

# Multifaceted Guidance and Support Services

*This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents*



Young adolescents live in a world that presents them with many choices. Developmentally responsive middle level schools, therefore, provide both teachers and specialized professionals who are readily available to offer the assistance many students need in negotiating their lives both in and out of school. Counselors, special needs teachers, school psychologists, social workers, school nurses, and community liaisons assist young adolescents with learning difficulties, social adjustments, family issues, and health problems. They use their specific knowledge and skills to team with classroom teachers and administrators to promote student progress. Consistent communication and interaction among specialists and classroom teachers help to assure that student behaviors and learning needs are accurately assessed and met. All faculty are aware of appropriate referral services and procedures to follow when recommending students for specialized services.

Counselors, administrators, and teachers can use student advocacy programs to provide ongoing assistance to all students. These programs make it possible for concerned adults to meet regularly with students in small groups during the school day. Small partner teams are especially effective in providing classroom-based guidance and support. Advocacy programs help students develop respect for self and others. They foster compassion, a workable set of values, and the skills of cooperation, decision making, and goal setting. The advocacy program design is based on the specific culture of the school and community and is developed to meet the needs of those particular students. Advocates receive ongoing professional development to help fulfill this vital role.

School counselors support teachers in advisory programs, demonstrate and conduct classroom group activities, and offer both one-on-one and small group guidance sessions for students as needed. They sponsor peer mediation and peer tutoring programs and share their expertise with teams and individual teachers, often serving as resource persons in classroom activities. They also meet with parents, usually in conjunction with teams or individual teachers.

Parents need help in understanding the relationship between various middle school course options and the high school's programs. School counselors facilitate transition programs for students entering and exiting the middle level school. An essential part of that transition is identifying special needs students and communicating their assistance plans to those responsible for them.

School counselors coordinate the support services provided by the school system, ensuring the most effective use of specialists such as school psychologists, social workers, and speech therapists. They see that guidance services are articulated with those of the district's elementary and high schools and access and coordinate community-based services for the well-being of their students. Counselors are important specialists with people-oriented skills and should not be burdened with administrative or report-related responsibilities.

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