

A Policy Brief For Legislators and Policy Makers

Meeting the Academic, Career, and Personal/Social Needs of New York State's Students in the 21st Century

What is School Counseling?

School counseling is an integral part of each school district's total education program. It is a comprehensive program that includes sequential activities provided in pre-Kindergarten through grade 12. These activities are organized and implemented by certified professional school counselors with the active support and involvement of parents, students, teachers, and administrators.

The program is designed to address the needs of all students by helping them to acquire competencies in career planning and exploration, knowledge of self and others, and educational and vocational development. Ultimately, the purpose of comprehensive school counseling in New York State is to provide students with the skills they need to meet the New York State Learning Standards.

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 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 student, parents, and teachers; that they are more visible to the public; and that they spend more time in classrooms (Gysbers, Lapan, & Blair, 1999).

The New York State Comprehensive School Counseling Program

The New York State Comprehensive School Counseling Program is a fully developed system for implementing effective school counseling programs in schools across the state. The document outlines the relationship between school counseling and the New York State Learning Standards and offers sample lessons for addressing those standards. Copies of this book are available free of charge at www.NYSSCA.org. In short, the *New York State Comprehensive School Counseling Program* is:

- A framework for evaluating and building local school counseling programs
- A tool for aligning school counseling programs with the academic mission of schools and the New York State Learning Standards
- A building block for defining the role of professional school counselors within the school

Information and Consultation

As research has documented, school counselors in New York State have substantial expertise in assisting students and their parents in responding to the challenges students face growing up in the changing world. Based upon this expertise, the New York State School Counselor Association (NYSSCA), representing school counselor throughout the state, offers legislators and other policy makers information and consultation related to the academic, career, and personal/social development of students. Please contact the association as the need arises.

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.

Lapan, R.T., Gysbers, N.C., & Petroski, G. (in press). Helping 7th graders to be safe and academically successful: A statewide study of the impact of comprehensive guidance programs. *Journal of Counseling and Development*.

Lapan, R.T., Gysbers, N.C., & Sun, Y. (1997). The impact of more fully implemented guidance programs on the school experience of high school students: A statewide evaluation study. *Journal of Counseling and Development* 75, 292-302.

Document adapted from one originally presented by the Missouri School Counselor Association.

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