

Appendix L

Beyond Barriers to Solutions: Actions That Promote Progress



BEYOND BARRIERS TO SOLUTIONS: ACTIONS THAT PROMOTE PROGRESS

1. *Barrier: School Counselors' Job Responsibilities Do Not Allow For Their 100% Involvement in the Guidance and Counseling Program.*

- Role has not been defined.
- Role is ambiguous; too many people demand school counselor's time.
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling program is add-on to all other duties.
- Non-guidance and counseling duties are still assigned to the counselor.
- Non-guidance and counseling duties have been added.
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling program has been added, but nothing has been taken away.
- There is no time to plan for program development, implementation, evaluation, and enhancement.
- To whom would administrative tasks be assigned? Administrators, too, feel overloaded.

Possible Solutions:

- Time and task analysis will put in "black and white" exactly how counselors are spending their time.
- Develop a job description with the principal and/or district-level administration; clarify times to be spent in each area of responsibility.
- Through the time and task analysis, identify non-guidance and counseling activities and provide a report to the principal so he or she is aware of the actual time these take away from the guidance and counseling program.
- Make others aware of non-guidance and counseling time and what it does to the comprehensive guidance and counseling program.
- Work with the principal to prioritize responsibilities.
- Work with the advisory council and steering committee to identify alternative means to address non-guidance and counseling tasks.
- Take control of your own time. Rule time; don't let time rule you.
- Work out a weekly / monthly calendar; post and/or distribute to everyone.
- Allot a specific time each day/week for planning time; be protective of that time.
- Just say "NO." Work with the principal to gain support for saying no. School Counselors support each other.



- Set own priorities and communicate these to others.
- Identify program priorities and what the counselor has to do to reach his or her goals.

2. *Barrier: Lack of Administrative Support*

- Administrators do not understand comprehensive guidance and counseling program requirements.
- Administrators are apathetic about the guidance and counseling program.
- Administrator adds non-guidance and counseling responsibilities (e.g., substituting, recess duty, lunch duty, computer, data entry, and responsibility for master schedule). There is no “top-down” support for the program; therefore, counselors have no real authority to implement the full program.
- Administrator sees the counselor’s role as strictly responsive services.

Possible Solutions:

- Provide administrators with more information about the benefits of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program. Relate its benefits to the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP).
- Invite administrators to attend state workshops.
- Require administrators to be involved in planning. Communicate needs to administrators in proactive ways.
- Be sure to report successes along with justification for additional resources.
- Be assertive enough to set priorities and discuss these with administrators.
- Work to change administrators’ view of counselors’ role.
- Educate superintendent to the need for “directives” from that level.
- Work for closer communication between administrator/counselor/state.
- Make sure all administrators have a copy of the Administrators’ Guide.

3. *Barrier: Counselor-to-Student Ratio Is Too High*

- Too many buildings may be assigned at elementary level.
- It is unrealistic to expect much with 1:1,500 (or even 1:500) ratio.
- The high elementary caseload allows for little more than crisis counseling.

Possible solutions:

- Become politically active and work for reduction in the ratio.
- Solicit teachers to become involved in conducting activities in the classroom.
- Develop a peer helpers program.
- Use homeroom period as a way to reach large groups of students.



- Develop a student assistance program to help with students who require a great deal of support.
- Identify ways the drug-free schools grants could be used to provide additional help.
- Hire clerical staff to do routine clerical tasks to free the counselor to work with more students.
- Conduct more small- and large-group activities.
- Use volunteers to perform routine tasks (as appropriate).

4. *Barrier: Various Groups Resist the Program.*

NOTE: this barrier takes many forms; its symptoms can be seen in each of the other barriers. Resistance is a natural part of change and, or a degree, is present in every person. It will be the task of the guidance and counseling program steering committee to recognize and understand the overt and covert resistance that emerges and to address it in a positive way.

- Staff is resistant to change.
- Some parents are resistant to some of the topics covered in the guidance and counseling curriculum.

Possible Solutions to Staff Resistance:

- Educate the school staff regarding reasons for change in school counselor's role. Include information about school counselors' responsibilities, the benefits of program for students and teachers and the and relationship of the guidance and counseling grade level expectations to core competencies and key skills in the academic and career and technical education curriculum areas.
- Solicit help of administrators in communicating expectations for staff involvement in comprehensive guidance and counseling program.
- Be persistent. Changes in attitude take time and patience.
- Conduct professional development activities.
- Involve faculty on steering and advisory committees.

To Counselors' Resistance:

- Implement gradually; give counselors opportunity to feel comfortable in new role.
- Identify the specific reasons for resistance and work to overcome them.
- Consider "differential" staffing if there is more than one counselor. One counselor could be responsible for classroom guidance and counseling and another could be responsible for individual student planning, or responsive services, etc.



- Emphasize the district commitment to the comprehensive guidance and counseling program and the expectation that school counselors will implement the program.

To Parent/Special Interest Group Resistance:

- Know your community and support base.
- Educate your community with numerous positive public relations activities.
- Acknowledge resistant factions but don't let resistance intimidate.
- Gain endorsements from parent-teacher-student organizations.
- Gain endorsement of community service groups.
- Involve individuals with diverse viewpoints on the advisory council and in work groups.
- Hold open forums to discuss the comprehensive guidance and counseling program and its benefits to students.
- Make materials readily available for review.

5. Barrier: Classroom Involvement Interferes With Immediate Response to Crises.

- Administration, teachers, and community have expectations that responsive services are top priority.
- Parents/students who might come unannounced or in a crisis fear that school counselors will be unavailable.
- There is a perception that the instructions in *The Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program Manual* do not allow for flexibility in responding to crises.
- Parents expect service on demand.

Possible Solutions:

NOTE: The *Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program Manual* allows for counselors to respond to students' needs as appropriate for the local district. The critical factor is balance between responsive services and the other programmatic components.

- Use time and task analysis to get a picture of the actual number, the time of day, and types of crises to which school counselors responds each day/week. Use this information to schedule open office hours.
- Adopt a school policy, based on the district's philosophy of guidance and counseling for all students, regarding the school counselor's responsibility for more than crisis cases. (This could be a part of the school counselor's job description.)



- Take control of time; include specific times for drop-ins in the school counselor's schedule; publicize times to all (including parents).
- Train others in evaluating severity of crises and how to deal with situations temporarily.
- Develop an efficient and responsive message system so that teachers and students alike can communicate a need to see a school counselor immediately or on short notice.
- Institute a peer mediation/conflict resolution program and a procedure for activating the process (at appropriate times) if the counselor is not available immediately.
- In multiple-counselor schools, arrange schedules so that someone is always on call for emergency/crisis situations. Publish schedule.

6. *Barrier: Lack of Resources*

- No budget is provided.
- Limited resource materials are provided.
- Space does not allow privacy; there is no room for resources and not enough space for small-group work.
- Space allocation for the comprehensive guidance and counseling program is not a priority.
- There is no clerical support for such tasks as typing, record keeping, and filing.

Possible Solutions:

For Budget:

- Explore possibilities of alternative funding for services and positions. For example, [federal](#) and [state](#) monies have been used to provide specific services for eligible students.
- Use business partners as a source for support and resources; solicit funds from local businesses.
- Work with administrators to make the comprehensive guidance and counseling program a part of the district and/or building budgeting priorities and processes
- Increase public awareness of the resource needs of education. Become politically active; conduct more advocacy activities with local school boards and the state legislature regarding funding needs.

For Materials:

- Use the Guidance e-Learning Center at www.mcce.org. Free materials are available.

- Use Missouri Connections as a resource; It is free tool to assist students in their educational and career planning.
- Seek free and inexpensive materials.
- Network and share materials with other school counselors by attending, district, and state [Missouri School Counselor Association](#) (MSCA) conferences, and state sponsored professional development workshops.

For Space:

- Go on a “space walk.” Look for places that could be rearranged and used for various purposes. One school counselor found a staircase landing that could be used to display materials; another found the end of a hallway to use as a small-group space.
- Rearrange existing space.

For Professional Development:

- Network with counselors in other districts, visit their schools, and initiate “Share Days.”
- Attend district and state MSCA meetings and conferences. Ask for time to discuss the comprehensive guidance and counseling program.
- Develop an area support group of counselors who are implementing the program.
- Start a support group for teachers; plan a “Share Day” or special event for teachers.
- New counselors are encouraged to participate in the state sponsored mentoring program for school counselors.

For Clerical Support:

- Use volunteers when appropriate.
- Use “Green Thumb” or “Foster Grandparent Program” participants.
- Use student aides to answer the phone, do non-confidential filing, and manage the resource library.

7. Barriers; Special Services Programs Take Time Away From the Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program.

- Increased demands of special services keep counselors from being able to fully implement the comprehensive guidance and counseling program.
- School counselors are responsible for all parent contacts.
- School Counselors coordinate the IEP and/or 504 processes.

Possible Solutions:

- Refer to Section V of the *Manual* for complete information concerning working with students with special needs.



8. Barrier: Some Teachers Are Resistant to Relinquishing Time for Classroom Guidance and Counseling Activities.

- Some teachers resent time lost from instruction due to mandated state-wide testing.
- There is resistance to adding guidance and counseling to the core curriculum (especially at the high school level).
- The core curriculum is so full that school counselors are unable to do classroom guidance and counseling activities.
- Teachers see counselor-led classroom guidance and counseling learning activities as a “break time” for them.

Possible Solutions:

- Educate teachers through in-service and advocacy activities about the comprehensive guidance and counseling program and their role in it.
- Emphasize the positives of the developmental and preventative approach to guidance and counseling.
- Work with those who are eager to be involved. Publicize successes and recognize classroom teachers’ contributions.
- Seek administrative support and encouragement for classroom guidance and counseling.
- Use the Prior-Proper-Planning (PPR) approach:
 - Schedule time with teachers early in the school year.
 - Publish a schedule and stick to it.
 - Plan meaningful classroom presentations.
- Work with classroom teachers to plan lessons that connect guidance and counseling GLEs to subject matter GLEs. Establish a spirit of cooperation and common purpose through one-to-one contacts with teachers.
- Encourage teachers to remain in the classrooms when school counselors present guidance and counseling activities. For example, teachers are present during the school counselor’s lesson enabling them to follow through with these concepts in their future work with students

9. Barrier: Lack of Communication

- There is a lack of communication concerning the comprehensive guidance and counseling program among buildings in the district.
- There is a lack of staff understanding about comprehensive guidance and counseling programs.
- There is an existing mind-set about how guidance and counseling is defined (i.e., responsive services only) and it’s difficult to overcome.



- The community doesn't see guidance and counseling as important.
- The comprehensive guidance and counseling program is unclear to community and staff.

Possible solutions:

- Stage a media blitz in the school and the community, regarding the importance of the contribution to student success of the comprehensive guidance and counseling program.
- Promote the idea of program ownership by involving many groups in each phase of the program development process
- Make presentations to various parent/teacher/business/service groups. Obtain their endorsement of the program along with permission to use their endorsement in future publicity.
- Make the program visible within the community.
- Include information about the program in existing district newsletters and patron communication mechanisms.
- Develop a comprehensive guidance and counseling program newsletter and website reporting the activities of the program.
- Reeducate various groups about the changing school counselor's role and the benefits of the comprehensive guidance and counseling program.
- Keep administrators informed about program activities so they are able to respond to questions from parents and the community.
- Use the advisory council to develop ways to publicize the program.
- Appoint someone to coordinate internal communications. Rotate responsibility if there is not a "paid" coordinator.
- Develop an in-house communication vehicle (e.g., bulletins, newsletter for teachers, website).
- Become an advocate for the program.

The participants presented these ideas as cited here. They are examples of the way people can work together to develop positive solutions to the barriers that may occur. These ideas and the concept of the team approach to barrier breaking will be useful in local planning. Working together to meet the challenges will give participants a greater sense of ownership of the district's comprehensive guidance and counseling program.