

Why Middle School Counselors



(Excerpt from the American School Counselor's Association)

Today's young people are living in an exciting time, with an increasingly diverse society, new technologies, and expanding opportunities. To help ensure that they are prepared to become the next generation of parents, workers, leaders and citizens, every student needs support, guidance and opportunities during adolescence, a time of rapid growth and change. Early adolescents face unique and diverse challenges, both personally and developmentally, that have an impact on academic achievement.

Middle School Students' Developmental Needs

Middle school is an exciting, yet challenging time for students, their parents and teachers. During this passage from childhood to adolescence, middle school students are characterized by a need to explore a variety of interests, connecting their learning in the classroom to its practical application in life and work; high levels of activity coupled with frequent fatigue due to rapid growth; a search for their own unique identity as they begin turning more frequently to peers rather than parents for ideas and affirmation; extreme sensitivity to the comments from others; and heavy reliance on friends to provide comfort, understanding and approval.

Meeting the Challenge

Middle school counselors are professional educators with a mental health perspective who understand and respond to the challenges presented by today's diverse student population. Middle school counselors do not work in isolation; rather they are integral to the total educational program. They provide proactive leadership that engages all stakeholders in the delivery of programs and services to help students achieve success in school. School counselors align with the school's mission to support the academic achievement of all students as they prepare for the ever-changing world of the 21st century. This mission is accomplished through the design, development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive, developmental and systematic school counseling program. The ASCA National Model: A Framework For School Counseling Programs, with its data-driven and results-based focus, serves as a guide for today's school counselor, who is uniquely trained to implement this program.

Middle School Counselors Implement the School Counseling Program by Providing:

School Guidance Curriculum

- Academic skills support
- Organizational, study and test-taking skills
- Education in understanding self and others
- Coping strategies
- Peer relationships and effective social skills
- Communication, problem-solving, decision-making and conflict resolution
- Career awareness, exploration and planning
- Substance abuse education
- Multicultural/diversity awareness

Individual Student Planning

- Goal-setting/decision- making
- Academic planning
- Career planning
- Education in understanding of self, including strengths and weaknesses
- Transition planning

Responsive Services

- Individual and small group counseling
- Individual/family/school crisis intervention
- Peer facilitation
- Consultation/collaboration
- Referrals

System Support

- Professional development
- Consultation, collaboration and teaming
- Program management and operation

Why Middle School Counselors?

Middle school students are characterized by rapid physical growth, curiosity about their world and an emerging self-identity. Through a comprehensive developmental school counseling program, school counselors work as a team member with school staff, parents and the community to create a caring, supportive climate and atmosphere whereby young adolescents can achieve academic success. Middle school counselors enhance the learning process and promote academic achievement. School counseling programs are essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set appropriate career goals and realize full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community. The professional middle school counselor holds a master's degree and required state certification in school counseling. Maintaining certification includes on-going professional development to stay current with education reform and challenges facing today's students. Professional association membership is encouraged as it enhances the school counselor's knowledge and effectiveness.