

## **The Role of the Elementary School Counselor in the Individual Student Planning Process**

From time to time questions are raised about the role of the elementary school counselor as it relates to the individual planning process. Often, when discussion revolves around personal plans of study and individual student planning, elementary school counselors might question how they fit into the discussion. Yet, the role they play and the role of the elementary comprehensive guidance and counseling program is crucial to the success of a strong individual planning component of the district's comprehensive guidance and counseling program (GCGP).

On pages 15 and 16 [The State Guidance and Counseling Program Manual](#) outlines the important role of the elementary guidance and counseling program:

*“Do students and their parents/guardians have the right to expect that the school district is sensitive and responsive to students’ unique life career needs, including their needs for goal setting and career planning? The answer is yes! Thus, an individual student planning component in a comprehensive guidance and counseling program is needed.”*

***“The foundation for individual student planning is established during the elementary school years through guidance and counseling curriculum activities in which students participate.”***

Note the important skills that support individual planning:

- Self-confidence development
- Acquisition of learning-to-learn skills
- Interpersonal relationship skill development
- Decision-making skill building
- Awareness and beginning exploration of educational and career path possibilities

*“[Topics] such as these continue to be covered through the activities of the guidance and counseling curriculum during middle school and high school, providing new information and experiences to enable students to regularly update, monitor, and manage their plans effectively.”*

Another common refrain heard in discussions about individual planning revolves around, “How do you expect an 8<sup>th</sup> grader to develop a 4-year or longer personal plan of study when they aren’t sure what they are doing the next day? “ This may be a legitimate question, but we have to turn the question around and ask, “What has the school district done to support students in developing an initial, flexible, personal plan of study that will be reviewed on a regular basis and revised as necessary. We don’t put 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Algebra I before they have had a good foundation in Math, so why would we expect students to be able to put together an initial personal plan of study without some back ground knowledge and skills as they related to life career development?

Career Development is one of the content areas of a CGCP. K-12 Grade Level Expectations have been developed in order that students may gain the knowledge and skills to support the development of a personal plan of study. Without the foundation at the elementary level, the work of the middle school and high school become more challenging in fully implementing an individual planning *process* that supports the educational and career planning of students all the way through to a successful post-secondary experience (College, Community College, Technical School, Military , Apprenticeships, On the Job Training).

The CGCP is truly a **K-12** program in all areas of student growth: Academic, Career, and Personal/Social Development. To deliver the content of these components to students, Curriculum and Individual Planning must be a district-wide collaborative effort. As Guidance and Counseling professionals, we have an important role in supporting the President’s goal of every student having a post-secondary degree or certificate. This will only happen when all students have a solid foundation not only in academics, but also in personal/social skills and the planning and decision making process. Laying those foundations at the elementary level is essential to the entire process.