

A Policy Brief For Boards of Education

Strengthening School Guidance and Counseling Programs in New York State for the 21st Century

The Need

In the 21st Century, the United States and the State of New York will continue to undergo major changes in the areas of industry, occupations, society, and economics. The labor force and the world of work are changing rapidly. Violence is increasing in homes, schools, and communities. Divorce, substance abuse, teen suicide, and sexual experimentation are growing challenges families must face. These challenges are real and they are making a continual impact on the overall development of students. They also serve as primary impediments to students meeting the New York State Learning Standards.

A Response

Comprehensive school guidance and counseling programs in New York, implemented by certified, professional school counselors working closely with parents, teachers, and administrators, are effective in assisting students in responding to a variety of challenges. Research conducted in other states during recent years has shown that when certified, professional school counselors have the time, the resources, and the structure of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program to work in, they contribute to positive student academic and career development as well as the development of positive and safe learning climates in schools.

- Students in high schools with more fully implemented guidance and counseling programs (as judged by school counselors) reported that:
 - they had earned higher grades.
 - their education was better preparing them for the future.
 - their schools had a more positive climate (Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997).
- When middle school classroom teachers rated guidance and counseling programs in their schools when fully implemented, seventh graders in these schools reported that:
 - they earned higher grades.
 - school was more relevant for them.
 - they had positive relationships with teachers.
 - they were more satisfied with their education.
 - they felt safer in school (Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, in press).
- Schools counselors who rated their guidance and counseling programs as more fully implemented indicated that they spend more time with students, parents, and teachers; that they are more visible to the public; and that they spend more time in classrooms (Gysbers, Lapan, & Blair, 1999).

The Keys to Success

The keys to the successful development and implementation of effective school guidance and counseling programs in New York State include:

- the full support of all district administrators.
- a written district-wide pre-k-12 comprehensive guidance and counseling program and a district-wide policy for guidance and counseling that have been adopted by the board of education.

- a written district-wide comprehensive guidance and counseling program that is fully implemented by certified, professional school counselors pre-K-12, spending 100 percent of their time working with students, parents, teachers, and administrators to carry out the program.
- a strong statewide professional association such as the New York State School Counselor Association.

The Problem

Too often, certified, professional school counselors in New York State are assigned duties that take them away from the tasks required to fully implement comprehensive school guidance and counseling programs. Often, they spend time performing clerical duties, carrying out administrative tasks, and assuming responsibility for special education case management and assessment work. As a result, they have limited time to provide services to students, parents, and teachers under a comprehensive school guidance and counseling program.

Recommendations

When certified, professional school counselors in New York State are able to devote their full time to implement comprehensive school guidance and counseling programs, research has documented that they contribute to positive student academic achievement and career development, as well as the development of positive and safe learning environments in schools. Therefore, we urge all members of boards of education to:

- adopt district-wide comprehensive guidance and counseling programs in their districts, such as that outlined in the *New York State Comprehensive School Counseling Program*. The *Program* is available free of charge online at www.NYSSCA.org.
- adopt policies for guidance and counseling that support comprehensive guidance and counseling programs as official programs within their districts.
- encourage and support the full implementation of comprehensive school guidance and counseling programs in their districts.

For more information on the *New York State Comprehensive School Counseling Program* and other developments in professional school counseling, contact the New York State School Counselor Association at www.NYSSCA.org and the American School Counseling Association at www.schoolcounselor.org.

References

Gysbers, N.C., Lapan, R. T., & Blair, M. (1999). Closing in on the statewide implementation of a comprehensive guidance program model. *Professional School Counseling* 2(5), 357-366.

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