

Parents' Perceptions of the Role of the School Counselor at the High School Level

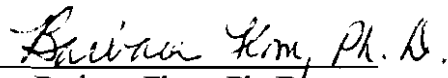
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ABSTRACT

The role of the high school counselor is one that can be frequently misunderstood. School counselors are in frequent contact with teachers, administrators, and students. Parents, however, often do not get as much of an opportunity to communicate with their son's or daughter's school counselor. This allows for misconceptions about the role of the school counselor at the high school level. Frequent communication with parents can increase the success rate of students and can be a positive way to keep parents involved in the lives of their teens. It is important to know and understand how parents feel and what their perceptions of the role of the counselor are. By understanding their thoughts and feelings a counselor will be more able to work with parents to offer their students a well- rounded academic, personal/social, and career-oriented program.

The purpose of the study was to assess parents' perceptions of the role of the school counselor at the high school level. The study also examined what types of services parents consider to be the most valuable for the school counselor to offer.

Parents of high school students in a northern Wisconsin school participated in a survey. The results of the survey revealed that the majority of the parents who participated felt that it was very important for the high school counselor to perform many of the duties stated in national and state models. The majority of the parents also felt that it was not important for a high school counselor to help with administrative and clerical duties or to coordinate with community resources.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The educational system has become one filled with numerous obligations, duties, goals, and laws. Schools across the country are full of diversity. There are students who have different ability levels and educational needs, students who come from homes with only one parent, homes where the guardian is not a biological parent, homes where parents have less traditional sexual preferences, homes where parents may not be available to meet the needs of their children, and homes where abuses such as drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, or verbal abuse are all too common. Schools and more specifically, school counselors, have quite the challenge before them. School counselors are pulled in several different directions trying to be of assistance to students, administrators, teachers, parents, and community members. In addition, counselor accountability is becoming absolutely necessary for funding, job security, and federal regulations.

The American School Counselor Association National Model (ASCA, 2005) recommended the majority of the school counselor's time should be spent in direct service to all students so that every student receives maximum benefits from the program. Borders (2002) stated that counselors primarily use their counseling (and other) skills towards the goals of enhancing the academic success and life career planning of all of their students, and they are the frontline mental health specialists in the schools, who thus must deal with the wide variety of societal issues confronting today's youth and their families. Today's youth bring so much more complexity to school than they once did. The issues these students carry around affect their ability to function in the classroom. Counselors are no longer able to focus only on academics.

Even though counselors are faced with these issues, many school counselors are expected to perform duties that may take time away from the student and the actual needs of that student. In an article by Fitch et al. (2001), common counselor duties not promoted by ASCA include scheduling, disciplinary functions, and clerical duties (student records and transcript requests). In a time where educational funding is rapidly decreasing, there are fewer people available to perform some of these tasks. Therefore, some schools are having their counselors take on those less desirable tasks.

In addition to meeting the demands of the schools and administrators, as well as advocating for the students, counselors now have to consider how to advocate for the counseling profession. Paisley and McMahon (2001) reported ongoing questions about the role of the counselor, calls for program evaluation and accountability, increasingly complex diversity in the schools, and school counselors as advocates.

Teachers, administrators, students, and parents all have different perceptions of the role and function of the school counselor. The school setting allows for some basic communication to take place between the administrators and the school counselor, the teachers and the school counselor, and the students and the school counselor. Granted these different groups may not be able to clearly relate their feelings of what they expect from their school counselor, but they are more likely to have contact with the counselor than the average parent. Parents do not have as frequent communication with the school counselor. It is often unclear to parents just what the school counselor's role is in the education of their child. Therefore, if a counselor understands parents' perceptions of the role and function of the high school counselor, the counselor can use that to his or her advantage. This understanding will enable the high school counselor to effectively

interact, consult, and help the parents become more aware and involved in their child's academic and personal development. As a result, the high school counselor's individual performance in the guidance program will increase, thus increasing the overall performance of delivering the guidance services (Schmidt, 2003). Before continuing on, it may be helpful to take a look back at the profession and recognize its original purpose and how it has developed over the years. In the Middle Ages, it was the priests and clergy who carried the role of the counselor. They informed people about the church as well as developmental issues such as career choices. Vocational development and occupational choice were introduced in books in the seventeenth century. These books also contained pictures of different occupations as well as information for parents. This allowed parents to help their children make career choices (Schmidt, 2003).

In the nineteenth century psychology began to explain human behavior and development. It was during this time that clinics became available for adults and children. This was the beginning of several helping professions in communities. By the twentieth century counselors became available in schools to offer vocational assistance. Prior to this teachers were responsible for all of the concerns and needs of their students. As schools began to open their doors to all levels of society, teachers could no longer meet all the different needs of their students (Schmidt, 2003).

In the 1920s schools began to play a role in guiding students in their personal, social, and moral development (Nugent, 2000). This was actually criticized by many, including parents, teachers, and administrators. Many did not feel that moral development was appropriate for the school setting as this should be left to the home and church setting.

The George-Barden Act of 1946 provided funds to develop and support guidance and counseling activities in the school setting. This was the beginning of a period of rapid growth for guidance and counseling services in schools (Schmidt, 2003).

The school counseling profession continued to expand with the development of the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) in 1953 (Skutley, 2006). Shortly after that the Soviet Union launched Sputnik I, and the U.S. became alarmed. The public felt that schools needed to improve testing of student aptitude and identify students' potential earlier in their educational career. Counselors were now needed to encourage students to stay in school, take academics seriously, and attend college. This movement also led to increased funding for guidance and counseling programs in schools as well as scholarships. This was all a result of the passage of Public Law 85-864, entitled the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (NDEA; Schmidt, 2003).

The 1960s brought the term "developmental guidance." Different roles of the school counselor in the 1960s were to counsel individual students, confer with teachers to help them understand and meet the needs of their students, confer with parents about their children, and refer students and families to outside agencies (Schmidt, 2003).

The 1970s brought the idea of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. Many handbooks and approaches were written and put into practice in the 1980s and 1990s. ASCA endorsed the first developmental, comprehensive guidance program. Gysbers and Moore (as cited in Schmidt, 2003) provided a base and a step-by-step process for developing the programs. By the late 1980s, several states developed their own guides for comprehensive school guidance programs. These were to assist the local districts and counselors to remodel their current programs. By the end of the 1990s,

ASCA had developed a national model (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). This model was based on five foundation premises: Guidance and counseling is a program, which includes student standards, certified personnel, and program materials; guidance and counseling programs are developmental and comprehensive and delivered on a regular basis to assist students in their academic, career, and personal/social development; guidance and counseling programs feature a team approach, which means all school staff are involved, but the certified school counselor is the center of the program; guidance and counseling programs are developed through a systematic process of planning, designing, implementing, evaluation, and enhancing, which assures delivery of the designed program to address established priorities; and guidance and counseling programs have established leadership, which ensures accountability for the quality of the program (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

School counselors are required to work with numerous individuals. They are often put in the position of dealing with many different issues within a school setting. Frequently school counselors work closely with administrators and are aware of their expectations. However, the expectations of parents are also extremely important. It can be more difficult to include parental expectations and opinions when they are not in the school building as frequently as teachers, administrators, and students. Their input can help a school counselors define their position.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the role and function of a high school guidance counselor as perceived by parents whose children attend a public high school in

northern Wisconsin. A survey will be distributed to parents and/or guardians while attending parent teacher conferences at their child's high school during the Fall of 2008.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer two research questions. The questions are listed below:

1. How do parents perceive the role of the school counselor?
2. What types of services do parents consider to be the most valuable services for the school counselor to offer?

Terms and Definitions

For the purpose of this research, there were three terms, which needed to be defined for clarity and understanding. These terms were:

School Counseling Program: A developmental program that allows students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for their academic, personal/social, and life career development (Skutley, 2006).

Perception: The opinions or beliefs held by another person.

Role: An assumed normal or characteristic position that is taken on by the school counselor.

Assumptions of the Study

It was assumed that parent participants would answer questions honestly and return surveys the same evening. It was also assumed that parents had a general understanding of the role of their child's school counselor.

Limitations of the Study

Historically parents who attend parent-teacher conferences at this particular high school tended to have students who do quite well academically. Therefore, results may not reflect the thoughts of parents who are less involved with their child for various reasons. In addition, results are not generalizable because of the particular geographic location and population of the school. Also, the researcher understands that participants may fill out the survey in order to please the researcher.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter will examine the current ASCA model and the Wisconsin Comprehensive School Counseling Model (WCSCM) that are currently in place in many schools across Wisconsin. Examining these models will allow for understanding of the current expectation of the school counselor according to the ASCA model and the WCSCM. The chapter will also cover perceptions of the role and function of school counselors. Although it is necessary for counselors to define their own role and function, it is also helpful to have insight from those other involved individuals. Perceptions of the role and function of the school counselor from teachers, parents, administrators, students, and also the high school counselor's point of view will also be examined and discussed.

Current Models in School Counseling

In response to a lack of clear identity of school counseling programs, ASCA researched and developed a national model with national standards. According to the ASCA model (2005), a school counseling program is comprehensive in scope, preventive in design, and developmental in nature. A comprehensive program focuses on what all students, pre-kindergarten through grade 12, should know, understand, and be able to do in these three domains: academic, career, and personal/social. The purpose of such a program is to allow students to gain skills and learning opportunities in a proactive, preventive manner. Preventive education is most often successful when implemented through guidance curriculum in the classroom. Programs and services offered by the school counselor should be designed to meet the needs of students at various growth and development stages.

The current ASCA model contains four primary elements: the foundation, a delivery system, a management system, and accountability (ASCA, 2005). The foundation element addresses what each student will know and be able to do. It contains the philosophy and beliefs of the model. This set of principles guides the development of the program, as well as the implementation and the evaluation. All personnel involved in the management and implementation of the program need to be in agreement on each of the principles or beliefs within the philosophy. The foundation is also where the mission statement will be found. This statement describes the program's purpose and vision. This is what the program desires for each student involved and often aligns with the school's mission statement. Also found within the foundation element are the domains. The school counseling program is designed to facilitate student development in the domains of academic, career, and personal/social. Lastly, included in this element is the ASCA national standards and competencies. These competencies define the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that students should obtain and demonstrate after participating in the school counseling program (ASCA, 2005).

ASCA recommends a system of delivery, which includes: a curriculum component, individual student planning, responsive services, and systems support (ASCA, 2005). The guidance curriculum consists of structured developmental lessons to provide all students with the knowledge and skills appropriate for their particular developmental level. The national model states high school counselors dedicate approximately 15-25% of their time to guidance curriculum. Individual student planning allows the school counselor to design activities to assist individual students in establishing personal goals and developing future plans. According to the national

model, high school counselors should spend between 25%-35% of their time doing individual student planning. This is a considerable amount of time in comparison to elementary counselors who only spend 5% to 10% of their time with individual student planning. Frequently students have immediate needs that must be addressed. This is where responsive services enter the program. These services may include one-on-one counseling, consultations with teachers, parents, students, administration, referrals to other agencies, or peer mediation. Another 23%-35% of a high school counselor's time should be spent dealing with responsive services. The systems support allows for professional development and collaboration. This support system also allows for program management and activities that establish, maintain, and enhance the entire school counseling program.

The third element found in the ASCA model is management systems (ASCA, 2005). This system defines the calendar and action plan, why the plan is necessary (by reviewing collected data), and on what authority the program will be implemented. The counselors and administrators develop agreements to assure accountability. An advisory council is an appointed group of individuals who review the guidance program results and make recommendations. Representatives of this group may be students, parents, guardians, teachers, counselors, administrators, and members of the community. Also included under the management system is the use of data. This includes collection analysis and interpretation of student achievement data to ensure all students are receiving what they need to be successful in the school setting. Data are necessary to determine the needs of the school and the direction of the school counseling program.

Actions plans for the guidance curriculum are also found under the management system. They often include standards and competencies, as well as a description of the guidance activity, the curriculum or materials to be used, and the time needed to complete the lesson. ASCA's model includes a guide for counselors to determine the time their program needs to spend in each of the four components of the delivery system (ASCA, 2005).

The final component of the national model is accountability (ASCA, 2005). This component measures how the students have changed as a result of the guidance program. The ASCA model (2005, p. 59) stated "Accountability and evaluation of the school counseling program are absolute necessities." It is important for counselors to be able to identify how the students are different as a result of the program they have in place. It is vital to collect data and be able to support and link their programs to students' academic success. This is quickly becoming more and more important in a time where schools may need to be making budget cuts and eliminating programs.

The Wisconsin Comprehensive School Counseling Model (WCSCM) is a model based on the ASCA model, with the same four components: Foundation, Management, Accountability, and Delivery. The standards are slightly different and represent lifelong development and learning goals. The standards are divided up among grade level benchmarks (WCSCM, 2007).

All activities carried out by a school counselor should fit into one of the four components in the delivery component of the model. The four components within the delivery component are: school counseling curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and system supports. The WCSCM states that School Counseling

Curriculum is a written program that is comprehensive in scope, preventive and developmental in design, coordinated by school counselor, and delivered, as appropriate, by school counselors, other educators, parents and community (2007, p. 30). The counselor's duty in this component is to plan, design, coordinate, implement, and evaluate this curriculum. The curriculum is delivered through activities within the classroom setting, small groups outside of the classroom, and individually with students and/or families concerned about careers and postsecondary options (WCSCM, 2007).

Individual Student Planning is the second component of the WCSCM. According to the WCSCM (2007,p. 31), this component focuses on activities that help students plan, monitor, and manage their educational, personal, and career development. In this particular component, parent involvement is vital because parents/ guardians many times are one of the biggest influences on career choices that students make. In this component it is recommended that student and parent conferences are held so that parents may be kept informed and their ideas and concerns heard. This is a primary way for parents and or guardians to remain involved in this stage of their students' life. These conferences allow for short term and long term goals to be set and examined (WCSCM, 2007).

Also in this Individual Student Planning component, at the high school level, counselors work one on one with students interpreting the results of their interest inventories, college admissions, aptitude tests, and achievement tests. In many instances, job- shadowing and scholarship searches are also performed in this component. The high school counselor is also be responsible for setting up college tours and visits (WCSCM, 2007).

The third component of the WCSCM is Responsive Services. The WCSCM states that Responsive Services are activities or interventions that are carried out to meet the immediate needs and concerns of the students (2007, p. 33). The school counselor does not work independently in this component. Frequently this consists of a collaboration of students, parents, school staff, and community members. The cooperation of all of these individuals is necessary for this component to be successful. Issues that may be addressed in this component may include, but are not limited to: relationships, violence issues, substance use/abuse, character education, conflict management, academic planning, to name a few (WCSCM, 2007).

This is also the component where counseling is found. Counseling can be initiated by an individual who is having difficulty with any of the above listed items or it may be done as an intervention based on a request of a staff member, parent/guardian, friend, etc. If there appears to be a number of students with the same concern, group counseling would also fall into this component. School counselors also consult with other professionals in the building, parents, or community members regarding ways to help students. School counselors also must be aware of services offered in the community to assist students and families so that they may refer them elsewhere to receive the assistance necessary for the student's success (WCSCM, 2007).

Another piece to the Responsive Services is peer facilitation. School counselors are responsible for getting students trained to be mediators or facilitators, conflict managers, tutors, and mentors (WCSCM, 2007).

The last component in the WCSCM is System Support. This component is responsible for doing just that, supporting the comprehensive school counseling program.

It involves committees and councils, community outreach, consultation, parent involvement, professional development, program management, research and development, and staff and community relations. The WCSCM states that the school counselor is responsible for organizing, planning, managing, and implementing activities in all of these areas (WCSCM, 2007).

The WCSCM recommends that a school counselor spend eighty percent of their time in direct service with students, parents, guardians, teachers, and the community (2007, p.42). This leaves a minimal amount of time for indirect work such as planning, documenting, and preparing.

Administrators' Perceptions of the Role of the School Counselor

Many times in more rural areas, school counselors may find it a challenge to have the resources available to create a fully integrated school counseling program (Monteiro-Leitner et al., 2006). It is not uncommon for school counselors to be assigned additional duties that do not necessarily fit into the traditional guidance role. One common duty that counselors are asked to do is to assist administrators with discipline duties or to step in for them. According to Monteiro-Leitner et al. (2006), some duties that are considered "non-guidance duties" that counselors are required to do are supervising activities such as lunch period, bus duty, hall supervision, etc. Other non-guidance duties frequently required are clerical duties, special education programs, and administrative duties.

In a study by Monteiro-Leitner et al. (2006), it was reported that principals felt that counselors should spend approximately 12.3 hours per week with individual students or small groups of students. Counselors felt they should be spending nearly 18 hours per week with individuals and small groups. This study also reported that principals thought

counselors should spend approximately 4.3 hours per week on special education and Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Counselors did not report this area as one of their responsibilities. Monteiro-Leitner's et al. study also reported that administrators thought counselors actually spent 10 hours per week consulting with teachers, staff, and parents about students' development needs whereas counselors reported this time as much less.

Confusion between the role and function of the counselor is not a new one. It has been an unresolved issue since the 1950s (Monteiro-Leitner et al., 2006, p. 5). Although it may appear that administrators have a much different perception of the role of the counselor, they actually do share many similar perceptions and expectations. Usually counselors are willing to participate in some of these "non-guidance" duties.

Counselors' Perceptions of Their Role

Even school counselors have differing views about their role and how to best use their time and skills (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). This issue of the role of the school counselor has been an issue for many years and continues to be one today. The services that school counselors provide have changed in response to various events, influences, and mandates. It is not uncommon for a high school counselor to struggle to define his/her exact role or function as the high school counselor. There are models available such as the ASCA model and the WCSCM, which outline clearly the role description to be performed by a school counselor.

Even with these models and descriptions, high school counselors in many cases find their time and energy being occupied performing duties that are perceived as essential by administrators, school staff, and parents, but not as essential by the high

school counselor (Quast, 2003). An area of concern for counselors is the amount of time spent doing clerical duties, scheduling, disciplinarian duties, and assessment duties.

ASCA views the primary goal of the school counseling program to enhance student achievement and accomplishment (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). School counselors continue to see their main role as stated above as well as to be an advocate for students and to be a leader in their school and community. In an article by Borders (2002), it is said that the success of all students has long been the goal for school counseling programs.

While it is the primary goal of the high school counselor to offer a comprehensive school counseling model, it is often difficult to offer a quality comprehensive program while also performing the many duties required by the school's administration. School counselors often find themselves as the District Assessment Coordinator (DAC) for their school. While this is an appropriate role for the school counselor, there are duties within this that may be better done by someone less qualified. Burnham & Jackson state "building test coordinators will mostly count, package, and clerically manipulate test materials" (2000). They continue on to say that these tasks do not require the skills of a professionally trained counselor and therefore takes time away from actually performing outlined school counselor tasks. Many counselors find themselves monitoring lunch period, substitute teaching in the classroom, and having to perform disciplinarian duties. By performing these duties the role of the high school counselor becomes confusing to students, staff, and parents.

In Burnham & Jackson (2000) it is reported that all counselors reported meeting with parents throughout the week as well as consulting with community agencies. This

same study done by Burnham & Jackson (2000) reported that counselors continue to meet student needs through individual counseling and found that group work was the most efficient and effective way to address student issues. Monteiro-Leitner et al. (2006) reported that counselors felt they should be spending nearly 18 hours per week with individuals and small groups. In a study done by Partin (1993), results showed high school counselors spending the majority of their time doing scheduling and an average of 17.27% of their day performing administrative and clerical duties. Paperwork, scheduling, and administrative tasks are seen as significant time robbers (Partin, 1993). It is reported in Partin's (1993) study that high school counselors would prefer to spend more time doing group and individual counseling.

All schools are different. Their circumstances are different. They have different populations, different amounts of funding, and different staff populations. It is necessary for high school counselors to ask about the desired role of the counselor within that building in the interview process. School counselors need to adapt the models to fit the needs of their school and community. Partin (1993) suggests that high school counselors keep a daily journal to monitor the use of their time. This may allow for a counselor to spend less time on less essential activities. This may also be beneficial in reporting to administration the services they are actually providing to their students (Partin, 1993).

Parents' Perceptions of the Role of the School Counselor

Parental involvement in the schools is associated with student improvement in a variety of areas including academic performance, attitudes and behavior, attendance, school adjustment and engagement, and graduation rates (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). Therefore, understanding parents' concerns and desires for their students' school

counseling program is essential. Schools across the country strive to meet academic performance standards, graduate a high number of students each year, and have students be well behaved, safe, and productive while attending school. Although schools are not always able to grant every wish that parents would like, it is necessary to listen and take parental perceptions into account when implementing a school counseling program.

Various studies have been done over the years to attempt to find out how parents do perceive school counselors and what the school counselor's function is within the school setting. Zabel (2007), in her University of Wisconsin-Stout Literature Review, reported that in June 2005, ASCA conducted a telephone survey to determine how often parents initiated contact with their child's school counselor. The survey found that "too many parents lack contact with the school counselor" (ASCA, 2005). It was also noted that results from the survey also indicated that parents did feel that school counselors made valuable contributions to students in the areas of academics, personal issues, career issues, and college preparation.

In another attempt to find out how parents perceive the role and function of the high school counselor, Quast (2003), did a study in a high school in central Wisconsin. In this study parents who attended parent teacher conferences were asked to complete a survey, which focused on the role and function of a high school counselor. Just over one hundred parents participated and returned that survey. In reviewing the results of that survey, Quast (2003), determined that "the majority of parents perceived a high school counselor as performing the appropriate and essential roles and functions within the school" (p. 59). Quast also stated that only 1/3 of parents who participated were able to

indicate whether their child's high school counselor was performing the necessary duties and responsibilities within the school (p. 59).

According to Quast (2003), Schmidt (1999) found that the primary role and function of the high school counselor was to assist students with appropriate course selections, different career opportunities, test results, college exploration and application, and scholarship information (p. 11). However, many parents often think of the high school counselor as someone sitting behind their desk doing paperwork, testing, and scheduling students for upcoming terms. In addition, many parents also tend to think the role of the high school counselor is to assume duties as that of an assistant principal (Partin, 1993). When in fact, school counselors are encouraged to avoid these types of disciplinarian duties.

While parents have different perceptions of the role and function of the high school counselor, a counselor may find it beneficial to periodically do studies and surveys, which allow parents to voice their concerns and/or their areas of satisfaction. In doing this, a counselor is better able to offer a well- rounded and complete service to the students. In addition, it allows for communication between the parents and the counselor, which in return benefits all students involved.

It is clear that research shows that high school counselor position frequently lacks a clear role definition. This has allowed for administrators and parents to define the duties of the high school counselor and for the high school counselor to become involved in additional duties outside of those recommended by models such as the ASCA model. These additional duties are often time consuming and therefore, take away from the duties a high school counselor should be performing such as individual and group

counseling, parent conferencing, assisting teachers with students, leading classroom guidance activities, organizing college fairs, etc.

It is also clear that parents can be a vital part in their child's education. A good working relationship with clearly defined role expectations can allow for the success of a high school guidance program as well as the success of the students. High school counselors and parents should join in being advocates for their children (Trusty & Brown, 2005). Getting parents involved in their child's guidance program may result in a successful guidance program and lead to a more well defined program.

High school counselors have to work to better define their role in the education of students in high school. Good communication between administration and the counselor as well as understanding of roles of teachers, administrators, and counselors amongst one another will increase the likelihood of a successful program. By doing this, high school counselors will be more able to offer a high quality service that is comprehensive, proactive, and preventive, which will allow for the success of the students within the school.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter will begin with the subject selection, as well as a description of the subjects. It will be followed by an explanation of the instrument used, as well as an overview of how the data was collected. An analysis procedure will be included and the chapter will conclude with the limitations.

Subject Selection and Description

The population of this study included parents and guardians of high school students attending the Fall 2008 parent-teacher conferences at one public high school in northern Wisconsin. All parents of high school age children, regardless of socio-economic status, age, number of students attending, or students with or without disabilities, male or female, were eligible to participate in the study. This particular school district was located in a very rural area, comprised of mostly Caucasian residents of middle to lower-class socio-economic status. The high school had an enrollment of approximately 200 students of whom 96.4% were Caucasian, 1.6% were American Indian, 1.6% were Hispanic, and .5% were Asian (State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, n.d.). Parent and guardian participation was voluntary and names were not requested on the survey, therefore allowing all participants to remain anonymous.

Instrumentation

Prior to beginning the study, the survey was submitted to the UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for approval. A copy of the letter of exemption is found in Appendix A.

A cover letter was included as part of the survey. The letter informed participants of the purpose for the research, the fact that their completion of the survey implied their

consent to participate in the anonymous study, and the ability to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. A copy of the cover letter is located in the Appendix B.

The survey portion of the study was designed to be simple and easy to complete in a short amount of time. Items were created based on current research, previously used instruments, and ASCA guidelines, which allowed the researcher to measure parents' perceptions of the role and function of the high school counselor. The researcher tailored items to design an original survey for this study. The survey took approximately 10 minutes and was approximately one and one fourth pages long.

Data Collection Procedures

The survey was handed out at a table in the high school wing of the building so that all parents had an opportunity to participate as they walked into the conference. The table was supplied with chairs and pencils so that parents could sit and complete the survey. There was also a box present at the table for parents to submit the surveys as they completed them.

Data Analysis

All appropriate statistics were run on the data. All data collected was nominal, therefore the means, percentages, and frequencies were appropriate.

Limitations

Historically, parents who attend parent-teacher conferences at this particular high school tend to have students who do quite well academically. Therefore, results may not reflect the thoughts of parents who, for various reasons, are less involved in their student's education. An additional limitation is that the study was completed in a very rural K-12 school where participants know most people in the community. This may

mean that participants answered survey questions based on their familiarity with the researcher or the current counselor. For these reasons, the results of this particular survey should be used with caution when generalizing to parent perceptions in other schools.

Chapter IV: Results

This chapter will contain the results of the study completed to attain the parents' perceptions of the role of the school counselor at the high school level and what types of services parents consider to be the most valuable. Each item and findings will be presented. Then, each research question will be stated as well as a brief description of the results.

Item Analysis

Survey item #1 was "Provide individual counseling (personal, social, and academic)." Of 77 respondents, 0% reported Not Important, 2.6% ($n = 2$) reported Slightly Important, 10.4% ($n = 8$) reported Somewhat Important, 24.7% ($n = 19$) reported Important, and 62.3% ($n = 48$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor provide individual counseling. The mean of all responses for this item was 4.1 on a 5-point scale, with 5 indicating very important.

Survey item #2 was "Provide group counseling (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Awareness, self-esteem, divorce groups, etc.)." Seventy-seven of 77 responded to this item. Of those respondents, 5.2% ($n = 4$) reported Not Important, 3.9% ($n = 3$) reported Slightly Important, 14.3% ($n = 11$) reported Somewhat Important, 29.9% ($n = 23$) reported Important, and 46.7% ($n = 36$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor provide group counseling. The mean for this item was 4.0.

Survey item #3 was "Work with teachers in order to help students with academic, personal, and social challenges." For this item 77 of 77 responded, 0% reported Not Important, 0% reported Slightly Important, 6.5% ($n = 5$) reported Somewhat Important, 23.4% ($n = 18$) reported Important, and 70.1% ($n = 54$) reported Very Important that the

high school counselor work with teachers in order to help students. The mean for this item was 4.6.

Survey item #4 was “Collaborate with student’s parents or guardians.” Seventy-seven of 77 responded to this item. Of those respondents, 0% reported Not Important, 0% reported Slightly Important, 7.8% ($n = 6$) reported Somewhat Important, 22.1% ($n = 17$) reported Important, and 70.1% ($n = 54$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor collaborate with parents and guardians. The mean of all responses was 4.6.

Survey item #5 was “Give assessments and tests (career inventories, ACT, SAT, etc.).” Seventy-seven of 77 responded to this item. Of those respondents, 0% reported Not Important, 1.3% ($n = 1$) reported Slightly Important, 15.6% ($n = 12$) reported Somewhat Important, 27.3% ($n = 21$) reported Important, and 55.8% ($n = 43$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor give assessments and tests. The mean of this item was 4.4.

Survey item #6 was “Promote student’s personal growth and development.” For this item 77 of 77 respondents responded. None reported Not Important, 1.3% ($n = 1$) reported Slightly Important, 16.9% ($n = 13$) reported Somewhat Important, 26.0% ($n = 20$) reported Important, and 55.8% ($n = 43$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor promote student’s personal growth and development. The mean of this item was 4.4.

Survey item #7 was “Teach decision-making skills.” Seventy-seven of 77 responded to this item. Of those respondents, 2.6% ($n = 2$) reported Not Important, 2.6% ($n = 2$) reported Slightly Important, 19.5% ($n = 15$) reported Somewhat Important, 29.9%

($n = 23$) reported Important, and 45.4% ($n = 35$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor teach decision-making skills. The mean of all responses was 4.1.

Survey item #8 was “Help students explore career interests.” Seventy-seven of 77 responded to this item. Of those respondents, 0% reported Not Important, 0% reported Slightly Important, 2.6% ($n = 2$) reported Somewhat Important, 23.4% ($n = 18$) reported Important, and 74.0% ($n = 57$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor help students explore career interests. The mean of this item was 4.7.

Survey item #9 was “Provide information on financial aid, grants, loans, or scholarships.” For this item 77 of 77 responded, 0% reported Not Important, 0% reported Slightly Important, 6.5% ($n = 5$) reported Somewhat Important, 15.6% ($n = 12$) reported Important, and 77.9% ($n = 60$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor provide information on financial aid. The mean of the responses of this item was 4.7.

Survey item #10 was “Provide information on post-secondary education opportunities (college, technical school, military, work force).” Seventy-seven of 77 responded to this item. Of those respondents, 0% reported Not Important, 2.6% ($n = 2$) reported Slightly Important, 3.9% ($n = 3$) reported Somewhat Important, 22.1% ($n = 17$) reported Important, and 71.4% ($n = 55$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor provide post-secondary information. The mean of this item was 4.6.

Survey item #11 was “Provide crisis intervention.” Seventy-seven of 77 responded to this item. Of those respondents, 0% reported Not Important, 3.9% ($n = 3$) reported Slightly Important, 13.0% ($n = 10$) reported Somewhat Important, 32.5% ($n = 25$) reported Important, and 50.6% ($n = 39$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor provide crisis interventions. The mean of this survey item was 4.3.

Survey item #12 was “Provide Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Awareness (A.T.O.D.A.)” For this item 77 of 77 responded, 1.3% ($n = 1$) reported Not Important, 7.8% ($n = 6$) reported Slightly Important, 16.9% ($n = 13$) reported Somewhat Important, 37.7% ($n = 29$) reported Important, and 36.3% ($n = 28$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor provide A.T.O.D.A. The mean of this item was 4.0.

Survey #13 was “Provide Programs for parents.” Seventy-seven of 77 responded to this item. Of those respondents, 2.6% ($n = 2$) reported Not Important, 13.0% ($n = 10$) reported Slightly Important, 29.9% ($n = 23$) reported Somewhat Important, 28.5% ($n = 22$) reported Important, and 26.0% ($n = 20$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor provide programs for parents. The mean of this item was 3.6.

Survey item #14 was “Monitor academic progress, credit totals, graduation requirements, and communicate this information to students, parents, and teachers.” Seventy-seven of 77 responded to this item. Of those respondents, 0% reported Not Important, 1.3% ($n = 1$) reported Slightly Important, 16.9% ($n = 13$) reported Somewhat Important, 20.8% ($n = 16$) reported Important, and 61.0% ($n = 47$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor monitor academic progress toward graduation and communicate this information to students, parents, and teachers. The mean of the responses was 4.4.

Survey item #15 was “Help with administrative duties (bus duty, office duties, etc.)” For this item 77 of 77 respondents, 26% ($n = 20$) reported Not Important, 16.9% ($n = 13$) reported Slightly Important, 22.1% ($n = 17$) reported Somewhat Important, 16.9% ($n = 13$) reported Important, and 18.2% ($n = 14$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor help with administrative duties. The mean of this item was 2.8.

Survey item #16 was “Work closely with resources within the community.” Seventy-seven of 77 responded to this item. Of those respondents, 1.3% ($n = 1$) reported Not Important, 3.9% ($n = 3$) reported Slightly Important, 29.8% ($n = 23$) reported Somewhat Important, 32.5% ($n = 25$) reported Important, and 32.5% ($n = 25$) reported Very Important that the high school counselor work closely with resources within the community. The mean of this item was 3.9.

Research Questions

Research question one was, “How do parents perceive the role of the school counselor?” Parents overwhelmingly endorse the duties included in the national model. The incredibly high parent response rate indicated that parents felt high school counselors should be performing such duties as: individual and group counseling, career exploration, post-secondary opportunities, and assistance with academic, personal, and social challenges that students may be faced with. This perception is much like the perception that high school counselors have for the role of the school counselor.

Research question two was, “What types of services do parents consider to be the most valuable services for the school counselor to offer.” According to the results of the survey, parents felt that it was most important to offer services to both teachers and parents to allow for better communication resulting in a successful high school experience for students. In addition, parents rated duties such as providing financial aid information and post secondary information as very important duties. In contrast to the ASCA recommendations, parents did feel that testing was an important role for the school counselor. Parents did not feel that it was important for the high school counselor

to perform administrative duties such as office duties or bus duties. Working closely with community resources also appeared to be of little importance to parents.

The survey was administered during parent-teacher conferences and had a very high response rate, with 77 parents responding for a school with enrollment of 203 students. A larger than average number of parents attended the conferences and eagerly participated in the survey. The results of their participation indicated that parents showed a fair amount of agreement with the high school counselor's accepted counselor duties.

Chapter V: Discussion

This chapter will include a brief discussion of the study as well as a conclusion of the study's results. The chapter will end with recommendations for further studies.

Limitations

As mentioned in chapter I, historically, parents who attend parent-teacher conferences at this particular school where the study was completed, tend to have students who do quite well academically. Therefore, results may not have reflected the thoughts of parents who are less involved with their child for various reasons. In addition, results are not generalizable because of the particular geographic location and population of the school. Also, the researcher understands that participants may have filled out the survey in order to please the researcher.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to learn parents' perceptions of the role of the school counselor at the high school level. The study also examined what types of services parents consider to be the most valuable services for the school counselor to offer. School counselors are often aware of the expectations of their administrators and teachers, however often times the expectations of the parents are often unknown. A school counselor can benefit from knowing and understanding what parents are expecting from their child's school counselor. This knowledge can assist the high school counselor in effectively including, interacting, and communicating with parents as well as better meeting the needs of the students.

The review of literature examined perceptions of the role of the school counselor by administrators, school counselors, and parents. While reviewing the perceptions of the administrators, it was not uncommon for school counselors to be assigned duties such as assisting administrators in discipline duties, supervising duties, and clerical duties (Monteiro-Leitner et al., 2006). However, school counselors and administrators do have similar perceptions and expectations as well. Such expectations can include but are not limited to individual and group counseling.

When reviewing the literature regarding school counselor's perceptions of their role as a school counselor, it was noted that school counselors have differing views regarding their role. School counselors have models, such as the ASCA model and the WCSCM, which outline role descriptions to be performed by a counselor. However, even with these models, school counselors often find themselves performing duties that do not relate directly to the school counseling profession.

Literature regarding parents' perceptions of the role of the high school counselor revealed "too many parents lack contact with the school counselor" (ASCA, 2005). Parents did report that they felt counselors made valuable academic, personal, and career contributions to students. In previous studies parents tended to believe that the role of the high school counselor is to assume duties as that of an assistant principal (Partin, 1993).

After reviewing the results of this study, the majority of parents perceived a high school counselor's role as performing the duties and responsibilities outlined in the ASCA model and WCSCM. In addition, the majority of the parents did not feel it was the role of the high school counselor to help with administrative duties or to work closely with resources in the community. According to the results of the survey, the majority of

the parents who participated, rated the majority of the survey items as #5, very important, and therefore, the types of services which they feel to be the most valuable services for the school counselor to offer.

Recommendations

Although there are research studies available concerning parents' perceptions of the role of the high school counselor, further research could be done to gather additional opinions. Opinions vary from school to school and counselor to counselor and therefore, surveys could be distributed occasionally to parents in schools to identify changes in perceptions or needs within the school. In addition, geographic regions and ethnicity may be of interest as well. This additional information can assist the counselor when interacting with parents and students as well as help the counselor evaluate their own program.

A recommendation for further study would be to include questions in the survey that addressed additional duties that are not traditionally duties specified in the national and state models, which would allow for a more thorough assessment. Another recommendation would be to use a "Yes"/"No" survey, which would more clearly state parents' perceptions.

There is always a need for a school counselor to communicate with parents regarding the services available for their child or themselves. School counselors may find it beneficial to educate parents, administrators, and school board members about the state and national models. Allowing parents to be members of an advisory committee may be another way to keep parents involved and allow them to witness the importance of the role of the high school counselor.

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Unpublished master's literature review, University of Wisconsin-Stout,

Menomonie.

Appendix A:



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<http://www.uwstout.edu/rs>

Date: October 21, 2008

To: Jodi Zimmer

Cc: Barbara Flom

From: Sue Foxwell, Research Administrator and Human
Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional
Review Board for the Protection of Human
Subjects in Research (IRB)

Susan Foxwell

Subject: Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Your project, "*Parents' Perceptions of the Role of the School Counselor at the High School Level*" is **Exempt** from review by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. The project is exempt under Category 2 of the Federal Exempt Guidelines and holds for 5 years. Your project is approved from October 15, 2008, through October 14, 2013.

Please copy and paste the following message to the top of your survey form before dissemination:

<p>This project has been reviewed by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46</p>
--

Please contact the IRB if the plan of your research changes. Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and best wishes with your project.

***NOTE: This is the only notice you will receive – no paper copy will be sent.**

Appendix B:

Consent to Participate in Research

Title: Parents' Perceptions of the Role of the School Counselor at the High School Level

Investigator:

Jodi Zimmer
Room 410
(715) 532-5550 ext 275

Description:

Parents have an important perspective to offer on school counseling programs. This study seeks your opinions about the needs you see at our school.

Risks and Benefits:

The risks of completing this survey are slight, and you can withdraw at any time. You may be concerned about the security of your responses. Please be assured that all results will be tallied and reported in group form and will not be shared individually with anyone outside the research team..

A benefit of your participation will be the school's knowledge of what parents, like yourself, want and expect from the counselor for their student. The study may increase parent involvement and support as well as possible improvement of the program in place.

Time Commitment:

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

Confidentiality:

Your name will not be included on any documents. We do not believe that you can be identified from any of this information.

Right to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. However, should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, there is no way to identify your anonymous document after it has been turned into the investigator.

IRB Approval:

This study has been reviewed and found exempt under Category 2 of the Federal Exempt Guidelines. The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

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Advisor: Barbara Flom
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IRB Administrator

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Statement of Consent:

By completing the following survey you agree to participate in the project entitled, Parents' Perception of the Role of the School Counselor at the High School Level.

Appendix: C

School Counseling Survey

This project has been reviewed by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46

The purpose of this survey is to acquire information as to **what you view as the role of a high school counselor**. It will also ask your opinion concerning what your child's high school guidance program provides. The results of this survey will help define the role of the high school counselor as well as help your child's school counselor in future planning of services and programs. Your input and suggestions will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you for your time!

Please **CIRCLE** the response that best reflects your opinion using the following choices:

1= NOT IMPORTANT 2= SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT 3=SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT

4= IMPORTANT 5= VERY IMPORTANT

In your opinion, a high school counselor's role is to:

- 1 2 3 4 5** 1. Provide individual counseling (personal, social, academic issues)
- 1 2 3 4 5** 2. Provide group counseling (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Awareness, self-esteem, divorce groups, etc.)
- 1 2 3 4 5** 3. Work with teachers in order to help students with academic, personal, and social challenges.
- 1 2 3 4 5** 4. Collaborate with student's parents or guardians.
- 1 2 3 4 5** 5. Give assessments and tests (career inventories, ACT, SAT, etc.).
- 1 2 3 4 5** 6. Promote student's personal growth and development.
- 1 2 3 4 5** 7. Teach decision- making skills.
- 1 2 3 4 5** 8. Help students explore career interests.
- 1 2 3 4 5** 9. Provide information on financial aid, grants, loans, or scholarships.
- 1 2 3 4 5** 10. Provide information on post- secondary education opportunities (college, technical school, military, work force).
- 1 2 3 4 5** 11. Provide crisis intervention.

- 1 2 3 4 5 12. Provide Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs Awareness (A.T.O.D.A.).
- 1 2 3 4 5 13. Provide programs for parents.
- 1 2 3 4 5 14. Monitor academic progress, credit totals, graduation requirements,
and communicate this information to students, parents, and teachers
- 1 2 3 4 5 15. Help with administrative duties (bus duty, office duties, etc.).
- 1 2 3 4 5 16. Work closely with resources within the community.

Please feel free to use the back page to write any additional comments that would contribute to your child's high school counseling program. Thank you again for your time and assistance in this survey.