - › Theoretical: Manuscripts in this category may include such things as an extensive review of the literature in a particular area, an annotated bibliography of fundamental key publications, and/or theoretical discussions which integrate relevant material in the field in a new light.
  - › Empirical: Manuscripts which involve actual scientific inquiries, and descriptive and/or inferential statistics. Attention will be paid to details such as client consent, preservation of subject confidentiality, sampling procedures to promote the representativeness of subjects, data storage, and follow up procedures.

- **Practice Based**
  - › Manuscripts in this arena will involve works which support, and facilitate the practice of school counseling.
  - › Examples may include a review of exemplary programs, activities, techniques, comprehensive websites, documentation procedures, or literary resources tied to a particular topic.

2. Commentaries and Reviews

- Each volume of the journal may contain invited essays on timely topics by school counseling professionals in the state.
- Examples of such topics may include school law and ethics, technological advances, special education, scheduling, state standards, model programs, graduation requirements, college readiness, job preparation.

3. Resources and Reflections

- Short, one to two page items will be included which will provide the reader with practical tools in the field or 'food for thought'.
- Examples of resource items are lists of websites, activities, and books.
- Examples of reflections are reaction statements to timely issues, professional experience accounts, book reviews, case studies, or responses to previous journal articles

Author Submission Guidelines

- Visit gaschoolcounselors.com for more information on guidelines

» Practicing school counselors at all school levels, their supervisors, school counselor educators, graduate students, and related professionals are encouraged to submit original works.

» Manuscripts that reflect creativity and critical thinking, as well as speak to timely issues, will be given the highest publication consideration.

» All manuscripts should conform to the guidelines for publication listed in the latest Edition of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual.

» Manuscripts which are currently under publication consideration by another publisher, or previously published work should **not** be submitted. Only original material will be reviewed.

» Manuscripts must be submitted electronically as a Microsoft Word attachment to the GSCA Journal Editor at journal@gaschoolcounselors.com.

» Manuscripts will be accepted throughout the year. The journal will be published once per year in November.

» Manuscripts longer than 20 pages will not be reviewed. Keep titles and headings concise.

» Manuscripts should include:

- Cover page with: article title, name, title, institution, address, phone number, e-mail address for each author. Primary authors should be designated as the contact person on manuscripts with multiple authors; and author identification should not appear on any page other than the title page in order that the Editorial Review Board may conduct a blind review of the manuscript.

- Abstract of the article should not be more than 75 words.

- Cover letter in which the merits of the manuscript are briefly described, and a statement indicating that the manuscript is an original work not under review consideration or previously published elsewhere is included.

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GSCA Executive Office
PMB 176
2900 Delk Rd, Ste 700
Marietta, GA 30067-5350
770-971-6002
888-455-0997 Toll Free
info@gaschoolcounselors.com