

Appropriate Use of School Counselors

By RENÉE ZANDO

School Counselors have an important role in the schools to help children achieve academic and lifelong success. The education of a Licensed Professional School Counselor equips them with the knowledge and training to address the academic, career, and social/emotional well-being of all students when they implement a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes student success. However, many school counselors face obstacles implementing a true comprehensive school counseling program and addressing the needs of all students. Many school counselors across the nation and across the Commonwealth of Virginia are faced with the challenge of large caseloads and being assigned too many non-counseling related responsibilities that inappropriately take time away from providing a successful comprehensive school counseling program.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has published a list of Appropriate Activities for School Counselors and Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors. After a recent survey conducted by the Virginia School Counselor Association (VSCA) that was completed by almost 600 school counselors in Virginia, the three most common non-appropriate activities assigned to our school counselors that have the greatest impact to their ability to provide services to students are 1- coordinating cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs, 2- coordinating school wide individual educational plans, student study teams, and school attendance review boards, and 3- supervising classrooms and common areas. If district and school administrations eliminated or reassigned certain inappropriate duties, the school counselors can provide the services that truly can maximize student success and provide them services they need for post-secondary planning. Appropriate alternatives for these most common duties would include interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests; collaborating with teachers to present

school counseling core curriculum lessons to students; providing individual and small group counseling to students; and advocating for students at individual education plan meetings, student study teams, and school attendance review boards.

When Professional School Counselors are used appropriately in schools, they should be accountable for providing a comprehensive school counseling program that addresses the needs of all students. Another important factor to make sure all student needs are met, is by ensuring that the ratio of students per school counselor aligns with the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) recommendation of 1:250. School Counselors can then deliver a program based on the ASCA National Model's areas of foundation, delivery, management, and accountability. When used appropriately, school counselors would be required to devote 80% of their time to direct or indirect services with students which includes delivering structured lessons based on student's needs, individual student planning, and responsive services, as well as providing referrals for additional assistance, and consultation, and collaboration with parents, teachers, other educators, and community organizations.

When Professional School Counselors are used appropriately in schools, they can be a powerful asset to provide a program that uniquely addresses the developmental needs to students and provides them with services to address their academic, career, and personal/social development need. School Counselors can also be an integral role to prepare students for some of the needs of our state and nation including Governor McAuliffe's Workforce Development Initiative and The First Lady's Reach Higher Initiative. A comprehensive School Counseling Program not only ensures student success, but also provides students the support to become productive citizens.

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Career and Technical Education—For Every Student

By DR. BRENDA D. LONG

Is Career and Technical Education (CTE) the exception, or should it be the rule? A recent opinion article by Dr. Tim Hodges, director of research for Gallup Education Practices, asked that question. Today's CTE programs provide cutting-edge, rigorous, and relevant programs and opportunities to have high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand careers.

The success of Virginia's secondary CTE programs continues to be documented while teaching transferable workplace skills and academic and technical content. Virginia is taking the lead in connecting students with high-demand jobs through the Governor's STEM Academies, the Governor's Health Science Academies, and the industry credentialing initiative. The 2012 General Assembly recognized the value of Virginia's secondary-education CTE credentialing by requiring students working toward a Standard Diploma to earn a CTE credential.

It is possible to have both college readiness and career readiness, and students would not need to decide between the two. After all, the purpose of CTE is to prepare students to have a successful career, regardless of what their professional goals are. Career readiness is a mixture of definitions, which are centered on learning skills for a specific entry-level job or are defined in broader terms of workplace skills.

CTE already has the foundation for strengthening career readiness



and offers a blend of academic, technical, and employability skills through 16 Career Clusters.

According to Dr. Hodges' article, U.S. business leaders stated, "candidates' knowledge and applied skills in a specific field are more important factors than where the candidate went to school or what their major was. To be successful in the workplace, college-bound students still need specific knowledge and skills, which they can get from CTE programs."

It is a given that most career pathways require some form of postsecondary education, such as a certificate, a two-year degree, a four-year degree, or beyond. Career readiness encompasses all of these postsecondary options and includes engaging workplace experiences, through which students apply academic and technical skills to real-world projects, problem-solving, and project-based learning situations.

During the 2012-2013 school year, more than 575,000 Virginia secondary students enrolled in one or more CTE courses. Approximately 46 percent of high school graduates completed two or more CTE courses, while about 48 percent of students receiving an Advanced Studies Diploma also enrolled in one or more CTE classes.

Recent studies suggest that whether students take one CTE course or enroll in a full sequence of courses, CTE should be a part of every student's education.

Dr. Brenda D. Long is the Executive Director of the Virginia Association for Career and Technical Education and has more than 30 years of experience in CTE as a classroom teacher and administrator. 