

Research Brief

Secondary School Counseling

Question: How do we develop an appropriate job description?

Summary of Findings:

"Secondary school counselors are professional educators with a mental health perspective who understand and respond to the challenges presented by today's diverse student population" (*Why secondary school counselors?*). As times have changed, so has the role of the school counselor. In the early part of the 20th century when the country was rapidly growing and the Industrial Age was king, there were high poverty and crime rates. This created a strong need for marketable job skills, so the position of school vocational counselor was created. When mandatory school attendance became law, the role of vocational counselor was strengthened. During the IQ and aptitude testing era, counselors assessed this information and placed students into the appropriate courses. With the advent of technology in the 1960s and 1970s, this brought about educational, social, and economic changes for which students needed to be prepared. As what can happen when needs change, job descriptions are often added to, but often not reexamined, to determine if it still meets the needs and demands of the job. The literature was clear that this has been the case in regards to the role of the school counselor. As a result, the counselor is often expected to meet the vocational, academic, social, and emotional needs of their clients while having an unrealistically high number of students to serve. The literature also stated that counselors are often used for jobs other than that of a counselor such as to do supervision and discipline.

Major Conclusions

When developing a sensible job description for the school counselor, feedback from all of the stakeholders (ie. students, teachers, parents, administration, and community) and the counselors is critical to the success of that role. In structuring the information form for the stakeholders, following the National Standards for School Counselors could be used as an outstanding guide. Once the comments and needs have been compiled, they should be prioritized with descriptions of what each would look like, who would implement it, then realistic timeframes should be established. The following is a synopsis of the National Standards for School Counselors:

1. Academic Development
Students should become lifelong learners by developing the knowledge and skills for life after high school. Academics should relate to their lives, work, home and community.
2. Career Development

Students should have the foundation for the skills, attitudes and knowledge about themselves and the world of work so they can make informed career decisions.

3. Personal/Social Development

Students should understand and respect themselves and others and have the skills to make sound and reasonable decisions.

Sample "counseling type " of activities to reach out to stakeholders

1. Early awareness workshops: for middle school students and their parents to provide information about college and financial aid, along with visits to colleges.
2. Student Mentoring: college students mentor high school students, high school students mentor middle school students, and middle school students mentor elementary students.
3. Job shadowing: students spend time with a professional in their job.
4. Career day: professionals come to the school and discuss their jobs and its requisite background and skills.
5. Groups: small groups meet on a regular basis to discuss a particular theme.
6. Newsletters: sent home on a regular basis describing different programs, options, techniques for parents to try with their child.
7. Academic monitoring: when a student falls below a 2.0, they meet with their counselor and teachers to develop a plan of action, parents would be contacted about the plan. When they are solidly back up to a 2.5, they would be taken off of the monitoring list.

Online Resources:

- Advocacy as a Critical Role for Urban School Counselors: Working Toward Equity and Social Justice
A brief description of the role a counselor should play in advocating for students who come from low income and/or of color is provided.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0KOC/is_3_8/ai_n10301212
- American School Counseling Association
This is a web site to access information on the most current information in the field of counseling.
<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>
- ASCA National Model
This provides an overview of what counseling programs should look like. Go to Executive Summary and it will download as a PDF file
<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=134>

- Design Standards for Elementary, Middle/Junior High, and High School Counseling Facilities
This is an extensive article. It begins with an historical overview of the development of the field of counseling and the type of work school counselors at different levels do. It continues to describe the needed physical environments for counselors to do their jobs well.
http://www.coe.uga.edu/sdpl/research/Chapter%20_files/Chapter%20.htm
- Fostering Educational Resilience and achievement in Urban Schools Through School-Family-Community Partnerships
This article provides some ideas for ways the school can help students, especially those deemed as "at risk" to develop resiliency.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0KOC/is_3_8/ai_n10301211
- In Search of the Profession's Finest Hour: a Critique of four views of 21st Century school Counseling-Response to Stan Baker and others
This provides a response to different authors about the role of the counselor and what it should and could be.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0KOC/is_3_5/ai_83037904
- National Standards
The list of the National Standards for Professional School Counselors cited on the Moreno Valley Unified School District site.
http://www.mvusd.k12.ca.us/Departments/Educational/Student_Services/Program_Information/National_Standards/national_standards.html
- Taking Stock in Children: Collaborating to Promote Success for Low-Income Secondary Students
This article describes several different grant programs to help meet the needs of students from low SES to help them gain academic skills for success in high school and to prepare them for life after high school.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200412/ai_n9483586/pg_2
- Urban School Counseling: Implications for Practice and Training
A definition for what qualifies as an "urban" area and a list of the characteristics of an urban school are provided in this article.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0KOC/is_3_8/ai_n10299200
- Urban School Counseling: Context, Characteristics and Competencies
6 factors that should be considered in urban counseling are cited.

http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0KOC/is_3_8/ai_n10301211

- What Does A School Counselor Do?
A brief description of the role of the school counselor is provided.
<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=133>
- Why Secondary School Counselors?
This piece provides an explanation of the specific functions of a secondary school counselor.
<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=233>

Schools

These schools have descriptions of their counseling programs on line.

- Berkeley High School
<http://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/1999/1110/bhs.html>
- El Segundo High School
<http://www.elsegundousd.com/eshs/counselors.htm#individual>
- Hayward High School
http://www.husd.k12.ca.us/hayward/general_info/counselingservices.html
- Presentation High School
All Girls' Christian High School in San Jose, Ca.
<http://www.pres-net.com/academics/programs.htm>

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