

# SECTION I

## MISSOURI COMPREHENSIVE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAM: A VITAL LINK TO EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Since the 1980s, many individuals and groups across the country have been active in seeking educational reform. Unfortunately, many educational reform efforts during the 1980s neglected the field of guidance and counseling. Little was said then about the contributions of guidance and counseling and the work of school counselors to the overall achievement of educational goals. This omission was alarming because “Although counselors are often seen as peripheral to the mainstream of education, they in fact occupy a crucial position. For this reason, efforts to improve the nation’s schools and create a more equitable system require careful consideration of guidance and counseling.” (Hart & Jacobi, 1992, p. 80).

In Missouri, excellence in education has been a long-standing goal. This commitment was reaffirmed in 1993 with the passage of the Outstanding Schools Act. The Act called for a strong and enduring commitment to our public school system and for the development of a tangible, concise plan to bring about educational reform in Missouri. The commitment to excellence has been reaffirmed through legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act (Pub.L. 107-10) and through the state’s focus on the goals identified in *Race to The Top*.

The state of Missouri has also recognized the important contributions school counselors make to the overall growth and development of students and to excellence in education. This recognition led to the development of the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program (MCGCP) in 1984 based on the work of Gysbers and Moore (1975, 1981). The goal of the MCGCP was to refocus and redirect guidance and counseling activities and to develop guidance and counseling and the work of school counselors in the schools within a program structure.

The first version of the MCGCP was designed for use at the secondary level. It was field- tested in selected secondary schools in Missouri from 1984 to 1988. During this time period, the development and field-testing processes involved numerous task forces that provided direction concerning the content, structure, and implementation of the MCGCP. While this field-testing was taking place, work also was underway to extend the MCGCP to the elementary school level. Over 300 school counselors and administrators participated in this process. This work was completed by 1988, allowing training on the full K-12 MCGCP to begin in 1988. This initial training ended in 1998. During this time period, school counselors and administrators in 441 out of 525 school districts across Missouri received training on how to implement MCGCP in their local school districts. Training for school counselors and administrators continues today through new personnel workshops and comprehensive guidance and counseling in-service workshops conducted yearly across Missouri.



## What Is the Purpose of the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program?

The structure of the MCGCP helps school districts plan, design, implement, evaluate, and enhance comprehensive, developmental, and systematic guidance and counseling programs in kindergarten through grade 12. The purpose of the MCGCP is to provide students in kindergarten through grade 12 with successful educational experiences. When the programs are fully implemented across the state, school districts will have comprehensive guidance and counseling programs in which school counselors will be able to devote full time to guidance and counseling, thereby reaching 100% of their students and enhancing:

- Student academic performance
- Student positive mental health and persona/social development
- Student achievement of guidance and counseling program grade level expectations
- Individual student planning resulting in enhanced positive career development through the use of Personal Plans of Study
- A positive and safe learning environment in collaboration with parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, and the community
- A program approach to guidance and counseling
- Program accountability through a comprehensive evaluation process (Program + Personnel = Results) that focuses on full program implementation, appropriate personnel evaluation, and the evaluation of student outcomes using relevant school/student data.



## What Is the Definition of the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program?

The comprehensive guidance and counseling program is an integral part of a school district's total educational program. It is developmental by design and includes sequential activities organized and implemented by school counselors with the active support of parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, and the community. As a developmental program, it addresses the needs of all students by facilitating their academic, career development, personal/social development, helping create positive and safe learning climates in schools, as well as helping students feel connected to school and to at least one caring adult. At the same time, the program assists students as they face issues and resolve problems that prevent their healthy development. The program is delivered through the following four program components:

- **Guidance and Counseling Curriculum** - structured group and classroom presentations
- **Individual Student Planning** - appraisal, development of Personal Plans of Study, and successful post-secondary transitions
- **Responsive Services** - individual counseling, small-group counseling, consultation, and referral
- **System Support** - program management, program evaluation, fair-share responsibilities, professional development, staff and community relations, consultation, committee participation, community outreach, and research and development



# What Are the Benefits of the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program for Local School Districts?

When comprehensive guidance and counseling programs are fully implemented in local school districts using the MCGCP as a guide, what benefits can be expected for students, parents/guardians, teachers, the community, boards of education, administrators, and school counselors?

## Benefits for Students

- Focuses on all students
- Enhances students' academic performance
- Centers on students' needs
- Seeks students' input
- Encourages more interaction among students
- Provides a developmental and preventative focus
- Promotes knowledge and assistance in career exploration and development
- Enhances life coping skills
- Helps students feel connected to school
- Enhances students' personal/social development
- Develops decision-making skills
- Increases knowledge of self and others
- Broadens knowledge of our changing work world
- Increases opportunities for school counselor-student interaction
- Develops a system of long-range planning for students



## Benefits for Parents/Guardians

- Enhances students' academic performance, and their career and personal/social development
- Encourages the input of parents/guardians
- Encourages outreach to all parents/guardians
- Provides support for parents/guardians regarding each child's educational development
- Increases opportunities for parent/school counselor interaction
- Provides parents/guardians information about available resources
- Assures parents/guardians that all children will receive support from the guidance and counseling program

## Benefits for Teachers

- Contributes to a team effort to enhance students' academic performance as well as their career and personal/social development
- Provides relevant curriculum ideas through the use of guidance and counseling grade level expectations
- Encourages teachers' input into the delivery of the comprehensive guidance and counseling program
- Establishes the school counselor as a resource/consultant
- Encourages positive, collaborative working relationships
- Defines the role of school counselors as educators

## Benefits for the Community

- Encourages input from business, industry, labor, and other community partners including community mental health and social service agencies
- Provides increased opportunities for collaboration among school counselors and business, industry, labor, and other community partners including community mental health and social service agencies
- Enhances the role of the school counselor as a resource person



- Increases opportunities for business, industry, labor, and other community partners including community mental health and social service agencies to actively participate in the total school program
- Enhances students' academic performance as well as their career and personal/social development
- Supplies a future workforce that has decision-making skills, pre-employment skills, and increased worker maturity
- Facilitates the development of students as active responsible citizens

## Benefits for the Board of Education

- Enhances students' academic performance as well as their career and personal/social development
- Encourages greater school-community interaction
- Meets the guidance and counseling standards found in the Missouri School Improvement Program
- Provides a rationale for including a comprehensive guidance and counseling program in a school system
- Provides program information to district patrons
- Provides a basis for determining funding allocations for the program
- Provides ongoing evaluation data concerning the full implementation of the program, the work of school counselors within the program, and the attainment of relevant guidance and counseling student outcomes

## Benefits for Administrators

- Enhances students' academic performance as well as their career and personal/social development
- Provides a clearly defined organizational structure for the comprehensive guidance and counseling program
- Establishes a clearly defined job description for school counselors
- Provides a way to supervise and evaluate school counselors



- Encourages administrative input and involvement in the implementation and evaluation of the comprehensive guidance and counseling program
- Provides the way to meet Missouri School Improvement Program standards for guidance and counseling
- Provides a means of accountability through comprehensive guidance and counseling program, personnel and results evaluations
- Enhances the image of the comprehensive guidance and counseling program in the school and community
- Promotes the work of school counselors as providers of direct services to students and parents as well as being a consultant and collaborator with teachers and administrators

### Benefits for School Counselors

- Enhances students' academic performance as well as their career and personal/social development
- Places guidance and counseling in the mainstream of the total educational system
- Provides clearly defined organizational structure in which to work
- Reduces and strives to eliminate non-guidance and counseling activities while retaining fair-share responsibilities
- Offers the opportunity to reach all students
- Provides a systemic way to plan, design, implement, evaluate and enhance the district's comprehensive guidance and counseling program
- Outlines clearly defined responsibilities for helping students master guidance and counseling content, develop personal plans of study and assisting students needing help with their individual concerns
- Provides the way to meet guidance and counseling program standards found in the Missouri School Improvement Program



## What Are the Demonstrated Effects of Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Programs in the Schools of Missouri?

Comprehensive guidance and counseling programs in Missouri – implemented by school counselors, in collaboration with parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators – are effective in assisting students to respond to challenges of living and working in the 21st century. Empirical research conducted in the state of Missouri during the past ten years has shown that when school counselors have the time, resources, and structure of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program in which to work, they contribute to positive student academic, personal/social, and career development as well as to the development of positive and safe learning climates in schools.

Students (22,964) in 236 small-, medium-, and large-sized high schools in Missouri with more fully implemented guidance and counseling programs, as judged by school counselors, reported the following:

- They had earned higher grades.
- Their education was better in preparing them for the future.
- Their schools had a more positive climate (Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997).

School counselors in Missouri (430 counselors representing 255 school districts across the state) who rated their guidance and counseling programs as more fully implemented indicated that they spent more time with students, parents/guardians, and teachers and were more visible (greater public understanding and more time in classrooms) (Gysbers, Lapan, & Blair, 1999).

When middle school classroom teachers (4,868) in 184 small-, medium-, and large-sized middle schools across Missouri rated comprehensive guidance and counseling programs in their schools as more implemented, 7th graders (22,601) in those 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, 2001).

In 2006, a state wide study was conducted comparing the degree of implementation of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs with relevant student outcomes such as achievement and attendance. This study found that in those schools which had more fully implemented guidance and counseling programs:

- MAP scores were higher.
- Attendance was better.
- Discipline problems were fewer.
- School counselors were spending less time on non-guidance and counseling duties (Lapan, Gysbers, and Kayson, 2007).

## What Resources Are Available to Assist Local School Districts?

As the MCGCP is implemented and enhanced in a district, the following resources may be helpful:

- **The Guidance and Counseling Personnel of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education** (PO Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102) [573-751-7966] <http://dese.mo.gov/divcareered/>. The following resources may be accessed and obtained from DESE:
- **The Guidance e-Learning Center located at The Missouri Center for Career Education** (T.R. Gaines 302, Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg, MO [660- 54-.8768] <http://www.missouricareereducation.org/for/content/guidance/>

The following resources may be accessed and obtained from the center:

- On-line Manual
- Guidance and Counseling content standards and grade level expectations
- Guidance and Counseling learning activities
- Mentoring information and material
- Calendar of professional development activities
- Lending library of guidance and counseling resources
- Abstracts of results based evaluation projects
- Internal Improvement Review Document for program implementation, evaluation and planning
- On-line E-learning opportunities
- 2006 State-wide study, "Missouri School Counselors Benefit All Students" (Lapan, Gysbers, and Kayson, 2007)
- **SuccessLink** (1111 Madison St. Suite 4, Jefferson City, MO. 65101[888-636-4395], <http://www.successlink.org/>)
  - On-line data base of guidance and counseling learning activities and activities for other curricular areas



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