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ABSTRACT

This document serves as a supportive tool for school counselors and their programs. It focuses on counseling issues and ideas, and has a particular emphasis on ideas for best practice. It also serves an important role in promoting the school counseling profession. This issue includes the following articles: (1) "Effective Counseling Strategies To Cope with Violence in Schools" (Kan V. Chandras); (2) "School Counselors...Taking a Moment To Touch the Head, the Heart, and the Hand: A Model for Character Education" (Cheryl Love, Aime Hinton, and Vasanne Tinsley); (3) "Management vs. Control of Behavior of African-American Males in Elementary School (A Case for Reinforcing Appropriate Behavior)" (Alvin F. Anderson); (4) "A Proactive Approach to Conflict Resolution: A Model Peer Mediation Program" (Linda Youngblood and Jacquelyn Brown); (5) "FOCUS--Finding Opportunities for Coping and Understanding Self-Discipline" (Joanne Wells); (6) GSCEP...Georgia School Counselors' Effective Practices" (Fran Mullis); (7) "The Impact of Current Brain Research on School Reform and the Implications for School Counselors" (Barbara R. Jones); (8) "Language Dysfunction: A Key to Understanding and Counseling Students with Learning Disabilities" (Joyce Williams Bergin and James J. Bergin); (9) "Professional School Counseling: A New Vision at State University of West Georgia" (C. Marie Jackson, Brent M. Snow, Paul L. Phillips, Susan R. Boes, and George E. Rolle); and (10) "School Counselor Practice and Preparation: A Local Partnership for Change" (Pamela O. Paisley, Richard L. Hayes, and Deryl F. Bailey). (Contains 169 references.) (JDM)

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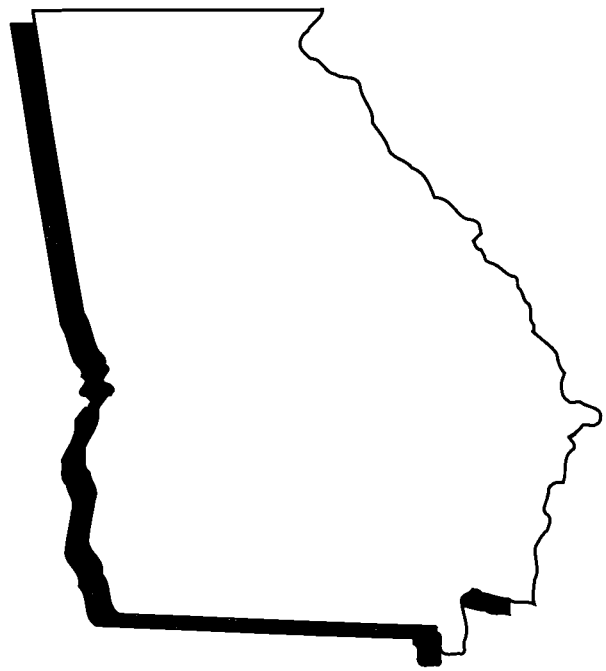

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Fall, 1999

Editorial Board

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From the Journal Editor

It is an honor for me to announce that Dr. Fran Mullis has been selected to be new editor of the *GSCA Journal*. Dr. Mullis, who has been the editor for the *GSCEP's* column in the *Journal*, began her two year term as *Journal* editor of July 1st. She has served on the editorial board since its inception, and has been one of the foremost reasons for the success of the *Journal*. Her contributions include not only several articles which she has authored or co-authored, but also mentoring numerous GSCA members in the publication of their own articles. In particular, I am especially appreciative of the creative work she did in transforming graduate student's projects into the practical ideas described in her *GSCEP's* column. Her selection as the new editor is a well deserved recognition – and a great step forward for the Journal!

On behalf of the editorial board, I'd like to express my appreciation to all those authors who have contributed to the *Journal* during the last three years. It has been a very rewarding experience for me to review the work of so many talented professional school counselors and educators, and to collaborate with the members of the editorial board in the production of such a fine state journal. I believe we all can take pride in the recognition the *Journal* received recently from the American School Counselor Association (see Jay Steven's letter).

On a personal note I would like to thank B.J. Cutts, Mary Broadhurst, Becky Bridges, Joyce Chandler, and Myra Chandler for affording me the opportunity to serve as *Journal* editor. Their support, guidance, and encouragement have provided the vision for these last three issues, and a solid foundation for future issues as well.

Jim Bergin
Editor, 1996-1999

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June 4, 1999

Dr. Jim Bergin, Editor
GSCA Journal
301 College Boulevard
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Dear Dr. Bergin,

I write to commend you and the Georgia School Counselors Association on the publication of the GSCA Journal. It was a pleasure to read such a fine publication.

While I have read the last two journals, I will comment on the Fall, 1998 issue. I found the interview with Dr. Bob Myrick especially interesting. It is fascinating to hear the views and projections of such a venerable leader in the guidance and counseling field.

Most of all, I like the practical nature of the articles. While theory is not absent, the emphasis is on practice in most articles which makes it particularly useful to those working daily helping children in schools. Although counselor educators and school counselors have equally important roles to play in promoting the school counseling profession and providing services to children, it was energizing to read so many articles in one publication written by practicing school counselors.

You, your Editorial Board and the Association should feel a sense of pride for publishing such a useful and professional publication. It is a real service to your members and, for those of us outside the state privileged to read it, the profession at large. I congratulate you and wish you and the Georgia School Counselors Association well as you continue to provide leadership and promote school counseling in Georgia.

Sincerely,

Jay H. Stevens

Jay H. Stevens, NCC, NCSC
ASCA Publications Committee Chair

c: J. Ladd; N. Perry

From your GSCA President

Once again the *GSCA Journal* provides a valuable tool for the support and enhancement of Georgia school counselors and their programs. Since the publication focuses on counseling issues, ideas, and concerns which are addressed by counselors and counselor educators, the *Journal* becomes an excellent resource for school counselors. Under the direction of Dr. Jim Bergin and the Editorial Board, the *GSCA Journal* serves as a shining example of the committed, caring, and competent school counselors and counselor educators across the state of Georgia.

GSCA bids a fond and grateful farewell to Dr. Bergin upon the completion of his term while extending a warm welcome to the very capable Dr. Fran Mullis as her term as editor begins. The time, commitment, leadership, and direction that Dr. Bergin has contributed to the *Journal* during his term as editor is much appreciated. His expertise has ensured the standard of excellence expected of the publication. There is no doubt that the reputation of the *GSCA Journal* will continue to soar as Dr. Mullis and the Editorial Board guide the *Journal* successfully into the new millennium.

Myra Chandler
President, 1999-2000
Georgia School Counselors Association

Effective Counseling Strategies to Cope With Violence in Schools

Kan V. Chandras

The incidences of recent school-related shootings and unrest in our public schools presented by the mass media (Anonymous, 1999; Cannon, 1999; Cloud, 1999; Gergen, 1998; Heim, 1998; Noonan, 1999; Petzal, 1998; Rogers, Haederle, Leonard, & Dodd, 1998; "Teen Killer," 1998; Witkin, Tharp, Schrof, Toch, & Scattarella, 1998) highlight the growing tendency of American students to engage in interpersonal violence. Violence is a problem not only in urban and suburban schools but also in rural schools, with more adolescents and children being both perpetrators and victims (Hall, 1994; Litke, 1996).

There are many explanations about the causes of student violence (Kimweli & Anderman, 1997). Such factors as family violence, violence in the society, and violence in the media incite students to act violently (Cass, 1999; Rather, 1999; Wood, 1998). Easy access to guns greatly adds to the number of violent acts by the students (Hammer, 1998). Generally, three types of violence which adolescents commit are: physical assaults, murders, and sexual assaults (Petzal, 1998). Other violent acts include date rapes (Maura, 1998; Sorenson & Bowie, 1994), gang activity (Anonymous, 1998; Carson, Butcher & Mineka, 1998, p. 542), assault on gay and lesbian adolescents (Reis, 1998), assault on Asian-American adolescents (Chandras, 1997; Chen, 1994; Pang, 1993), and Hispanic adolescents (Soriano, 1994).

Generally, the perpetrators have been young, white males, typically angry and depressed. Time (Cloud, 1999) and Newsweek (King & Murr, 1998) have listed a chronology of school-related shootings in recent months:

1. February 2, 1996: Barry Loukaitis, 14, killed a teacher and two fellow students in Moses Lake, Washington.
2. February 19, 1997: Evan Ramsey, 16, killed his school principal and a fellow student and wounded two in Bethel, Alaska.
3. October 1, 1997: In Pearl, Mississippi, Luke Woodham, 16, allegedly killed his mother, his ex-girlfriend and another student.
4. December 1, 1997: Police say Michael Carneal, 14, shot at a group of students, killing

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three, in West Paducah, Kentucky.

5. March 24, 1998: In Jonesboro, Arkansas, Mitchell Johnson, 13, and Andrew Golden, 11, allegedly killed five. On August 11, 1998, they were convicted of murder and sentenced to serve in a detention center till 18 years of age or possibly 21 (Rather, 1998).
6. April 24, 1998: Andrew Wurst, 14, allegedly opened fire at a school dance in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, killing a teacher.
7. May 19, 1998: In Fayetteville, Tennessee, Jacob Davis, 18, allegedly killed a classmate three days before graduation.
8. May 21, 1998: In Springfield, Oregon, Kipland Kinkel, 15-year-old freshman, opened gunfire in the cafeteria with a rifle propped against his shoulder. He killed two and wounded 22 other students. The shooting ended only when another student tackled Kinkel as he attempted to reload (King & Muir, 1998; Rogers, et al., 1998).
9. April 20, 1999: In Littleton, Colorado, Eric Harris, 18 and Dylan Klebold, 17, opened gunfire in Columbine High School killing one teacher, 12 students and wounding 23 other students. They were teased by jocks, labeled "Trench Coat Mafia." Both committed suicide.
10. May 20, 1999: Thomas J. Solomon, 15, opened gunfire in Heritage High School, Conyers, Georgia, wounding 6 students. He was taking antidepressant drugs and broke up with his girl friend.

The above tragedies are only the latest in an appalling spate of adolescent violence in recent months. Surprisingly, these adolescent boys come from middle-class and working-class families (Rogers, Haederle, Leonard & Dodd, 1998), shattering the myth that violent students come from desperate, impoverished families. These tragedies prompt inescapable questions: What could be the cause of this disturbing trend? What is happening in the lives of these children? What is happening in American families and the larger society to cause adolescents to resort to violence? What had the parents and school personnel done or not done to add their schools to the growing list of communities in the United States where adolescent anger has turned public schools into battlegrounds? It is difficult to find definitive answers to these questions.

Educators and other helping professionals have long been concerned with the physical, social, and psychological magnitude of violence in adolescence. Balk (1995) provides some factors that are associated with the alarmingly high rates of American family violence: (a) frequency of interaction between family members, (b) proximity to each other, (c) intensity of involvement, (d) dependence of some family members on others, and (e) greater cultural acceptance of domestic violence.

These factors pose questions as to who is responsible for adolescent violence? Are families responsible for school violence? To answer these questions, we have to look at some basic facts about family interactions. The basic aspects of the self-concept develop within the family through the social interactions that occur there. Children learn to trust and to love another person, to mistrust and avoid, or a combination of

the two. Children with positive family interpersonal relationships develop characteristics such as positive affect, empathy, high self-esteem, and constructive interactions with peers and with adults. Insecure children are hostile and distant in social relationships, and they resist seeking adult assistance when problems arise. They tend to be angry and depressed as well as being non-compliant, unenthusiastic, and unsociable (Baron & Byrne, 1997).

For many youngsters, their families provide an introduction to interpersonal violence. Violent home life generally breeds youth who react violently. Parental conflicts and parental neglect scar children emotionally, but they also serve as lessons in how to resolve interpersonal conflicts. Parents are one of the first sources from whom many youths learn about interpersonal aggression. Also, sibling violence against one another leads some youth to turn aggressive against others (Balk, 1995; Kaplan, 1998).

It seems that there is a dearth of understanding of adolescents by those who are devoted to helping them—parents, teachers, counselors, and other helping professionals (Addis, 1997). Adults seem to lack awareness of adolescent physical, social, and psychological needs, as well as a general appreciation of the changes and adjustments that adolescents undergo. It was found that such personal characteristics as warmth, flexibility, and being socially oriented are related to less violent adolescent behavior (Elias, 1998; Hawkins, Catalano & Brewer, 1995). These characteristics arouse prosocial behavior among adolescents. As a result, they develop the ability to understand and appreciate the experiences of someone else from that person's point of view. They are less violent and more empathic in their behavior.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOLESCENTS

Since the guidance services in schools exist for students, it is appropriate to briefly focus our attention on the characteristics of adolescents, their concerns, their relationships, and their views of society. All too often, the concept of adolescence is used as if a set of unitary characteristics defined this age group, but most people know that this is not the case. Broad generalizations are made characterizing adolescents and ignoring vastly contrasting developmental stages and gender-specific differences. The onset of puberty, maturation and development proceed at different rates for boys and girls (Kaplan, 1998). This should be understood and dealt with in relating to adolescents.

Frequently, adolescence is described from an external frame of reference in which adult standards and expectations are stressed but criteria from the adolescent's point of view are ignored (Kaplan, 1998). Early writers (Gitelson, 1948; Lander, 1942; Meek, 1940) emphasized the differences between adolescent behavior and that of other age groups. However, it would be most constructive to counselors and other helping professionals to understand the worldview of the adolescents and assist them accordingly. At present, the age span for adolescence is considered to be 10 to 21 (Balk, 1995). Generally, it comprises three periods: early, middle, and late adolescence.

According to Erikson's (1963) theory, the search for identity leads some

adolescents into substantial psychological difficulties as they encounter the adolescent identity crisis. He suggests that adolescence is a time of the identity-versus-role-diffusion stage. Erikson believes that those adolescents who flounder in their search for a suitable identity may follow dysfunctional courses. They may adopt socially unacceptable roles such as that of deviate, or they may have difficulty in forming and maintaining close relationships with others (Feldman, 1997). Most adolescents, however, emerge with a sense of identity and are able to commit themselves to intimacy with another person (Erikson, 1980). Those who are successful in resolving the identity crisis develop an accurate sense of who they are. They take full advantage of their strengths (Archer & Waterman, 1994).

Well-adjusted and popular adolescents have more close friends and disclose more about themselves to others than do less popular students. They are more involved in extracurricular school activities. They are less lonely than are their less popular classmates (Franzoi, Davis, & Vasquez-Suson, 1994).

In contrast, the worldview of rejected and neglected adolescents is more negative. They have fewer friends, engage in social school activities less frequently, and have less interaction with the opposite sex. They see themselves as less popular, less liked and they are more likely to feel lonely and rejected (Feldman, 1997; Gibbs, 1999). They are not prepared to negotiate a mutually acceptable solution when a conflict of interest occurs between two or more persons. They fail to perceive the potential consequences of their choices and actions. As a result, they may resort to physical violence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

Although the worldview of the adolescent is important in assisting the counselor to identify problem areas, conceptions of mental health and illness are derived from the worldview and prevailing philosophy of life that exists in society. Therefore, a counselor should view an adolescent problem as an adolescent might view a problem, also keeping in mind the adolescent's expectations for solutions (Chandras, 1997). The counselor should be thoroughly aware of and sensitive to the facts of the specific population and setting they serve. This understanding and process are basic to counseling the adolescent.

Here, an attempt has been made to provide counselors with some counseling strategies for assisting the troubled adolescent to cope with their problems constructively. The following counseling strategies are found to be effective:

1. Comprehensive School Counseling Program;
2. Prevention and Rehabilitation;
3. Outreach, Advocacy and Consultation;
4. Crisis Management; and
5. Conflict Resolution through Mediation.

Comprehensive School Counseling Program

The basic assumption in school counseling is that those adolescents who understand themselves and their world will become better able to manage their lives effectively and productively. Through counseling, adolescents achieve greater awareness of who they are and who they can become. School counseling programs provide all

students four direct services (appraisal, information, individual and group counseling, and classroom guidance) and three indirect services (consultation, coordination and referral) (Gibson & Mitchell, 1995). Counselors can incorporate other services into the program such as anger management, students-at-risk services, alcohol and substance abuse prevention programs, school drop-out prevention programs, teen pregnancy, suicide, teaching problem-solving skills, prevention of violence and other social problems (Smaby & Daugherty, 1995). However, the most effective means of fighting school violence is to teach students effective problem-solving skills (Cole, 1989).

Prevention and Rehabilitation

Various concerned parents, community leaders and school personnel have put forward the argument that proactive, preventive efforts should be given more emphasis (Coelho, Kahan, Christie, & Sandberg, 1998; Elias, 1998; Wood, 1998). The core idea of prevention is that action taken in the present can limit or avoid an undesirable consequence or state of affairs in the future (Levine & Perkins, 1997). Those who implement a program of prevention should consider three basic questions. They are: (1) At what point is intervention to take place? (2) Should preventive measures be provided for all students or are they only for a segment of the student body? (3) Is intervention to be direct with a particular student(s) or indirect with significant others who could influence the student behavior?

To prevent physical or verbal violence, many schools have implemented violence prevention programs (Cass, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 1996). The types of programs vary, emphasizing such diverse elements as zero tolerance policy (Burke & Herbert, 1996; Skiba & Paterson, 1999), metal detectors and police patrols in the school (Johnson & Johnson, 1996), student training in how to manage their anger in constructive ways (Wilde, 1995), guest speakers such as police officers, student and teacher training in physical self-defense procedures, and showing videotapes of violence and discussions about ways of responding and managing aggression. The prevention programs work only if they focus on implementation strategies and cooperation from the parents and community leaders.

Outreach, Advocacy and Consultation Services

Counselors may use outreach, advocacy and consultation services in school violence prevention. In outreach, the counselors seek out at-risk populations and assist them to resolve their problems before violence occurs. It also utilizes school and community professionals of various backgrounds for help with at-risk populations.

In advocacy, the counselor acts as an advocate for the student and asks the assistance of the community leaders for providing necessary funds for school projects to curb violence. As an advocate, the counselor works with teachers, administrators, school board members, community leaders, students and others to manage programs directed at curbing school violence (Smaby & Daugherty, 1995).

The most common role that consultants take on is that of expert or technical advisor. Consultation is providing technical assistance to teachers, parents, administrators, school-

community teams and other counselors to identify and remedy problems associated with combating school violence. For example, the consultant may assist the school-community team (consultees) to examine school violence from the perspective of students-at-risk and parents. The counselor helps the team to collect reliable data and recommend appropriate solutions to previously defined problems. Another example is that a consultant might recommend a training program in anger management for the at-risk-students at a secondary school.

Crisis Management

The avenue of crisis management involves strategies of close surveillance of students in schools. The strategies may include installing metal detectors, communicating trouble spots on campus, telephone "hot lines" to report crisis situations, hiring guards to supervise hallways, and enforce laws strictly for criminal acts on campus. Crisis management solutions have preventive effects (Wolfe, 1995).

Ironically, school populations include "hard-core" students who are bent on creating violence in schools. Anderson (1994) states: "Nerve is shown when one takes another person's possessions, 'messes with' someone's woman, throws the first punch, 'gets in someone's face,' or pulls a trigger" (p. 85). Schools need crisis management to contain students' surface behaviors temporarily.

In a crisis situation, the counselor is concerned about an adolescent who may be self-destructive or a danger to others. The client must be directed or monitored for a short time (24 to 72 hours). Definite steps must be taken to safeguard the client's well-being in an assertive and empathic way. Decisions must be made relative to needed intervention. The counselor must work cooperatively with colleagues or Crisis Center staff.

Conflict Resolution Through Mediation

Mediation as a means of conflict resolution has been successfully used by families, churches, courts and other agencies. Schools and colleges are encouraging mediation concepts on their campuses among students and staff. School personnel want to educate students to resolve conflicts and disputes through mediation. Thus, mediation is a dynamic interactive process that facilitates change through clarification and discovery (Carlson & Lewis, 1993).

Mediation is a process of resolving conflicts through an objective third party (mediator) whose job is to assist the parties to solve their own disputes amicably. Typically, there are five to ten steps depending on the mediator (Carlson & Lewis, 1993; Zimmer, 1993, p. 19). However, here, the author uses five steps:

Step 1 — Orientation and clarification: The mediator in this session focuses on a number of tasks: setting a positive tone, establishing rapport, explaining the process and the ground rules, clarifying members' expectations, and readiness for mediation. The mediator's role is to facilitate members to reach an agreement themselves. Confidentiality is stressed among all parties. The mediator facilitates presentation of the issues by

both parties. Generally, the complainant starts the presentation without any interruptions.

Step 2 — Identifying the facts: Specific issues and facts are identified through active listening, summarizing the facts, and making the parties understand and agree on the facts presented.

Step 3 — Early bargaining and identifying alternate solutions: The mediator summarizes and recaps the events of the preceding session and highlights any agreements made. The mediator meets with each party separately. The mediator plays off the other(s) by speculating about what the other party might accept. In this way, the mediator has been helping the members focus on potential options available to solve the problems. Now, they are locked into working around specific problems and finding solutions. If an impasse exists regarding options, the mediator can mention similar situations that he or she worked with in the past. Suggestions of this nature could facilitate identification of options.

Step 4 — Tentative agreement and revisions: Once the members agree to a tentative solution, a rough draft of the areas of agreement can be worked out. Copies of the agreement are provided to the parties for corrections, or revisions before the parties sign the agreement. Any concerns raised are dealt with by repeating the previous procedures. Once the parties agree to the corrections and/or revisions, the final agreement can be prepared.

Step 5 — Agreement and termination: The mediator prepares the final written document agreed by the parties for their approval and signature. The document should be written in simple, clear language that can be understood by the parties without any assistance.

The parties who signed the agreement have worked out a new method of conflict resolution. The mediator should monitor agreements for a time as a reminder that the mediator really cares about the ultimate outcome of the mediation.

CONCLUSION

In light of the increasing violence in schools, counselors and other personnel should be ready and able to meet crises when they occur in schools. Counselors should address problem solving issues by teaching students problem solving skills and mediation of their own disputes. It is important to empower students to discover alternative ways of perceiving problems in order to handle them constructively. The challenge of preparing students for the 21st century is an enormous task for our schools. Schools should develop nonviolent environments in which students and staff members can settle differences through discussion, mediation, and compromise. They deserve no less than major efforts by home, school and community leaders if violent responses are to be curtailed.

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School Counselors...Taking a Moment to Touch the Head, the Heart and the Hand: A Model for Character Education

Cheryl Love
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In 1997, the Georgia Board of Education adopted the Values and Character Education Implementation Guide and it was distributed to school systems throughout the state. Educational leaders in our school division were well aware that elementary counselors in the school system would play a critical role in educating for character at their local sites. Moreover, system wide implementation of a character education curriculum could be a prime opportunity for counselors to support the local Board of Education goal of improving human relations. For the coordinator of the elementary guidance and counseling program, several questions arose. How challenging would it be to implement character education? Would home, school and community come on board? How would schools ensure character education was being taught to students? There was only one way to answer these questions and others on a rapidly growing list: much homework would have to be done.

A system level steering committee was formed, a time line was developed and general research had begun by fall, 1997. Sources from bibliographies and character education web sites provided a wealth of information. Various approaches and materials were compared and contrasted in search of common threads as we pondered applicability for our school system Considering each school has its own set of needs, the committee agreed that the school system's character education program implementation would have to allow for each school's uniqueness. The committee was in agreement that the selection of one "pre-packaged" character education program for the entire system would not provide the flexibility needed for a diverse system such as ours; implementation would have to be least intrusive as possible. Communication with principals and counselors revealed several schools had already begun researching character education on their own. Two schools had formed character

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education committees consisting of parents, business partners and school personnel whose mission was to collaboratively determine how character education would look at their local sites. By including representation from their entire school community, these schools successfully gained support for the program from home, school, and the community. With this in mind, each elementary school was encouraged to personalize their approach, and involve parents and community in the character building process.

To prepare counselors for their role in this endeavor, staff development was planned for summer, 1998. Character education experts spent three days emphasizing theory and practical application. Since implementation would begin in the fall, staff development included time for discussion and for counselors to network with colleagues while creating their action plan and site inservice presentations for the coming year. Additional preparation followed as counselors and site committees formulated plans for implementation. Classroom guidance lessons focusing on character traits within the Language Arts curriculum were developed by a team of counselors. This team trained their colleagues on how to use the materials during fall inservice. Character education correlations for Language Arts were also provided for each elementary school site. In response to a needs assessment conducted in spring of 1999, a session entitled, "Character Education...Where Do I Go From Here?" was offered during summer staff development.

WHERE TO BEGIN?
ONE COUNSELOR'S RESPONSE

In meeting the challenge of creating a character education program for the school, there were several factors to consider. First, how does one create a program that allows for buy-in from the staff? Second, how does one ensure that topics important to the school's population and needs are covered? Finally, how does one create a program that allows for variations and avoids becoming a mundane duplication of a packaged program?

For the elementary school counselor, many resources are readily available which could be used to teach character education. These materials were not all labeled as such, but they were exceptional resources that allowed for variety and creativity. It was important to emphasize the use of materials already included in the general curriculum which were excellent tools to use for teaching respect, responsibility, and conflict resolution. This would ensure the school community that character education infusion would be simple and that it would not require extra resources.

At this point the counselor conducted an informal needs assessment by speaking with various stakeholders about topics which they felt were important, and should be stressed in a character education curriculum. Staff members, parents and students provided feedback. A list of character education topics were developed which would benefit the students and specifically address the areas of concern which had been expressed. These topics were incorporated into the regular school curriculum to allow for reinforcement of the character trait at school and at home.

Observed results of this curriculum change indicate the focus on character has become evident throughout the school. Motivational messages stressing character traits are displayed along hallways. Character development is emphasized during morning announcements in the forms of challenges, words of the day, or motivational messages. Perhaps the toughest challenge has been gaining "*buy-in*" from all stakeholders. Parents, community representatives, students and school personnel have begun to see the advantages that having such as program provides. One of the primary goals of the school was to create an

environment where students are respectful, responsible and able to work cooperatively with others. This vision appealed to all stakeholders. The belief that working together will help improve school climate, reduce disciplinary programs and help students become better able to resolve conflicts has been instrumental in gaining the approval of staff and community.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION... A COUNSELOR'S PROGRAM

After attending a summer workshop on character education, the counselor was full of ideas and "fired up" about presenting the idea of a character education program to the faculty and parents. Both groups were very receptive. The faculty and parents decided on a theme and identified the character traits on which the program would focus. The theme became, "We are Building Character at _____ School!" During preplanning we chose the following character traits, focusing on one for each month of the year.

Month	Character Trait
September	Responsibility
October	Respect
November	Citizenship
December	Compassion
January	Fairness
February	Honesty
March	Integrity
April	Trustworthiness
May	Perseverance
June	Self-Discipline

Practical application of the character trait was put into action. For example, in September the counselor talked with students about being responsible by coming to school every day, being on time, and bringing all necessary supplies. In October, the counselor incorporated respect with Red Ribbon Week. In November, the counselor discussed Election Day, Veteran's Day, and Thanksgiving, all of which play a big role in citizenship. In December, the student council sponsored a school wide "can-a-thon," giving students the opportunity to practice compassion for others.

Bibliotherapy was a major component of the character education program. Books focusing on a particular character trait of the month were read and discussed in the classroom. Since many of the books could be found in the media center, students were motivated to check them out to read on their own. (A bibliography, organized by character trait, is included in the appendix.)

As a home-school connection, character calendars and parent newsletters were sent home monthly so that parents could help their children build character at home as well. Every morning during announcements, the thought for the day from the character calendar was read over the intercom as reinforcement.

Periodically, students who model exemplary character were spotlighted. At the end of each month, a student from each homeroom who had displayed outstanding character was selected to attend a "student of the month" breakfast. At the breakfast, the students were commended for their modeling of good character, and each one received a document entitled, "Certificate of Character." A picture was taken of each student for display in the "character hallway."

WHAT WAS LEARNED? THE AUTHORS' RECOMMEND

Listed below are issues and suggestions that the school counselor should consider when incorporating a character education curriculum into his/her program. Although the list is not exhaustive, it contains ideas the authors feel are most importance to successful implementation of character education.

- Become more knowledgeable in the area of character development, and provide opportunities for your stakeholders to do so.
- Truly believe educating for character makes a difference. The leadership, motivation and

willingness to "go the extra mile" needed for the endeavor will require this of the counselor.

- Include representation from each group of stakeholders in the character education committee. Stakesholders include parents, community leaders, business partners and school personnel who together plan, develop and share a common vision for character education.
- Maintain open lines of communication and correspondence with stakeholders via class newsletters, school and community newspapers, marquees and media.
- Character education curricula components which are "teacher friendly," integrated with the academic curriculum, and cost effective are most easily implemented.
- Plan an evaluation for the program and conduct it. Use results from the data for future program planning and revisions.

APPENDIX

Bibliography of Character Education Books

1 RESPONSIBILITY
Drummer Hoff by Ed Emberly
A Chair for My Mother by Vera B. Williams
Horton Hatches the Egg by Dr. Seuss
"King Alfred and the Cakes" from The Book of Virtues.

2. RESPECT
The Great Kapok Tree by Lynne Cherry
Captain Snap and the Children of Vinegar Lane by Roni Schotter

3. CITIZENSHIP
All in a Day by various authors
"Land of the Free" from the Victor Team Storybook-Vol. 5
Bully on the Bus by Carl Bosh

4. COMPASSION
The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein
The Rainbow Fish by Mark Pfister
The Children's Book of Virtues edited by William Bennett

5. FAIRNESS
The Doorbell Rang by Pat Hutchins
It's Mine by Leo Lionni
No Fair! by Caren Holtzman and Marilyn Burns
The Value of Fairness: The Story of Nellie Bly by Ann Johnson

6. HONESTY
Believing Sophie by H.J. Hutchens
Sam, Bangs and Moonshine by Evaline Ness
"George Washington and the Cherry Tree", "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" from The Children's Book of Virtues

7. INTEGRITY
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst
The Magic Fan by Keith Baker
Duck, Duck, Goose? by Katya Arnold
Ruby the Copycat by Peggy Rathman

8. TRUSTWORTHINESS
Doctor DeSoto by William Steig
The Principal's New Clothes by Stephanie Calmeson
Frog and Toad Are Friends by Arnold Lobel
Strega Nona by Tomie dePaola

9. PERSEVERANCE
Brave Irene by William Steig
The Little Engine that Could by Watty Piper
The Very Quiet Cricket by Eric Carle
The Children's Book of Virtues

10. SELF-DISCIPLINE
Lily's Purple Plastic Purse by Kevin Henkes
Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut by Margaret Atwood
"The King and His Hawk" from The Children's Book of Virtues

Management vs. Control of Behavior of African-American Males in Elementary School

(A Case For Reinforcing Appropriate Behavior)

Alvin F. Anderson

INTRODUCTION

Counselors develop certain assumptions about children, and among them are: the child is innocent, is a being of natural virtue, and the child seeks the nurturing comfort of significant others. A different assumption is that children can be frightening – especially the males that Tribble (1992) calls the "dark and the different." These African-American males present a unique challenge for their parents. No parent wishes to expose a child to hurtful insults and gratuitous pain. The normal impulse for some African-American parents, to nurture their children, can land them on the horns of a dilemma: how to educate children with enough psychological armor to survive in their respective environments while sparing them soul-wounding experiences. Some African-American parents fear that their children will get into trouble with the authorities if they are rebellious or defiant. So, the parents use punishment to teach submission (Cose, 1993). But Hutchinson (1995) says that some parents react to the pressures and stresses of daily living and take their frustration out on their children. Some believe that punishment is a way to teach respect and correct behavior. Experience and acquired wisdom have shown, however that African-American males may reject all forms of coercive control and authority to which the school and home have had to resort.

In order to work effectively with African-Americans and others, counselors, teachers, administrators as well as parents, need multicultural counseling which will provide, according to Arredondo and Toporek (1996), preparation and practice that integrate multicultural and culture specific awareness, knowledge, and skills into counseling interaction that spreads from the home to the classroom (and perhaps even from the classroom to the home). Teachers can serve as the direct liaison to the home, supported by counselors and all other school personnel. Teachers can make an effort to get to know the parents in situations other than conferences about a child's problem. The school as a whole can develop programs that reduce the social distance between home and school. It is the trust and believability factors that will make substantial changes in the relationship with African-American children – especially males.

Some African-American parents unwittingly contribute to a major dichotomy in parenting young males. Many chide their

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sons to "be a man," while others, especially single mothers, tell them "you are the man of the house now." Some even call these preadolescent boys "little man". When these children become physically aggressive and teachers and counselors try to teach them how to mediate their disputes, they frequently report the child saying, "my mama/daddy told me that if somebody hit me, I better hit them back." Teaching/ modeling aggression at home and teaching positive discipline, self-control, and anger management in school, must surely be confusing to the children. In both private practice and in the school setting, I have had considerable, if only short-lived success, in addressing this dichotomy by saying, "let me help you *learn how* to be a man." Boys experiencing conflicting role expectations tend to be those most often subjected to school discipline. It is taxing for African-American males to live the "tales of two cities." These children, like all children, observe and model the behavior of adults and their peers. Children raised in an atmosphere of love and security, will be prepared to face the challenges of tomorrow. Having more male teachers and counselors in the elementary schools may be a good idea. When good male teachers are available in the community or in school, it is helpful if boys from absent-father families are exposed to them. Where effective models are not available, it is important for mothers and women teachers to encourage boys to identify with and play male roles. Many social and civic groups in the community are willing to provide a positive group experience for African-American males. These volunteer groups will also serve as role models to younger students in the community.

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES

In order to build the case which follows, ten elementary school counselors were identified and randomly selected during the 1998 Georgia School Counselor Association Annual Conference, to participate in this adapted and amended replication of the Bramlett, Nelson, and Reeves (1997) study of stimulant treatment of elementary school children. Five of these counselors agreed to select randomly two teachers each with children in their classes who were taking behavior altering medication. Each teacher received a questionnaire which gave instructions to describe anonymously the classroom behavior of African-American males BEFORE they took the medication, to describe the behavior AFTER taking medication, and to list the name and dosage of the medication taken by these children.

Ten teachers returned the questionnaire which described the classroom behavior of twenty-two African-American males in third to fifth grades. Ritalin in doses from 2.5mg to 20mg was the major medication taken during the school day. The most frequent occurring behaviors listed BEFORE taking medication included: "constantly talking at inappropriate times", "difficulty getting along with others", "disrespectful to the teacher", "uneasy", "lack of concentration", and "volunteers to do anything else but class assignments." AFTER taking their medication, the students were described as: "not talkative", "gets along well with others", "uses good manners", "stays on task", "answers questions", "spacey" [lethargic] and "willing to do more work." Admittedly, this quick study provides only room for speculation about the nature and severity of the behaviors both before and after medication. No attempt is made to make final assumptions about these few students, but the findings support a case for the *management* vs. *control* of behavior of African-American males in elementary school. The *management* of behavior should create an environment for self-motivation, or what some might call internal motivation, where the severity of the students' behavior is mild with few if any conduct problems in the classroom. On the other hand, *control* of behavior is measured or identified by the external focus of control (e.g., medication,

teacher mandates), as opposed to student learned self-motivation to conform to expected behavior in the classroom.

The literature supports the fact that Ritalin is the most frequently prescribed medication to treat attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). A current national debate focuses on whether Ritalin is being over prescribed. According to Bart (1999) there is no consistency in treatment, diagnosis, or follow up for children with ADHD. Because these children typically have difficulty sitting still in class and following instructions, their grades suffer. ADHD seems to be a behavior that occurs in some children that is somewhat an exaggeration of normal behavior, so diagnosis is difficult. It is hard to say where the line is drawn between what is normal and what is not [especially among African-American males in elementary school]. Without a consistent procedure for diagnosis, critics argue that children are being labeled ADHD when, if fact, they are merely rambunctious, careless, and perhaps a little immature.

Elementary school counselors have an early opportunity to observe, record, and talk about children with various disorders. Some of these early diagnoses may need a closer look because these children may have other problems which are attributed to normal growth and development as well as school readiness. Maxmen & Ward (1986) mentioned that IQ tests [which are often used in a Student Support Team (SST) process] primarily measure potential ability to perform in school and were not specifically developed to measure ability to perform life functions. The diagnosis of mental retardation, which is usually made before seven or eight years of age, describes current thinking and behavior, but does not necessarily given an accurate prognosis for the future.

Elementary school counselors at the first line of defense, are aware that the cardinal features of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are hyperactivity, short attention span, and impulsivity that is developmentally inappropriate and endures at least six months. Typically, this condition is recognized before or during elementary school. Because of the level and types of intervention (e.g., behavior modification plans, instructional modifications) generated by the school staff, some parents may become susceptible to the pressures, shame, and embarrassment generated coincidentally by the SST process. Many African-American parents may feel uncomfortable with professional school staff. Differences in income and training between staff and the community can lead to a feeling of alienation (Comer & Poussaint, 1975). Subliminal messages may also contribute to a "rush to judgment" which leads the parents to seek medical confirmation through prescribed medication, particularly Ritalin.

The Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC), both the home instrument and the school instrument, requires current information in order to insure accuracy in its interpretation and practical use. Awareness of appropriate screening of selected populations, monitoring of ADHD treatment, assessing behavior change in the classroom, intervention design and evaluation are extremely necessary. The student Support Team process must focus on the *management* as opposed to the *control* of behavior of elementary school children. In support of reinforcing appropriate behavior, the word punishment is defined as "the withholding" of the satisfaction of a need, as opposed to inflicting/applying negative consequences as a result of the behavior.

What some educators refer to as discipline problems may in fact be the way that African-American males manage their strong feelings in the classroom. Their management mandates some judgment about whether the observed behavior is "normal" (age appropriate) and expected, or "abnormal" (not appropriate) and something to be noticed, addressed, and corrected. Behavior is classified as abnormal by

observers if it deviates so much from what they expect to see that it bothers them. Judgmental responsibility is in the eye of the beholder, and this explains why opinions differ about what is and what is not worthy of notice or reaction. In subjective grading, teachers make decisions about what they observe and compare that with some mental image of what they expect and want to see. If the discrepancy exceeds some level, a reaction is triggered. A teacher may notice that when passing in the halls, boys poke at each other. They frequently tap their feet or a pencil and draw attention to themselves by making "rude noises." The teacher who reacts to each and every deviation from standards of genteel behavior will be completely exhausted by the end of the first week of school (Beymer, 1995).

Why do adults persist in thinking that they are limited to the use of power-based discipline when they certainly must recognize that most children fight it to escape from it by trying all the coping mechanisms they can muster? Gordon (1989) says that the one simple answer is that people persist in playing the role of disciplinarian because they think the only alternative is to be permissive, and nobody likes that role in relationship to children, or in any relationship, for that matter. Self-disciplined children, however, are those who have been given considerable personal freedom. They have been allowed the chance to make their own choices and decisions. Children will learn to control or limit behavior that is disturbing to adults only if those adults have shown a similar consideration for them; children will use self-motivation to follow rules when they have been given the chance to join with adults in deciding what those rules should be (Gordon, 1989).

Martinez, Cooper and Leverte (1981) address the issue related to common attention-seeking misbehaviors, which may be active or passive. In active misbehavior the child's behavior is quickly identified as something that is annoying to the adult (e.g., showing off, tattling, playing tricks, testing an adult's patience). The child's purpose is to get either adults or peers to notice him/her in some way. This behavior may be especially true for the "dark and the different." Passive misbehavior is not as evident, but is considered more harmful to a child's personality (e.g., laziness, dependence on others, shyness, and the use of good looks and personality to get what is desired). Such children with passive misbehavior are so discouraged that they are unable to bring their behaviors out into the open. Instead, they learn to survive by manipulating adults and never admitting to themselves or anyone else the purpose of their behavior. Many African-American parents complain to the counselors that "he [the child] will not talk to us. We never know how he feels about anything."

African-American *expressiveness* is a concept that, according to Pasteur and Toldson (1982) refers to a cluster of behaviors that are traditional, normal, and functional in the African-American minority population, but challenging and threatening to the majority culture that establishes rules for institutional behavior. The definition of behavior problems as a matter of how some African-American children manage their strong feelings, coincides with the concept of "*expressiveness*." In this "cluster of behaviors," some African-Americans tend to be uninhibited, talk while another person is talking (with no disrespect intended), interrupt conversations, and talk in the movies, as well as in church. These behaviors, unless better understood, violate "rules for institutional behavior." "Preparation and practice that integrate multicultural and culture specific awareness, knowledge and skills" are necessary for building better relationships with African-American children and their families.

Karlsson (1996) points out that children are very perceptive and competitive; they are aware of what their friends, siblings, and classmates can do and what they cannot

do. Therefore, students will choose activities in which they have previously been successful and which they know will not be frustrating. Perhaps this insight may also apply to negative behaviors both at home and in the classroom. When African-American males are not permitted or recruited to participate in school sponsored activities because of behavior problems, a sense of isolation will occur and negative attention getting behaviors will increase. All children have a need to belong.

The introduction of African-American male "expressiveness" as a "cluster of behaviors," offers some additional explanations/insights and support of the position that *management* as opposed to *control* of behaviors of males is a challenging option in elementary school counseling. The reinforcement of appropriate behavior according to Good and Brophy (1978) identifies many skills that make a difference in the quality of instruction. Good teachers are able to develop student thinking, manage classrooms effectively, deliver high quality instruction, evaluate learning, and adapt to changing requirements [demographic shifts]. Effective teachers have pleasant, organized, and productive classrooms. In contrast, ineffective teachers have difficulty in providing conditions that lead to harmonious and productive behavior.

Schilling (1996) compiled activities to help apply the theory and recommendations from the field of brain-based education and emotional learning. Emotional intelligence units that have been adapted for use at two elementary schools in Clayton County include self-awareness, managing feelings, conflict resolution, responsibility, learning to listen, self-concept, and decision making skills enhancement. Adjustments are made [especially through classroom guidance activities] to accommodate the interests, abilities, cultural background and learning styles of African-American males in third to fifth grades.

Another example of an effective teacher's success in dealing with African-American males, while supporting the parent's assigning responsibilities to the child at home, is mentioned in this case study by Karlin (1992). The child told his teacher that he had chores to do, and while enumerating them, he beamed with pride. The teacher discussed this point with the child who needed to hear it. "You have a big advantage. You can help with chores, and by doing this you are learning to take care of yourself and to be independent." This comment helped to improve the child's self-image. When a child is disruptive, he or she may need to hear such comments like this to improve his/her self-esteem. The axiom of "praise in public and admonishment in private" is worthy of consideration.

For effective classroom management, positive reinforcement from teachers, administrators and counselors should be contingent upon appropriate student behavior. Praise and attention (indicators of success) may be offered when desired behaviors occur. Wong and Wong (1998) state that the three most important axioms that must be taught the first day of school are rules/discipline, procedures, and routines. During the first week of school, these rules take precedence over lessons. Teachers who do not have a formal discipline plan resort to disciplining by yelling, screaming, scolding, and demanding.

SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM INITIATIVES

The following are examples of guidance initiatives that are currently in various stages of development at two elementary schools in Clayton County. Future assessment of their impact on African-American males will be a critical measure of their effectiveness:

- Character Education is diffused throughout the curriculum, with classroom guidance lessons and activities as the focal point. The values taught include: respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, compassion, tolerance, self-discipline, equity, integrity,

and citizenship.

- Counseling and Development Center (CDC) is a counseling resource room where students come and participate in hands-on activities revolving around the eight Georgia Elementary Guidance Curriculum Standards: self-understanding, interpersonal relations, expressing ideas, gathering and processing information, rights and responsibilities, valuing and decision making, achievement motivation and problem solving. The CDC offers first hand information and experiences in regard to life skills.
- Peer Mediation is a program in which students trained as peer mediators help other students peacefully resolve their disagreements. The goal is to reduce problems which result in referrals to administrators for disciplinary action. Teachers are encouraged to "think mediation before discipline."
- Small Group Counseling sessions (with parental permission) are conducted to help students (males) develop responsibility and understanding of their own behavior. Special emphasis is placed on anger management. The thrust is to help students learn that "they are responsible for everything they do and say."
- Classroom Guidance Series involves third, fourth and fifth grade students in five yearly sessions, covering topics such as learning to listen, self-awareness, dealing with feelings, character education, and work/study skills.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Proactive approaches are also being tried at the same two elementary schools in Clayton County, in an attempt to enhance fruitful relationships with African-American males, in particular. These techniques have been implemented quite easily over the past three years, when they were pursued with kindness, sensitivity, sincerity, patience, and determination:

1. When behavior incident occurs, the involved African-American males are escorted from the classroom to an area of "*perceived privacy*" before discussing the matter (*do not touch*).
2. When talking with the child, school personnel reduce the "*perceptual field*" by sitting next to the child (*do not stand eyeball to eyeball*).
3. When talking to the child, school personnel speak in a soft voice, repeating the statements until calm is restored (*I know you are upset, but let's discuss this like a young man*).
4. When confronting the child, school personnel do not use aggressive gestures (*pointing finger in the child's face*).
5. When behavior matters arise, school personnel gage the severity/importance (*major, medium, minor, and nuisance*) before determining course of action (*e.g., refer to Assistant Principal for disciplinary action, hold a class meeting, recommend mediation and/or refer to the counselor*).
6. Teachers provide adequate space between seats and are conscious of ethnic and gender mix.
7. Teachers use "*classroom buddies*" and "*study buddies*" to help with social interaction/adjustment in the classroom.
8. Teachers provide opportunities for the child to become involved in responsibility building projects/activities (e.g., classroom helpers, school clubs).
9. When teachers identify that a "major" problem in developing, they refer the child to a counselor and/or schedule a parent conference.

CONCLUSION

Utilizing the expertise of school counselors, schools can institute an entirely new focus on classroom management in dealing with African-American males in elementary school. Counselors can be a catalyst, assisting the administrator, in recognizing the implementing the practical aspects of learning styles. In-school staff development provides splendid opportunities for teachers

to study and recognize multicultural sensitivities in working with students and their parents. Emphasis on school readiness, age appropriate behavior, and early innovative uses of parent conferences are all useful. Another option for the counselor is to develop an atmosphere of collegiality with teachers so that they are perceived as being peers. Use of the knowledge, skills and experiences of the school counselor can help teachers and parents learn what counselors really can do. The counselor can serve as the cheerleader for teachers and students.

COUNSELORS CAN ALSO:

- Assist in reviewing school policies and programs to determine their "shelf date" and encourage modifications when they have a negative impact on the *management* rather than the *control* of behavior.
- Serve as a staff resource in identifying demographic shifts that have impact on the school society, curriculum, and classroom management.
- Assist in bringing the diversity issues to the forefront by helping to implement appropriate policies and practices. Such involvement could also address language differences in the population, and accommodate for differences in religion, gender, social skills, and other forms of status and expression.
- Help identify and clarify problem trends and assist the administrator in devising workable solutions.
- Work directly with African-American males by helping them to qualify for, or perhaps be reinstated in school activities from which they were removed or never included because of past behaviors.
- Help develop and maintain alliances with Licensed Professional Counselors and other mental health professionals in their communities, in order to help facilitate parent understanding of the referral process.

The case presented does not purport to be the definitive answer to what counselors should, would, or could do. But, certain implications may be drawn about how to improve the plight of African-American males in elementary school. It is necessary to raise issues and examine different approaches to provide successfully school counseling services for the "dark and the different."

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A Proactive Approach to Conflict Resolution: A Model Peer Mediation Program

Linda Youngblood
and Jacquelyn Brown

An increase in recent episodes of school violence nationwide indicates the need for educators to address conflicts and violence in the school setting. Student conflicts involving personal issues have increased in all grades. These issues range from topics as insignificant as stepping on someone else's shoes or looking at someone the "wrong" way to serious issues involving violent threats, group conflicts, or serious girlfriend/boyfriend issues. For educators, these outbursts interrupt class and instruction and create a negative social atmosphere among the students during common times such as lunch, class changes, and bus dismissal.

Many students do not know how to settle a conflict without resorting to violence or abusive language. Because of the disruptive impact on learning, the question of whether conflict resolution is something that should be taught is no longer in question. We must all get along in order to promote a proper learning environment. A peer mediation program can assist by promoting a tension-free learning environment and by teaching students resolution skills that they can utilize throughout their lives. Peer mediation can help students involved in a dispute to communicate effectively and agree upon a solution satisfactory to all parties. In addition, mediation provides students the opportunity to solve conflicts in a positive manner utilizing a student-centered approach. Furthermore, an effective school mediation program enables students to acquire lifelong conflict resolution skills while enhancing student problem solving, decision making, social, and communication skills.

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

In 1994 discipline problems began to increase at Pebblebrook High School and a committee of faculty members began an informal study of solutions to these problems. The committee learned that schools across the nation have found that peer mediation programs result in a reduction in classroom discipline problems and in the number of students suspended for fighting. In addition, over 5,000 schools across the nation had established peer mediation programs with an emphasis on teaching resolution skills as a means to handle student conflicts (Peart, 1994). Programs established by the American Bar Association (Hansen, 1997) and the Black Mental Health Association (Cain, 1997) in response to increased school conflicts have also proven to be successful. The committee

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then presented a proposal to the entire faculty to implement a peer mediation program at Pebblebrook High School. The faculty voted overwhelmingly to approve the implementation of the program.

DEVELOPING THE PEER MEDIATION PROGRAM

Once the program was approved for implementation by the faculty and administration, a procedure was developed to choose the mediators. Interested students were required to complete a form, answering questions about why they wanted to become peer mediators and how they would be effective. Faculty members could also nominate students for the program. Teachers evaluated students on five qualities: integrity, confidentiality, maturity, ability to communicate, and a strong sense of self. A faculty committee selected a total of twenty-six mediators from these applications and evaluations.

After the mediator selection was complete, an administrator and a counselor were selected to serve as facilitators for the program, along with ten faculty members. Cobb County Prevention/Intervention Center Drug-Free Program Specialists Jeff Dess and Alyse Cooper provided the initial training. The faculty volunteers and students were taken off campus for two days and taught the mediation process through a variety of communication exercises, demonstrations, role-playing, and practice in large and small group settings. They were trained to follow an established procedure in order to assist disputants involved in a conflict toward a peaceful resolution. Students were provided step-by-step training, using a method developed from a variety of models. A group spirit developed among the students which later carried over into the mediation sessions. At the end of the training students received certificates of completion at a celebration party. The training continued throughout the school year. Periodically the Prevention/Intervention Specialists visited the school to refresh the students' skills. Meetings were held monthly with all mediators.

THE MEDIATION PROCESS

When a request for peer mediation is received one of the facilitators immediately sets up the mediation. Mediators are selected on a rotating basis. Student mediators may choose not to mediate if they are testing or because they choose not to miss class. Mediators are selected to meet the needs of the disputants based on grade level, ethnicity, and/or gender. The peer mediation room is reserved for mediations only and is located next to an administrator's office. All mediation forms are located in that room. After the two mediators are selected the disputants are then brought in and seated at either end of the table while the mediators sit on opposite sides of the table.

The mediators review the ground rules for the mediation session to which both of the disputants must agree to abide. The rules include no name-calling, no threats, listening without interrupting, and maintaining confidentiality after the session is concluded. Mediators also review topics that must be reported to the facilitator if discussed during the session, including weapons, drugs, suicide, or abuse.

The mediation begins with one mediator assigned to each disputant. There are no adults present in the room but an adult facilitator is always sitting outside the room whenever a session is taking place in case he/she is needed. Each disputant has his/her chance to say without interruption what happened and how he/she feels.

The disputants then brainstorm ideas on how they might settle this dispute. Finally they must choose a solution from their brainstorming list. The mediators summarize what each person has agreed to do, and have the disputants sign a contract agreement to abide by the solution on which they have agreed. Mediators remind the disputants about the confidentiality

agreement and ask disputants to tell their friends that they have solved their problem in mediation and not to discuss it with them. The mediators thank the disputants for agreeing to mediate and congratulate them on their hard work in successfully resolving the conflict in a peaceful manner. Disputants then return to their classes while mediators complete the paperwork.

The adult facilitator then discusses the mediation with the mediators to determine whether the conflict is completely resolved or not. This step gives the mediators a sense of ownership and responsibility for the program. Mediators are thanked and given a pass to return to class. Mediations last about thirty minutes and students are responsible for making up any missed class work. Finally a form notifying the referring teacher or administrator of the outcome is sent as a follow-up to the mediation process. This form notifies the referring party about the outcome of the mediation. Mediation information is then recorded by the facilitator on the computer in the student discipline activity tracker.

EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

An evaluation of the program has determined that peer mediation at Pebblebrook High School is very successful, as measured by the percentage of resolved mediations (Table 1). A current success rate of 96% for the 1998-1999 school year indicates that the school is becoming more successful each year at conducting mediations. The program has also been implemented in one of the feeder middle schools and one of the feeder elementary schools in the fourth and fifth grades. When mediators reach Pebblebrook, they may have up to five years experience in the mediation process.

Forty-four percent of our mediations involve ninth graders. However, we find that most of the serious conflicts come from the older students who bring those conflicts to the mediation table in greater numbers each year (fifty-six percent in 1997-1998 as compared to fifty percent for 1994-1995).

Rumors and gossip are the primary source of conflicts, with arguments and name calling the second most common causes. The school tries to reduce incidences of conflict by teaching tolerance and appreciation of differences, and to defuse conflict situations when they arise by teaching conflict resolution skills.

The mediation program has included every possible student combination including gender, grade and race. The peers have mediated with students who were about to fight, and students who have returned from a suspension after having been involved in a fight. They have also mediated with students who have had confrontations in the local community. Parents often ask for assistance to resolve these disputes before the police become involved. In most of these

TABLE 1

	1994-1995	1995-1996	1996-1997	1997-1998	1998-1999
# MEDIATIONS	58	89	78	51	59
# RESOLVED	52	79	72	48	57
# UNRESOLVED	6	10	6	3	2
SUCCESS RATE	90%	89%	92%	94%	97%

mediations the conflict is resolved with positive results in less than an hour.

The school has also seen an increase in teacher- and student-initiated referrals. The continued growth in student-initiated referrals indicates an exercise in self-control as students reach out for alternative methods to resolve conflicts when faced with difficult emotional situations. This also indicates that the students buy into the program, considering it a viable method of conflict resolution. One of the main goals continues to be an acceptance of the program throughout the school. That goal is being realized as evidenced by an increase in the number of referrals and a decrease in the number of conflicts. This year the largest source of referrals was from teachers, indicating that the counselors have the trust and support in the program from the faculty.

Using the discipline tracker employed by the school to track discipline statistics, the counselors have found that the number of incidents involving confrontation, harassment, class disruption, aggression toward another, fights, and weapons has been reduced by fifty percent. The school has experienced significant changes during the last four years (Table 2), including an increase in the total school population of over two hundred students. The cultural diversity of the student population has also changed as evidenced by the growing number of students from Africa, Mexico, South America, Eastern Europe, China and Vietnam. However, the school has experienced a reduction in fights by 31%.

In a survey (Appendix A) given to students who have participated in mediation during the 1998-1999 school year, the disputants were asked whether the original problem for which they sought mediation had been resolved. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents reported that peer mediation led to a successful resolution of their original conflict. Sixty-two percent felt the situation would have gotten worse and that they would have been involved in a discipline situation without the mediation. Seventy-two percent of the respondents also felt their situation was of a serious nature. Finally, seventy-nine percent of the student respondents indicated that peer mediation is a vital component of the school and wanted to see it continue.

The results of a similar survey (Appendix B) administered to the faculty in 1998-1999 indicated that teachers felt that missing class time to conduct mediation was a valid excuse.Teachers who had been at Pebblebrook prior to the initiation of this process also indicated a positive change in school climate and atmosphere. Ninety-two percent of the responding teachers who have taught at the school four years or more indicated that peer mediation makes a significant positive difference in the school.

TABLE 2

	BLACK	WHITE	HISPANIC	ASIAN	OTHER	**TOTAL**
1995-1996	588	534	37	16	14	**1191**
1996-1997	677	506	45	20	21	**1269**
1997-1998	741	468	52	26	13	**1300**
1998-1999	825	516	89	18	18	**1466**

CONCLUSION

Peer mediation at Pebblebrook High School has taught conflict resolution skills to all of the mediator teams and over 450 students who have been exposed to these skills through participation in mediation. Since conflicts can disrupt the educational process, the school's mediation program has proven to be an invaluable tool in preserving a safe and orderly environment. Many students also have reported assisting friends away from school who were involved in conflict situations by utilizing the skills they learned in mediation.

The next step in the development of the program is to identify ways to assist students in managing the anger inherent in most of these conflicts. The school is discussing the development of a program that would require all students who have been in mediation to participate in an anger management program. The continuous goal is to assist students in becoming successful in their academic pursuits while acting responsibly and living peacefully with one another.

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APPENDIX A

PEER MEDIATION FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

Please help us evaluate our program by answering the following questions. When you are finished, return this immediately to your homeroom teacher.

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle the letter to mark your answer for each question.

1. Do you feel that the original problem for which you came to mediation has been resolved?
   A. Yes B. No C. Somewhat

2. If there were no peer mediation program at Pebblebrook, what do you think would have happened in terms of your conflict?
   A. We would have worked it out on our own.
   B. It would have gotten worse and we would have eventually gotten into trouble – possibly a fight.
   C. Eventually it would have gone away.
   D. Other_____

3. Do you consider the reason you mediated as:
   A. Serious B. Not serious C. Somewhat serious

4. Who encouraged you to request mediation?
   A. Teacher C. Administrator E. Self
   B. Friend D. Counselor F. Other_____

APPENDIX A
PEER MEDIATION FOLLOW-UP SURVEY (Continued)

5. Overall, how successful do you feel your mediation was?
   A. Very successful B. Not successful C. Somewhat successful

6. Would you use mediation again to try to resolve a future dispute?
   A. Yes B. No C. Maybe

7. Do you feel the peer mediation program here at Pebblebrook is:
   A. Important/Vital/Something we should continue to offer
   B. A waste of everyone's time
   C. Not sure, it depends on the situation

8. The peer mediation process actually consists of a variety of communication and conflict resolution skills. Please check the skills which you have learned and would use again when involved in a conflict:
   - ❒ Listening to the other person's point of view
   - ❒ Understanding the other person's feelings
   - ❒ Brainstorming for solutions
   - ❒ Compromising to reach a livable solution

9. Now that you have peer mediated, if you were confronted with a similar situation again, how would you handle it?

   _____

   _____

10. Have you used the conflict resolution skills that you learned in peer mediation in other situations such as at home with a parent or family member or with a friend? Briefly explain.

    _____

    _____

Comments:
Anything else you would like to add regarding the peer mediation program and its effectiveness?

_____

_____

_____

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

APPENDIX B

PEER MEDIATION - TEACHER EVALUATION SURVEY

(no name please – it's not necessary)

If possible, I need your help to complete a project regarding peer mediation for graduate school. In addition, the information you supply may also have a direct impact on our program here at Pebblebrook.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please take a few moments to circle your answer to the following questions and return the survey to my mailbox sometime in the next week.

Thank you – I really appreciate you taking time to do this for me.

1. When two students are having a conflict that you notice, do you:
   A. Suggest mediation to the students
   B. Avoid mediation because it appears to be a waste of time
   C. Generally let the students decide how they want to work it out

2. If a mediator or disputant is called from my class, I feel:
   A. It is for a good reason
   B. Upset because they are missing valuable class time
   C. Upset because it is a waste of time
   D. Both A and B

3. If you have ever referred anyone for mediation, after the mediation was complete, did you notice that it was:
   A. Helpful B. Ineffective

(If you are new to Pebblebrook in the last 3 years, skip to #7 – otherwise, please continue)

4. Since its implementation 3 years ago (94-95), what type of effect do you feel the peer mediation program has had on the climate/atmosphere of the school?
   A. Positive B. Negative C. No effect

5. Overall, in general, is it your opinion that the addition of a mediation program has been:
   A. Beneficial; made a significant positive difference in our school
   B. Insignificant/no change/no impact

6. Prior to the peer mediation program 3 years ago, do you believe that at Pebblebrook today we have:
   A. Less conflicts/fights
   B. More conflicts/fights
   C. The same amount of conflicts/fights

7. In your opinion, how can the peer mediation program be more effective: (circle all that apply)
   A. More publicity needed for the program
   B. More training of all students in the general/basic steps of conflict resolution
   C. More teacher involvement in the peer mediation program
   D. Design a better process for mediators/disputants leaving class; missing instruction; making up the work
   E. Scrap the whole mediation program and implement some other program for conflict resolution
   F. Other suggestions:_____
   _____
   _____

Again, thank you for your time – please return to Jackie Brown's mailbox as soon as you can.

FOCUS – Finding Opportunities for Coping and Understanding Self-Discipline

Joann Wells

In an effort to make students and parents more aware of the need for appropriate conduct, students were given a conduct grade. For those students who still experienced poor grades in behavior, an additional resource was developed. In 1997, Muscogee County School District implemented a program for students who ended the school year with an unsatisfactory grade in conduct. The program was named FOCUS...Finding Opportunities for Coping and Understanding Self-discipline. This was a four week program and was taught during the summer.

MISSION

The Mission of the FOCUS curriculum was to provide learners opportunities to develop appropriate coping skills and to demonstrate self-discipline.

GOAL

The Goal of the FOCUS curriculum was to present a comprehensive supplementary program to enhance learning opportunities that promote responsibility, productivity, and individuality. The curriculum included five content areas. Those areas included rights and responsibility, conflict resolution, problem solving, decision making and anger management.

STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM

Attendance was an important factor in the program. Students had to attend every day. The program also had a parent component. In order for the student to pass FOCUS, parents of the students had to attend a parenting class taught by faculty members of FOCUS.

Each day was started on time and in the same way. Structure was an important element of the program and it added to the success of FOCUS. Daily opening activities were lead by students. Each day began with the pledge to the flag, the Five Laws of Responsibility (which are posted in the classroom) and a student lead discussion of the FOCUS Points. FOCUS Points were quotations with a message, such as "I would prefer to fail with honor than win by cheating." – Sophocles. A student was selected at the end of each day to lead the next morning's opening. The Five Laws of Responsibility reminded students they are responsible for everything they do. If they "do well", they get the credit and if they "mess up", they must accept what they did and not put the blame

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on someone else. Daily, each student told of something good or exciting that happened to him/her. The students were always excited to hear what their peers had to say. This proved to be a very good way to teach listening skills and to keep students tuned to the good in their lives and in the lives of their classmates.

Students were responsible for the daily review of the classroom rules. This was led by a different student each day. The class repeated rules stated by the lead student. Daily review of the rules and seeing the rules posted in the classroom was intended to make it easier for the students to abide by them.

Ice breakers were used daily to introduce the lesson. Ice breakers helped the students to become receptive to the lesson. Each session contained a variety of activities. Discussions, role-play, interviewing and group work were all a part of the FOCUS Program. The FOCUS Points were used throughout the lesson to give meaning and clarity to the lessons. At the end of each day, students wrote in a journal what they learned in class that day and what special meanings the lessons had for them.

COURAGE TO CHANGE AWARD

At the end of the each day, students had an opportunity to evaluate each other's classroom behavior. Students selected a peer whom they felt had the "courage to improve." They read aloud their nominations and then presented the students with a "Courage to Change" badge. Students receiving this award kept the badges in their folders. At the end of the week, the top three students were placed in competition to receive the Courage To Change Certificate at the weekly awards program. From the top three names, each class voted for the persons to receive the Courage To Change Certificate.

AWARDS PROGRAM

An awards program was held each Friday. The weekly programs provided students an opportunity to display proper assembly manners and to learn that good behavior was recognized and rewarded. Parents were invited to attend the assemblies.

The weekly awards program also involved active participation by the students. Students were taught mediation skills and demonstrated these skills through role play. Students did special readings and volunteered to share what they had learned from the program. Guest speakers included the Assistant Chief of Police, school board members, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, a United Methodist Minister and the President of the Muscogee County Board of Education. Students selected from each of the classes received awards such as the Most Improved Student Award. A special guest was invited to observe class' assembly behavior. The class demonstrating the best behavior received the "Best of the Bunch" award. This was a big banner that remained in the winning classroom for the week. The teacher and a student received the banner and posted it in the classroom. This class recognition promoted classroom unity in demonstrating appropriate behavior.

GRADUATION DAY

Each student who successfully completed the FOCUS program received a certificate of completion with a seal. Students who did not complete the program were assigned to the alternative school for the fall semester. Students participated in the graduation program by reading the Five Laws of Responsibility, and presenting a skit illustrating the Mediation Process. Parents attending the graduation program were very happy to see their sons and daughters receive positive recognition for improved behavior.

FOLLOW-UP

A behavior intervention plan was written for each student who participated in the FOCUS Program. This plan was reviewed with each student and sent to the child's receiving school. Counselors at the receiving schools monitored the FOCUS students' behavior and counseled the students to help insure the students' continued success.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This program has been in existence for two years. During these two years, 620 students have been served. Only five percent of these students have had to repeat the program. Counselors believe the program has improved student behavior and have noticed some positive behavioral changes among the students.

This program teaches and reminds students of appropriate school behavior. It provides them with opportunities to experience instant results of positive behavior. It provides parents an opportunity to learn better ways to respond to their child's misbehavior and ways to encourage positive behavior. Parents discuss common problems and share solutions to these problems. Parents also are involved in role play, learning what to say to their children and how to say it. In order for us to see a long term change in student behavior, we must appeal to both parent and child.

GSCEP

Fran Mullis, *Column Editor*

The effective practices described in this issue are somewhat different from those discussed in the last two GSCEP columns. The effective practices listed here pertain to those behaviors exhibited by school counselors who contribute to the professional development of students who are completing their practica and internships in school counseling. It is these one-site supervisors who help students put into practice what they have learned in their university classes and who introduce students to the realities of school counseling.

Students from Georgia State University described the supervisory behaviors that were most helpful to them as school counseling interns. The following students contributed to this column: Brenda Barnes, Greg Bullock, Penny Crawford, Tina Daniel, Kay Gifford, Amy Levin, Bill Morris, Marianna Sullivan, Amy Surasky, and Amy Vinson. The behaviors listed are in no particular order, but were cited by several students as being very helpful for them.

- **Being available to talk with and being willing to provide direction in difficult situations; offering suggestions**
  One student said that the supervisor was helpful "because she was friendly and she made me feel welcome". Several students stated that they appreciated their supervisors being available to listen when extra guidance was needed; "he always asks me to sit down and discuss the situation, no matter how busy he is". Processing counseling activities was helpful, especially when supervisors shared how they had handled similar situations in the past. Students found it very encouraging to know that their supervisor sometimes struggled with deciding on a course of action and that supervisors sometimes had to learn from their mistakes.

- **Sharing resources and files**
  An abundance of materials is available for small group and classroom guidance lessons, but students often do not know where to find them. Supervising counselors who not only shared materials, but also who led students to appropriate activities for small and large groups were especially appreciated. Allowing students to copy files of materials about specific topics was also helpful.

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- **Allowing me the freedom to plan groups and classroom guidance activities; letting me work independently as soon as I was ready**
  The key phrase in the above statement is "as soon as I was ready". One supervisory task is deciding when the student is ready to work independently. Although some students said that they would have liked more opportunity to observe their supervisor and to be observed, several students were happy to be given the responsibility for large segments of the counseling program early in the year. By being able to plan things independently "I learned a great deal", and never felt that "she was looking over my shoulder, but was there when I needed guidance". One student said that she appreciated having independence to "find my own way".

- **Including me in a variety of counseling activities, such as DFACS referrals, student placement meetings, consultation with parents, teachers, and administrators**
  Many school counseling students at Georgia State do not have teaching experience. For these students, observing conferences with parents and teachers was very useful because they learned how to establish both personal and professional relationships with these important groups. Seeing the supervisor model effective interpersonal skills with students, parents, teachers, and administrators was also listed as important in the student's professional development.

- **Helping me develop effective relationships with the faculty**
  Observing the supervisor model effective interpersonal skills with individual faculty members and with the faculty as a whole was helpful in teaching students how to develop relationships with the faculty. Students also appreciated supervisors who introduced them to faculty members, especially those who would be amenable to consulting and referring their students to a counselor-in-training.

- **Supporting decisions regarding students**
  Knowing that the supervisor would be supportive of decisions made by the counselor-in-training was reassuring. However, offering suggestions about alternative procedures and techniques was also helpful.

- **Clear, concise feedback**
  Most students, as well as most human beings, prefer feedback that indicates outstanding performance. Although not always pleasant to hear, feedback that is clear and concise about ways in which one's performance could be improved is also a valuable learning experience. Students valued clear feedback whether positive or negative.

- **Modeling effective counseling skills**
  Observing supervisors working with individual students, small and large groups, parents, teachers, and others was a rewarding and helpful experience. Several students mentioned that it would be very helpful to have more opportunities to observe their supervisor.

- **Encouragement**
  Encouragement was also a welcomed supervisory behavior. Focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses and applauding efforts rather than lamenting deficiencies are hallmarks of encouraging behavior. Encouragement typically inspired people to work toward improvement and is treasured by students and supervisors alike.

Effective on-site supervision is critical in the training and development of competent and caring school counselors. Although counseling interns are often a helpful

addition to the school counseling team, supervisors must be willing to add another duty to an already overwhelming job description. I know I speak for all counselor educators when I say "Many thanks for your hard work and dedication to the school counseling profession".

The Impact of Current Brain Research on School Reform and The Implications for School Counselors

Barbara R. Jones

The current public school system was created in a 19th century society for a population of children that no longer exist. Fortunately, there is a fresh breeze blowing on the educational waters. A blend of technology and medical research is currently revealing secrets long well hidden. These discoveries may have profound implications for addressing the current problems in public education. Thanks to high-tech brain scans we are now getting a glimpse of how mind and body are connected to emotion and behavior. This information may well change the entire perspective of how educators look at discipline and learning in the future. Goleman (1995) in his groundbreaking book, Emotional Intelligence discusses studies which document that emotional and social skills are the determining factor, rather than IQ, in how well we do in life. In an article for Learning (1996) magazine, he states that intellectual quotient (IQ) contributes only about 20 percent to the factors that determine success in life, while the remaining 80 percent is made up of emotional intelligence.

Begley (1996) reports that stress and constant fear have a profound effect on the workings of the brain and can actually reroute the neurochemical circuits. The overloaded emotional part of the brain causes the cortex or thinking part of the brain to fall behind. The result for the cortex is a difficulty in "assimilating complex information" (p.58). In our fast-paced, competitive, and violent society this may be a clue to the low academic performance of many American children.

This research also suggests that emotional intelligence is not a fixed quotient but can be learned. Therefore, it can and should be taught – and the earlier the better. According to Kotulak (1996) the brain really is sensitive to the early environment, and those early experiences are likely to underlie the kinds of intellectual performance that we see on the behavioral side in humans and that negative patterns of thinking can indeed be changed.

The insights from this research are profound for school counselors whose focus in upon emotional and behavioral issues and their influence on academic success. Counselors can begin to adapt their various roles to reflect current research as they strive to create the optimum learning environment for our students.

CLASSROOM GUIDANCE

Based on the law of parsimony, classroom

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guidance sessions continue to be the most effective means of reaching the most students. To implement a brain-based classroom guidance program requires that school counselors and teachers:

1. Provide service to all grades, Kindergarten through Twelfth.
2. Structure the lessons to reach all learning styles. Include hands-on activities, props, puppets, songs, movement, as well as lecture.
3. Begin the lesson with an activity/story that perks childrens' interest and gets their attention to begin to learn. Since retention is the highest when the new information is related to existing knowledge, bring in props from the student's world that are unique, unusual or just "fun". The strategies elicit emotional responses from the student such as curiosity, awe, excitement, joy and wonder. Based on major breakthroughs in brain research and their impact on learning. Dryden and Vos (1994) state "The door" must be open to learning before true learning can happen. And that "door" is an emotional one – the "gatekeeper to learning" (p.305). Learning is an emotional experience.

CONSULTATION

In the role of consultant, the school counselor is called upon to share information and ideas with teachers, parents and administrators. In working with teachers, the primary goal is to help them create the optimal learning climate in the classroom. Toward that end counselors' recommendations to teachers might include the following ideas:

1. **Involve all the senses**. As with the classroom guidance, the key to long-term memory is the "limbic" part of the brain where both emotion and memory is processed. Students internalize information not from merely hearing it, but from experiencing it. Taking advantage of the senses to awaken the emotions can be the catalyst to this experience. As Montagu (1978) states, "Tactile stimulation is like rubbing the world on the outside layer of our brain" (p.65).
2. **Cultivate a relationship with students**. "Emotionally stressful school environments are counterproductive because they can reduce the students' ability to learn" (Sylvester, 1995, p.77). Unmet needs of acknowledgement, communication, socialization, structure, relaxation, and encouragement often manifest into acting-out behaviors, thus disrupting learning for the student as well as others in the classroom (Tobin, 1991). Meeting the social and emotional needs of the child creates a climate that encourages success.
3. **Stimulate inquiry and higher order thinking skills**. The teacher's role must begin to shift from the traditional one of lecturer to a broader one of facilitator, coach and guide. Rather than constantly giving out answers, he/she must begin to ask questions thus forcing the student into higher levels of thinking. The student is able then to experience the "joy of learning" rather than merely listening and trying to remember what the teacher is teaching.

COORDINATOR

One of the many roles of the school counselor is as a coordinator of a wide range of indirect services to students. These may include, but are not limited to, peer facilitator training and projects, staff development and inservice programs, standardized testing, educational placement, working with and coordinating paraprofessionals and parent volunteers, mentoring programs, and managing student records. Serving as coordinator of the student support team (SST) referral process continues to be one of the major responsibilities of many school counselors. The SST coordinator works with parents, teachers and administrators as the team develops and puts into place interventions and strategies to enhance the success of the child in the classroom. In

assessing the students' academic performance, there are several things to remember.

1. Intelligence Quotient (IQ) is only one way to view intelligence.
2. Current assessment instruments test only certain abilities. The child may have other "gifts" the school never addresses (such as persistence, patience, tolerance, a gregarious personality, leadership skills, etc.) which will serve him/her well in future endeavors. Because these are not specifically academic related, they often go unnoticed, especially in a child who is functioning several levels below grade level. "Lack of individual or competitive ability generally isn't what causes people to lose their adult jobs or destroy their marriages. These failures are more often a result of people's inability to work effectively with others" (Sylwester, 1995). The definition of "being smart" is changing and being redefined, and this new perspective changes how we view student potential.
3. Stress affects brain functioning and is a major factor in learning (Sylwester, 1995). Creating a stress-free environment in which the child can learn and grow is one of the first steps for educational reform. We live in a very demanding, highly competitive culture which contributes to stress and tension for adults as well as children. Often classrooms reflect this high level of anxiety, and this impacts the learning situation. Dryden and Vos (1994) contend that "80 percent of learning difficulties are related to stress. Remove the stress and you remove the difficulties" (p.368). Most teachers realize the need to constantly fine-tune their classroom management skills to maintain the most favorable learning climate in today's classrooms. The challenge is to create an enriched and stimulating environment which is also peaceful and emotionally safe. The result will be a classroom that has the best potential for developing the brain to its maximum and thereby create a classroom climate worthy of the new millenium.

CONCLUSION

For school counselors especially, current brain research suggests a new and broader perspective of how to educate children for the next century. Sylwester (1995) warns educators that the educational system is on the brink of a major transformation, and that scientific discoveries about learning and memory will continue whether or not we are willing to use this information to influence curriculum. Our challenge is to use brain research to adopt a holistic perspective for educating the child, and to realize that improved test scores are the by-product of that educational effort rather than the goal.

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Language Dysfunction: A Key to Understanding and Counseling Students With Learning Disabilities

Joyce Williams Bergin
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Children and young adults identified as having learning disabilities often pose unique problems for counselors. By definition, persons with learning disabilities have "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder many manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations." This key aspect of the definition of learning disabilities has been part of the federal definition since 1975 when it appeared in Public Law 94-142, *Education for All Handicapped Children* Act (20 U.S. C. Sections 1400-1461), and has remained through the 1997 reauthorization of *IDEA*, PL 101-476 (20 U.S. C. Section 1400 et seq.). It is this element in the definition which places language dysfunction as the central factor in learning disability, and it is the various manifestations of language dysfunction which create problems for those who counsel persons with learning disabilities.

Linguistics, the systematic study of language, explains that there are functional components of language which must be understood in order to appreciate the form, content, and use of language. These key components include *phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics*, and *pragmatics*. Understanding the roles and functions of these components of language can help counselors and other professionals appreciate the difficulties which arise in language comprehension and use for those who have learning disabilities. **Phonology** allows the speaker to sequence speech sounds and shape syllables according to the underlying rules of his/her native language. It allows the listener to identify the unique sounds that blend to form meaningful discourse. For example, the communicator must be able to differentiate between the specific sounds that make up the words *cat* and *cake* in order to ascertain that one word refers to an animal and the other to a dessert. **Morphology** allows one to use the smallest grammatical units or *morphemes* to organize words appropriately in order to be understood in the native language. Persons who have difficulties with morphology may

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be unable to form noun plurals, possessives, and past tenses of irregular verbs correctly. They typically demonstrate difficulty with written spelling. **Syntax** deals with the rules of sentence structure specific to the native language. **Semantics** governs meaning and allows the speaker/writer to express language so that it can be understood by others in his society or culture. A speaker utilizes the set of language rules referred to as **pragmatics** (Owens, 1996) to send communication messages effectively and to affect others with spoken or written language.

Persons with learning disabilities may demonstrate difficulties with appropriate utilization of any or all of these components of language. The manifestations of the difficulties may range from quite subtle to overt. Typically, dysfunction in phonology and morphology leads to problems in learning to read as well as long term difficulty with reading fluency. There may be significant problems in phonology in terms of awareness, recall, memory, retrieval, and production. Reading success depends on adequate language development (Catts & Kamhi, 1999).

Difficulties with semantics results in the reduced ability to extract meaning from spoken or written language and, more specifically, to grasp accurate meaning from multiple-meaning words, synonyms, and antonyms. Appropriate use of semantics requires utilization of both *word knowledge* and *world knowledge* (Owens, 1996, p.22). Word knowledge refers to the size of one's vocabulary and personal mental dictionary of words and their uses. World knowledge refers to a person's life experiences, memory, and comprehension of the events in one's range of experiences.

Typically, persons with learning disabilities speak using a more limited vocabulary than they may possess in their mental dictionaries. It is not uncommon for them to use malapropisms or to speak somewhat hesitantly as they attempt to extract from memory the best words to express themselves successfully. Their written language often reveals an even more restricted vocabulary due to the fear of making spelling errors generated by deficits in the use of the language's underlying rules of morphology. The individual with learning disabilities may not comprehend jokes, puns, *double entendre*, indirect requests, and even sarcasm and often responds inappropriately to them (Mercer & Mercer, 1993). An example would be a student who laughs loudly before the speaker delivers the joke's punch line or one who says, "I don't get it" when an obvious joke has been shared by someone in his/her group. Such a student might respond negatively when given an indirect request such as "Close the window, please." This student also may answer rhetorical questions much to the annoyance of the speaker.

Problems with syntax often lead to stilted writing in which sentences are brief and void of the descriptors that add to the meaning and vitality of the message. Their spoken language often reveals the same patterns, and there is a marked tendency among persons with learning disabilities to process inappropriately wh questions *(who, what, where, when, why)*, interrogatives, and negative sentences (Wiig & Semel, 1984).

However, the most common problems with language dysfunction exhibited by persons with learning disabilities fall in the area of pragmatics. Often they misread the body language of others. They make socially inappropriate comments, and their overall ability to cooperate in social interactions may be compromised. Their spoken language is often inappropriate in terms of pitch, stress, and volume which results in their being deemed rude by others who attempt to engage them in conversation. These problems in pragmatics may affect their social, vocational, and academic performance and very likely will be carried into adulthood (Schumaker & Deshler, 1984).

When a counselor works with a child or adolescent who has learning disabilities, s/he may experience difficulty because the youngster has an incomplete ability to comprehend what the counselor is saying, the counselor's body language, and ultimately the counselor's wishes for the youngster's success. In addition, the counselor must contend with the youngster's incomplete ability to fully express his/her own needs, concerns, fears, and wishes. Thus, counseling can become an exercise in communicating at cross purposes. As a result, it is not uncommon for a youngster to express the concern that the counselor is yet another person who finds him/her wanting.

Recently, a teacher related a story about a high school student which demonstrates clearly some of the difficulties experienced by persons with learning disabilities. The student who had learning disabilities was quietly completing a written examination when, suddenly, he sprang from his seat and rushed to the teacher with his examination paper wadded up and extended in his fist. He seemed extremely agitated. When questioned calmly by the teacher, the student stated that he could not do the work on one of the examination questions. He forcefully stated that his teacher should have known that he could not draw. Obviously, since he could not draw, he could not respond to the question. Upon reading the examination item, the teacher discovered that it required the student to *draw some conclusions* about a particular topic. The student had misunderstood the meaning of the directions (semantics) and had overreacted in a rather violent and inappropriate manner (pragmatics) in making his frustration known.

Quite often, teachers and other educational professionals deal with the overt, acting out behaviors with no consideration of the student's underlying language deficits. Fortunately, the teacher in the incident recounted here was both willing and able to probe for understanding. Ultimately, she was able to explain the correct meaning of the directions, and the student was able to proceed with the examination without further incident.

How can counselors use this knowledge of language dysfunction to interpret student responses correctly and make appropriate interventions? Initially, counselors serving on student support teams and/or assessment teams should request that language skills be assessed and deficit areas be identified. This assessment data should become part of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) along with goals and objectives for helping the student improve those skills. Accommodations for and improvement of these global language problems cannot be left to speech pathology alone. They must be addressed by each education professional with whom the student comes into contact during the school day as well as by the student's parents, siblings, and significant others.

Likewise, counselors can advocate and help facilitate the active participation of the student at appropriate points in the IEP process so that the process itself can be understood by the student as positive rather than secretive. Frequently, students are not involved at any point in the referral, assessment, and IEP development processes, so they readily interpret their need for instructional assistance and accommodations as something negative and perhaps even shameful.

Counselors can support students with learning disabilities by helping them, along with their parents, to come to terms with the disability. Parents' and students' reactions to the diagnosis of disability are often grief reactions and, as such, must be respected and dealt with appropriately (Mercer, 1997). Frank discussion, with careful probing for the student's understanding, is the key to helping the student adjust to the disability and to see that there are accommodations that can make the disability less intrusive and burdensome. Care should be taken to avoid

assuming that the student fully understands his/her role in the ownership of the disability, nor should the counselor assume that the student has internalized the process of developing the necessary steps that can be taken to ameliorate its effects.

Group and individual counseling can be effective for parents and students in order to foster adjustment, reduce conflict, and eliminate dysfunctional attitudes toward authority and responsibility, as well as misunderstandings due to cultural factors (Klein, Altman, Dreizen, Friedman, & Powers, 1981a and 1981b). Reflective listening with probing for understanding is key to assisting the learning disabled. The gift of time required for cognitive processing plus on-going discussion, coupled with planning, are essential to insure that the student acquires the skills needed to cope successfully with the learning disability. One difficulty evident in counseling persons with learning disabilities is the need for extended time. Longer sessions are required to insure that issues have been addressed with mutual understanding by both counselor and client. In addition, there is the need to extend periods of time over which counseling sessions will occur. Language processing problems, memory dysfunction, and self-esteem issues often slow the typical counseling process when one deals with persons who have learning disabilities. The counselor must be prepared to adjust timing based on these factors and others that are unique to his/her client.

Due to the problem of semantics and pragmatics typical of persons with learning disabilities, social skills instruction is of great importance, but it must be coupled with the understanding that language deficits will be addressed. Role playing is helpful in dispelling misunderstandings that can occur through use of techniques that depend on discussion alone. The counselor can incorporate into group counseling unique programs such as *Skillstreaming The Elementary School Child* and *Skillstreaming the Adolescent* (McGinnis, Goldstein, Sprafkin, & Gershaw, 1980, 1984), which are designed to teach prosocial skills through modeling, role playing, and group performance feedback. These programs are particularly helpful because the students select issues from their own life experiences to examine in terms of specific content areas including making and maintaining friendships, maintaining a conversation, choosing alternatives to aggression, managing stress, and developing planning skills.

Videotaping the role playing allows the players themselves and the other group members to view the role play interactions as often as necessary to reach consensus when evaluating group performance. Participants can watch themselves as they role play problem solving and planning during confrontations with situations drawn from their real life experiences. This viewing can be beneficial in reinforcing memory of best choices and the most effective approaches to problem solving.

Another intervention technique that has proven helpful in assisting persons with learning disabilities is the use of mnemonic devices. Simple flow charts, pictures, and consequence maps (Voltz & Damiano-Lantz, 1993) can support memory of goals, objectives, and plans for dealing with a student's identified areas of need. The consequence map involves the drawing of a simple chart which develops out of the discussion between counselor and client concerning a situation and the possible consequences, both positive and negative, which can arise from the client's response to the situation. To better understand consequence mapping, consider a situation in which a student is hesitant to approach a teacher for help. The counselor and the student discuss what might happen if the student approaches the teacher. Both the positive and the possibly negative results of the student's approach will be mapped out as they are discussed using a cause-effect

type map. As the counselor and student continue to discuss and map a number of alternative approaches that can have positive results, they highlight these. The counselor keeps a copy of the map and gives the original to the student. The student now owns a clear, concrete, easy-to-follow plan that can be used as reference to support the student as s/he approaches the teacher for help. Follow-up on the use of the consequence map can be reviewed and revised by the counselor and the student as results and progress are assessed. Use of mnemonic devices can reduce the effect of memory problems and language deficits experienced by persons with learning disabilities.

Despite problems with word attack skills and fluency during reading, biblio-therapy can be used successfully with persons with language centered learning disabilities if some simple accommodations are made. First, it is essential for the counselor and student to discuss any new and/or troublesome vocabulary which will be encountered. Then the counselor can read the story aloud in segments followed by discussion of the feelings, characters, and situations encountered. Of critical importance throughout the discussion is maintenance of a level of trust which will allow the client freedom to question new words or ideas and identify any areas of confusion.

Books-on-tape may also be used but with the same attention to preparing for unfamiliar vocabulary and new concepts. Again the story should be broken into manageable segments followed by discussion. The discussion is key to the client's understanding. Role playing the situations encountered can extend and deepen understanding of the story and its unique message. Mnemonic devices can be employed to extend the comprehension and recall of the bibliographic experience. For example, a simple chart might be drawn to show how the positive reactions of a story's character to some problem event are like the client's positive reactions to a similar problem event in his/her experience.

In summary, the key to successful counseling with persons who have learning disabilities lies in understanding the kinds of underlying language deficits which typically exist. Counselors committed to working with persons with learning disabilities should educate themselves about these language problems. There is much information that can be of assistance but which cannot be covered adequately in this article. For that reason, a brief bibliography has been appended for the reader. Counselors can be strong advocates for those persons who may often misunderstand what is being said to them and who themselves are often misunderstood as they attempt to communicate with others.

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Professional School Counseling: A New Vision at State University of West Georgia

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The future of schools and even more importantly, the future of all students within our schools are critical concerns of educational professionals (Hart & Jacobi, 1992; Haycock & Navarro, (1988). This is not a new concern. However, as we approach the new millennium, a recognition of the vast and rapid changes facing youth in the next century has led to a search for a new vision to bring clarity and focus to the education of professional school counselors for 21st century schools. The DeWitt Wallace Readers Digest Fund has financed a national initiative to transform school counseling. "The mission of the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest fund is to foster fundamental improvement in the quality of educational and career development opportunities for all school-age youth, and to increase access to these improved services for young people in low-income communities" (Transforming School Counseling: Planning Grant Guidelines, 1997, Letter of invitation, p.1). This initiative is to transform school counseling preparation programs. The Education Trust, a Washington, D.C. private consortium, is the agency responsible for the administration of this initiative. The purpose of this article is to describe briefly this national initiative and the State University of West Georgia's (UWG) involvement in the process. An overview and summary of the department follows to place that involvement in an historical context.

OVERVIEW OF COUNSELOR EDUCATION AT UWG

The Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology (CEPD) is administratively located within the College of Education at the State University of West Georgia. The department offers two graduate degrees in counseling (M.Ed. and Ed.S.). In addition to offering graduate work

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in counseling, the department offers the supporting course work and expertise in educational psychology for the various departments within the College of Education. Most course work is offered in the late afternoon and evening with the exception of the summer term.

Both counseling degrees are designed to meet the academic requirements for licensing in professional counseling (LPC) in Georgia and certification by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC). Graduates are eligible for these credentials after successfully passing the appropriate exams and completing required post degree supervised counseling experiences. The M.Ed. programs in school and community counseling are designed to conform to the eight common-core areas specified by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

About 2000 graduate students have completed their degrees since those first awarded in 1969. Currently, there are several hundred graduate students pursuing work within the department. Thirteen faculty with diverse teaching and research interests make up the department in addition to part-time and adjunct faculty. Historically, the College of Education at the State University of West Georgia has been one of the largest in the United States in terms of the production of teacher education graduates. The school-counseling program has shared that history and reputation.

Beginning in the fall of 1996, the school-counseling program changed from a 60 to a 75 quarter hour program. Additionally, admission and selection requirements were strengthened relative to academic criteria. This change formally initiated the commitment of faculty and administrators to meeting CACREP standards. Practicum/internship requirements were altered to include a requirement of 750 contact hours at a school-based site under the supervision of a certified school counselor. As the University System converted to semesters, the program changed again in the fall of 1998 to a 48-semester hour program. The program design was very traditional with a primary focus on "counseling".

In the summer of 1997, the department and its partnership school system, Clayton County, applied for and received a grant from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest fund administered by the Education Trust to transform the education and training of school counselors. West Georgia was one of ten universities to receive this year-long planning grant. In the fall of 1998, six of the ten universities were selected to actually implement their respective plans for transforming school counseling curriculum and practice. In addition to the State University of West Georgia, other selected institutions were the University of Georgia, University of North Florida, Ohio State University, Indiana State University, and California State University at Northridge. These six universities have worked collaboratively, although the respective "transformed" programs are not the same and have significant differences as well as strengths and weaknesses.

DEVELOPING A MISSION DRIVEN PROGRAM

As one of six universities across the nation to receive this competitive grant, UWG will begin implementation of the new curriculum beginning with a cohort group of counselor trainees in the fall semester of 1999. The faculty worked diligently to arrive at a vision and to design a mission-driven program around the eight essential elements for change outlined by the Education Trust, Inc. The new mission written by the Counseling and Educational Psychology Department is as follows:

"The mission of the school-counseling program is to educate Professional School Counselors. Through leadership, advocacy, collaboration, use of data, and

action, our graduates will be competent at identifying and removing barriers that impede equal access to educational and career opportunities for all students. We are committed to educating Professional School Counselors who are skilled in needs assessment and who are effective counselors and strategic brokers in providing equal support for all students, when needed, dedicated to the high academic achievement, career success, and personal/social development of all students (Counseling and Educational Psychology, 1998b)."

The elements needing change proposed by the Education Trust include: (1) the criteria for selection and recruitment of counselor candidates; (2) the curricular content, structure, and sequence of courses; (3) methods of instruction, field experiences, and practices; (4) the induction process into the profession; (5) working relationships with community partners; (6) professional development for counselor educators; (7) university/school district partnerships (The National Initiative for Transforming School Counseling, 1997). UWG integrated these eight essential elements into the current ongoing change process, adopted the foregoing mission statement, and developed a curricular program model, The Advocacy Achievement Model with six arenas. Working with our partner school system, Clayton County, Georgia, a joint-curriculum team designed our mission-driven school-counseling program to support the new vision. This curriculum team included faculty, practicing school counselors, a community representative, and a retired school administrator.

While counseling continues to be an important part of the model, the new emphasis in the Advocacy Achievement Model is upon removing barriers to success for all students and to empower students to become fully functioning individuals (Hart & Jacobi, 1992). In order to accomplish these objectives, counselors will be trained to become (1) effective advocates for high level achievement of all students, (2) skilled leaders and team members, (3) knowledgeable brokers of services, (4) collaborators within the school and the community at large, and (5) effective users of data to initiate necessary changes within the school environment to support students.

UWG's Advocacy Achievement Model for Training Professional School Counselors

When school counselors are driven by a mission to provide equal support to all students and to be dedicated to high academic achievement, career success, and person/social development for all students, the role behaviors will change. The Advisory Board of the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund's National Initiative developed a working definition of school counseling to guide the transformation. This guiding definition is presented here.

"School Counseling is...

A profession that focuses on the relations and interactions between students and their school environment with the expressed purpose of reducing the effect of environmental and institutional barriers impeding student academic success. The profession fosters conditions that ensure educational equity, access, and academic success for all students K-12. To accomplish this function, the trained school counselor must be an assertive advocate creating opportunities for all students to nurture dreams of high aspirations. The counselor assists students in their academic, social, emotional, and personal development and helps them to define the best pathways to successfully achieve their dreams. The school counselor serves as a leader, as well as effective team member working with teachers, administrators, and other school personnel to make sure that each student succeeds. The school counselor as consultant empowers families to act on behalf of their children by helping parents/guardians identify student needs

and shared interests, as well as access available resources (The National Initiative for Transforming School Counseling, 1997)."

The new vision for school counseling as presented by The Education Trust, (The National Initiative for Transforming School Counseling, 1997) focuses on concern for the whole school and system issues within the school and community. Emphases are placed upon being a change agent, creating equal access for students to opportunities for high level success, and acting as an advocate for all students, but especially for those students who traditionally have been under-served, the poor and minority youth. In light of the guiding vision of the Education Trust and the CEPD school-counseling mission, UWG's Advocacy Achievement model is designed with six arenas encompassing the critical skills for school counselors. The initial course in the curriculum introduces graduate students to the Advocacy Achievement model for the professional school counselor. The main objectives of this course are to present the significance, the principles, and the competencies within the core arenas. Additionally, it introduces students to the practices of a professional school counselor within a comprehensive school counseling program as outlined by UWG's model (Counseling and Educational Psychology, 1998).

Additionally, The State University of West Georgia's program is designed to train its graduates to be effective and competent counselors and strategic brokers of services. These new counselors will become involved with parents, other educational profes-sionals, community members and agencies. As a part of the educational leadership, counselors will collaborate with the school team to accomplish the mission of the school. A counselor acting from this new vision will become a key player in student development and no longer be a forgotten entity in school reform. Emphasis will be placed upon providing equitable support for all students to aid in the attainment of success in the academic, career, and personal/social realms. Supporting student success through academic counseling and by leading, planning, and developing programs basic to learning and achievement, the counselor will be defined as an important educational team member. The new counselor will work with students to build upon their strengths, rather than focusing upon deficits, encourage admission to college or technical institutions or quality employment upon graduation, and use data to effect change and to recognize barriers to educational achievement.

Each arena of the UWG Advocacy Achievement Model for training Professional School Counselors is designed to build skills and to develop the basic underlying philosophy needed for change. The leadership arena provides the necessary knowledge of leadership skills, awareness of research related to the psychological principles and practices of teaching, principles of curriculum development, school polices and procedures, and the change process and methods to effect change. Leadership skills are essential as counselors become involved in school improvement and work to foster high achievement. The leadership course emphasis "theory to practice" by providing experiences that allow students to assess and develop their personal leadership profile and by providing knowledge of social, economic, and political power. Special emphasis will be placed upon the development of skills in planning, organizing, coordinating, and delivering programs that generate systemic change through establishing collaboration within schools and between schools and communities. (Counseling and Educational Psychology, 1999).

The *advocacy arena* is developed across the curriculum with direct attention in a specifically related course that focuses on values, knowledge, and skills required for

effective advocacy. The course focuses on equal access for all students to rigorous educational experiences and the coordination and delivery of support services. Use of data to identify needs, remove barriers, and secure resources from the school and the community is central to the advocacy role.

Closely tied to advocacy is the brokering of services arena. In order to be a strong advocate for students and their families, the counselor must be able to mobilize resources from the school and the community. Brokering of services will be taught across the curriculum and directly with the Advocacy and Brokering of Services course. Brokering involves knowing about resources, using coordination skills, networking, teaming, referral processes, and follow-up procedures. Effective presentation skills for many different audiences will be taught. Another important counselor asset taught in this arena is the development of outreach skills to connect successfully with parents as well as the community.

Counseling remains an important arena within the CEPD curriculum and involves individual counseling, group counseling, and classroom guidance. Hart and Jacobi (1992) pointed out that students face critical problems (drug abuse, teen pregnancy, family violence, etc.) and that assisting students with these problems is an important part of the school counselor's role. Acknowledging the extensive responsibilities and high student/counselor ratios, these authors recognized lengthy individual counseling as not feasible for school counselors. UWG's curriculum will include brief counseling approaches (Sklare, 1997) to individual counseling and a broad-spectrum view of group work. In addition to reaching students in counseling groups, school counselors will need to know how to lead a variety of types of groups such as support, discussion and task groups. Group work skills are taught to provide leadership knowledge, to perform the advocacy role, and to work within collaborative systems to help students achieve at high levels.

Collaboration is also an essential skill and one characteristic of educational leaders of change. School counselors in the training program at UWG will (1) review collaborative schools literature, (2) gain knowledge of the skills involved in collaboration, (3) discuss the benefits of effective collaboration, and (4) explore methods to overcome barriers which prevent educators from establishing and maintaining collaborative efforts (Hobbs & Collison, 1995). The collaboration arena is a part of the leadership course and also will be included at appropriate points across the curriculum. Emphasis in this arena is placed upon the relationship of the school counselor to collaborative efforts throughout the school and community.

The *effective use of data* to identify needs, to build support for removal of barriers, and to document achievement gaps and program successes provides the basis for recognition of the when and how of (a) advocacy, (b) brokering of services, (c) collaboration, and (d) counseling. Coursework in assessment and effective use of data in schools, research, and program evaluation provides the counselor with the knowledge and skills to collect data and communicate findings to effect change and to act appropriately as an advocate for students and their families. In addition, a counselor prepared for this new vision will learn to use technology for monitoring student progress and career planning, as well as to assist the student in informed decision-making.

CONCLUSION

Historically, a primary mission of the public school has been recognized as education of students for success in life; however, the school counselor's role has been less clear (Herr, 1984) and more varied throughout the history of school guidance and counseling programs. The critical needs of our youth are now being addressed in the school

reform and school counseling literature (Keys, Bemak, & Lockhart, 1998; Lerner, 1995), as these problems are manifest in acts of violence, truancy, and self-destructive behaviors. The cries of these young people are loud and clear, calling for attention to their needs. Counselors and other stakeholders must meet the advocacy needs of all children and youth by providing equitable opportunities to achieve at high levels in order to combat the critical demands of a rapidly paced and demanding 21st century.

The new vision counselor will transform school counseling to support high level achievement for all students. The overriding mission of the State University of West Georgia is to train school counselors as highly skilled professionals ready to meet these 21st century challenges.

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School Counselor Practice and Preparation: A Local Partnership for Change

Pamela O. Paisley,
Richard L. Hayes
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After almost twenty-five years in education and counseling, I find myself again at one of those points in time when I am an active participant in discussions concerning the appropriate professional role and preparation of school counselors. I have to admit that for many of the earlier years of my career, I found myself frustrated by these discussions. I longed for a stable definition so that we could move to effective implementation. However, the "more seasoned" I've become, the more comfortable I am with the ongoing dialog. In fact, I have come to believe that these discussions are vital to the survival of the specialty. My earlier assumption that there would be some type of consistent definition was, at the very least, naive. Today I embrace opportunities to be a part of considering where we are and where we need to go (Paisley, 1999, p.7).

School counseling has been described as an evolving specialty within the profession; one that emerged and continues to change as a result of social, educational, political, and economic trends (Paisley & Borders, 1995). With the changes that have occurred in those environments, it is not surprising that the focus of school counseling programs has also shifted. In fact, the history of school counseling as a profession shows a shift from vocational guidance to personal growth to comprehensive and developmental programs in response to changes in the needs of individuals, families, school, and communities (Paisley & Borders, 1995; Schmidt, 1999; Wittmer, 1993).

Recently, there have been several calls for re-examination of school counselor practice and preparation (Hayes, Dagley, & Horne, 1996; Keys, Bemak, & Lockhart, 1998; The Education Trust, 1996). A central issue that resonates through all these proposals is the recognition that today's children must be prepared to live in a rapidly changing, culturally diverse, and technologically sophisticated world. In response to the challenge to prepare children to live as effective citizens in such a world, school counselors must re-examine the role they are to play as educational leaders and student advocates. As school counselors and

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counselor educators in Georgia, we need to look seriously at the issues and examine creatively the full range of policies and programs that best address the needs of educating this generation of students. We might also consider looking at different models based on local concerns and contexts--giving us an opportunity to compare programs, interventions, and philosophies. Perhaps, most significantly, we need to understand that the programs we design for today are unlikely to be effective five years from now. As we can learn from our postmodern colleagues, we are always in the process of co-constructing our practice and our preparation. In that process, it is unlikely we will find one "right" way but instead we may construct several "better" models that meet the demands of a diverse society.

TRANSFORMING SCHOOL COUNSELING: A NATIONAL INITIATIVE

One such initiative to transform school counseling has been associated with a funding opportunity sponsored by the DeWitt Wallace - Reader's Digest Fund and directed by The Education Trust (The Education Trust, 1996). This initiative is based on the central premise that school counselors are neither being prepared nor utilized in ways that best meet the educational needs of today's children and adolescents. Across the country, environmental and institutional barriers are in place that impede the general development and academic success of many students, especially poor and minority children. This initiative asks that school and community leaders come together to focus on student achievement as part of educational reform. School counselors are seen as being in key positions to have a significant impact on this process by being among the leaders in this undertaking. Unfortunately, too few of today's school counselors have had the specialized and innovative preparation that is required to fill this role nor are they employed in school systems committed to supporting counselors working in this way. Improving school counseling as a means of enhancing development and opening academic doors for all students is described in this initiative as requiring a reconceptualization of the role for school counselors at the university, school, and community levels.

TRANSFORMING SCHOOL COUNSELING: A GEORGIA EXAMPLE

In partnership, the School Counseling Program at The University of Georgia and the Clarke County School System were recipients of both a planning and implementation grant as part of this national initiative. During the planning process, we provided opportunities for our faculty, students, local counselors, other school personnel, and community leaders to join together to examine:

- the issues facing children and adolescents in our area,
- the type of educational experience we would like for them to have, and
- the role that counselors should play in supporting that experience.

The resulting plan was designed to transform the practice of school counselors in the county and the preparation of school counselors by the university. The sections that follow describe the plan for this university/public school partnership, which is centered on counseling and coordination, educational leadership, advocacy, team-building and coordination, and the use of assessment data.

The Process

The School Counseling Program at The University of Georgia and the Athens-Clarke County School District were awarded a planning grant from DeWitt Wallace - Reader's Digest to allow for collaborative planning to transform the preparation of school counselors at The University of Georgia and the practice of school counselors in the Clarke County School

District. During the planning process, we developed a grant proposal outlining a three-year action plan for implementation.

In the planning process, we hoped to create both a process and a product -- a process for partnerships to be developed and a product in the form of the proposal itself. We wanted both the process and product to be designed and owned by our community and based on the best that we know from research and experience about effective practice. We hoped to build a common vision for what we could offer all of the children and adolescents in our school while giving particular attention to those who have in any way been previously left out of the process. We were -- and are -- committed to the belief that all students can succeed when provided with the appropriate educational experiences and environments. The focus would be upon helping school counselors become active participants in creating and providing such experiences and environments.

As a structure, we developed our action plan in stages, building community, school, and university relationships in the process. A planning team was established that included school system representatives, school counseling program faculty and graduate assistants, university representatives from our local P-16 Initiative, the State Department of Education, the Georgia School Counselors Association (GSCA), the Board of Regents, and two counselor supervisors from neighboring counties, which have nationally recognized school counseling programs. This planning team was involved in discussions related to the eight essential elements of change identified by The Education Trust:
(1) recruitment and retention, (2) curriculum, (3) methods of instruction, field experiences and practices, (4) induction, (5) community partnerships,
(6) university/school district partnerships, (7) university/state department partnerships, and (8) professional development. A larger Summit on School Counseling was also conducted to involve greater numbers of community partners in these discussions. Such broad-based conversations: (1) informed school counselors and counselor educators about community issues and perspectives, and (2) helped educate all partners about the goals of the initiative and this new vision for school counseling. Our major objectives for the planning process were to:

- Continue and enhance the existing school/university partnership.
- Develop and/or strengthen community partnerships.
- Use these partnerships to develop an action plan for transforming school counselor preparation and practice to be outlined in an implementation grant proposal to be submitted to The Education Trust.

The Product

The particular proposal we developed addressed the localized version of the national achievement, equity, and access problems. The proposal was compatible with more inclusive state-wide efforts aimed at raising expectations and ensuring success for all students from pre-school through post-secondary education. The State Department of Education and the Board of Regents, respectively, had recently increased high school graduation requirements and admissions requirements to state colleges and universities. Raising expectations and ensuring success for all students has brought particular challenges to Georgia and to our partner school district. To gain some perspective on the size of the problem, consider that an estimated 40,000 of the approximately 100,000 seventh graders in public school within our state in 1995 were at-risk for failure.

The goal of the program that was developed by our partnership was to transform the practice and preparation of school counselors to enhance the

educational experiences and outcomes for children and adolescents. Particular emphasis was placed on preparing and re-training counselors to create learning environments in schools that: (1) ensure educational equity, access, and academic success for all students, and (2) support teacher success in bringing students from diverse backgrounds to high levels of learning. An embedded goal of this proposal was to close the achievement gap by improving the educational experiences and outcomes of poor and minority students by concentrating on the actions of school counselors.

Implementation

To our delight, the proposal for implementation was also funded. Our plan focused on extending our current model of school counseling, which was centered on counseling, coordination, and collaboration, to include educational leadership, advocacy, and the use of assessment data to improve practice. The transformed program for preparation is driven by our mission to prepare counselors to work in elementary, middle, and secondary schools who: (1) are educational leaders and self-reflective practitioners, (2) serve as advocates for all students, (3) understand and apply principles of group work in building school and community partnerships, and (4) accept responsibility for improving educational practices through an active program of research and evaluation. This program nurtures and extends partnerships between the university, the school system, and various business, community, and professional groups. In order to implement this transformation, we are committed to:

- Developing a systematic program for the identification, recruitment, retention, placement, and mentoring of a diverse student body who can fulfill new roles as advocates for all students.
- Restructuring the pre-service counselor education curriculum to reflect the content areas and experiences needed to prepare school counselors for this new role as educational leaders.
- Offering on-going in-service experiences to re-educate university faculty, practicing school counselors and other school personnel, and our recent graduates.
- Developing a mentoring program for the induction of our graduates into the profession.
- Developing a computer-supported information systems network that: (1) is infused within the pre-service curriculum, (2) provides communication links among practicing counselors, faculty, students, and agencies, and (3) allows the management of data to inform decision making to enhance student achievement.
- Nurturing university, school, State Department of Education, Board of Regents, professional association, and community partnerships to enhance both preparation and role implementation.

Related Activities

As we began this implementation process, several activities were central to our work. These activities include curriculum revision as well as several professional development events intended to be held annually.

Curriculum revision. Faculty and practicing counselors are revising the curriculum to reflect more clearly the realities of counseling within a school environment. Core counseling courses, such as those on theories, appraisal, career, and group work, now each include a laboratory experience in which students apply these concepts to school settings. School counseling specialty courses focus on a model of practice that encourages school counselors to be educational leaders, advocates for all students, and team-builders and collaborators as well as counselors and coordinators or counseling services. Students are also encouraged to use data to identify significant practical issues in schools – what we call "real world problems." Throughout all

courses, students use computer-supported technologies to improve programs and are required to consider the multicultural implications of any applications. This particular model also incorporates the National Standards for School Counseling Programs that were developed by the American School Counselor Association.

Counselor Academies. Each summer, a week-long Counselor Academy will be held that combines pre-service and in-service education. Practicing counselors from Clark County School System and students and faculty from UGA participate together in professional development activities. The first Academy, which was held during the summer of 1999, focused on team-building, diversity issues, and advocacy. Future academies are planned to address issues related to group work and the use of computers in counseling to support student assessment and program evaluation.

Best Practices Conferences. Each spring a Best Practices Conference will be held for Clarke County Counselors and UGA students, faculty, and alumni. The conferences begin on Friday evening with an opening session and reception, followed by Saturday "swap and share" sessions on a variety of topics. During the first Conference, which was held during the spring of 1999, a representative from the American School Counselor Association spoke during the opening session about the significant challenges school counselors face as advocates for all children. Saturday discussion topics included group work in schools, transition programs, and school-based interventions to celebrate diversity.

Community Caucuses. Each spring, a Community Caucus will be held that brings educators, community leaders, and parents together to consider the issues facing children and adolescents in our county. This gathering also provides an opportunity for networking and collaborative planning. During the first Caucus, a demographer from The University of Georgia provided a statistical snapshot of the county. Participants were then involved in small group discussions of the implications of the data for program planning and brainstorming potential solutions to identified problems.

Technology Network. The grant has also provided funds to acquire and upgrade computer-based technology for counselors in the school system and for state-of-the-art computer lab at the university. Faculty, counselors, and students will be involved in professional development activities over the next three years to enhance knowledge and skills related to computer applications for school counseling.

These activities are obviously not the only ones that are part of this initiative but do represent examples of what the grant has provided for students and practitioners. The core planning group for these activities is the Clarke County Counselors Collaborative, which is comprised of school counselors and UGA faculty and students as part of an eight-year collaboration to improve counseling practices in both the schools and the university.

SUMMARY

The practice and preparation of school counselors has changed over time. Recently, the DeWitt Wallace -- Reader's Digest Fund provided funding opportunities for school and university partnerships to examine and revise school counselor preparation and practice. The University of Georgia School Counseling Program and the Clarke County School System have taken this opportunity to improve their respective counseling programs in their mutual effort to contribute to improving the lives of children and adolescents in our community.

We accept that we are at a beginning point in this journey. Thus far, the experience has been challenging, frustrating, thought provoking, and very exciting. The conversations -- in fact, the very voices that have been at the table -- have provided a rich and fertile ground for considering the needs of

students and the possibilities for school counselors. We have a great deal of work still to do even in finalizing our current plans. We are also aware, as our history tells us, that this process will be dynamic rather than static, and that we will continue to learn and change as we go.

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The Editorial Board of the *GSCA Journal* is requesting that practicing school counselors, supervisors, counselor educators, and other professionals interested in the promotion of school counseling in Georgia submit articles for publication in the next issue of the *Journal*.

Articles which highlight the positive outcomes of counseling with students and/or which support the accountability of school counseling programs in Georgia are of particular interest to our readers. Manuscripts which address ethical/philosophical issues relevant to school counseling, describe successful school counseling techniques and practices, review books and other media products of interest to school counselors, poetry and other creative writings will also be included in the issue.

For more information regarding the *Journal* contact Fran Mullis, Editor, in writing at GSCA Journal, 190 Hamilton Way, Roswell, Georgia 30075; by telephone at (404) 651-3421; or by e-mail at fmullis@gsu.edu. Submission deadline for articles is May 1, 2000.

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