Building an Effective Principal-School Counselor Relationship:

Collaborative Planning

Having a shared vision is important at Ernesto Serna. “Maybe that’s when we clicked,” says Tammi. “I thought, ‘We’re shortchanging our kids. We don’t have high enough expectations; they can do as well as anybody else can.’ But it was always kind of a philosophy that, ‘Oh well, they’re doing as good as they can.’ And I always felt like, ‘No, they’re not. We can do better — we’re shortchanging them.’ That’s the direction we both wanted them to go, to achieve as high as anybody else did. Because it didn’t matter, with all the other stuff that was going on with them. They still can do it, you know, if you just have the expectation.” Ricardo agrees, saying that “a counselor I could work with is one who basically has the same philosophy when it comes to kids, that we need to serve the kids, not just pop in — you know, where you have your presentation and pop in the tape and sit there and do your paperwork.”

The focus at the school is on getting all students to achieve at high levels, and the team has been very successful at this. One strategy is to get the school’s two counselors involved in the classroom. Tammi attends teachers’ planning meetings to better understand what’s going on in the classroom and to give her views from a counseling perspective. And they involve the whole school in their team — not just the principal and counselor. Tammi says, “You couldn’t possibly have a principal–counselor team that worked really well together if it didn’t reflect on the whole faculty … I don’t think it was just our team that made students successful, but it was just building a team on the campus. Everybody works together well as a team.”

Adapted from Finding a Way
Once you have gained a clearer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of your current relationship and have taken some initial steps to make it even stronger, the next step is to plan together to create an action plan for the school’s counseling program. This involves developing a mission and vision for what success looks like in your school and then carefully planning and agreeing upon a counseling program that supports that vision.

**Tools in this section:**
- 5.1 Developing a Shared Vision
- 5.2 Developing Vision and Mission Statements
- 5.3 NOSCA School Counselor Strategic Planning Tool
- 5.4 ASCA Secondary School Counselor Management Agreement
- 5.5 School Counselor Activities Rating (Counselor)
- 5.6 School Counselor Activities Rating (Principal)
Developing a Shared Vision and Mission

*Everyone takes the limits of his own vision for the limits of the world.*

— Arthur Schopenhauer

**Vision (n.): The state of seeing what could be.**

As Schopenhauer noted, a collective vision is almost always more powerful than that of a single person. People come from many different places and backgrounds and often have strong beliefs. In order to create a school environment in which student achievement is at the forefront, the school professionals must come to terms with basic agreement on:

- What they believe
- What they want the results to look like
- How they are going to get there

This three-step process includes discovering values, developing a vision and identifying a mission. In other works, to effectively plan an effective school, it is important for everyone to first understand what you believe (your values), what you want the end result to be for your students (your vision) and how the school community can organize to get there (your mission).

Ideally, all school professionals should be included in the process or the vision will not be truly shared.
5.1 Developing a Shared Vision

If possible, this exercise should be distributed prior to the group session in order to ensure thoughtful responses to the questions. This is not a quick process and might require one or two full days to develop a sense of mission and vision for the school.

Exercise

1. Make a list of your core values as they relate to education. What really matters, and why? (An example is provided.) Participants should include at least three examples of values and beliefs that can be directly affected by effective school counselors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Value or Belief</th>
<th>Why This is Important</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Ex. All children can learn and achieve at a high level.</td>
<td>Once we accept that all students are capable of excelling, we can no longer sit back comfortably if large numbers are failing.</td>
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2. Selecting completed forms at random, discuss the values presented. If principals and counselors from multiple schools are participating, divide into groups, mixing principals and school counselors. Assign completed worksheets at random, and discuss the values. Ask these questions:
   • Should this be a core value of our school?
   • How does this value or belief affect our students? Our staff? Our community?
   • Is there currently widespread belief in this value in the school? In the community?
   • How can we get buy-in from the key stakeholders — Including the community, parents, district supervisors, principals, counselors, teachers, other staff — and students?

3. Following your discussions, take a fresh belief chart and, working as a team, define your core beliefs and values, and describe why they are important to the school.

A note on developing shared values. In order to develop values that are truly shared, a “safe” atmosphere is required. That is, all participants must feel that they are able to present their views without fear of repercussions, blame or belittlement. Principals must take care to not dominate the discussion — it would be good practice to have principals speak after other team members whenever possible. And everyone on the team should be heard and should listen.
5.2 Developing Vision and Mission Statements

Vision Statements
A vision statement tells you what your school will look like when your values and beliefs are translated into outcomes. This vision should directly reflect the values developed in the previous exercise. Vision statements can be short. (All our students will graduate from high school and attend college.) They can, however, also include longer lists of how things should look in the classroom and elsewhere in the school in an ideal situation.

Mission Statements
Using the shared values developed earlier, create a short mission statement for the school. Effective mission statements have several things in common. They:

- Are concise — 1–2 sentences
- Are grounded
- Are challenging enough to push the boundaries of what the school is currently achieving
- Are clear
- Do not require explanation
- Are relevant for your school’s community and students

There are many resources available on creating vision and mission statements, and it is often a long, involved process. Our belief, however, is that once shared values are identified, the vision and mission will quickly fall into place.
Sample Vision Statements

Women’s Centre
Within the next five years, the Women’s Centre will have helped create a safer, more harmonious community by helping women acquire the education, skills and resources necessary to build self-sufficient prosperous lives.

Metromanage.com
Within the next five years, Metromanage.com will become a leading provider of management software to North American small businesses by providing customizable, user-friendly software scaled to small business needs.

Wicomico County
Wicomico County government is valuable and service driven. Wicomico County will be known locally, regionally, statewide and nationally as being innovative and progressive in providing cost effective county services. The citizens and the County council will be proud of the staff and have a firm belief in the reliability, truth and strength of the organization.

Andover Department of Community Services
The Andover Department of Community Services vision is to provide high quality services to all residents by continuing to serve as leaders in the recreation field with innovative and creative programs. DCS will serve well as advocates for current community interests by keeping pace with our growing community in providing a maximum number and a variety of quality programs. A pro-active strategy of coordination, planning and implementation with the Andover Youth Services, Andover Public Schools and other town departments and organizations will foster our ability to respond effectively.

The Leisure Services Department
The Leisure Services Department is committed to improving the quality of life of the citizens of ___________ by providing a variety of high quality leisure service opportunities that are reasonably priced, in the most cost-effective manner to citizens of all ages, in a safe, courteous, clean, comfortable and enjoyable family environment.

Microsoft
“A personal computer in every home running Microsoft software.”

SYP Mentorship Program
The purpose of the CWRA SYP mentoring program is to promote the management of Canada’s water resources by strengthening the professional capacity of students and young professionals through meaningful mentorship opportunities and/or relationships. While mutually benefiting students, young professionals, and CWRA professionals, this program will foster a larger professional water community.
Sample Mission Statements

IBM
“Our goal is simply stated. We want to be the best service organization in the world.”

Wal-Mart
“To give ordinary folk the chance to buy the same thing as rich people.”

Saturn
“Our mission is to earn the loyalty of Saturn owners and grow our family by developing and marketing U.S.-manufactured vehicles that are world leaders in quality, cost and customer enthusiasm through the integration of people, technology and business systems.”

Westin Hotels and Resorts
In order to realize our Vision, our Mission must be to exceed the expectations of our customers, whom we define as guests, partners and fellow employees. We will accomplish this by committing to our shared values and by achieving the highest levels of customer satisfaction, with extraordinary emphasis on the creation of value. In this way we will ensure that our profit, quality and growth goals are met.”

FedEx
“FedEx is committed to providing outstanding customer experience, to being a great place to work, a thoughtful steward of the environment and a caring citizen in the communities where we live and work. At FedEx, we are passionate about sustainably connecting people and places and improving the quality of life around the world.”

Family Dollar Stores
“For our customers we offer a compelling place to shop by providing convenience and low prices. For our associates … a compelling place to work by providing exceptional opportunities and rewards for achievement. For our investors … a compelling place to invest by providing outstanding returns.

Hewlett-Packard
“To provide products, services and solutions of the highest quality and deliver more value to our customers that earns their respect and loyalty.”

MBC Farms
MBC Farms is a producer of grains, oilseeds, specialty crops and milk. Our mission is to be recognized by our business associates and competitors as one of the top producers in our area and to make sure that productivity translates into prosperity and growth for everyone involved with our farm.
Every student should graduate from high school with the educational preparation and social capital necessary for success in college and the workforce.

School counselors are well positioned as the school professionals best able to guide all students toward college and career readiness. To be effective leaders in establishing a college-going culture, counselors must be strong advocates for their students and their profession and possess the skills to drive positive change in the school.

Strategic planning is an essential tool for school counselors to use to drive positive change in schools. Strategic planning helps school counselors use data to set clear goals and develop strategies with measurable outcomes for student achievement and success. Using this process helps school counselors to align college and career counseling with school improvement plans. It makes the case that college counseling is an effective way to meet the goals set by principals and district leaders. This allows counselors to become school leaders and advocates for all students. A clear plan enables them to build college and career readiness programs at each level of K–12 education.

**NOSCA's strategic planning process helps school counselors:**

- Makes the most of the school counselor’s time and resources
- Links goals, interventions and outcomes
- Provides evidence to advocate for systemic change
- Eliminates “random initiatives”
- Provides results measured in student outcomes

"My counselor’s strategic planning helped us transform the school community into one where everyone in the building was focused on getting all our students ready for college."

— Sharon Sevier
Director of Guidance and Counseling
Rockwood School District
Eureka, Mo.
STEP 1: Collect, analyze and interpret data to identify gaps in student outcomes.
Examine data elements that describe student outcomes, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, family income and other relevant measures, in order to identify student, school and community needs. Analyze data to identify inequities.

STEP 2: Develop and prioritize measurable, data-driven goals aligned with school, district, state and national goals. Goals should be specific, quantifiable, time-sensitive statements of what is going to be achieved and when it will be achieved.

STEP 3: Develop strategies and interventions to meet goals. Develop solutions and interventions that can be successfully implemented within the context of the school and community and will gain support from stakeholders.

STEP 4: Develop and implement the plans for each goal, including benchmarks to monitor progress. Develop multilevel action plans for each goal. Identify action items, the specific individuals responsible for implementation and key milestones, and timelines that correspond to each goal.

STEP 5: Collect and report outcome data to all stakeholders, and adjust strategies and interventions as needed based on results. Collect results data to determine whether the goals were reached and if strategies or implementations need to be adjusted. Present results to administrators and other stakeholders.

STEP 6: Institutionalize policies, practices and procedures to sustain gains in equity. Identify the strategies and interventions that result in positive student outcomes and equity gains to make them standard operating procedure within the context of the school.

The College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA)
The College Board’s National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) promotes the value of school counselors as leaders in advancing school reform and student achievement. It seeks to endorse and institutionalize school counseling practice that advocates for equitable educational access and rigorous academic preparation necessary for college readiness for all students. For more information, please visit www.collegeboard.com/nosca.

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5.4 Secondary School Counselor Management Agreement
(Counselor/Principal Agreement)

School year __________ School ____________________________ Date __________
Counselor ________________________________________________

STUDENT ACCESS:
Students will access the school counselor by:

_____ Grade level  _____ Domain  _____ By academy/pathway
_____ Alpha listing  _____ No caseload (See any counselor)  _____ Other please specify ____________

COUNSELOR OF THE DAY:
Our counseling program will _____ will not _____ implement counselor of the day.

DOMAIN RESPONSIBILITIES
Looking at your site needs/strengths, counselors will be identified as the domain counselors for the following areas:

Academic domain: __________________________________________
Career domain: _____________________________________________
Personal/social domain: ______________________________________
Rationale for decision: _______________________________________

PROGRAMMATIC DELIVERY
The school counseling teams will spend approximately the following time in each component area to ensure the delivery of the school counseling program?

_________ % of time delivering guidance curriculum
_________ % of time with individual student planning
_________ % of time with responsive services
_________ % of time with system support

SCHOOL COUNSELOR AVAILABILITY:
The school counseling department be open for student/parent/teacher access from ______ to _______
The department will manage the division of hours by: ________________________________
The career center will be open from ________________________________ to _______
The department will manage the division of hours by: ________________________________

Programs and services presented and available to parents include:
Example: guidance newsletter, parenting classes, parent information night
Secondary School Counselor Program Management Agreement

Programs and services presented and available to staff include:
*Example: department liaison, topical information workshops (child abuse, ADD, etc.)*

Community liaisons, programs and services will include:

**THE SCHOOL COUNSELORS WILL BE COMPENSATED FOR EXTRA WORK HOURS (BEYOND WORK DAY) BY?**

- [ ] Extra duty pay (fund?)
- [ ] Comp time
- [x] By principal/counselor negotiation
- [ ] Flex schedule
- [ ] Per union regulations
- [ ] No option for this

**MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES**

What materials and supplies are necessary for the implementation of the school counseling program:

The following funding resources support the school counseling program:

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The school counseling team will participate in the following professional development:

**PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION**

The school counseling department will meet weekly/monthly:

- [ ] As a counseling department team
- [x] With administration
- [ ] With the school staff (faculty)
- [ ] With subject area departments
- [ ] With the advisory council

**OFFICE ORGANIZATION**

Responsibilities for the support services provided the counseling team will be divided among the support services staff:

- The school counseling assistant will: __________________
- The registrar will: __________________
- The clerk will: __________________
- The receptionist will: __________________
- Volunteers will: __________________
- Others will: __________________

_______________________________
Counselor signature & date

_______________________________
Principal signature & date
5.5 School Counselor Activities Rating (Counselor)

**Time:** 1 hour

**Instructions**

**Step 1:** Directions: Rate each of the 13 counselor activities in the table below for both Importance and the Time you believe counselors spend on this activity as either “High” or “Low.” Rate each answer.

“High” (+) is defined as of significant value and engagement.
“Low” (-) is defined as not of significant value or engagement.

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**Step 2:** Transfer each of your responses into the matching box in the grid below for further analysis of your responses.

- **Mismatches (-, +)**
  (Low Importance + High Time Spent)

- **Low Priorities (-, -)**
  (Low Importance + Low Time Spent)

- **Good Alignment (+, +)**
  (High Importance + High Time Spent)

- **Neglected Activities (+, -)**
  (High Importance + Low Time Spent)
**Step 3:** Reflection Questions

1. What observations can you make based on the placement of your responses? What surprises you? What causes you the most concern?

2. What responses would you like to be changed? Do you think you need to change?

3. What would you have to do differently in order to change the placement of the responses that need to be improved?

4. What knowledge and/or skills would you need to make the change?

5. How do you feel your responses impact student outcomes?

6. Can you make the changes you feel are necessary on your own or do you need the active support and engagement of your principal?
Step 4: Compare and contrast your responses with those of the counselor survey respondents.

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1. In which of the four focus areas is there the greatest similarity or discrepancy in Importance and Time Spent between your principal’s chart and yours?

2. To what do you attribute the similarities and/or discrepancies?

3. In what ways do you believe these similarities and/or discrepancies impact your collective ability to meet your students’ needs?
Step 6: Compare and contrast the Mismatches, Good Alignment, Low Priorities and Neglected Activities with your principal. Use the questions below to begin the conversation.

Mismatches: How can we create greater alignment in these areas?

Good Alignment: How can we capitalize on these areas and use them to help strengthen other areas?

Low Priorities: How can we work together to develop and continue to have a shared sense of high- and low-priority issues?

Neglected Activities: How can we engage in collaborative problem solving and decision making to address neglected areas that impact outcomes for our students?
Step 7: Given the identified Good Alignment, Mismatches, Low Priorities and Neglected Activities in both the principal and counselor responses, what needs to change in the way you interact and work together in order to increase academic achievement and outcomes for all students?

1.  

2.  

3.  

4.  

5.  

6.  

7.  

8.  

5.6 School Counselor Activities Rating (Principal)

Time: 1 hour

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