

Running head: SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM

School Counseling Program

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Table of Contents

1. Acknowledgments	.....	2
2. Abstract	.....	5
3. Review of Literature	.....	6
4. Method	.....	44
5. Results	.....	46
6. Discussion	.....	51
7. References	.....	58
8. Appendix A Perry School Counseling Program	.....	63
9. Appendix B High School Yearly Calendar	.....	64
10. Appendix C Middle School Yearly Calendar	.....	65
11. Appendix D Letters Home	.....	66
12. Appendix E Middle School Survey	.....	67
13. Appendix F High School Survey	.....	68
14. Appendix G Staff Survey	.....	69
15. Appendix H Scantron sheets	.....	70

Abstract

A graduate student discussed the need for revision of a comprehensive school counseling program. With use of literature pertaining information on guidance and school counseling programs, this student reviewed a number of various models. Student developed and conducted a survey to ascertain the current status and perceptions of the student body and staff regarding the Student Services Center and its counselors. The student then presented a summary of findings and implications for future programs, curriculum, and services.

## Review of Literature

School counselors and their roles have been progressing for the past 100 years (Hatch & Blowers, 2002). Starting off as vocational counselors, the profession has evolved school counselors to be highly trained well versed group of individuals who have taken on many different roles from school to school and dealt with diversified demands of the students who they work with (Hatch & Blowers, 2002). In past years, school counselors have had responsibilities that have included: discipline, attendance officer, filling in for the principal when the principal is absent, grade checks, study hall monitor, case managers for special education, testing coordination, clerical responsibilities, classroom coverage, organizing and maintaining school records, scheduling the student body for the upcoming school year, scheduling new students, and master schedule building (Hatch & Blowers, 2002). With all these demands, current trends in counselor education, and leading counselor education students in a direction of psychotherapy training, it is no wonder that school counselor roles have been questioned.

The first step in developing a school counseling program is making the decision that change is needed and wanted (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Change can be inspired from a variety of motivators: school boards, administration, students, parents, the counseling department, or community organizations (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). No matter where the inspiration comes from it is important that the counseling staff and the administration work together on deciphering if a new plan is feasible or not (Fitch & Newby, Ballestero, Marshall, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Once the decision has been made to change or not to change a program, from that point on it is crucial that the majority of the participants agree to contribute and provide ideas and input (Gysbers &

Henderson, 2000). After deciding on the team that will approach the development, it is then time to address the getting organized phase of planning, in conjunction with this the team must start to research and understand the characteristics of a comprehensive program (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Hughley, 2001). In addition, Mitchell and Gysbers (1978) built a list of conditions that they felt were prerequisites for the successful transition to a comprehensive program at a localized school level.

- All members of the program development team are involved.
- All staff members are committed to the common objective: total, integrated development of individual students.
- The administration is committed to the comprehensive approach and is willing to negotiate (trade off) helping staff members identify current activities that do not contribute to the priority outcomes and supporting staff members' abandonment of such activities in favor of those that do contribute to the priority outcomes.
- All staff members see the comprehensive systematic counseling and guidance program as a function of the total staff rather than the exclusive responsibility of the counselors.
- Counselors are willing to give up such "security blankets" as writing lengthy reports of their contacts with counselees or seeing counselee's individual on matters better addressed in a group.
- Counselors are interested in acquiring competencies.
- Staff development uses activities to help staff members acquire competencies needed for successful implementation of comprehensive program provided.

- Time is made available for planning, designing, and evaluating the program with all interested groups participating (students, parents, teachers, counselors, administrators, and community).
- Program developers design an incremental transition rather than an abrupt transition that ignores the need for continuing many current activities and thrusts.
- Abrupt change is difficult and anxiety-producing; it tends to cause participants in the change to build barriers against it. (p.36)

Gysbers and Henderson (2000) stress the importance of using the planning stage to develop steps that ensure that implementation can realistically happen. This planning is more effective if implemented from the beginning to the end (Bemak, 2000; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). There are numerous ways to conceptualize the change process and there are different examples of this. Ballast and Shoemaker (1978) have developed a systematic process that includes the following components: identifying guidance departments needs, generating support of program development, establishing departmental leadership, preparing the proposal for leadership development, involving key decision makers, identifying current services and activities, developing tools for the assessment of student needs, administering needs surveys, interpreting the results of the needs surveys, identifying priority items of needs surveys, interpreting the activities designed to attain student outcomes and integrating these with current activities and services, identifying time lines and materials, developing a guidance calendar including individual counselor responsibilities, and organizing the guidance program handbook.

Use of this model, or one similar can aide the team working on the program in having a realistic idea of where the plan should go.

The School Climate and Student Support Unit of the California State Department of Education (1987) describe three steps for change in a school counseling program:

- Step 1. Develop the Climate for Change

Getting the school and people ready to renew and re-renew. Successful change is found on a positive and supportive environment. This includes commitment and support from the school broad, superintendent, school administration and staff, students, parents, and community. The following instruments or checklists are provided:

- a. *Survey of the school climate.* Checking your own perceptions.
- b. *Building a collaborative team.* Establishing and enhancing a supportive political climate.
- c. *The anatomy of a philosophy.* Developing a program philosophy.

- Step 2. Analyze the Program

Relating what you have to what you could be. Change requires an understanding of the difference between what is and what could be. This includes the perceptions of users and providers, empirical data about outcomes, and a vision of the future. The following instruments or checklist are provided:

- a. *Provider survey.* Comparing your program to future model.
- b. *User survey.* Collecting current data from program users.
- c. *Audit procedures.* Collecting other program data.

- d. *Prioritizing grid.* Determining desired program elements/services.
- Step 3. Design the Renewed Program
 

Describe what you want your new program to be. A successful program requires a well-developed plan. The plan must integrate content, method, resources, marketing, and evaluation. The following instruments or checklists are provided:

  - a. *Counseling resources.* Determining how much you have.
  - b. *Other possible resources.* Determining what is available.
  - c. *Possible delivery methods.* Surveying “how-to-do-it.”
  - d. *Services, resources, and methods.* Combining 2d, 3a, 3b, and 3c.
  - e. *Program description.* Putting it together into a plan.
  - f. *Staff development design.* Providing skills and knowledge as needed.
  - g. *Program promotion.* Telling others what the program is and does.
  - h. *Continuous evaluation.* Reviewing and renewing again and again.
  - i. *The guidance program calendar.* Visually displaying what and when.

With this organization in mind, it is important that the team working on the school counseling program set basic ground rules for their behavior within the meeting process (Myrick, 1993). Gysbers and Henderson (2000) believe that working together on these ground rules should be a collaborative effort within the team to set with some of the following ideas: set limits on time, personal relationships, clarify purpose of meetings, conflict resolution ideals, job roles within the group, mutually agreed-upon facilitative tools, methods for checking the physical environment, maintaining personal ownership, and respect for one another’s work. It is also important that the team makes a

commitment to the task, realizing that the process will not be easy or fast (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Focusing on the future and not on past mistakes will help keep a positive attitude and approach to the task (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Hargens & Gysbers, 1984).

During the initial team meeting, it is important that a strong leader be chosen. This leader must be very clear on the program that the team and the district want to adapt or adopt (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Sparks, 2003). This leader should be prepared to take responsibility for the team and assist all members of the team when needed (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). It is imperative that the leaders educate themselves on the vast amount of programs and the different approaches to creating one. In short, the leader should be the expert within the group on school counseling programs (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001). The leader must be dedicated after the program has been developed; and recognize that developing a program is a long term, ongoing, and adaptable process (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). The leader should also maintain continuing contact with the administration and committees working on the program.

Committees and work groups are a natural part of the developing school counseling program. Gysberg and Henderson (2000) recommend that there should be minimal amount of groups and committees. Too many groups can lead to a lack of consistency within the team and eventual plan (Gordon, 1999). These committees should include individuals from all grades, buildings, and counselors who work with unique student populations (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). One of the first goals of a committee should be to create a timeline that the program will be developed in (Gysbers &

Henderson, 2000). A school-community advisory committee should also be an essential asset in the developmental process. Gysbers & Henderson (2000) argue that this committee should act as liaison between the school and community and provide recommendations concerning the needs of students and the community. This committee's focus should be to advise those involved in the program, not act as a policy or decision-making body. Rather, should be a source of advice, counsel, and support (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000).

After the team moves through the getting organized phase of the transition, and the comprehensive school counseling program has begun, the next phase of the development process may be instituted (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Throughout this stage, it is imperative that the determination of specific aspects of the foundational orientation of human development and growth program be decided (Lapan, 2001). This stage must also take a look at the delicate balance of other education programs within the school (Lapan, 2001). Lastly, thought must be given to the overall structure of the guidance program (Lapan, 2001).

This human development and growth perception should be used as the groundwork that the comprehensive school counseling program will use to identify the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that the students require to assist in their development (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). One perspective is known as the life career development model (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). This model has two major delivery systems in the schools, the guidance program and the instructional program (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). For this model, life career development is defined as an individual's self development over their life span through the integration of the settings,

roles, and events in a person's life (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). One must also make a break between the definitions of career, and that of occupation (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). While looking at this model, a career represents what you do throughout your life and the interrelated parts of a person, and an occupation is bound to the marketplace (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998; Wolfe & Kolb, 1980).

A more in-depth break down of the life career development model reveals more clarity into the foundation. The word "life" for this particular model means that the focus of this conception of human development and growth is on the entire person and the human career (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). The definition of "career" in the model relates and identifies the plethora of roles that individuals are involved (parent, student, citizen, worker and consumer), the locations that individuals are involved (community, school, home), and the proceedings that occur over their life span (starting a job, marriage, becoming a parent, retirement) (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). Finally, the word "development" represents the notion that individuals are always in the process of becoming (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). All of these terms should be looked at individually and as a whole (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). Life career development is a culmination of individuals, each of which is different with their own lifestyle (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998).

There are many influencing factors that contribute to the life career development: gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ethnic origin, race, and religion (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). All of these play a pivotal role in the molding of life settings, roles, and life events of all ages and circumstances throughout a lifetime (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). One must also use this information to not only

think of the society in which they live, but also in the scale of the world (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). There are common themes throughout the world that connect us all, and it is essential that we recognize that these themes and views change and evolve, with our society (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). In other words, stay up to date in current trends in society and in the broad spectrum of the larger picture.

One of the foremost goals of this perspective is to assist students to identify, describe, and understand the dynamics of their own life development (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). With this understanding, individuals should become aware of their own consciousness enough to plan their life and careers (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). Reich (1971) believes that the consciousness is an individual's education, politics, emotions, philosophy, values, and their overall background. Reich (1971) uses all of these notions to conclude that there is a bigger picture, that consciousness is the whole person. As a result of the previous statement the person creates his or her own life (Reich, 1971). The major goal of this work is to utilize the individual's persona to project themselves into their life possibilities. This helps them realize where they are now, and facilitates goals and reduction of their troubles (Reich, 1971). Life career development also stresses the importance of using these concepts to help in dealing with here-and-now situations (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998).

The life career development perspective has two branches of its delivery system: use of instruction and use of guidance strategies (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). Through the use of instruction the students will receive the majority of their core school requirements including: English, Science, Math, Social Studies, Physical Education, Health (New York State), foreign language, vocational-technical training, fine arts, and

occupational preparation (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). On the other branch of the delivery system is Guidance where the students receive their majority of life career planning, life roles, setting and events, self-knowledge, and assistance with interpersonal relations (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). It must be recognized that students will benefit from a shared curriculum when appropriate (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). Staff members must also be willing to work together to provide the best education and developmental process.

The next step in utilizing the work of the career development perspective is to set up a list of domains and competencies for the developing program (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). In this paper three different examples of this will be included, the Life Career Development Model, the American School Counselor Association Model (2003), and the New York State Comprehensive Model. The Life Career Development Model has been discussed already, so it will be listed first. This model uses three domains, each of which has five broad goals. After the Life Career Development Model was established, it was also broken down by individual grade levels K-12 (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998). As referenced in Gysbers & Henderson (2002), the Life Career Development Model utilizes the following:

- Self-Knowledge and Interpersonal Skill Goals
  1. Students will develop and incorporate an understanding of unique personal characteristics and abilities of themselves and others.
  2. Students will develop and incorporate personal skills that will lead to satisfactory physical and mental health.

3. Students will develop the ability to incorporate self-responsibility for themselves while managing their environment.
  4. Students will develop and incorporate the ability to maintain effective relationships with peers and adults.
  5. Students will develop and incorporate listening and expression skills that allow for involvement with others in problem solving and helping relationships.
- Life Roles, Setting, and Event Goals
    1. Students will develop and incorporate those skills that lead to an effective role as a learner.
    2. Students will develop and incorporate an understanding of legal and economic principles and practices that lead to responsible daily living.
    3. Students will develop and incorporate understanding of interactive effects of lifestyles, life roles, setting, and events.
    4. Students will develop and incorporate understanding of stereotypes and how they affect career identity.
    5. Students will develop and incorporate an ability to express futuristic concerns and the ability to imagine themselves in these conditions.
  - Life Career Planning Goals
    1. Students will develop and incorporate an understanding of producer rights and responsibilities.
    2. Students will develop and incorporate an understanding of how attitudes and values affect decisions, actions, and lifestyles.

3. Students will develop and incorporate understanding of the decision-making process and how the decisions they make are influenced by previous choices made by themselves and others.
4. Students will develop and incorporate the ability to generate decision-making alternatives, gather necessary information, and assess the risks and consequences of alternatives.
5. Students will develop and incorporate skills in clarifying values, expanding interests, capabilities, and evaluating progress toward goals (p 327).

The American School Counselor Association (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, p 17) indicates that counseling programs stress student competencies in three areas under the student learning standards:

- Academia Development Standards
  1. Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and the skills that contribute to effective learning and across the life span.
  2. Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial post-secondary options that include the possibility of college.
  3. Students will understand the relationship between academics, world of work, and life at home and in the community.
- Career Development Standards
  1. Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.

2. Students will employ strategies to achieve future career success and satisfaction.
  3. Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education and training, world of work.
- Personal/Social Development Standards
1. Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and interpersonal skills to assist them in understanding and respecting their self and others.
  2. Students will make decisions, set goals, and take necessary action to achieve goals.
  3. Students will understand safety and survival skills.

The recently published New York State Model for Comprehensive School Counseling K-12 (2005) has developed four major components for their model:

1. The foundation of the program which addresses the belief and mission that every student will benefit from the school counseling program.
2. The delivery system which defines the implementation process and components of the comprehensive model include: guidance curriculum, individual planning with students, responsive services, and system support.
3. The management system presents the organization processes and tools needed to deliver a comprehensive school counseling program. These process' and tools include: agreements of responsibility, use of data, action plans, and time and task analysis.

4. The accountability system. This is the process that helps school counselors demonstrate the effectiveness of their work in measurable terms; such as impact over time, performance evaluation, and a program audit.

When developing a school counseling model the team must decide on a definition for school counseling (Massachusetts School Counselor Association, 2000). An example of a school counseling program definition that can be adapted to meet the demands and constraints of a developing program is:

Counseling is a process of helping people by assisting them in making decisions and changing behavior. School counselors work with all students, school staff, families and members of the community as an integral part of the educational program. School counseling programs promote school success through a focus on academic achievement, prevention and intervention activities, advocacy and social/emotional and career development (American School Counseling Association, 1997).

A school counseling program should have a rationale that discusses the importance of the program in relation to other aspects of the educational system as a whole (Baker, 2000; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). This rationale should be a clear reference for why students need to obtain certain competencies in relation to the school counseling program and provide assistance through it (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Lehr & Sumarah, 2002). This rationale should be closely linked to the goals of the state, community, and school. Adelman & Taylor (2001) suggest an outline of aspects that the program should be aware of the following in relation to student needs and program structure: student development, self-knowledge, decision making, changing

environments, placement assistance, and relevant education. Gysbers & Henderson (2002) gave the following examples of rationales that a school counseling program could use:

- Student development- Students today face depersonalization in numerous areas of their daily lives as the society in which we live becomes more and more impersonal. Students have the potential to feel powerless and lost in the abundance of people, communications, and direction in which society is evolving. It is the goal of the school to provide a place where students can deal with the intense feelings that they are having in relation to these feelings. We as school counselors can facilitate growth and control within the students that will help them develop the personal skills needed to exist in such a society and develop an innate sense of control and direction. It is imperative that this development start at an early age and be supported all the way through the students' educational tracks, and continue through the completion of 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Self-knowledge- Previously, children in this society were brought up in a fairly stable environment in which their roles were defined and relationships with others were fairly consistent. Today's society is evolving into a mobile system, where development of relationships is not as prevalent. Society forces us all to look at things differently, and in-turn changes the way of interacting and relating. As a result of this, students are now struggling more and more with defining their place in society and within themselves. School counseling programs have the opportunity to facilitate growth through

development of a student's self-appraisal, and self-improvement strategies.

Students then have the potential to apply these foundations to their own situations and focus on their strengths. These strengths would then carry over into interpersonal relationships and career planning that are encompassed in a well developed school counseling program.

- **Decision-making- Planning and decision-making** are two of the most important aspects of our lives as individuals. These decisions are made on a day-to-day basis and have the potential to affect a person for the remainder of their life. A school counseling program is essential in the development of an individual student's ability to master the process of decision-making and make it relevant to their life. Values development is essential in the basis for all decisions that are made and should be placed at the beginning of the developmental process. As a result, another goal of such a program is to foster an environment where the importance of congruence can mature. As a student matures and society changes, it is a realistic goal of a school counseling program to stress the importance of a student's ability to evaluate their decisions and implications towards their future.
- **Changing environment-** We are in a time when change is happening at an accelerated rate in society, technology, education, work settings, globally, etc. Students today need to develop skills to cope and deal with the change that is common. Students learn to function in a variety of settings, under numerous roles, deal with new experiences, and realize the importance of learning and education as an imperative component of the process. School counseling

programs assist students in the development and understanding of the basis of their family, education, work, leisure characteristics and requirements. It should be emphasized that change is inevitable and dealing with change is imperative.

- Placement assistance- Movement from setting to setting is expected for student's future. There are skills and knowledge that can assist students to make this transition a task that can be managed in an effective manner. Students will need to understand the relationship between personal goals, demands placed on them, societal needs, relationships they will be involved in, and the pathways that their educational and life experiences bring them through. These experiences, once recognized, will help them to connect and link their future experiences. School counseling programs can assist in all of the previously mentioned and the teaching of needed skills such as: resume writing, employability skills development, job searching, and job interviewing.
- Relevant education- Students in today's school systems have the potential to look at the educational curriculum they are enrolled in and fail to see the rationale for the content in relation to their lives. Students are becoming more skeptical of the implications that education has in helping them prepare for their future. A school counseling program can be the bridge between the student's current aspirations and the link this has with their future goals, creating a relevance to what they are doing.

The New York State Model for Comprehensive School Counseling (NYSSCA, 2005) continues to add rationale to the process of program development by referencing the need to adhere to mandatory programs in place such as No Child Left Behind (2002). They continue to explain that school counselors in New York can use the No Child Left Behind act by narrowing in on the provisions set forth by law. This uses school counselors as certified and trained personnel who are devoted to helping students, providing curriculum based around study skills, career choices, college opportunities, and many other activities that foster success. The New York State Model also mentions SAVE legislation, state standards, and Crosswalk as viable resources for rationale for developing, implementing and utilizing a comprehensive school counseling program (NYSSCA, 2005).

There are certain assumptions that a school counseling program must identify and describe as part of the programs development. Assumptions give the program form and bearing (McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999). Two pillars of assumptions that a program must be built on relate to staff and programming. It should be assumed that the staff is comprised of trained, capable, and motivated personal (McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999). As a result of this the staff must professionally and competently carry out six basic roles: program management, guidance, counseling, coordination, evaluation, and assessment within testing situations (Texas Counseling Association, 1991). The staff must be expected to maintain and operate within the guidelines of the professional, legal, and ethical standards (Borders & Dury, 1992; Texas Counseling Association, 1991). Counselors must be expected to work as an integral part of the school community team, which includes teachers, administrators, specialists, parents, health professionals and

other community representatives (Texas Counseling Association, 1991). It is also expected that the counselors work under conditions that are supported by the administrators, favorable interpersonal relations among the school staff, adequate physical resources, budget appropriations, and paraprofessional support staff (Texas Counseling Association, 1991). Finally, the counselor to student ratio should be appropriate to implement the comprehensive school counseling (Lapan, 2005; NYSSCA, 2005). This number is recommended to be in the area of one counselor to every two hundred and fifty students (NYSSCA, 2005).

Like the staff, the program should have certain assumptions (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1996). The Northside Independent School District Program (1997, p 27):

- Serves equally all student, parents, teachers, and other recipients regardless of such factors as race, gender, cultural background, ethnicity, sexual orientation, handicap, disability, family structure and functionality, socioeconomic status, learning ability, level of school involvement, language, or other specialized characteristics.
- Helps students to function in all facets of their lives.
- Helps the students develop competencies in all educational levels.
- Assists students in their emotional, social, career, personal, and educational development.
- Facilitates consultation and coordination between services to the teachers, parents, administrators, and others who work with the students.

- Strives to be part of an independent component of the entire educational program.
- Is constantly refined through an organized systematic planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating.
- Guarantees the student access to the counselor and the counselor access to the student.
- Helps develop and protect student's rights to be individuals.

The next step after finalizing the programs assumptions is to examine needs of the students, the variety of guidance methods, the techniques, and the resources available (Johnson & Johnson, 1982; Wittmer, 2000). The increased expectations of the team working on the program, the school's demands, and the community's needs all indicate what the new program needs to encompass (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). A guidance curriculum assumes that guidance is based on the premise that there is guidance content that all students should learn in a systemic, sequential way (Aubrey, 1982; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). This means that the school counselor is directly involved in the curriculum typically referred to as guidance. According to Wittmer (2000), the guidance curriculum is based in the idea that curriculum normally consists of student competencies (generally by grade level and chronological development) and structured activities presented systematically through such methods as:

- Classroom activities. Counselors teach, team teach, or maintain the teaching of guidance curriculum learning activities or unites in classrooms. Counselors utilize teachers to assist during these units. The curriculum is not meant to be taught in one or two subjects, but should be included in as many subjects as

realistic in the entire school curriculum and throughout different settings within the school building.

- School wide activities. Counselors organize and conduct large group functions such as educational, college, vocational and career days. Other members of the school staff should also be encouraged to assist in the organization, planning and implementation of such activities.

After group strategies and mass curriculum for the school are developed, it is now time to focus on the individual students. Current trend in schools and in complex society is to focus on student development as the foundation of the guidance movement (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). This complexity in society helps to mold the role of the school counselor to become a driving force to help students become the persons they are capable of becoming (Herr, 2001). Cook (1971) stresses that when working with students, school counselors take on roles similar to that of an advocate. The advocate role, according to Cook (1971) would enhance the student's development. This view was echoed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (1996) when they recommended that each student develop and use a personal plan for success.

The rationale for the individual planning portion of the school counseling program is to provide all students with the activities to assist them in preparing for and then monitoring and implementing their personal- social, emotional, educational, and occupational development (American School Counselor Association, 1990; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). The focal point of these activities in this component is on each student's life career plans which should be consistent with their personal- social, emotional, educational and occupational goals (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Through

these activities, the school counselor is the facilitator of the student's growth developmentally (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Lehr & Sumarah, 2002). These activities can consist of structured ways for students to analyze, synthesize, and organize self, educational, and occupational information (Lehr & Sumarah, 2002). Throughout this process the preparation and outlines are venues through which the information is incorporated into short and long range goal-setting, decision-making, and planning activities (Lehr & Sumarah, 2002). These are not a set of processes that will lock a student into a "track," but instead are more of a visionary outline of the individual's life ambitions (Lehr, & Sumarah, 2002).

The foundation for students to develop the ability to start thinking in terms of goal setting must start early in their education. Elementary is not too early to start the implementation of a guidance curriculum and begin the process of developing individual student's visionary outlines. Aubrey (1982) suggests that subjects explored in the elementary years should include: self-concept development, interpersonal relationship skill development, occupational possibilities, learning-to-learn skills, decision-making skills, awareness and the beginning exploration of education possibilities. This foundation should be built on and encouraged throughout the middle and high school years (Paisley, 2001). This development can be exaggerated with use of new information and experiences and should be monitored and managed successfully (Massachusetts School Counselors Association, 2000).

During both the middle school and high school levels, staff should be sure to review previous plans and update them in direct correlation with the student's desires and goals (American School Counselor Association, 1990). These goals should include

graduation requirements and occupational and educational goals (American School Counselor Association, 1990). This process does not necessarily have to happen in one-to-one situations, but the focus should be on the individual student's personal development. Daniels & Daniels (2000) find that though planning with individuals, the counselor will assist with the implementation of the following:

- Individual appraisal. Counselors assist students to assess and interpret their abilities, skills, and achievement.
- Individual advisement. Counselors assist the student to use self-appraisal information along with personal-social, educational, career, and labor market information to assist them in planning for and realizing their personal, educational, and occupational goals.
- Placement. Counselors and other educational staff assist students in making the transition from school to work or to additional education, military careers, and training.
- Follow-up. Counselors and other educational staff provide follow up help to students as well as find back-up data for evaluation and program modifications.

One area where school counselors have specifically been orientated in the past is relates to an individual student's four year plans (Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001). It is crucial that the school counselor develop the four year plans with the student's interest and goals in mind, however making sure that the student is consistent with state graduation requirements supercedes there wishes, if there is a conflict (Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). A relatively recent

format that school counselors utilize is helping the students to develop a portfolio of their high school accolades (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). This portfolio is normally much more comprehensive than a traditional four year plan and involves more work on the behalf of the student and the counselors (Goldberg, 2000). Portfolios have many different parts and are constructed to meet the demands of the state, district, and individual students. Possible items included in a portfolio could be: documentation of their work, their education, personal information, interests, traits, favorite classes, and social activities (American School Counselor Association 2003; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). Portfolios should encompass a detailed career plan that the students could have the option to take with them and adapt throughout their lives (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). A career plan can include information and activities such as: resume writing techniques, application techniques, job seeking and keeping outlines, preparing for interview and interview techniques, and goal setting references (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Herr, 2001). It is also important that the student involves not only themselves in this process of development, but also their parents and community resources (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Lehr, Sumarah, 2002).

Resources within the school must be prepared for the purpose of providing support for students whose personal circumstances, concerns, or problems are threatening or are currently interfering with healthy personal, emotional, career, social, and educational development (Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Lapan, 2005). Certain students face a wide spectrum of issues including: suicide ideation, substance abuse, stress, relationships, school attendance, family loss, dropping out of school, working while in school, motivation, gender bias, career worries, and the list is almost endless (Lapan,

2005). Working with these demands, there is need for crisis counseling, individual counseling, small group counseling, diagnostic and remediation activities, and referral and consultation as part of a comprehensive program (Lapan, 2005). The counseling staff must also be prepared to be a usable asset for information to students, teachers, administrators, and the community (Isaacs, 2003).

The counseling department must be an on-demand service meant to provide immediate services to the needs and concerns of the students (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). These needs may include: counseling, consultation, referral or information (Baker, 2000; Campbell & Dahir, 1997). One crucial point to services that are provided is that parental and staff support must happen. Parent involvement may include referring their child for assistance, working with the school counselors and other trained school staff to identify issues for concern, granting permission for required services, and providing overall support and help in resolving the issues (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). According to Gysbers and Henderson (1994) these services can be implemented through:

- Crisis counseling. Counseling and support are provided to students or their families facing emergency situations. Such counseling is normally short term and temporary in nature. When necessary, appropriate referral sources need to be implemented.
- Consultation. Counselors consult with parents, teachers, other educators, and community agencies regarding strategies to help students deal with and resolve their issues.
- Personal counseling. Counseling is provided on an individual or small group basis for students who have concerns or difficulties dealing with relationships,

personal concerns, or normal developmental tasks. The focus is on assisting students to identify problems and causes, alternatives, possible consequences, and to take appropriate action.

- Referral. Counselors use other professional resources of the school and community to refer students as appropriate. These referral sources may include:
  - juvenile services;
  - social services;
  - mental health agencies;
  - employment and training programs;
  - vocational rehabilitation;
  - inpatient care facilities;
  - outpatient care facilities; and
  - special school programs

The next step in the process towards a comprehensive school counseling program being built is to think ahead towards how to manage and support the program. This is one area where creators seem to make a mistake of underestimating the importance of system support or only give it minimal attention (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994; Lehr & Sumarah, 2002). It is important to remember that without system support the other major parts of the program could be ineffective after only a short period of time (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994). The system support component consists of management activities that create, establish, sustain, and improve the school counseling program (Gysbers &

Henderson, 1994; Lehr & Sumarah, 2002). Examples of system support activities according to Gysbers and Henderson (2000) include:

- Professional development. Counselors need to be involved regularly in updating their skills and professional knowledge. Examples are completing postgraduate work, professional meetings, in-service trainings, and contributing to professional research.
- Program management. This area includes the planning and management tasks needed to support the activities of a comprehensive counseling program. It also includes responsibilities that members of the school staff may need to execute.
- Fair-share responsibilities. These are the routine “day-to-day” tasks that all members of the school staff take equal turns doing to assure the status quo operation of the school.
- Research and development. School counseling programs need to include evaluation, follow up studies, and continued development and updating of counseling learning activities.
- Staff and community public relations. This involves orienting staff and the community to the comprehensive school counseling program through newsletters, local medial, school and community presentations, and newly the use of school websites.
- Community outreach. Included in this area are activities constructed to help counselors become knowledgeable about community resources, local labor market, and employment opportunities. This should involve counselors

visiting social services agencies, industries, and businesses in the local area on a periodic basis.

- Community and advisory boards. Possible examples of this are serving on local committees, curriculum teams, or advisory boards. Within these panels counselors must also be willing to work outside of the counseling team on projects that will help other programs within the school and community.

An area where school counselors often have a difficult time is balancing, maintaining and proving time allocations. Appropriate use of a counselors' time is pivotal in the development and implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program (Borders & Dury, 1992; Sparks, 2003). How should professionally certified counselors spend their time? What guidelines should be used to judge and guide the process of time disbursement? Both of the previous questions will not only be asked within the development team, but will also be asked by outside sources. Having answers will help with all aspects of the program's success (Borders & Dury, 1992).

One view of time allocation that came from Borders & Dury (1992), states that there are four program components that provide the structure for making judgments about realistic allocations of a counselors' time. Program balance is one way of looking at this need for time disbursement (Borders & Dury, 1992). This balance must include the guidance curriculum, individual planning, the indirect system support services, and responsive services program components (Hughley, 2001). Responsive services represent the direct services counselors and other counseling personnel provide to the students, teachers, administration, and the community (Borders & Dury, 1992; American School Counselor Association, 2003). Through this balanced approach the counselors'

time should be dispersed and allocated amongst all components and demands of the job at a recommended 80/20 split (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Eighty percent being allocated to direct services to the students, parents, teachers, and the community and only twenty percent allocated to indirect services associated with the school counseling plan (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000).

This plan should recognize that school counselor's work within different grade levels and must have realistic expectations placed on the counselors working in these levels (Wittmer, 2000). An example of this is at the elementary level, counselors may use more of their time working with the counseling curriculum and less time on individual planning (Wittmer, 2000). In the high school, the counselors' time may be spent on individual planning (Wittmer, 2000). The counseling staff must determine the needs of the students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community before allocating their time. It is also important that time allocations not be fixed, they should be implemented and revised until a realistic balance has been met (Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001). The program must also take into account the fair-share responsibilities previously stated.

After the steps of getting organized, researching perspective, researching content, researching organizational frameworks, and recognition of resources are completed the next step in developing a comprehensive school counseling model is to evaluate the current school counseling program (Daniels & Daniels, 2000). For schools that do not have a formal counseling plan, it is still crucial that they evaluate their current status quo. Starting with an evaluation of current programs offered can help to clarify the current description of the program and the school (Daniels & Daniels, 2000). It is important to

gather different types of data during this process, both quantitative and qualitative research are recommended (Isaacs, 2003). It is important to remember current programming services being provided to the students in the here and now, more importantly the team needs to decide if these current services are meeting the demands of the people who the program should be serving (Baker, 2000).

A developing program should in effect be used as a baseline to see where current gaps and current strengths exist. This process should be the job of many different people and come from a few different perspectives such as administrative, counseling, teachers, students, and community (Herr, 2001). The role of this evaluation is also to find out how many students the program is reaching and how the services are being utilized (Herr, 2001).

Evaluation of this program should be done using up-to-date material (Lehr & Sumarah, 2002). Material being used in the implementation of the current program should be used to critique itself (Hughley, 2001; Lehr & Sumarah, 2002). Efforts need to be made to list the current program activities, which will facilitate current assessment efforts (Hughley, 2001). A realistic question to be asked during this stage is: are these activities even being used as part of the curriculum or are they just written and not used (Hughley, 2001)? This stage will take a large amount of time, and a realistic time frame should be set up in accordance (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Hughley, 2001). A time frame from six months to one year is very realistic to complete a meticulous assessment (Lapan, 2005). The data gathered should be conducted using ethical, accurate, and non-bias methods (Lapan, 2005).

Gysbers & Henderson (2000) find that evaluation of the current program can be broken down into three major areas to help simplify the process: human, financial, and political resources. Human resources will be the first of the three covered in this paper. Human resources that need to be assessed include counselors and student services department paraprofessionals, teachers, administrators, community members who are involved with the curriculum, and any other individuals or groups that play a role in the current program (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). First it is important that the counselors look at their own background including: training, experience, counselor student assignment patterns, counselor use of time management, and counselor to student ratios (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000).

Counselor training and experience make them the wonderful resources that they are to students and the school (American School Counselor Association, 1990). This unique perspective allows counselors to help students to make decisions, problem solve, deal with emotional difficulties, and perform numerous other tasks (American School Counselor Association, 1990). The rationale for gathering information about counselor backgrounds is that it can be used to show how unique school counselors' talents are (American School Counselor Association, 1990). The American School Counseling Association recommends making all of the counselors' trainings and requirements public knowledge, including an accurate job description of what the counselors in specific districts and schools entails (American School Counselor Association, 1990).

Counselor-Student assignment patterns need to be reviewed to systematically check if counselors are providing accurate services to all the students (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994). This area can be very different from district to district. Some districts

assign students to their counselors by using the alphabet, grade level, vocational, special education, specific district programs, substance abusers, and many more (Wittmer, 2000). In smaller districts there may only be one counselor for all the levels, or a few counselors spread out by different means (Wittmer, 2000). The two more common breaking procedures at the alphabetical splits or the grade level designation and both of these techniques directly relate to the program philosophy (Baker, 2000). The rationale behind the use of alphabetical separation normally relates to the program's desire to place an emphasis on responding to students within knowledge of their family context (Myrick, 1993). The use of grade level designation being used utilizes a developmental approach to working with students (Myrick, 1993).

How counselors use their time is an area where extra care must be taken on behalf of the team developing the program? This is an area where if properly assessed, quantitative data can easily be extracted (McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999). This assessment can provide large amounts of data about the current program, which is important because the counselors are the most important resource the program has and will have to offer (McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999). The planning associated with gathering this data is crucial, there are many questions the team must ask: Whose time will be assessed? Why the positions' time is assessed? What the team wants to learn about their time as well as where, when, and how the study will be executed (McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999; Isaacs, 2003)? The data gathered should be placed into meaningful reports that can be analyzed (Isaacs, 2003). Percentages, tallies, and graphs can all be used to present the data in the most effective and concrete manners (Isaacs, 2003). Hargens & Gysbers, (1984) believe that the team should use various methods when presenting their data. For example some

districts may choose to show all the counselors in one graph, where another might choose to show all of their levels or concentration areas separate. Further more, the data can also be broken up by individual counselors or arranged by job activities, basically it is up to the team to present the data in an effective and ethical manor (Hargens & Gysbers, 1984).

Counselor-to-student ratio patterns are a crucial piece of quantitative data that counselors must use (American School Counselor Association, 1990). It is important that one of the goals of this specific endeavor is to decipher how many students a counselor is expected to work with and the services that he/she can provide when the numbers are manipulated (American School Counselor Association, 1990). In some cases a counselor can only handle a minimal amount of students and in others the number could be very high, this does directly correlate with the services the counselor is expected to provide (American School Counselor Association, 1990). A deeper look must be evaluated within a district, the level that the counselor is working with, and the expectations and responsibilities of working with the levels (American School Counselor Association, 1990). It is recommended that the ideal counselor to student ratio generally be approximately 1:250 (Sparks, 2003).

There are numerous staff members in the schools that are important to the success of the counseling program, these individuals responsibilities need to be identified in the program (Adelman & Taylor, 2001). In many districts the counselors share responsibilities with the administrators or staff, these relationships should also be covered by the program (Adelman & Taylor, 2001). The program must also include secretaries and paraprofessionals, whose roles are essential to the success of the program (Adelman & Taylor, 2001). Teacher contributions in the form of guidance curriculum support and

their role in student referral are indispensable and needs to be included (Adelman & Taylor, 2001; Bemak, 2000). Other support staff includes: psychologist, nurses, specialists, and social workers are important to the program and should be mentioned (Adelman & Taylor, 2001). In addition to all of the previously mentioned, parental and community resources should also be included in the developing plan and implications for use (Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001).

Financial resources should be assessed and included into the program. The program should consider how the budget, facilities, materials, and equipment are going to impact the program (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). Gysbers & Henderson (1988) state the first place to assess is the district budget, even if no official budget exists, there are funds being used for school counseling functions. The assessing team should include all expenses that are associated with the department including: salaries for the counselors and staff associated with the department, office supplies, guidance materials, testing and scoring services, all other expenses (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). In addition to all expenses the assessment should also include every funding source including state, federal, local, or community (Myrick, 1993). This cumulative data should be used as a perspective to provide insight into how much the department's financial figures impact the entire school budget (Myrick, 1993).

Materials, equipment, and facilities finish off the financial resources used through the department. Materials are represented in the form of inventory and an accurate count should be taken (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Gysbers and Henderson (2000) claim the list should be thorough enough to include: title, a brief description, what the function of the object is, copyright date, and condition the materials are in. The equipment inventory

needs to include the number and kinds of equipment available and how the equipment is concentrated (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). This evaluation should include how well the equipment is being utilized in regards to the initial purpose (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). A building to building assessment of facilities should include program development. Availability, space, accessibility are all factors that need to be outlined when assessing facilities (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). This information will be crucial if the finalized plan involves modifying or building additional facilities and should be prepared in advance for the appropriate administrators (Sparks, 2003).

The program team should evaluate the political resources associated with the program, meaning all support from the building and district policies; in local, state and federal rules, regulations, and laws; or in standards from accreditations or other professional organizations that the district subscribes to (Wolfe & Kolb, 1980). Political resources are an area where the team should assess the philosophical ideals that have influenced the program (Wolfe & Kolb, 1980). The team should take time to research how the board of education policy has influenced the program (Lapan, 2005). The team needs to look elsewhere for policies that can help and possibly expand the current program (Borders & Dury, 1992). Borders & Dury (1992) site examples of additional policies including allocations supporting: safe and drug free money, migrant education, bilingual students, drop out prevention, vocational education, and compensatory activities.

Distinguishing current activities and results of the program is the next step in assessing the existing program. This major task should include categorizing the activities and give detailed examples and structure by grade level or school level (Wittmer, 2000).

These activities should include, but are not limited to: counseling individuals and groups of students with problems, conferencing with parents and teachers, collaboration with classroom teachers for lessons, individual planning for students, course scheduling, and trainings provided by the counselors (Wittmer, 2000). This process is not only for the staff of the counseling department, it can be used as a reference tool for outside sources (Wittmer, 2000). This will help to make the role of a counselor much more visible and tangible to the public (Wittmer, 2000). This process can assist counselors within a district to realize what the other counselors are doing, which would unify the program holistically (McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999).

The results associated with the activities must be linked to the program (Daniels & Daniels, 2000). However, before linking the two it is imperative that the team evaluates the activity on the basis of why do we do this? How many students are impacted by this? How are the students affected by this? And, what can the students do now that they could not do before (Daniels & Daniels, 2000)? Identifying whom the program serves is not easily answered by saying “students”. Even harder to prove, is whom the program is reaching. The challenging task is to identify students who have achieved desired results (Lehr & Sumarah, 2002). This can be accomplished by indicating the number and percentage of students who have achieved a specific outcome and how it was determined the outcome was achieved (Lehr & Sumarah, 2002). One recommended process for gathering data is to develop a survey for the desired population. Something as simple as a sign in to the counseling center or something as in-depth as a detailed question survey can be utilized (Gysbers & Henderson, 2002). Log

keeping is a task that counselors can also use, in this method the counselors write down students that have been served and in what capacity (Gysbers & Henderson, 2002).

Individual and group perception of the program can provide much needed insight into the current program and where the program might want to aspire. Perceptions gathered from teachers, administrators, parents, community members, counselors, and last but not least, the students' is a must (American School Counseling Association, 2003). This assessment needs to come from the consumers of the program and should be conducted in such a manor not to hinder or dissuade certain opinions. For exceptionally large populations it may be realistic to only take an accurate sample of the total numbers (Isaacs, 2003). Using proper terminology and including input from others while developing the surveys or techniques, is a must a great care should be taken (Lapan, 2001). A technique that the department can use within itself is to brainstorm the perceptions that others have about the program (Lapan, 2001). This should not be an accusatory activity within the group, but an eye opening and realistic experience.

Interviews are another method used in the collection of perceptions. Interviewing should be conducted with a structured format and carried out with leaders, members, and consumers of various sub-groups (Goldberg, 2000). This process can be very tedious and time-consuming. However, it can produce some extraordinary insightful results. One specific advantage of this method is the ability to gather in-depth information and use of direct contact, clarification is possible and examples can be produced (Hargens & Gysbers, 1984).

The final method this paper will discuss in the relation to assessing the current program is the utilization of questionnaires. The benefit to questionnaires is that they can

be duplicated and distributed to large amounts of people (Daniels & Daniels, 2000). Daniels & Daniels (2000) claim when creating the questionnaires, the team should be careful not to ask too many questions or becoming too overbearing on the people completing the questionnaires. The population being questioned should be taken into consideration and all wording and time constraints are appropriate (Daniels & Daniels, 2000).

Assessing a current plan is a long and difficult process. After completing the overall assessment of the current plan there should be a substantial amount of information that will need to be processed (Hughley, 2001). After processing the data a report must be compiled that presented the data that was collected and be written and distributed (Hughley, 2001). The team should now have the required and essential data and information with which the new guidance plan will be built on.

## Method

This project was started with the idea of creating a school counseling project that would be able to be implemented. The first step in the project was to review the literature published in relation to school counseling programs and school guidance programs. After reviewing the literature a team of personnel were brought together and started the process of creating a school counseling program for a rural school. This rural school where the data was collected has roughly 1200 total students in the district and a total community population of approximately 7,500. The district employs a teaching staff of 100 between the two buildings, which are split having one high school (9 through 12) and one elementary/middle school (Pre-K through 8). The district is comprised of mainly middle to lower class families with a working class background. The counseling department assessed in this thesis is located in both buildings, having four certified counselors in the elementary and middle school and one certified counselor in the high school. The average student to counselor ratio district wide is one counselor to every two hundred eighty-one students.

Surveys were created to try to decipher the needs of and demands placed on the counseling department by the students, staff, administration and the community (Appendices E, F, & G). These surveys were then cleared by all three individual principals of the specific levels questions. After sending home a parent notification letter, these surveys were then distributed to the students, staff, and administration of the school. It is important to note that if a student did not wish to participate they could refuse or if a parent did not want their child to participate, they needed to return the letter with their signature (Appendix D). The answer sheets and the surveys were given out

using Scantron answer sheets (appendix H), these sheets were then ran through a Scantron machine to expedite the process of analyzing the data. These surveys were then analyzed in an attempt to compile the demands and needs of the population that the school counseling program would be designed around. After the information was collected and combined with input from the literature, a new school counseling program was created (Appendix A). Through this process tentative yearly school counseling calendars were created for the high and middle school counselors (Appendix C & B). The actual implementation of the newly developed counseling program will happen, however results of the implementation will not be included in this document.

## Results

As previously mentioned in the Method section, three surveys were distributed to the students and faculty. These surveys consisted of a middle and high school survey, and staff survey K-12. Again, they were dispersed between two buildings, a primary/middle school and high school. Survey data was collected via scantron and the results of these surveys are included.

First set of data that will be discussed will be the middle school student data. The corresponding middle school survey is noted in Appendix E. There were 204 students who agreed to participate in the survey. Question 1 on the survey was, “What grade are you in?” Answers are as follows: 41 said 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 48 said 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 65 said 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 46 said 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Question 2 on the survey said, “Do you feel like you see your counselor when you need to?” 21 students said never, 49 said sometimes, 30 said most times, 70 said always, and 32 did not know. Question 3 on the survey said, “When I have met with the counselor, I feel that they really listen to me and try to help to the best of their ability.” Answers were as follows: 17 said never, 21 said sometimes, 32 said most times, 92 said always, and 35 said that they did not know. Question 4 on the survey said, “I feel good about myself.” Answers are as follows: 8 said never, 46 said sometimes, 61 said most times, 72 said always, and 12 said, I do not know. Question 5 on the survey said, “I feel bullied.” Answers were as follows: 109 said never, 52 said sometimes, 13 said most times, 17 said always, and 11 said I do not know. Question 6 on the survey said, “I feel safe in my school.” Answers were as follows: 25 said never, 35 said sometimes, 40 said most times, 76 said always, and 26 said I do not know. Question 7 on the survey said, “My community has a drug problem.” Answers are as follows: 37 said

never, 43 said sometimes, 17 said most times, 34 said always, and 71 I do not know.

Question 8 on the survey said, "I have friends that support me." Answers are as follows: 5 said never, 25 said sometimes, 30 said most times, 127 said always, and 11 said I do not know. Question 9 on the survey said, "I have good study habits." Answers are as follows: 20 said never, 59 said sometimes, 63 said most times, 50 said always, and 9 said I do no know. Question 10 on the survey said, "I am confident in my ability to succeed in high school." Answers are as follows: 12 said never, 23 said sometimes, 47 said most times, 91 said always, and 25 said I do no know. Question 11 on the survey said, "Things that upset me usually involve." Answers are as follows: 24 said friends, 11 said family, 48 said school, 4 said myself, and 62 said more than one. Question 12 on the survey said, "If I have a problem I am most likely to talk to (just one)." Answers are as follows: 42 said my parents, 18 said my counselor, 56 said my friends, 6 said teacher/staff, and 22 said other. Question 13 on the survey said, "Do you feel there are enough counselors to meet your needs as this time?" Answers are as follows: 101 said yes, 40 said no, and 11 did not properly answer the question. Question 14 on the survey said, "I see my counselor how often." Answers are as follows: 5 said once a day in their office, 21 said a few times per week in their office, 30 said a few times per month in their office, 11 said not in their office, and 78 said just in the hall.

The second survey being discussed is the high school student survey. The corresponding high school survey is noted in Appendix F. There were 245 students who agreed to participate in the survey. The surveys first question began by having the student answer which grade they are currently located. Answers are as follows: 75 were 9<sup>th</sup> graders, 75 10<sup>th</sup> graders, 61 11<sup>th</sup> graders, and 28 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Question 2 on the

survey said, “Do you feel like you see your counselor when you need to?” 13 students said never, 40 said sometimes, 67 said most times, 92 said always, and 30 did not know. Question 3 on the survey said, “When I have met with the counselor, I feel that they really listen to me and try to help to the best of their ability.” Answers were as follows: 14 said never, 28 said sometimes, 41 said most times, 120 said always, and 40 said that they have no opinion. Question 4 on the survey said, “I feel good about myself.” Answers are as follows: 8 said never, 55 said sometimes, 105 said most times, 63 said always, and 12 said, said they have no opinion. Question 5 on the survey said, “I feel bullied.” Answers were as follows: 157 said never, 63 said sometimes, 9 said most times, 5 said always, and 8 had no opinion. Question 6 on the survey said, “I feel safe in my school.” Answers were as follows: 13 said never, 35 said sometimes, 64 said most times, 119 said always, and 11 had no opinion. Question 7 on the survey said, “My community has a drug problem.” Answers are as follows: 29 said never, 66 said sometimes, 45 said most times, 63 said always, and 39 had no opinion. Question 8 on the survey said, “I have friends that support me.” Answers are as follows: 3 said never, 31 said sometimes, 58 said most times, 146 said always, and 3 had no opinion. Question 9 on the survey said, “I have good study habits.” Answers are as follows: 37 said never, 80 said sometimes, 89 said most times, 29 said always, and 6 had no opinion. Question 10 on the survey said, “I feel prepared for what I am doing after high school.” Answers are as follows: 19 said never, 55 said sometimes, 80 said most times, 67 said always, and 17 said no opinion. Question 11 on the survey said, “I have found the Student Services Center to be useful in my post-secondary planning (after High School planning).” Answers are as follows: 42 said never, 46 said sometimes, 55 said most times, 31 said

always, and 65 said that they have no opinion. Question 12 on the survey said, “I have found Student Services Center to be readily available.” Answers are as follows: 14 said never, 50 said sometimes, 79 said most times, 55 said always, and 42 had no opinion. Question 13 on the survey said, “Things that usually upset me include.” Answers are as follows: 27 said friends, 25 said family, 51 said teachers, 17 said myself, and 89 said all of the above. Question 14 on the survey said, “If I have a problem, most of the time I talk to.” Answers are as follows: 50 said their friends, 5 said their counselor, 105 said their friends, 0 said teachers/staff, and 56 said other. Question 15 on the survey said, “Do you feel there are enough counselors to meet your needs as this time.” Results are as follows: 189 said yes, 35 said no, and 12 answered the question incorrectly. Question 16 on the survey said, “How often do you interact with the Student Services Staff?” Answers are as follows: 5 said once per day, 23 said a few times per week, 42 said a few times per month, 160 said not often, and 6 answered the question incorrectly.

The third survey being discussed is the school staff survey. The corresponding middle school survey is noted in Appendix G. There were 74 staff members who agreed to participate in the survey. The survey's first question begins with, “What level of student do you work with?” Answers are as follows: 14 said elementary, 26 said middle school, 24 said high school, 2 said both schools, and 9 answered incorrectly. Question 2 on the survey said, “I am satisfied with the counseling department?” Answers are as follows: 0 said never, 1 said sometimes, 32 said most times, 38 said always, and 5 had no opinion. Question 3 on the survey said, “Is the counseling department supportive of your needs?” Answers were as follows: 0 said never, 2 said sometimes, 18 said most times, 51 said always, and 5 had no opinion. Question 4 on the survey said, “I understand the role

of a school counselor.” Answers are as follows: 0 said never, 5 said sometimes, 34 said most times, 35 said always, and 1 said no opinion. Question 5 on the survey said, “The school counselor acts as a liaison between home and school.” Answers were as follows: 0 said never, 5 said sometimes, 21 said most times, 41 said always, and 7 had no opinion. Question 6 on the survey said, “The school counselor is dependable (i.e. follows through).” Answers were as follows: 0 said never, 1 said sometimes, 20 said most times, 49 said always, and 5 had no opinion. Question 7 on the survey said, “The students utilize the counseling department.” Answers are as follows: 0 said never, 5 said sometimes, 32 said most times, 32 said always, and 6 had no opinion. Question 8 on the survey said, “The referral process to get students into counseling is efficient.” Answers are as follows: 0 said never, 5 said sometimes, 22 said most times, 23 said always, and 23 had no opinion. Question 9 on the survey said, “I feel “heard” by the counselor when I discuss an issue with him/her.” Answers are as follows: 0 said never, 2 said sometimes, 21 said most times, 47 said always, and 4 had no opinion. Question 10 on the survey said, “My counselor is competent on important counseling areas.” Answers are as follows: 0 said never, 0 said sometimes, 14 said most times, 50 said always, and 10 said no opinion.

## Discussion

The survey results can act as a catalyst towards influencing a new school counseling program. It is important that the team working on the new plan take time to break down and analyze what these results mean.

In analyzing the middle school surveys results, starting with the second question and end with the fourteenth. The second question of the middle school survey leads me to believe that the majority of the students think that they are able to meet with a counselor when needed. This implies that the current plan is in fact working for the demands of the students. Question number three shows that a large majority of the students feel listened to when meeting with their counselor. This leads one to believe that the training of the current counseling staff has been adequate and needs to continue in the future. Question four asks students about their self-esteem. These results do show a need for more self-esteem enhancement curriculum. Question five dealt with bullying. Based on the results of over 50% stating that they have never been bullied, this demonstrates that our current curriculum is effective, but we still have work to do to reach acceptable percentages. Question six pertains to the students feeling safe in school. This is an area of new concern with results showing over 10% of the students feeling that they are never safe in the building. Question seven asking students about communitywide drug concerns, this too shows that a more effective curriculum needs to be created and implemented, not just in school but also within the community. Question eight pertains to a student's support system. Over sixty percent of the students polled stated that they always have friends that support them. However, there are still students that would benefit from socialization counseling support. Question nine relates to having good study

habits. This section showed mixed results and a need for educational training for students in the area of studying. Question ten asks about a student's confidence level in being successful at the high school level. These results were acceptable due to the wide variety of grades surveyed. Question eleven and twelve are in regards to what upsets middle school students and whom they choose to talk to about their issues. These results give us background to potential areas of concern. This demonstrates a need for a strong guidance curriculum would be to education parents, teachers, etc. on effective strategies for developing problem-solving skills. Question thirteen relates to student-counselor ratio, in which most students feel that there are enough counselors currently to meet the demands of the majority of the students. However, it should be taken into account that almost a quarter of the students did not feel there were enough counselors to meet their needs. Question fourteen shows how often students utilize the counselors within the building. This is an initial survey and results show that a longitudinal study should be outlined and implemented through a new comprehensive counseling plan.

The team would then need to analyze the high school survey data, keeping in mind the breakdown of students answering question one. Question two relates to the students seeing the counselor whenever they need them. The data leads us to believe that overall the counselors are available to the students the majority of the time. Question three asks about how effective the counselors are at actually listening to the students and attempting to help them with their issue. Surveys showed that the majority of the students felt that the counselor did try and listen to them most of the time. This leads one to believe that current counseling skills are effective at meeting the needs of the students and that continuing education to maintain these skills will be important.

Question four relates to students self-esteem. The majority of the students did answer that they feel good about themselves most of the time. However, there are still small populations of students who are in need of counselor assistance. This can be managed through interactive classroom activities and individual or group counseling sessions.

Question five and six relate to bullying and school safety. The most important finding is that approximately 65% of the students claim that they have never been bullied and feel safe in school. However, there are a small concerning percentage of students that have been bullied and do not feel safe in school. These finding must be addressed through student and faculty awareness curriculum development. Question seven relates to drug issues within the community. This data indicates that there is a drug problem within the community. These findings demonstrate a need for increased drug awareness, counseling, and education in homes, community, and within the school building.

Question eight relates to having a supportive network via friends. The majority of the students reported that at least most of the time, they feel that they are supported. There is are a small percentage that do not feel that they have friends that support them and this can be curtailed by the availability of counselors, socialization curriculum, and outreach activities. Question nine reflects how students interrupted their study habits. The findings show that there is a need for development of an educational curriculum based around study habits. Questions ten, eleven, and twelve relate how effective the Student Service Center has been in preparing students for their post-secondary plans. Results showed a need for a more organized and thorough approach from the staff, including teachers, administration, community resources, and the Student Services staff. Questions thirteen and fourteen relate to what upsets high school students and whom they choose to

confide. Results give us background to potential areas of concern. Future implications for guidance curriculum would be to education parents, teachers, etc. on effective strategies for developing problem-solving skills. Question fifteen relates to the students believe that there are enough counselors to meet their needs at this time. Findings show that over 75% of the students feel that there are enough counselors available to meet their needs at this time. Counselors still need to concentrate on reaching out to the small number of students who did not think that there were enough counselors to meet their needs. Question sixteen asks the students how often they interact with the Student Services staff. Results show that the majority of the students interact with the staff at least a few times a month. These results show that the student services staff is doing an effective job in maintaining availability.

The final data that will be evaluated is the staff data from the elementary/middle school and the high school. Question one ascertained the grade level the teacher works in and the results have been discussed in the results findings. Question two and three relate to how satisfied the staff is with the counseling services provided in their location. Results indicate that the majority of the feels content with the services at least most of the time, implicating that the staff has been effective and should continue through training and competency to provide services. Question four relates to the staffs views and understanding of the role of a school counselor. The results demonstrate the need for clarification and education within the school as to the roles and responsibilities of the Student Services staff. Question five asks the staff their perception of how well the counselor communicates and acts as a liaison between the school and home. The results show that the teachers believed that the counselors are effective liaisons. Continued

trainings and set procedures will be useful in the new program. Question six, nine, and ten relate to the dependability, listening skills, and knowledge base of the counseling staff. The results show that the majority of the time the counselors are dependable, knowledgeable, and effective in listening to the staff. Implications for the future include continued trainings and education in areas of demand. Question eight relates to the referral process of referring students into counseling services. Results are vague and indicate a need for a more efficient procedure to facilitate this process.

In conclusion, writing this thesis on the topic of school counseling programs was much more in-depth as I thought it was going to be. One aspect that I have realized is that I really do not see a major difference between the terminology of guidance programs and school counseling programs. Essentially, I believe that guidance programs lack the more recent trend in school counseling to make sure that counselors are making sure to attend to the psychotherapy related demands of the student body and try to cut back on the administrative responsibilities, which are often time placed on the counselors, this is consistent with the American School Counselor Association (2003).

Research that was utilized for this paper was clear that the process of creating a school counseling program was not an easy venture, as mentioned in Gysbers and Henderson (2000). Current literature, such as Hughley (2001), stresses crucial steps and ideas that must take place in order for the program to be a success. Making sure that the school and counseling department was ready for such a plan being a major initial component (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Also taking the time to realistically look at the needs of the school and what resources are available to meet the demands, this is consistent with Isaacs (2003). In addition it would be self-defeating for a developing

team working on a program to not include all services and programs already existing within a school and develop the new counseling plan with the forethought of how it will work with the other services and programs, as referenced in Adelman (2001).

The process of creating the initial school counseling program is just the tip of the iceberg in relation to all the work that must be done in implementing and maintaining a comprehensive program, which is consistent with the American School Counselor Association (2003). A more complete management plan and evaluation plan should be added to the initial program that was created in relation to this thesis to effectively meet the demands placed on a school counseling program. The key to the success of a school counseling program is to be able to monitor the demands of the people in which the program serves and change accordingly, this correlates with Daniels & Daniels (2000). The hard part will be to make sure that the program maintains the ethical and theoretical goals in which the program was originally built on, as mentioned by the American School Counseling Association (1998). One of the best things that was discovered in the creation of this thesis is the realization that this is a topic that is frequently published on and that there are many resources available to counselors and districts who are truly ready to put forth the commitment needed to develop, implement, manage, and evaluate a comprehensive school counseling program.

Implications for counseling practice in areas for suggested study or research are in the areas of: a more thorough analysis of the daily calendar of a school counselor, designing a new program, transition to a new counseling program, implementation of a new counseling program, evaluation of the new program, management of a new program, and revision of the program after it has been evaluated and proposals for continual

revisions. It also important that the team working on the counseling program continue to stay current, for example even while this paper was written the American School Counseling Association publish current and developing material in several of their monthly journals with a large portion of the content related to new information regarding comprehensive school counseling programs. This is a process that should and must evolve over time for school counselors to effectively meet the demand of the students, staff, and communities associated with schools, this thought is mirrored by Wittmer (2000), Gysbers & Henderson (2000), The American School Counselor Association (2003), and The New York State School Counselor Associating (2005).

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Appendix A

School Counseling Program

Appendix B

Yearly High School Counselor Calendar

Appendix C

Middle School Yearly Calendar

Appendix D

Letters Home

Appendix E

Middle School Survey

Appendix F

High School Survey

Appendix G

Staff Survey

Appendix H  
Scantron Sheets