AN EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM AT STILLWATER AREA SCHOOLS IN STILLWATER, MINNESOTA

by

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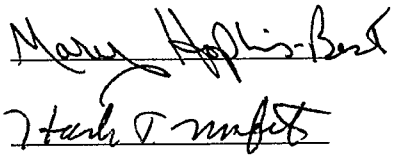

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ABSTRACT

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School counselors can be more responsive and effective when the needs of the population they serve have been clearly identified. This research focused on the secondary (7-12) guidance and counseling program of Stillwater Area Schools, including two junior high schools and one senior high school. The major purposes of this study were to determine what stakeholders perceive as their needs of the counseling program, to ascertain if stakeholders perceive that their needs are being met effectively, and to identify goals in partnership with stakeholders' needs and desired outcomes for the future. Four groups were surveyed: students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Each group was asked to evaluate current counseling services and complete a needs-assessment inventory. Results of the evaluation were favorable overall. There were indicators of discrepancies between schools in varying areas and trends of perceived higher and lower performance in others. The research data generated from this study is intended as a tool for the Stillwater counseling staff to use in setting goals for program improvement and charting future direction for school counseling in the Stillwater Area Schools.

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Without the inspiration, support, and cooperation of counselors in the Stillwater Area Schools this project could not have been implemented. Their willingness to open their professional lives to scrutiny and analysis is appreciated and commendable. Their devotion to the ongoing mission of helping young people overcome obstacles, succeed, and thrive is to be admired.

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Thank you to Jim Otto, a loving husband and father, whose support throughout this project has been invaluable. Andrew Otto is appreciated for his patience and good attitude in sharing his mom with the demands of this project.

This research is dedicated to the lives of children for whom school counselors play a vital role. May our focus always be on facilitating the healthy growth and development of young people and finding the best ways to do accomplish this task in our schools.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

School counseling programs play an important yet widely varied role in the lives of students of all ages. Because ongoing effective evaluation is vital to the health of any program, school counseling programs should be appropriately assessed at regular intervals. Rye and Sparks (1999) contend that evaluation provides the data needed for accountability. This data can show whether the goals of a program are being met and provide a means by which needed adjustments and changes can be identified and implemented (Rye & Sparks, 1999). Lewis states that if a counselor can prove through a thorough evaluation that his or her program is having a positive effect, he or she has made counseling less vulnerable to attacks by critics and will have more confidence in his or her own professional ability (Lewis, 1983).

Because the role of a school counselor can be defined in many ways and the needs of particular populations typically differ, it is common for school counseling programs to vary considerably from school to school and community to community. Administrators have a tremendous impact on shaping school counseling programs. Their expectations of counseling tend to dictate how counselors direct their efforts. Rye and Sparks (1999) suggest that to build a strong and balanced program, the administrator and counselor must work together. Generally, counselors complain that too little time is available for their primary function in schools: counseling students (Bardo, Cody, & Bryson, 1978). Clarifying the school counselor's role within a school is important for counselors, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community at-large. Counselors can be more focused when the needs of a population have been clearly identified and more effective when the expectations are clearly understood by all stakeholders.

In 1990 Robert D. Myrick, Ph.D., conducted a North Central Association evaluation of the Stillwater Area Schools' Guidance and Counseling Program. Dr. Myrick met with focus groups of primary and secondary stakeholders and reviewed the program overall. A 22-page final report was written that included 15 recommendations for program improvements. This was the last time the program has been formally evaluated.

The Stillwater Area Schools' Guidance and Counseling Department supports a proactive, developmental guidance model that serves all students in grades 7 - 12, helping each student grow in identified competencies. The counseling staff of District #834 believes that guidance and counseling is an integral part of the educational process of our schools. The department holds a philosophy of concern for the educational, career, personal and social needs of students. Counselors respect the inherent rights and responsibilities of young people and their parents as they strive to establish relationships that will help individuals reach their potential as students and citizens. They are also committed to developing working relationships with the entire staff to create healthy psychological environments in the schools.

Rationale is derived from both state and national guidelines for school counseling. The Minnesota School Counselors' Association (MSCA), in alignment with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), has produced a model of developmental guidance and counseling. MSCA seeks to advance the mission of comprehensive developmental guidance and counseling programs that provide developmental as well as pro-active, preventive programs and remedial efforts. Its purpose is to empower all learners to lead satisfying and productive lives by assisting

them in acquiring competencies in the personal/social, career, and educational domains. It also identifies four modes of delivery: guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support (Rief & Enestvedt, 1993). The Stillwater Guidance and Counseling Department has developed goals in accordance with assisting students across the grade levels in developing competencies in each domain while appropriately utilizing all four delivery systems.

There are four secondary schools in the district: Stillwater Area High School (10-12), Stillwater Junior High School (7-9), Oak-Land Junior High School (7-9), and St. Croix Valley Alternative Learning Program (10-post 12). Stillwater Area High School's counseling department staff consists of 6.8 counselors. Two counselors team on each grade level, splitting the students in half. This creates two consistent caseloads over the course of the three years students spend at the high school. The remaining .8 position is an at-risk counselor who serves students identified with special needs throughout the entire student body. Stillwater Junior High School employs three full-time counselors, each counselor having responsibility for one grade level (7-9) and continuing with that population for each of the three years students are in the building. Oak-Land Junior High School has two full-time counselors on staff who split the student population in half alphabetically, also maintaining continuity by retaining a consistent student caseload. No counseling positions are in place at St. Croix Valley Alternative Learning Program, therefore the school does not implement a counseling program.

There are no school counselors currently employed by any of the school district's eight elementary schools. Stillwater has not developed an elementary school counseling program; therefore the scope of this program evaluation will be at the secondary level.

Statement of the Problem

A formal evaluation of the school guidance and counseling program in Stillwater has not been conducted for ten years. The department is no longer on the rotation for periodic North Central Association evaluations. If priority is to be given to conducting such an evaluation it appears that impetus must come from within the department. An evaluation would provide important information that would allow counselors to better understand the students' needs, the current impact of the program on meeting those needs, and desirable future direction for the program.

Purpose of the Study

The major purposes of this research study are:

1) To determine what stakeholders perceive as their needs of the counseling program.
2) To ascertain if stakeholders perceive that the needs are being met effectively.
3) To identify goals in partnership with stakeholders' needs and desired outcomes for the future.

Definition of Terms

For clarity of understanding the following terms will be defined.

Stakeholder: an individual with direct involvement and a vested interest in the counseling program.

Developmental Guidance: a counseling program that includes developmental, sequential activities across the grade levels and is an integral part of the school's total educational program.

Personal/Social Domain: focuses on development of students' self-understanding, social skills, and self-identity.

Educational Domain: focuses on students' development of intellectual understanding as well as school and work understanding.

Career Domain: focuses on students' development of task skills and marketability, economic understanding, work world understanding, and leisure time understanding.

Delivery Systems: how developmental guidance is implemented within a school.

Guidance Curriculum: structured developmental experiences presented systematically through classroom and group activities.

Individual Planning: activities that help all students plan, monitor, and manage their own learning as well as their personal and career development.

Responsive Services: activities that meet immediate needs and concerns of students whether these needs or concerns require counseling, consultation, referral, or information.

System Support: management activities that establish, maintain, and enhance the total guidance program.

Summary

It is the desire of the Stillwater Area Schools counseling staff to measure the effectiveness of the Stillwater Guidance and Counseling Program. This research project will focus on determining what stakeholders perceive as their needs of the counseling program, ascertaining how well the needs are currently being met, and identifying goals

in partnership with stakeholders' needs and desired outcomes for the future. Students will realize the primary benefits of this evaluation, but it may also enhance the lives of all stakeholders.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Much has been written about the need for school counseling evaluation. To improve, counseling and guidance programs must be evaluated and areas of concern determined (Scruggs, 1999). This chapter will discuss the importance of school counseling program evaluation, methods of conducting an evaluation, a historical perspective of school counseling and the changing role of the school counselor, key elements of programs today, national standards for school counseling, and planning for the future.

The Importance of School Counseling Program Evaluation

The public outcry for accountability in education, though loud and persistent today, is not a recent development. A call for measurement and accountability with attention to quality education for all students was sounded in the first part of the 20th century (Cole & Walz, 1988). Numerous authors throughout the 1970s reference the public demand to see that educators and counselors are producing results, in fact opinion polls in 1972 and 1973 indicated that accountability is something that the public felt was necessary and long overdue at that time (Crabbs & Crabbs, 1977). In the foreword of *Strengthening K-12 School Counseling Programs*, Walter Roberts states: "Society demands that professional school counseling—whether viewed as a component of the overall curricular mission of the school or as an add-on support program—must be able to validate what it does, for whom, and how well it achieves its stated goals" (Rye & Sparks, 1999).

Receiving adequate staffing and funding for education, school counseling in particular, is an ongoing battle at the local, state and federal levels. Demands for accountability ring clearly through the voices of citizens and legislators at all levels. Policy makers are requiring increasing evidence that supports the effectiveness of various funding initiatives (Lapan, 2001). Evaluation can provide the information needed to substantiate the efficacy of guidance and counseling program appropriations. When counselors have meaningful data to show that the counseling program is meeting goals and impacting students positively, they have evidence to support their position.

Trevisan and Hubert (2001) identify program improvement, accountability data regarding student outcomes, and documentation of what counselors actually do in schools as the benefits of program evaluation. In light of the tenuous role school counselors have historically endured within the academic environment of schools (Baker, 2000) program evaluation should be viewed as a priority by school counselors. Yet some authors have argued that a lack of time and training as well as a mistrust of the evaluation process have prevented school counselors from embracing the concept and the implementation of program evaluation (Trevisan & Hubert, 2001).

A lack of knowledge often leads to mistrust. Many counselors have been instructed in their counselor education programs in how to conduct research, but received little training it implementing program evaluation. Doing research is offered as a means to generate new knowledge while the purpose for evaluation is to make decisions (Trevisan & Hubert, 2001).

Jastrzab (1999) states that more and more, practitioners are willing to have their programs evaluated and want to collaborate in the design of the evaluations. They

recognize the importance of evaluation for the external recognition value it offers, as an indicator of how to improve programs, and as a mechanism of accountability. Just as receiving feedback is essential in the learning process for students (Jensen, 1998), professional counselors need accurate and immediate feedback to sharpen their skill and improve their offerings to students. As human beings, counselors desire to enrich themselves. Evaluation is a method of fostering this professional growth.

Rye and Sparks (1999) describe the evaluation plan as a means by which adjustments and changes occur. The actual effects of every activity and strategy within a counseling program plan cannot be fully anticipated, and usually some activities are just not effective for a variety of reasons. An evaluation plan provides for regular checkups and allows for continuous improvement. Good evaluation will also show whether the goals of the program were realized, whether the mission was accomplished and if the identified needs were met (Rye & Sparks, 1999). "Well constructed program evaluations provide the kind of meaningful information that can be useful for important system support initiatives, such as reshaping program priorities, arguing for resources, or making reports to the local school board" (Hayslip &VanZandt, 2000).

Hughes and James (2001) illustrated how an elementary school counselor avoided major negative changes in her position, precipitated by budget cutbacks, by organizing and presenting evaluative information to a site-based decision-making committee. They recommend developing and implementing an ongoing system for counselor and counseling program accountability. The information can not only be used to counteract threats to the program, but also to promote positive public relations. Four processes are encouraged:

- Keeping a collection of school counseling references on hand to enable a counselor to quickly access important supportive information from literature and colleagues.
- Adopting a school counseling model or set of standards reflective of state and national standards to demonstrate systematic program efforts and build credibility.
- Keeping a record of the time spent on each school counseling activity to communicate an overall sense of the counseling role and how time is accounted. This can be useful in the preparation of annual reports.
- Saving and organizing documents about your school counseling program into a portfolio to provide a picture of the total program (Hughes & James, 2001).

Especially with the complexity of problems facing students and families today and the accelerating demands placed upon school counselors, it is critical for the identified goals and objectives to provide focus and direction for the counselor. Too often the school counselor is expected to be all things to all people, a standard no one is equipped to meet. Priorities on which to focus must be identified in order to maintain program effectiveness and protect the counseling staff from feeling burned out as they are pulled in every direction. Scruggs (1999) notes that schools spend a minimal amount of time on research, training, and program evaluation. Counselors, like other professionals in education, get overwhelmed with the constant demands of their positions. Unfortunately, both the planning and evaluating tend to get lost in the urgent needs of

students, parents, teachers, and administrators. It is a challenge for counselors to place priority on planning and evaluating, but it is essential to the building of a strong counseling program. Herr (2001) emphasizes that school counselors are likely to be continuously required to demonstrate that they achieve results consistent with the outcomes for which accountability has been assigned.

Methods of Evaluation

Rye and Sparks (1999) identify four types of evaluation:

1) **Accountability logs** are a way of documenting what has been done. Some counselors maintain simple logs of the kinds and numbers of contacts each day and total them for each week. Another approach is to create a preset list of categories of activities—such as individual counseling, small group counseling, classroom guidance, parent contact, telephone contact, and test interpretation—for keeping a tally. This method is a way of verifying the nature and amount of activity devoted to the many tasks of the counselor. It can provide data for both formative and summative evaluations.
2) **Formative Evaluation** is the process of collecting and reviewing data for purposes of continuously shaping or improving the program. It requires systematically gathering evidence that can be used as a basis for adjustment and revision of the individual components of the program. This method is aimed at improving the functions, strategies employed, or the expertise of individuals so that the effectiveness of the program can remain focused on accomplishing the established mission and goals.

3) **Summative Evaluation** is the final compilation of all evidence of program effectiveness. Data generated by one of the other three methods of evaluation must be examined, analyzed, and interpreted in the appropriate context.
4) **Needs-Based Evaluation** answers the question "What is to be done?" by seeking information directly from students and other stakeholders (parents, teachers, administrators, employers, business leaders, government leaders) regarding their needs within a school counseling program. The results provide the framework of the program. This method of evaluation can be approached with paper/pencil surveys, structured interviews, and/or focus groups (Rye & Sparks, 1999).

Rye and Sparks (1999) have put forth a support system approach to strengthening school counseling programs. Drawing a parallel between physical structures and human institutional endeavors in their need to begin with solid foundations, they assert that by building strong community support and installing a continuous feedback and involvement loop in a program such foundations can be formed. To carry out this approach, they suggest building school-community teams that act as advisory committees, partnering on the planning effort. Once in place, this broad-based school and community support will facilitate the program's effectiveness and create positive public relations, provided that the program meets the expectations of the stakeholders (Rye & Sparks, 1999).

Trevisan & Hubert (2001) echo the primary importance of obtaining buy-in from stakeholders, particularly at the district administration level. Administrators and school board members are key decision-makers in educational programming. Their understanding of the job functions and the nature of the school counseling program is vital. They also must learn how the evaluation process is an integral tool in the decision

making process (Trevisan & Hubert, 2001). Ensuring that the advisory committee includes representation of the school board and district administration is important.

At the root of any system or culture is a set of core values and ideals by which the individuals within that system operate. The advisory committee's first step is to define the identity of the program based on the school district's (and the counseling program's) core beliefs and governing values. These are translated into a professional school counseling vision, which gives birth to a mission statement (Rye & Sparks, 1999).

The committee then develops a needs-assessment tool that is administered to all stakeholders. Clearly articulated goals and objectives are developed out of this mission statement and the results of the needs-assessment research. An effective school counseling program must be responsive to the population it serves, reflecting the current school needs as well as local and community concerns. For this reason it is both common and desirable for programs to vary from school to school and community to community. The identification of a particular school district's needs and priorities is of paramount importance in laying the foundation for building a strong program and stakeholders must be involved in this process (Rye & Sparks, 1999).

An ongoing evaluation process is established as part of the comprehensive plan. The advisory committee plays a continuous and critical role in the planning, implementation, evaluating, and adjusting of the overall program (Rye & Sparks 1999). Hayslip & VanZandt (2000) suggest that a key component in the development of any evaluation is validity. Therefore, they suggest using national standards to aid in the construction of assessment tools, making sure that the theoretical framework and component parts of the model is used (Hayslip & VanZandt, 2000).

Lapan (2001) refers to results-based comprehensive guidance and counseling programs whose goals are built around obtaining student outcomes in developmental competencies. Evaluation within this systems framework involves gaining understanding of outcomes to be realized, how to effectively bring about these outcomes, and the situations in which various interventions are successful and why they are successful (Lapan, 2001).

Historical Perspectives and the Changing Role of the School Counselor

Herr (2001) traces the beginnings of the school counseling profession in the United States to the late 1800s. Cremin (as cited in Herr, 2001), a historian of education, suggested that the clearest reminder in contemporary schools of the Progressive Education Movement, which flourished in the last quarter of the 19th Century and the first 50 years of the 20th Century, is the guidance counselor. The Progressive Movement was a movement that sought to change negative social conditions associated with the Industrial Revolution, a period of rapid industrial growth, social protest, social reform and utopian idealism in which the United States was deeply involved during this time period (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

The work of a number of individuals, including people such as Frank Parsons, Meyer Bloomfield, Jessie Davis, Anna Reed, E. W. Weaver, and David Hill, were instrumental in formulating and implementing early conceptions of guidance, each working through a number of organizations and movements such as the settlement house movement, the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education, and schools in Grand Rapids, Seattle, New York, and New Orleans (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

Parsons (as cited in Herr, 2001), who was widely seen as the architect of vocational guidance in the United States, saw the process of adapting vocational guidance to the school as fully compatible with the calls for educational reform in the schools in the early 1900s. Representing Parson's position on the need for a vocation guidance effort in the schools Stephens (as cited in Herr, 200l) stated in 1970:

> ...a school curriculum and educational goals that mirrored the occupational structure created merely a platform and impetus for launching youth into the world of work. What was clearly needed to consummate the launch were guidance mechanisms that would insure their safe and efficient arrival on the job. Without guidance experts it was argued, other efforts at reform would be aborted...the youth who had been carefully trained would also have to be carefully counseled into a suitable occupational niche (Herr, 2001, p. 237).

The initial label of vocational education representing school counseling which later evolved to vocational guidance during the infancy of the school counseling movement strongly focused on the training and guidance of young people to enter the work force.

Throughout history school counseling has experienced a number of shifts in emphasis, each reflecting its own socio-historical context (Sink & MacDonald, 1998). Herr (2001) suggests that the rise of school counseling at the end of the 19th Century was accelerated by the demands of the industrial revolution for workers, the need to match the large number of immigrants coming to this nation seeking better economic opportunities with the available jobs, and the concerns of many of the early pioneers of school counseling. These concerns involved preserving human dignity, free and informed

choice, and the need to change the content and practice of schools to address the changing social, economic and political conditions of the nation (Herr, 2001). Cole (1988) identifies several societal forces in the early part of the 20th century that facilitated the emergence of the school guidance and counseling movement. These include: a philanthropic and humanitarian movement stressing vocational guidance for young wage earners, a mental hygiene emphasis that called for more humane treatment for mental patients, technological unemployment and economic depression, laws reducing child labor and compulsory school attendance, industrialization, urbanization, perceived depersonalization of American society, measurement, accountability, and a call for quality education for all students (Cole & Walz, 1988).

Herr (2001) reflects upon the foundational beliefs of the early pioneers of the guidance movement:

> In discussing the role of Parsons and other early social and educational reformers, Cremin (as cited in Herr, 2001) observed that Progressive Education embraced several of the early assumptions of the implementations of guidance in schools:
>
> - The craft of vocational guidance would serve not only the youngsters who sought counsel, but the cause of social reform as well.
> - The effort to individualize education was at the heart of what came to be known as educational guidance.
> - The effort to develop a science of education, also at the heart of the progressive movement, was reflected into spirited interest in tests

and measurements that grew up in the United States shortly after the turn of the century.

- The idea developed of the guidance worker as a trained professional, wise in administering and interpreting scientific instruments for the prediction of vocational and educational success.

While not addressing the comprehensive nature of guidance as a program, these observers made clear that guidance mechanisms were early responses to educational reform with implications for facilitating the economic development of the nation as well as the decision making of individuals (Herr, 2001, p. 237).

Gysbers & Henderson (2001) articulate the perspective of Ginn (1924) regarding the first guidance counselors: "The implementation of guidance and counseling in the schools during the first two decades of the 20th Century was accomplished by appointing teachers to the position of vocational counselor, often with no relief from their teaching duties and with no additional pay" (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001, p. 247). These teachers performed a list of duties without any organizational structure for vocational guidance. This early period in the historical development of school counseling is considered a position orientation to guidance and counseling. As early as the 1920s and 1930s concern was beginning to be expressed about the lack of a unified guidance program (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). Various individuals cited potential problems that could arise due to the absence of an agreed-upon centralized structure to organize and direct the work of vocational counselors. Gysbers and Henderson (2001) reference two pioneers in the field, which addressed this issue early in the 20th Century. The first is Myers (1923):

> Another tendency dangerous to the cause of vocational guidance is the tendency to load the vocational counselor with so many duties foreign to the office that little real counseling can be done. The principal, and often the counselor himself, has a very indefinite idea of the proper duties of this new office. The counselor's time is more free from definite assignments with groups or classes of pupils than is that of the ordinary teacher. If well chosen he has administrative ability. It is perfectly natural, therefore, for the principal to assign one administrative duty after another to the counselor until he becomes practically assistant principal, with little time for the real work of a counselor" (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001, p. 247).

Fitch (1936) expresses the second view, which echoes the concern about position orientation voiced by Myers (1923):

> The dominance of the principal in the field of guidance has also resulted in some cases in an undesirable expansion of the tasks assigned to the counselor. Where the principal has an intelligent and sympathetic interest in the practice of vocational guidance this is less likely to occur, but there is always danger that the counselor may come to be regarded as a handy man on whom may be unloaded any sort of task that no one else has time to do. Thus we often find counselors performing the function of visiting teacher, director of the lunch room, substitute teacher, counselor of problem pupils, etc. They may be called upon to act in all sorts of roles from that of chairman of the committee on social

activities to that of assistant principal (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001, p.247).

The position orientation of vocational guidance evolved to a service orientation. In the effort to develop structure for guidance and counseling in the schools, some adopted an organization framework called pupil personnel work. The personnel involved in delivering this broad range of services included attendance officers, visiting teachers, school nurses, school physicians, and vocational counselors. Later the title pupil personnel work was modified into pupil personnel services and included the work of social workers and school psychologists as well. It continued to be the preferred organizational system (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

Addressing changes in the years to follow Gysbers and Henderson (2001) comment:

> "As the decades of the 20th Century unfolded, the influences of educational reform movements, the work of theorists and practitioners, and various social, political, and economic events, all combined to continue to shape the nature and structure of guidance and counseling in schools. The vocational focus remained, but it was often overshadowed by a more psychological/clinical perspective with an emphasis on counseling and by testing. Federal legislation, including the Vocational Education Act of 1946 (George-Barden Act) and the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958 also played a part in shaping guidance and counseling in the schools" (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001, p. 247-248).

Cole (1988) suggests that the single strongest impetus for the role of the school counselor was the NDEA of 1958, motivated by space exploration competition with Russia, which provided guidance with substantial funding to discover more scientific talent in the schools. NDEA Institutes had prepared thousands of counselors by the mid-60s, and the number of counselors in secondary schools increased from about 12,000 in the late 1950s to almost 30,000 in the early 1960s. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 followed, which strengthened previous legislation that fostered vocational guidance and required vocational guidance and counseling for all students enrolled in vocational courses. (Cole & Walz, 1988).

By the 1960s, due to a great degree to the NDEA of 1958, guidance and counseling in the schools was being provided more often by full-time counselors who did not have additional teaching responsibilities. Six guidance services were commonly identified and delivered by the school counselors—orientation, assessment, information, counseling, placement, and follow-up. Guidance and counseling was often seen as a ancillary-support service, which put counselors primarily in remedial-reactive roles that were not viewed as fundamental to the mainstream educational effort. This pattern often continued to place counselors in the position of taking on administrative-clerical duties (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

Herr (2001) emphasized the tremendous impact that the NDEA of 1958 had on shaping the school counseling profession into what it is today. He states:

> "As the NDEA unfolded over the 10-year life of this legislation, what had been a narrowly focused national concern about identification and counseling of scientifically talented students, when implemented in

> the schools, began to be seen as important for all students, not just the scientifically talented. Further, with the support for secondary and subsequently, elementary school counselors, the ACT essentially gave impetus to the creation of K-12 guidance programs and to school counselors being seen as vital professionals in discharging the changing missions of schools. And, certainly, as funding was provided to counselor education programs to prepare school counselors, it stimulated the development of theory, new models of practice, and paradigms of accountability (Herr, 2001, p. 238).

As the internal and external demands of their position increased significantly over time, school counselors became primarily crisis-oriented, reactive, focused on remediation over prevention, and overburdened with nonguidance-related clerical and administrative tasks. Consequently, the public often viewed the typical duties of secondary counselors as largely unrelated to the teaching-learning process. Concurrently, calls for restructuring counseling practice emerged from within the counseling field as early as the late 1960s and several organizational models in the 1970s and 1980s emerged emphasizing a systems approach, developmental theory, and proposed research. (Sink & MacDonald, 1998).

By the 1970s the service-oriented approach began to integrate with the process model, another traditional organizational pattern focusing on the processes of counseling, consulting, and coordination as the primary services afforded to students. Also in the 1970s an effort emerged to reorient guidance and counseling from an ancillary service delivered by a school counselor into a comprehensive, developmental program integral to

the entire educational system. The fundamental responsibility of school counselors was reconceptualized from an ancillary and position-focused service provider to a developmental guidance specialist (Sink & MacDonald, 1998). Because of this change in focus, the developmental counselor is curriculum and program-oriented, available to all students, and is competent to teach important life skills (Sink & MacDonald, 1998).

Gysbers and Henderson (2001) attribute the call for reorientation primarily to:

(a) a renewed interest in vocational-career guidance (and its theoretical base, career development),

(b) a renewed interest in developmental guidance and counseling,

(c) concern about the efficacy of the prevailing approach to guidance and counseling in the schools, and

(d) concern about accountability and evaluation" (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001, p. 248).

Administrators, policy-makers, and legislators did not find the outcomes of guidance and counseling self-evident and they were unwilling to accept the validity of guidance on faith. Neither were they willing to accept counselor statements that indicated that measuring guidance outcomes was impossible. Typically, those who were holding school counselors accountable were interested in outcomes that resulted rather than the processes used. These accountability issues instigated focus within the guidance and counseling field on identifying expected results from guidance functions and using the information for planning purposes. By the early 1970s a movement toward the implementing accountability and evaluation mechanisms within comprehensive guidance programs had begun (Herr, 2000).

Developmental, comprehensive guidance programs that are proactive and preventive in nature, designed to meet the needs of all students by helping them to acquire competencies to meet the expectations of all their life roles, continued to be put into schools throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Models increased in sophistication and were translated into practical, effective models at the state, district, and local school levels. Comprehensive programs continue to be the dominant method of organizing and managing guidance and counseling in the schools across the country, although the legacy of the traditional organization models continues to define the job duties of many school counselors (Sink & MacDonald, 1998).

Beginning in the 1970s the Governing Board of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) started issuing a series of position and role statements concerning the establishment of school-based comprehensive and developmental guidance and counseling programs. Many states developed standards for school counseling K-12 curriculum for counselors to implement, although school counseling programs vary significantly from state to state. Based on a 1998 nationwide survey, results revealed that comprehensive developmental guidance and counseling programs have been developed in approximately half of the states and it is anticipated that numbers may increase to 34 or more states by the end of the decade (Sink & MacDonald, 1998).

The principal attributes of a comprehensive developmental guidance and counseling model are sharply different from those of a traditional service-delivery approach. Comprehensive programs, for example, de-emphasize administrative and clerical tasks (nonguidance activities) and crisis-centered modes of intervention. Instead,

they promote guidance activities and structured group experiences that are designed to support students in the process of skill-development (Sink & MacDonald, 1998).

The Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model describes the difference between the traditional and developmental model of counseling as a shifting of emphasis illustrated below:

Traditional	Developmental
Crisis Counseling	Preventive Plus Crisis Counseling
Information Service	Guidance Curriculum
Career Information Service	Career Planning and Development
Scheduling/Programming	Program Management
Reactive	Proactive
Clerical/Task-Oriented	Goal-Oriented
Unplanned	Planned Daily Activities
Unstructured	Accountable
Maintains Status Quo	Evaluates and Changes (WDPI, 1986)

Both federal legislation and selected national commissions recognized the importance of planned, systematic, and comprehensive guidance programs in the 1980s and 1990s. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984, designed to improve, expand, and extend career guidance and counseling programs to meet the career development, vocational education, and employment needs of vocational education students, affirmed the use of the term *guidance program*. The National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee has had a major impact on the planning of guidance programs, particularly the career guidance aspects, and on counselor training, helping to reinforce the need for comprehensive guidance programs. The School to Work

Opportunities Act approved by Congress in 1994 is the most recent legislation supporting planned comprehensive guidance programs (Herr, 2001).

In addition to federal legislation, a number of "blue ribbon" panels discussing educational reforms were assembled in the last two decades. For example, in 1986 the Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling of the College Board prioritized the importance of comprehensive guidance programs in schools by making several recommendations in line with philosophy and orientation of such programs. Many states as well as major cities in the United States have developed models of programs (Herr, 2001). The Minnesota School Counselors' Association published The Minnesota School Counselors' Model of Developmental Guidance and Counseling in 1993 (Rief & Enestvedt, 1993). In 1997, the American School Counselor Association adopted The National Standards for School Counseling Programs, emphatically using the word *program* to describe the organization and purpose of counseling in schools (Herr, 2001).

While guidance and counseling programs have evolved from a position to a service to a comprehensive program orientation during the last century (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001), other factors have influenced the changing role of the counselor as well. The turbulent times of the 1960s and early 1970s facilitated several new trends in society. Divorce rates increased, family units became less traditional and more mobile, racial tensions exploded, women's roles changed, drug abuse and teen pregnancy skyrocketed, draft-dodgers emerged, runaway children increased, and school counselors found themselves dealing with a whole different set of issues. Parents, teachers, and administrators looked to counselors for the expertise in human behavior. Trained to provide vocational guidance, many school counselors were now overwhelmed with

demands beyond their training and experience, and spent a substantial amount of time dealing with crises (Cole & Walz, 1987).

New demands gave way to changes in how school counselors were trained and introduced new techniques and approaches. More students needed individual counseling related to personal issues. School counselors attempted to address these needs, but time constraints forced them to develop a consultative role and focus on referral services to outside agencies, which were increasing in availability. It became more socially acceptable and affordable for individuals to seek mental health treatment (Cole & Walz, 1987).

Group counseling, intended to address specific problems commonly held by assorted individuals in a group format, became an accepted part of the counseling process. School counselors not only began to run student support groups during the school day, but also offered parenting groups as well. They began to play a consultative role with parents and families, attempting to educate, intervene, and help families develop the knowledge and skills to address the needs of their children (Cole & Walz, 1987).

In the 1980s, the roles of counselors became increasingly devoted to a range of social problems such as chemical dependency, changing family structures, special needs of children with single parents or in blended families, child-rearing problems, child abuse, the lack of acceptance of diversity of ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion, etc., school violence, and other crisis issues. Consequently the roles of counselors were broadened and the need for comprehensive counseling programs became more apparent (Herr, 2001).

At the beginning of the 21st century American schools continue deal with a host of social ills and mental health issues. Comprehensive guidance programs continue to evolve as the desired standard approach to school counseling in the United States (Herr, 2001). School counselors struggle to meet a plethora of needs within a limited time frame. Due to the lack of continuity within programs across community and state boundaries, counselors are dealing with varying constraints. Because the legacy of traditional organizational models continue to define the job duties of many school counselors (Herr, 2001), too often overwhelming demands force them to stay in a reactive mode and non-counseling, administrative tasks are inappropriately delegated to them, diminishing their student contact time.

School violence, though not uncommon throughout the last four decades of the 20th century, sent shock waves through the nation on April 20, 1999 when two boys murdered several students, a teacher, and then themselves at the middle-class suburban Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Columbine was so ornately gory and so profoundly heartbreaking that it became a cultural reference point. In the two years since Columbine, America's schools have been plagued by new attacks; Time Magazine reported on 20 different plots during that time period. Many violent plans of students were foiled because their classmates took threats more seriously and so did school officials when they were reported (Gibbs, 2001).

Parents perceive school violence to be escalating and they are frightened and concerned about the safety of their children in schools as evidenced in an April 2000 poll in which 70% of adults said they believe a shooting was likely in their neighborhood's school. With a contrary perspective, roughly the same percentage of students said that

they feel personally safe from campus violence in a fall 1999 poll. The actual statistics show that more than 99.9% of public schools have never had a homicide of any kind, let alone a mass killing. In the 1992-93 school year there were 54 violent deaths on campuses compared to 16 in 1999-2000 (Cloud, 2001).

School counselors are called upon to lead violence prevention and intervention efforts all across the country. The United States Congress led by Minnesota senator, Paul Wellstone, and others have attempted to mandate school counselors in adequate numbers into every school. Increased national attention has been focused on the role of school counselors since the Columbine incident of 1999 and similar events in other schools in the years that followed. Protecting their own children and ensuring that mental health needs of young people are addressed is the average American's concern today. School counselors are being called upon to play a major role in this endeavor.

Changes in our nation's economy, particularly the movement from a manufacturing-based to a service-based economy and the incredible technological advances of the 1980s and 1990s, have impacted school career guidance. School counselors are expected to understand labor market information and keep current on labor market trends. The national initiatives, Goals 2000 and School to Work, have aimed to attract students to technology-based fields that require a technical college degree and offer good starting salaries. Many school counselors have accessed funds through these initiatives to develop career mentoring or shadowing programs, coordinate career fairs or related special events, bring in speakers to feature a variety of careers, and/or access resources for use in career resource center, which are commonplace in most high schools

today. Sometimes counselors staff the career resource center after school or during the evening and present career planning information to parents.

As comprehensive guidance and counseling models are implemented, school counselors are spending more time in the classroom delivering developmentally appropriate material related to career, academic, and social/personal competencies at all grade levels. At the high school level a large amount of time is devoted to facilitating the *post-secondary* (formerly called *college*) planning of students. With huge increases in the number of students going to college and other post-secondary schools this endeavor consumes an increasing amount of school counselors' time. Most counselors write numerous college and scholarship recommendations, process student applications to colleges and other post-secondary schools, and spend many hours consulting with students and parents regarding choosing a post-secondary school, a field to pursue, understanding the financial aid and scholarship system, and negotiating their way through the information-seeking and application process.

School counselors tend to be generalists within a school system, with a wide variety of responsibilities. Role definition is extremely important. It is difficult to evaluate one's effectiveness if one's role has not been clearly defined. Because so many functions can fall under the domain of the school counselor, it is particularly important to clarify counselors' roles so those counselors can effectively manage their time and set priorities appropriately. Bemark (2001) asserts that the job description for school counselors must be redefined to align effectively with national and state educational objectives. He emphasizes the change in terminology that refers to the *school counselor* rather than *school guidance counselor* or *guidance counselor*. This change represents a

shift in role definition and is particularly important in light of the critical period of transition school counseling is currently undergoing that will determine its future structure and existence (Bemark, 2001).

Key Elements of Programs Today

Life career development is the terminology used today to describe the process of human development that occurs throughout a person's life as they learn to integrate their life roles and experiences. *Life* emphasizes that the focus of this conception is on the whole person. *Career* identifies the many roles that individuals assume (student, worker, consumer, citizen, parent), the settings in which individuals find themselves (home, school, community), and the events that occur over a lifetime (entry job, marriage, divorce, retirement). *Development* illustrates that the person is always in the process of becoming. When these three words are used in sequence, a greater meaning evolves describing total, unique individuals with their own life styles. An organizing and integrating concept for understanding and facilitating human development, life career development is the foundation for comprehensive guidance and counseling programs today and serves as the basis for identifying the developmental competencies that students need to master. (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

According to Gysbers and Henderson (2001) content, an organizational framework, and resources are the three key elements of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program. The content is usually organized around domains such as career, academic, and personal/social. Developmental competencies that students achieve by participating in the activities of the program are identified within each domain. Age-

appropriate competencies are typically developed across the grade levels (K-12), building on foundational preparation in the previous years (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). For example, the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model focuses on helping elementary students *learn about* the areas addressed within the competencies, while the orientation for middle/junior high students is on *understanding* the concepts, and high school students need to *apply* what they have previously learned, moving toward increased understanding and knowledge (WDPI, 1992).

The organizational framework contains three structural components (definition, rationale, assumptions), and four program components (guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, system support), along with a suggested distribution of counselor time by grade levels across the four program components. The definition should include a mission statement that portrays the program as an integral component within the total educational system. The rationale describes the importance of the program and should be based upon information gathered from needs-assessment tools. The principles that shape and guide the program are the assumptions.

The guidance curriculum component is generally delivered in a classroom setting, but can be accomplished in a structured group or large group format depending on the goals and content. Structured activities (K-12) that give students an opportunity to master competencies drawn from the content element of the program are presented. Individual planning involves assisting students in understanding and periodically monitoring their career, academic, and personal/social development. Advisement, assessment , placement, and follow-up are the usual activities associated with individual planning. Dealing with the problems related to the many areas in a student's life is

considered responsive services. This can involve individual counseling, small group counseling, consultation, and referral. System support includes the activities involved in the administration and management of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program such as research and development, professional development, staff/community advisory boards, community outreach, program management, and fair-share responsibilities within a school (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

How counselors distribute their time across all the program components varies by grade level. The following recommendations are suggested:

	Elementary	Middle/Junior	Senior High
Guidance Curriculum	35-45%	25-35%	15-25%
Individual Planning	5-10%	15-25%	25-35%
Responsive Services	30-40%	30-40%	25-35%
System Support	10-15%	10-15%	15-20%
	100%	100%	100%

(Gysbers & Henderson, 2001)

Human, financial, and political resources each play an important role as key elements of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program. While school counselors are the primary human resources, others such as teachers, administrators, parents, students, community members, and business and labor personnel play supportive roles fostering a program's success. In order to function effectively, financial resources including a budget for materials and equipment and appropriate facilities to house the personnel of the program must be adequate. The mobilization of political resources is

key to success as well. Programs must receive support and endorsements from influential people in the district administration and the school board (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

As we enter the 21st Century rapid, substantial, and ongoing societal changes present personal challenges for students and counselors. Comprehensive guidance and counseling programs must be responsive to the needs of the students, parents, and school staff. Content priorities may change with the fluctuations in society, even the rationale and assumptions that support the program may change. The activities and procedures will be changed and improved. The allocation of counselors' time may be altered. The basic organizational structure, however, should remain the same, providing the means for school counselors to apply their talents to meet the needs of students using methods desired by the stakeholders within that school community. The structure provides a foundation for the accountable use of resources. The program supports accountability for program relevance by using needs-assessment data to set program direction, for content priorities through evaluation of student results, and for counselors' performance through assessment of their use of time and evaluation of their competence based on professional school counseling standards (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

National Standards for School Counseling

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) asserts that the purpose of a counseling program in a school setting is to promote and enhance the learning process. The goal of the program is to enable all students to achieve success in school and to develop into contributing members of our society. The National Standards for School Counseling Programs facilitate student development in three broad areas: academic

development; career development; and personal/social development. The standards provide the guidance, direction and the framework for state, school systems and individual schools to develop effective school counseling programs.

There are nine standards—three in each broad area—described below:

1) **Academic Development**: implementing strategies and activities that support and maximize student learning including acquiring skills, attitudes, and knowledge to learn effectively; employing strategies to achieve success in school; and understanding the relationship of academics to the world of work, and to life at home and in the community.

   Standard A. Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills, that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.

   Standard B. Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial post-secondary options, including college.

   Standard C. Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work, and to life at home and in the community.

2) **Career Development**: enabling students to make a successful transition from school to the world of work including strategies to achieve future career success and job satisfaction; fostering an understanding of the relationship between personal qualities, education and training, and the world of work; and the development of career goals by all students as a result of career awareness and experiential activities.

Standard A. Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.

Standard B. Students will employ strategies to achieve future career success and satisfaction.

Standard C. Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education and training, and the world of work.

3) **Personal/Social Development**: providing a foundation for personal and social growth which contributes to academic and career success including the acquisition of skills, attitudes, and knowledge which helps students to respect self and others; the use of effective interpersonal skills; the employment of safety and survival skills; understanding the obligation to be contributing members of our society; and the ability to negotiate successfully and safely in the increasingly complex and diverse world of the 21st century.

Standard A. Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

Standard B. Students will make decisions, set goals, and take necessary action to achieve goals.

Standard C. Students will understand safety and survival skills.

The National Standards for School Counseling Programs assist school counselors, school and district administrators, faculty and staff, parents, counselor educators, state associations, business, community and policy makers to provide effective school counseling programs for all students (ASCA, 2001).

Planning for the Future

The Minnesota School Counselor Association aligns with the philosophical position of the American School Counselor Association, referring to three domains around which a comprehensive developmental guidance and counseling program should be built. The organization outlines an eight-step process to begin the challenge of change from a traditional model to a comprehensive developmental model of guidance and counseling.

The first step in the process is conducting a needs assessment allowing all stakeholders (parents, students, staff) in the guidance process the opportunity to share thoughts and feelings about what has been and should be contained in the school district adaptation of the Minnesota Model. The Minnesota School Counselor Association has made sample assessment surveys available. The eight recommended steps are as follows:

1) conducting a needs assessment
2) conducting a counselor time and task analysis
3) writing a mission statement
4) identifying outcomes for each of the three domains
5) selecting competencies to correspond with outcomes
6) developing delivery methods
7) establishing activities or strategies to meet the competencies
8) evaluating outcomes/competencies and making adjustments. (Rief & Enestvedt 1993).

Planning for the future is a tremendous, but essential task. The task can be broken down into manageable steps and many authors have contributed formulas with step-by-

step processes outlined for schools to follow. A well-designed and implemented evaluation process plays a key role in planning and decision making, insuring that the program is responsive to the needs of the population served.

Summary

Evaluation plays an important role in building and maintaining strong school counseling programs. It provides accountability, self-reflective feedback for counselors, a means of making adjustments and changes in programs, and allows for continuous improvement. Good evaluation will also show whether the goals of the program were realized, whether the mission was accomplished and if the identified needs were met. It is a necessary commitment of every school district.

The profession of school counseling has evolved from a position to a service to a comprehensive program orientation (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). As guidance and counseling programs develop a comprehensive, results-based, systems approach, sound evaluation plays an even more critical role in making decisions related to building and modifying the program, ultimately meeting student needs most effectively.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

In order to determine what stakeholders perceive as their needs of the counseling program and ascertain how well the needs are currently being met a written survey instrument was implemented. Four groups of stakeholders—students, parents, teachers, and administrators—were asked to participate in the study. This chapter will include discussion related to a description of the population, the sample selection, the measures used, and the steps taken in carrying out the research project. All numbers quoted regarding populations are based on March 2001 figures.

The Population

Stillwater Area Schools serve the residents of several communities in the St. Croix Valley of southeastern Minnesota. It is a rural/suburban area in Washington County, one of the wealthiest counties per capita in the nation. Although there is a heavy constituency of families with a high socio-economic status, there is also a wide variety of income levels and heavy representation of both white and blue-collar employment. Located 15 miles east of St. Paul, Minnesota's state capital, many of the area's residents commute into the Twin Cities metropolitan area to work. Total student population of the school district is 9,239 students in grades K-12 while the secondary student population is 4,423. It is the secondary population, students in grades 7-12, which will be the focus of this study, along with their parents, teachers and administrators.

There are four secondary schools in the school district. One is a senior high school, Stillwater Area High School serving 2,173 students in grades 10-12. Two are

junior high schools serving 7-9th grade students, Stillwater Junior High School and Oak-Land Junior High School enrolling 1,288 and 962 students, respectively. The fourth, the St. Croix Valley Alternative Learning Program, serves a non-traditional population of 70 students in grades 10-12 and an additional 26 post-12th grade students. This alternative program does not offer a counseling program and therefore was not included in the research process.

Stillwater Area High School is situated between a residential and commercial area in the city of Oak Park Heights, population 3,486. The school district runs approximately 25 miles north to south and six miles east to west. At the center of the district are the cities of Stillwater and Oak Park Heights, with a combined population of almost 20,000 people, offering a suburban lifestyle. The north and south ends of the district are rural areas dotted with communities of 600 to 2,600 residents.

The populations of the junior high schools are demographically similar to each other. Stillwater Junior High School is located within a residential neighborhood in the city of Stillwater, population 13,882, and draws its students from the northern half of the district. Oak-Land Junior High School is positioned in a more rural setting within the outlying boundaries of the city of Lake Elmo, population 5,903. Oak-Land serves students in the southern half of the district.

Development of the Survey Instrument

The survey instruments (see Appendix A) were taken from The Minnesota School Counselors' Model of Developmental Guidance and Counseling produced by the Minnesota School Counselors' Association (Rief, Enestvedt 1993). The survey

instruments remained almost entirely intact as presented in this publication. Only slight modifications were made. Two questions were eliminated from the needs-assessment involving helping students learn about human development, A.I.D.S., alcohol, drug abuse, and refusal skills. These topics are already integrated into the district's health curriculum and are not relevant to decisions regarding the counseling program. A couple of questions were rearranged to allow for direct correlation between the samples of stakeholders. A qualifier asking for the number of years a certified staff member had worked in the district was added in hopes of distinguishing any differences in perceptions between new and more senior faculty. Several specific questions were added for the 12th grade students in order to gain more specific feedback regarding elements of the high school program.

The survey instruments have been utilized by several other school districts in Minnesota, however evidence of validity or reliability is not available. Only anecdotal stories of success have been shared through the professional counseling networks. They have proven to be effective in helping stakeholders' articulate their needs related to the counseling program and give feedback regarding whether their needs are being met. Other school districts have been able to development improvement plans based on the results obtained. The information contained in the survey instruments is based upon national guidelines for school counselors supported by the American School Counselor Association.

Sample Selection

Students in 9th and 12th grades have spent almost three years in their various schools, consequently having had the greatest opportunity for involvement in the counseling program. Therefore, they became the target population for this research. A random sampling of 9th and 12th grade students were identified. The structure of each school determined the identification process and the ensuing random sampling.

Stillwater Junior High School organizes its students into three teams within each grade level. The music program dictates this structure in that students in the orchestra, band, and choir make up the core of the three teams. Students who are not involved in a music program are randomly assorted among them. It was necessary to draw a sample from each of the three teams. The 9th grade students are computer sorted into required core classes (English, social studies, and science) within the team assignments. They are not grouped by ability in any of these classes. However, the timing of foreign language, math, and music classes can bias the student composition within various sections that meet at the same period. Therefore in identifying one required core class to survey in each 9th grade team, attention was paid to choose sections that did not meet opposite any classes that might impact the composition in such a way that it would become less random. 96 out of 458 9th grade students (21%) were surveyed at Stillwater Junior High School.

Oak-Land Junior High School's 9th grade students are not organized into teams. The computer randomly sorts them into a required social studies course and they are not grouped by ability. Two of these social studies classes were surveyed. To insure the most random assortment, sections were chosen that met during an hour of the school day in

which no music, no foreign language, or advanced math classes were offered. 62 out of 320 9th grade students (19.4%) were surveyed at Oak-Land Junior High School. Between the two junior high schools, a total of 158 ninth grade students were surveyed, representing 20.3% of the total district 9th grade population

Identifying a random population was a bit more complicated at Stillwater Area High School. Students in 12th grade are grouped by ability in all core classes and have many more curricular options including technical college and internship programs that take them out of the building for a portion of the school day. Of the 711 12th grade students, all are required to take senior-level social studies. 563 students (79.2% of the 12th grade population) were enrolled in a regular level social studies class and 148 students (20.8% of 12th grade population) were taking an advanced level social studies course. A total of 155 students (79.5% of the sample) in seven regular social studies classes and 40 students (20.5% of the sample) in two advanced social studies classes were surveyed. The entire 195 students surveyed represents 27.1% of the total 12th grade population.

The percentage surveyed in 12th grade was slightly higher than in 9th grade for two reasons. The effort in aligning the sample population to match the proportion of students in regular vs. advanced level courses required a greater sample. It was also anticipated that the rate of return would be lower with 12th grade students. Surveying more students would potentially yield a greater number of returned surveys, ultimately yielding more useful results.

Since a random sampling of students had been carefully identified, it seemed logical and expedient to use the parents of the student sample as the random sampling of

parents. All certified staff (other than counselors) and administrators in each of the three secondary buildings were given an opportunity to participate in the study. Certified staff includes teachers and all other faculty on a teacher's contract such as media specialists, school nurses technology specialists, etc.

Research Procedures

During the last half of February through the first week in March of 2001, identified stakeholders were contacted and asked to complete the written survey instrument. All contacts with students and their parents were made through the various classrooms that had been identified as the random student sample. The research project was explained to students and each student was given an opportunity to participate. A parental consent form, a parent survey, and a cover letter explaining the project were distributed to each student. Students were directed to bring these materials home to their parents, return the consent form signed if they chose to participate, and return the completed parent survey to their classroom teacher if their parent(s) chose to participate. Within two weeks a second contact was made with each classroom. Completed parent surveys were collected and students with signed consent forms completed student surveys.

A survey along with a cover letter of explanation was placed in the school mailbox of each certified staff member and administrator. A sealed box with a slot in the top was placed in each school's mailroom for the return of the completed surveys. A period of two weeks was given to complete the surveys.

Surveys were color-coded according to school. All surveys disseminated at Stillwater Area High School were blue, at Stillwater Junior High School yellow, and Oak-Land Junior High School's surveys were green. The purpose of the color-coding was to enable an analysis of the information by school as well as in totality within the district.

Limitations

Midway through their last year of high school, young people are stressed and distracted by many things. Since the 12th grade students would not directly benefit from any changes in the counseling program that might result from the information gathered in this study, their motivation to complete the survey and do so accurately could be impaired. That is true to a lesser degree with the 9th grade students who were told that their input could lead to changes in the high school counseling program, which does impact them.

Having students act as the delivery vehicle for the parent survey could potentially be a limitation. However, this method was chosen because it was believed to be more effective in yielding a higher rate of return than direct mail. How teachers facilitated this process in their classroom was a difficult variable to control. It was evident that some teachers made consistent efforts to remind their students to return the surveys and others did not. Some teachers offered rewards of extra credit points or candy for returned parent surveys and parental consent forms. To maintain fairness and avoid bias, as long as a student brought some communication back from the parent, even if the parent chose not to participate, the student was eligible for the reward. Other teachers offered no reward.

Due to the staffing structure within the various schools, some student and parent surveys will be more reflective of the entire counseling department in that school. Since Oak-Land Junior High School divides its caseload alphabetically across the grade levels, half of the 9th grade students are assigned to each counselor. The results should be equally reflective of both counselors' efforts. However, at Stillwater Junior High School each counselor is assigned a grade level so all of the 9th grade student and parent responses will be reflective of their interactions with only one of the three counselors. The same is true at Stillwater Area High School where two counselors are assigned to each grade level, thus the survey results will be reflective of interactions with only one-third of the counseling staff.

In addition to the team of two counselors, there has been an intern counselor working with the graduating class of 2001. This intern position has been filled each year with a different individual. Consequently, 25% of the 12th grade students have been assigned a different intern counselor each of their three years in high school. Another staffing change occurred during the fall of 2000 causing half of the senior class to transition to a new counselor. This lack of continuity may play a role in shaping the feedback received by parents and students. However, although an individual counselor's personality and style naturally color the presentation, the elements of the counseling program are implemented consistently at various grade levels. It is the counseling program that is being evaluated, not individual counselors.

Summary

The following research questions are posed in this project. What do stakeholders perceive as their needs of the Stillwater Area Schools' counseling program? How well are needs are currently being met? What goals and desired outcomes for the future can be identified in partnership with stakeholders' needs? The survey instrument was designed to answer the first two questions. The third question will be addressed as the information gathered by the survey is analyzed. Seeking input from four different groups of stakeholders will hopefully provide a balanced perspective. Since the school district counseling department has been in support of this study, the probability is high that the results achieved through the information gathering and analysis of data will be utilized.

Chapter 4

Results and Findings

The expectations of a school counselor can vary considerably between individuals, groups (e.g. teachers), and communities. Clarifying the school counselor's role within a particular school and school district is important for counselors, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community at-large. Counselors can be more focused and responsive when the needs of a population have been clearly identified and more effective when the expectations are clearly understood by all stakeholders.

The major purposes of this research study were to determine what stakeholders perceive as their needs of the counseling program, to ascertain if stakeholders perceive that their needs are being met effectively, and to identify goals in partnership with stakeholders' needs and desired outcomes for the future. The research questions were addressed in surveys completed by four groups of stakeholders: students, parents, teachers (certified staff), and administrators (see Appendix A for survey instruments). The survey results are intended to help the Stillwater Area Schools Guidance and Counseling Department gain insight into the program's effectiveness and provide foundational data to direct program improvement in each of the secondary schools as well as in the overall counseling program within the school district.

Throughout this chapter building acronyms will refer to the three secondary schools involved in this research: Stillwater Area High School (SAHS), Stillwater Junior High School (SJHS), and Oak-Land Junior High School (OJHS).

Response from the Sample Surveyed

The rate of return in each of the four groups surveyed and a breakdown of the response rate according to each of the secondary schools is shown in Table 1. The rate of return was highest among administrators, 9th grade students at the junior high schools, and the parents of 9th grade students, with each of these three groups responding at a rate of 49% or higher. The 12th grade students' rate of return (24.6%) along with their parents (25.1%) was significantly lower. As anticipated, the 12th grade sample population may have been distracted by the demands and emotions surrounding the completion of the last semester of their senior year of high school and recognized that little personal benefit would be involved in any changes made in the counseling program. They would therefore be less inclined to follow-through in the required process of communicating the information to their parents, returning the signed consent forms that would allow them to participate in the survey, and delivering the completed parent surveys. It is the researcher's observation that the nearly 25% that completed the survey represents a cross-section of the entire 12th grade class. This observation is not only supported by the methods employed in the process of identifying a random population (see Chapter 3), but also in the personal observation involved in the surveying process. The researcher personally administered the surveys to all of the students who participated and had a high degree of familiarity with the 12th grade class, having worked with them throughout their 10th and 11th grade years.

Student and parent feedback is descriptive of interaction with a fraction of the counseling staff in certain buildings. The 12th grade students at SAHS have had primary contact with two counselors and one counseling intern, who represent approximately one-

third of the high school's counseling team. Therefore the survey results of 12th grade students will be reflective of a specific grade-level team at SAHS, one in which staffing turnover has been a factor. By reviewing student signatures on the parental consent forms, it was determined that the respondents were fairly well distributed alphabetically. There was a slightly better rate of response (8%) of students assigned to the researcher during their first two years of high school, probably due to the familiarity of the students with the researcher conducting the study.

Because the two junior high schools vary in counseling structure, the implications related to the student and parent results will be different. At SJHS, one counselor is assigned to the entire 9th grade class and has worked with this group of students for three years. The student and parent feedback regarding this school will therefore represent contact with a particular counselor. The counselors at OJHS divide the 9th grade caseload in half alphabetically and the 9th grade students participating in the study were equally distributed between the two counselors. The student and parent responses in this school should be reflective of the entire counseling team.

Some of the parent feedback seemed to be reflective of an overall experience with the school system including encounters relating to other children in the family, not just the child surveyed or the school in which the surveying took place. SAHS parents sometimes commented regarding experiences in junior high that have shaped their impressions and tendencies related to interfacing with counselors. At times junior high parents made reference to the overall (7-12) counseling program based upon the experience of more than one child. For example one SJHS parent stated, "Counseling at both schools are very available—I've sought assistance for another child and was quite satisfied."

Teacher response was strongest at SAHS (42.6%), possibly because of familiarity with the researcher who is a staff member on sabbatical leave from this school. Teacher response was nearly as high at OJHS (39.7%), but lower at SJHS (27.2%). Because the method of implied consent was used to facilitate an anonymous process with teachers, there is no way of determining whether the responders represent a cross-section of the certified staff population. However, there is no reason to believe that it might be skewed in any particular direction. All teachers would benefit from improvements made to the counseling department. The demanding nature of their position in the school is probably the primary reason that a majority of teachers did not take time to complete the survey.

In general, the teacher response should be reflective of the current counseling efforts in the particular building in which they were surveyed. However, other factors play a role as well. There has been significant turnover in counseling staff district-wide, but especially at SAHS. Eight years ago, only 3 of the 13 counselors in place today were counselors in the Stillwater Area Schools. Three years ago, only 6 of the 13 counselors currently employed were in those positions. With changes in counseling staff has come considerable change in philosophy and programmatic efforts.

63% of the teachers responding have been teaching in the school district for five or more years, 46% eleven or more years. Many of these teachers have taught at more than one secondary building. Experiences in different schools and interaction with previous counselors may have shaped their perspectives. Some found difficulty commenting on the overall efforts of the counseling program. For example one SJHS teacher commented, "Difficult to talk about the program as it differs by building and by counselor. The person providing counselor services is in large part the program."

The administrator response was very strong. Administration, having a significant interest in all program improvement, would tend to take surveying efforts seriously. Because the entire administrator population is so small, a higher response rate is necessary to generate reliable feedback. With 80% of the building administrators responding, it is expected that the comments are representative of the entire group.

Table 1

The Sample Surveyed and Response Rate

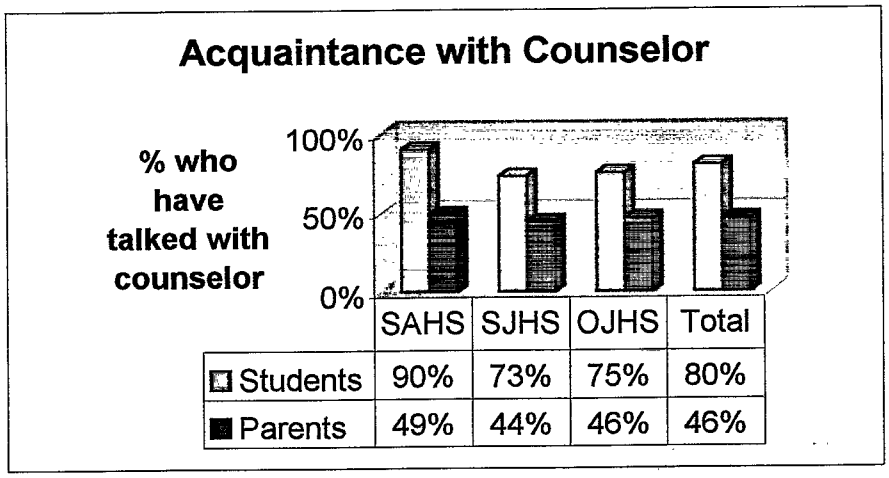
	Total number of surveys distributed	Number of completed surveys returned	Percentage of sample that returned surveys
STUDENTS			
SAHS	195	48	24.6%
SJHS	96	47	49.0%
OJHS	62	36	58.1%
Total Students	353	131	37.1%
PARENTS			
SAHS	195	49	25.1%
SJHS	96	51	53.1%
OJHS	62	37	59.7%
Total Parents	353	137	38.8%
TEACHERS			
SAHS	129	55	42.6%
SJHS	81	22	27.2%
OJHS	58	23	39.7%
Total Teachers	268	100	37.3%
ADMIN.			
SAHS	5	4	80.0%
SJHS	3	2	66.7%
OJHS	2	2	100.0%
Total Admin.	10	8	80.0%

Data Analysis

This section will be a discussion of the data generated from the surveys. The feedback from students and parents will be reviewed first, followed by the responses of the school staff. When the same question has been asked of all groups, the data will be reviewed together and compared (see Appendix A for survey instruments).

The first set of questions (1-6) on the student and parent surveys reflect upon actual experience with the assigned school counselor within the school the student attends. Question 1 measures the degree of acquaintance the student and parent have with the counselor. Students and parents who indicated on the surveys that they have talked with the counselor either about minor matters or heavy-duty concerns were considered acquainted with the counselor. It appears that while a high number of students are acquainted with their counselor, especially at SAHS, less than half of parents have the same level of acquaintance (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

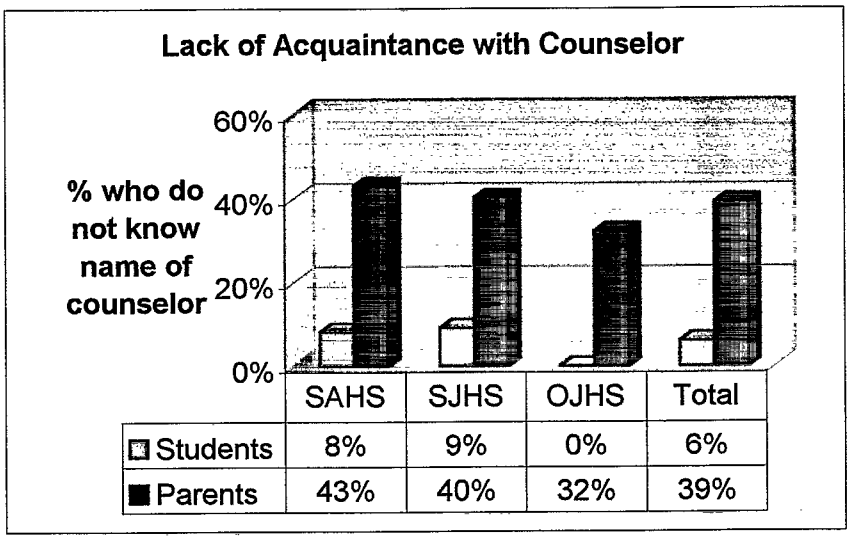


	SAHS	SJHS	OJHS	Total
Students	90%	73%	75%	80%
Parents	49%	44%	46%	46%

In fact, nearly half of the parents surveyed do not know the counselor's name, while most of the students who had not talked with a counselor could at least identify the

counselor by name (see Figure 2). Counselors appear to have established strong name recognition and acquaintance within the student body.

Figure 2



Questions regarding the accessibility to counselors were asked of each group. It appears from the results, question 2 on the student and parent surveys and questions 1 and 2 on the teacher and administrator surveys, that overall stakeholders perceive that counselors are easily accessible to students, parents, and staff. However, a concern emerged regarding student and parent accessibility to SAHS counselors. 19% of SAHS students and 8.3% of SAHS parents reported difficulty arranging to see the counselor, and another 40.5% of SAHS students and 25% of SAHS parents indicated that it was a slight struggle. In addition, 25% of SAHS teachers stated that students do not have easy access to counselors. The percentage of students and parents who perceive that they have easy access to counselors is shown in Figure 3. Figure 4 illustrates teacher and administration perception of counselor accessibility for students and for teachers.

Figure 3

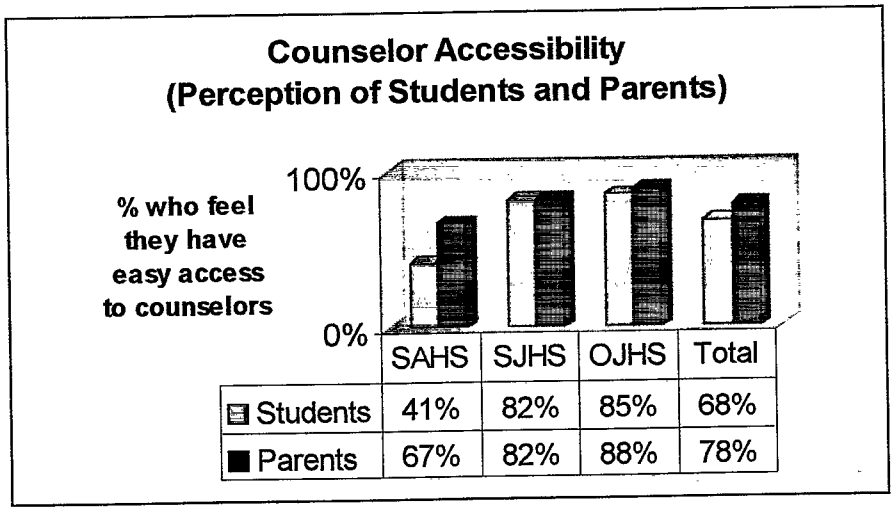
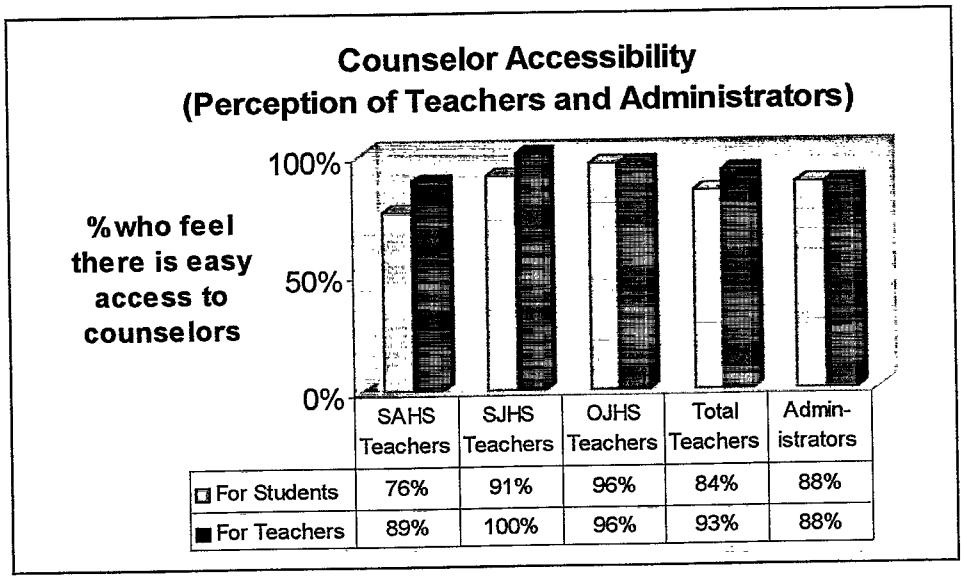


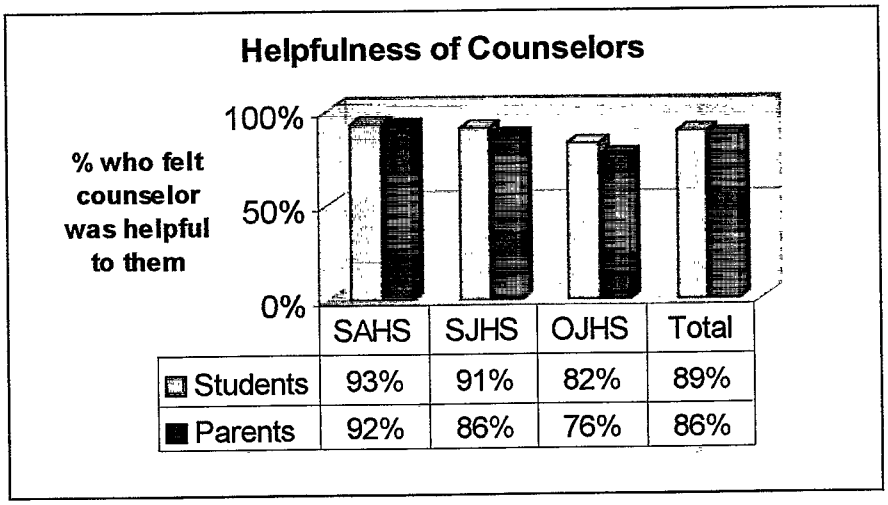
Figure 4



Question 3 asked students and parents who had previous contact with a counselor (those whom had indicated in question 1 that they had talked with a counselor) how helpful the counselor had been in their interaction. They were able to rate the degree of helpfulness received from somewhat helpful to helpful to very helpful. The results indicate that counselors are perceived as helpful to a majority of both students and

parents with degrees of helpfulness received evenly distributed across the range. Figure 5 illustrates the total number of students and parents (represented as a percentage) that perceived some level of helpfulness from the counselor.

Figure 5



Question 3 also offered an opportunity for students and parents to comment on their reasons for perceiving why the counselor was helpful or not helpful. Themes emerged from the written responses that indicated that both groups perceived counselors as helpful when their personal styles were friendly and positive, when they listened and demonstrated concern for students. Students and parents appreciated responsiveness, attentiveness to their problems, suggestions on how to deal with problems they were facing, and prompt follow-through on plans of action. The types of situations mentioned in which counselors at all three schools were helpful often related to class scheduling (current or registration for the next year), registering and orientating new students, solving problems (peer, teacher, academic, personal, etc.), and sharing ideas or advice.

At the high school level post-secondary planning activities including selecting and applying to colleges and writing letters of recommendation were frequently mentioned.

Students and parents felt the counselor was not helpful when they perceived that the counselor was not nice, uncaring about their problems, difficult to access, unwilling to honor requests or at least advocate for them, and didn't follow-through with a plan or situation.

Written comments taken from this section of the survey have been summarized, paraphrased, and grouped by similarity to identify themes. Students' and parents' comments are listed separately and broken down by school. Some responders were specific and others general in their comments. The numeral in parenthesis preceding some comments indicates the number of times that idea was repeated. If there is no number in front of a comment it was written by only one student or parent at that school.

SAHS Students...why was counselor helpful?
(9)Helped with scheduling/academic program problems
(6)Helped with college selection/application
(6)Positive, encouraging, helpful, nice in process
(4)Gave direction/information
(3)Prompt follow-through
(2)Solved problem
(2)Understanding, knowledgeable
(2)Wrote letter of recommendation
(2)Need was met
(2)Explained how things work
(2)Willing to listen...did the best they could
(2)Gave great advice in college selection
(2)PSEO academic advisement
Had good ideas
Gave plenty of time to talk
Gave me lots of time and support during tough time

SAHS Students...why was counselor not helpful?
(4)Hard to get an appointment (counselors are too busy)
(4)Lack of knowledge about high school classes
(3)Didn't solve problem or offer any alternative suggestions

(2)Counselor doesn't seem to care
Counselor enforced school policy rather than looking at student's best interest
Counselor didn't show up for either of two appointments
Takes 2 or 3 meetings to accomplish goals
Discouraged me from trying for a scholarship because grades weren't good enough
Didn't know me

SAHS Parents...why was counselor helpful?
(5)Knowledgeable (information provided/questions answered)
(3)College/scholarship applications
(2)Solved problem
Prompt attention
Scheduling for grad standards
New options were presented
Took time/didn't feel rushed
Encouraged/reassured
Arranged and facilitated a meeting with teacher
Insightful, kind, helpful, cared about my child
Academic placement issue
Developed homework monitoring plan
Connected to mentoring program
Directed me to who I should contact

SAHS Parents...why was counselor not helpful?
(2)Counselor did not know my child
Had to go to administrator to get action

SJHS Students...why was counselor helpful?
(5)Answered my question/provided information
(4)Scheduling concern/change
(4)Attended to need
(3)Helped work through the problem
(2)Helped with high school registration process
(2)Helped with personal problems/helps me see others' perspectives
Was very nice
Gave advice on how to handle a situation
Helped organize a meeting with teacher
It helped to talk
Helped me to understand

SJHS Students...why was counselor not helpful?
(2)No follow-through
(2)Heard it all before...told me the same thing over and over
(2)Lack of knowledge, opinions and caring (not aware of school problems)
Didn't listen/pay attention
I needed more detail

Counselor was too busy with other stuff
Short-tempered

SJHS Parents...why was counselor helpful?
(7)Provided information/was knowledgeable
(4)Well intentioned/willing to help/sympathetic/interested in concerns
(3)Facilitated accommodations needed/put plan in place
(2)Gave ideas/advice
(2)Solved problem
Communicated son's behavior at school

SJHS Parents...why was counselor not helpful?
(2)Not personally accessible—too much voice mail and not available in evening
Lack of knowledge related to grad standards testing
Lack of help with making high school course selections
Lack of follow-up
Limited by mainstream curriculum offering—no Gifted/Talented program
Lack of willingness to listen and positive attitude
Had sense my son was just another number

OJHS Students...why was counselor helpful?
(5)Prompt attention and follow-through
(4)Helped to solve problem or create plan
(4)Helpful with schedule change
(2)It felt good to talk with counselor (just needed someone to talk to)
(3)Helped through high school registration process
Provided orientation to new student
Helped with friend problems
Discussed locker theft
Provided information
Helped with grades
Good listener...and took action

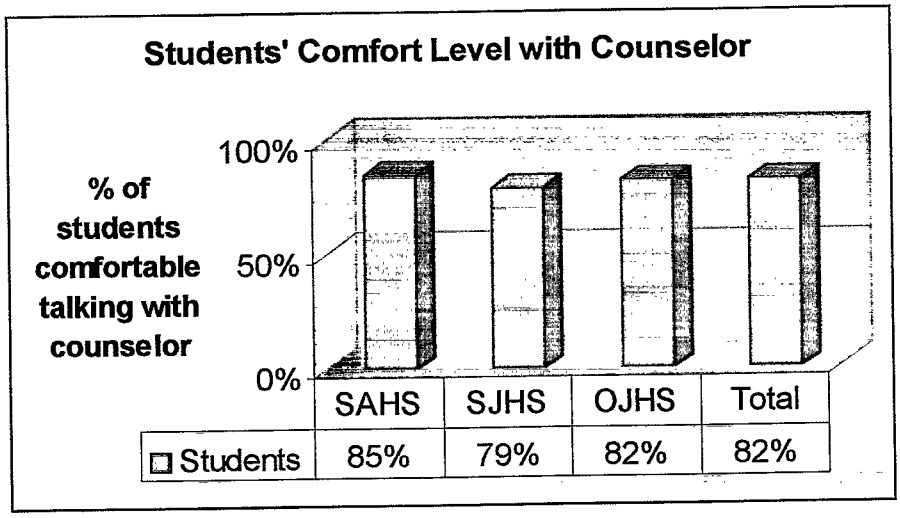
OJHS Students...why was counselor not helpful?
(3)Lack of follow-through
Not very nice/didn't seem like students' problem was important
Didn't answer my question
Talked too much/didn't listen
Didn't solve the problem/didn't do what student requested
Didn't talk about things
They just tell you what you already know and then you leave

OJHS Parents...why was counselor helpful?
(2)Concerns were addressed
(2)Advise/helpful suggestions
Sympathetic to issue (but was principal's decision)
Helpful to talk to counselor (but didn't get what I needed regarding teachers)
Making high school course selections
Gave information
Registration of new student
Helped child through family crisis

OJHS Parents...why was counselor not helpful?
(4)Wanted child placed in a different class—no cooperation from counselor
Wanted schedule change because of problems with peers in classes—counselor wouldn't change schedule without names and documentation of incidents.
Wasn't interested in my problem
No action

Question 4 on the student survey asks students who are acquainted with their counselor about their comfortable level in talking with him/her. Students could indicate a degree of comfort that ranged from somewhat to very comfortable or somewhat to very uncomfortable. 82% of students responded that they were comfortable when talking with their counselor. There was a fairly even split between the two levels of comfort at the high school, while two-thirds of junior high students reported that they were somewhat comfortable and one-third very comfortable. Figure 6 does not distinguish between the levels of comfort, but rather shows the total number of students who experience some level of comfort with their counselor.

Figure 6



Question 4 of the parent survey attempted to determine how helpful parents perceived counselors in the student's transition into his/her current school. The results indicated that a majority of parents, though only 78.4 %, felt that counselors were helpful to their children as they transitioned into their school from their previous school. Parents were able to choose from a range of helpfulness from somewhat helpful to helpful to very helpful. The bulk of the responses (39.2%) were in the somewhat helpful category. Second highest category was that of helpful (28%) and only 11.2% checked the very helpful category. There appeared to be some confusion related to this item, however, since many parents qualified their answers with written comments indicating that their son or daughter didn't need any help, therefore the counselors lack of helpfulness was no indication of a counseling deficiency. A few parents wrote that their children had always attended Stillwater schools so there had been no transition in their minds.

Questions 5 and 6 asked students and parents about the likelihood of initiating contact with a counselor if the student was experiencing an academic or personal/social

problem. Likeliness ranged from maybe to probably to very likely. Figures 7 and 8 do not distinguish between the levels of likelihood, rather the numbers indicate the percentage of students and parents that indicated some degree of likeliness to make contact with a counselor when dealing with problems in these two areas.

With regard to academic problems, 80.6% of students and 86% of parents checked responses in one of these three categories. The strongest showing for students was in the maybe (35.7%) category and the weakest was that of very likely (20.2%). The data of parents showed the opposite trend with 42.6% of parents reporting that they would be very likely to initiate contact and only 17.6% responding with a maybe. Many parents included written comments next to their response clarifying that they would always contact the teacher first regarding an academic problem.

Figure 7

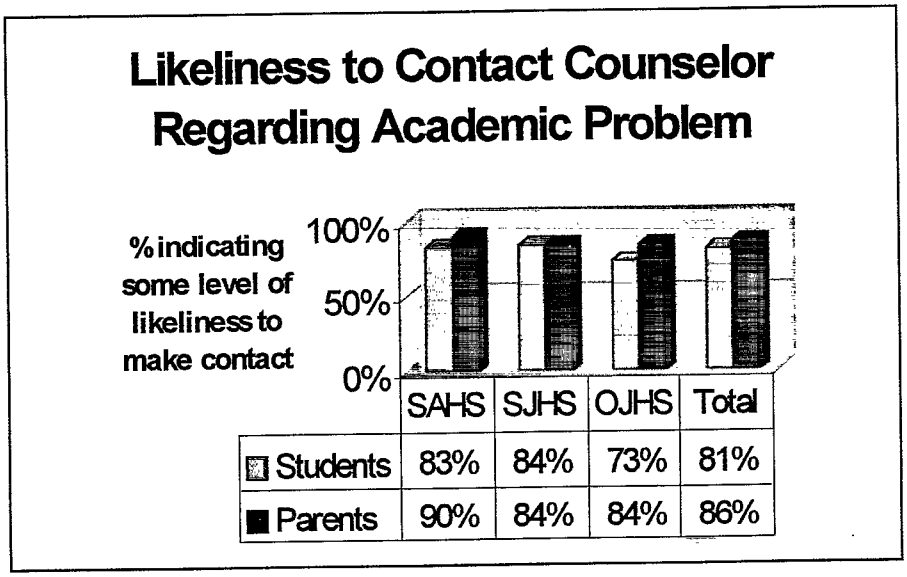
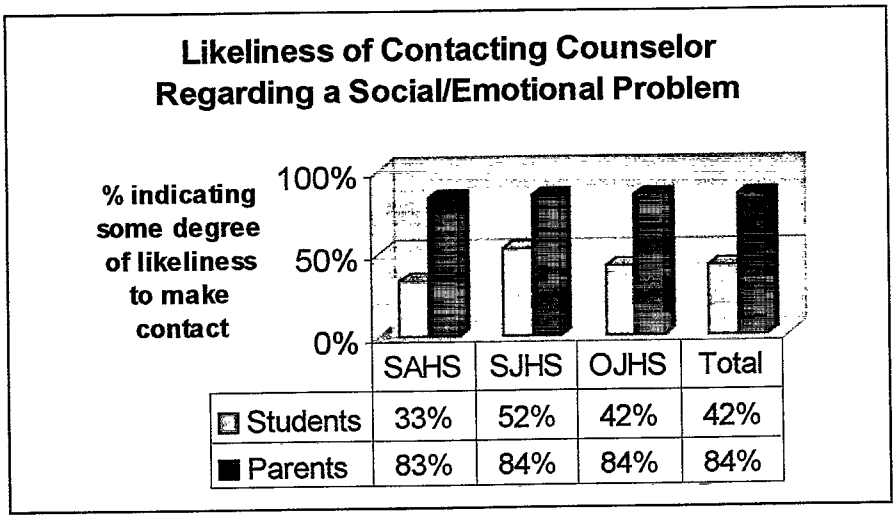


Figure 8



The results indicating the likelihood of making counselor contact regarding a social or emotional problem were much lower, especially for students. The same range of selection was offered. Only 42.3% of students choose a response within that range indicating that they would maybe, probably, or be very likely to contact a counselor in this circumstance. The bulk of those indicating some likelihood choose maybe (27.7%) and only 6.2% said that they would be very likely to make contact. 83.7% of parents, however, indicated that they would maybe, probably, or very likely be inclined to make contact. The splits between the three levels of likelihood were fairly even with a slightly greater percentage in the very likely category.

Question 7, items a-p, assessed the perceived needs of students and parents for a number of different guidance and counseling related educational experiences. Students and parents indicated whether they felt it was important that our school provided the various experiences. The percentage of students who responded in agreement that it was important for our school to provide these experiences is

illustrated in ranked order for both students and parents on Tables 2 and 3 (see Appendix B). The letters a-p correspond to the items in question 7 on page two of both the student and parent surveys (see Appendix A).

The results of question 7 a-p are not a reflection of counselor performance in these areas, but rather are an assessment of the needs of students, providing information about what students and parents perceive as important. This needs-assessment information can be used to set priorities for new goals and activities.

The data show that most students and parents view all of these areas as important for the school to address. As a total group, 80% of all parents agreed that all areas are important and nearly 80% (79.2%) of all students agreed that 12 out of 16 areas are important. 58% of all students agreed that all areas are important.

Students and parents seem to be in general agreement regarding the needs that are most important for the school to meet. Each group had five out of their top six rankings in common. The experiences they felt it was most important for the school to provide included:

L. Helping students make transitions from one level of education to the next.

G. Helping students understand course options and their impact on future plans.

C. Teaching students study skills.

H. Helping students understand his/her learning style and its implications.

O. Explaining the test scores on students' cumulative record.

At the other end of the ranking, students and parents agreed on three out of four of the needs perceived as least important (within the realm of comparison). They felt that it least important that our school:

K. Helps students cope with family disturbances.

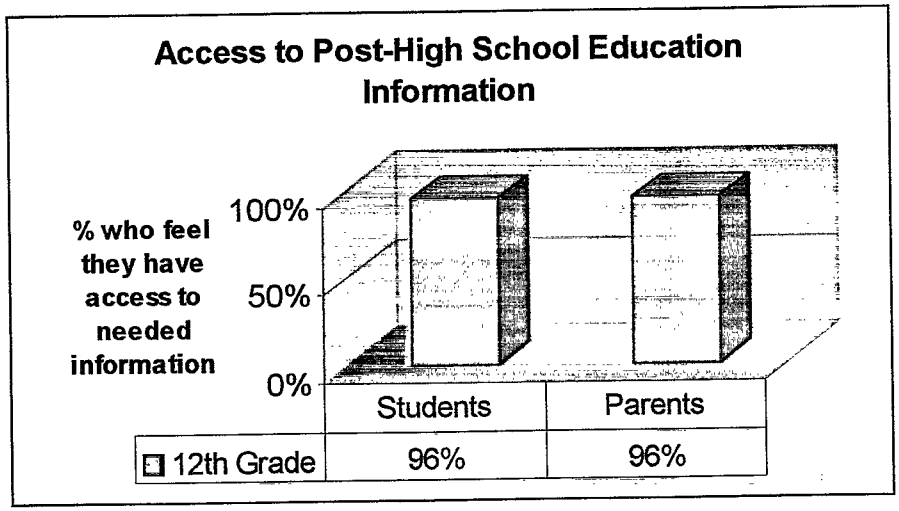
E. Helps students understand personal relationships.

P. Has meeting with students and their parents to discuss student plans after high school.

Comments were written on some surveys indicating that the school should not address areas concerning personal and family problems. For example, one parent wrote "I believe your counseling program should be a resource for outsourcing children with personal problems...not a relationship counselor, but an academic counselor." While the majority of students and parents showed support for addressing all of the areas listed in question 7, there seemed to be a representation of people who agree with this philosophy as indicated by the falling percentages of agreement on the items that dealt with personal and family related issues.

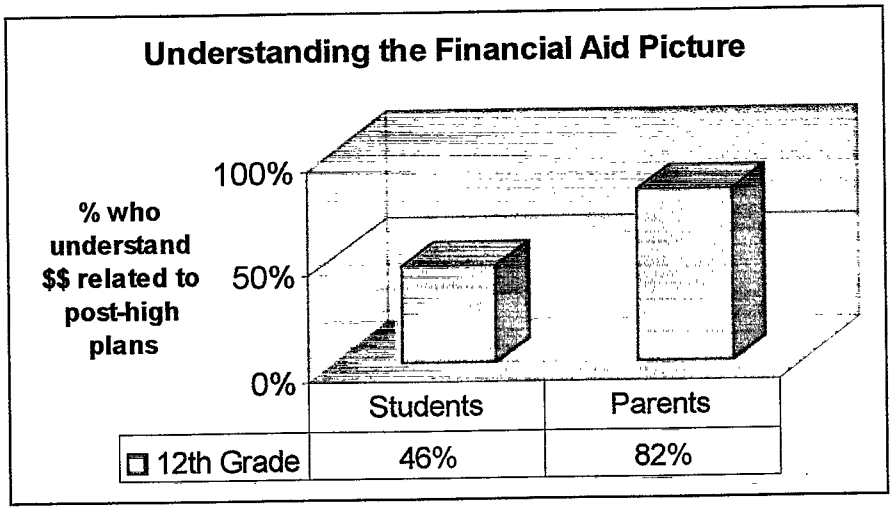
Questions 8-10 on the student and parent surveys, addressing aspects of post-high planning, were included only for the 12th grade population. Question 8 attempted to assess whether the student and parent felt they had access to the information needed to select a college or other post-high school educational option. As Figure 9 indicates, a strong majority of both students and parents feel they do.

Figure 9



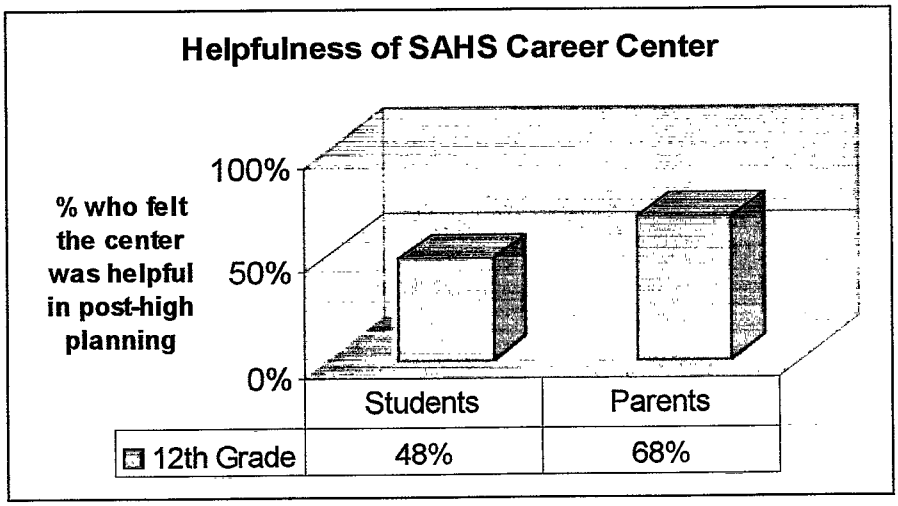
Question 9 asks students and parents if they have an understanding of the financial aid picture associated with the student's post-high school educational plans. As Figure 10 suggests, parents have a much greater understanding of this issue than students do.

Figure 10



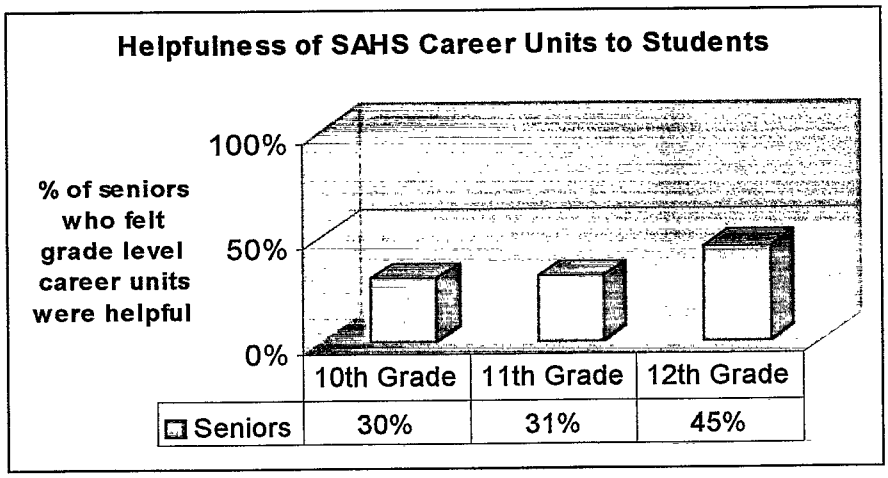
Question 10 asked students and parents if the SAHS Career Center was helpful in accessing information for post-high school planning. Less than half of students and two-thirds of parents found it helpful (see Figure 11). A number of students wrote comments on the surveys complaining of needing help to access information in the center, but no one was available. Parents as well as students expressed frustrations in writing regarding the limited hours of the center, desiring it to be staffed and open later—after school and evening hours.

Figure 11



Questions 11-20 on the student survey were specific only to 12th grade students, addressing some additional counseling related experiences at the high school. Questions 11-13 asked students whether the career units counselors presented in 10th, 11th, and 12th grades were helpful to students. The majority of students felt that they were not helpful during any of the three years (see Figure 12). Some commented in writing that they had no recollection of the career units in one or more grades.

Figure 12



Question 14 asked students if they had used the ECOS computer program in their post-high planning during their 12th grade year and question 15 asked those who had if it had been helpful. Only 3 of 32 students said that they had used ECOS. Of those 3 students, only 1 said it had been helpful and the other 2 indicated that it had not been helpful.

Questions 16 and 17 addressed the registration process. First, students were asked if the process was effective in providing them with the information needed to make good decisions (question 16). Slightly more than half (57%) indicated affirmatively. When asked if counselors had been helpful resources in the process (question 17), the number who agreed that they had been helpful was again slightly over half (54%).

Questions 18-20 sought information about the students' transition into high school. Of the students who had previously attended SJHS or OJHS, 93% (38 out of 41) felt they had made a smooth transition from junior high into SAHS (question 18). The majority of students who entered SAHS from another school district also felt they had made a smooth transition—83% or 5 out of 6 students (question 19). Question 20 asked

these students who were new to the district at some point during their high school years if the new student orientation meetings had been helpful to them. Of the 5 students who responded to the question, 4 of them indicated that they had participated and it had been helpful to their transition into SAHS.

Questions 11-16 on the parent survey sought to determine the level of parent participation in evening presentations of information related to post-high school education that were coordinated by the counseling department. Parents were asked about their attendance at and the helpfulness of three different presentations. The first discussed post-high planning in general. The other two concerned financial aid, one was an overview of financial aid and the other was specifically focused on completing the FAFSA form. Figure 13 illustrates the participation level of the responding parents and Figure 14 shows how helpful the presentations were to those who attended.

Figure 13

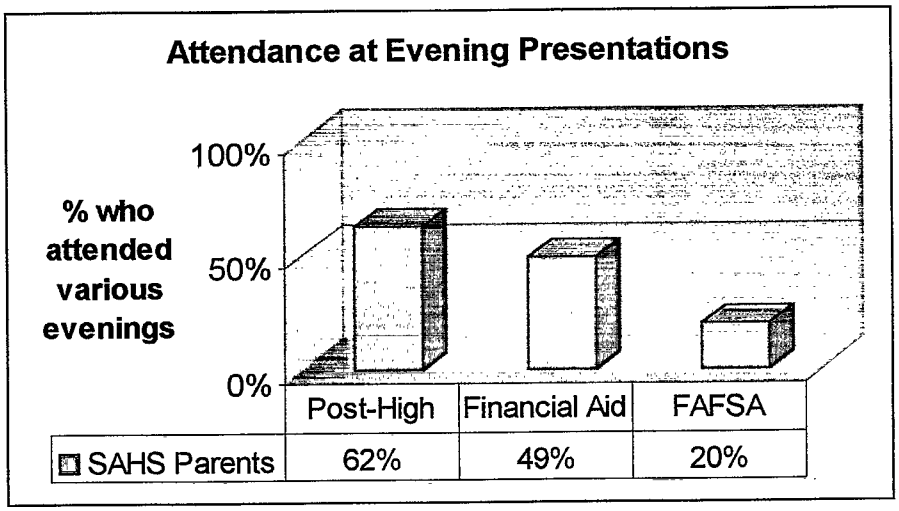
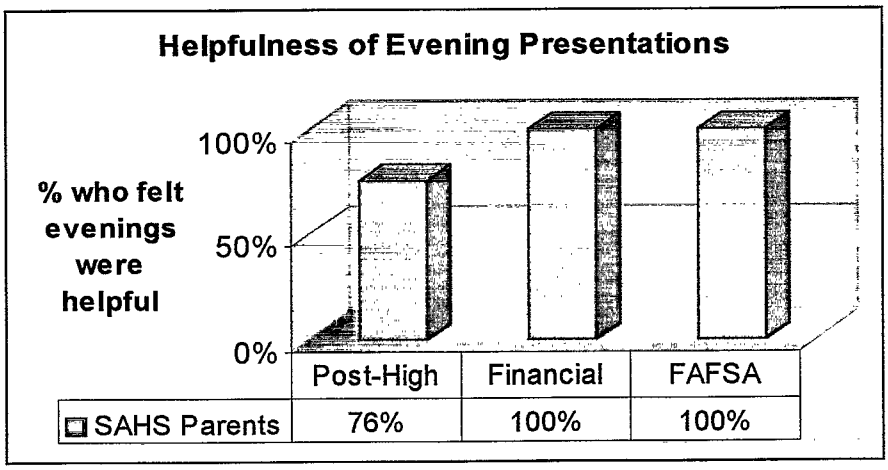


Figure 14



The surveys provided an opportunity for students and parents to share any comments that would help to improve the counseling programs at the various schools. Selected comments have been quoted when applicable to an area discussed. Other comments have been summarized, paraphrased, and grouped by similarity to identify themes in hopes of gaining additional insights into the thoughts and perceptions of students and parents. Comments are organized according to responding group and school. Some responders were specific and others general in their comments. The numeral in parenthesis preceding some comments indicates the number of times that idea was repeated. If there is no number in front of a comment it was written by only one student or parent at that school. The most reoccurring themes in the comment section are at the beginning of each list.

SAHS Student comments:
(3)No memory of 10th and 11th grade career units
(3)No knowledge of ECOS
(2)11th grade career unit was boring (not helpful)
(2)Don't get involved in family problems unless student asks for help
(2)Counselors aren't accessible enough
(2)Registration process was too rushed (counselors too busy to listen)

(2)Students don't want to discuss problems with busy counselors
(2)Counselors are administrators (bureaucratic robots), not student advocates or counselors...just give you the "don'ts" and they don't share options, no direct knowledge...they are just an index. I would never discuss personal problems with one!
(2)Need more promotion of career center and scholarships...people don't know about it
Counselors should try harder to get to know their students on a personal level and help them plan after high school (I need someone who really knows me to help) I'm stressed out about it
College/career planning sessions are great...need more
Give students early graduation options
Pointless (didn't get what I wanted)
Switched counselor because another was more willing to listen and help
Need information meetings starting in 10th grade to understand more clearly how important grades are.
I don't recall the school doing any of the things listed in #7 (needs assessment)
Get more counselors and make sure they're nice
Need counselors to discuss personal/family problems, but not these...can't trust them
No one was available in the career center to help
Difficult to make friends as new student
Counselors are more like secretaries
Don't take time out of classes

SAHS Parents...Comments:
(6)Hire more counselors/smaller caseloads
(4)Need trained counseling personnel to work with personal/family issues
(3)Not aware of evening parent presentations attended anyway
(3)Career Center is not accessible...must be open after school
(2)Repeat parent presentations on several nights (or partner with neighboring schools)
(2)Meet with each student each year
(2)Needs assessment questions address parent's role, not school's
(2)Child didn't have same counselor for 3 years—need continuity
Counselors should be more available
I don't feel comfortable bothering counselors with minor problems—they're too busy
Tend not to contact—had bad experience with junior high counselor on bully issue
Wouldn't contact for social/emotional problem because it won't be resolved, it will get worse...fear retribution from teacher or student involved
Be more willing to help students
The more counselors can do to help, the better
Counselors should focus on academics...personal issues referred out to agencies
Counselors should be student advocates, not administrators reinforcing the system
Work on PR so that seeing a counselor isn't considered bad or embarrassing by students
Support staff in centers must be more respectful to parents and students
Impressed by personal support child received from counselors
Doing a great job now...continue
Better connection to students starting in 10th grade re: post high planning

Better communication for deadlines, post-high steps
Need more communication and guidance related to post-high planning
Average students get overlooked—focus falls on troubled students

SJHS Student comments:
Need counselors to be happy and positive so kids can trust
Should follow-through with promises
Should be knowledgeable about high school program and course selections
Should get to the point
Should meeting individually with each student regarding college planning, appropriate high school registration, and preparation for scholarships
Should provide more career education and prepare us with job skills
Change the color of passes so that everyone doesn't know that you're going to the counselor
Better awareness of school problems...what's happening in the schools

SJHS Parents...Comments:
Too few counselors—aren't able to know all kids well.
Too many students assigned to depend on counselor to address social/emotional issues
Decrease number of students per counselor so they get to know each student (not just when they're in trouble
Should have regular meetings with students instead of waiting until there are problems
High school registration was like an assembly line...need more personal attention
Counselors should focus on academics, but when family/peer problems surface it affects academics so it should be addressed as well
Counselors have been ineffective in dealing with harassment, drugs, bullies, etc.
Do 9th grade aptitude test and college/career field trip in 9th grade
Help them realize where they can go...use visualization
Counseling at "both schools" has been accessible and invaluable—we're very satisfied
Recommend facilitating the building of student/counselor relationships early
I support counseling services, but parental involvement needs to be a priority
Counselors should assist college-bound students w/ university options and scholarship info and academic readiness

OJHS Student comments:
(3)Family and personal business is private and counselor (school) shouldn't get involved
Counselors should meet with each student during the year to see what's going on in his/her life
Get counselors who talk more and are nicer. Some counselors scare the kids.
Should be respectful and help with problems or concerns immediately
Feels like counselors are just there to get you in trouble/not help you...they make things worse.
Always accuses me of doing something wrong when I didn't.
When I seek help I'm ignored
Quit going over the same things again and again (like I'm always late...I know!) have a point.

I don't feel comfortable because my counselor is the opposite sex...students should be paired with same sex counselors.
Counselors need to be more authentic (not cheesy and phony)...so they're easier to talk to
Improve accessibility during student's available time.
Don't communicate with parents...let students have responsibility

OJHS Parents...Comments:
(2)Not enough counselors—need lower ratio to meet student needs.
(2)Counselors should do more to address situation involving problem teachers (are you student advocates or teacher supporters?)
(2)Spend time on academics. Let family handle items on needs-assessment.
Smaller class sizes would address issues in needs-assessment better than counseling services
Counselors don't know all of their assigned students.
Should meet with each student periodically.
It's the individual counselor that makes the difference (not the program).
The parent or church or other referral should address Social/personal issues
High school registration process too rushed and premature to choose 11th & 12th classes
Continue sex education programs
Help students develop self-awareness and sensitivity to others
My kids haven't felt they could talk to counselors (not approachable) so counselors have had little impact on them
Based on 3 children—each have received no valuable help from counselors. They are not helpful and kids avoid them.
Past experience with another child was that counselor compounded the social/emotional problem rather than improving the situation.
Received bad advice in past
Counselors and administrators do not address issues to raise rigor, rather spend too much time on discipline and supporting mediocrity
Too much busy work in classes
Counselors need to provide training and awareness workshops for teachers and administrators on mental health issues, substance abuse, special needs etc. and how to accommodate (504)

This section will discuss the results of the teacher (certified staff) and administrator survey results. Significant trends were not identified within groups of teachers sorted by years of experience in the school district so information will be represented by the total population of teachers as well as breakdowns according to school. Because the number of administrators responding is small (8) their data will not be broken down by school, but rather reported as a total figure.

Question 3, items a-k, asks teachers and administrators to evaluate whether counselors do a good job in a number of areas. Each item response is illustrated in a bar graph with the left axis representing the percentage of respondents agreeing that counselors do a good job in this area. The right axis shows a breakdown of teacher responses by school along with both teacher and administrator totals (see Figures 15-25).

Figure 15

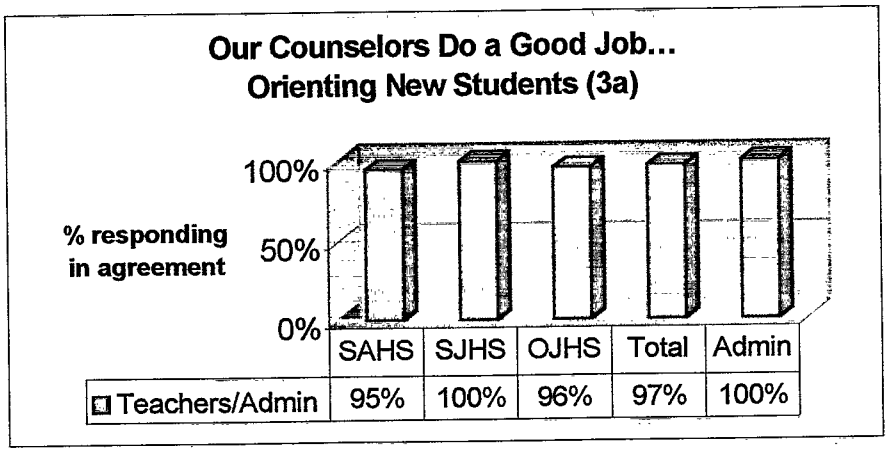


Figure 16

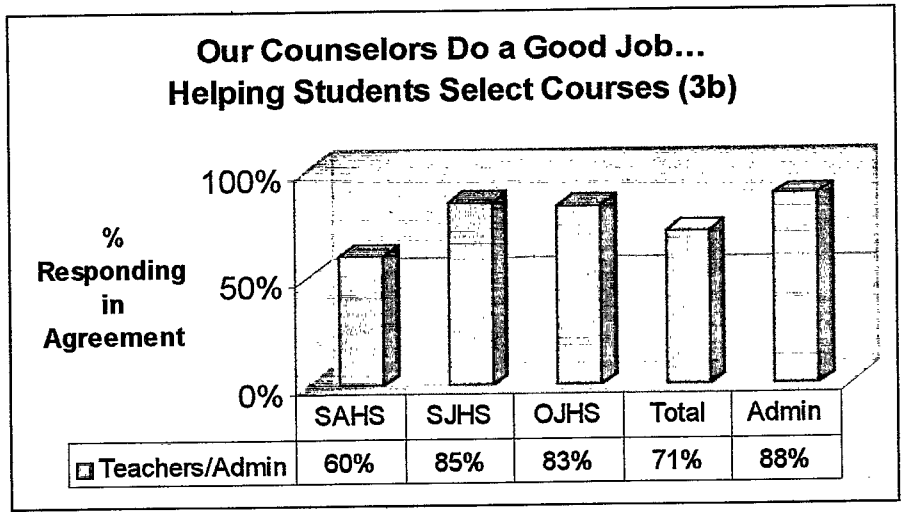


Figure 17

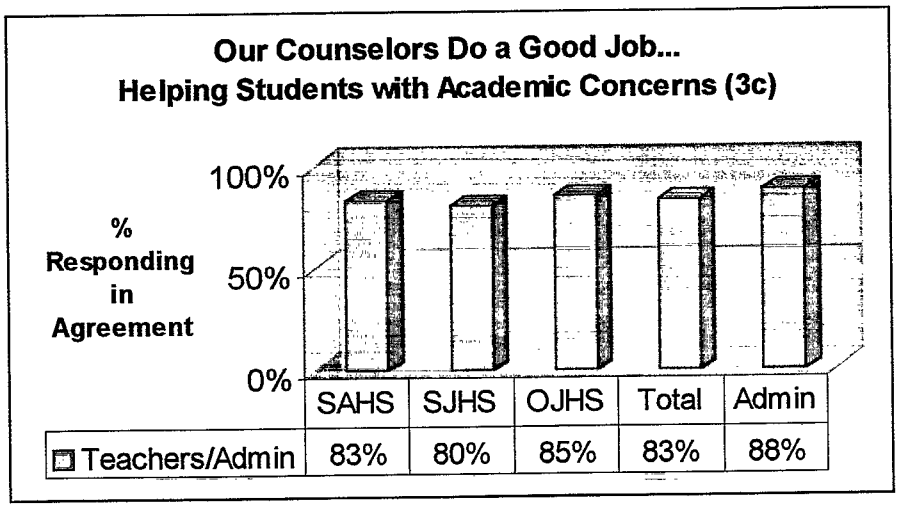


Figure 18

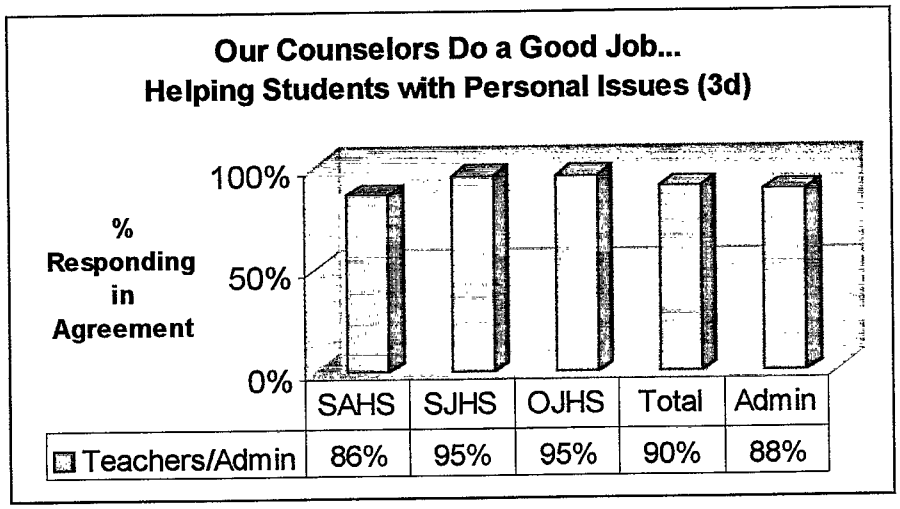


Figure 19

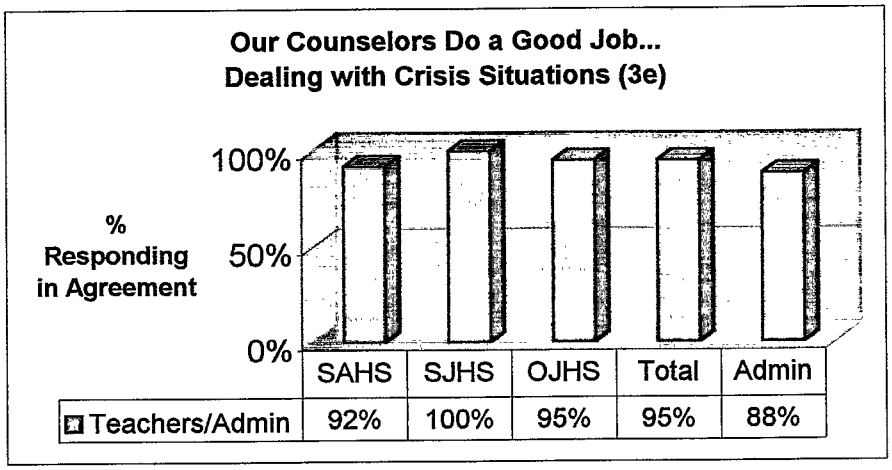


Figure 20

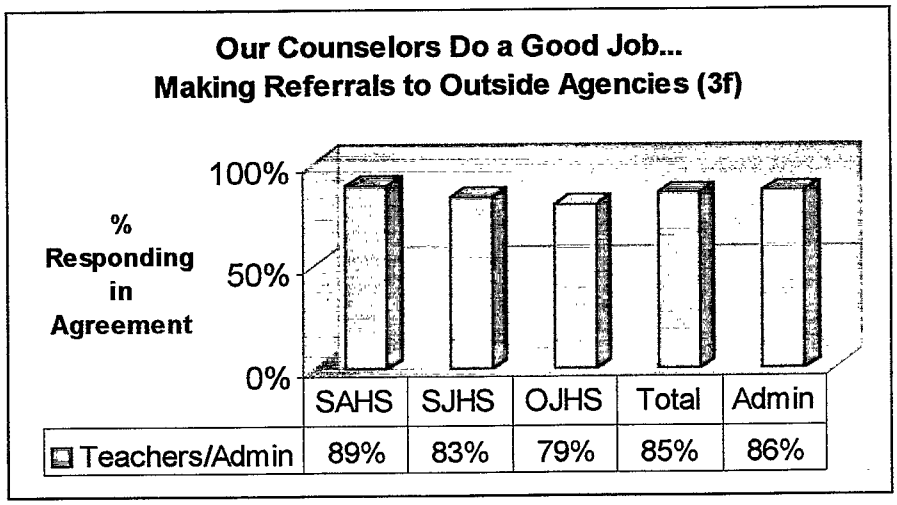


Figure 21

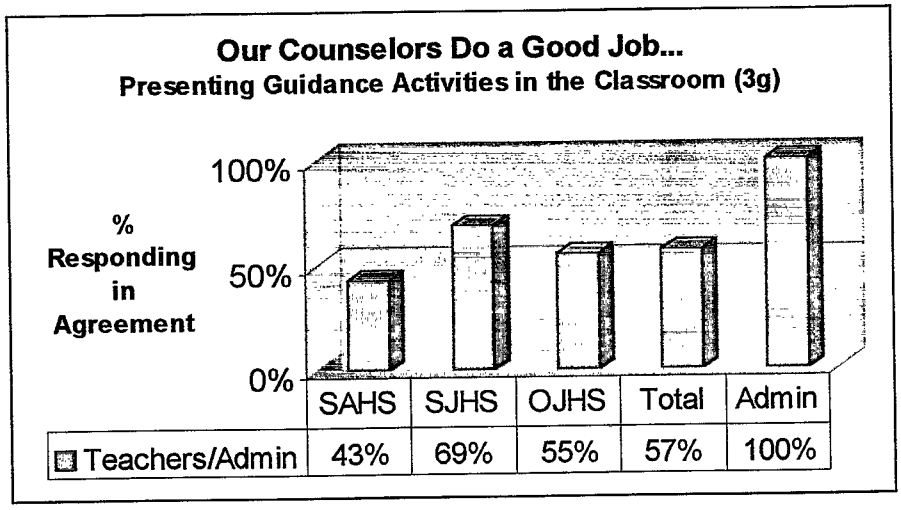


Figure 22

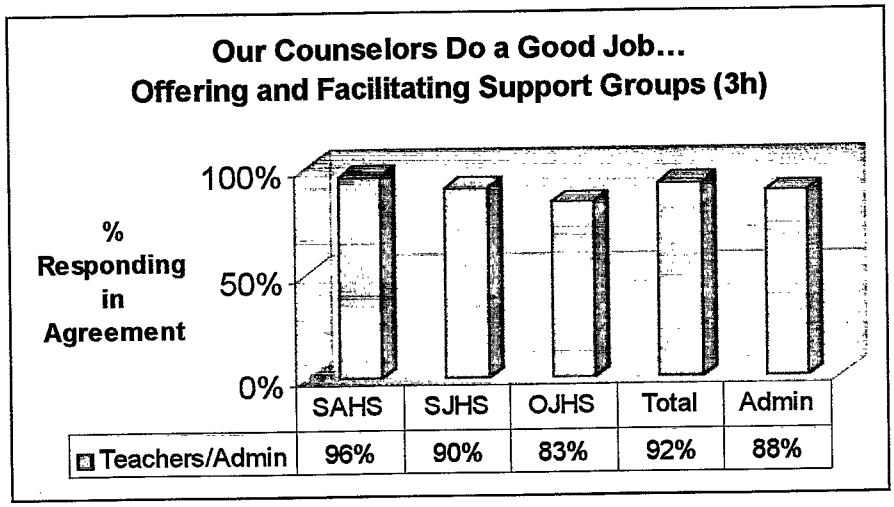


Figure 23

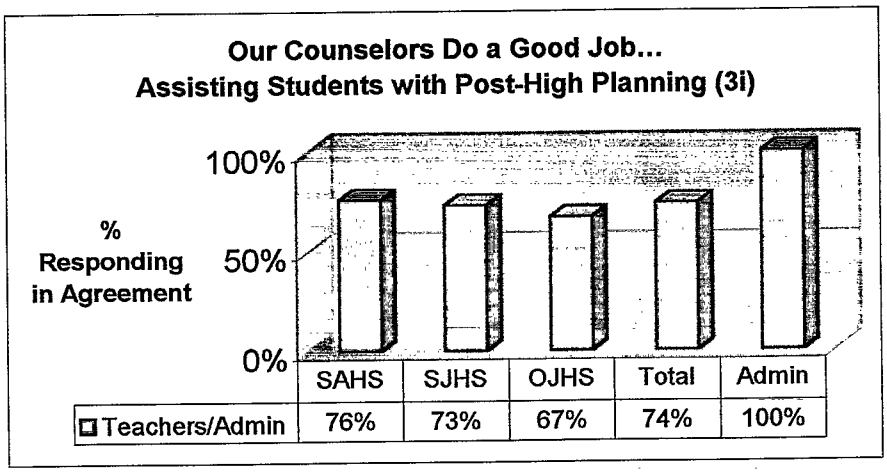


Figure 24

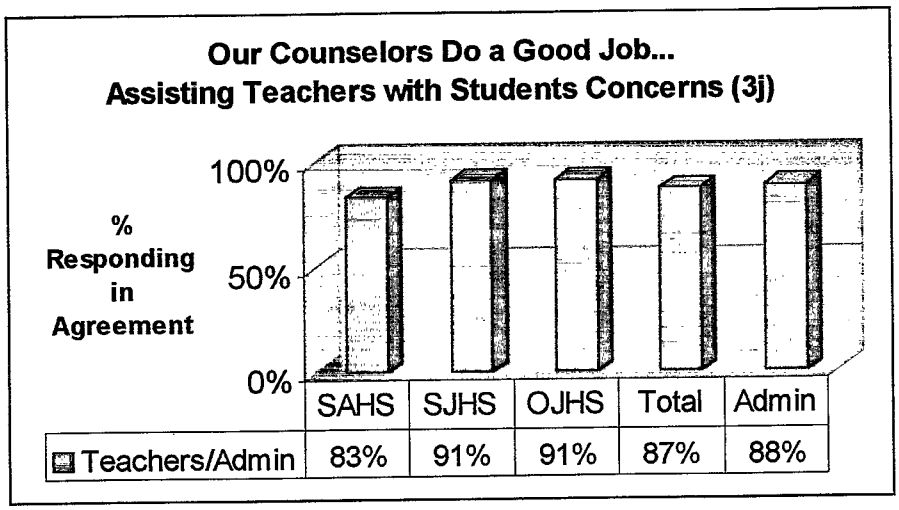
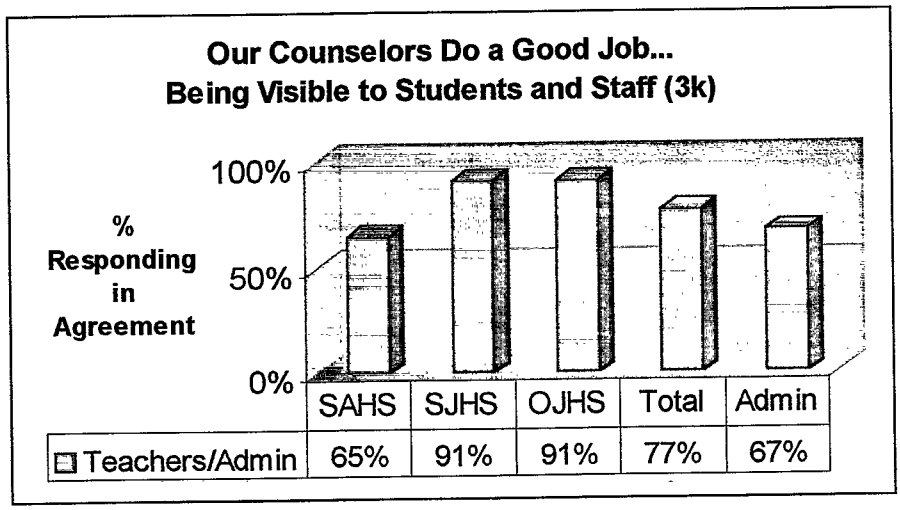


Figure 25



Less than 70% of teachers who completed a survey responded to three of the items—3f (67%), 3g (58%), and 3i (65%), indicating that they did not know enough about the counselors' job performance in these areas to appropriately assess it. Therefore the responses on these three items are based on a smaller representation of teachers. Between 83 and 100% of the surveyed teachers responded to each of the other items in question 3.

Questions 4-12 assessed teacher and administrator perception of need for and understanding of various aspects of the counseling program. The responses are illustrated on Tables 26-34.

Figure 26

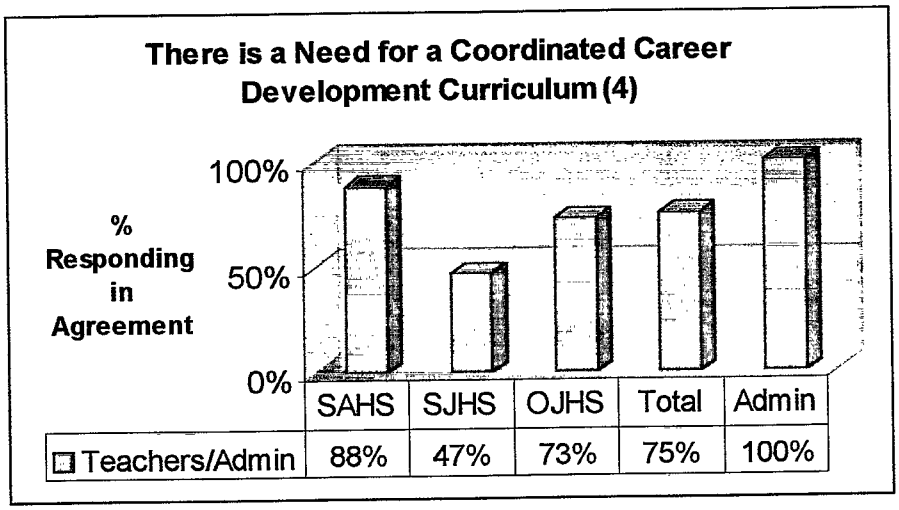


Figure 27

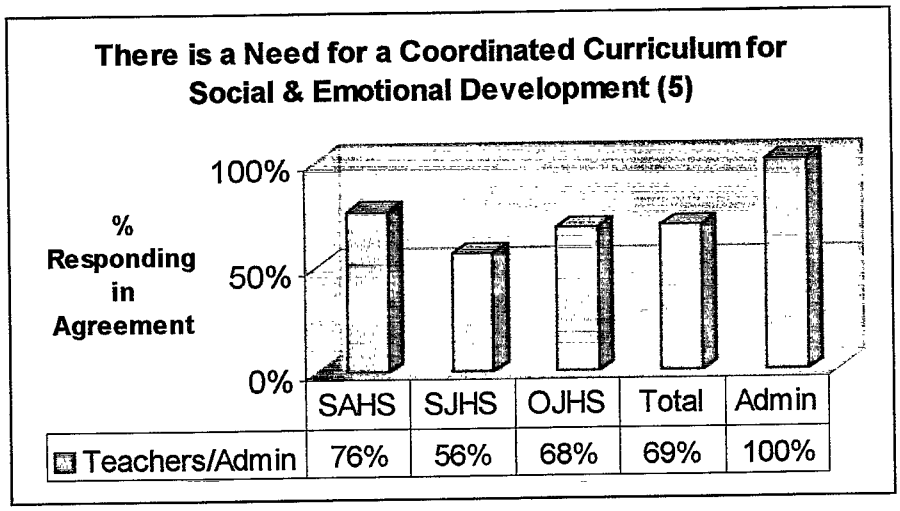


Figure 28

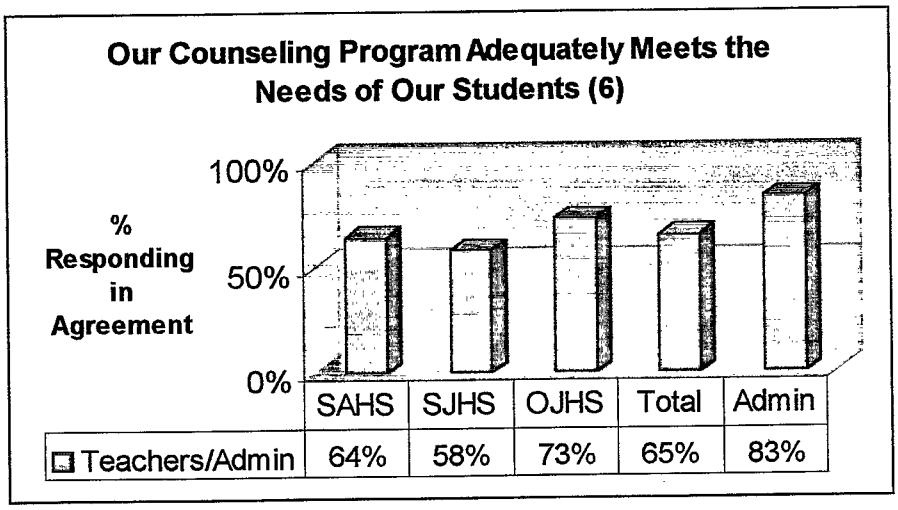


Figure 29

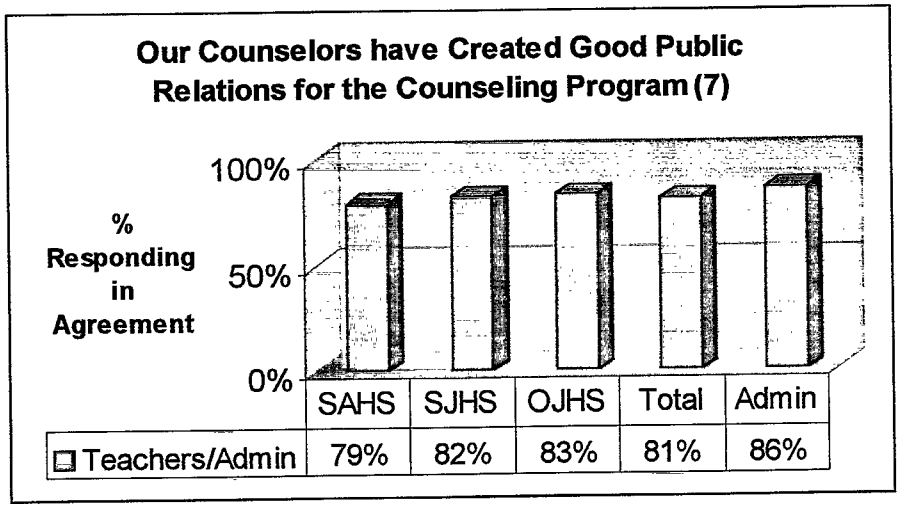


Figure 30

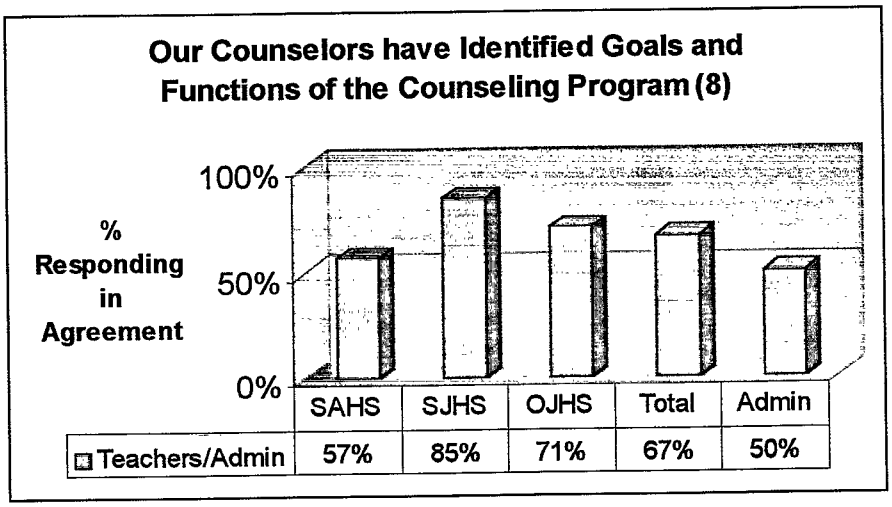


Figure 31

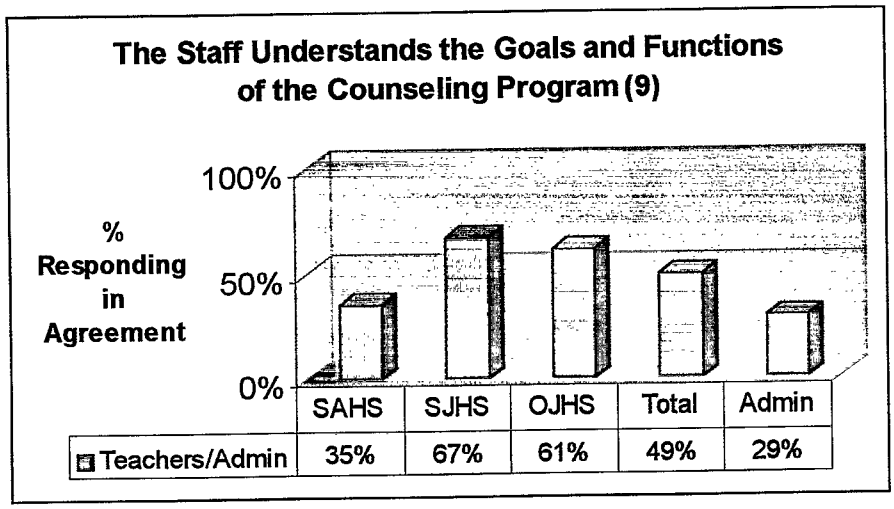


Figure 32

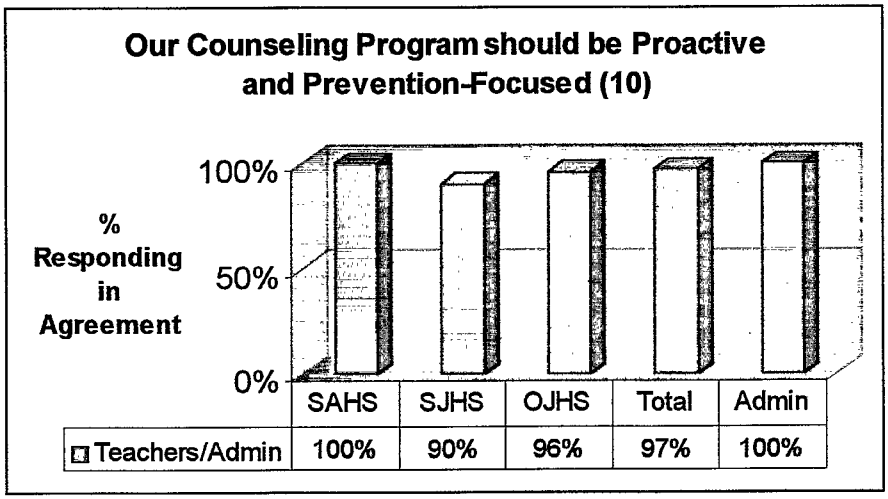


Figure 33

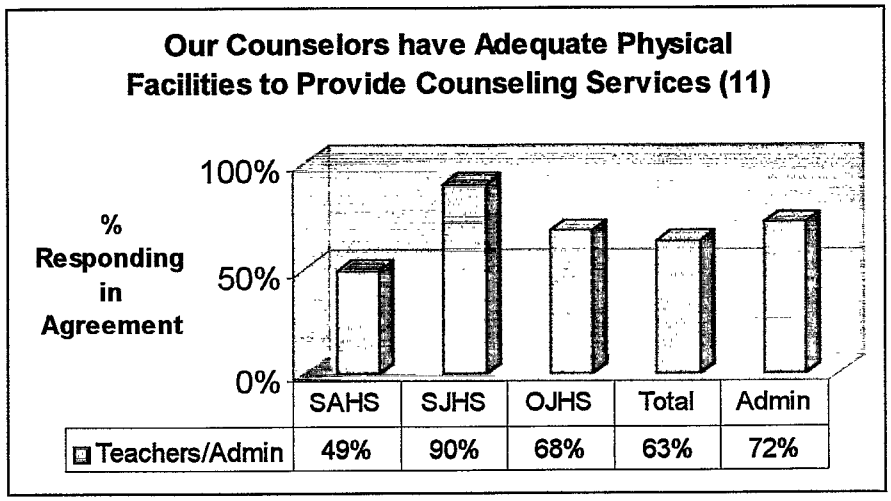
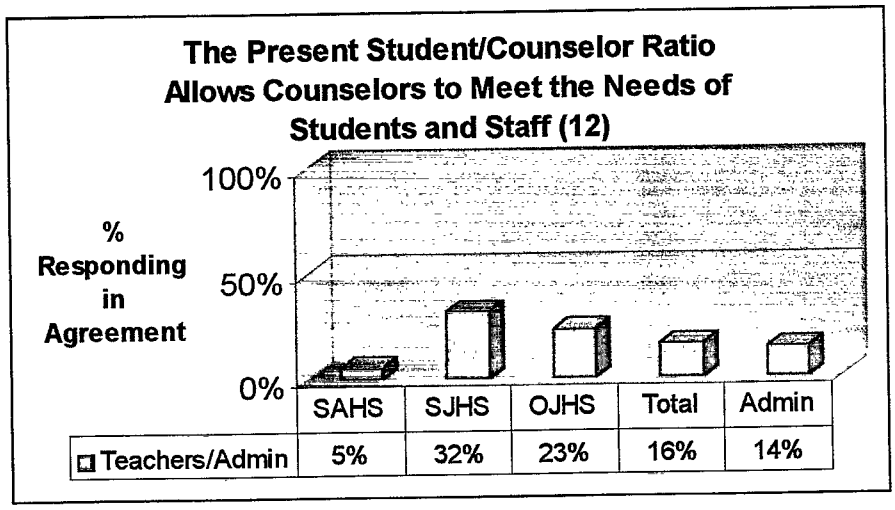


Figure 34



Administrators were also asked whether they felt counselors had an adequate budget (question 14) and adequate clerical help (question 15). 62.5% agreed that the budget was adequate, 12.5% felt that it was not adequate, and 25% indicated that they had no opinion or insufficient information by circling the "?." 62.5% felt that counselors have adequate clerical help and 37.5% believe that counselors do not. It would be helpful to review the results by building in the area of clerical help since the structure is different in the various buildings and a clear distinction in results between levels emerged. 100% of the administrators at both junior high schools perceived clerical support for counselors to be adequate while only 25% of the high school administration agreed that it was adequate and 75% of the high school administration felt that clerical support to counselors was not adequate.

Administrators were asked what student/counselor ratio they would recommend for their counselors. Responses ranged from 200:1 to 300:1 though many qualified their answers stating that schools were severely limited by budget constraints in their ability to

offer this ratio. Two administrators left the question blank, one writing in that it depended upon responsibilities and the other indicating that it should be the lowest possible within staffing confines.

The surveys provided an opportunity for teachers and administrators to write in their perceptions of the major strengths and needs of the counseling programs along with any other comments that would be helpful in improving the program. Their responses have been summarized and paraphrased. The numeral in parenthesis preceding some responses indicates the number of times that idea was repeated. If there is no number in front of a comment it was written by only one teacher or administrator at the school. The most reoccurring themes in the comment section are at the beginning of each list.

SAHS Teachers—Major Strengths of the Counseling Program

(11)Caring
(10)Willingness and ability to help with problems of staff and students
(10)Approachable…connect well with students (the people themselves)
(8)Well qualified and insightful
(8)Hard working, committed, juggle huge work load
(6)Professionalism—good communication skills
(5)Dependable, responsive, listening skills
(4)Open door of communication (accessibility)
(4)Available to all students
(4)Staff and system in place—offers variety of services; grade level center program
(3)Course selections (good approach to registration)
(2)Academic concerns
(2)Great dealing with social/emotional
Support groups for various needs
Post high planning
Dealing with crisis
Team players

SAHS Teachers—Major Needs of the Counseling Program

(25)More counselors—lower ratio
(15)Increased knowledge about SAHS courses to improve academic advisement (perception is that staff doesn't know enough about different courses to be effectively advising students…key areas: electives, math, and world language)
(7)Better communication regarding program, procedures, specific students, drops, etc.
(4)Eliminate your grad standards work/need technology to support grad standards

(4)More counseling time
(3)Teachers need a better understanding of role of counselors and their workload
(2)Need more staff for family and at risk counseling and career counselor
(2)More space
(2)Focus on career...not college...be honest with students
(2)Offer social skills group (more groups)
(2)Need center to center consistency (e.g. paperwork for changes)
Be firm with students...support teachers
Need counselors with teaching experience
Don't allow students to see you during classes
Need elementary counselors
Use paras to take some of workload
Less paperwork and computer responsibilities
More resources
Better expertise related to post high planning
Need for more counselors is seasonal (peak: start of school year and at registration time)
Greater visibility

SAHS Teachers—Comments to aid in Counseling Program Improvement
(5)Great counseling staff—good connections with students, families and staff
(5)Not accessible enough due to high demand (can't meet the needs)
Keep counselors for each grade in the same center
Increase awareness of all they do
Counselors spend way too much time making class changes...hire a clerk
Make students and parents more accountable for their actions and choices.
Poor behavior in classroom should not be rewarded with escape to a counseling safe haven.
Should be more accommodating to top students regarding grad standards...waive so they can have a study hall
Let teacher know about students so they can help (e.g. with TLC, academic support, etc.)
Many of my "D" and "SD" responses do not reflect negatively on counselors—rather we are severely understaffed in this and many human service professions
Some counselors are great...concerns about others
Keep lines of communication open
Academic placement tests (math)

SAHS Administrators— Major Strengths of the Counseling Program
Emphasis is on providing assistance for academic counseling
Counselors appear competent in classroom settings as teachers to large groups
Highly skilled in communication and working with problem solving issues
Student supports in all areas
Parent relationships
Highly qualified and committed professionals
Address and are sensitive to the needs of the total child
Have perspective of the whole 10-12 program

SAHS Administrators— Major Needs of the Counseling Program

Area of concern that counselors do not take time to determine underlying issue for behavior (i.e. failure, peer conflicts)
Setting specific philosophy (developmental model)
Communicating functions and direction of counseling to staff
Set limits
Definitive roles 7-12
Could use support staff to free them from some of the clerical duties that take time away from students.
Need to be available in some way throughout the summer

SAHS Administrators— Comments to aid in Counseling Program Improvement

May be central to "change" the perception that all things can be handled in any one setting or on only one day.
Counselors are advocates...not to be punitive.
Try to create logical consequences for students
SAHS counselors are the best I've seen
Tough financial situation puts added stress on staff and services
Expectations of counselors need to be kept in the context of the demands and expectations that differ among grade levels.
Counselors of incoming 10^{th} need planning time and work time to develop a strong incoming orientation program
Counselors of seniors need time for credit checks and work w/post high planning
"Career" counseling is needed more at all levels

SJHS Teachers—Major Strengths of the Counseling Program

(7)Well trained, capable, experienced, excellent counselors
(4)Caring
(3)Accessible
(2)Wonderful people
(2)Work hard
(2)They juggle lots
Visible to staff and students
Previous classroom experience helps them understand concerns
Helping teachers with classroom concerns
Communicating with parents
Helping students solve personal/peer issues
Helpful
Positive
Open

SJHS Teachers—Major Needs of the Counseling Program

(9)Need more counselors—lower ratio
(3)Offer more groups (friendship, social skill)
More support (secretarial) personnel
A clearer focus of grad standard and how students can meet them in electives

Continued efforts to meet with teams
Money
Implement academic success skills curriculum
Need social workers, too
Need more specialized personnel to deliver programs in emotional/psychological, academic, and career planning (separately)
Career development program
More referral info for parents
Should not be so involved in the disciplinary action of students (assistant principals should do it)...let counselors counsel
Well intentioned enabling

SJHS Teachers—Comments to Aid in Counseling Program Improvement
(3)Each counselor has different strengths and weaknesses...tough to generalize
Don't understand curriculum in all courses
Often overwhelmed by the many issues of the day
Too many district-level meetings that pull them out of building...impacts visibility and accessibility

SJHS Administrators— Major Strengths of the Counseling Program
Strong people—really committed to students, staff and student growth
Kind, caring people
Love their work
Our counselors are truly in the business of wanting to help kids
Team players
Dedicated

SJHS Administrators— Major Needs of the Counseling Program
Better and more efficient system to keep track of credits and grad standards
More opportunities and time to get into classrooms to present information (e.g. dealing with peers, teen issues, etc.)
More staff (300:1 ratio)
Chemical health/mental health focus
Additional time in summer and fall (6 weeks of extended time)

SJHS Administrators— Comments to aid in Counseling Program Improvement
Best group of counselors (Dan, Elaine, Liz) I ever worked with...they are delightful

OJHS Teachers—Major Strengths of the Counseling Program
(4)Personally accessible to students and teachers
(2)easy to talk to—approachable
(2)Excellence...Heather
(2)Great people to work with
(2)Work well with teachers and students OJHS Teachers—
Program is running well
Counselors offer lots of good programs (classroom visits, support groups, new student)

Crisis ready
Genuinely care for student's needs
Dealing with parents
Help admin with discipline
The personalities and character of individual counselors
Visible to students and staff
Doing a great job
Give 100% effort to meet needs of students

OJHS Teachers—Major Needs of the Counseling Program
(11)More counselors—reduce student load
(2)More space and secretarial help
Counselors needs to be consistent
Strong, goal oriented attitude

OJHS Teachers—Comments to aid in Counseling Program Improvement
Discipline is dumped on counselors too much
All kids don't need social/emotion curriculum—direct toward only those who do
Counselors have too many duties (discipline, parent calls) and too many students
Need a family therapist on staff
More help to parents (classes, groups)

OJHS Administrators—Major Strengths of the Counseling Program
(2)Student focus (centered)
(2)Knowledge and skills
Concerned
Organized individuals
Cooperative
Counselors advocate for students

OJHS Administrators— Major Needs of the Counseling Program
Identify how to help student inclusively
Therapeutic component
Become more familiar with courses, grad standards, etc.
Developmental counseling focus
Process in place to reach all kids

OJHS Administrators— Comments to aid in Counseling Program Improvement
We have more students who are at-risk
Involvement with special education students is becoming overwhelming and time consuming
Revisit staff in terms of student needs.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

The major purposes of this research study were to determine what stakeholders perceive as their needs of the counseling program, to ascertain if stakeholders perceive that their needs are being met effectively, and to identify goals in partnership with stakeholders' needs and desired outcomes for the future.

Four groups of stakeholders were identified for this research: students, parents, teachers (certified staff), and administrators. Survey instruments were distributed to random samples of 9th and 12th grade students and their parents, and all teachers and administrators in three secondary schools (7-12) in Independent School District 834 in Stillwater, Minnesota. Response rates of the four groups ranged from 37-80%.

The data gathered was analyzed to gain insight into the needs of each group of stakeholders and the perceived effectiveness of the school counseling program in a variety of different areas. Survey results for each group were reported by individual school and as a whole to enable counselors in each building to review the results particular to their setting and to facilitate the use of the data in improving the overall school district counseling program.

The direct involvement of each counselor within the school district in the interpretation of data and establishing of direction for the future is critical to authentic program improvement. There are indicators of discrepancies between schools in varying areas and overall trends of perceived higher and lower performance in others. It is important for the counseling departments in each school to review the results, further

investigate rationale behind the responses, and develop goals and strategies to address them in relevant areas. As a district-wide counseling team review efforts should also be coordinated to further develop a comprehensive guidance and counseling program that is coordinated between grade levels and responsive to the needs of stakeholders.

Conclusions

The results of this study show that counselors are effective in a variety of ways. Stillwater counselors are to be applauded for their efforts in helping students and delivering a beneficial counseling program. In reviewing the most pressing issues revealed by this research study, potentially useful as a springboard for meaningful program improvement, several topics should be considered.

The number of students, parents, and teachers reporting that students have difficulty accessing a counselor at Stillwater Area High School is considerably higher than either of the junior highs and frequently mentioned as a concern of students in the written comments. High school teachers also expressed concern regarding counselor visibility to students and staff. 65% of the high school staff compared to 91% of the junior high staff perceive counselors as visible. Both of these topics appear to be important issues for the high school counseling team to address.

Connected to the issue of counselor accessibility, but not limited to the high school, are concerns related to high student/counselor ratios and excessive workloads for counselors. Only 5% of the high school staff and 16% of teachers in all three buildings feel that the present student/counselor ratio allows counselors to meet the needs of students and staff. A majority of administrators agree that counseling caseloads are too

high. Half of the teachers in each building wrote comments expressing that the biggest need of the counseling department is for more counselors and lower student/counselor ratios. Teachers and administrators made many qualifying comments related to the difficult financial constraints in currently in the field of education which facilitate the high ratio. Nevertheless this is a resounding theme that demands attention in the evaluation review process. Concerns were also expressed about the lack of adequate physical facilities for counseling services at Stillwater Area High School and, to a lesser degree, at Oak-Land Junior High School as well.

Although counselors are generally perceived as helpful and most students expressed that they feel comfortable with their counselor, more than half of the students indicated that they would be unlikely to initiate contact with a counselor regarding a social or emotional problem. Many written comments that elaborated on this issue suggested that counselors were too busy to help students with personal problems and/or they were too closely aligned with administration and couldn't be trusted. It appears that a number of students and parents don't perceive personal counseling to be part of the school counselor's role. The counseling team may want to further explore this phenomenon and address the issue of role definition.

Less than half of 12th grade students reported that the career center was helpful in their post-high planning. Some concerns were expressed about lack of familiarity with and accessibility to the career center. Only a third of 12th grade students felt that the two-day career units counselors presented in 10th and 11th grades had been helpful to them, and less than half had found the 12th grade unit helpful. Most parents who participated in evening post-high planning related presentations found them to be helpful, but the

numbers of parents who had attended ranged from 20-62% depending on the presentation. A review of career and post-high planning efforts would be helpful.

Only 12th grade students were asked about the effectiveness of the registration process and the helpfulness of counselors in the process, but many 9th grade students and their parents commented on the confusing and rushed nature of registration for 10th grade. The 12th grade students were asked about registration in general, rather than a particular year. Slightly over half of them felt that the process was effective and counselors were helpful in it. Reviewing the registration process and the counselor's role in it is recommended.

Teachers perceive counselors to be doing a good job in a number of areas, especially in providing support to students in a variety of ways. Teachers reported strong relationships with counselors and respect for them personally and professionally. Teacher concerns surfaced regarding counselor effectiveness in presenting guidance in the classroom in all schools to varying degrees. A substantially lower number of SJHS teachers see a need for coordinated curriculums dealing with career and social/emotional development than at the other two schools. The high school teachers expressed concerns about counselor effectiveness in helping students select courses. Several written comments elaborated on this issue, expressing concern about perceived lack of counselor knowledge about some high school courses and inappropriate academic placement. Teachers place a high priority on addressing this issue.

When asked if counselors have identified goals and functions of the counseling program, teachers and administrators expressed much uncertainty. Only one-third of the high school teaching staff and two-thirds of the junior high teachers feel that the staff

understands the goals and functions of the counseling program. More than two-thirds of administrators agree that there is a lack of understanding. Addressing role and program definition is an important issue that permeates throughout this discussion of research conclusions.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations derived from the study:

1) The research findings should be presented to counselors and administrators at each of the three schools.
2) If counselors determine that further information is needed to gain a clearer picture of areas of concern identified in the study, focus groups or structured interviews could be used to accomplish this task.
3) School district counselors should meet as a group to discuss the overall results and steps in moving toward a purposeful, responsive, comprehensive district-wide counseling program.
4) Goals, based upon data generated from this study, should be established by the Stillwater Area Schools Counseling and Guidance Department.
5) A review process should be established for ongoing internal evaluation.
6) The formation of an advisory committee is a strong recommendation of many authors represented in the review of literature and should be considered by the district counseling team. An advisory committee could use the data generated in this study as a starting point and play a leadership role in setting future direction for the counseling effort.

7) The research data should be shared with district level administrators as well as school board members to gain support at a foundational level. Key decision makers must be kept informed and prepared to be able to facilitate the healthy growth and development of young people through support of school counseling interventions and comprehensive, prevention-focused programs.

Recommendations for further research to enhance this study could focus on several areas. Surveying additional classes of students and their parents (other than the classes of 2001 and 2004) with the same survey instruments would be helpful to verify that the results are truly representative of current counseling efforts. Once articulated goals are in place for the counseling program, a different survey instrument could be developed in line with the specific outcomes the department wishes to measure.

Further research involving focus groups of stakeholders to verify the accuracy in the representation of the sample surveyed and gain further insight into the concerns addressed in the results would be a helpful study. This qualitative research method would potentially yield powerful information with a broader perspective.

Because this research focused on secondary school counseling, little attention was given to efforts in the elementary schools. Even though there are no counselors at elementary schools in the Stillwater school district, it is anticipated that the needs of students would drive the implementation of some counseling-related activities. A study to determine what services and/or programmatic efforts might currently be implemented in the elementary schools within the district and who is delivering them to whom would be valuable. A similar study of counseling-related efforts at the St. Croix Valley Alternative Learning Program would be useful as well.

An evaluation of the progress made toward goals set in December 1990, the date of the last counseling program evaluation, would be an interesting study. School counseling in Stillwater has changed significantly in the last ten years and research measuring the changes could provide encouragement to counselors that have been involved in the process of growth and development of the counseling program as well as insight to administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

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Appendix A

STUDENT SURVEY
Stillwater Area Schools Counseling Department

The Counseling Department needs your help in assessing the current program. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions. Your answers and opinions will help us better meet the needs of all students. Thank you for your time!

EXPERIENCE WITH SCHOOL COUNSELING

1. Which of the following best describes how well you are acquainted with your counselor? (check one)
   _____ a. I don't know his/her name
   _____ b. I know his/her name, but we've never met
   _____ c. I've talked with him/her about minor matters
   _____ d. I've talked with him/her about some heavy-duty concerns

If you answered "a" or "b" skip to question 5.

2. How easy was it to arrange a time to see your counselor?
   _____ a. Very easy
   _____ b. Pretty easy
   _____ c. A slight struggle
   _____ d. Difficult

3. How helpful was the counselor in your conversation with him/her?
   _____ a. Very helpful
   _____ b. Helpful
   _____ c. Somewhat helpful
   _____ d. Not helpful

If the conversation was helpful, please briefly explain._____
_____

If the conversation was not helpful, how could it have been better?_____
_____

4. How comfortable were you talking with your counselor?
   _____ a. Very comfortable
   _____ b. Somewhat comfortable
   _____ c. Somewhat uncomfortable
   _____ d. Very uncomfortable

5. If you had a concern about an **academic** problem in school, how likely would you be to contact your counselor?
   _____ a. Very likely
   _____ b. Probably
   _____ c. Maybe
   _____ d. Not likely

6. If you had a concern about a **social or emotional** problem in school, how likely would you be to contact your counselor?
   _____ a. Very likely
   _____ b. Probably
   _____ c. Maybe
   _____ d. Not likely

STUDENT NEEDS FOR COUNSELING PROGRAM

Please use the following scale when responding to each of these statements. Circle the appropriate response.

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree
? = No Opinion or Insufficient Information

7. It is important that our school...

a. Help students begin planning a career.	SA	A	D	SD	?
b. Teach students employment skills.	SA	A	D	SD	?
c. Teach students study skills.	SA	A	D	SD	?
d. Teach students conflict resolution skills.	SA	A	D	SD	?
e. Help students understand personal relationships.	SA	A	D	SD	?
f. Teach students decision-making skills.	SA	A	D	SD	?
g. Help students understand course options and their impact on future plans.	SA	A	D	SD	?
h. Help students understand his/her learning style and its implications.	SA	A	D	SD	?
i. Help students develop positive self-esteem.	SA	A	D	SD	?
j. Help students learn to manage stress.	SA	A	D	SD	?
k. Help students cope with family disturbances.	SA	A	D	SD	?
l. Help students make the transitions from one level of education to the next.	SA	A	D	SD	?
m. Have trained personnel available to speak with students about personal problems.	SA	A	D	SD	?
n. Provide support groups to allow students to discuss issues of concern	SA	A	D	SD	?
o. Explain the test scores on students' cumulative record.	SA	A	D	SD	?
p. Have a meeting with students and their parents to discuss student plans after high school.	SA	A	D	SD	?

Please add any comments that would help us improve our counseling services at the junior or senior high schools.

_____

_____

FOR SENIORS ONLY

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree
? = No Opinion or Insufficient Information

8. I have access to the information I need to select a college or other post-high school educational option.	SA	A	D	SD	?
9. I understand the financial aid picture associated with my post-high school educational plans.	SA	A	D	SD	?
10. The SAHS Career Center was helpful to me in my post-high school planning.	SA	A	D	SD	?
11. The 2-day career unit presented by counselors in in 10th grade English class was helpful to me.	SA	A	D	SD	?
12. The 2-day career unit presented by counselors in in 11th grade U.S. History class was helpful to me.	SA	A	D	SD	?
13. The 1-day unit presented by counselors in 12th grade English class on post-high planning was helpful to me.	SA	A	D	SD	?
14. I used the ECOS computer program in my post-high planning this year.	SA	A	D	SD	?
15. **Answer ONLY if you used the ECOS program this year:** I found the ECOS program helpful to me.	SA	A	D	SD	?
16. The process for registering for classes for the next school year at SAHS was effective in providing me with the information I needed to make good decisions.	SA	A	D	SD	?
17. Counselors were helpful resources during the registration process.	SA	A	D	SD	?
18. **Answer ONLY if you attended SJHS or OJHS:** I made a smooth transition from junior high to SAHS.	SA	A	D	SD	?
19. **Answer ONLY if you entered SAHS from another school district and did not attend SJHS or OJHS:** I made a smooth transition into SAHS from my former school.	SA	A	D	SD	?
20. **Answer ONLY if you entered SAHS from another school district AND attended a New Student Orientation meeting:** The New Student Orientation meeting(s) helped my transition into SAHS.	SA	A	D	SD	?

Please share any additional comments that would help us improve the counseling program at SAHS._____

_____

_____

PARENT SURVEY
Stillwater Area Schools Counseling Department

The Counseling Department needs your help in assessing the current program. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions. Your answers and opinions will help us better meet the needs of all students. Thank you for your time!

EXPERIENCE WITH SCHOOL COUNSELING

1. Which of the following best describes how well you are acquainted with your child's counselor? (check one)
   _____ a. I don't know his/her name
   _____ b. I know his/her name
   _____ c. I've talked with him/her on the phone
   _____ d. I've met with him/her at school

   If you answered "a" or "b" skip to question 4.
2. How easy was it to make contact with your child's counselor?
   _____ a. Very easy
   _____ b. Pretty easy
   _____ c. A slight struggle
   _____ d. Difficult

3. How helpful was the counselor in your conversation with him/her?
   _____ a. Very helpful
   _____ b. Helpful
   _____ c. Somewhat helpful
   _____ d. Not helpful

   If the conversation was helpful, please briefly explain._____
   _____

   If the conversation was not helpful, how could it have been better?_____
   _____

4. How helpful were the counselors to your child in making the transition from his/her previous school to his/her present school?
   _____ a. Very helpful
   _____ b. Helpful
   _____ c. Somewhat helpful
   _____ d. Not helpful

5. If you had a concern about your child's **academic** performance in school, how likely would you be to contact a counselor?
   _____ a. Very likely
   _____ b. Probably
   _____ c. Maybe
   _____ d. Not likely

6. If you had a concern about your child's **social or emotional** status in school, how likely would you be to contact a counselor?
   _____ a. Very likely
   _____ b. Probably
   _____ c. Maybe
   _____ d. Not likely

STUDENT NEEDS FOR COUNSELING PROGRAM

Please use the following scale when responding to each of these statements. Circle the appropriate response.

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree
? = No Opinion or Insufficient Information

7. It is important that our school...

a. Help students begin planning a career.	SA	A	D	SD	?
b. Teach students employment skills.	SA	A	D	SD	?
c. Teach students study skills.	SA	A	D	SD	?
d. Teach students conflict resolution skills.	SA	A	D	SD	?
e. Help students understand personal relationships.	SA	A	D	SD	?
f. Teach students decision-making skills.	SA	A	D	SD	?
g. Help students understand course options and their impact on future plans.	SA	A	D	SD	?
h. Help students understand his/her learning style and its implications.	SA	A	D	SD	?
i. Help students develop positive self-esteem.	SA	A	D	SD	?
j. Help students learn to manage stress.	SA	A	D	SD	?
k. Help students cope with family disturbances.	SA	A	D	SD	?
l. Help students make the transitions from one level of education to the next.	SA	A	D	SD	?
m. Have trained personnel available to speak with students about personal problems.	SA	A	D	SD	?
n. Provide support groups to allow students to discuss issues of concern	SA	A	D	SD	?
o. Explain the test scores on students' cumulative record.	SA	A	D	SD	?
p. Have a meeting with students and their parents to discuss student plans after high school.	SA	A	D	SD	?

Please add any comments that would help us improve our counseling services at the junior or senior high schools.

_____

_____

FOR PARENTS OF SENIORS ONLY

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree
? = No Opinion or Insufficient Information

8. My child has access to the information he/she needs to select a college or other post-high school educational option.	SA	A	D	SD	?
9. Our family understands the financial aid picture associated with our child's post-high school educational plans.	SA	A	D	SD	?
10. The SAHS Career Center was helpful me and/or my child in accessing information for post-high school planning.	SA	A	D	SD	?
11. I attended an evening presentation at SAHS related to my child's post-high school planning.	SA	A	D	SD	?
12. **Answer only if you agreed with question 11:** The evening presentation on post-high planning I attended was helpful to me and my family.	SA	A	D	SD	?
13. I attended an evening presentation at SAHS regarding financial aid for post-high education.	SA	A	D	SD	?
14. **Answer only if you agreed with question 13:** The evening presentation regarding financial aid was helpful to me and my family.	SA	A	D	SD	?
15. I attended an evening presentation in January specifically focused on completing the FAFSA form.	SA	A	D	SD	?
16. **Answer only if you agreed with question 15:** The evening presentation in January on how to complete the FAFSA was helpful to me.	SA	A	D	SD	?

Please share any additional comments that would help us improve the counseling program at SAHS:

_____

_____

_____

_____

TEACHER (CERTIFIED STAFF) SURVEY
Stillwater Area Schools Counseling Department

The Counseling Department needs your help in assessing the current program. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions. Your answers and opinions will help us better meet the needs of all students. Thank you for your time!

Please indicate below the number of years you have been teaching in this school district. If you are a traveling teacher, please complete only one survey.

_____1 – 4 years
_____5 – 10 years
_____11 or more years

Use the following scale when responding to each of these statements. Circle the appropriate response.

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree
? = No Opinion or Insufficient Information

1. Students have easy access to counselors.	SA	A	D	SD	?
2. Teachers have easy access to counselors.	SA	A	D	SD	?
3. Our counselors do a good job...					
a. Orienting new students to the school.	SA	A	D	SD	?
b. Helping students select appropriate courses.	SA	A	D	SD	?
c. Helping students with academic concerns.	SA	A	D	SD	?
d. Helping students with personal issues.	SA	A	D	SD	?
e. Dealing with crisis situations.	SA	A	D	SD	?
f. Making referrals to outside agencies (e.g., chemical dependency or mental health centers).	SA	A	D	SD	?
g. Presenting guidance activities in the classroom.	SA	A	D	SD	?
h. Offering and facilitating support groups for students to discuss issues of concern.	SA	A	D	SD	?
i. Assisting students with post-high planning.	SA	A	D	SD	?
j. Assisting teachers with student concerns.	SA	A	D	SD	?
k. Being visible in the school to students and staff.	SA	A	D	SD	?

	4. There is a need for a coordinated career development curriculum.	SA	A	D	SD	?
5.	There is a need for a coordinated curriculum for social and emotional development.	SA	A	D	SD	?
6.	Our counseling program adequately meets the needs of our students.	SA	A	D	SD	?
7.	Our counselors have created good public relations for the counseling program.	SA	A	D	SD	?
8.	Our counselors have identified goals and functions of the counseling program.	SA	A	D	SD	?
9.	The staff understands the goals and functions of the counseling program.	SA	A	D	SD	?
10.	Our counseling program should be proactive and prevention-focused.	SA	A	D	SD	?
11.	Our counselors have adequate physical facilities to provide counseling services.	SA	A	D	SD	?
12.	The present student/counselor ratio allows counselors to meet the needs of our students and staff.	SA	A	D	SD	?

13. What are the **major strengths** of the counseling program?

_____

_____

_____

14. What are the **major needs** of the counseling program?

_____

_____

_____

15. Please add any other comments that would help us improve our counseling program.

_____

_____

_____

ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY
Stillwater Area Schools Counseling Department

The Counseling Department needs your help in assessing the current program. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions. Your answers and opinions will help us better meet the needs of all students. Thank you for your time!

Use the following scale when responding to each of these statements. Circle the appropriate response.

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree
? = No Opinion or Insufficient Information

1.	Students have easy access to counselors.	SA	A	D	SD	?
2.	Teachers have easy access to counselors.	SA	A	D	SD	?
3.	Our counselors do a good job...					
	a. Orienting new students to the school.	SA	A	D	SD	?
	b. Helping students select appropriate courses.	SA	A	D	SD	?
	c. Helping students with academic concerns.	SA	A	D	SD	?
	d. Helping students with personal issues.	SA	A	D	SD	?
	e. Dealing with crisis situations.	SA	A	D	SD	?
	f. Making referrals to outside agencies (e.g., chemical dependency or mental health centers).	SA	A	D	SD	?
	g. Presenting guidance activities in the classroom.	SA	A	D	SD	?
	h. Offering and facilitating support groups for students to discuss issues of concern.	SA	A	D	SD	?
	i. Assisting students with post-high planning.	SA	A	D	SD	?
	j. Assisting teachers with student concerns.	SA	A	D	SD	?
	k. Being visible in the school to students and staff.	SA	A	D	SD	?
4.	There is a need for a coordinated career development curriculum.	SA	A	D	SD	?
5.	There is a need for a coordinated curriculum for social and emotional development.	SA	A	D	SD	?
6.	Our counseling program adequately meets the needs of our students.	SA	A	D	SD	?

7. Our counselors have created good public relations for the counseling program. SA A D SD ?

8. Our counselors have identified goals and functions of the counseling program. SA A D SD ?

9. The staff understands the goals and functions of the counseling program. SA A D SD ?

10. Our counseling program should be proactive and prevention-focused. SA A D SD ?

11. Our counselors have adequate physical facilities to provide counseling services SA A D SD ?

12. The present student/counselor ratio allows counselors to meet the needs of our students and staff. SA A D SD ?

13. Recommended student/counselor ratios depend on what is expected of the counselors. In your opinion, what student/counselor ratio do you recommend for your counselors:

_____ students for one counselor.

14. Our counselors have an adequate budget for supplies and materials. SA A D SD ?

15. Our counselors have adequate clerical help. SA A D SD ?

16. What are the **major strengths** of the counseling program?

_____

_____

_____

17. What are the **major needs** of the counseling program?

_____

_____

_____

18. Please add any other comments that would help us improve our counseling program.

_____

_____

Appendix B

Table 2 illustrates in ranked order the percentage of students who responded in agreement that it is important for our school to provide identified guidance and counseling related educational experiences. The letters a-p correspond to the items addressed in question 7 on page two of the student survey (see Appendix A).

Table 2

Needs Assessment (Students)

	SAHS	SJHS	OJHS	Total
Priority #1	G 100%	L 97.8%	A 97.2%	G 96.2%
Priority #2	O 100%	I 95.8%	G 94.4%	L 96.1%
Priority #3	C 95.9%	C 95.7%	L 94.4%	C 94.6%
Priority #4	L 95.8%	H 95.7%	B 91.6%	A 93.8%
Priority #5	H 93.6%	A 93.4%	C 91.5%	H 92.2%
Priority #6	A 91.7%	B93.3%	F 91.5%	O 91.0%
Priority #7	F 89.6%	G 93.3%	I 88.6%	I 89.9%
Priority #8	J 89.1%	J 89.2%	D 87.9%	F 88.4%
Priority #9	I 84.8%	D 88.7%	H 84.9%	B 86.6%
Priority #10	D 83.3%	O 88.1%	O 82.3%	D 85.7%
Priority #11	N 82.6%	F 84.8%	J 75.0%	J 85.2%
Priority #12	M 82.2%	M 80.8%	M 73.5%	M 79.2%
Priority #13	P 78.0%	K 75.0%	N 69.7%	N 75.8%
Priority #14	B 76.1%	N 73.4%	K 54.5%	K 68.6%
Priority #15	K 72.3%	E 69.7%	P 52.9%	P 64.7%
Priority #16	E 53.5%	P 60.9%	E 48.5%	E 58.0%

Table 3 illustrates in ranked order the percentage of parents who responded in agreement that it is important for our school to provide identified guidance and counseling related educational experiences. The letters a-p correspond to the items addressed in question 7 on page two of the parent survey (see Appendix A).

Table 3

Needs Assessment (Parents)

	SAHS	SJHS	OJHS	Total
Priority #1	L 97.8%	F 100%	C 100%	L 99.2%
Priority #2	O 97.8%	G 100%	G 100%	G 98.5%
Priority #3	A 95.9%	H 100%	L 100%	C 97.7%
Priority #4	C 95.9%	L 100%	D 97.3%	H 97.7%
Priority #5	G 95.7%	C 98.0%	H 97.1%	O 97.5%
Priority #6	H 95.7%	O 98.0%	O 97.1%	D 96.2%
Priority #7	N 95.4%	D 97.8%	F 94.3%	F 93.9%
Priority #8	D 93.6%	M 95.9%	A 93.9%	M 93.7%
Priority #9	M 93.6%	I 93.7%	P 93.3%	A 92.3%
Priority #10	J 88.9%	E 93.6%	I 91.2%	N 91.5%
Priority #11	F 87.3%	N 93.4%	J 90.9%	J 90.6%
Priority #12	B 86.4%	J 91.8%	M 90.7%	I 90.5%
Priority #13	I 86.3%	A 87.8%	E 87.9%	E 89.2%
Priority #14	E 85.4%	P 84.5%	B 85.7%	B 83.6%
Priority #15	K 80.5%	K 83.3%	K 74.2%	P 81.5%
Priority #16	P 77.3%	B 79.6%	N 72.8%	K 80.0%