

Site Supervision of Graduate Students in School Counseling: A Georgia Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article considers the unique supervision needs of graduate students in practicum and internship in the state of Georgia where, in addition to guidelines from national initiatives, the Board of Regents institutions are utilizing new standards for the preparation of school counselors incorporating roles as both counselors and educators.

SITE SUPERVISION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS IN SCHOOL COUNSELING: A GEORGIA PERSPECTIVE

Supervision of counselors within any of the specialties of the profession has been identified as a critical component of professional development (Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, 2000). Supervision consists of a

relationship and process that provides the bridge between theory and practice. School counseling represents one of the specialties in particular need of assistance in the translation of coursework to real world settings. The Transforming School Counseling Initiative (The Education Trust, 2003) and the National Model from the American School Counselor Association (2003) call for school counselors to impact K-12 student development in academic, career, and personal/social domains. These initiatives also ask that school counselors extend their traditional involvement with counseling and coordination to include educational leadership, advocacy, teaming, and assessment of outcomes. These "new vision" school counselors are, therefore, in the unique position of serving as both counselors and educators *and* as such, require specialized supervision to support development in both roles.

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The purpose of this article is to consider the supervision of graduate students in practicum and internship in the state of Georgia where, in addition to guidelines from national initiatives, the Board of Regents institutions are utilizing new standards for preparation of school counselors incorporating counselor roles as both counselors and educators.

STATEMENT OF RELEVANT ISSUES

Professional school counselors are in the unique position of being both counselors and educators (Paisley, Daigle, Getch, & Bailey, in press). School counselors are often the only mental health professional in the building and as such deal with the increasing incidence of pathology and at risk factors as well as the normal developmental difficulties of young people in the process of growing up. School counselors are simultaneously part of the educational system being called upon to provide a quality and equitable education for all young people in our society in order to position them for the best futures possible, and to fully participate in a democratic and pluralistic society. For school counselor candidates in graduate schools and their university and site supervisors, this dual role presents the considerable challenge of being prepared for and supervised in both roles.

Supervision of School Counselors

Bernard and Goodyear (2004) describe supervision as being focused on educating the counselor, helping with skill development, increasing abilities to conceptualize clients, supporting the development of professional behaviors and attitudes, and increasing self-

awareness. Specifically, they define supervision as:

An intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior member or members of that same profession. This relationship is evaluative, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person(s), monitoring the quality of professional services offered to client(s) she, he or they see(s), and serving as a gatekeeper of those who are to enter the profession (p. 8).

An argument can be made also that supervision is a specialty unto itself, and that being a good counselor or teacher is necessary but not sufficient for being a good supervisor (Borders & Brown, 2005; Dye & Borders, 1990). Bernard's (1979) discrimination model suggests a social role model for supervision that includes functioning in three roles (counselor, teacher, consultant) while dealing with three potential areas of focus (intervention, conceptualization, or personalization). The complexity of this model as well as other proposed models (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004) and the distinct nature of the associated activities support the need for training in supervision, training that all too often is not occurring (Henderson & Lampe, 1992; Herlihy, Gray, & McCollum, 2002).

In reviewing the literature related specifically to the clinical supervision of school counselors, Luke and Bernard (2006) note that while supervision has been a significant part of pre-service preparation and is also recognized as a

critical contribution to practice, there is no evidence that supervision is actually occurring in any substantial way in school counseling contexts. In fact, results from several studies suggest that school counselors do not receive clinical supervision at all once employed (Crutchfield & Borders, 1997; Sutton & Page, 1994). A variety of reasons have been considered in explanation of this lack of supervision (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006) including: (a) limited availability of qualified supervisors, (b) lack of awareness of benefits and resulting counselor resistance, (c) assignment of tasks that are clerical rather than clinical, (d) complicating ethical issues, and (e) lack of a state or national mandate. Regardless of why this lack of clinical supervision for school counselors occurs, the situation places particular importance on the quality of supervision that school counseling graduate students receive while in their preparation programs. Internship and practicum supervision may, in fact, be the best – if not the only – opportunity for supervision that school counselors receive.

Supervision of School Counseling Graduate Students

For school counseling graduate students, one of the most critical learning experiences involves the practicum and internship supervision provided by university and site supervisors. In a summary of guidelines for site supervisors for school counselors, Roberts, Morotti, Herrick, and Tilbury (2001) note that:

In sum, the on-site experiential components of the counselor education program should be the apex of the intern learning experience, wherein student

competencies, program teaching, skills acquisition, and site supervisor mentoring merge to mold the novice counselor into the best that one can be at the conclusion of that stage of professional development. (p. 208)

They further suggest the following guidelines for site supervisors of school counselors:

- Be familiar with university expectations prior to agreeing to supervise.
- Have training in supervision through a university course or professional workshop.
- Accept responsibility as role models for the next generation of school counselors.
- Know relevant legal and ethical standards.
- Be willing to communicate with university supervisors.
- Notify university personnel of any concerns as soon as possible.
- Commit to the necessary reflection time with the intern.

To provide the best mentoring suggested by Roberts et al., it is necessary for site supervisors to be aware of the standards toward which graduate students are being prepared and the requirements of various regulating bodies.

SUPERVISING IN GEORGIA FOR BOTH ROLES

In 2004, the Board of Regents (BOR) of the University System in the State of Georgia adopted *Principles for the Preparation of School Counselors*. These principles include the requirement that all BOR school counselor preparation programs become accredited by the

Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). This CACREP requirement acknowledges the importance of the counseling core as the foundation for school counselor preparation and dictates that all programs in Georgia will meet the highest standards deemed appropriate by the profession. The authors, as faculty members in a BOR school counselor preparation program, have used these new principles in conjunction with the CACREP standards with which their program was previously aligned to design a preparation program which encourages the development of a school counselor professional identity embracing roles as both counselors and educators. Practicum and internship provide the opportunities for the school counseling candidates to demonstrate competence in both roles by developing programs, designing interventions, and impacting K-12 student outcomes. These programs and interventions are focused on promoting academic success, career preparedness, and personal/social development for all K-12 students.

Relevant Board of Regents Principles

The Principles from the Board of Regents (2004) include sections related to overall results, performance outcomes, institutional factors, and inputs. For curriculum development and assessment purposes in practicum and internship, the performance outcomes for candidates provide the most relevant guidelines. The nine standards require that school counseling candidates demonstrate competence in their ability to:

- Advocate for school policies, programs and services that are equitable and responsive to

cultural differences among students.

- Advocate for rigorous academic preparation of all students to close the achievement gaps among demographic groups.
- Coordinate a school to career transition plan for each student.
- Provide leadership in the development, implementation, evaluation, and revision of a comprehensive school counseling plan that contributes to school renewal by promoting increased academic success, career preparedness, and social/emotional development for all students.
- Use student outcome data to facilitate student academic success.
- Provide individual and group counseling and classroom guidance that promote academic success, social/emotional development, and career preparedness for all students.
- Collaborate with other professionals in the development of staff training, family support, and appropriate community initiatives that address student needs.
- Assess student needs and make appropriate referrals to school and/or community resources.
- Demonstrate mastery and application of the content knowledge in each of the core areas of counseling recommended by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

The CACREP Standards (2001) for the Counseling Core then become the

foundation upon which the more specialized school counseling standards rest.

The CACREP Foundation

The graduate students in this school counseling program are, therefore, expected to be knowledgeable in the following core counseling areas associated with CACREP (2001) accreditation: (1) Professional Identity and Orientation; (2) Social and Cultural Diversity; (3) Human Growth and Development; (4) Career Development; (5) Helping Relationships; (6) Group Work; (7) Assessment and Evaluation; and (8) Research and Program Evaluation (CACREP, 2001). These content areas are required for all counselors and provide the foundational knowledge base for the counseling portion of the dual roles associated with school counselor identity development. In addition to the CACREP common core curricular experiences, all students in the school counseling program are required to complete course work related to the specialty: (1) foundations of school counseling, (2) contextual dimensions of school counseling, and (3) knowledge and skill requirements for school counselors. In this particular preparation program, graduate students are required to take a course in each of the core content areas as well as four specialty courses in school counseling (Foundations of School Counseling, Seminar in School Counseling, Practicum, and Internship). This program also has a special emphasis on social justice; therefore, all courses emphasize topics related to social and cultural issues.

The ASCA National Model

The preparation program is also grounded in the ASCA National Model (2003). This model provides a framework for school counseling program development including a clearly articulated foundation, management system, and delivery system as well as a structure for accountability based on K-12 student outcomes. The ASCA Model uses standards in three domains of development – academic, career, and personal/social and requires that professional school counselors function as educational leaders, advocates, collaborators, and program evaluators. A clear focus is maintained on K-12 student outcomes as well as the processes that support those results. In this graduate program, students are introduced to this model in their foundational course at the beginning of the preparation program. This knowledge is reinforced in a seminar during the first academic year. Opportunities to demonstrate competence in the model are provided in clinical experiences. The components of and goals for the ASCA model are highly compatible with both the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (2003) and the BOR Principles (2004).

Clinical Experiences

Practicum and internship provide the vehicle for demonstrating content knowledge and skills. For clinical requirements, school counseling graduate students are expected to complete a 100-hour practicum, with 40 hours in direct services including individual and small group work. Students are also required to complete a 600-hour internship; 240 hours of which must be in direct service. One hour of individual supervision and one and one-

half hours of group supervision are required weekly. Typically the site supervisor provides individual supervision and the university supervisor provides group supervision for internship. During practicum, candidates also receive one hour of individual supervision at the university.

In the particular program within which the authors work, practicum, a 100-hour introduction to the school setting, focuses on interventions with individuals, small groups, and some classroom guidance. Practicum is designed for the students to practice and continue developing basic counseling skills as they begin to integrate theory and knowledge in the "real world". During practicum, candidates work with faculty and local school site supervisors to determine internship sites. The students complete practicum under the supervision of the course instructor, school site supervisor, and university supervisor. In the second academic year, candidates complete a 600-hour internship becoming involved in the total school counseling program and overall mission of the school. At this stage, candidates are expected to be involved in the full range of school counseling activities such as: (a) individual counseling, small groups, and classroom guidance; (b) consultation with teachers, parents and outside agencies; and (c) coordination of school-wide projects. Candidates are also asked to become familiar with school improvement plans and to design and implement an intervention to contribute to at least one of the school improvement goals. Students are assessed on the development of their counseling skills with a review of prior work in practicum and current skills in internship. The practicum and internship experiences

serve to blend the roles of educational leaders and professional counselors through the practice and continual development of personal/social, academic, and career counseling.

Appropriate activities.

There are numerous activities that we consider appropriate as part of the clinical experiences of school counseling candidates and that relate to CACREP and BOR standards:

- Individual counseling
- Small group activities
- Classroom guidance
- Parent consultation
- Teacher consultation
- Observing the site supervisor or master teachers
- Shadowing an administrator
- Parent education
- Community outreach
- Consultation with other members of the school community
- Academic or behavioral monitoring
- Staff development
- Coordinating school wide projects
- Newsletters
- Any activities associated with a comprehensive developmental school counseling program or implementation of the ASCA model
- Any activities that allow them to demonstrate competence in the CACREP and BOR standards areas.

Sequence of activities.

As a sequence for clinical experiences on site, it is important to remember that practicum is typically the first field experience for graduate students in a true counseling role. As such, they would

likely need more structure and guidance initially as well as a case load that is appropriate for beginning professionals. Interns, typically, will present with more experience and confidence but will still need an intentional and gradual process of engagement. For both experiences, a sequence of activities is helpful.

Graduate students first need to be oriented to the school, introduced to faculty and staff, and made aware of all relevant policies and procedures. It is also helpful to use the beginning of practicum and/or internship to develop an effective working alliance between the graduate student and the supervisor. The working alliance refers to the congruence of goals, tasks, and methods. Initially, it is also helpful for graduate students to be able to observe the site supervisor in a variety of roles. From observation, graduate students can begin co-facilitation with the site supervisor, followed by facilitation with site supervisor observation prior to working independently.

Because the ASCA model and the BOR competencies require outcome data, it is essential for graduate students to have access to the school data and school improvement goals. The program in which the authors work requires that graduate students complete a collaborative action research project based on a school profile they construct. The profiles include data on achievement, attendance, behavior referrals, course-taking patterns, and special education placements as well as qualitative information from interviews with students, parents, and other educators. Graduate students are asked to select an issue based upon an identified need of the school and develop an intervention that will make a contribution. Students have

typically chosen projects related to attendance, achievement, and violence prevention. They are also required to provide work samples as documentation in each of the BOR standards of competence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SITE SUPERVISORS

While being a good school counselor is fundamental to becoming a good site supervisor, it is not enough. With that said, good site supervisors are individuals who are able to transfer their counseling skills to the supervision of school counselors-in-training. An understanding of current state-of-the-art in school counseling at both the state and national levels is also fundamental to becoming a good site supervisor. In Georgia, this will require familiarity with the CACREP standards, the ASCA Model, and the BOR Principles. In addition, individuals serving in this role will need to understand the level of responsibility involved with supervising school counseling practicum and internship students in their preparation for assuming the role of a transformed professional school counselor. This responsibility includes, but is not limited to, making sure that their supervisees have adequate opportunities and support for the experiences as outlined by the training programs. In preparation for providing these opportunities and support, site supervisors must possess an in-depth familiarity of the training programs in which their supervisees are enrolled. Finally, site supervisors must see their role as a process and not an event. This process involves training, experience, and a high level of commitment to their supervisees, the

students they serve, and the profession as a whole. Anecdotally, site supervisors report that while orienting and supporting graduate students is time-intensive in the beginning, they find that helping to educate their future colleagues to be extremely rewarding.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELING PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Counselor educators involved in the preparation of school counselors must be intentional in developing strong relationships with the practitioners who serve as site supervisors. It is important that counselor educators view practitioners/site supervisors as partners in the preparation process and not as ancillary participants. In addition, counselor educators must be clear with the site supervisors, the counselors-in-training, and themselves, regarding the expectations of the supervision experience and the type of counselors they wish to produce. In an effort to produce the best school counselors possible, school counselor preparation programs must be committed to providing adequate training for site supervisors and have well thought out and intentional methods of evaluating both supervisees, supervisors, and the supervision experience itself. It will also be important for preparation programs to have in place adequate means to communicate with and receive feedback from site supervisors. Feedback should be requested in multiple forms, should include formal and informal methods, and should be solicited early and often. Typical methods include formative and summative evaluation forms, phone conferences between site supervisors

and university faculty, and site visits by university representatives. Other more informal feedback loops are available when partnerships are in place between counselor educators and practicing school counselors as well as through professional associations and conferences including both groups. Finally, counselor educators responsible for preparing school counselors for their new roles should not simply solicit feedback from site supervisors but must also be responsive to that feedback. This feedback could enhance the supervision experience for students as well as assist in the refinement of the supervision experiences as a whole.

SUMMARY

Quality supervision can greatly enhance the specialty of school counseling. Practicum and internship (as part of the preparation process) provide a set of experiences for which quality supervision is particularly significant. Collaboration between professional school counselors and school counselor educators has the potential of making these initial field experiences more substantive and meaningful. In Georgia, this collaboration can be structured using the CACREP standards, the ASCA National Model, and the BOR Principles to support the development of graduate students who can become professional school counselors functioning at the highest levels as both counselors and educators.

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