

THE SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR IN USA

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ABSTRACT: School counseling is one of several specialties that comprise the counseling profession. The profession of school counseling is growing, changing, and increasing. Why? Traditionally, schools have concentrated on teaching children basic academic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. When time and money were available, schools expanded academic subjects and taught skills in areas such as athletics and arts. However, there has been a counselor who is necessary. The research into what a school counselor is, what his responsibilities and the necessary skills demanded for the profession elementary, middle and high school (teaching levels at the US schools referring to the Escolas Fundamental e Médio in Brazil). With the dissemination of this profession some models and theories about school counseling have come up. However, in practice it has been shown that the school counselor is moving towards the future: Children, teenagers, school are entering the 21 century and confront the range of changes and challenges predicted for the future. School counselors must be ready to assist it.

Keywords: school counseling; guidance counselor; elementary; middle; high school.

RESUMO: O aconselhamento escolar é uma das várias especialidades envolvidas na profissão de aconselhamento e, que vem passando por um processo de crescimento e mudanças. Tradicionalmente as escolas têm-se concentrado em ensinar às crianças as habilidades acadêmicas básicas como a escrita, a leitura e a aritmética. Quando tempo e dinheiro estão disponíveis, as escolas procuraram expandir a gama de matérias e ensinaram habilidades tais como atletismo e artes. Entretanto, existe uma notável falta de tarefas escolares e habilidades interpessoais com o objetivo de obter sucesso no ambiente escolar. É nesse ponto que o conselheiro escolar se faz necessário. A pesquisa do que é o conselheiro escolar, qual a sua função e quais os pré-requisitos para tê-lo, mostra que apesar das definições encontradas serem aplicáveis nos diferentes níveis de ensino, há algumas sutis e importantes diferenças de papéis no: elementary, middle e high school, (níveis de ensino das escolas nos Estados Unidos referente aos Escolas fundamental e Médio no Brasil). Com o crescimento desta profissão, surgem modelos e teorias sobre aconselhamento escolar. Contudo, a prática tem mostrado que o conselheiro escolar tem se direcionado para o futuro: crianças, jovens, professores, escolas estão entrando no século XXI e confrontando as mudanças já prognosticadas. O conselheiro escolar deve estar preparado para isso.

Palavras-chave: aconselhamento escolar; conselheiro escolar; elementary; middle; high school.

Introduction

School counseling is one of several specialties that comprise the counseling profession. The profession of school counseling is growing, changing, and increasing. Why? Traditionally, schools have concentrated on teaching children basic academic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. When time and money were available, schools expanded academic subjects and taught skills in areas such as athletics and arts. However, there has been a noticeable lack of teaching tasks and interpersonal skills linked directly to achieving success in the school setting. This is where a school counselor is necessary.

What is a School Guidance Counselor?

Several requirements are necessary to be a school guidance counselor. First, the counseling profession began at the secondary school level with the vocational guidance movement of the early 1900's.

One definition of a school guidance counselor: in the school, the guidance counselor is a person who assists students in making intelligent and realistic personal, social educational, a vocational decisions. It sometimes includes counseling in such areas as drug abuse and teenage pregnancy (encyclopedia.com). However, the counseling profession is not the only social service that is sensitive and responsive to society's needs and problems, but it is one of the major ones.

All counselors share a common core of preparation. Regardless of specialization planned, all counselors have preparation in psychological and sociological foundations, the helping relationship, groups, career development, appraisal, research and evaluation, and professional aspects. When you complete the program, you are a counselor first, and then a community agency counselor or a school counselor.

Actually, the term school counseling and is more contemporary and definitive term then are personnel services or guidance services, which, as noted earlier, are vague descriptions encompassing conflicting roles and functions for school counselors. For example, personnel services imply record-keeping, class scheduling, attendance monitoring, and

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other functions that are administrative in nature and detract from direct counseling and consulting services with students, parents, and teachers. Meanwhile, the term guidance, while noted for its historical significance, is not the sole responsibility of school counselors, nor is it the domain of any single professional group.

Everything done in schools, whether by administrators, teachers, counselors, or others can be related in some way to the concept of guiding students. For as long as schools have existed, teachers have guided children and adolescents in classroom behaviors and in their personal relationships. By the same token, school administrators have guided students with respect to policies, curriculum, discipline and others aspects of education program.

Student guidance is important and everyone who works in schools and cares about children and adolescents has a role in this process. By accepting a broader application for the term guidance, school administrators, teachers and counselors recognize that the entire educational program of the school is guidance oriented or should be. For this reason, it is inaccurate to confine guidance goals and objectives to single program such as school counseling. Because guidance permeates every facet of the school, no one person or program has ownership (SCHIMIDT, 1991, p. 12)

The term "school counselor" and "school program" are compatible with the terminology used by the national professional associations, as seen in the name of the American school Counselor Association (ASCA) and its journal *The School Counselor*. In addition, the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) has created a specialty certification area for school counselors.

While the term school counselor is the preferred descriptions used in this research paper, guidance and other terms have an important place in helping school counselors define and describe their programs of services. In this field the terms guidance, consultation have important significance.

On first term "guidance" is used to describe a curriculum related to affective or psychological education. The guidance curriculum generally consists of broad goals and objectives for each grade level, and ideally, is a cooperative effort. Sometimes guidance is used to designate a particular instructional or informational service such as classroom guidance or small group guidance.

Second, "counseling" is a primary service of school counselors. Its focus is to provide individual and small group counseling for students. Counseling relationships are defined as on going helping processes, confidential in nature, that assist people in focusing on concerns, planning strategies to address specific issues and evaluating their success in carrying out these plans. Successful counseling relationships require a high level of knowledge about human development and behavior as well as effective and facilitative communication skills. Depending on circumstances, school counselors sometimes offer brief counseling services to parents and teachers. In these instances, their goal is to help a parent or teacher make a decision about future treatment in

a community agency or service. By helping parents and teachers in short-term counseling, school counselors give indirect assistance to children and students.

Finally, "consultations" are relationships in which school counselors, as students development specialists, confer with parents, teachers and other professionals to identify student needs and select appropriate services. Occasionally, counselors determine that the best method to help students is to provide information to parents or teachers. In these instances, consultation takes the form of parents education groups or teacher in-service workshops. Counselors also consult to disseminate information or to offer instruction about particular topics. For example, middle-grade students interested in a peer helper program might consult with a counselor to find out what peer helpers do in schools and how they can join special groups of students.

Although these definitions are applicable in various level of school, there are some subtle and important differences of the functions and role of the school counselor between elementary, middle and high school. Counseling services began developing from the upper grades down. The first counselors were in high schools. Much later, services very much like those at the high schools level were instituted in junior high schools. Only fairly recently have counselors appeared in elementary schools and in the middle schools.

The Functions and Role of the Elementary School Guidance Counselor

Guidance programs in the elementary school have been in existence for relatively short time compared with those in the secondary schools, but they have shown remarkable growth in only a few years. They are more clear-cut and consistent than at the secondary level, partly because of their more recent arrival on the school scene and the simpler organization of schools at this level and partly because of a clear focus.

The elementary school guidance program usually involves a school-based counselor providing the services of counseling, consultation, and coordination. Further guidance responsibilities within these areas are diagnosis and referral.

According to Faust, the counselor is in a key position to help identify pupils with special needs, disabilities, or handicaps and to refer those in need of special assistance. The role of elementary school counselor is that of mediator to pupils, teachers and parents. To carry out this role, the counselor works face to face with pupils individually and in small groups on remedial and developmental needs, provides classroom guidance activities focusing on affective aspects of personality, and assists teachers in developing skills in use of these techniques. Consultation with teachers is designed to help them work effectively and positively with individuals and groups. Both individual conferences and group meetings with parents are used to help with problems and give information about guidance services. The counselor also coordinates services such as team help for learning deficiencies and referrals to out-of-school agencies. Counselors facilitate the developmental process by helping teachers, the primary person working with the child, provide an affective educational program.

The Functions and Role of the Middle School/Junior High School Guidance Counselor

A discussion of work in junior high and middle schools reviews guidance in the middle years of school. Of the two types of programs for early adolescents, the junior and high school type is older and better known. But over the years it has been criticized under fire for imitating senior high school programs and guidance services have been subjected to similar criticism. The middle school, designed to replace the junior high school, is structuring guidance services that follow the trend from a former vocational-personal-guidance and career education. More similar to programs on the elementary than secondary level, the middle school program is developing its own identity. In fact, the middle school program tends to resemble elementary school services and emphasizes group work and parent contact. Thus they also work with teachers to help them improve classroom climate and promote exploration of self and environment. But the middle school does need its own strategies and approaches.

The evolving role of the middle school counselor reflects the needs and the problems of pupils at this stage, but not all professional issues are resolved. As Tindall says (referring also to the junior high school): *Many counselors feel they do not have a special identity and place. They often feel frustrated with the lack of training and information to perform a good job at the junior high/middle school level* (TINDALL, 1976, p. 47). But there is a visible trend to strive for continuity from grades K to 12, giving the middle school the responsibility to promote the development of social, emotional, and physical growth, and assisting with educational planning and career development.

Therefore, the middle school present the counselor with an opportunity to focus almost entirely on development. Stamm and Nissman put this way:

The effective counselor supports the student's fundamental need to assert independence. The counselor must be able to provide the expertise in human growth and development as a supportive service to teachers and parents in understanding the special needs of this school counselor needs to broaden the scope of his image to include that of staff member involved in all aspects of the learning process (STAMM & NISSMAN, 1979, p. 112).

Counseling, consultation, the work of peers and paraprofessionals, career educations, and work with the handicapped are discussed separately for the middle/junior high school just as they were for the elementary school. These five areas do not make up the total work of the counselor, but they are major responsibilities and thus merit special attention.

In this age of middle/junior high school, the work of counselor is based with the individual and groups. More emphasis is placed on groups, as the social interaction inherent in this approach facilitates growth and problem solution. Verbal interaction such as puppets may be need to promote expression of feelings. In both individual and group work, the counselor attempts to help pupils develop trust, to

communicate effectively, to experience emotions, and to make choices. In-group work, activities and exercises that provide the setting for new behaviors to be tried out are particularly useful. Contracts for specific behaviors are frequently employed. While individual work may at times be counselor-directed, there is usually a need for structure. The counselor selects the process to be used, sets up or helps set up ground rules, and keeps the counselor on task.

The functions and Role of the High School Guidance Counselor

It has been the high-school counselor who is most often identified when people asked, "What does a counselor do?" This is because high school were the first to employ counselors, and most people who attended high school since the 1960's have known a counselor. While the present-day high-school counselor's role is changing, the typical counselor continues to assist students by providing information about course selections, career opportunities, test results, colleges, and scholarships. Generally, the helping processes described for elementary and middle school counselor earlier are used at high-school level as well. Again, these processes include counseling, consulting, coordinating, and appraising. The difference in how these essential services are delivered is seen in the specific activities chosen and used by school at different levels of practice. As with elementary and middle-school counselors, high-school counselors select and choose specific strategies and activities to address the unique needs of adolescents preparing to enter young adulthood.

In a study, GIBSON (1990) found that teachers saw the most important functions of high school counselors as: (1) individual counseling, (2) providing career information, (3) administering and interpreting test results, (4) college advising, and (5) group counseling and guidance. In most studies, counseling continues to be a dominant service provide by high-school counselors.

Conclusion: The Future of School Counseling

Throughout its development, the school counseling profession has been influenced by educational and social trends, both inside and outside the United States. While theories and models of counseling have emerged as a result of conceptual development and action research, the role and practice of school counseling have most often been established as a result of reaction to nation and world events.

Today the counseling profession continues to react to the social, economic and political forces of time, but also has begun to establish for itself a direction and focus on the future, school counselors must be ready to assist. School counselors at all levels: elementary, middle and high school, can be expected to adjust their goals, create expanded services, develop new skills and server broader populations in the years to come. To meet these challenges, according to FARLING (1999), future counselors will (1) develop a broader knowledge of human development throughout the life span, (2) adapt to new technology, (3) increase the use of group processes, (4) expand their own professional development and (5) measure the outcome of their services.

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