



Building an Effective Principal-School Counselor Relationship:

Advanced Practice



6.1 Application of Knowledge and Skills: Principal Counselor Scenarios

This section contains five parts; rules of engagement, overarching questions, four situations, guiding questions, and blank templates for personalized school situations for practice.

Goal

Apply the awareness and knowledge of an effective principal-counselor relationship when faced with challenging situations by exhibiting effective rules of engagement through structured practice. Customize your application of knowledge and skill to your own school situations.

Directions

The work in this section can be done in teams, pairs or as individuals, however teams are recommended.

1. Read the rules of engagement and discuss whether your relationship and way of working falls on the “Move From” or the “Move To.” Use this as an opening conversation directed at desired modes of interacting when facing challenging situations.
2. There are four situations presented in this section describing common challenges in schools. Read a situation and then use the overarching questions for solution finding and the guiding questions for more in depth analysis. See if your interactions resemble the “Move To” column of Rules of Engagement.
3. Once you have completed practice on the four situations, use the blank templates and write in real life situations in your school. Engage in the same process as you did for the structured situations. What part of this work can you actually apply in your school?

Application of Knowledge and Skills Package

Principal – Four Counselor Solution-Finding Scenarios

Rules of Engagement

Effective Principal-Counselor Relationship Development/Maintenance

MOVE FROM:

- Personal gripes
- Adult needs/wants
- Issues benefiting one or a few students
- Judgmental posture/remarks
- Sharing critical info when requested or problems occur
- Presenting problems
- Shutting down when faced with opposition

MOVE TO:

- Professional goals
- Plans/outcomes that benefit students
- Systemic issues that benefit whole school/community
- Consensus building posture/remarks
- Sharing critical info frequently to ensure team success
- Building solutions to problems presented
- Reframing, reconciling and use of data for making points

Overarching Questions for solution finding in the situations below, ask these questions:

1. How could the principal or counselor build mutual trust and respect in working to resolve these issues? (*Relationship Development*)
2. What could be done to avoid getting into these kinds of nonproductive activities that could lead to conflict involving principals against counselors, counselors against principals and counselors against teachers? (*Collaborative Action/Leadership/Equity*)
3. How could counselor participation on the leadership team make these situations workable and less conflicting? (*Leadership*)

Finding a Way: Principal-Counselor Relationships — Solution-Finding Activity (Relationship Development, Collaborative Action, Equity)

Structured Situation 1:

Principal has set goal to increase the number of students in AP classes by directing that every student take at least one AP course during grades 10–12.

- Principal communicates the rule that all students will take at least one AP class before graduating from high school, part of the master plan to get all students college/career ready.
- Counselor tries to make sure only the students who have the capacity to earn a 3 or above are placed in AP classes because he or she does not want to set students up for failure.

Guiding Questions

Leadership

1. What are the benefits of having a school counselor on the leadership team in working on solutions for this situation?
2. Who owns the responsibility for success of the goals and metrics that are being sought for student success?
3. What happens when the solution finding sought represents a “win-win” for all — principal, counselor as well as the students/school community?

Relationship Development

1. How could the principal or counselor build mutual trust and respect in working to resolve these issues?
2. What would that look like? Words? Tone? Behavior? Expectations?

Collaborative Action

1. What would be the indicators that solution finding is characterized by open communication, opportunities for both parties to have input, and that benefiting students is the primary goal?
2. What critical student and community information must be addressed in reaching an educationally just and sound solution?

Equity

1. What does equity have to do with finding solutions to this situation?
2. How will you know that equity is being addressed in your solution?
3. How is a commitment to equity demonstrated in your solution?

Note: All 10 characteristics of an effective principal-counselor relationship can be addressed by engaging principal and counselor in working through the situations above to arrive at “win-win” solutions for principals, counselors and students.

Finding a Way: Principal-Counselor Relationships — Solution-Finding Activity (Leadership, Relationship Development, Collaborative Action, Equity)

Situation 2:

By school board directive, every 12th-grader in the school must have a documented conference with school counselor to go over graduation requirements and make post-high school plans.

- Counselor sets up a schedule over two months to accomplish this task by pulling students out of classes to meet in guidance office.
- Principal issues a cease-and-desist directive to counselor for using this method, acting under pressure from teachers who want to maintain instructional time and cut down on class disruptions.

Guiding Questions

Leadership

1. What are the benefits of having a school counselor on the leadership team in working on solutions for this situation?
2. Who owns the responsibility for success of the goals and metrics that are being sought for student success?
3. What happens when the solution finding sought represents a “win-win” for all — principal, counselor as well as the students/school community?

Relationship Development

1. How could the principal or counselor build mutual trust and respect in working to resolve these issues?
2. What would that look like? Words? Tone? Behavior? Expectations?

Collaborative Action

1. What would be the indicators that solution finding is characterized by open communication, opportunities for both parties to have input, and that benefitting the students is the primary goal?
2. What critical student and community information must be addressed in reaching an educationally just and sound solution?

Equity

1. What does equity have to do with finding solutions to this situation?
2. How will you know that equity is being addressed in your solution?
3. How is a commitment to equity demonstrated in your solution?

Note: All 10 characteristics of an effective principal-counselor relationship can be addressed by engaging principal and counselor in working through the situations above to arrive at “win-win” solutions for principals, counselors and students.

Finding a Way: Principal-Counselor Relationships — Solution-Finding Activity (Leadership, Relationship Development, Collaborative Action, Equity)

Situation 3:

After opening school in September, class sizes for required English and social studies classes are overloaded. New students enroll daily needing these required classes with no changes being made to the master schedule.

- All students, no matter when they enter as school opens, must have a schedule of classes that meets their grade-level requirements, especially grade-level English and social studies.
- Counselors have no option except to place students in full classes, which causes constant controversy with receiving teachers. Additionally, some teachers refuse to seat the students and send them back to the counselor's office, giving new students the feeling that they are not welcome in this school. Students are sent back to same classroom where they must now contend with a teacher who didn't want them in the first place.

Guiding Questions

Leadership

1. What are the benefits of having a school counselor on the leadership team in working on solutions for this situation?
2. Who owns the responsibility for success of the goals and metrics that are being sought for student success?
3. What happens when the solution finding sought represents a “win-win” for all — principal, counselor as well as the students/school community?

Relationship Development

1. How could the principal or counselor build mutual trust and respect in working to resolve these issues?
2. What would that look like? Words? Tone? Behavior? Expectations?

Collaborative Action

1. What would be the indicators that solution finding is characterized by open communication, opportunities for both parties to have input, and that benefitting the students is the primary goal?
2. What critical student and community information must be addressed in reaching an educationally just and sound solution?

Equity

1. What does equity have to do with finding solutions to this situation?
2. How will you know that equity is being addressed in your solution?
3. How is a commitment to equity demonstrated in your solution?

Note: All 10 characteristics of an effective principal-counselor relationship can be addressed by engaging principal and counselor in working through the situations above to arrive at “win-win” solutions for principals, counselors and students.

Finding a Way: Principal-Counselor Relationships — Solution-Finding Activity (Leadership, Relationship Development, Collaborative Action, Equity)

Situation 4:

It is the first week of second semester of the school year, and the principal has held one meeting with the counseling department. That meeting was about the opening of school processes and how to handle schedule changes.

- The principal is a hands-on manager who holds frequent meetings with his administrative staff, but calls additional staff/department meetings on an “as-needed basis.” The administrative meetings are scheduled for every Monday morning before students arrive and are seldom cancelled.
- Counselors view this as a direct slighting of them as professionals; they feel that their contributions to the school are discounted because their irregularly scheduled monthly meetings with the principal are almost always cancelled.

Guiding Questions

Leadership

1. What are the benefits of having a school counselor on the leadership team in working on solutions for this situation?
2. Who owns the responsibility for success of the goals and metrics that are being sought for student success?
3. What happens when the solution finding sought represents a “win-win” for all — principal, counselor as well as the students/school community?

Relationship Development

1. How could the principal or counselor build mutual trust and respect in working to resolve these issues?
2. What would that look like? Words? Tone? Behavior? Expectations?

Collaborative Action

1. What would be the indicators that solution finding is characterized by open communication, opportunities for both parties to have input, and that benefitting the students is the primary goal?
2. What critical student and community information must be addressed in reaching an educationally just and sound solution?

Equity

1. What does equity have to do with finding solutions to this situation?
2. How will you know that equity is being addressed in your solution?
3. How is a commitment to equity demonstrated in your solution?

Note: All 10 characteristics of an effective principal-counselor relationship can be addressed by engaging principal and counselor in working through the situations above to arrive at “win-win” solutions for principals, counselors and students.

Write 2–4 scenarios that describe situations in your school that you would like to substitute for any of the four shown above.

My Situation #1:

My Situation #2:

Write 2–4 scenarios that describe situations in your school that you would like to substitute for any of the four shown above.

My Situation #3:

My Situation #4: