Preparing preservice English teachers and school counselor interns for future collaboration

By: Melanie Shoffner, Carrie Wachter Morris

Abstract:

The authors believe that by working together, teachers and school counselors can better support students and more effectively work for their success. In this article, we present our efforts in creating a collaborative class for preservice English teachers and school counselor interns. While offering an overview of English teachers and school counselors in their daily interactions with adolescents, we focus on the university preparation of both groups, specifically the preparation at our university, a large research institution in the Midwestern United States. We provide a look at the collaborative class created for the preservice English teachers and school counselor interns, offering examples of their interaction and feedback from the students. Lastly, we close with a consideration of the meaning of such collaboration at the university level for both English teachers and school counselors.

Article:

Introduction

Good teaching relies on professional competency as well as personal connection, with good teachers integrating issues of pedagogy and relationship in the classroom (Shoffner, 2009). This requires teachers to possess subject matter knowledge in addition to an understanding of adolescents' social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development (Gomez, Allen, & Clinton,2004). A teacher's understanding of students' needs, however, is necessarily shaped by the personal issues students bring to their education, ranging from low academic expectations to substance abuse, from poverty to family disintegration (Cochran-Smith,2003). The ability to

meet the diverse needs of students on a daily basis challenges any teacher, much less one in the early years.

The teacher is not the only adult seeking to support students, although the isolation of the classroom (Lortie, 2002) can make teachers' work seem like an individual effort. As Melanie (Author 1) learned during her first year as an English teacher, however, the classroom teacher can often meet the challenges of the profession through collaboration with other professionals. In that first year, she taught in what was locally considered a "difficult" school, with students' issues running the gamut from drug use to truancy, from mental illness to near illiteracy. The memory is vivid: sitting at her desk late one afternoon, head in hands, wondering how to engage her students in a discussion on *Things fall apart* (Achebe, 1994), much less motivate them to read the assigned chapters, when their daily lives seemed to embody Achebe's sentiment.

Enter Dorothea, the 10th-grade school counselor. In the flurry of starting that first year, introductions to other school personnel had been perfunctory; Dorothea was simply one of many people to greet in the hallway until she requested a meeting to discuss a particular 10th grader's situation. With that interaction, Melanie gained perspective on the school counselor's daily involvement with students: Dorothea arranged meetings with troubled individuals, stayed after school to meet with parents, tracked down missing students in the bathrooms. She also gained a useful resource for her students: Dorothea provided background information to recommend Shala for remedial courses, seconded the need for concern over Ishmael's graphic marginalia, voiced support to overturn Jamie's suspension. Through collaboration and communication with the school counselor, Melanie joined forces with another adult in the school who cared for the students in her classroom and focused on their academic and emotional wellbeing.

School counselors, too, engage in the hard work of meeting students' needs, integrating acts of care and professional skills in support of students' academic and personal achievement (Baker & Gerler Jr., 2007). School counselors are charged with supporting the academic, career, personal, and social development of students; to do so, they must design, coordinate, implement, and evaluate comprehensive, developmentally appropriate programming that supports students' development in multiple ways (American School Counselor Association, 2005). While creating this student-focused programming, however, they must also address the immediate needs of individual students who require assistance for issues ranging from failing grades to sexual abuse.

As Melanie learned in her first year of teaching, teachers and counselors have the same focus on student achievement, however different their approaches may be; by working together, they have the opportunity to better support students and more effectively work for their success. There are many barriers to such collaboration in the school setting, however: the demands of the school day, the isolation of teachers, high student to counselor ratios, and the lack of understanding between the two professions. Barriers to collaboration and care are also established during teacher preparation, as preservice teachers often put aside their care-based concerns for students to focus on the technical skills of teaching (Mills & Satterthwait, 2000), supported by preparation

programs that ignore the "need to help them understand the role of caring in teaching and prepare them to teach in ways that draw on the power of caring relationships in teaching and learning" (Goldstein & Freedman, 2003, p. 442). Strict concentration on the managerial issues of teaching and learning rejects the importance of relationships in good teaching (Shoffner, 2009), whether those relationships are with students or other school professionals, and restricts the ability of teachers to support students both academically and personally. At issue, then, is how to connect teachers and school counselors, despite the obstacles, and encourage them to work together to support students.

Melanie, now an English teacher educator, and Carrie (Author 2), a school counselor educator, believe one way to create such a connection is to support interaction between the two groups of professionals during their university preparation. By understanding their shared goal of student success and acknowledging the common element of care during their preparation, future English teachers and school counselors may then recognize the benefits of collaboration once they enter the school setting. In this article, we present our efforts to answer the question of what educators can do at the university level to encourage collaboration between English teachers and school counselors; specifically, we discuss the creation of a collaborative class for preservice English teachers and school counselor interns. While offering an overview of English teachers and school counselors in their daily interactions with adolescents, we focus on the university preparation of both groups, grounded in the specific context of the preparation at our university, a large research institution in the Midwestern United States. We provide a look at the collaborative class created for the preservice English teachers and school counselor interns, offering examples of their interaction and feedback from the students. Lastly, we close with a consideration of the meaning of such collaboration at the university level for both English teachers and school counselors.

English teachers and school counselors

English teachers operate in complex classrooms, engaging diverse students with diverse texts, integrating multiple literacies to meet multiple objectives (Beers, Probst, & Rief, 2007). Students work with print, visual, and media literacies (Albers & Harste, 2007; Carter, 2007; Golden, 2001), reading canonical short stories, graphic novels, public speeches, well-known artwork, popular music, and modern film. They also work with "new" literacies supported by technology (Kajder, 2006; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004; Richardson, 2006); virtual worlds, online literature circles, multimodal writing, digital video creation, and podcasting all have a place in English classrooms now.

As students work to read these texts, English teachers work to read their students. Why is this student so resistant to group work? What does that student mean in a journal entry? How can this student be encouraged to stay in school? While any teacher in the school may ask such questions, the English teacher is perhaps uniquely placed to do so, interacting with students through assignments that encourage personal connections to texts and meaningful responses through

writing. Typical assignments in an English curriculum – creating an original poem, writing a journal entry, or engaging in class discussion – provide students with the opportunity to share personal information or address difficult subjects in a manner not readily available in other classrooms. For example, the young adult novel *Speak* (Anderson, 1999), a popular text in English classrooms, uses first-person narration to relate a teenage girl's experiences in high school after her rape at a summer party. Although addressing difficult subject matter, the novel provides opportunities for students to explore a range of societal issues as well as the traditional literary elements of theme, characterization, and symbolism (Jackett, 2007). A teacher may not intend for students to share personal situations during the teaching of this – or any – novel but, as a student revealed in a college-level discussion of *Speak* (Miller, 2008), finding a connection to a literary character may encourage the disclosure of difficult information to a teacher in or outside a classroom setting.

The various questions surrounding students in the classroom may be adequately addressed through effective pedagogy – a resistant student may finally engage with a text that sparks her interest – or a concerned teacher – a frustrated student may need the chance to talk to a caring adult. The issues underlying such questions go beyond classroom walls, however, and extend beyond the sole purview of the teacher. Despite their best intentions, teachers are bound by numerous considerations: time, emotional involvement, access to resources, lack of understanding, absence of training. In short, teachers are not always able to engage in the emotional labor (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006) needed to read and understand the complex needs of their students.

School counselors, however, are trained to read, address, and manage the complexity of students' academic, personal, social, and career development (American School Counselor Association, 2005). They are prepared for the varied backgrounds, abilities, and motivations students bring to their education; they understand the wider contexts of students' environments and development levels; and they are ready to work with students, families, teachers, and administrators to support adolescents with their academic and personal issues. Adolescents deal with a range of emotional, social, familial, mental health, and crisis-related issues that impact their ability to learn in the school setting. A few statistics sadly support this:

the average freshman graduation rate for public high school students in 2004 was 75% (Laird, DeBell, Kienzl, & Chapman, 2007);

adolescents struggle with high rates of depression and other mental health issues, with 28% of high school students reporting continuous feelings of extreme hopelessness and sadness (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006);

a typical high school classroom is likely to have three students who have made a suicide

attempt in the previous year (American Association of Suicidology, 2008);

self-injury, such as cutting, biting or burning, is prevalent among adolescents, with up to 46% of adolescents participating in some form of self-injury within a 12-month period (Lloyd-Richardson, Perrine, Dierker, & Kelley, 2007);

bullying is a common occurrence in high schools, with up to 30% of students reporting victimization by a bully at some point in their high school careers (Newman, Holden, & Delville, 2005); and

with the increase in online socializing, bullying has also spread to the Internet; known as "cyberbullying", 19% of regular adolescent users have been victimized at some point (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004).

While school counselors are trained to address the issues adolescents bring to their education, they are bound not by the isolation of the classroom but by the number of students in the school. With an average of 229 students per one counselor at the secondary level (American School Counselor Association, 2008), school counselors cannot work alone to meet the needs of every student. English teachers have daily contact with students and are often the first to recognize the presence of an issue, if not the issue itself. A sudden shift in mood, a change in behavior, a new preoccupation, a disclosure in a journal entry – these signs of potential issues are likely to come to the attention of the classroom teacher first, putting teachers "in a unique position to provide insight and meaningful feedback to school counselors" (Beesley, 2004, p. 261). Bringing a student to the notice of the school counselor allows the counselor to more effectively assist a student, offering individual, small-group or classroom-based support as needed.

In addressing students' needs, English teachers and school counselors also have the opportunity to collaborate as professionals. English teachers may recognize the assistance school counselors can offer in certain situations, such as reporting suspected abuse or explaining college admission processes (American School Counselor Association, 2005), but fail to see how teachers and counselors can work together to address student issues in general. In working with the novel *Speak*, for example, one teacher educator suggests "bringing in a counselor or an individual from a rape crisis center to counter emotionally loaded reading passages … [and] discuss issues around date rape, unwanted advances, and fear of reporting" (Miller, 2008, p. 151). This may indeed be a useful presentation for students in the classroom, yet the counselor and the teacher remain separated in their efforts to address a very important student concern. Likewise, Reis and Cornell (2008) address the importance of suicide prevention training for teachers and school counselors and the need for counselors to raise awareness of suicide risk

factors among school personnel. However, they do not mention the potential for collaboration between the two groups to achieve these goals.

Rather than working separately, English teachers and school counselors should explore opportunities to join forces. In speaking to the need to address violence in students' lives, for example, Fisher (2006) encourages teachers to "collaborate with students, their counselors, and the administration to begin to solve the issues or lead the students to understand their lived experiences" (p.70). Fisher (2006) recognizes the need to address student issues in the classroom and suggests that collaborative approaches may provide necessary support. Helker, Schottelborb, and Ray (2007) also identify the need for collaboration between teachers and school counselors in a discussion of the importance of student–teacher relationships and the role of school counselors in helping teachers gain the skills to build such relationships. The interactions offered by the authors include inservice training, consultations with teachers, and classroom guidance lessons.

Collaboration between English teachers and school counselors is unlikely to develop without recognition of its benefits from both parties, however. In effect, teachers and counselors must form communities of practice, "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). By taking the time to share resources and develop solutions together, teachers and counselors create a community of support focused on students' needs in and out of the classroom.

Additionally, preparation for such collaboration should start at the university level, and this is not likely to occur without direct effort on the part of teacher and counselor educators. Beesley (2004) calls for educators to "provide school counselors and teachers with the necessary skills to support each other and to promote academic success among the range of students they serve" (p. 267). In order to do so, educators must "[develop] and [promote] collaborative training models for teachers and school counselors that better prepare them to function as part of a multidisciplinary team" (Beesley, 2004, p. 267). By modeling the communities of practice that can exist at the school level, educators provide preservice teachers and school counselor interns with an understanding of the expertise of each profession and a recognition of the potential of future collaboration in supporting students' needs. As such, Melanie and Carrie chose to create a collaborative class, discussed below, to bring together preservice English teachers and school counselor interns to explore the potential power of collaboration and communities of practice at the preservice level.

University preparation

English teachers and school counselors are often prepared in entirely separate programs during their university education. At our institution, English Education is an undergraduate program while School Counseling is a Master's program, housed in two different buildings on opposite

ends of campus. School counselor interns are required to spend 600 hours in the local schools, while preservice English teachers complete 30 hours of classroom practica and 10 weeks of student teaching, greatly reducing opportunities to interact on the university campus. The preservice teachers and interns have little reason to cross paths during their preparation.

This state of affairs is continued upon entering the schools, where contact is infrequent between English teachers and counselors during a typical school day. Both operate in physically separate spheres, making it easy to interact as polite professionals and little more. The lack of meaningful communication between teachers and counselors naturally limits their collaboration as well as their understanding of the resources and strengths each can offer the other.

Yet both are exploring issues of student success in the classroom during their university preparation. In Melanie's secondary methods course, preservice English teachers are engaged in a weekly practicum in local high school classrooms. The practicum allows the preservice teachers to interact with students struggling with a range of issues, see the impact of those issues on classroom instruction, and question how teachers can best support the students. In Carrie's school counseling seminar, the school counselor interns work in local schools with professional school counselors to create student-based programs and develop collaborative relationships with teachers and administrators.

In spring 2007, we found ourselves discussing our courses and the disconnect between English teachers and school counselors. Two important points surfaced as we shared stories from different sides of the professional fence. Carrie was frustrated; she saw teachers and school counselors ending up as adversaries in the schools, fighting for students' time as they both tried to address students' needs in their own spheres, and worked hard to dispel this image among her counselor interns. Melanie was neutral; despite her own past experiences as a classroom teacher, she had not previously prepared her preservice English teachers to work with counselors once they entered classrooms of their own and rarely addressed the topic unless asked directly. Additionally, neither of us had models from our respective disciplines to support the idea of collaboration between school counselors and English teachers. The conversation led us to an important question: What could we do at the university level to encourage English teachers and school counselors to work together once they entered their own schools?

We realized that a focus on the disconnect between English teachers and school counselors failed to recognize their common concern for high school students. We believed that supplemental readings or guest lectures in our respective classes, while offering food for thought, would not achieve our goal of supporting future collaboration in the schools. Additionally, we believed that providing a model of collaborative problem-solving for future use was best achieved through personal interaction between the two groups, rather than information alone. Accordingly, we decided to bring Melanie's preservice English teachers and Carrie's school counselor interns together in Melanie's secondary English methods course, to explore how they could form a community of practice to collaboratively address student issues and support students' needs.

Connecting at the university

Before coming to the methods course, Carrie's interns designed a needs assessment for the preservice English teachers. A needs assessment is a tool that school counselors often use in order to gauge which topics will best serve their target population: in this case, the preservice English teachers. This assessment, administered a week before the collaborative class, examined the preservice teachers' confidence on topics related to their personal ability to deal with certain student issues and the role of school counselors, using a scoring range of 1 (Not Confident) to 5 (Very Confident). A selection of statements from the needs assessment are given below:

- my ability to determine when to refer a student to the school counselor;

- my understanding of the areas in which school counselors receive training;

- my ability to recognize signs of an eating disorder;

- my understanding of the warning signs exhibited by a student with suicidal ideation;

- my understanding of a teacher's role in an Individual Education Plan (IEP);

- my understanding of how a counselor could assist me with classroom management issues; and

- my understanding of how a counselor could be a liaison between teachers, students and administration.

Using the responses from the preservice English teachers, the counselor interns created a short, inservice-styled presentation on the preparation of school counselors and student issues in the classroom. To determine topics for the inservice presentation, the counselor interns focused on statements that averaged a rating of below three, indicating that the preservice English teachers evinced a lack of confidence in these areas. Using these data, the counselor interns determined to focus on the following statements in the collaborative class: the process of general educational interventions ($M = 1.58$; $SD = .69$); school counselor preparation ($M = 2.16$; $SD = .68$); school counselors' role in helping increase classroom management ($M = 2.32$; $SD = .89$); collaboration with school counselors in classroom guidance lessons ($M = 2.58$; $SD = 1.07$); and limits to confidentiality ($M = 2.89$; $SD = 1.10$). Carrie gave her counseling interns full responsibility for

planning and implementing the inservice presentation, providing them with the opportunity to put into practice the skills acquired during their university preparation. The school counselor interns decided to blend dialogic and experiential approaches to inform, engage, and model the consultation and collaboration they hoped to have with practicing teachers.

The 75-minute collaborative methods class allowed for two main activities: the counselor interns' inservice presentation and a question-and-answer session between the preservice teachers and interns. Both allowed for an exchange of useful information, an awareness of each group's professional responsibilities, an understanding of how English teachers and counselors can work together in the schools, and a model of collaborative problem-solving.

Counseling presentation

The inservice presentation took place in the first 50 minutes of class. During the preparation and training portion of the presentation, the counselor interns provided handouts with information on school counselors' education and expertise as well as ways that counselors are trained to support and collaborate with teachers (examples of these handouts are provided in Wachter & Bouck, 2008). The purpose of this portion of the class was twofold: to demonstrate how school counselors could be helpful to the preservice English teachers once they reached their own classrooms and to provide the counselor interns with the opportunity of explaining their multifaceted role in the schools to future allies.

The interns involved the preservice English teachers in role plays of individual and small-group counseling sessions and classroom guidance activities, getting the preservice teachers out of their seats to engage as if they were adolescents. By participating in the activities, the preservice teachers gained an understanding of students' interactions with school counselors and experienced examples of how school counselors might work with students on a variety of issues.

During the student issues portion of the presentation, the counselor interns used sample scenarios to provoke discussion among the preservice teachers. These scenarios addressed specific student issues, offering concrete warning signs for issues such as adolescent depression, suicide, and violence. One such scenario described a journal writing assignment in which a student wrote:

Have you ever noticed that even though parents say they love all their children equally, that they never really do? One's always better. One always does everything right … And how are the rest of us supposed to live up to that?!? There's nothing I can do. Sometimes I just think about what they would say if I were dead. Is that what it would take for them to realize that I was a good son, too?

After allowing the preservice teachers to explain how they might react and what they thought was the "right" course of action, the interns discussed actions teachers might take for a student such as the one portrayed in the scenario. The discussion following each scenario emphasized the range of solutions suited to the situation, rather than establishing right and wrong answers,

allowing the counselor interns to address the complexity of student issues. In the scenario given above, for example, the preservice teachers and counselor interns applied their different perspectives to the student's journal entry, discussing several potential solutions, including sharing the journal entry with the school counselor, encouraging the student to expand the journal entry into a short story, speaking to the student in private to voice the teacher's concern, and arranging a meeting between the student and the school counselor.

Q&A session

The question-and-answer session took place in the last 25 minutes of class, with the preservice English teachers and counselor interns sharing concerns and considering solutions through their discussion. Some questions came from the presentation itself, stemming from the new ideas and information provided. Much of the discussion, however, was prompted by questions the preservice teachers brought to class, as Melanie had required the preservice teachers to prepare specific written questions for the school counselor interns. Their questions tended to focus on future interactions with students as English teachers, as the following examples show:

If you have speculations about a student (that they are having personal or family problems), should you say something, even if you don't have proof?

What should you do if a student tells you something personal and then says that he doesn't want you to tell anyone because he doesn't want trouble?

As an English teacher, it's more likely that I will come across student writing that could potentially be scary or dark. How do I know when to approach the student, counselors, or school authorities about it?

Do you tell parents if a student confides in you? Is there such a thing as student–teacher confidentiality?

By the end of the presentation, the preservice English teachers had gained an understanding of the school counselor's professional skills, ability to address a variety of student issues, and interest in working with teachers to support students in the classroom. The counselor interns gained insight into the needs and concerns of preservice English teachers, the opportunity to practice their presentation skills, an opportunity to practice consultation skills, and the chance to advocate for their profession. The preservice teachers also gained a variety of resources on topics connected to their future students' potential concerns through the handouts, activities and initial discussion: warning signs for specific issues, descriptions of common adolescent behaviors, examples of support provided by school counselors.

In addition, both groups gained a clearer understanding of how English teachers and school counselors could work together for student success. During the role-playing exercises, the preservice teachers had the opportunity to experience the variety of activities school counselors employ when working with students. Such an experience supports the inclusion of school counselors in English teachers' classrooms; rather than serving simply as guest lecturers, school counselors can work with the English teacher to design active learning experiences for students connected to specific subject matter or identified student concerns. For example, school counselors can help English teachers facilitate classroom conversations about difficult issues, such as rape, teen pregnancy, depression or violence, which often feature prominently in the literature students read. School counselors can also work with teachers to implement classroom curricula that build students' academic and self-management skills. One example is the Student Success Skills program (Brigman & Webb, 2004), a curriculum focused on the improvement of students' learning, social, and self-management skills; completion of the program has shown an increase in students' high-stakes test scores and an improvement in student behavior in the classroom (Webb, Brigman, & Campbell, 2005), areas that speak to the opportunity for students to achieve academically and personally. By working together, English teachers and school counselors can draw on their shared expertise to create specific lessons tied to classroom subject matter or student concerns that support student learning in multiple areas.

Reflecting on the experience

The preservice English teachers left class talking about the presentation, a positive sign of engagement with the material discussed. In following classes, they sometimes referenced a point made by the counselor interns or referred to a piece of information gained from a handout. They also addressed the collaborative class with the counselor interns in reflections.

In the methods course, the preservice English teachers are required to write weekly reflections on a topic of their choice. Although not required to do so, some of the preservice teachers addressed the collaborative class in subsequent reflections. After discussing the different issues students bring to the classroom, for example, Kathryn[1] went on to say:

I also enjoyed the [presentation on] students and school counselors. They addressed many topics that I thought are relevant for us and that we are likely to encounter in our classrooms. As English teachers, I think that it is even more likely that we will be faced with difficult issues because of the often personal level found in English classrooms.

Kathryn already recognized an important aspect of teaching: that teachers cannot ignore the issues students bring to the classroom. She also understood that English teachers are in a unique position; by the very nature of the subject matter, they are likely to elicit personal responses from students that may be difficult to address. In fact, one of the common concerns raised in Melanie's methods course is how to teach certain topics found in literature, such as rape, homosexuality, or racism, when those same topics may be personally troublesome for individual students. The

collaborative class did not – could not – answer all of the preservice teachers' concerns; the interaction with the counselor interns, however, did offer useful information related to such issues and a reassurance that teachers have an ally in the school counselor when it comes to supporting students and addressing their concerns.

Larissa's reflection addressed a different point made during the collaborative class with the counselor interns. Following a school counselor's visit to her practicum classroom, she noted the potential for – and lack of – collaboration between teachers and school counselors:

It was perfect timing for the graduate students to come and speak to our class about school counselors when they did. It was very informative and gave me a better appreciation for what they do, and I got to witness a school counselor at work today … I was disappointed but not surprised to see some of the things the students told us about preconceived notions of counselors … The counselor today … came in to talk to the students and only talked about scheduling them for classes. I was hoping she would throw in something like, "And also if you want to talk to me about these huge decisions you are about to make in your lives and how it is going to affect you, I'm here for you to talk through those sorts of issues." This wasn't the case. None of the students knew who she was … Also, the teacher even referred to her as the counselor rather than addressing her by her name, which seemed to imply to me a lack of a personal relationship between the teacher and the counselor as well … Watching the counselor's interactions with the students and teacher today encouraged me even more to develop a good working environment with my future school counselor so that we can give each other help when working with students with issues. I wouldn't have thought anything of it had the grad students not come the day before and painted a pretty picture of the teacher, counselor, and students all working together as a team.

Larissa's experience highlights the all too common situation of teachers and counselors in separate spheres, interacting when necessary but having little connection otherwise. After her interaction with the counselor interns, Larissa understood that school counselors could offer much more than scheduling forms to both students and teachers – and she now expected to see evidence of that "more" in the classroom. Perhaps the most important point made in her reflection is her comment that she "wouldn't have thought anything" of the experience without the collaborative class with the counselor interns. As we had hoped, the preservice teachers gained an understanding of the support school counselors could offer students in their future classrooms.

Considering the implications

Our experience with the first collaborative methods class encouraged us to arrange a similar class between our respective students when Melanie next taught the secondary English methods course. We believe introducing preservice English teachers and school counselor interns during their university preparation helps them understand the benefits of communication and

collaboration with each other before they reach their future schools. We also believe structured collaboration, such as that created in the methods course, provides useful information while establishing the common concern of student support. While not creating authentic communities of practice at the university level, such collaborative experiences support the development of future communities once English teachers and school counselors enter schools as fully trained professionals.

Supporting collaboration between the two groups at the university level has implications for practicing English teachers and professional school counselors. Taking the time to create collaborative opportunities underscores the importance of making connections between the two groups during university preparation, while demonstrating how teachers and counselors can maximize their ability to positively impact students by working together. English teachers and school counselors may be more amenable to creating communities of practice during their preparation, when they are in the process of forming conceptions of their respective professions. Entering the schools with an understanding of the benefits of collaboration encourages both English teachers and school counselors to work against potentially entrenched ideas of teachers and counselors operating in separate spheres, as Larissa illustrated in her reflection. In the absence of university-level collaboration, however, aspects of this project could be adapted into an inservice format. Opportunities for such professional development may support the formation of communities of practice between practicing teachers and counselors, particularly as both groups are unlikely to learn each others' expertise or goals without specific time dedicated to collaborative work.

Having the two groups interact at the university level also models the expectation that teachers and counselors should work together as allies once they reach their schools. Together, they can read the needs and concerns of the individual student and try to provide the support necessary for the student's success. That common concern for the student came through to the preservice English teachers. After noting how much she enjoyed the discussion with the counselor interns, Bronwyn explained in her reflection, "The reason I decided to teach was for the kids themselves … because I want to be a good influence on students' lives." She later noted that she saw – and was impressed by – that same dedication to students from the counselor interns.

English teachers have the ability to be important forces in the social and emotional development of their students while working for their students' academic success. School counselors have the ability to positively support the academic, career, personal, and social needs of students. The common ground shared between these two groups of professionals – the support, care, and understanding of the student – is a powerful reason to collaborate. Recognizing this shared focus on student success provides English teachers and school counselors with the incentive to collaborate and supports teacher educators' efforts to arrange experiences with such collaboration during the university preparation.

Notes

1. The names of all preservice English teachers have been changed.

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