

Comprehensive school counseling programs: A review for policymakers and practitioners

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Abstract:

This article describes components of effective school counseling programs that have emerged from 30 years of empirical research and professional standards. Results are summarized in seven sections: core principles of school counseling programs, program resources, program interventions, program evaluation, program renewal, written policies, and program climate.

Keywords: school counseling | literature review | counselors | interventions

Article:

Currently, the field of school counseling is enjoying program expansion and renewal. A number of state legislatures are considering mandates for elementary (and, in some cases, middle) school counseling while others are updating accreditation standards and counselor certification requirements (Ferns, 1988; Glossoff & Koprowicz, 1990). In addition, the National Conference of State Legislatures and the American Association for Counseling and Development (AACD) recently collaborated on a report advocating elementary school counseling programs (Glossoff & Koprowicz, 1990).

These developments provide a window of opportunity for educating policymakers about the components of comprehensive school counseling programs and the appropriate role of school counselors (Cole, 1988; Sweeney, 1988). Within this favorable environment, however, there is also an increasing emphasis on program accountability (Cole, 1988; Lombana, 1985), including mandated program evaluations tied to funding in several states. Thus, it is clear that program development must be guided by systematic planning and proven practices.

Sources for systematic planning of comprehensive school counseling programs do exist, including practical guides for program development (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Myrick, 1987) and a series of professional position statements (see American School Counselor

Association [ASCA] references). In addition, school counseling research provides some guidelines for effective practice, although several reviewers have found more testimonials than empirically based reports in the literature (e.g., Cole, 1988; Loesch, 1988).

Although these varied sources are informative, they are also quite scattered. As a result, it is difficult for school counseling professionals to advocate, plan, or evaluate comprehensive school counseling programs. Not surprisingly, then, one consultant recently observed that some programs "seem to have evolved with no particular plan in mind" (Brown, 1989, p. 47). Other writers have indicated that legislators, principals, parents, and even some counselors are still confused, if not woefully uninformed, about the contributions of school counseling programs and the role of school counselors (Brown, 1989; Cole, 1988; Herr, 1984; Sweeney, 1988). This state of affairs is alarming, particularly in light of the critical decisions that these persons are making about program funding and content. Clearly, a comprehensive synthesis of professional standards and the empirical literature would be advantageous for school counseling advocates, as well as legislators, administrators, and practitioners.

This article, a comprehensive review of existing sources, is our attempt to present a cogent rationale for the components of effective school counseling programs. Our interest in a diverse audience (e.g., legislators, principals, parents, and counselors) dictated several decisions concerning the content of this review. First, we have assumed little knowledge of the field, and so included brief definitions of program components that are applicable to K-12 schools. Second, we have included both global concepts, or core principles, of school counseling programs and the concrete factors (e.g., facilities, resources, counselor-student ratios) necessary for implementing programs. Third, we have provided an overview of empirical evidence rather than a technical critique of research methodology. It should be noted, however, that we included only studies published in refereed journals. In addition, each program component we discuss was supported by more than one source.

This article differs in scope from other literature reviews. Previous publications provide more in-depth critiques of one program component or counseling issue (e.g., Capuzzi, 1988; Cole, 1988; Gysbers, 1988; Wilson, 1986a). Despite its scope and length, however, this article is still an overview. Readers are encouraged to consult previous reviews and other original sources listed in the references.

METHOD

In compiling this review, we conducted computerized and manual searches of indexes to counseling and educational research journals and ERIC documents from the 1960s through January 1990, giving particular attention to empirical studies. Journals of particular interest were the *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *The School Counselor*, *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, and *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development* (current titles). We also obtained role statements, position statements, and professional standards from AACD and ASCA. In addition, we read reports of recent national studies and school counseling conferences. We also drew from developmental theories, which constitute much of the foundation for "state-of-the-art" school counseling practice. Finally, we contacted several national experts and professional leaders concerning current developments in the field.

We begin our review with a discussion of core principles that reflect the assumptions and philosophical foundations of school counseling programs. This section is followed by presentations of more concrete program components and practices, including resources, program interventions, evaluation procedures, program renewal, written policies, and program climate.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS

There is widespread consensus concerning the desired nature and scope of school counseling programs (e.g., ASCA, 1981, 1984b; ASCA/NACAC, 1986; Aubrey, 1982; Carroll, 1980; Commission, 1986; Gerstein & Lichtman, 1989; Glossoff & Koprowicz, 1990; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Hargens & Gysbers, 1984; Myrick, 1987). Four core principles that characterize effective programs are described in the following sections.

Independent Educational Program

Counseling and guidance is a distinct, comprehensive program rather than a "set of loosely related services" (Commission, 1986, p. 8). As a full-fledged, independent program, counseling and guidance is comprehensive, purposeful, and sequential. Like other educational programs, its curriculum is grounded in a philosophy or mission statement that is consistent with other school-level and district-level statements (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). The counseling and guidance curriculum includes specific student competencies (outcomes) and program objectives, interventions to assist students in meeting these objectives, materials and resources, qualified professionals, and an ongoing evaluation system (Crabbs & Crabbs, 1977; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Morgan, 1984).

Guides for creating a comprehensive curriculum have been written at system and state levels. In the North Carolina competency-based curriculum (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 1985), for example, goals and sequential objectives are outlined in a developmental context. The curriculum specifies developmental tasks in the domains of educational/career maturity, personal/emotional maturity, and social maturity for elementary, middle, and high school students. Multiple objectives are presented for each developmental area at each grade level. To achieve these objectives, practical and measurable developmental activities are included.

Integrative Program

The counseling program "is both an integral part of and an independent component of the total educational program" (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988, p. 72) and is "central rather than peripheral to teaching and learning in the schools" (Commission, 1986, p. 7). Although the program has its own distinct curriculum, its underlying purposes are to facilitate the instructional process and students' academic success (Myrick, 1987).

In an integrative program, guidance is infused into all areas of the traditional curriculum. For example, communication skills naturally fit into the language arts curriculum, problem solving into science and math, social skills into social studies, and mental health concepts into health and

science (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). In addition, career guidance can be infused into all traditional curriculum areas (ASCA, 1985).

Other implications of this core principle are that counselors are school team members and that all school staff participate in the counseling and guidance program (ASCA, 1981, 1984b; Commission, 1986; Gerstein & Lichtman, 1989; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Hargens & Gysbers, 1984; Kornick, 1984; Myrick, 1987; Thompson, 1987). Staff participation may be informal or structured, as, for example, in a student advisory program (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Myrick, 1987) or crisis intervention program. Teachers and other school staff who perceive themselves as part of the student support system typically increase their understanding and support of the program. An integrative approach also ensures that all students participate in the counseling and guidance program.

Developmental Program

Effective counseling programs are clearly based in human development theories, including those of Piaget (1954) (cognitive), Erikson (1968) (psychosocial), Loevinger (1976) (ego), Kohlberg (1981) and Gilligan (1982) (moral), and Selman (1980) (social cognition) (ASCA, 1981, 1984b, 1985; Clark & Frith, 1983; D'Andrea, 1983; Dinkmeyer, 1966; Gerstein & Lichtman, 1989; Myrick, 1987; Thornburg, 1986; Zaccaria, 1965). These theories describe sequential, hierarchical stages of functioning in the various developmental domains. A developmental program is designed to help students cope with normal developmental tasks that characterize each developmental stage. The program "Vigorously stimulates and actively facilitates the total development" (ASCA, 1984b, p. 1) of students, including their personal, social, educational, and career development.

Program content, goals, and interventions should reflect this theoretical foundation. The developmental program is proactive and preventive, helping students acquire the knowledge, skills, self-awareness, and attitudes necessary for successful mastery of normal developmental tasks. Developmental concepts are translated into specific outcomes for students; developmental principles are evident in the program plan (curriculum) and intervention strategies.

For example, elementary students are concrete thinkers who are externally motivated and eager to learn new skills (Whitelaw, 1982). During their middle school years, students begin to generalize and problem solve; they are concerned about peer relationships and desire greater independence (D'Andrea, 1983; Thornburg, 1986). High school students are developing abstract thinking and logical reasoning. Even so, their self-preoccupation leads them to construct an "imaginary audience" that constantly monitors their behavior and a "personal fable" that they are exempt from rules that hold true for others (Elkind, 1980; Whitelaw, 1982).

Developmentally based programs increase the visibility of the counseling program and ensure that more students are served (Myrick, 1987; Shaw & Goodyear, 1984). There is also substantial empirical evidence that these programs promote students' development and academic success. In a meta-analysis of 40 studies published between 1971 and 1982, researchers found particularly positive results for programs that emphasized career maturity and communication skills (Baker, Swisher, Nadenichek, & Popowicz, 1984). A variety of deliberate psychological education

programs had a positive impact on the conceptual, moral, and ego development of students (Baker et al, 1984; Sprinthall, 1984). In addition, Sheldon and Morgan (1984) reported that elementary students in their comprehensive developmental program showed significant increases in self-concept and achievement scores. Parents, who also participated in this longitudinal study, said that their children had more positive attitudes toward school and got along better with other children. In addition, they reported that they understood their children better and participated more in their children's education.

Equitable Program

Effective school counseling programs serve all students equally (ASCA, 1985, 1988a; ASCA/NACAC, 1986; Commission, 1986; Gerstein & Lichtman, 1989; Myrick, 1987; Sewall & Humes, 1988). All students refers to those who are average, gifted and talented, low achieving and to those with handicaps and disabilities; those in all ethnic, cultural, and sexual orientation groups; those who speak English as a second language; migrants; boys and girls; athletes and nonathletes; and any other "special students" in the school. This principle indicates that all students have equal access to counselors, the guidance curriculum, counseling resources, and all other direct and indirect services. In addition, information about educational and career opportunities is distributed equitably. In terms of career guidance, this means that all students are informed of wide choices, including professional and nontraditional careers (ASCA, 1985; Sproles, 1988).

More generally, program goals for the entire school community should include interventions to increase awareness, acceptance, and appreciation of cultural diversities (ASCA, 1988a). In addition, counselors attend to school policies and procedures, instructional practices, staff-student interactions, and other environmental factors that may impede development of students.

Although equity seems an obvious principle, there is evidence that school counseling services are not equally accessible to all students. Girls take fewer mathematics and science courses in high school than do boys (Ramist & Arbeiter, 1986), and, as the "gatekeepers" to various opportunities in the schools, counselors have been cited for their failure to channel bright girls into advanced courses in math and science (Sells, 1978). The critical influence of school counselors on their female students was illustrated in two recent studies based on data from *High School and Beyond*, a national, longitudinal study of high school sophomores and seniors begun in 1980. Ware and Lee (1988) reported that girls, in contrast with boys, were more influenced by their high school teachers and counselors when deciding whether to take science and math courses at both the high school and college levels. It seemed that these high school advisers could positively or negatively influence the female students' decisions. These results give significance to Ethington and Wolfe's (1988) findings that the most predominant factor in girls' choice of a quantitative major was the number of math and science courses they had taken in high school.

Additional questions about the equitability of counseling services were investigated by Lee and Ekstrom (1987), who also analyzed data from the *High School and Beyond* study. They found that students from lower socioeconomic homes, rural areas, or minority families received less guidance counseling than did other students and, thus, were less likely to be guided toward

academic courses, Similarly, the Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling (1986) found that rural and low-income students had the least access to professional counselors. In short, students who needed guidance the most were the least likely to receive it. Interestingly, the Commission on Precollege Guidance (1986) also indicated that these groups would make up a larger proportion of student populations in the future.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

Qualifications of Counseling Staff

Current standards for qualifications reflect the changing role of the school counselor and the growing professionalism of the field. Preparation standards (Council for Accreditation and Counseling Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 1988) specify a 48-hour master's program in school counseling that includes a core curriculum (i.e., human development theory, social and cultural foundations, helping relationships, counseling theories, group counseling, life-style and career counseling, appraisal, research and evaluation, and professional orientation), plus extensive supervised practica (150 hours) and internships (600 hours). Additional "environmental" studies emphasize a developmental approach and cover specialized topics such as the history of and trends in school counseling; program planning, management, and evaluation; consultation; and placement. These preparation standards provide consistent and comprehensive curricula that prepare school counselors for their complex and varied functions (Stone, 1985; Sweeney, 1988). The standards have been endorsed by ASCA (1988b; ASCA/NACAC, 1986) and are beginning to have some impact on state certification guidelines and employment preferences for school counselors (Paisley & Hubbard, 1989).

It is usually desirable for one counselor to be designated as the "head" or "chair" of the counseling department (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). The head counselor assumes additional tasks related to the efficient implementation of the counseling program. Because of these additional responsibilities, this person should be an experienced school counselor who has had additional training in administrative skills, such as staff evaluations and budget preparation (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). Similarly, the district-level director should be a qualified and experienced school counselor who has had additional training for administrative and leadership functions (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988).

There is growing concern that school counselors are often "supervised" by persons who have little (or no) background in counseling or counseling supervision (AACD School Counseling Task Force, 1989; Barret & Schmidt, 1986; Borders, 1991). Building principals and district-level administrators typically are well qualified to provide administrative supervision, program supervision, or both (Barret & Schmidt, 1986). Persons who supervise school counselors' clinical skills, however, should be certified and experienced counselors who have additional training in counseling supervision skills (AACD School Counseling Task Force, 1989; Barret & Schmidt, 1986; Borders, 1991; Dye & Borders, 1990; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988).

Composition of Counseling Staff

A wide range of counselor-student ratios have been suggested. To some degree, the requisite number of school counselors depends on the school level, student population, and content and goals of the counseling program. Recommendations include a 1:50 ratio for at-risk students (Commission, 1986), 1:300 for elementary schools (Glosoff & Koprowicz, 1990), and 1:100 for high schools (Boyer, 1983). ASCA (1988c) recently adopted a position statement recommending a counselor-student ratio between 1:100 (the ideal) and 1:300 (the maximum). ASCA's statement, however, also recognized that each school district has unique needs that may influence the desired number of counselors. Thus, the appropriate counselor-student ratio for a school should be based on the identified needs and goals of the students, school, and school district.

The number of needed support personnel also varies. For example, at the high school level, a registrar is often needed to handle graduation-related duties (e.g., credit checks, transcripts, and college and financial aid applications). Additional personnel are needed to maintain the career and postsecondary education resource center. At the elementary level, the counseling office may be responsible for maintaining the records of students in exceptional programs (i.e., diagnostic assessment, Individual Educational Plans [IEPs]) and coordinating placement and IEP meetings. Such time-consuming clerical tasks can be performed by an appropriately trained paraprofessional. In general, clerical help should be adequate to meet the specified objectives of the program so that school counselors are able to devote their time and energy to those activities for which they have special training (ASCA, 1986b; ASCA/NACAC, 1986). In addition, clerical personnel should be assigned only counseling program duties (ASCA/NACAC, 1986).

Finally, the counseling staff should reflect the minorities represented in the school and community (ASCA/NACAC, 1986; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). In some situations, where an adequate number of minority or bilingual counselors are unavailable, trained paraprofessionals may provide ethnic and cultural balance and enhance the success of the program (Commission, 1986).

Availability of Counselors

To some extent, counselor availability (and their perceived effectiveness) is dependent on the counselor-student ratio (ASCA, 1986b; Boser, Poppen, & Thompson, 1988; Glosoff & Koprowicz, 1990). Location of the counseling office also can influence counselor accessibility (ASCA, 1986b). Counselors can maximize their visibility and accessibility through a deliberately planned weekly schedule, including activities that reach large groups of students (i.e., classroom guidance) and time periods reserved for individual appointments (Myrick, 1987). Flexible scheduling is also necessary to be responsive to particular populations. Parents and graduates, for example, may need to meet the counselor before or after regular school hours (ASCA/NACAC, 1986).

Facilities

To some extent, needed facilities depend on the particular goals of the counseling program and the school level (elementary, middle, or high school). Nevertheless, there are some common basic needs. The counseling program requires several types of facilities to fulfill its various

functions (ASCA, 1986b; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). Individual offices (with telephones) for individual counseling and parent and teacher conferences are required, as well as areas that will accommodate small-group counseling, large-group guidance, and parent groups. A reception area with work space for support staff and secure storage areas for student records are also needed. A facility of central importance is a comprehensive guidance resource center. This center should house resources and materials appropriate to the school (developmental) level and should be easily accessible to students, teachers, and parents (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). Counseling facilities should be located in an area that maximizes student access and maintains confidentiality (ASCA, 1986a, 1986b). In addition, the arrangement and furnishings of all facilities should make clear that the counseling office and the program are student centered (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988).

Materials

A wide range of printed, audio, and video materials are needed to enhance school counselors' work with students, parents, and teachers. These materials are increasingly more sophisticated and technological. Equipment needs now include computers and VCR players, in addition to filmstrip and movie projectors (Cole, 1988; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Johnson, 1983; Kornick, 1984). Counselors now rely on computers to schedule courses and review transcripts, and students use computer-assisted career guidance programs and "visit" college campuses using video-taped tours. Up-to-date materials and equipment increase the efficiency and accessibility of the counseling program (ASCA/NACAC, 1986).

The specific materials needed to fully implement the counseling program vary at each school level (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). Developmentally appropriate materials at the elementary level include commercial kits (e.g., DUSO, Magic Circle), toys, and books and audiovisuals on parenting skills. At the middle school level, materials that encourage career exploration, stress self-responsibility, and address peer relationships are appropriate. High school students need access to materials concerning career planning and placement, postsecondary educational opportunities, and financial aid. Assessment materials, including a variety of educational, career, and psychosocial instruments, are also requisite at all levels. For example, counselors may use an instrument such as the Career Development Inventory (CDI; Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Jordaan, & Myers, 1981) to determine students' career knowledge and maturity. Students' scores on various CDI subscales, such as Career Planning, Career Exploration, Decision Making, and Knowledge of World of Work may indicate student competencies that need to be targeted. Other instruments that might be used in a career planning program include The Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1979), Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory (Hansen & Campbell, 1985), Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985), and Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (Edwards, 1959).

Finally, because all students participate in the counseling program, it is imperative that materials be nonbiased (ASCA, 1986a) and appropriate to ability levels of students in the school.

PROGRAM INTERVENTIONS

There is general consensus among professionals concerning interventions that should be included in a comprehensive, developmental school counseling program (e.g., ASCA, 1981, 1984b; ASCA/NACAC, 1986; Cole, 1988; Gerstein & Lichtman, 1989; Glossoff & Koprowicz, 1990; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Myrick, 1987). Both *direct* and *indirect* services are identified, and these are frequently categorized as *counseling* and *classroom guidance* (direct services), and *consultation* and *coordination* (indirect services).

These interventions are endorsed by practicing counselors, their students, teachers, and principals, according to results of recent studies. Bonebrake and Borgers (1984) found that middle and junior high school principals and counselors agreed that "ideal" programs should emphasize individual and group counseling, classroom guidance, consultation with parents and teachers, and coordination functions. More recently, high school teachers ranked individual counseling as the most important responsibility of counselors in their schools (Gibson, 1990). Notably, respondents in both studies gave low ratings to disciplinary functions and clerical work.

Two other studies focused on actual programs. Wiggins and Moody (1987) compared the activities of counselors in schools that were rated excellent, average, or below average by students. Counselors in excellent schools reported that they provided substantially more direct services (i.e., individual and group counseling), whereas counselors in average or below average schools spent relatively more time completing clerical tasks. Miller (1988) surveyed counselors in elementary, middle, and high schools rated excellent by the United States Department of Education. Counselors at all three levels said that counseling and consultation were the most important functions in their counseling programs. These results indicate that school counselors in quality programs spend the majority of their time in counseling and counseling-related activities. A recent national report from AACD and the National Conference of State Legislatures (Glossoff & Koprowicz, 1990) recommended that elementary counselors spend 75% of their time in direct services, and several states have mandated 60% (Virginia) to 75% (Florida).

Although some interventions (i.e., counseling and consulting) seem to be more valued than are others (i.e., coordination), all four are necessary components of a comprehensive school counseling program and contribute to its effectiveness. These interventions, along with a brief summary of empirical literature on their effectiveness, are presented in the following sections.

Counseling

Certainly, counseling interventions are the sine qua non of school counseling programs. The purpose of these interventions is to promote students' personal and social growth and to foster their educational and career development. In all counseling interventions, the central, underlying goal is to foster students' educational progress (Myrick, 1987). Appropriate issues for counseling are wide-ranging, including school attitudes and behaviors, peer relationships, study skills, career planning, college choice, death of a family member, divorce, substance abuse, family abuse, and sexuality concerns. Educational and career counseling may include self-assessments and test interpretations. Results from a number of studies indicate that students who received counseling improved their academic performance (Gerler, Kinney, & Anderson, 1985; Wilson, 1985), attitudes (Gerler, 1985; Peck & Jackson, 1976), and behaviors (e.g., Cobb & Richards, 1983;

Crabbs, 1984; Gerler, 1985; Gerler, Kinney, & Anderson, 1985) (also see reviews by Herr, 1982; Robie, Gansneder, & Van Hoose, 1979; St. Clair, 1989; Wiggins, 1977).

Small-group counseling, particularly structured, time-limited groups, is often viewed as the intervention of choice. This intervention is not only cost and time efficient (Myrick, 1987) but also sound practice, based on principles of group dynamics and process (Myrick, 1987), and is developmentally appropriate, drawing on powerful peer interactions (e.g., Elkind, 1980; Myrick, 1987). Students who share a common concern can provide support and verification for each other, share coping strategies, give and receive feedback, and challenge each other to make changes. In developmentally oriented groups, students can also learn skills related to educational planning, career development, and "life competency" (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Herr, 1984, p. 218; Myrick, 1987).

A number of empirical studies have verified the positive effects of group counseling interventions. Students have shown significant increases in academic persistence and achievement (Deffenbacher & Kemper, 1974; Morse, 1987), school attendance (Krivatsy-O'Hara, Reed, & Davenport, 1978), classroom behaviors (Myrick & Dixon, 1985), self-esteem (Herr, 1982), self-concepts (Cangelosi, Gressard, & Mines, 1980), and their attitudes toward school and others (Herr, 1982). These increases held for special population groups, including low-achieving students (Thompson, 1987; Wilson, 1986a), disruptive students (Bleck & Bleck, 1982; Downing, 1977; Omizo, Hershberger, & Omizo, 1988), learning-disabled students (Amerikaner & Summerlin, 1982; Omizo & Omizo, 1987a, 1988b), gifted students (Kerr & Ghrist-Priebe, 1988), and students from divorced families (Anderson, Kinney, & Gerler, 1984; Capuzzi, 1988; Omizo & Omizo, 1988a; Tedder, Scherman, & Wantz, 1987).

Peer facilitator training is a specialized developmental group experience that benefits both group members and the students with whom they work (ASCA, 1984b; Myrick, 1987). Peer facilitators learn basic listening and helping skills and, at higher school levels, the basics of problem solving and decision making. Following training, they serve as tutors, "special friends" to younger students or new students, co-leaders of small discussion groups in the classroom, or assistants to teachers and counselors. Increasingly, peer facilitator training is part of a comprehensive, developmental school counseling program (Gerstein & Lichtman, 1989; Myrick, 1987).

Empirical support for the effectiveness of peer facilitation training includes an experimental study by Bowman and Myrick (1987). They reported that trained fifth graders were effective in improving classroom behaviors and school attitudes of second and third graders with classroom behavior problems. Other researchers have reported positive changes in the peer facilitators' academic performance and classroom behaviors (e.g., Anderson, 1976; Kern & Kirby, 1971). In addition, Morey et al. (1989) found that high school students who had talked with a peer counselor were generally satisfied with their experience, although they perceived that the peer counselors were more helpful when discussing future plans and school problems than drug and alcohol problems.

It should be noted that school counselors typically do not do long-term "therapy," but work within a developmental framework on issues with direct relevance to educational success. For students who have more serious concerns, counselors provide short-term crisis counseling and,

as appropriate, make referrals to resources outside the school (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Myrick, 1987).

Classroom Guidance

Classroom guidance is perhaps the most visible and parsimonious approach to program implementation, allowing counselors to address the general developmental needs of all students (Myrick, 1987). Elementary counselors in particular have used this approach, whereas secondary counselors have been less active in the classroom (Myrick, 1987). The movement toward comprehensive school counseling programs has led to infusion of the guidance curriculum into regular academic courses and increased involvement of teachers in service delivery (e.g., Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Kornick, 1984; Myrick, 1987). School counselors, however, are the primary sources of topics, unit plans, instructional strategies, and materials for classroom guidance.

Typically, classroom guidance is a structured unit based on common developmental needs and interests of students at a particular level. Units also may be devised in response to particular needs or events, such as the death of a student or teacher, a destructive tornado, or racial conflict. In addition, teachers may ask counselors to lead a unit that addresses problems of a particular group, such as competitiveness or stress in a gifted classroom.

A variety of studies, including several large-scale investigations using experimental designs, have demonstrated the positive effects of classroom guidance. Myrick, Merhill, and Swanson (1986) studied fourth graders in Florida and Indiana who participated in a unit designed to improve classroom behavior and attitudes. Following the guidance unit, students and teachers reported significant positive changes in classroom behavior and attitudes for both target students (those with negative attitudes) and top students (those with positive attitudes). Gerler and Anderson (1986) investigated the effects of a "Succeeding in School" unit in 18 schools in North Carolina. Significant differences between treatment and control groups included improvements in classroom behavior and attitudes toward school. There were no significant effects on achievement in language arts and mathematics. Wilson (1986b) reported that low-achieving sixth graders who had participated in a classroom guidance unit on exam preparation had significantly higher final exam grades than did students in the control group.

In a longitudinal study, Gerler (1980) investigated the effects of kindergarten guidance programs (Magic Circle or DUSO) on students' subsequent school attendance. He found significantly higher attendance during kindergarten and first grade, but not the third grade. Several national studies of career guidance, summarized by Gysbers (1988), indicated that structured, developmental interventions had positive effects, including higher career goals, college attendance, and career-planning skills. Bundy and Boser (1987) evaluated a unit on middle school students' coping skills when they were home alone. They found increases in knowledge of self-care practices immediately after the unit and 5 months later. In addition, parents reported more confidence in their children's ability to take care of themselves.

Consultation

Consultation interventions have been advocated by professional organizations and by many leaders and practitioners in the field (e.g., ASCA, 1981, 1988b; Commission, 1986; Dinkmeyer, 1968; Dinkmeyer & Dinkmeyer, 1984; Fullmer & Bernard, 1972; Gerstein & Lichtman, 1989; Glosoff & Koprowicz, 1990; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Herr, 1982; Kornick, 1984; Lauver, 1974; Myrick, 1987; Strother & Barlow, 1985; Umansky & Holloway, 1984). Consultation refers to school counselors' collaborative work with other school staff or parents (consultees) to improve consultees' interactions with students. School counselors may teach consultees specific skills or psychoeducational principles or help them develop a plan of action for dealing with a specific problem. School counselor-consultants may use both individual conferences and training workshops. Consultation is an indirect service to students, but one that has far-reaching effects, both in terms of the number of students serviced and prevention of future difficulties. Through collaborative problem solving, counselors enable parents, teachers, and other school personnel to work more effectively with students.

In their consultative role, school counselors use their specialized training in developmental theory, human behavior, and relationship skills (Myrick, 1987; Sheldon & Morgan, 1984). They apply this background to consultees' questions and concerns about students. For example, they help teachers with classroom management (e.g., writing behavioral contracts) and instructional strategies (e.g., grouping procedures). They help parents understand their child's developmental changes and facilitate parent-child communications. As a result, consultation interventions also benefit consultees, who gain new knowledge and skills. Finally, school counselor-consultants provide instructive feedback to administrators concerning school curriculum, appraisal instruments, policies and procedures, and other aspects of the learning environment.

Another increasingly popular program that relies on consultation interventions is a schoolwide student advisory system (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Myrick, 1987). Typically, teachers and other school staff work with a limited number of students, assisting them with educational and career planning. They monitor students' academic progress, serve as an informed contact person for parents, and lead classroom guidance units. Counselors provide consultation to school staff about their advisory functions, including in-service training. Advisers, who observe and interact with their advisees on a regular basis, refer students to counselors for specialized help as needed. Advocates of student advisory programs (e.g., Daresh & Pautsch, 1983; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Kornick, 1984; Myrick, 1987) believe that, as a result of this approach, more students receive counseling services and the school learning environment is enhanced.

Empirical support for consultation interventions has been summarized in several reviews of the research (e.g., Bundy & Poppen, 1986; Conoley & Conoley, 1981; Gerler, 1985; Meade, Hamilton, & Yuen, 1982; Medway, 1982). These reviews indicated that consultation with teachers, parents, or both led to improvements in students' academic achievement scores, grades, attention, classroom behaviors, motivation, and self-concept. Behavioral consultation was especially effective in changing students' inappropriate behaviors (Bundy & Poppin, 1986; Conoley & Conoley, 1981; Medway, 1982).

Some studies have focused on training workshops, one form of consultation. Students of teachers trained in communication (facilitative) skills improved their achievement, attendance, and self-concepts (Aspy, Roebuck, & Aspy, 1984). In a number of studies researchers have investigated

the effects of parent education programs (e.g., Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976; Gordon, 1976; Huhn & Zimpfer, 1984) on students' academic achievement and attitudes toward self and others. Positive outcomes were found for preschool children (e.g., Pierson, Walker, & Tivnan, 1984), elementary children (e.g., Sheldon & Morgan, 1984), Black elementary students (e.g., Herr, 1982), rural, low-socioeconomic, low-achieving elementary students (Esters & Levant, 1983), suburban, upper-middle-class, learning-disabled students (Williams, Omizo, & Abrams, 1984), and children of divorced parents (Omizo & Omizo, 1987b).

In addition to student gains, consultee changes have also been documented. Teachers who consulted with school counselors created more productive learning environments, were more complimentary of students, were more positive in their interactions with students, had more positive views of themselves as teachers (Conoley & Conoley, 1981), and reported greater job satisfaction (Gerler, 1985). Some of these changes were maintained in several follow-up studies. Parents revealed significant changes in parental confidence, attitudes toward their children, child-rearing behavior, and parent-child communication (Bundy & Poppen, 1986; Gerler, 1985; Williams et al., 1984).

Coordination

Coordination activities are vital to a viable, cost-effective school counseling program (Kameen, Robinson, & Rotter, 1985). Although specific activities vary from school to school, typically they include organizing and managing regular program activities (e.g., classroom guidance units, student appraisal, peer facilitation training, student orientation, student advising, scheduling and placement, student records, resource center) and special events (e.g., College Night, Career Fair). School counselors also coordinate the work of support staff, volunteers, and program committees (e.g., steering committee and school-community advisory committee), and write and revise policies and procedures. Often, they coordinate services for exceptional students, including diagnostic assessments, placements, record maintenance and review, and IEP meetings. The student referral system also is established and maintained by the counseling staff. Program evaluation activities are critical responsibilities that require much coordination. Finally, because of their access to student information and their schoolwide perspective, school counselors can compile informative summary reports for teachers, administrators, parents, and even students (ASCA/NACAC, 1986; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). These reports can be useful in curriculum planning and evaluation.

Although the "systematic coordination of guidance [and counseling] programs is paramount to effective delivery of services" (Kameen et al., 1985, p. 102), it is imperative that coordination activities do not consume the counselor's time and attention (Myrick, 1987). When appropriate, clerical tasks should be delegated to support personnel (Myrick, 1987). Coordination activities should lead to efficient management of the counseling program and should allow counselors to spend the majority of their time providing direct and indirect services to students.

Program Evaluation

It is widely recognized that a program evaluation plan is essential for establishing and maintaining an effective school counseling program (ASCA, 1984b; ASCA/NACAC, 1986;

Aubrey, 1982; Bardo & Cody, 1975; Bardo, Cody, & Bryson, 1978; Chopra, 1988; Commission, 1986; Crabbs & Crabbs, 1977; Gerstein & Lichtman, 1989; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Helliwell & Jones, 1975; Keene & Stewart, 1989; Lasser, 1975; Lewis, 1983; Lombana, 1985; Myrick, 1987; Peer, 1985; Pine, 1975; Umansky & Holloway, 1984; Wheeler & Loesch, 1981; Wiggins, 1977, 1985; Wiggins & Moody, 1987). Historically, program evaluation has consisted primarily of reports on kinds of services offered, percentage of counselors' time spent on each activity, and number of students served. Some recent writers, however, have suggested that evaluation plans should focus on program results rather than program services (e.g., Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Johnson & Johnson, 1982; Robie et al, 1979). These writers emphasized student competencies as desired outcomes of school counseling programs.

Competency-based program evaluation naturally evolves within a comprehensive school counseling program in which student competencies have been specified and program interventions have targeted those competencies. Program evaluation is also integral to the ongoing cycle of program planning and development.

The first step in a student-competency-driven evaluation plan consists of writing specific competency statements for various learning domains (e.g., educational, career, personal, social) and learning goals (e.g., knowledge, skills, self-awareness, attitudes). Student competency statements are consistent with mission statements of the school and the counseling program and reflect developmentally appropriate tasks.

Subsequent steps in an evaluation plan are based on the student competency statements: (a) conducting needs assessments to determine student strengths and deficiencies, (b) writing program goals, (c) setting priorities, (d) choosing and implementing program activities, and (e) evaluating program effectiveness. Finally, to complete the sequence, evaluation outcomes are "recycled" through program renewal efforts. Thus, the formulation of student competency statements provides the initial structure for program goals and activities, whereas evaluation of targeted student competencies and related program activities drive further program development.

A variety of evaluation methods have been recommended, including formal and informal, quantitative and qualitative approaches (ASCA/NACAC, 1986; Crabbs & Crabbs, 1977; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Lombana, 1985; Maher & Barbrack, 1984; St. Clair, 1989). *Participant evaluations*, such as attitude surveys and structured reaction questionnaires, provide insight into how the intervention was perceived by those it intended to help, either directly or indirectly. *Direct observation* is helpful in determining the exact nature of a student's behavioral problem in a given setting, as well as measuring change in the behavior over time. For example, a counselor or other trained observer records a target student's behavioral responses to his or her teacher and to other students in the classroom, on the playground, or in the lunchroom. These observations are conducted before proceeding with an intervention (baseline data) and again at various points throughout the intervention until the behavior improves or desists.

The *case study* focuses on one student or a small group of students. Multiple sources of information are synthesized to determine student needs, goals, and resources for change. The case study also documents counseling interventions with the student(s), consultations with teachers, parents, or both, and student progress toward identified goals. *Pretest-posttest*

comparisons enable counselors to identify changes in specific student competencies by measuring those competencies before and after an intervention. *Participant-nonparticipant comparisons* involve separating students who are similar in age, race, sex, and area of concern into two groups: one group that receives a specified intervention and one group that does not receive the intervention. After the intervention is completed, the groups are compared on a particular outcome, such as number of discipline referrals to the principal's office. The assumption being tested is that the intervention group will perform better than will the non-intervention group on the specified outcome measure. *Goal attainment* scaling requires that the counselor and student define specific, sequential objectives for attaining a particular individual goal and then monitor the achievement of each objective until the goal is reached. *Follow-up studies* enable counselors to evaluate whether or not improvements are maintained once the intervention is terminated. For example, previously targeted classroom behaviors may be observed after several weeks, months, or both.

Based on the program evaluation plan, data are collected according to an established schedule from a variety of sources, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. Data collection instruments are appropriate to the purposes of the evaluation and are relatively simple to administer; as needed, data collectors are properly trained for their tasks (Bardo & Cody, 1975). Confidentiality is maintained and, where appropriate, informed consent is obtained from program participants (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988).

A well-conceived evaluation plan demonstrates accountability and validates the work of the counselor and the school counseling program. Results are used purposively for program renewal and staff development (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). Summary reports indicate successes and strengths of the program, as well as areas for improvement. These reports are shared with appropriate audiences, typically including students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988).

The literature provides some examples of various types of program evaluations. Empirical studies cited in this review illustrate evaluations of specific program activities (i.e., classroom guidance unit, small-counseling group). Examples of larger, more global evaluations have been published as ERIC documents (e.g., Davis et al., 1987; New Hampshire Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Project, 1988; Terrill et al., 1981). Often, these more comprehensive evaluations stemmed from state mandates and were conducted on a systemwide basis.

PROGRAM RENEWAL

Concerns are not static. As social, economic, political, and demographic trends evolve, needs of students and the school community also change (Commission, 1986). Program renewal is necessary to meet the changing needs of students and those who have the greatest impact on their educational, career, personal, and social development. In addition, new developments are reported in the professional literature, professional organizations periodically revise their standards, and federal and state priorities shift (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). To maintain its currency and effectiveness, the counseling program must respond to these developments.

Program renewal is also dependent on the continued professional development of school counselors (ASCA, 1984b; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). Counselors need access (e.g., released time, financial support) to a variety of professional development activities (ASCA, 1984b; Carroll, 1980; Glossoff & Koprowicz, 1990; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). These activities should be based on program evaluation data, self-assessments (e.g., ASCA, 1990; ASCA/NACAC, 1986), and supervisory feedback, and should include both in-service training workshops and ongoing supervision (program and counseling/clinical supervision) (AACD School Counseling Task Force, 1989). Collaborative relationships with counselor education programs in the area, including working with school counseling interns, also promote professional development. Finally, counselors keep current through being actively involved in local, state, and national professional organizations, attending conventions and workshops, and reading counseling and educational journals.

Counselors can meet the challenge of continued development through devising an individual professional growth plan each year (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). This plan includes specific goals, appropriate professional development activities, and methods of assessing progress. To facilitate implementation, the plan is shared with administrators and supervisors at the beginning of each year and is a basis for end-of-the-year performance appraisals.

Written Policies

Counseling functions often involve sensitive and serious matters. Increasingly, school counselors are confronted with complex issues such as suicide threats, child abuse, and addictive behaviors, and they face situations to which they must respond expeditiously (e.g., Capuzzi, 1988; Erickson & Newman, 1984; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Herr, 1984; Matter & Matter, 1984; Stone, 1985; Wellman, 1984). Counselors must also deal with numerous requests for student information (e.g., test results, grades, classroom behavior) from a variety of sources (e.g., Zingaro, 1983). Written policies help ensure that the interventions and decisions made in these and other situations are both wise and therapeutic. The policies also are important sources of information for the school community.

First and foremost, guidance and counseling policies should be consistent with the ethical standards of ASCA (1984a) and AACD (1988) (see also ASCA, 1981, 1986a; ASCA/NACAC, 1986; Carroll, 1980; Huey, 1986; Larabee & Terresa, 1985). They also should be based on legal guidelines for professional practice (e.g., Henderson, 1987; Huey & Remley, 1989; Remley, 1985; Sheeley & Herlihy, 1987).

Policies for some situations include preventive strategies in addition to a detailed response plan. This is particularly true for crisis situations, such as suicide threats and community disasters. Counselors should take leadership in planning preventive education for students, providing in-service training for teachers and staff, and establishing a cooperative relationship with community agencies (Palmo, Langlois, & Bender, 1988).

The purpose of written policies is to provide guidelines for sound decision making, not to create rigid regulations that are overly restrictive. It should be recognized that each situation presents a

set of unique circumstances. Counselors, however, should follow suggested procedures in formulating their decision or response in each situation (Huey, 1986).

PROGRAM CLIMATE

The climate of the school counseling program is of particular significance because of the sensitive and private nature of many program functions. Policies, procedures, and interactions with counseling staff must be characterized by trust, respect, genuine interest, and confidentiality. Otherwise, the program cannot meet its goals or fulfill its functions.

A recent survey (Wiggins & Moody, 1987) of middle and high schools in four states underscored the importance of this point. Students who believed confidentiality was assured voluntarily sought help from school counselors on a regular basis and rated their schools' counseling programs very favorably. Those who believed their disclosures would not be kept confidential said that they seldom scheduled appointments with their counselors and rated their programs as below average.

The counseling program has some additional responsibility for the overall school climate. An effective program "permeates the school environment" (Myrick, 1987, p. 46) and fosters an "atmosphere of openness, sensitivity, and responsiveness within the school community" (ASCA/NACAC, 1986, p. 9). This responsibility is underscored by research indicating that a positive school climate is clearly linked to student achievement (Lee & Ekstrom, 1987) and self-esteem (Capuzzi, 1988). Because of their specialized training, school counselors are sensitive to environmental factors that impede the full development of students; they also have the skills to intercede. In fact, counseling programs have had a positive impact on the school environment, such as reducing racial conflict and increasing intergroup understanding (Herr, 1982).

The success of the counseling program is dependent upon the support of building-level and district-level administrators (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). Historically, however, there has been some confusion concerning the role and functions of school counselors (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Kornick, 1984; Myrick, 1987). Administrators (and teachers) are not always cognizant of changes in the training and professional status of school counselors. As a result, counselors may be assigned nonguidance and counseling activities, such as administrative and clerical tasks and disciplinary responsibilities. Thus, it is imperative that counselors meet with administrators regularly to clarify program goals and the appropriate use of their specialized skills (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988).

Counseling staff often interact with other student personnel professionals (e.g., school psychologist, nurse, and social worker) concerning placement or particular student needs. To enhance the goal of serving students, these relationships should be characterized by mutual respect, collaboration, and cooperation (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988).

Often, counselors are the frontline contact for parents and other community members. Such contacts are advantageous, because these persons make substantial contributions to the success of the counseling program. Nevertheless, a systematic plan of public relations activities is needed to educate and inform others about the counseling program and to solicit their support (Gysbers

& Henderson, 1988; Shields, 1986). These activities may include handbooks or pamphlets describing the program and services, newsletters and news releases, and presentations to school and community groups (ASCA/NACAC, 1986; Gerstein & Lichtman, 1989; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). Public relations activities should also be an integral part of the evaluation process (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988).

Another mechanism for improving relationships with the public is a school-community advisory committee (Commission, 1986; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Myrick, 1987). Ideally, members of this committee would include an administrator, a teacher, a student, and representatives from business and industry, mental health agencies, and the media. This committee serves as a liaison between the school and community, makes recommendations concerning student and community needs, offers advice concerning program changes, and provides consultation for public relations efforts.

Special effort should be given to increasing parents' involvement in the students' education and in the counseling program (Commission, 1986; Gerstein & Lichtman, 1989; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). Parents are probably the strongest influence on students' development, including their academic success and educational and career planning. Outreach efforts and public relations activities can enhance informed decision making by parents and their children.

Finally, clear and cooperative relationships with community resources (e.g., referral agencies, hotlines) are critical to the student referral system (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Palmo et al., 1988). As appropriate, outreach efforts also should include employers and college admission counselors (ASCA/NACAC, 1986).

CONCLUSION

One major conclusion seems evident from this synthesis of 30 years of empirical work and professional statements: School counseling interventions have a substantial impact on students' educational and personal development. Individual and small-group counseling, classroom guidance, and consultation activities seem to contribute directly to students' success in the classroom and beyond, and school counselors should spend the majority of their time performing these interventions. Coordination activities should be confined to those that improve the program's efficiency and accountability. It seems clear that policymakers and practitioners should ensure that every student has the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive school counseling program.

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