

**A LITERATURE REVIEW OF SCHOOL COUNSELOR AND PROGRAMS
EFFECTIVENESS ADDRESSING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT,
PERSONAL/SOCIAL ISSUES AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

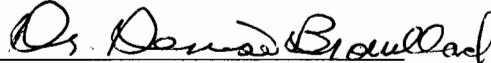
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ABSTRACT

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This literature review explores the positive effects that school counselors have on our students within the areas of academic achievement, personal/social issues and career development. To understand where school counselors are going, it is necessary to learn where they have been, to assist with this; a brief history of school counseling is provided. Research was conducted in the area of school counselor interventions and how they have a positive effect on student's academic success and a direct link to student's success in the school social setting. In addition, it was shown that students had better success in life after high school when they

participated in a high school career development program. Following the literature review, recommendations were made for future research in the area of school counselor effectiveness.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Every ten seconds, a student drops out of school. Every five hours a teen commits suicide. One in three students is a year or more behind in school. One in seven students never graduates from high school (Children's Defense Fund, 2004). The list of devastating statistics about our children goes on for pages. The bottom line is that school-age children today are faced with a plethora of issues, yet are still expected to attend school, be successful, choose a career path, function appropriately and be a productive member of the school, in addition to dealing with their own life challenges.

The need to help students is greater today more now than ever before. Although most school professionals are in a school are there because they care about students and want to help, their primary focus is teaching specific subject material. However, school counselors are specifically educated and trained to help in critical areas that students so very much need guidance and counseling. The American School Counselors Association (ASCA, 2004) states that the school counselor's role is to address all students' academic, personal/social and career development needs. Unfortunately, current counselor case loads are often so high that it becomes a daunting challenge to meet the needs of all students. The national average counselor to student ratio is one counselor to 477 students; California has the highest ratio of one to 971 students followed by Minnesota with one to 806 students. ASCA recommends the ratio to be one counselor to every 250 students. Only six states are within 50 students of that recommendation (American School Counselor Association, 2004).

The dilemma is that there is a need for more school counselors and yet, due to federal, state and local funding issues, budget cuts have seriously affected school counseling positions. Unfortunately budget cuts often have a direct affect on student services, such as school

counseling, which deprives students of greatly needed services to be ensured that all students achieve academic, personal, social and career success.

Minneapolis, MN has considered cutting more counselors from their district. This would be their second cut in counseling and related services within the past five years. For example, a school that once had four counselors now only has two, creating a new ratio of one counselor to 654 students. A review of literature on counselor effectiveness revealed that there is a great need for more information on the positive impact of school counselors. In order to sustain counselor to student ratios as well as decrease those to the ASCA recommended ratio (1/250), guidance departments are finding it necessary to provide information for school officials showing the benefits of an effective program as well as documenting levels of accountability and outcomes in their work.

Lapan (2001) stated that “school counseling can become an important part of both national and international educational improvement efforts” (p.2). As schools are looking at improving the school environment, we need to advocate the importance of school counseling services as well. The future of our nation depends on the success of our children today.

Of the three areas of counseling, career readiness has been a recent area of concern. Carnevale and Desrochers (2003) both with Educational Testing Service, found that although employers seek individuals who are competent in their area, they are also looking for skills in reasoning, problem solving and the ability to handle successes and failures.

In the United States, fifty percent of college freshmen drop out at the end of their first year of college. Studies show that this is a result of various reasons ranging from tuition costs to lack of direction in the quest to further their education. In addition, most college students change

their major two to three times once they have entered college, sometimes resulting in a delayed graduation date (Mangum, Baugher, Winch and Varanelli, 2005).

One recent study conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers asked college students about their thoughts regarding finding a job. Researchers Bohovich and Nagle (2000) reported that 60.2% of the students expressed some concern in finding a job upon graduation. In addition, this study showed that a career service center, within a counseling program, was the most helpful in their job search, followed by friends, teachers, parents, and relatives. With this in mind, students who are able to go through an extensive career development program in their high school years were more confident in their efforts for searching for a job, career or occupation.

Statement of the Problem

This paper will provide a review of literature and research of school counselor effectiveness, focusing primarily on career development as well as personal/social issues and academic achievement. A student is a whole person; all three aspects are critical elements in how that student will succeed in the future.

Purpose of the study

There are four objectives this paper will address. They are:

- To put a spotlight on the positive effect school counselors have on our students.
- To provide a brief history of school counseling.
- To gather research and data that shows school counselor effectiveness in academic achievement and personal/social issues.
- To examine issues with career development.
- To explore current trends in career development curriculum.

Definition of Terms

There is one term that needs to be defined for clarity of understanding. It is:

American School Counselor Association (ASCA). An association that focuses on providing professional development, enhancing school counseling programs and researching effective school counseling practices.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will begin with a brief historical background of school counseling, followed by a review of data showing general school counselor effectiveness in regards to student success. Also included will be a discussion on the critical need for career development in our schools, followed by an in-depth look at the key career development elements needed within the high school years of a student as well as whose responsibility it is to provide career counseling, concluding with a look at particular influences that affect a student's decision for life after high school, such as parent, teacher, counselor and other role models.

History of School Counseling

In order to understand where we are now and where we will be going it is imperative to explore where we started. The history of school counseling traces back to the 1880's. In 1889, Jesse B. Davis, a school principal in a Detroit, Michigan school, initiated guidance curriculum within the English classes (Coy, 1999). Davis later included vocational and moral development into the guidance program when he moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1908, the "Father of Guidance," Frank Parsons, founded and developed the vocational bureau of Boston. This began to assist students who needed help with career choices due to leaving the public schools early. Due to a rise in industrialization and urbanization in the first part of the 20th century, there became a need and concern for vocational guidance. Between 1914 and 1918, many large cities within the United States, began to implement school guidance programs (Bauman, Falco, Szymanski, Davis, Seabolt, 2003). In the 1930's, educational or academic guidance included vocational guidance, in addition, the technique of counseling was thought of as a tool to assist in the guidance program (Bauman et al.). Robert Mathewson, another noteworthy person in the

school counseling field, suggested in 1949, that school guidance and counseling programs become developmentally focused. In addition, he advocated for school counselors versus classroom teachers to administer necessary guidance lessons, stating that the most vital educational elements for enhancing student development are the guidance programs (Bauman et al., 2003).

After a little more than a decade from the first findings of school counseling practices, school counselors received professional status. In 1952, American School Counselor Association (ASCA) was founded. Around the same time American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) was developed; this later became American Counseling Association (ACA). These organizations have provided guidance and direction in the implementation of school counselors in schools. They are currently very active and have a strong voice as advocates in this profession. Furthermore, ASCA and APGA/ACA both published journals dedicated to school counseling. In 1997, the two journals merged into one, it is now called Professional School Counseling.

As the emergence of school counselors in the schools began, so did the need for unified counselor training. In 1955, the first certificate for "Guidance and Counseling" was issued in Ohio (Bauman et al., 2003). Shortly after, in 1957, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) launched Sputnik. With this scare in the military area, the United States defense department quickly developed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). This act promoted testing in the schools to help identify students that were excelling in math and science as to strengthen the U.S. defense department, in fighting against other countries. Additional funding

was also provided to training institutes for school counselors to meet their needs. From 1951 to 1965, the number of school counselors increased to 30,000 from 6,780 (Bauman et al., 2003).

In the years to follow there were supporters of school counselors and society changes that called for an even greater need for them. In James B. Conant's report on the state of American education in 1959, he supported the efforts for an increase of funding and need for school counselors. The White House Conference on Children and Youth also supported an increase of school counselors (Bauman et al., 2003).

Currently, school counselors are expected to advise students in the areas of career development, academic achievement and personal/social issues. In addition, their day may include other various school duties such as a variety of paper work, scheduling students for courses, supervisions and in some cases disciplining students. There is however a shift in school counseling programs to now focus more on a comprehensive developmental guidance approach. Schlossberg (2001) the director of the Division of Engineering Student Service Department at Florida Atlantic University, stated that in previous years the programs were generally more reactive and crisis driven, with a focus on noncounseling tasks. Thirty states currently have implemented a comprehensive guidance program within their school system, thus becoming more proactive in supplying tools for students to be successful before failing.

Our history shows several examples of support and funding for school counselors, yet it seems the pendulum has now swung the other way. Many school districts are cutting student support services, which include school counselors. In an era of accountability, one that has been difficult to measure with school counselors, researchers have attempted and in some cases succeeded to provide empirical data indicating the effectiveness of school counselors in the areas

of career development, academic achievement and persona/social issues. In the sections to follow, there will be an attempt to gather the greatly desired counselor effectiveness data.

School Counselor Effectiveness: Academic Student Success

The direction a student takes in life after high school can be directly related to their academic success in school. Although teachers have a huge impact on student success, studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between school counselor's effectiveness, the success of the counseling program and a student's success in academic areas.

One school district in Florida solicited help from the local university to conduct a study to provide the needed data to justify hiring additional help in assisting with nonguidance tasks that were bogging down the counselors. In this study conducted by Brigman and Campbell (2003) professors at Florida Atlantic University, it was found that there was a positive impact on student achievement and behavior in school using a program called Student Success Skills (SSS) model. This model included an intervention that combined group counseling and classroom guidance. The study was a two year project based in Florida and included 10 school counselors and 180 students from 30 different schools. The students selected were considered below average and would not regularly receive services because they were not drastically high or low achievers. Four different grade levels were included, fifth, sixth, eighth and ninth grade students (Brigman and Campbell, 2003). Based on several educational reviews, it was concluded that the following skills were critical to school success: cognitive, social and self-management.

Prior to beginning the research, it was discovered that the counselors to be involved lacked confidence in their ability to impact student test scores. To overcome this concern, specific strategies were implemented. First they encouraged counselors to talk about and explain

to the students the key skills they would be evaluated on. Secondly they assured them the format would be easy to use as well as advised them to use the research-based curriculum for group and classroom lessons. Lastly they embellished on the counselor skills with additional training and peer coaching.

Students were tested in the subject areas of reading and math, first in September and then in April after the guidance curriculum were implemented. Results showed that seven out of ten treated students improved on their test scores by 22 percentile points, with 82% of these students improving in math and 61% improvement in reading. As a result of the findings in this study, they were able to show a positive impact on the work of the counselors and student test scores, as well as collect enough data to justify the hiring of additional staff (Brigman and Campbell, 2003).

Another school in Washington state participated in a study measuring a comprehensive school counseling program and elementary school student's test scores. The results showed a positive correlation between academic success and participation in a CSCP for multiple years. Sink, a professor of School Counseling at Seattle Pacific University and Stroh, a researcher at Washington School Research Center (2003) stated that "students enrolled for several years in high usage Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP) schools tended to perform better on various achievement tests than those pupils in non-CSCP buildings" (p.353). In addition to their findings, they reinforced prior research from Gysbers (2001) (as cited in Sink and Stroh) in the areas of CSCP schools stating the following:

When certified professional school counselors have the time, the resources, and the structure of a comprehensive guidance program in which to work, they contribute to

positive student academic and career development as well as the development of positive and safe learning climates in schools. (p.360)

School Counselor Effectiveness: Personal/Social Transitions

In preparing students for the future, it is critical to look at the different transitions that students will go through while in school. One significant change is going from middle school to high school. School counselors can be especially effective in paving the path for students as they begin schooling that are considered higher stakes for their future.

Schollossberg (2001) stated ninth grade students who are dealing with particular issues in school such as “low grades, truancy, pregnancy, drug use, criminal offenses, dropping out of school and even attempted suicide” (p. 156) are greatly intensified when they are not provided with the necessary guidance to provide a smooth transition into high school.

In an effort to provide skills necessary for ninth grade students to make a smoother transition into high school and set them up for success, the following study was conducted. The intervention focused on improving students’ behavior, and attitude in regards to school success. Activities such as goal setting, problem solving and career exploration were also implemented. The counselors led six different sessions with the students, each were 45 minutes long and were structured with large and small group activities. Results showed a positive correlation between the counselor led session and the students improved behavior and attitude in school. It was also suggested from this study that counselors seek out input from other staff members and students by means of a needs assessment to hone in on what issues need to be addressed within each school.

In another study conducted by Lapan, Tucker, Se-Kang and Kosciulek (2003), research was conducted to explore the effects of support given to students by the school counselor on transitions between high school and their post-high school experience. Through this study they looked further into the student's satisfaction with the schools help in "achieving future educational and career goals" (p. 330). Results showed a positive correlation between the school counselor interventions and student satisfaction for preparation after high school. It was also noted that within programs that increase their career development activities, students perceived their educational experience as better preparing them for the future.

Issues in Career Development

Many high school seniors sit at commencement ceremony wearing their cap and gown, listening to speeches about their future. As they sit there, are they feeling prepared for what is to come next or are they in a total fog as to what to expect for their future? Regardless of their preparation for the real world, they may experience both feelings. However, along with the parent and student, it is partly the school's responsibility to ensure students readiness. Are the schools effectively preparing students for their future? If so, what are they doing to reach that goal? Are there other influences that become a factor in students' success in their future career choice? How are their choices being made? Have they chosen a direction that they have a passion for?

Brown (2003), stressed the importance of having quality career development programs for our students. When students begin their adult life with a good understanding of the world of work, they are better prepared to deal with career issues that may come up in the future. In a study by the Gallup Organization (as cited in Brown, 2003), there are an estimated 16.7 million

people each year who seek assistance with career counseling. The reasons for this high level are due to low job satisfaction, lack of a plan for career aspirations and limited resources to find substantial employment. It was also stated that individuals with higher education levels had more of a tendency to have career goals, thus leading to a higher success rate. As school counselors assist students in learning about their career interests, abilities and goals, it is critical to prepare the students to be successful, lifelong learners in our society after graduation. So what is needed for a quality career development program within our schools?

First and foremost, it is crucial for individuals involved in working with our youth to have an open mind, to be welcoming towards students and their ideas for the future. This is a time of exploration of possible careers that may interest them. Rosenbaum and Person (2003) point out that traditionally it has been customary for educators to have a “college-for-all policy” that inhibits students from the following:

Getting crucial information about how they are doing; seeing the full range of desirable options for school and work; assessing the appropriateness of these options and their likely outcomes; and seeing what actions they can take to improve their education and career outcomes. (p. 252)

School counselors play a critical role in assessing student’s interests, abilities and skills which play a significant role in students selecting their career path.

Within the counselor’s guidance lessons, it is suggested by Brouillard (class lecture, June 16, 2004), a counseling professor at the University of Wisconsin – Stout, to develop a theoretical base for each lesson. This creates a foundation for which the lessons are developed. There are four established theories and five emerging theories that are in the forefront of career

development. These theories were discussed in depth by Brooks and Brown (1996), experts in the area of career development, who stated that each theory looks at the cognitive and social development leading up to the point of career exploration. They also addressed how individuals are influenced by the different experiences that mold and shape their thinking towards career development. In addition to having a theoretical base for career development in our schools, it is helpful and useful for students to be given opportunities to learn about new careers, to learn what type and level of education is necessary for obtaining specific careers, to understand what other options are available other than college, and to ascertain what skills are needed for these careers. In addition to self exploration of interests, having hands-on activities was also suggested, such as job shadowing a potential career interest, having experience with interviewing, and assistance in writing a resume.

Ultimately, who is responsible for preparing students for college and career choices? It was suggested by Lowery (as cited in Chapman and DeMasi, 1991) that the best choices for career and college were made when the parents, students, counselors, and college advisors were involved. All persons should play a part in the decision making. However, often times the school counselor is the first and sometimes the only person who will encourage, advise, and assist students in their post high school decisions. Coy (1991) explained that when appropriate programs are set up in schools to help students grow developmentally, the counselor can be very effective in many ways, the most important in this discussion being career choice. It is also important to note that students themselves need to take an active approach towards taking responsibility for their future.

Researchers Mau, Hitchcock and Calvert (1998) examined various influences students have within their career plans. Possible influences included parents, teachers, school counselors, relatives and coaches. Results showed that as students progressed in their years in high school, they were more influenced by the school counselor. It was suggested that this was partly due to students seeking out counselors for graduation requirement information. In addition it was also found that within the student's perceptions of the school counselors, that the expectations were that all students would attend college. Little information and attention was provided about other options such as trade schools, military or work force. Lastly, it was found that "parents, especially mothers, play an important role in influencing students' college attendance" (p. 264).

Counselors and teachers are one element to the development of student's career life, what other influences are there? As mentioned in the career theories, life experiences leading up to that point are critical, in which case parents become an important element in the student's success, not only in the beginning stages, but in the decision making process as well. Parents can provide a strong foundation and support system for students as they explore career choices and other decisions after high school. Murray (1999), the director of career services at the University of California-San Diego, stressed the importance of "tapping into" and partnering with parents to help students. Parents can act as promoters of career planning, provide opportunities to explore different careers, and become a patron of a career service center. In one situation, Lozada (1999) a Techniques Editor, described that parents are interested in being involved with the career planning element of their student's lives, and in some cases, the parents may be the one encouraging the teachers to establish and work on various aspects of career development within the classroom setting.

Selig (1999) compiled a list of several famous and some not so famous quotes about success and how to reach it. Margaret Thatcher was quoted as saying “I think [success] is a mixture of having a flair for the thing that you are doing; knowing that it is not enough, that you have got to have hard work and a certain sense of purpose” (p. 105). As advocates for students and their success in life, it is our duty to help foster success now for them to excel later.

Effective Career Development Programs

It was suggested by Magnuson (1997) that having students develop a portfolio becomes a helpful tool in monitoring the progress of the students’ career development. This allows the counselor, students and parent to document the various career goals set at the different levels of education, indications of different interests and abilities that have developed through the years, and history of activities involved in helping with the exploration of the world of work.

Researchers Dykeman, Wood, Ingram, Pehrsson, Mandsager and Herr (2003) suggest school counselors implement a taxonomy for career development. Using this intervention would “give a school counselor a parsimonious framework within which to examine if there are areas of career development where [the] district is underdeveloped” (p. 272). In addition using this method would provide clearer data for researchers to evaluate career development initiatives among several different schools. There are four interventions to us within the career development taxonomy, work-based, advising, introductory and curriculum-based. Work-based interventions are defined as “the class of interventions designed to promote both career and academic self-efficacy and motivation through sustained and meaningful interactions with work sites in the community” (p. 275-276). For example students would be provided with job shadowing experiences, participate in volunteer activities, work in an internship or work study,

explore mentorship programs or be involved with cooperative education. Within the advising interventions, focuses more on the student's career goals suggesting a plan and providing direction for their future. Examples of this intervention includes several aspects such as conference with student and parent to discuss career possibilities, assessments in interests and abilities, research into the different careers, information on job hunting, preparing a portfolio and various career counseling details. Introductory interventions allow students to examine their own interests in regards to professional and personal growth. Introductory interventions include more large group based including career day fairs, field trips to various occupations, classrooms being taught by community members, and classroom guidance lessons on personal/social, career and academic development. Lastly, curriculum-based interventions are defined as "the class of interventions designed to promote career and academic knowledge and skills through means and content relevant to the world of work" (p.276). Interventions that are curriculum-based have infused regular school settings with a strong concentration of career development, such as career/technical education courses, magnet schools that are career focused, and school based enterprise.

One school in the northern metro area of Minneapolis implemented a program called Future's Prep to address issues related to student readiness for life after high school. Recognizing the importance of providing students with a strong foundation of career development, they sought out information that would be helpful in forming the program. As a part of graduation requirements, all high school students are expected to complete the program.

There are specific activities and projects that are required at each grade level. Beginning in the ninth grade, students take the Futures Prep class and complete several different activities.

The first is to reconsider the path that they may have selected while in the eighth grade. Second is to go through four different interest and abilities inventories through the World of Work Map program. Next the students reflect on their personal strengths and how they can be used in careers. Once students have completed the assessments, they select potential careers that fit with their interest and abilities; with this they develop a vision for the future. This vision includes identifying specific activities needed to reach their goals during their high school career. Upon completion of the program in ninth grade, parents are invited to a workshop to help understand how to assist their children with their career aspirations. In tenth grade students are given an opportunity to meet with a career counselor to follow up on work completed thus far. At this point they also complete a survey evaluating whether their current path is still accurate and appropriate for them. All tenth grade students are invited to go on college tours, this occurs during the school day, each bus load is able to visit two to three schools in a day. Students are also encouraged to go on other college tours on their own, hopefully with their parents. Once students have reached the eleventh grade, they are given a couple of options. One option is geared toward students who are planning on attending a college and the other is for students who are going right into the work force or military services. Regardless of their direction, all students are given the opportunity to participate in several achievement/aptitude assessments, such as the ACT, SAT, PSAT. Within the final year, twelfth grade, students complete a resume, cover letter, references and mock interview. Upon completion of those elements and activities, the students graduate and are sent on their way into the future (Saint Francis High School, 2004).

In closing, it is well documented that career planning and development is a necessary element in students' success after high school. If all ingredients of the formula are in place,

students will be sent off into the world with the confidence that they are well prepared and ready to succeed in their chosen world of work. The ultimate quest is to determine the best way to prepare students to be successful, productive and contributing citizens of society.

CHAPTER III: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This section will provide a discussion about research limitations as well as recommendations for future research followed by a summary of the literature found.

Limitations

This literature review seems to have a few limitations. First although many articles and research reports were studied there appears to be a deficiency in research of counselor effectiveness in regards to personal/social issues. This area can be a delicate and sensitive subject to research. Due to the confidentiality element, measuring positive effects on students is difficult to measure. Secondly school counseling programs vary differently between each state; it was not feasible to narrow the search to research in one state. Due to the extreme differences in counselor to student ratios among states and the composite of school counseling programs, each study does not reflect the effectiveness within all programs. Finally, this literature review is a summary of other's research findings. There was not any new empirical research conducted. As a result, there is not any new information provided to the field of school counseling.

Recommendations

Due to the vast array of literature in this area, it is suggested that future research focus on smaller locations. Due to the uniqueness of each school, it is recommended that school counselors conduct research within their school to examine the needs of their students, parents and staff. By doing this a program will be set up to adhere to specific situations within that school. It is also recommended that research be conducted within each state as to determine how counselor to student ratios influences school counselor effectiveness. In addition, it is recommended that further research be done in the area of personal and social issues that students are faced with. Although the literature found some examples, additional data would be effective

is documenting positive effects school counselors have with students. The challenge with this recommendation is designing an instrument that is effective in providing accurate information.

Summary and Discussion

A summary of literature found that there are examples school counselors that are making a positive impact on students in the areas of personal/social issues, academic achievement and career development. Research findings indicate that when school counselors are provided with the necessary tools to be effective, students succeed in the classroom, in their future and in life. Such tools include a reasonable case load, time to implement small group counseling, classroom guidance lessons and individual counseling time. The current trend of showing accountability within the counseling program is allowing counselors to document their impact on academic success. Research also found that there are many schools where counselors are faced with many duties of the day that are not directly related to school counseling. As the school counselor role becomes more clearly defined within a school, the nonguidance tasks should be greatly reduced. Lastly, research shows that there is a great need for students to participate in a career development program while they are in high school. By doing so, they will leave the high school better prepared to face the work world.

In closing, there is an enormous need for effective school counselors in schools today. Research from this literature review shows that when school counselors are provided with opportunities to positively affect the lives of students, success will happen. As our educational systems improve and enhance the school environment, it is critical to be sure that efforts are made to provide students with necessary skills, tools and knowledge to succeed. Within that system, the school counseling program offers services to help students be successful in

academics, personal/social situations and career development decisions. The ultimate goal is that students will leave high school with confidence, assurance, enthusiasm and excitement to set a positive course for their future, reach their goals and have a passion and purpose in their life.

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