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What Does Your School's Counseling Program Look Like?

by Dr. Brandie Oliver, Butler University School Counseling Program

With the ever increasing demands that all students will achieve at high levels and be college and career ready, the center of a school's efforts to meet these expectations often is targeted at the classroom teacher. However, other school staff resources can also support student needs and impact student outcomes. How does your school counseling program connect to your school's improvement plan? How does your school counseling program impact student outcomes? What role does your school counselor play to ensure students are college and career ready? When pondering these questions, it may be helpful to begin by examining the relationship between the administration and the school counseling program in your school.

The relationship between the principal and the school counselor is a critical factor that leads to effective collaboration imperative to school success. It takes intentional focus and time to build relationships that ultimately help guide student development and positively impact school outcomes. When strong partnerships exist between principals and counselors, it is evident that each has a firm understanding of the other's knowledge, skills, capabilities, and expertise.² Another important shared belief is this partnership is interdependent; therefore, each can perform with greater effectiveness when they are sharing support, guidance, understanding, and workload.

Beginning this process can be a challenge. One step is to ask: Is school counseling viewed as a program or a position in my school?³ Within this process the principal will need to engage in an open and candid discussion around appropriate roles and responsibilities of a school counselor. Completing a thorough and thoughtful assessment of the school's current school counseling program is another critical step in the process.² In doing so the administrators, along with school counselors can work together to reallocate the foci of school counselors so that their practices align with the educational agenda of the school¹.

An effective school counseling program—as well as strong principal-counselor relationships—will only come about through intentional efforts. Research does demonstrate the time invested does payoff. Collaborative practices resulting in comprehensive developmental school counseling programs have been found to have higher student scores on both norm-referenced national tests of academic knowledge and on state criterion-referenced tests of academic achievement². Additional research has demonstrated that students who remained in the same school with a well-defined comprehensive developmental school counseling program for multiple years obtained higher achievement test scores than students who attended schools without such programs².

Resources are available to you to begin this work to build an effective, outcome-based comprehensive developmental school counseling program through a collaborative relationship with your school counselor. Please watch for upcoming professional development opportunities in January 2016 if you are interested in exploring the questions posed in this article and working toward an innovative approach to school counseling practices that clearly connect to student outcomes.

References

¹ Janson, C., & Stone, C. (2009). What works in the field: Comprehensive school counseling programs. In F. Connolly & N. Protheroe (Eds.), *Principals and counselors partnering for success* (pp. 139–157). Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service and Naviance, Inc.

² Dimmitt, C., Militello, M., & Janson, C. (2009). School counselors and principals partnering for achievement: What does the research evidence say? In F. Connolly & N. Protheroe (Eds.), *Principals and counselors partnering for success* (pp. 37–73). Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service and Naviance, Inc.

³ Martin, I., Lopez, H., & Carey, J. C. (2009). A principal's guide to practical considerations in the organization and management of the school counseling program. In F. Connolly & N. Protheroe (Eds.), *Principals and counselors partnering for success* (pp. 107–138). Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service and Naviance, Inc.

NAESP Report

by: Susan Cobb, Principal at Ouabache Elementary, Terre Haute

NAESP recognized outstanding elementary and middle school principals from across the nation and abroad on Oct. 8, 2015 in Alexandria, Virginia. The K-8 State Principals of the Year were honored on Oct. 16th at an awards banquet in Washington, D.C. A special congratulation goes out to Mrs. Marsha Jones from Lost Creek Elementary School in Terre Haute, IN. She was the 2014 IASP Elementary Principal of the Year and represented the state of Indiana well.

In August, the American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), representing collectively 115,000 principals, wrote a letter of commentary regarding the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Under current law, the role of principal and teacher are viewed as the same role, yet Principals do not receive any allocations to support their leadership of schools. Principals do support the elimination of AYP and the 100 percent proficiency requirements; the continued requirement for disaggregation of subgroup data; the removal of unworkable school turnaround models; and the clarification of the term “school leader”. The letter went on to recommend necessary provisions. This united front from these organizations, along with your individual support, will hopefully make a powerful impact.

You may now register for the NAESP National Conference in National Harbor, Maryland. The conference dates are set for July 6 – 8th. Get registered as soon as possible as I'm sure hotels will be filling quickly. I would love to see you there.