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GEORGIA SCHOOL COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION

Empowering Students to Imagine, Believe and Achieve, 2010 - 2011

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Table of Contents

- 4 From Your GSCA President by Demetria Williams
- 5 From the *GSCA Journal* Editor by Rhonda M. Bryant
- 6 From the *GSCA Journal* Editorial Assistant by Yolanda Anderson

FEATURED ARTICLES

- 7 Integrate Your Program: Aligning the ASCA National Standards with the Georgia Performance Standards by Lisa L. Schulz
- 15 Utilizing Staff Perceptions to Guide and Shape Future Program Planning
- 26 New School Counselor Perceptions of Their Mentoring and Induction Program
- 34 Say the Word Islam: School Counselors and Muslim Children

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS & JOURNAL GUIDELINES

- 39 Call for Submissions
- 40 *GSCA Journal* Guidelines for Authors

From Your GSCA President



Greetings School Counselors:

It is with great pleasure that the association presents to you the 17th annual *GSCA Journal*. As you read this edition you will discover several learning opportunities in the area of professional school counseling. As we all know, this is pivotal time for our profession. School counselors must continue to provide compelling evidence that we are professionals who contribute substantially to student growth, development, and achievement. GSCA is proud to offer you this publication as an element of research and professional learning.

Our theme for 2010-11 is *Empowering Students to Imagine, Believe, and Achieve*. **Imagine** the possibilities. **Believe** in themselves and what they can accomplish. **Achieve** at their greatest potential both personally and academically. You will find this issue, like the ones before it, to be useful for your professional growth and development. Join me in honoring the authors of the articles for this edition. These school counselors are leaders among us who model the behaviors and skills so needed to move our profession forward. Additionally, thank you to the Editorial Board for their commitment and dedication. They have worked incredibly hard to provide school counselors, graduate students, and counselor educators with an opportunity for professional growth, based on counselor-identified needs. Finally, thank you to all who work daily empowering students to imagine, believe and achieve.

All the best,

Demetria Williams
GSCA President 2010-2011



GEORGIA SCHOOL COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION

Empowering Students to Imagine, Believe and Achieve, 2010 - 2011



Dr. Rhonda M. Bryant
GSCA Journal Editor

From the *GSCA Journal* Editor

As Dr. Susan Boes passed the baton of the Journal editorship to me, I was convinced that I had plenty of time before the next issue. Of course, time waits for no one and here is the latest issue of the Journal! Dr. Boes' support has been invaluable as has been that of GSCA leadership, editorial board, and membership. I sincerely hope that readers find the contents helpful in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of their professional school counseling activities.

This issue covers various topics related to our roles as professional school counselors, counselor educators, and counselors in training. I am particularly pleased to introduce a new section entitled, Perspectives From Our Stakeholders, which provides stakeholders opportunities to present information and research on how school counseling shapes their professional and personal experiences. I look forward to feedback regarding this section and other journal articles as well.

As we progress through 2010 and explore new ventures for 2011, I plan to confer with GSCA office staff to create a totally electronic submission process for upcoming issues. So continue conducting your research and developing conceptual articles and best practices in anticipation of the 2011 call for submissions. Thank you for your readership and support of the Journal.

Dr. Rhonda M. Bryant is an Associate Professor of School Counseling at Albany State University. She also serves on the editorial board of the Journal of Counseling and Development (JCD) and is the co-editor of *The Activist*, a publication of Counselors for Social Justice, which is a division of the American Counseling Association.



Yolanda Anderson
GSCA Journal Editorial Assistant

Thoughts from the *GSCA Journal* Editorial Assistant

When Dr. Rhonda Bryant approached me about being her editorial assistant for the Journal, I was a little confused. Immediately, I thought about all that is required to accomplish this task. Yet, with a year and a half of writing papers in Albany State University's School Counseling Program, I figured Dr. Bryant knew about my skills and novice APA abilities. I expressed my doubt about being an adequate editorial assistant; however, because Dr. Bryant is such a strong advocate for her graduate students, she had total confidence that I would do a fine job.

To prepare for this task, I reflected on my time in the school counseling program. I respect and admire the faculty members who have in-depth knowledge and experiences as professional counselors. I have learned also a great deal about the field and how I can make a positive and most importantly, effective difference in the lives of young people. Dr. Bryant challenges me to reach beyond what I believe I can do and to develop a creative approach to whatever the task may be. With the opportunity to be her assistant, I must say that the job is well out of my comfort zone. This is new territory!

Like previous editions, this issue of the Georgia School Counselors Association Journal provides a wealth of information pertaining to comprehensive counseling services to our Georgia K-12 students. I am pleased to participate in the publishing process and especially encourage my graduate school colleagues to refer to the Journal often and submit work for publication.

Yolanda Anderson has a B.A. in Political Science from Fort Valley State University. Her willingness to help Georgia youth become productive citizens led her to pursue a career as a professional school counselor. She plans to graduate in May 2011.

Integrate Your Program: Aligning the ASCA National Standards With the Georgia Performance Standards

Lisa L. Schulz

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Abstract

Professional school counselors must clearly establish and articulate the purpose and goals of their school counseling program and its relationship to student achievement in order to become integral participants in the school reform movement. By aligning Georgia's Performance Standards and the ASCA National Standards, counselors can realize measurable gains in student achievement as well as demonstrate program effectiveness. Designed to assist Georgia's school counselors in developing programming which aligns counseling standards with academic standards, this article includes examples of standards alignment at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Suggestions for program delivery, teacher collaboration, promoting cultural responsive practices, and assessment of program effectiveness are discussed.

Integrate Your Program: Aligning the ASCA National Standards With the Georgia Performance Standards

Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and *The National Education Goals Report: Building a Nation of Learners* (National Education Goals Panel, 1991), the school counseling profession has been struggling to solidify its place in the education reform movement. What has thrived, however, is the movement to a standards-based educational model. As a result, academic standards in content areas such as English/Language Arts, Social Science, Mathematics, and Science have been written to identify content and performance standards applicable to all students across all grade levels. Standards of achievement serve both to clarify and to raise expectations, and standards provide a common set of expectations. Standards-based education, student academic achievement,

and accountability have become the language of the work in schools. Therefore, in an effort to identify as partners in student achievement and further define the role of the school counselor, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) developed the national standards for school counseling programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) and a framework by which they can be administered.

The framework of the ASCA National Model (2005) helps to align the comprehensive school counseling program with the school's core mission, that of teaching and learning. ASCA has created a framework that allows for fine-tuning on the part of states, individual districts, and departments to define more intimately the needs of students in their respective areas. This allows programs to share a uniformity of vision, but fulfill the vision in diverse ways according to the needs of the students. The clearly stated purpose of the National Model is to encourage school counselors to provide leadership and serve as advocates, change agents, and collaborators to ensure student success (ASCA, 2005).

An additional response to the educational reform movement, the Transforming School Counseling Initiative [TSCI] (Education Trust, 1997), in collaboration with the DeWitt Wallace-Readers Digest, the ASCA, the American Counseling Association (ACA), and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) focused on redefining the role of the school counselor. This new vision for school counselor training and practice requires a focus on identifying and removing the inequities and other barriers to student achievement. The TSCI promotes a more systems-focused approach where the counselor functions as social justice advocate through leadership, collaboration, counseling, consultation, assessment, data analysis, and the implementation of evidence-based programs designed to eliminate the achievement gap (Education Trust, 1997).

ASCA National Standards and the Georgia Performance Standards

Being Both Counselor and Educator

As definitions of the school counselor role and identity have evolved, concern and consternation have surfaced in terms of who the school counselor is: a counselor or an educator (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Brown & Trusty, 2005)? Simply by looking at the numbers of students in schools who suffer from biological and environmental barriers to learning (i.e., ADHD, having an alcoholic caregiver), a case can be made for the school counselor to focus solely on the mental health needs of students. Often the only professional in a building with mental health training, the school counselor is the central contact for supporting immediate and on-going clinical services. Choosing to work in a school setting is indicative of supporting the teaching and learning process and, therefore, puts counselors in the role of educator. School counselors are at the hub of the educational experience, having knowledge of student, teacher, administrator, family, and community. This affords the school counselor the opportunity to advocate for each student's educational achievement at each of these levels. The level of educational attainment continues to determine the quality of life for most individuals, and the focus on changing systems which do not fully support all students requires an education specialist (Paisley, Ziomek-Daigle, Getch, & Bailey, 2006).

Paisley et al. (2006) encourage that both the roles of counselor and educator be embraced rather than expend energy in a debate to determine which is more consistent with the current vision of school counseling as defined by ASCA and TSCI. The practicing school counselor quite simply operates as both in order to address student-focused and systems-focused barriers to student achievement. Perhaps something to consider in this debate, however, is that school counselors possess a unique skill set and professional disposition that other school professionals do not. It would seem beneficial for professional school counselors to focus on supporting the core mission of schools utilizing the unique clinical, consultative, and collaborative skills other education professionals do not possess. It is in this way the school counselor can demonstrate how students are improved given their participation in a comprehensive counseling program.

The ASCA Standards and the Georgia Performance Standards

With the passage of the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (U. S. Department of Education [USDE], 1994), U.S. lawmakers acknowledged the importance of high

standards in improving education. Since that time, the call for higher standards has come from all areas: administrators, teachers, teachers unions, state- and national-level educational organizations, business and community leaders, parents, and students (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory [NCREL], 2010). Sadly, this legislation along with other reports and proposals for school reform neglected to consider school counseling as integral to improving school success and counseling programs "were ignored as a means to improve student achievement and help students prepare for the future" (Dahir, 2001, p. 322). In order to address this lack of consideration, the ASCA National Standards were developed to demonstrate how vital and integral school counselors and school counseling programs are to student success.

The ASCA standards address the content knowledge, skills, and attitudes all students need to acquire in a school counseling program. They are comprised of three broad and interrelated areas: academic development, career development, and personal/social development (Hogan, 1998). Each standard is more fully defined by skill competencies and indicators of desired student learning outcome. The academic standards describe what students need to know and achieve academically and the career standards focus on the successful transition from school to the world of work. The personal/social standards provide a foundation for students' personal and social growth and development which in turn contributes to academic and career success (Hogan, 1998). The standards identify not only the role school counselors must play in supporting the academic mission of schools, but provide the basis by which administrators, teachers, and parents can know how school counseling programming enhances the core academic standards. A copy of the ASCA standards can be downloaded using the following internet address: <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/files/NationalStandards.pdf>

The Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) have been developed and systematically implemented in an effort to meet the school improvement goals of the Georgia Department of Education (GADOE). According to the GADOE website:

The performance standards provide clear expectations for instruction, assessment, and student work. They define the level of work that demonstrates achievement of the standards, enabling a teacher to know "how good is good enough." The performance standards isolate and identify the skills needed to use the knowledge and skills to problem-solve, reason, com-

ASCA National Standards and the Georgia Performance Standards

municate, and make connections with other information.

They also tell the teacher how to assess the extent to which the student knows the material or can manipulate and apply the information (GADOE, n.d.).

The GPS are comprised of the following content areas: English Language Arts & Reading,

Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts, Health Education, Physical Education, Modern Languages & Latin, and Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE). Generally, the GPS are divided into grade level standards by K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. Currently, several areas (i.e. CTAE and Science) are under review for future implementation. Public schools across the state have based their curricula on these standards and state-wide assessments such as the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT), End-of-Course Tests (EOCT), and Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHS GT) are intended to assess how well students perform according to these learning standards.

Character Education and Guidance Quality Core Curriculum

The development and implementation of the GPS replaces the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) for all content areas previously used throughout Georgia as part of the Georgia Learning Connections material. The process of replacing the QCC standards with the GPS has been taking place gradually since 2004 and is virtually complete for all the core academic areas. At this time, the author is unaware of any plan for development or implementation of new school counseling standards by the Georgia Department of Education. Currently, the QCC for both Character Education and Guidance are available online and may be used to bring stated goals for Georgia students into alignment with the GPS and ASCA standards.

The Georgia Character Education and Guidance QCC, like the GPS, are divided into grade level by K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The Character Education QCC consists of the same three strands for each grade level: Citizenship, Respect for Others, and Respect for Self. Each strand has identified topics and performance standards for each topic. The Guidance QCC also consists of three strands in each grade level: Self Knowledge, Educational and Occupational Exploration, and Career Planning, each with identified topics and standards.

The task of aligning or “crosswalking” the Georgia QCC and the ASCA standards with the GPS will assist Georgia school counselors and other school leaders in developing exemplary programs in all areas. Crosswalking core academic content standards and school counseling standards provides students with an integrated perspective of the core mission of schools and the life skills required to achieve success in school and beyond.

Crosswalking the Standards

The vision to integrate school counseling standards with the academic mission of schools is infused throughout the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005). The National Model, created to “more clearly define and unify professional identity and practices” (Schellenberg, 2008, p. 10), provides a framework to establish comprehensive, developmental programs. The standards, competencies, and indicators complement a more academic-focused school counseling program as opposed to the more mental-health focused model of the past. This does not mean the mental health needs of students have been abandoned, as such services are built into the model, only that school counselors link interventions to the core mission of schools and become accountable for the contributions to student outcomes (Paisley & Hayes, 2003).

Crosswalking, or standards blending as coined by Schellenberg (2008, p. 32), is a “systems-focused, integrative, and student centered approach that directly and overtly aligns school counseling programs with academic achievement missions.” This programmatic approach requires that school counselors use their dual role of counselor and educator in an effort to meet the mental health and educational needs of all students. Schellenberg recommends focusing on language arts and mathematics standards as both content areas have traditionally been the basic core of the teaching and learning process. In addition, the focus on language arts and mathematics will support schools in attaining the reading and math proficiency requirements as outlined by NCLB.

The national standards in school counseling describe “what students should know and be able to do as a result of participating in a school counseling program” (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, p.1). Just as for Math and English teachers, counselors are accountable for creating, delivering, and ensuring the effectiveness of their curricula. School counselors can select which standards to align based on instructional guidelines, consultation with teachers, and as identified by examination of test scores,

ASCA National Standards and the Georgia Performance Standards

state and/or classroom assessment data, and other performance data (Schellenberg, 2008). Appendix A demonstrates the alignment of an ASCA standard from each domain (academic, career, and personal/social) with both a Georgia Guidance QCC and a GPS. The academic standard is aligned with 3rd grade Science, the career standard is aligned with a 7th grade Social Studies, and the personal/social standard is aligned with high school English Language Arts and Reading. The blending of the standards into one unit compliments each area and allows students to build both extrinsic and intrinsic meaning given the integration of the counseling component.

Inclusion and Program Delivery

With regard to program delivery, the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005) identifies large group guidance lessons, small group work, and individual work as the traditional forms of instruction and intervention. Classroom guidance, consisting of structured developmental lessons, is identified as an effective means to deliver the counseling standards to students (Whiston & Quinby, 2011). Developmental guidance lessons provide an ideal format by which to integrate academic and counseling curriculum as opposed to pulling students out of class or usurping their recess, music, or P.E. time. Teachers are not requested to sacrifice academic or instructional time spent in preparation for high-stakes testing (Clark & Breman, 2009). Guidance lessons offer both counselors and teachers an opportunity to integrate content as well as increase the relevance for students. According to Akos, Cockman, and Strickland (2007):

...classroom guidance has inherent variance that includes how systematically it reaches all students, how sequential it is (building on previous curricula), how classroom dynamics interact (subject, teacher, student configurations), and how numerous pedagogical classroom considerations operate (e.g., teacher- or student-centered lessons, lecture or activity based, classroom management) (p. 456).

Helping students understand the relationship of academic content to the possibilities and potentials of life during and after high school increases student interest and participation.

In the planning and delivery of classroom guidance, Akos et al. (2007) ask school counselors to consider the concept of differentiation. Prevalent as an instructional strategy for teachers, differentiating instruction means to incorporate the varying learning styles of the various

learners into the lesson. Given the counselors' understanding of the developmental diversity of students, even for those within the same grade, such a consideration makes sense. However, planning for multiple learning needs is still a challenge.

Akos et al. (2007) offer a two-prong preparation model for planning and delivering differentiated classroom guidance. First, determine students' needs by assessing their (a) readiness to understand and apply new knowledge and skills, (b) interest levels in order to determine the varying levels of motivation, and (c) learning styles, given not all students learn by the same delivery method or pace. Secondly, after determining student needs, counselors can then differentiate lessons based on content (what the students need to learn), process (the manner in which they learn), and product (the way student understanding is assessed). Identified as a school counselor best practice, differentiating curriculum gives the school counselor language with which to work collaboratively with teachers and ensure the material is delivered in an appropriate and effective manner.

Small group work and individual work within the classroom setting is another possible method of delivering curriculum (Clark & Breman, 2009). Focusing on a more systemic definition of integration, Clark and Breman describe an "inclusion model [which] ideally would be one that embraces the concept of providing academic and social-emotional support to all students through a myriad of approaches, a variety of services and innovation interventions in classroom settings" (p. 7). Also identified as a best practice in educating a diverse student population, this model purports the use of student collaboration and peer-mediated instruction, teaching responsibility, peace-making, self-determination, the use of technology, and the use of supports and accommodations. As an example, Clark and Breman offer utilizing a peer tutoring or peer mentoring program whereby students follow-up on a counselor/teacher introduced lesson without oversight.

A similar, favorite delivery method of the author is to divide classes into groups, each group having a unique task to perform within the time allotted. (Each task is related to the central theme of the aligned standards). The teacher leads one group, the counselor another, and the remaining groups are student-managed. The student-managed groups can incorporate group work or individual work depending on the nature of the curriculum being introduced or reinforced. Students rotate through the different tasks and are accountable for the content of each. Incorporating small group and individual work

ASCA National Standards and the Georgia Performance Standards

into the classroom further integrates the school counseling program by meeting the diverse academic and social-emotional needs of students while supporting the core mission of schools.

Teacher collaboration and consultation. Teachers are actively interested in being collaborative with school counselors (Clark & Amatea, 2004). In fact, in their study of teachers' perceptions and expectations of school counselors, Clark and Amatea indicate that the theme which emerged most frequently for teachers was that of "teacher-counselor communication, collaboration, and teamwork" (p. 135). They continue:

Teachers and pre-service counselors commented on the need to work together for the good of their students. This theme ties in very well with the philosophy of the ASCA National Standards (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) and the ASCA National Model (2003a), particularly with regard to the delivery system component (Clark & Amatea, 2004, p. 137).

The work must begin in small steps. Integrating school counseling standards across the curriculum will take time and dedication. Start with one teacher-ally and a willingness to measure the effectiveness of the lesson for both sets of standards. Appendix B provides the reader with a potential lesson plan developed for another 3rd grade Science standard. Based on an on-line unit created by Lori Miller (2009) of Wacona Elementary School in Waycross, GA, a school counselor could work collaboratively with such a teacher to incorporate the indicated ASCA standard and Georgia QCC. By adding a question or two to the existing worksheets or adding an additional piece to the assessment process, the school counselor could not only align counseling standards, but convey how such decision-making builds valuable life skills such as problem-solving and maintaining personal safety.

While it is still necessary that school counselors convey to the teachers and administrators the role and specialized training they possess, working to align standards can lead to increased mutual respect, understanding, and higher student achievement.

Assessment. Most evaluation methods include behavioral observations and measurement of knowledge and content standards. Formal assessments such as student self reports, needs assessments, case studies, portfolios, student resumes, journal entries, school records, standardized assessments, surveys and questionnaires, and pre/post inventories can be utilized to demonstrate the effectiveness of the collaboration between professionals

and impact on student academic achievement and social-emotional development. Indirect assessments such as feedback from parents, employers, counselors, and teachers can also be indicators of student progress.

Regardless of the method, it is vital that data be collected and the results shared in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the school counseling program. To be viewed as simply support rather than integral to the core mission of schools could result in the loss of jobs which clearly means the loss of protective services for students. The contributions of school counseling must not be lost or diminished because of a lack of data collection.

Addressing the Achievement Gap

For school counseling, effectiveness can be measured in terms of students' academic achievement and increased social capital. Of particular concern is being able to measure the increased achievement by those students who are impacted by academic and non-academic barriers to that achievement. School counseling programs must address these barriers to student learning and accomplishment regardless of their origins. In as much as school counselors are trained to be social justice advocates, they must also incorporate and model culturally responsive practices.

Gay (2006) defines culturally responsive practice as the use the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective; it teaches to and through the strengths of students. Translating this definition to the classroom means identifying and using the diverse nature of students to construct the teaching and learning experience based on the array of lived experience each brings. This concept views diversity as an asset rather than a deficit and thus, requires a shift in the pedagogical core of a system. Understanding how students and teachers make meaning is critical to the creation of empowered and engaged students. A curriculum that aligns itself with that construct will undoubtedly produce quality outcomes for previously marginalized students.

In an effort to close the achievement gap through standards alignment, Schellenberg and Grothaus (2009) used small group work as the strategy with 3rd grade African-American males. They reported gains for these students in both academic and counseling curriculum areas as well as increased self-esteem. The academic areas reinforced in the group were Math and Language Arts. The counseling curriculum "offered opportunities to appreciate students' cultural backgrounds and the strengths these provide"

ASCA National Standards and the Georgia Performance Standards

(Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009, p. 442) so as to counteract projected negative messages and attitudes. This research is promising in that it supports school counselor's efforts to close the achievement gap. In addition, the infusion of academic content in counseling work supports the overall mission of schools.

Such integration allows counselors, teachers, and administrators another means by which to implement more culturally responsive practices. Steen and Kaffenberger (2007) also advocate for the integration of academics into counseling work. Again using small group work as the intervention strategy, improvement of student attitude toward academic achievement was realized. The purpose of the group for was to "help students increase learning behaviors (i.e., actions such as asking questions, completing assignments, and staying on task) and improve academic achievement, while addressing their personal/social concerns such as changing families, friendships, and/or anger management" (Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007, p. 516). Another facet of this intervention was to use communication strategies to collaborate with teachers and parents to support student learning. It is in these ways the school counselor can implement systems- and student-focused interventions in order to reduce and eliminate barriers.

Conclusion

The decision of which ASCA standards to align with which GPS is often made given the needs of a particular group of students. Ideally, the state's professional organizations (i.e., Georgia School Counseling Association, Georgia Association of Educational Leaders) could initiate the development of a state model for school counseling programs. State-level leadership can influence local practice through the development and implementation of a state model (Martin, Carey, & DeCoster, 2009) which includes a standards crosswalk. ASCA has available the material and guidance necessary to develop a state model as well as the materials needed to crosswalk the counseling and academic standards. Providing Georgia's school counselors with a unifying document containing a philosophy of practice and counselor-led strategies and interventions for each content area and level can only further equip Georgia's counselors with the tools to offer best educational and culturally responsive practices.

Modeling collaborative relationships with teachers supports student development and healthy life skills. Putting into action an aligned curriculum can foster critical thinking, improved decision-making, and increased stu-

dent achievement. Students may become more motivated to invest in the overall school program given the increased relevance they glean from integrated lessons. Ultimately, aligning school counseling standards with academic achievement provides school counselors the opportunity to function as both education specialist by reinforcing academic standards, and simultaneously as mental health specialist by addressing the personal/social and emotional development of students (Schellenberg, 2008).

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ASCA National Standards and the Georgia Performance Standards

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ASCA National Standards and the Georgia Performance Standards

Appendix A

ASCA Standard, Guidance QCC & GPS – Sample

ASCA Domain & Standard	ASCA Competencies & Indicators	GA Guidance QCC	GA Performance Standard
Academic Standard C Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home and in the community.	Competency C1 Relate school to life experiences. A:C1.6 Understand how school success and academic achievement enhance future career and vocational opportunities.	Strand: 3B:8 Topic: Awareness of how work relates to the needs and functions of society. Standard: Describe how work can satisfy personal needs. Describe the products and services of local employers. Describe ways in which work can help overcome social and economic problems.	<i>3rd grade: Life Science</i> S3L2. Students will recognize the effects of pollution and humans on the environment. a. Explain the effects of pollution (such as littering) to the habitats of plants and animals. b. Identify ways to protect the environment. • Conservation of resources • Recycling of materials
Career Standard C Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training and the world of work.	Competency C1 Acquire knowledge to achieve career goals. C:C1.5 Describe the effect of work on lifestyle C:C1.6 Understand the importance of equity and access in career choice.	Strand: 7B:5 Topic: Understanding the relationship between work and learning. Standard: Demonstrate effective learning habits and skills. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of personal skills and attitudes to job success. Describe the relationship of personal attitudes, beliefs, abilities, and skills to occupations.	<i>7th grade: Social Studies</i> SS7E5 The student will analyze different economic systems. a. Compare how traditional, command, and market economic economies answer the economic questions of (1) what to produce, (2) how to produce, and (3) for whom to produce. b. Explain how most countries have a mixed economy located on a continuum between pure market and pure command.
Personal/Social Standard A Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to help understand and respect self and others.	Competency A2 Acquire interpersonal skills. PS:A2.5 Recognize and respect differences in various family configurations PS:A2.7 Know that communication involves speaking, listening and nonverbal behavior.	Strand: 9-12A:2 Topic: Skills to interact positively with others Standard: Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills. Demonstrate interpersonal skills required for working with and for others. Describe appropriate employer and employee interactions in various situations. Demonstrate how to express feelings, reactions, and ideas in an appropriate manner.	<i>Grades 9-12: English Language Arts and Reading</i> ELABLRC2 The student participates in discussions related to curricular learning in all subject areas. The students a. Identifies messages and themes from books in all subject areas. b. Responds to a variety of texts in multiple modes of discourse. c. Relates messages and themes from one subject area to those in another area.

ASCA National Standards and the Georgia Performance Standards

Appendix B

School Counseling Lesson Plan Worksheet

Grade Level: 3 rd grade
Lesson Title: Pollution and people.
ASCA Standard(s) & Competency(ies): <u>PS: B</u> Students will make decisions, set goals and take necessary action to achieve goals. <u>PS:B1</u> Self-Knowledge Application <u>PS: C</u> Students will understand safety and survival skills <u>PS:C1</u> Acquire Personal Safety Skills
GA Guidance QCC: <u>3:C.9</u> Topic: Understand how to make decisions Standard: Describe how choices are made. Describe what can be learned from making mistakes. Identify and access problems that interfere with attaining goals. Identify strategies used in solving problems. Identify alternatives in decision making situations. Describe how personal beliefs and attitudes affect decision making. Describe how decisions affect self and others.
GA Performance Standard: <i>3rd grade Science – Life Science</i> <i>S3L2. Students will recognize the effects of pollution and humans on the environment.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Explain the effects of pollution (such as littering) to the habitats of plants and animals.b. Identify ways to protect the environment.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Conservation of resources- Recycling of materials
Objectives (indicators): <u>PS:B1:2</u> Understand consequences of decisions and choices <u>PS:C1.2</u> Learn about the relationship between rules, laws, safety and the protection of rights of the individual
Activity(ies): Learning module lesson on pollution - http://www.alienteacher.com/pollution/pollution.html
Materials: Computer access, pens, markers, crayons for poster, recycling bags
Evaluation: Pre – post survey
Total Time: One – two weeks.

A School Counseling Program Evaluation:

Utilizing Staff Perceptions to Guide and Shape Future Program Planning

Heather Sherwood

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The author would like to thank Dr. Susan Boes for her helpful feedback and assistance throughout the process of the action research study. The ARS is a requirement of the University of West Georgia Specialist degree in the area of school counseling, but is the research of the author.

Abstract

This paper describes an action research project evaluating an elementary school counseling program in a large suburban Georgia city. Using staff surveys (which include homeroom teachers as well as support teachers and paraprofessionals), interviews, and researcher observations the program was evaluated to determine strengths and weaknesses. The results indicate that the staff members have a general understanding of the school counseling program's goals. Most participants indicated that the program met the needs of the school and its students. Implications from the research pointed to a need for more direct collaboration of the professional school counselor (PSC) with teachers on a regular basis. Further research into the parent and student perceptions of the school counseling program is recommended.

A School Counseling Program Evaluation:

Utilizing Staff Perceptions to Guide and Shape Future Program Planning

With a major focus on accountability for educators, evaluation of all elements of student performance maximizes student success. School counseling programs must follow this trend and move toward greater demonstration of accountability through thoughtful program evaluations. In the state of Georgia, academic competencies are based on the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS); however, the state has not yet established these standards for school counseling programs. Individual counties have flexibility in the delivery and standards for school counseling programs.

The purpose of this action research study (ARS) was to determine the staff perceptions of the school counseling program for an elementary school (PK -5th grade) in a large suburban Georgia city and to utilize this information to make improvements to the program. The school's population is diverse in ethnicity and socioeconomic status: more than 50% of students are on free/reduced lunch status, and the student demographic breakdown is 68% African-American, 14% Hispanic, 13% Caucasian, 3% Asian, 2% multiracial. Class sizes are below the state average and numerous supports assist teachers in the educational process. With only one professional school counselor (PSC) for a school of almost 500 students, it is important that the school counseling program, which is modeled after the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model, is regularly evaluated and changed to meet the needs of students. This paper's purpose is to review the methods, outcomes, and limitations from the ARS to determine the program's strengths and weaknesses. The interventions utilized for improvement are also discussed. Having interaction regarding the staff perceptions of the school counseling program will guide the PSC and the school counseling advisory council in making changes to program elements and goals to provide students with a program that better meets their needs.

Review of Related School Counseling Literature

The literature related to this ARS identifies two main themes: accountability for PSCs and their programs, and how staff perceptions of school counseling programs impact changes within the programs. Through a review of this literature, the foundation for this ARS was established.

A School Counseling Program Evaluation:

Accountability and the Need for Program Evaluations

Like other professions, there is an increased demand for school counseling programs to demonstrate accountability and impact on student academic, personal/social, and career development (Beesley, 2004; Dimmitt, 2009; Whiston & Aricak, 2008). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2003) created a National Model for PSCs to utilize as a guide in the creation of programs. The model is comprised of four domains: foundation, delivery, management, and accountability. The accountability domain promotes the need for PSCs to utilize data to drive the program goals and demonstrate effectiveness (ASCA, 2003). Using data, the PSC should be able to demonstrate how the program's interventions have assisted in student performance and success.

Methods for Program Evaluations

Thorough evaluation of school counseling programs can reveal the following: contributions that the program makes towards educational successes, increased awareness, and further definition of the responsibilities of the PSC. Having this information not only builds on the knowledge about the program but also leads to more effective interventions being utilized in the pursuit of assisting students (Dimmitt, 2009). School counseling program evaluation is necessary for the growth and improvement of the program. ASCA outlines performance standards and recommends a program audit for PSCs. The multifaceted design assists PSCs in simplifying and evaluating each element of the program. PSCs then utilize the information in setting program goals (2003). Methods for program evaluation can vary.

Sample program evaluations. Missouri, for example, evaluates school counseling programs using a multifaceted assessment of the components of the program, supervision of personnel, and program results. This school counseling model places emphasis on feedback from stakeholders regarding mastery of competencies, and satisfaction with program elements (Gysbers, Hughey, Starr & Lapan, 1992). By utilizing several sources of systemic data, PSCs had a more concrete picture of the impact of the program.

Conversely, other program evaluations center more on the individual PSC and his/her personal contributions to the program. Littrell and Peterson (2001) focused their description of program evaluation on one PSC's program

and through extensive observations were able to assess the impact of the school counseling program on the school and its students. Although helpful in reference, attempting to evaluate a program using this method, would present major difficulties for PSCs. Having outside observers enter a setting and conduct interviews related to the effectiveness of a program would be informative; however, most PSCs would find this approach unrealistic in that limited resources would be available to utilize this method of evaluation.

Many evaluation techniques require feedback from stakeholders regarding their insights into the program. This type of feedback can be difficult for stakeholders to provide, especially if the program is not fully implemented or well publicized. Providing information in the form of brochures, or presentations to parents and other stakeholders promotes the school counseling program and the role of the PSC is made clearer to the stakeholders. In turn, this improves stakeholder ability to access and evaluate program elements (Gillilan, 2006). Once stakeholders are knowledgeable about programs, they are able to communicate their needs through membership on advisory councils, and feedback in interviews and surveys. By advertising about programs, stakeholders will know more about the interventions and program elements that are offered to students (Lenhardt & Young, 2001). Teachers must be included in stakeholder groups who receive information on the school counseling program, as they consistently interact with students and are aware of student needs.

Teacher Perceptions of School Counseling Programs

Surveying stakeholders is considered a useful tool in program evaluation, specifically with teachers and school staff as this helps to gain their perceptions of the program. From teacher surveys, PSCs can obtain information on beliefs related to their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, being aware of teacher perceptions is important, as this information can impact the success of the program (Jackson, et al., 2002). Teachers are more regularly in contact with parents and students, so they are more likely to suggest counseling assistance to a student in need of these services. Furthermore, providing stakeholders with opportunities for providing feedback on school counseling programs, demonstrates their importance to the program and concern for fulfilling their needs (Reiner, Colbert, & Perusse, 2009). Validating the opinions of

A School Counseling Program Evaluation:

stakeholders and integrating their needs into programs helps to guarantee that the program is comprehensive in nature and will increase buy-in for the program.

Teachers are important stakeholders of school counseling programs because of the influence they have on students and parents (Clark & Amatea, 2004). Collaborating with this stakeholder group about the program helps to ensure the counseling services are utilized. Clark & Amatea (2004) found in their studies of teacher perceptions that building positive relationships with teachers was critical to program success. Having a positive working relationship in which teaming and consulting between teachers and PSCs occurs will strengthen the school counseling program and allow for better utilization of services.

Although it is difficult to generalize teacher perceptions studies, the information they yield is extremely helpful in measuring counseling program effectiveness (Beesley, 2004). This ARS builds upon the research found pertaining to other school counseling programs that utilize school/staff perceptions to impact and evaluate the school counseling program.

Methodology

The method for conducting this study is action research (AR). With this type of research, educators gather information to determine effectiveness of practices. However, use of AR research results is limited in generalizability but yields meaningful descriptive statistics for the researcher. Although AR results have limited generalizability, the data produced gives helpful insights (Mills, 2011) for possible replication individualized to the particular program.

Before beginning the data collection process, a plan for the ARS was given to the school and county administration for approval. With authorization from both parties, the researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of West Georgia. The purpose of the study was to evaluate staff members' perceptions of the school counseling program to determine program strengths as well as areas for improvement. The researcher understood that the willingness of staff members to honestly critique the program and its elements could have influenced participant responses in both interviews and surveys. Additionally, the researcher is the current PSC and interview participants may not have felt comfortable discussing weaknesses of the program with her.

After reviewing related literature and self reflecting on the current school counseling program, the researcher formulated hypotheses before beginning the study. The researcher expected that the staff would be aware of the most of the elements of the school counseling program and generally have an accurate understanding of the PSC's role. Lastly, the researcher predicted that staff would express concerns over certain program elements that require teacher implementation, but would also have positive feedback on other program elements.

Research questions were formulated to test these hypotheses. The specific research questions include: 1) How does the school staff perceive the school counseling program? 2) Does the school staff have adequate and accurate information on the role of the school counselor? 3) How can the school counseling program be changed to better meet the needs of students? 4) What elements of the school counseling program currently in place do staff members perceive as beneficial to students?

Participants

Prior to survey distribution, all staff members were informed of the ARS, its purpose and goal. In regards to participants, the term staff member includes full-time professionals and paraprofessionals that have direct academic interactions with students, which include classroom teachers, specials teachers, early intervention program (EIP) teachers, support teachers, and administrators. Generally, the school staff has an average of 11.8 years of experience in the school setting. There are only 2 male staff members and the rest are females. The majority, 68% of the staff members are Caucasian with the remaining 32% being African-American. During a school staff meeting, staff members in attendance were given a survey and their honest, thoughtful participation was encouraged. Staff members, with direct student contact, not in attendance were also given the opportunity to complete a survey that was placed in their employee mailbox. Of the 50 surveys distributed, 31 were returned with a return rate of 62%. Interview participants were selected based on their willingness to volunteer time to speak with the researcher about the school counseling program. Great care was given to ensure that interviews were conducted with a representative sampling of staff members to gain insight from various grade levels and content areas about the needs of all students. In all, nine interviews were conducted each lasting approximately 30 minutes. Staff members were asked strengths of the program, areas in

A School Counseling Program Evaluation:

which it could be improved and to make general comments regarding the overall effectiveness of the program.

Data Collection and Analysis

For this ARS, data were collected using a staff survey, staff interviews, and researcher observations. The survey was developed after reviewing literature and other related assessment tools. The survey consisted of 10 items using a 4-point Likert scale, comprised of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Additionally, the survey also included 3 open-ended sentence completion items. These items gave participants the opportunity to express options for improvements to the current school counseling program. The quantitative data from the survey information were entered into an Excel spreadsheet. The information was totaled and converted into percentages (see Table 1).

Open-ended responses were compiled in a table format and were examined for reoccurring themes. Interviews were conducted by the PSC, who also was the participant researcher in this ARS, with 9 staff members that are part of different academic teams. These interviews were conversational, but structured and typically lasted 15-30 minutes. Interviewees were asked to evaluate the overall program, and to give insights into areas where the program could be strengthened. Following the structured questions, the researcher allowed staff members to give feedback on other program elements. Researcher journaling was also utilized for data collection. During the time frame of the ARS, the researcher kept detailed notes of informal conversations, and meeting discussions pertaining to the school counseling program. The notes were reviewed for common themes, areas for improvement, and program strengths.

Results

Likert scale survey results indicate the staff perceptions of the school counseling program. Sixty-five percent of participants strongly agree that classroom guidance lessons are conducted regularly, 19% agree, 3% disagree (1 participant), and 13% did not respond. When asked whether classroom guidance lessons are meaningful 68% strongly agree, 16% agree, and 16% did not respond. Thirty-two percent strongly agree that small groups have been beneficial for students, 42% agree, 3% disagree, and 23% did not respond. When asked if small group topics met the needs of students 52% strongly agree, 35

% agree, and 13% did not respond. Sixty-five percent strongly agree that counseling referrals are followed up in a timely manner, 26% agree, and 10% did not respond. When asked whether or not teachers were given appropriate follow-up information 32% strongly agree, 42% agree, 10% disagree, and 16% did not respond. Ninety-four percent strongly agree or agree that the PSC meets with parents when needed or requested, 6% did not respond. When asked if the PSC is willing to meet with teachers to plan for student needs 61% strongly agree, and the remaining 39% agree. Sixty-five percent strongly agree that they would recommend school counseling services to students and parents, 32% agree, and 3% did not respond (see Table 1).

Three open-ended survey items were also included to allow staff opinions for improvements to the program, ideas for new program elements, and insights into how the school counselor can better serve students. Forty-eight percent of participants expressed their opinions. Several people wrote comments of positive feedback, but nothing that specifically answered the questions. Some suggestions were made for ways or areas for program improvement which include having another PSC, more time for small groups, and reminders of classroom guidance lessons (see Table 2). In regards to beginning new programs, some suggested the following: more one on one counseling for students with major needs, conducting classroom guidance sessions in the individual classrooms instead of the PSC's room, meeting monthly with grade levels to discuss student needs, and parenting workshops (see Table 3). The final open-ended question referred to how the PSC could better serve students. This question yielded some responses but only a few suggestions for improvements which included having the counselor spend less time on behavioral issues, and having time available for prevention (See Table 4).

Notes from researcher observations and interviews were reviewed for repeated suggestions for program improvement. Qualitative results indicated several common themes from teachers for improving the school counseling program. Common themes were established as ideas that more than one teacher recommended as a program change. Staff felt classroom guidance is helpful and completed regularly. Multiple teachers suggested having more classroom guidance sessions, instead of the current one per month. A few participants mentioned that having the second lesson of the month on the same topic as a review of the information taught in the first lesson to reinforce this material. Several staff members shared

A School Counseling Program Evaluation:

that referrals are followed up quickly and given needed attention. Two teachers expressed frustration about the PSC being called upon to handle administrative or discipline issues, which took away from counseling time. The main theme that emerged from the interviews is the desire for monthly collaborative planning sessions with the PSC. Teachers believed it would be beneficial to know monthly guidance topics so that they are able to reinforce the material with students. Additionally, several felt that this would be a good time to share student concerns with the PSC to see if there are possible interventions for helping the students with needs. Other comments indicated great satisfaction with the school-wide character education program, and positive feedback on guidance lessons and small group topics.

Discussion

The ARS, designed to evaluate the school counseling program at a suburban elementary school, indicates that stakeholders perceive that the overall program is functioning to meet the needs of students based on their survey responses and interviews. Participants provided positive feedback and suggestions for strengthening further the PSC and the program elements. Almost all respondents report classroom guidance lessons and small group counseling as beneficial to students. Data from in-depth interviews suggest that the guidance curriculum could be strengthened by adding more lessons which would reinforce skills that have been previously taught. Further, having teacher buy-in through collaborative meetings would allow for greater transfer of learning as teachers will be able to use the same vocabulary and concepts covered in the guidance lessons. Small group sessions would also be strengthened through collaborative interactions with staff members.

Interview data also indicate that some students do not receive referrals to small group because teachers were not aware of group options or did not communicate the need to the PSC. By providing all grade level teams with a monthly time to connect with the PSC, the school counseling program should be better able to ensure that students' needs are not going unmet.

Throughout the survey, there were several items that a fairly large percentage of respondents chose not to answer. Because all staff members, including the support teachers, were surveyed, it is likely that staff members who were not homeroom teachers may not have been aware of students who participate in small group counseling or the

impact of classroom guidance on students. Support staff interviews affirmed that these teachers are aware of the elements of the school counseling program, but that they did not feel they had adequate knowledge to rate them.

Data related to counseling referrals explain that the staff members believe that both teacher referrals and student self referrals are handled in a timely manner. Upon review of the data, the researcher discovered that two of the survey questions were very similarly worded and were likely confusing to participants. However, the results indicate that staff members do not find referral follow up as a concern. Furthermore, during the interviewing, several participants expressed satisfaction at the handling of referrals and the quick response time. One interesting finding indicated that staff members (n=2) expressed concern that the PSC might be delayed in responding to counseling referrals because non-counseling duties have been assigned to her (e.g., the PSC being called to handle classroom disciplinary concerns more appropriately assigned to an administrator). The teachers felt this was a concern for the administration and not the fault of the PSC or teachers' misunderstanding of the PSC's role.

The findings of this ARS offer helpful considerations for evaluating the school counseling program. From the overall staff perspective, the program is beneficial and meets student needs. Although the program is valuable to student success, areas of improvement were discovered and appropriate interventions can be utilized to advance the program's development.

Interventions

One of the recurring themes in the staff interviews was the potential benefit of having monthly grade level team meetings with the counselor. The PSC began meeting with each grade level team monthly to share student concerns and to debrief staff members on the classroom guidance topic for that month. This time for individual student planning has strengthened the program by allowing for easier access to referrals and early counselor intervention for problems.

Future interventions will include adjusting the classroom guidance schedule to allow for two classroom guidance lessons each month. The PSC will begin piloting this intervention at the beginning of the next school year to determine how this change to the schedule will impact the rest of the school counseling program.

A School Counseling Program Evaluation:

Limitations

There are several limitations with regard to this ARS. First, the data from the study only include one mid-sized suburban elementary school. While this ARS could be replicated in other schools, the implications and results are only pertinent to the program evaluation for the school at hand. The interventions utilized, however, could likely be beneficial to other school counseling programs. Another limitation is the use of untested measurement tools. The survey, created by the researcher from a review of the literature, had some items which were not worded clearly. Two of the questions seemed to be evaluating the response time of the PSC. If further surveys of other stakeholder groups are to be done, it would be helpful to pilot the survey tool with a focus group before full distribution. Further, the interviews were conducted by the PSC which may have caused participants to answer differently than with an outside researcher. While a participant researcher is an entity within AR, it can be difficult when interviews are conducted. In the future, it would be wise to have another individual conduct the interviews.

Implications and Conclusions

The school staff members at this elementary school are familiar with the school counseling program and its components. Although some adjustments can be made to the program to improve its ability to meet student needs, it generally seems, from a teacher perspective to be successful. The suggested interventions are likely beneficial and will have a positive impact on improvement of the overall program. However, with the demands placed on the PSC's time, it will be important to resolve some of the disciplinary duties that are often requested of the PSC thus allowing time for more classroom guidance lessons and collaborative planning with staff.

The results of this ARS proved to be helpful to the PSC in providing a careful program evaluation. From the information gathered, adjustments to the current plan will be implemented. The study also points to a need for future program evaluations to survey other stakeholders such as parents and/or students to determine their awareness of the program and its components to be sure that they are able to easily understand and access the school counseling program.

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A School Counseling Program Evaluation:

Appendix A

Staff Perceptions of an Elementary School Counseling Program

*This survey is voluntary and anonymous. Completed surveys will be used in improving the school counseling program

Please indicate your role in the school

Homeroom Teacher	Support Teacher	Administrator	Paraprofessional

Please complete for your perceptions related to the school counseling program.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1) Classroom guidance lessons are conducted regularly.				
2) The topics of classroom guidance lessons are meaningful.				
3) Within the school counseling program, small groups have been beneficial for my students.				
4) Small group topic/focus covers several areas that meet the needs of students.				
5) Counseling referrals for students are followed up in a timely manner.				
6) Teachers are provided an appropriate amount of follow-up information about their students as it relates to the school counseling program.				
7) School counseling student referrals are follow-up in a timely manner.				
8) With regard to the school counseling program, the counselor meets with parents as needed or requested.				
9) With regard to the school counseling program, the school counselor is willing to meet with teachers to plan for student needs.				
10) I recommend school counseling services to students and parents.				

The school counseling program could be improved

I would like the school counseling program to begin

The school counselor could better serve students

A School Counseling Program Evaluation:

Appendix B

Table 1
Elementary School Perception Survey Results: Likert Scale Statements
Response Percentage/ n=31

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	NR
1) Classroom guidance lessons are conducted regularly.	65%	19%	3%	0%	13%
2) The topics of classroom guidance lessons are meaningful.	65%	16%	0%	0%	16%
3) Within the school counseling program, small groups have been beneficial for my students.	32%	42%	3%	0%	23%
4) Small group topic/focus covers several areas that meet the needs of students.	52%	35%	0%	0%	13%
5) Counseling referrals for students are followed up in a timely manner.	65%	26%	0%	0%	10%
6) Teachers are provided an appropriate amount of follow-up information about their students as it relates to the school counseling program.	32%	42%	10%	0%	16%
7) School counseling student referrals are follow-up in a timely manner.	61%	26%	0%	0%	13%
8) With regard to the school counseling program, the counselor meets with parents as needed or requested.	65%	29%	0%	0%	6%
9) With regard to the school counseling program, the school counselor is willing to meet with teachers to plan for student needs.	61%	39%	0%	0%	0%
10) I recommend school counseling services to students and parents.	65%	32%	0%	0%	3%

Note: SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, NR=No Response

A School Counseling Program Evaluation:

Appendix C

Table 2

Open-ended Survey Responses 1; Program could be improved by:

Response #	Response
1	I think our program offers a variety of options already
2	I think we do a great job
3	More time for more small groups
4	By keeping Mrs. Sherwood
5	Awesome and multifaceted! Thanks for all you do and all you offer!
6	Only if we could get another counselor. Heather does a wonderful job.
7	Not trying so many different programs. Staying with one or two that work
8	Please send a reminder re: guidance in the morning

Appendix D

Table 3

Open-ended Survey Responses 2; I would like the school counseling program to begin:

Response #	Response
1	One on one counseling with a few students who have major issues!
2	Continue character building - I love the videos
3	Meeting with grade levels 1 time month to see needs
4	Parenting classes at the beginning of the year (mini ones/ off shoot of this year)
5	ASAP when school starts
6	Beginning of the year

A School Counseling Program Evaluation:

Appendix E

Table 4

Open-ended Survey Responses 3; The school counselor could better serve students:

Response #	Response
1	Ours is doing a wonderful job. Always helpful, reliable, supportive. . excellent with the students . . . great example of what a school counselor should be/do
2	I can't think of anything you are doing a great job!
3	She does a great job
4	If she had more hours in the day. We seem to have many needs. I think that more students would benefit from small group sessions
5	If we had 2 counselors. 1 for K-2; 1 for 3-5
6	If she was not so busy with behavior issues each day
7	By visiting the classroom more than having class in the counselors office only
8	She's doing a great job
9	Mrs. Sherwood does an excellent job
10	Mrs. Sherwood does an excellent job! I don't see how she gets so much accomplished! Hard worker!
11	This program is fantastic!

A School Counseling Program Evaluation:

Appendix F Guided Interview Questions about School Counseling Program

Teacher's Name

Grade/Subject Taught

What do you feel are the positive elements of the school counseling program?

How can the school counseling program be improved to better meet the needs of your students?

What changes do you feel would be beneficial to the program?

Please comment about the overall effectiveness of the program and what adjustments could be made to increase effectiveness.

New School Counselor Perceptions of Their Mentoring and Induction Program

Carol P. Loveless

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Abstract

Abstract

School counselors in their first year of practice within the profession or within a new school district can experience challenges in assuming the professional responsibilities associated with their role. Mentoring programs are one form of professional assistance that has been recommended in the literature for new educators, including school counselors.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of new elementary school counselors regarding their mentoring/induction program in a large suburban school district in the southeastern United States. A qualitative case study was conducted and data were collected from multiple sources, including individual interviews, observations, and documents. Findings highlighted both positive perceptions held by program participants regarding training, resources, support, impact, and effectiveness, as well as specific needs not addressed.

New School Counselor Perceptions of Their Mentoring and Induction Program

For most new school counselors, the first year on the job is filled with daily challenges to meet competing demands of students, parents, and faculty. Student crises, classroom presentations, group guidance, staff meetings, program planning, accountability studies, and paperwork must all fit into overbooked schedules. New school counselors may feel stressed in their attempts to meet such varied demands (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Butler & Constantine, 2005; Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005; Rayle, 2006). Furthermore, peer support can be limited when school counselors work alone or in small departments within much larger faculties (Mor-

risette, 2000; Thomas, 2005).

Mentoring and induction programs provide one time-honored method of support for new educators. Although mentoring programs for new counselors have been encouraged in recent years (Jackson et al., 2002; Lazovsky & Shimoni, 2007; Walker, 2006), the development of such programs has lagged behind that of mentoring for other educators. When Black, Suarez, and Medina (2004) reviewed the various counseling flagship journals, they discovered that less than 1% of all articles published in the last three decades pertained to mentoring. Although mentoring of new counselors is promoted in the available literature, the concept of organized, structured induction programs has received little attention in current publications for professional school counselors.

In theory, a mentoring/induction program for new school counselors should benefit both the participating counselors and their students. Effective school counseling programs can improve school climate (Fitch & Marshall, 2004), as well as student achievement (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007). Strong support of new school counselors can assist these counselors in offering impactful programs and services to their students.

Novice school counselors fresh from graduate training may enter the field well-versed in helping skills, but may be potentially lacking in their knowledge of school culture and their particular role within that culture. Teachers may perceive new counselors who do not have teaching backgrounds as less competent than those with classroom experience (Quarto, 1999). Conversely, first year school counselors with teaching backgrounds may be quite familiar with school culture, but their shifting roles within the work setting can prove stressful. Learning to relate to students and faculty from a counselor's perspective and adapting to a less structured work environment may pres-

New School Counselor Perceptions of Their Mentoring and Induction Program

ent challenges for these former teachers (Peterson, Goodman, Keller, & McCauley, 2004). Furthermore, many new counselors perceive that their faculties expect them to be highly functioning professionals from their initial days of employment (Matthes, 1992; McMahon & Patton, 2001). Peer supervision from more experienced colleagues or clinical supervision from a district counseling coordinator may ameliorate some of the stress new counselors experience, if they are fortunate enough to have such support. Those new counselors who are veterans of the profession but are new to a particular school district may benefit from training in the culture of the local district, that is, what the expectations are regarding counselors and their role. Through appropriate training and support in a first year mentoring/induction program, these gaps in knowledge can be filled and role expectations clarified.

In Brott and Myers's (1999) grounded theory of school counselor identity development, which provided the conceptual framework for this study, the authors argued that the development of a professional identity is crucial to school counselors. Such an identity "serves as a frame of reference for carrying out work roles, making significant decisions, and developing as a profession" (Introduction section, ¶ 4). Brott and Myers reported that a "blending of influences" occurs over time as new school counselors progress through various training experiences and participate in professional interactions with constituents. In the mentoring/induction program that was studied, new counselors had a unique opportunity to add to this blend of influences through the training and support provided by the program mentors.

The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of a structured mentoring/induction program for new school counselors at the elementary school level through the perceptions of program participants. In the program that was selected for study, three experienced counselors served as mentors to a group of 11 newly hired elementary school counselors; seven of the new counselors were novices and four were veteran counselors who were new to the school district. Program design included a series of structured monthly meetings for the mentees, led by mentor counselors throughout the first school year. Each mentor also provided individual support to mentees as needed. The mentor counselors created both program curriculum and activities for each meeting. Sessions included numerous topics of value to new counselors, including use of computer technology, mandated reporter training, small group lessons, classroom guidance, teacher support, district and community resources, organizational

techniques, maintenance of counseling records, accountability studies, and consultation. By closely examining the impact of this program through the perceptions of its participants, this study explored how effectively the program was meeting the needs of these counselors and how the program might be improved to better address unmet needs.

Method

Research Questions

Of central interest in this case study was the research question: How do new counselors perceive the structured mentoring/induction program? The researcher also sought to explore participant perceptions of training and peer support received within the program; individual impact, if any, of the mentoring/induction program; necessary components of a highly effective mentoring/induction program; and how future mentoring/induction programs might be adapted to better meet the needs of participants.

Sample and Participant Selection

Merriam (1998) argued that two levels of sampling are usually necessary in a qualitative case study: first, the case itself must be selected, and then sampling within that case must be determined. In this study, the case selected was a mentoring/induction program for new elementary school counselors within a large public school district in the southeastern United States. This program was selected for study because of its structured approach to new counselor mentoring, including a planned calendar of meetings, set agendas for each session, and a group mentoring format.

Purposeful sampling was also used to select the sample within the case, just as it was used to select the case itself. At the second level of sampling, six elementary counselors were selected from 11 potential participants, representing 10 different elementary schools. Although demographic data were not collected regarding participant age and ethnicity, all of the 11 potential participants were female. Of the potential participants, seven were novice elementary school counselors and four were elementary school counselors new to the district, but with previous counseling experience. Input was sought from the primary program leader in determining which participants to select and establishing a prioritized list of those who were invited to participate. By including participants with prior experience, a sample was provided that was representative of the district's program, which included all counselors new to

New School Counselor Perceptions of Their Mentoring and Induction Program

the district, regardless of prior experience. Potential participants were solicited for the study through e-mail invitation. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned a pseudonym and references in the manuscript utilize these pseudonyms.

Data Collection and Analysis

Methodology for this case study of a new counselor mentoring and induction program included multiple sources of evidence: (a) individual interviews with program participants, (b) observations of new counselors in the work setting, and (c) investigation of program documents. The researcher designed all data collection tools, including an oral questionnaire and an observation protocol. The researcher collected data in the individual interviews using a semi-structured format that allowed flexibility in questioning. Field notes, researcher reflections, and audio-taped recordings provided the means of data collection. Four observations of new counselor activities were conducted. Two counselors were observed teaching classroom guidance lessons. Two additional participants were observed in systems support activities, specifically in program planning consultation with fellow counselors. The researcher took notes in the observations using a data collection form that included field notes and reflections organized around six guideposts. The documents studied included program calendars, handouts, and a new counselor handbook.

Data were analyzed at two levels. The researcher first utilized the constant comparative method recommended by Merriam (1998) to conduct category construction. At the second level of analysis, a search for broader themes, patterns, and relationships among the identified concepts was conducted.

To ensure data quality within the study, the researcher used multiple sources of evidence as recommended by Yin (2009), including individual interviews, observations in the field, and document review. Additionally, a chain of events was established through the use of a case study protocol guiding the collection and analysis of data. The researcher also used member-checking to allow participants to review transcripts and provide feedback on initial findings (Merriam, 1998).

Findings

Participant Perceptions of Training and Peer Support

McMahon and Patton (2001) believed that new counselors would need additional training and support in their first year on the job, especially with the practical aspects of their jobs, and more specifically, in adjusting to the school culture. The authors also noted that new counselors would benefit from the guidance of more experienced counselors during their first year. The findings of the current study of the mentoring/induction program for new elementary counselors mirrored the findings of McMahon and Patton. Overwhelmingly, the mentees revealed positive perceptions of the program, the mentors, and the resources provided. By far, the majority of impressions that were shared by the participants were positive. Out of 34 impressions shared by the participants interviewed, 25 were clearly positive and could most often be categorized as *helpful*. The mentees described numerous ways in which they perceived that the program helped them: through sharing of resources, demonstrations, consultation, exploration of materials, and mentor support. Beatrice found the new counselor handbook to be especially valuable:

Probably the nicest thing about summer orientation was getting the binder, the tool kit that they made for us which was something that I could refer to all year long. Being able to leave with that, you know having that in my hands was really important.

Beatrice also expressed appreciation for the mentoring meetings as “a really safe place, a safe environment. It really just took kind of a ‘come as you are’ and talk about whatever it was you were experiencing.” Danielle valued the “support of resources, being able to consult with someone, bouncing ideas off of someone, getting ideas from someone. I mean the program was very consistent and just extremely helpful.” Allyson found that the mentors “really did a good job of overall covering everything that would be helpful, you know, ‘Here’s how you do your monthly report.’ They gave extra help in doing the ASCA model as well.” Fiona also valued the leadership of the program mentors:

Both ladies leading the program were incredibly knowledgeable. Listening to them talking was like listening to my favorite professor at school. They were role models for me and I had a feeling like “I want to be like one of these ladies” when I get experience in my field.

Participant responses to specific interview questions regarding peer support were mixed. Mentee comments regarding mentor support were uniformly positive. However, when queried about support from fellow new coun-

New School Counselor Perceptions of Their Mentoring and Induction Program

selors within the program, responses varied; some felt that the commiseration between mentees was quite valuable, and others expressed the opposite viewpoint. Beatrice, a novice counselor, found it helpful to hear from other new counselors “how some of their challenges and issues were similar and how some were very, very different.” As an experienced counselor, Allyson stated that she did not find the peer consultation component as valuable as the novice counselors in the group appeared to find it.

Participant Perceptions of Individual Impact

Counselor mentors can play a vital role in teaching their protégés the skills they need for success in the workplace (Lazovsky & Shimoni, 2007). Program participants interviewed in this study stated that the mentoring/induction program had enhanced their feelings of professional efficacy as newly hired counselors. Mentees gave numerous examples of skills they had developed while in the program, as well as valued resources, such as the new counselor handbook that had been created by mentors. Program participants also discussed the value of mentor support in making decisions and gathering resources, a finding supported in studies that cite the importance of new counselor mentoring in easing adjustment to the school culture (Desmond et al., 2007; Peterson et al., 2004).

Program participants also cited numerous examples of resources their mentors gave them for classroom guidance, group lessons, office organization, classroom management techniques, and attendance programs. For example, three different participants described a puppet named “PAL” that was introduced to them as part of a classroom guidance lesson on listening skills that the mentors had shared. All three counselors had used or were planning to use PAL in their own classroom guidance. Mentors also presented a lesson on transition to middle school; subsequently two of the mentees used this lesson plan with their own fifth graders. Two participants discussed the helpfulness of the small group topics and lesson plans shared by mentors. Several participants mentioned the usefulness of a meeting held on site at two of the mentors’ school, wherein mentees had an opportunity to view the set-up of the mentors’ offices and organizational systems.

Danielle described the process that led program mentors to share valuable information on attendance programs:

[The mentors] would e-mail us and say, “Our meeting’s coming up. Do you all have anything you want to add?” So I e-mailed about I’ve been having some

attendance issues.... So like that next meeting, they brought, ... an attendance packet, so it had like an attendance contract, a letter for parents, ... when to keep your kid at home, so just those types of resources. And they also did attendance days, where the people the previous year who had multiple absences, they’d have a day where they would be with the counselor, the social worker. They’d be meeting, inviting those people in, just kind of an attendance informational type of meeting.

Not only did Danielle perceive the attendance interventions as useful, she clearly found the process wherein the mentors sought input prior to meetings to be helpful as well.

All counselors interviewed stated that participation in the mentoring program had impacted the quality of their own classroom guidance. Elizabeth said that she “got different perspectives on how to tackle problems” in classroom management from the mentors. Over the course of the school year, she purposely made her lessons more “intriguing” and “interesting” and subsequently found that she had fewer off-task behaviors with her students. Other mentees described classroom guidance ideas that they learned in the mentoring program, ranging from kindergarten friendship activities to end-of-year fifth grade lessons. Fiona added that she reduced the time she spent designing her classroom guidance lessons by repeatedly teaching the same lesson in grade levels where students were close in age, a tip she learned from the program mentors.

Through the mentoring program, participants learned strategies for organizing resources. Danielle commented that “you can have great ideas but another part is keeping those ideas, keeping these resources, organizing them, so they’re able for you to use and then pass on to others.” Carrie was interviewed during the summer following program participation. She described how she was working on plans to align her school’s counseling program with standards of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (2005), which she had learned about in the mentoring/induction program. Carrie was also making use of her free time to organize lessons:

What I’ve been doing this summer that I did not actually have an opportunity to do for last school year is to actually go through and look at my standards and competencies for the grade levels that I’m over and kind of get my lessons together.

Participants discussed numerous ideas for improving

New School Counselor Perceptions of Their Mentoring and Induction Program

staff relations during the following school year by using a variety of ideas they had learned during meetings of the mentoring/induction program. Mentees described faculty morale boosters, methods for improving staff climate, and techniques for improving relationships with teachers that were shared by mentors. Allyson recognized the need for regular collaboration with her administrators while participating in the program. She wanted to discuss both guidance plans for the upcoming year and a counselor/principal management agreement with her administrators because she saw “a disconnect between counselors and the administration” and a need for better counselor collaboration with them.

New counselors made numerous references to support received while in the program, such as networking opportunities with other new counselors, advice from mentors, case consultation, peer support, and motivation. Elizabeth described the motivational impact of the meetings:

Every time I would leave the mentoring meetings, it just made me want to improve our program even more. I always wanted to make improvements and think of ideas for our program so it kind of lit a fire under me. It - they motivated me.

Mentees also viewed the individual support given by program mentors as positive. There were times when “what you need to do isn’t listed in [school district] protocol,” but the new counselors could turn to one of the three mentors for advice. The program mentors were seen as “definitely available - - e-mail or phone call - - really quick. Always there to be helpful if you did have a question and you needed an answer.” Not one of the new counselors interviewed in this study expressed the sense of isolation that had been described in the literature on the first-year counseling experience (Culbreth et al., 2005; Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Jackson et al., 2002; Nelson & Johnson, 1999).

Participant Perceptions of a Highly Effective Mentoring/Induction Program

According to ASCA, veteran school counselors should provide “support and mentoring to novice professionals” and should contribute “to the development of the profession through the sharing of skills, ideas, and expertise with colleagues” (ASCA, 2010, Section F.2). The participants interviewed expanded on ASCA’s concept of mentoring and specifically described their ideal mentoring/induction program. Danielle’s vision of the ideal program was that it should be “a structured one, which we had, (*laughs*) where we kind of knew what to expect for

everyone.” Overall, responses fell into three categories: *structure*, *resources*, and *support*. Mentees proposed that a mentoring program should ideally be structured through such means as planned agendas with pertinent topics, consistent meetings of appropriate length and frequency, and opportunities to address individual concerns when needed.

Mentees discussed the value of learning about guidance resources, not only as part of an ideal mentoring/induction program, but as part of the program in which they had participated. Numerous highly valued resources were available to program participants and included a handbook for new counselors, as well as a lesson plan database and electronic handbook that were available to all counselors in the district. Mentees also expressed that new counselor mentoring should ideally provide a means to review topics relevant to the school year calendar in a timely fashion. For example, school adjustment issues could be discussed at the beginning of the school year, when student issues are most likely to arise.

Program participants believed that ideally, support in a mentoring/induction program should come from both mentors and peers. Allyson stated that the mentors in her program “were definitely available -- e-mail or phone call - - really quick. Always there to be helpful if you did have a question and you needed an answer.” Beatrice described the value of peer support:

I loved the fact that our mentors gave us a little bit of leeway time at the beginning of each meeting and they encouraged us to find a buddy, meet up with each other and to have lunch first, go have lunch and then come and talk.

Overall, Beatrice’s response regarding components of an ideal mentoring/induction program was typical of the new counselors. Such a program, she stated, “would look a lot like what we got.”

Participant Perceptions of How Their Mentoring/Induction Program Might Be Improved

Interview responses from all six mentees indicated that there was little that the new counselors would change about their mentoring/induction program. Elizabeth commented that “I don’t think anything was lacking.” Danielle stated that “Obviously there’s room for improvement for things, but I really don’t know any negatives to the program.” Nevertheless, participants had several suggestions for program improvement, including more one-on-one mentoring, mentoring novices and those with prior counseling experience in two separate groups,

New School Counselor Perceptions of Their Mentoring and Induction Program

running the program over two years instead of one, and providing more information on community resources for needy families. Some participants indicated that including more mentors in the program might increase the amount of personal attention available to mentees. As Elizabeth remarked, "I think about those who didn't have a co-counselor that had years of experience," that is, an on-site veteran who could assist on a daily basis. Another suggestion for program improvement was to make available a master list of veteran counselors who could be called upon for consultation, as Carrie suggested: "OK, call these veteran people; you know all of them are on the same page." Allyson, who had prior counseling experience in another school system, participated in the program because she was new to the district. She suggested that having two separate mentoring groups would be ideal - that is, "having new counselors together and then having [those] new to the system together." Fiona was interviewed at the beginning of her second year as a school counselor and wanted the mentoring/induction program to continue:

An ideal program for me would last two years. As a second year counselor, I still feel... new in this field and with all the challenges that this job presents, it would be great to continue having that support this year.

Beatrice was also reluctant to see the mentoring program end after only one year:

It was very nurturing. Just the amount of resources and information that we were given was incredible. [The mentors] put so much time and energy into preparing for us. That was evident. I think that we were all so appreciative. You know, we would joke along the way, "We're not sure how we're going to do when we don't have this next year." And it was true. It was sort of a joke, but there was a feeling that we weren't ready to be weaned, so to speak, (*laughs*) from this experience because it was so nurturing.

Discussion

The mentoring/induction program in this study provides other school systems with an efficient model for inducting new counselors into the profession while providing the quality of training and support that is essential for guiding new hires through their first year of employment. Highly skilled mentors provided the necessary expertise; program structure provided the appropriate setting. The combination of these two factors produced the experience so highly valued by mentees. By selecting skilled

mentors and by providing the opportunity for extended meetings with protégés, the sponsoring school district anticipated and fulfilled new counselor needs. As a general recommendation, other school districts should consider implementing a similar model for the induction of their new school counseling hires. Use of such a model should result in faster adaptation to the school counseling role, higher productivity in the new counselor's first year on the job, and ultimately, improved services for students. Both of the counselor participants who had prior experience in other school districts said there was no similar program in their previous system, a situation which created a void for them in their novice year. As Allyson stated, "In the other system, it was, you're just thrown in. You're a new counselor, here's your school, go!"

The research findings extend the conceptual framework that guided the study, Brott and Myers's (1999) grounded theory regarding professional identity formation in school counselors. Brott and Myers theorized that professional identity is formed through a blending of influences from both training and professional interactions; a structured mentoring program can provide extensive opportunities for new counselors to receive such training and support in their professional interactions. Mentee perceptions of program effectiveness and impact were overwhelmingly positive. Each counselor interviewed described at least two positive impressions of the program and identified a minimum of three areas of professional impact. Participants valued program structure, with set meetings and agendas, as well as purposeful training and support activities. Each counselor also identified at least one aspect of the job that she might approach differently in the future as a result of program participation. Observations and document review reinforced data collected in individual interviews. New counselors were observed in both classroom guidance and systems support activities, that is, roles for which they had been trained in the mentoring program. Document review and analysis revealed that purposeful training and support had also been provided through a new counselor handbook and program handouts.

Limitations of the study included the small sample size and the possibility that those new school counselors who agreed to participate in the study may have been a more motivated group than those who declined. If this is true, then the study's findings may have been skewed in a more positive direction than if a more representative sample had been used. A final limitation of the study was that the researcher has served as a mentor to new school coun-

New School Counselor Perceptions of Their Mentoring and Induction Program

sors at the middle school level for many years, and as such may have a positive bias toward the concept of new counselor mentoring.

The central research question that guided this study was: How do new counselors perceive the structured mentoring/induction program? The data collected and analyzed in this study indicated that participants had overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the program as a whole, and that such a program was an effective means of inducting new counselors into the school system. Thus, new counselor mentoring can clearly play a role in the formation of professional identity for novice counselors.

The findings of this qualitative case study provide support for the mentoring and induction of new school counselors, particularly through structured programming. Because related research on this topic is currently lacking, there is ample opportunity for continued investigation. Areas for possible future exploration might include a comparison of group mentoring to traditional one-on-one mentoring, a study of new counselor mentoring at the middle or high school level, or a quantitative study of new counselor mentoring. Regardless of the direction of future research, finding effective ways to support those new to school counseling can only serve to strengthen the profession as a whole.

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New School Counselor Perceptions of Their Mentoring and Induction Program

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Perspectives From Stakeholders

This Journal feature presents school counseling stakeholders' perspectives that potentially reframe school counselors' conceptualization of service delivery, ethical considerations, and professional development needs.

Say the Word Islam: School Counselors and Muslim Children

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Abstract

Two Muslim women who hold Ph.D.'s, a clinical and developmental psychologist and a teacher educator speak personally and professionally about important information school counselors need to know about Islam and providing services to Muslim children. First, the authors draw from personal experiences in parenting Muslim children who have come of age in public schools. Second, the authors' collective years of professional interviewing, counseling, and teaching facilitate analysis and unpacking of half-truths and untruths circulating about Islam and Muslims in the public forum today. They provide accurate facts about Islam and most importantly, address the damaging impact to the self esteem and identity formation of Muslim children and young adults who develop their sense of self in today's post 9-11 anti-Islam climate.

Say the Word Islam: School Counselors and Muslim Children

Optimizing healthy emotional adjustment of Muslim students in the public schools must be grounded in accurate knowledge about Islam, Muslims and Muslim culture. In many cases Muslim children are attending schools where the entire school community—other children, their parents, teachers, principals *and* school counselors have accepted without question, the biased and often incorrect messages that have been conveyed overtly and covertly through the media. It is no wonder that, when being dropped off at school one morning, a kindergarten child from a Muslim family told his mother “Don't

tell them we're Muslim.” Or, that another child whose name was Osama *before* the World Trade Center tragedy, has subsequently begun to hate school and to exhibit an increasing sense of isolation from his peers. Or, that Muslim girls have had their scarves pulled off by laughing mischievous children buoyed to action by the hate and fear filled messages about Muslims in their environments. Because there has been a wave of anti-Islamic sentiment stirred in the American news media since 9/11/2001, school counselors must interrogate their own knowledge and perceptions of Islam and Muslims if they are to deal fairly and effectively with Muslim children themselves and if they are to help other professionals in their institutions to do the same.

In another more detailed example, a ninth grade social studies class was given an assignment to do a project on “terrorism.” The choices given the students involved “Islamic terrorist groups.” A Muslim student in the class requested to do her project on peace movements, but the request was denied. The student then requested to do her project on terrorism by whites against blacks in America. This project was grudgingly permitted. Although her project met the stated requirements, she was given the lowest grade in the class. The student and her parent sent her project to outside evaluators at a teacher education program at a nearby university and were uniformly told that the grade was not fair. The teacher education department invited the young Muslim student to present her project for teacher education majors at the college and was again uniformly given grades of “A” or “B.” Numerous conferences with administrators and the teacher even-

Say the Word Islam: School Counselors and Muslim Children

tually resulted in the grade being changed.

The words *Islam* and *Muslim* have been equated in numerous multi-media forms in the US with *terrorism* so often that even well-meaning typically critical thinking citizens—including school counselors and classroom teachers—may display some signs of “Islamophobia.” Islamophobia is a term coined recently in the counter-media to describe the hatred, fear, and religious intolerance engendered among some American people as a result of *overt* media messages. In the entertainment media there have been overt media messages as well, sending the direct message that Islam and terrorism are words to be paired. For example, in the movie “Traitor,” there are people donned in Islamic garb (kufis, carrying dhikr beads, etc.), saying “Allahu Akbar!” and then setting off bombs.

There have also been covert media messages conveying subliminal messages designed to bring negative associations with Islam and Muslims. Over the years, a number of popular movies such as “Back to the Future” have included brief scenes implying that Muslims are terrorists. In that movie, in one scene Libyans, riding in a van, were shooting at the protagonist and attack the beloved character known as “Doc.” In other movies, (e.g., *The Omen*, *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*), Islamic imagery is paired with satanic imagery to send the subliminal message that Islam is evil. Such inflammatory and inaccurate portrayals must be countered with truth. It is imperative that school professionals have basic knowledge about the Qur’an—the religious book of the Muslim, the hadith—the second source of religious knowledge in Islam, and the basic tenets of the Islamic faith tradition, i.e., 1) that there is nothing worthy of worship but the One God and that Muhammad of 1400 years ago was God’s last Messenger; 2) that prayer is a duty owed to God; 3) that charity is a requirement of faith; 4) that fasting during the month of Ramadan and 5) journeying to Hajj at least once in a lifetime as one is able. These five points are universally accepted as the five pillars of Islamic faith.

It is important, for example, that school counselors know that Muslims worship the same God that Christians do—the God of Adam, Abraham, Moses and Noah. One of the misleading untruths subtly expounded in the media is that worshiping Allah is different from worshiping God. Allah is the Arabic word for God; even Arab Christians call God “Allah.” Other basic truths that can help school personnel to interrogate their assumptions about 9/11 have actually been shared, though downplayed, in the media. For example: (1) Prior to the events of 9/11 in 2001, overwhelmingly *most Muslims throughout the world*

had never heard of either Al Qaeda or Osama Bin Laden. (2) There were several hundred Muslims working in and around the World Trade Center on 9/11/2001, and Muslims died in that tragic event. (3) Among the ground zero rescue team there were Muslims. (4) 9/11/2001 occurred on the High Holy Day of Rosh Hashanah. Because most of them were at home observing their holiday, there were only three Jewish people in the Twin Towers at the time of that event. The significance of mentioning this is that Al Qaeda is alleged to have committed these acts of terrorism in protest to Israeli occupation of Palestine. (5) The word “Islam” literally means “submission to God’s will or peace,” and while God (in the *Qur’an*) instructs Muslims that they have a right to defend themselves from attack, they are warned that it is a sin to aggress against innocent people. In fact, the *Qur’an* teaches that to kill one innocent person is equivalent to having killed all of humankind, while to save such a person is equivalent to saving all of humankind. “We ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone slew a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew all people: and if anyone saves a life, it would be as if he save the life of all people.” (5:32). If these teachings from the *Qur’an* are understood, then it is clear that a true religious Muslim cannot be a “terrorist.”

Thomas Jefferson stated in his published works that he wanted America to be a land where people of all faiths were free to practice their religion and he included Islam in a list of faiths he wanted to have free expression (Hayes, 2004). Jefferson owned a *Qur’an* and studied other Islamic texts in an effort to understand the *Qur’an* as a book of law. Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams negotiated a treaty with the Emperor of Morocco in 1784. They knew that earlier, in 1777, Morocco, a Muslim country, was the first sovereign nation to recognize the United States as an independent country (Moroccan American Center for Policy, 2007). Another reference to Islam in American history is found in the architecture of the United State Supreme Court. The sculptor of the frieze located on the north wall of the Supreme Court carved Islamic references into the stone walls in an attempt to “honor Mohammed” (p.2, paragraph 4) (Office of Curator, US Supreme Court, 2003).

If America is to live up to its espoused tenet of freedom of religion and religious tolerance, school counselors, other school personnel, and the public must become aware of alternative points of view. The truth about religious messages should be conveyed from members of that faith, rather than messages promoted from groups who despise and denigrate that faith. A lesson can be learned from

Say the Word Islam: School Counselors and Muslim Children

the Civil Rights Movement. Whereas racial stereotypes depicting African-Americans in the media as sub-human had pervaded the media in those times, when whites had the opportunity to meet African-Americans, they learned that those stereotypes were false. Counselor education preparation programs, professional organizations, and school systems, in general, must take the lead in assisting counseling professionals in surpassing religious tolerance, arriving at interfaith respect and human decency. Indeed, the American Counseling Association's Multicultural Competencies and the American School Counseling Association's (ASCA) ethical codes set the tone for school counselors to interrogate their beliefs about Islam and to establish culturally relevant and meaningful interactions with Muslim children and their families.

As professionals who work with the public, school counselors must prepare themselves and their students for interacting effectively in a world where one in five people is Muslim. Further, the Muslim demographic shift in the United States indicates that by the year 2020, Islam may be the dominant religion in certain urban centers throughout the country (Turner, 1997). While some Georgia school counselors may not have had a Muslim child in their programs, recent demographic shifts indicate that they will soon likely serve this group of students. Muslim children, like all children, come in a variety of sizes, shapes, colors and ethnicities. They are the offspring of indigenous African Americans, European Americans, and Hispanic American as well as first or second generation immigrant parents. Their family traditions range from conservative to moderate to liberal.

Advocacy, Cultural Competence, School Counselors, and Muslim Children

How prepared are school counselors to work with Muslim children and families? What resources are available for school counselors to assess their advocacy skills for working with this group of students? Of course, assessment of multicultural competence is an ongoing unfolding process rather than a single event. An effective way to begin the self assessment process is to utilize the ACA Multicultural Competencies which challenge counselors to become aware of their multicultural attitudes, beliefs, knowledge at the individual, worldview, and practitioner levels (Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez, & Stadler, 1996).

Advocacy is a key aspect of school counselors' roles (ASCA, 2005); therefore, a systemic perspective of ad-

vocacy benefits school counselors in planning a comprehensive school counseling program that is meaningful to Muslim students. One way to conceptualize school counselor advocacy is to apply Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory. Bronfenbrenner (1979) maintains that children's development is influenced by different systems in their environment: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. The microsystem includes the students' families, school community, and neighborhood; the microsystem reflects those relationships and experiences that are most intimate to children's daily lives. The mesosystem reflects the functioning of the microsystem and shapes the overall development of the child; an encouraging and affirming mesosystem contributes to the optimal development of children. The exosystem reflects the influence of persons and environments that the children do not experience directly but still influence their lives (e.g., parental work environments that may be stressful and affect how parents interact in the home). Bronfenbrenner's next system is the macrosystem, which includes societal forces that influence the quality of children's lives such as the national economy, health care policies and access, availability of suitable housing, etc. Finally, the chronosystem refers to the effects of time on development over the lifespan. "Change or consistency of any element affecting an individual's life over a long period of time encompasses the chronosystem" (Paquette, as cited in Feinstein, Baartman, Buboltz, Sonnichsen, & Solomon, 2008). The example of the kindergartener who expressed concerns about being identified as Muslim offers the opportunity to consider the influence of the chronosystem. As this child progresses through twelve years of public school, his perceptions of religious micro-aggressions will likely deter high regard for the schooling process and environment. Well meaning but uninformed educators may consider this child 'at risk', 'disengaged' or perhaps even 'unmotivated' without fully considering how years of institutional and societal disregard or disdain for his religious faith has shaped his attitudes toward school.

Bronfenbrenner's Model leads school counselors to assess their ability to provide culturally responsive programming to Muslim children. For example, how do these systems influence Muslim children's development in public schools? What information does the school counselor have about the various systems that shape Muslim children's learning and development? Certainly, if school counselors lack information about the various shaping influences of the children's microsystems and mesosystems, counseling interventions will not be relevant to the chil-

Say the Word Islam: School Counselors and Muslim Children

dren, their families, or take advantage of cultural strengths that support Muslim students' academic, personal/social, and career development. A simple word association with the word "Islam" might yield important information for the individual counselor. Say the word Islam and see how close to the top of this list the word terrorist is. How far down the list would the word children be?

Cultural Considerations

Based on their personal and professional experiences, the authors have identified five critical themes that can assist school counselors in promoting the development of Muslim children:

1. School counselors need to be aware of the Islamic calendar and should make parallel accommodations for Muslim youth as are made for their non-Muslim counterparts. Of course, Saturday and Sunday—the sacred days of Christians and Jews are not school days, so that young Adventists, other Christian denominations and Jews do not face the challenge that Muslim youth do. For Muslims the day of communal worship is on Friday. School counselors should be cognizant that Muslim children may choose to attend the Friday congregational worship and benefit from not being penalized for absences or tardies because of this decision. Counselors and classroom teachers can collaborate on strategies to sensitize classmates and other adult school personnel on the Muslim faith requirements.
2. Muslim youth at the age of seven are required by their religion to perform formal acts of worship that sometimes occur during the school hours. The precise times of these acts of worship vary according to the time and geographical location. School counselors can print prayer times monthly so that accommodations can be made for those students needing to make their *salah*. Allow them to go to a quiet area to perform their worship.
3. Just like nuns and many devout women of a variety of faith traditions, some Muslim girls cover their heads, arms, necks and legs while in public. School counselors can be pro-active in providing information about Muslim girls' modesty requirements to other adult school personnel. School counselors can also be instrumental in providing in-service training to teachers and coaches who need this information and assist in the creation of a school wide policy that reflects sensitivity and respect for the modesty of the

Muslim children.

4. Before a student or his or her parent expresses concern about the male/female dynamic in the classroom, school counselors can be proactive by ensuring that those Muslim girls and boys are given the option to sit in same sex cohorts if they choose. An interview with the parents and in the case of older children the child can be held early in the semester to determine where the individual family's practice of Islam is situated- e.g. conservative, moderate, or liberal.
5. Make accommodations for children and young adults who observe Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. They do not drink water or food during this time. They also avoid excessive talking, viewing of materials that are not pleasing to Allah (God) and they read the Qur'an all the way through. Many Muslim families spend more time in the Masjid (the Muslim place of worship) and in other religious activities. These increased demands may result in the children being less energetic in school. Muslim children should have other legitimate places to go during lunch time when it is Ramadan. As advocates, school counselors can assist classroom teachers in identifying appropriate places such as empty classrooms or the media teacher.

Implications

The Jewish educator Haim Ginott (1995) spoke eloquently of the role of the classroom teacher and by extension the school counselor in shaping a child's school experience. Although this essay is devoted to the plight of Muslim children, school counselors can take heed for children everywhere who have to experience the denigration of their beliefs and culture by powerful others. Ginott writes: "I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my daily mood that makes the weather...I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized." Ginott's challenge can lead school counselors to critically and boldly consider how their beliefs, knowledge, and skills support Muslim children in achieving optimal academic, personal/social, and career development within the public school environment.

Say the Word Islam: School Counselors and Muslim Children

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The Editorial Review Board of the *GSCA Journal* is requesting that practicing school counselors, supervisors, counselor educators, and other professionals interested in the promotion of school counseling in Georgia submit articles for publication in the next issue of the *Journal*.

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