



8-2014

## Redefining School Counseling: What's in a Name?

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### Recommended Citation

Oliver, Brandie M., "Redefining School Counseling: What's in a Name?" (2014). *Scholarship and Professional Work – Education*. 56.

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## Redefining School Counseling: What's in a Name?

by Dr. Brandie Oliver, President of Indiana School Counselor Association & Asst. Professor at Butler University

It is with great pleasure that I have been given the opportunity to write an article each month for your newsletter. As President of the Indiana School Counselor Association, I am thrilled to share a glimpse into the world of school counseling. This June, I was able to represent Indiana as a delegate at our national school counseling conference. This year we spent a great deal of time discussing the roles, responsibilities, and the evolving identity of the school counseling profession. Many schools around the nation continue to use the antiquated term, Guidance Counselor, but this article will illustrate the importance of redefining the profession of school counseling. In response to reading this article, I encourage you to change the title in your school system to School Counselor.

The roots of modern-day school counseling can be linked to the early 1900s as students required assistance to navigate the ever-changing industrial society. Next came the passage of the National Defense Education Act (N.D.E.A.) in 1958 and the race to the moon was set in high gear (remember Sputnik?). In response, the federal government allocated funding to expand the school counseling workforce specifically with the goal to increase college rates with students focusing on math and science careers.

Fast forward to 2014. The needs for school counselors remain great yet the funding doesn't reflect the need. In fact I would argue that we need school counselors now more than ever because of the complex and complicated society in which we live, especially as we recognize the numerous mental health needs of our students and families.

The school counselor of today is not the guidance counselor of yesterday. School counselors are uniquely trained to support all students in the areas of academic achievement, social/emotional development, and college/career planning. Research shows that comprehensive school counseling programs do indeed positively affect student success and achievement. Data also indicate that students who have access to quality school counseling do better on standardized achievement tests, one predictor of success in college. The percentage of students bound for higher education increases when they have access to highly trained school counselors who are not at lunch duty, completing paperwork, or counting test booklets. The American School Counselor Association's National Model (additional information can be found at <http://www.ascanationalmodel.org/>) provides a framework for what school counselors should be doing and what an effective school counseling program looks like.

Here are just a few ideas of how you, as the school administrator, can support the work of your school counselor so s/he can truly make a positive impact on your school community.

### 3 Ways to Support the Work of the School Counselor

- Meet with your counselor at the beginning of the school year and engage in a conversation about working toward a comprehensive school counseling program. Identifying the counselors' responsibilities maximizes their effectiveness.
- Review the list of inappropriate and appropriate duties in the ASCA National Model to rediscover any duties that are not in line with best practices, and then decide which duties can be reassigned to other personnel (can be found at <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/home/appropriate-activities-of-school-counselors.pdf>)
- Allow time for direct services to students (approximately 80% of your school counselor's time should spent in direct service). Direct services include presenting the school counseling curriculum in classrooms and conducting small group and individual counseling.

Changing our title is more than a name change. It is reflective of the scope of practice of the 21st century school counselor. Again, I encourage you to seek out a conversation with your school counselor. School counselors are equipped with the tools, training, and expertise to be change agents in your school. By positively impacting school climate and culture, your school will in return be a more productive learning environment for all students. If I can be of assistance or answer any questions concerning your school counseling program, please feel free to email me at [bmoliver@butler.edu](mailto:bmoliver@butler.edu).

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