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Article 35

Ignite Professional Passion by Infusing Evidence-Based Classroom Management Skills into Counselor Training and Practice

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Prior to the 1990s, most states required school counselors to have teaching experience in order to establish themselves as part of the educational system (Baker, 1994). Over the years as the demand began to outweigh the supply of school counselors, and there was recognition that it was unwise to require credentials in one profession in order to qualify for another, states revised certification standards by removing teaching requirements. Currently, only five states (AR, CT, NE, ND, and RI) require school counselors to have teaching experience to be licensed; five states (AZ, CT, DE, IL, and OR) require either previous counseling or teaching experience, but permit this requirement to be satisfied by completion of a supervised internship in schools; and, two states (NV and NH) require applicants to have previous school counseling or related experience only if their master's degree was in a field other than school counseling (American Counseling Association, 2010). These program changes reflect a movement to give non-teacher counselors credentials to practice as professional school counselors.

Professional literature notes some advantages non-teacher school counselors have over those with teaching experience. Baker (1994) reviewed almost 50 years of professional literature and research on the effects of teaching experience of school counselors and found counselors with teaching experience tend to be more direct and tend to give advice in their interviews with students. However, as the role of professional school counselors expands in accordance with the educational reform demands, more will be expected of counselors than meeting with students individually or in small group counseling sessions.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model® expects school counselors to develop standards-based, comprehensive developmental school counseling programs for all students in their respective buildings (ASCA, 2005). Given the large student-to-counselor ratios, it seems most efficient, effective, and practical for counselors to deliver services via classroom guidance lessons (Myrick, 2002). ASCA offers guidelines on the amount of time school counselors should commit to facilitating a classroom guidance curriculum. ASCA suggests that 35%-45% of elementary school

counselors' time, 25%-35% of middle school counselors' time, and 15%-25% of high school counselors' time is to be devoted to classroom guidance. Therefore, it is essential that professional school counselors have training in classroom management knowledge and skills.

In response to the trend of non-teaching counselors implementing comprehensive school counseling programs, school counselor educators must have a responsibility to infuse classroom management knowledge into their programs. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (2009) revised its standards to require trainees in school counseling to understand not just classroom management, but also "curriculum design, lesson plan development, and differentiated instructional strategies" (Standard III-K-3). With an already full training program, counselor educators continue to explore new ways to ensure that their students acquire the skills and disposition for managing student learning during classroom guidance. This leads to the question, "What evidence is available to guide counselor educators in achieving this goal?

Literature Review

The professional debate on the value of teaching experience for school counselors has been highly spirited for over 50 years with some arguing that it hinders counselor effectiveness (Fredrickson & Pippert, 1964; Hudson, 1961) to those maintaining the importance of classroom teaching for licensure requirement (Arbuckle, 1961; Baker & Herr, 1976). The authors reviewed research to determine whether teaching experience is necessary for school counselor effectiveness to deliver classroom guidance curriculum; and if not, then what experiences can counselor educators provide in lieu of teaching experience?

Olson and Allen (1993) compared the performance of Wisconsin school counselors with teaching experience and those without teaching experience. They designed a questionnaire to measure 13 school counselor functions and received 138 principals' ratings of their respective counselors. Classroom management skills between teacher and non-teacher counselors were analyzed; there were no significant differences between these two groups at any of the grade levels. However, because this study did not separate data based upon years of experience, it could be that counselors with less experience are less confident in their classroom management skills. This caution may have led Olson and Allen to suggest that counselor education programs provide more "classroom observations, job shadowing, and classroom management seminars" (p. 16) for counselor trainees.

In a survey of Virginia principals, Beale (1995) found that just over half (55%) of the respondents indicated that they would consider counselor applicants without previous teaching experience. However, elementary and middle school principals were more reluctant to consider non-teacher applicants than were high school principals. This may be because classroom guidance and teacher consultation in the elementary and middle school grades make up a higher percentage of school counselor daily functions than in high school, as noted above in accordance with ASCA guidelines.

Measuring the perceptions of teachers, Quarto (1999) found that classroom teachers have more confidence in counselors with teaching experience than counselors

without teaching experience. A comparison of 152 teachers in four states who completed a modified Olson and Allen (1993) instrument revealed that teachers perceive school counselors with prior teaching experience as significantly more effective in managing students during classroom guidance than were non-teacher counselors. It seems that teachers who work more closely with counselors on student behaviors prefer counselors with teaching experience. Quarto acknowledged that the methodology in this study might have contributed to the bias teachers have toward counselors with teaching experience mentioned by Baker and Herr (1976). As a result, Quarto (2001) increased the rigor of the research design in a follow-up study in order to promote more confidence in these findings. Within the design, 171 teachers from nine states completed the modified questionnaire (Quarto, 1999), this time without information of counselors' teaching experience or lack of teaching experience. The survey instruments were randomly distributed among three groups of teachers whose ratings were based upon a single description of a counselor's previous experiences rather than the side-by-side comparison of the 1999 study. The results of the 2001 study were consistent with the 1999 study; teachers expect school counselors with teaching experience to be more effective with classroom management. Therefore, to assist counselor trainees without teaching experience, Quarto suggests they have a college course to orient them to the nuts and bolts of classroom activities.

School counseling interns and experienced professional school counselors without teaching experience report their struggle in delivering classroom guidance curriculum. Non-teacher school counseling interns acknowledge that a lack of classroom management knowledge and skills affects their ability to confidently conduct guidance lessons and to adjust to school culture (Peterson, Goodman, Keller, & McCauley, 2004). Bringman and Lee (2008) surveyed 117 middle school counselors whose experience ranged from 1 to 35 years and asked them to rate their classroom guidance skills. They found that counselors without teaching experience perceived themselves as significantly less competent in presenting classroom guidance lessons than how counselors with teaching experience perceived themselves.

Interns and counselors recognize a need for classroom management strategies (Bringman & Lee, 2008; Peterson et al., 2004). Therefore, counselor educators should consider going beyond providing classroom management knowledge and present opportunities for counselor trainees to practice classroom management skills instead. While most counselor educators do not believe teaching experience is essential to successful school counseling, they tend to agree that school counselors need skills in teaching (Smith, Crutchfield, & Culbreth, 2001). Consequently several models have been proposed.

Desmond, West, and Bubenzer (2007) found that new school counselors without teaching experience benefit from mentoring to improve their ability to plan and deliver guidance lessons. Based upon a study of interns, Peterson et al. (2004) suggested school counselor educators adjust the training non-teacher counselors receive to help them develop classroom management skills and adapt to school culture. Perhaps counselor preparation programs should incorporate classroom management experiences in their training programs early in order to ensure integration of classroom management knowledge with skills.

Peterson and Deuschle (2006) suggest counselor educators be intentional in making interns aware of developing lesson plans and teaching classroom guidance lessons. Site supervisors should be informed about the training needs of non-teacher interns so that greater opportunities to develop classroom management skills may be developed at their school site. In addition, interns without teaching experience should do reflective observations of school culture such as interviewing administrators, school psychologists, and special educators, etc., so their site supervisors can provide feedback and perhaps clarify their observations when necessary. However, a model that enables non-teacher counselors to enter a K-6 or 7-12 grade classroom earlier in their training than the clinical field experience might be an effective approach for non-teacher counselors to learn classroom management skills.

Because the role of school counselors is different from that of teachers, practitioners and counselor educators are beginning to suggest ways counselors work with students in classrooms. Geltner and Clark (2005) suggest counselors state simple rules in a positive way, use their small group counseling and listening skills to facilitate classroom discussions, design lessons that engage students, and the like. Kyle and Rogien (2006) recommend counselors use a comprehensive classroom management approach with four components, i.e., Effective Teaching, Preventive, Corrective, and Supportive. This approach provides a structure to organizing lessons, sets a positive atmosphere for learning, establishes a method to address disruptive students, and offers a process for supporting challenging students. Akos, Cockman, and Strickland (2007) propose that school counselors use differentiated instructional strategies in classroom guidance as a way of meeting individual student learning needs. For example, counselors should consider the readiness level of each student when designing activities.

The debate as to whether teaching experience is helpful for school counselors has become less important as research begins to clarify for counselor educators the need to differentiate training for those students who have teaching experience and for those who have other experiences (Peterson et al., 2004). We now know that teacher counselors usually require more effort to reframe their approach to working with students than non-teacher counselors. They need to set aside their direct, instructive, advice-giving demeanor and replace it with open-ended questions, reflective thinking, and paraphrasing strategies that empower students to develop skills for planning and problem solving. Counselor trainees who have a teacher background need less classroom management knowledge, but they may need to alter their approach to be more in line with their new role as counselor, which provides students with a greater locus of control, develops ownership of decisions, and assumes responsibility for one's own actions. We know that non-teacher counselors tend to embrace the basic helping skills of counseling more readily than counselors with teaching experience. However, non-teacher counselors need to develop abilities to manage a classroom of students in order to effectively implement comprehensive school counseling programs (Olson & Allen, 1993; Quarto, 2001). The authors have outlined a model that counselor educators can use to provide classroom management knowledge, develop classroom management skills and awareness of school culture for non-teacher students early in their training.

A Training Model for Non-Teacher Counselors

School Orientation for Counselors is a hybrid-course that combines online instruction, in-class activities, and actual experiences in school settings. This model has four key components to build classroom management knowledge and skills and to enhance school culture awareness. Components are: online instruction in classroom management, classroom participation with two cooperating teachers, structured interviews with school, and reflective observations. The course was initially designed to comply with licensure requirements established by the Tennessee State Board of Education which states "...counselor candidates who do not have teaching experience (are) to participate in a semester-long orientation experience in school settings which includes classroom instruction..." (Agenda Action Item: IV.E. Tennessee State Board of Education, April 21, 2006). However, this model addresses issues identified by counselor educators as training needs for non-teacher school counselors (Clark & Amatea, 2004; Peterson et al., 2004).

Online Instruction

Classroom management knowledge is introduced to the non-teacher counselors through designed online instruction. Students in the orientation course meet as a class twice during the semester: at the beginning to outline course expectations and procedures and at the end to process their experiences in schools. Course lessons focus on classroom management methods and strategies that are consistent with the school counselor's role.

Eight lessons provide students with an understanding of the classroom management philosophies and theories of Rudolf Dreikur's Adlerian approach, William Glasser's Reality Therapy/Choice Theory, Haim Ginott's Congruent Communication, and others. Students also learn practical ideas and techniques including planning engaging guidance lessons (Studer & Diambra, 2010), establishing classroom guidance routines and procedures (Wong & Wong, 2009), anticipating student behaviors and misbehaviors, differentiating learning for special needs students (Akos et al., 2007; Niesyn, 2009), and building cooperative learning activities. Orientation students learn to write lessons plans from the student teaching handbook that they download from the school of education where they attend graduate school. They also obtain student teaching evaluation forms from the same website. Orientation students acquire classroom management knowledge from reviewing journal articles of evidenced-based classroom management approaches like Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, and Sugai (2008), viewing DVDs of best practices such as Wong (2005), and reading selected chapters in *Building Classroom Discipline* by Charles (2010). Students post reviews and reflections to an online discussion board for classmates to read and submit comments. An example of this reflective practice is as follows:

Today was my last day. I want to mention that while talking to Mr. Abernathy about his procedures and tools he used (for classroom management), he mentioned Fred Jones and Harry Wong. I just wanted to say that after seeing how successful Mr. Abernathy was with his classes, I wanted to praise the methods we studied in class and (to) say that they work well to establish class discipline and routines. This stuff actually works! Lol. (A. Meade, personal communication, May 14, 2010)

This collaborative approach generates a higher commitment, promotes self-reflection, and encourages critical thinking among self and cohorts. In addition, the quality of learning classroom management knowledge improves. Using the guidelines and forms that traditional student teaching programs require enables future school counselors to gain a deeper respect for the training of classroom teachers.

Field Experience

After a few weeks of online learning, orientation students take their general knowledge of classroom management into area schools to assist regular classroom teachers. Their online learning gives these students a special lens through which to view their cooperating teachers managing a classroom. However, before they can be placed in a school setting with children, counseling students must provide documentation of a criminal background check and proof of liability insurance coverage, usually obtained from American School Counselor Association student membership. The orientation course professor works through area principals to identify cooperating teachers to supervise counseling students during their orientation experiences. Each student is required to schedule 35 hours in which he/she will be assisting a cooperating teacher in the classroom. Some students schedule their field orientation time to be done in one week, while others spread the experience over several weeks.

During in-school experiences, counselors-in-training initially observe the classroom management skills of their cooperating teacher, watch behavior of students, note school routines and procedures, and ask questions. They quickly become engaged in the hustle and bustle of the classroom. Under the supervision of cooperating teachers, orientation students work with pupils individually, grade papers, monitor pupil's in-class work, and perform other typical classroom teacher activities. In collaboration with their cooperating teacher, counseling students make plans to teach at least one lesson and to receive feedback from the teacher using traditional student teacher evaluation forms. This process enables counseling students to develop a greater appreciation for the pressures regular classroom teachers experience. For example, one student reflected the following:

Teachers have other problems to deal with other than discipline. Students in the 8th grade are already having sex. Several of the students have had several partners by this time in the year. Yikes!!! (L. Harkleroad, personal communication, March 31, 2010)

The orientation field experience is completed twice: once in an elementary classroom (K-6 grades) and once in a secondary classroom (7-12 grades). Students chronicle personal thoughts and feelings as professionals-in-training during their time inside classrooms and in schools. They post thoughts daily online for their classmates and professor to read. This task fits into students' technology skills and is somewhat like blogging to them. As a result, they are able to utilize their technology skills and enjoy reading each other's comments that reflect a range of feelings from humorous to distressing. For example, one student had this reflection:

During second period English, I taught my first lesson. I was pretty nervous but it went really well. The teacher had helped me put it together all week, and of course helped me pick the calmest, least rowdy class to give it to. It went really well. I loved teaching! They answered questions

and joked around. It went great! (B. Caudill, personal communication, March 18, 2010)

Orientation Notebook

Students submit a hard copy of the Orientation Notebook to document all of the required tasks of their in-school experiences. Orientation students must note the classroom management strategies used by their cooperating teacher, perform basic teacher functions as assigned by their cooperating teachers, observe various school functions, attend professional meetings, and interview several school professionals. These tasks are designed to expand counseling trainees' awareness of school culture from a professional's perspective. For example, one student reflected the following:

I noticed that she used several techniques for correcting misbehavior that we have learned in our class. She used ignoring when students were talking out of turn and called on students who had their hands raised. (L. Harkleroad, personal communication, March 8, 2010)

As noted above, new school counselors who lack teaching experience need to understand unspoken customs and professional expectations in school settings. For example, orientation students learn: Who has the responsibility for certain tasks in the school? When is the best time to ask a professional for assistance? How does one request support when one needs help? What is the appropriate protocol to address issues of concern involving difficult challenges? The purpose of this orientation handbook is to ensure counselors-in-training have learning opportunities early in their program to accelerate their learning curve so they make fewer professional *faux pas* when they move into the real world of school counseling.

Orientation students are required to interview school personnel such as school psychologist, special education teacher, reading and/or math specialist, and special area teachers (librarian, physical education teacher, etc.). The main question they pose to these professionals is: how do you collaborate with the school counselor to ensure student success? Answers to this question are recorded in the Orientation Notebook.

Counseling trainees attend school functions such as IEP meetings, student support team meetings, faculty meetings, and parent-teacher conferences and are required to obtain permission from administrators and/or parents before they can attend these meetings. In these meetings, counselors-in-training observe school professionals collaborating to promote student success, witness interactions between professionals and parents, participate in professional development programs, and the like. These experiences expand the awareness of school culture and professional behavior for the counseling trainee. Reflections from attending the professional meetings are written in the Orientation Notebook.

The orientation students observe special non-teaching duties that their cooperating teachers must perform. Many classroom teachers monitor hallways between classes, have bus duty before and after school, check bathrooms between class changes, and other assignments. Recording what they see and hear from teachers and students can expand the awareness of non-teacher counselors and enable them to develop a greater understanding of school culture early in their training. This experience also can enable the counselors-in-training to consider how they may respond when asked by a principal to assume non-counselor duties when they become professional school counselors.

Counseling students describe the assistance they provide their cooperating teachers in their Orientation Notebooks. As a way to underscore the many classroom tasks regular teachers have to juggle each day, counselor trainees are expected to help their cooperating teachers with tasks such as grading papers, designing bulletin boards, setting up displays of student work, tutoring, and the like. This experience of helping teachers can be a foundation on which non-teacher counselors will develop mutual respect and confidence of their teacher colleagues in the future. One student reflected with the following:

I assisted the teacher with a vocabulary game that the students play each week. One of the students almost won and was upset about not winning. The student returned to his desk and cried. Another student called attention to this, but the teacher directed class attention off the student and on to the next lesson. The student was fine in a few minutes. (D. Montgomery, personal communication, March 10, 2010)

Orientation students learn how to deliver effective guidance lessons by observing their cooperating teachers organize and present lessons. Recording their observations in their notebooks helps non-teacher counselors to acquire these practical skills, not just admire how teachers teach. Learning how to write lesson plans, watching teachers model this process, and then teaching a lesson themselves builds confidence early in counselors' training programs.

Classroom management approaches are the centerpiece of this orientation program. Using their special lens to observe how classroom teachers manage their students, non-teacher counselors develop enhanced awareness of this important skill. As non-teacher counselors learn in this course, classroom management includes planning, preparation, organization, structure, flexibility, and more. They learn how building relationships with students can impact classroom behavior. They learn strategies to motivate student learning. They learn how to respond to off-task behaviors and to manage disruptions. They record what they see in their Orientation Notebooks to enhance their understanding. For example, one student reflected the following:

On this day the teacher met me in the classroom before the day began and talked with me about his philosophy on teaching and discipline. He told me that he feels that you must have a relationship with a student before you can effectively discipline... The class seemed to really respect the teacher and usually complied with directions. The teacher used humor often when interacting with the students. He also recognized each student's individual needs and reacted accordingly. (A. Ball, personal communication, October 14, 2010)

Summary

Providing school counselor training that meets diverse student needs enhances successful transition into the real world setting. Non-teacher counselors report the challenges of displaying effective classroom management skills and in adjusting to the professional climate within schools. Research confirms these concerns and provides some suggestions for school counselor educators. Using what is known about the needs of counselors without teaching experience, the authors collaborated to design a unique

course that provides non-teacher counselors with experiences to develop classroom management skills and to learn about the norms and culture of professional life in a K-12 school setting. With this orientation program early in their training, non-teacher counselors can later move into practicum and internship experiences better equipped to fulfill their role and function.

The effectiveness of School Orientation for Counselors can be found in student comments and reflections, examples of which are embedded in this article. Since this course has been offered two years, only four students have advanced to the internship stage of training. A more robust evaluation of this model will be made once sufficient numbers of students have completed the course. Nonetheless, data from course evaluations indicate that it has the potential to address a need in school counselor preparation. Modifications continue to be made as orientation students provide feedback on ways to enhance its effectiveness. For example, we will continually update evidence-based classroom management methods that are consistent with the role of school counselors. We will be more intentional about placements of orientation students with model classroom teachers.

The potential impact of this model goes beyond learning classroom management skills to use in facilitating guidance lessons, it can improve counselor effectiveness in other areas of comprehensive school counseling programs. For example, one student reflects the following:

This course taught me not only about how to manage classroom behavior, but I was able to apply these skills in my group counseling sessions as well! I was having some trouble getting the attention of group members, so I used Wong's approach and set some consistent procedures... and it worked! (B. Ryan, personal communication, May 13, 2010)

The knowledge and understanding school counseling students gain during early orientation experiences in field settings often transfers to other areas of their training program. As orientation students progress through their school counselor preparation they reference their field experiences and observations. Orientation students become more determined and enthusiastic learners; this can make training them more enjoyable for counselor educators. Therefore, infusing classroom management early into school counselor training can ignite new passion in counselor training and practice.

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