

## Calendaring: The Key to Fully Implemented Guidance and Counseling Programs

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*Managing a guidance program is all about calendaring and working collaboratively with colleagues and school staff. Build a program calendar sequentially—day, week, month, and developmentally by grade level. Calendaring is the key to successful guidance program implementation. When counselors take time to calendar before the school year begins, they find the time to do all that is recommended and more for all students. A guidance program calendar can be an accountability record of school counselors' work.  
(Granite School District, Utah, 2011)*

A fully implemented comprehensive guidance and counseling program (CGCP) means that school counselors are spending 100% of their time addressing the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students K-12 through the program components, Guidance Curriculum, Individual Student Planning, Responsive Services, and System Support. There are several factors that influence the ability of the school counselor to fully implement a program:

- School Counselor knowledge and skills (including the ability to advocate for the program)
- Administrator/faculty/parent/community understanding and support (the reason for having the ability to advocate)
- Resources to implement the program and the ability to harness those resources (Program management)
- Effective time management and organization

This article is not meant to be a full blown implementation guide and will not attempt to address all of these issues. The primary focus of this paper is to address effective communication, organization, and time management. It is through the calendaring process that the program actually gets put down on paper (physically or electronically), scheduled, viewed by stakeholders, and put into action.

To reach the 100% goal, a calendaring system is required that fills each day, week, month, and school year with the tasks for which school counselors are responsible. By calendaring these tasks, school counselors will be in moving from “random acts of guidance” to a systematic, developmental program that truly addresses the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students K-12.

A calendaring system will accomplish the following:

- Enable school counselors to see, organize, and manage the activities of their guidance and counseling programs
- Provide a timeframe for scheduling resources and equipment
- Provide an organized and systematic way to deliver the district's/building's comprehensive guidance and counseling program
- Enable school counselors to gain more control over their time
- Enable school counselors to communicate the goals of the guidance and counseling program to the staff, administration, parents, and community
- Help integrate the guidance and counseling program into the overall instructional program and other school activities and thereby encourage staff involvement

### **Getting Started**

It is essential that administrators understand the comprehensive guidance and counseling program and be active partners in the planning process so they can provide the leadership and support needed for full implementation. *Continually engage your administrator in this planning and development.* A fully implemented comprehensive guidance and counseling program involves the entire school community.

There are a number of tasks that need to be completed to create a guidance and counseling program calendar. Initially, three factors must be determined for this process: School calendar dates, instruction/activity time, and guidance content.

1. School Calendar: Review the district/building calendar for locked in dates that should be built into the calendar before any guidance and counseling activities are scheduled. These might include but would not be limited to such things as:
  - Holidays
  - Professional Development Days
  - District/Building/Test Dates
  - National Test Dates (Advanced Placement and PSAT especially as they have specific test dates)
  - Parent/Teacher conferences
  - Special Assemblies or other activities that impact the regular school day
  - Early Release Days

2. Instruction/Activity Time: Determine the time allotted for each of the components of the CGCP. Remember that 80% to 85% of time should be allocated to direct student services (Guidance Curriculum, Individual Student Planning, and Responsive Services) while 15% to 20% should be allocated to System Support. Suppose school counselors in a school district chose to allocate their time by level as follows using a 174 day school year.

Guidance Curriculum

- Elementary 40% = 70 school days
- Middle School 30% = 52 days
- High School 15% = 26 days

Individual Student Planning

- Elementary 5% = 9 school days
- Middle School 20% = 35 days
- High School 35% = 61 days

Responsive Services

- Elementary 40% = 70 school days
- Middle School 35% = 61 days
- High School 30% = 52 days

System Support

- Elementary 15% = 26 school days
- Middle School 15% = 26 days
- High School 20% = 35 days

You can also look at it by level:

	Curriculum	Ind. Student Planning	Responsive Services	System Support
Elementary	70 days	9 days	70 days	26 days
Middle School	52 days	35 days	61 days	26 days
High School	26 days	61 days	52 days	35 days

Next, determine each level’s method of organizing time for the school day. For example, at the elementary level, 30 minute time blocks may be how time is allocated. At the middle and high school levels the school day may be divided into seven class periods or longer blocks of time. Doing this provides you with the overall number of blocks of time available each day, week, month, and year.

3. Content: Through a collaborative process involving your advisory committee, administrators, staff and other district counselors, determine what content and what activities should be provided to students. To do this, analyze the Guidance Planning Survey results <http://www.missouricareereducation.org/doc/guidemanual/AppendixF.pdf>, other relevant school and student data that may be available, plus your own observations about student needs. If the survey has not been completed, it needs to become part of the calendar for the year in which it will be conducted and calendared under System Support. It is recommended that this survey be done on the district’s/building’s curriculum review schedule.

Identifying this content cannot be done in isolation. After developing a shared understanding and clearly defined expectations with your administrator, collaborating with your faculty is essential to the effective scheduling of the guidance curriculum. What would such a meeting entail?

- Explaining the guidance and counseling program (remember the importance of advocacy skills!).
- Sharing the guidance planning survey and other data that shows the need for covering topics within the guidance curriculum.
- Sharing how the guidance curriculum supports common core and other standards that are important to teachers.
- Gathering support for a team approach to teaching the guidance curriculum so that teachers can reinforce what the school counselor presents.

### **Program Components**

Now that you have data about student needs and an understanding of time allocations and desired content, the fourth step is to begin scheduling activities in each of the program components for the school year. Also, while each level will be developing their own calendars, it is important for all levels to coordinate their calendars so there is scope and sequence across K-12.

### **Guidance Curriculum**

Begin calendaring the Guidance Curriculum by identifying possible themes for each grade or grade level grouping K-12 that captures the essence of the Guidance Curriculum focus for students. Example themes could include words such as imagine, explore, expand, extend, design, utilize, express, plan, set goals, apply, determine, and decide.

Next, identify the grade level expectations (GLEs) from the Academic, Career, and Person/Social domains you expect students to learn and the corresponding guidance lessons in collaboration with grade level and subject matter teachers. This will demonstrate to teachers how the Guidance Curriculum GLEs support the content standards from their disciplines. Then calendar the lessons for each week, month, and if possible, the school year remembering the time allocations for each level. Once each level has laid out the lessons to be taught, check to see that they are organized developmentally and sequentially across all levels, K-12.

## Individual Student Planning

In scheduling Individual Student Planning activities keep in mind the following points:

- The main focus of Individual Student Planning is the development, review, and revision if necessary of the *personal plan of study*.
- Often times this takes place during the registration/scheduling process for the following year. Keep in mind that *Individual Student Planning is NOT scheduling*. It is really a process to help ensure that students have an academic plan with appropriate co-curricular activities that will lead to a successful post-secondary transition.
- Individual Student Planning can be done one on one or in advisory periods. The important focus is that all students have an opportunity to discuss, share, and work through their personal plans of study with an adult knowledgeable about the process.
- Activities related to Individual Student Planning that should be scheduled include but are not limited to:
  - Advising time with students either one on one or in small groups
  - Career Assessment activities
    - Scheduling time with resources such as Missouri Connections to help students with educational and career planning
    - College and Career Planning Assessments such as
      - Explore
      - PLAN
      - ACT
      - SAT
      - ASVAB
  - Exploratory/Informational activities such as career fairs, college fairs, financial aid nights, pre-registration nights, “stop days” to review the school’s Career and Educational Planning Guide and course offerings for the next year during the school day

## Responsive Services

Schedule the Responsive Services that can be scheduled. Normally one might think of responsive services as something that can’t be scheduled as it relates to addressing the immediate need of students through counseling and referral. However, school data might indicate a need for small groups on issues such as divorce, anger management, study skills, etc. These should also be scheduled and planned for. What proactive activities can be included in this master plan?

## System Support

It takes time to effectively manage and evaluate a comprehensive guidance and counseling program. Examples of activities that should be scheduled include but not limited to are:

- Conducting the Internal Improvement Review (IIR)
- Scheduling time/tasks analysis
- Results based evaluation interventions
- Guidance Advisory Committee meetings
- School or district wide committees on which school counselors might serve
- Professional development activities such as the fall conference of the Missouri School Counselor Association
- Conducting the Guidance Planning Survey
- Faculty meetings/school board presentations
- Data review (if we collect data, we need to have some quality time to reflect and analyze the data)
- Collaborative team meetings such as IEP, 504, data review teams, PLC meetings

If all of these activities were scheduled, there would be little if any time left for activities that might be barriers to fully implementing a comprehensive guidance and counseling program. This reinforces the importance of effective calendaring. When done well, it provides greater opportunity for more fully implementing the program and it provides in concrete ways a visual and practical demonstration of what a comprehensive guidance and counseling program might look like.

All across Missouri there are pockets of excellence where schools are using calendars to guide the implementation of their guidance and counseling programs. We have the challenge and the opportunity to create a “sea of excellence” where every school is using an effective calendaring process for implementing their program.

Go to <http://dese.mo.gov/webinar/Webinar02-22-12-CCR.htm> for an excellent webinar by two schools that worked through their calendaring process. Contact information for the presenters is also provided. This link comes from the Webinar link on the DESE homepage.