An Information Brief for Parents

Strengthening School Guidance Programs in Missouri in the 21st Century

What is Guidance?
Guidance is an integral part of each school district’s total educational program. It is a comprehensive program that includes sequential activities kindergarten through grade 12, organized and implemented by certified professional school counselors with the active involvement and support of parents, teachers and administrators.

The program is designed to address the needs of all students by helping them to acquire competencies in career planning and exploration, knowledge of self and others, and educational and vocational development.

The Need
In the 21st century, the United States and the state of Missouri continue to undergo major changes in the areas of industry, occupations, society and economics. The labor force and the world of work is changing rapidly. Violence is increasing in homes, schools and communities. Divorce, substance abuse, teen suicide and sexual experimentation are growing challenges families must face. These challenges are real, and they are having a continual impact on the overall development of students.

A Response
Comprehensive school guidance programs in Missouri, implemented by certified, professional school counselors, working closely with parents, teachers and administrators, are effective in assisting students to respond to a variety of challenges. Research conducted in Missouri since the 1990’s has shown that when certified, professional school counselors have the time, the resources and the structure of a comprehensive guidance program to work in, they contribute to positive student academic and career development as well as the development of positive and safe learning climates in schools.

• Students in 236 small, medium and large size high schools in Missouri with more fully implemented guidance programs (as judged by school counselors) reported that:
  - they had earned higher grades.
  - their education was better preparing them for the future.
  - their schools had a more positive climate (Lapan, Gysbers & Sun, 1997).

• When middle school classroom teachers in Missouri in 184 small, medium and large size middle schools rated guidance programs in their schools as more fully implemented, seventh graders in these schools reported that:
  - they earned higher grades.
  - school was more relevant for them.
  - they had positive relationships with teachers.
  - they were more satisfied with their education.
  - they felt safer in school (Lapan, Gysbers & Petroski, 2001).

• When school counselors in Missouri work in schools that have more fully implemented guidance programs, they make significant contributions to overall student success including student academic achievement.
  - Students had higher 10th grade MAP mathematics scores.
  - Students had higher 11th grade MAP communication arts scores.
  - More students are likely to attend school.
  - Fewer students have discipline problems.
  - Fewer students receive out-of-school suspensions
    (Lapan, Gysbers & Kayson, 2006).

This brief has been provided by the Missouri School Counselor Association (MSCA). For more information on this topic, contact MSCA at 1.800.763.MSCA (6722).
The Keys to Success

The keys to the successful development and implementation of effective comprehensive school guidance programs in Missouri include:

• the full support of all school district administrators.
• a written district-wide K-12 comprehensive guidance program and a district-wide policy for guidance that has been adopted by the board of education.
• a written district-wide comprehensive guidance program that is fully implemented by certified, professional school counselors K-12, spending 100 percent of their time working with students, parents, teachers and administrators to carry out the program.
• strong state guidance leadership that provides regular, ongoing training, resources and technical support.
• a strong statewide professional association, the Missouri School Counselor Association.

Your Support is Needed

• Talk to your child’s school counselor to learn about your school’s comprehensive guidance program.
• Serve on the school-community guidance program advisory committee.
• Learn about your child’s strengths, and how they can build upon them to maximize academic and career opportunities.
• Become actively involved in your child’s education.
• Encourage your children to do their best in school and at part-time jobs, and provide assurance that school subjects selected are tied to career choices.

Requirements for School Counselors

• Recommendation for certification from the designated official of a college or university approved to train school counselors by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; and

• The applicant must possess either:

  1. a master’s degree with a major emphasis in guidance and counseling from a college of university meeting approval of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education based upon the completion of a planned program of at least twenty-four (24) semester hours of approved graduate credit in courses in guidance and counseling; or
  2. a master’s degree or higher degree in education, school counseling, counseling, counseling psychology, or a closely related mental health discipline; and additional graduate coursework specific to school counseling, as designated by the state-approved recommending certification official, including a supervised internship or field experience of at least three hundred (300) hours in an appropriate school setting; and

• The applicant must either:

  1. possess a bachelor’s degree in education from a state-approved teacher preparation program; or
  2. complete a curriculum in teaching methods and practices, classroom management and the psychology of the exceptional child, as specified by the recommending certification officer of a state-approved program; and

• Must achieve a score equal to or greater than the Missouri qualifying score on the assessment designated by the State Board of Education, not to include the principles of learning and teaching.

References


(Prepared by Norman C. Gysbers, 2007)