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AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL COUNSELOR PRACTICE

A Dissertation Presented

by

YOLANDA DOUGHTY JOHNSON

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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Educational Policy, Research, and Administration
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AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP
PRACTICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL
COUNSELOR PRACTICE

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YOLANDA DOUGHTY JOHNSON

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mom, husband, and children.

To my mom, who has contributed to this accomplishment more than she knows. Always pushing me to achieve at the highest level in all that I do, expecting nothing less than the best. My mom has provided encouragement and support throughout every stage of my life, always a positive force uplifting me. For these things, I am very thankful.

To my husband, who listened and supported me through this dissertation journey. I know there were times when I was impossible. Thank you for your patience when I was stressed and providing me with the space that I needed to focus on my writing. Without your understanding and encouragement, I would not be where I am today.

To my children, who have inspired me to work harder to complete this process. You both have taught me to be a master multitasker. I hope that one day you will understand how you motivated me to dig deep inside to find the energy I needed day after day. I am very fortunate to have both of you, and I love you more than words could ever begin to explain.

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As I reflect on this journey, I must first acknowledge my faith, which has been my strength and my shield. As I moved along this path, there have been many people who prayed for me and believed in me and in my ability to finish the race. I thank each and every one who has helped me reach my goal.

Realizing that the completion of this dissertation takes more than just will power and personal perseverance, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincerest appreciation to my invaluable mentors, friends, and family who have unselfishly given me the support necessary for the completion of this arduous journey.

I extend my appreciation to the school principals who took the time from their busy daily schedules to participate in this study and share their professional experiences. Their dedication and determination to improving the academic success for all students was truly inspiring.

I want to thank my chairperson, Dr. Sharon F. Rallis, for her high expectations and making me strive for excellence; Dr. John C. Carey for sharing his time and knowledge; and Dr. Alexandrina F. Deschamps for her continuous support and words of wisdom.

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ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP
PRACTICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL
COUNSELOR PRACTICE

FEBRUARY 2015

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School counselors, whose role is often viewed as peripheral and isolated from
teaching and learning, can help principals, teachers, students, and parents balance the
duties and responsibilities involved in continuous student growth and performance. The
purpose of this research is to examine the working relationship between school principals
and school counselors and to assess how school principal leadership practices influence
school counselor practice and effectiveness. This study utilized a conceptual framework
that describes the relationship between concepts from the literature that may lead to
school counselor effectiveness. This qualitative study investigates the leadership practices
of school principals and how this working relationship influences the effectiveness of the
practices of school counselors. The study was conducted in a school district in
Massachusetts. The participants in this study were 12 public school principals. Interviews
were used to collect data to investigate the significance of the working relationship
between school principals and school counselors and how the leadership approach of the
school principal influences school counselor practice and effectiveness. The descriptive
data from the interviews were analyzed using matrices to sort the data into categories to

find and show a relationship in the qualitative data. The results suggest that effectiveness

of school counselor practice is determined by the strength of the relationship with the

principal.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The era of accountability makes it perfectly clear that public education must improve (Henry, 1996; Hoover & Shook, 2003). The process of improving public schools started with reforms rising from the Civil Rights era. It became apparent in the 1980s with the report commissioned by President Reagan, "A Nation at Risk," that a more progressive approach would be needed to improve public education (Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Every president since has set a new agenda to increase academic standards in public schools. This has given rise to high-stakes testing to increase and demonstrate accountability. A declining economy and employment opportunities in the United States have sparked discourse on whether or not our public schools are producing students that are college- and career-ready to sustain employment opportunities in the United States. School districts across this nation are seeing improvements in increasing graduation rates and declining dropout rates (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2013). The report by Balfanz et al. raises concern that while the progress is encouraging, there is a number of students from subgroups (low income, English language learners, special education, African American, Hispanic) who make up what they call a "graduation gap," resulting in not every student being prepared for college and a career.

Educators in public schools have responded to education reform. Principals and teachers have been scrutinized based on whether or not their schools and students were demonstrating academic proficiency. This has resulted in teachers and principals having a focus on learning by students and using data to show a teacher's progress or lack of

progress, with the overriding purpose of learning and growing. Early school improvement

efforts have focused on teacher effectiveness, and school counselors were not historically

included. According to Dahir and Stone (2009), expectations run high that accountability

for student outcomes will continue to drive the education agenda and impact school

counselors. Race to the Top (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) has taken

accountability to a new level of aligning effectiveness with evaluation.

Problem Statement

For school counselors to demonstrate effectiveness, principals need to recognize

that a unified focus is needed where staff can learn from one another and teamwork is

valued (Janson & Militello, 2009). Such characteristics demonstrated by school principals

are described as distributed forms of leadership (Janson, Militello, & Kosine, 2008).

Great emphasis must be placed on the importance of the principal and counselor

relationship in promoting effectiveness of school counselor practices (Dahir, 2009).

School counselor effectiveness rests in having a school principal who clearly understands

the role and function of the counselor. When the principal and counselor have common

goals, they will forge a relationship that will yield greater student achievement and

increased accountability around effective practices (Dahir & Stone, 2003).

House and Hayes (2002) assert that with their school-wide perspective on serving

the needs of all students, school counselors are in the best position to assess the school

for systemic barriers to academic success for every student. School counselors are

underused resources who exist in schools and who can be utilized to improve student

performance if their contributions to school improvement are publicized (Bridgeland &

Capterton, 2011). A few years into the 21st century, many scholars in the field of school counseling began to sound the alarm that if school counselors did not align their practice to school reform efforts, they would continue to be seen as insignificant to the purpose of schooling (Dahir & Stone, 2007). According to P. Martin (2002),

> The convergence of our rapidly changing society to allow the United States to compete globally, coupled with a critical look at school counseling at the close of the 20th century, provides a perfect opportunity for the re-examination of the role of school counseling in schools. (p. 1)

The re-examination to which Martin refers provides an opportunity for public schools to understand and gauge the role of school counselors in measuring and improving the academic achievement of all students to promote our nation's ability to compete on a global playing field.

Increased accountability standards for public schools as a result of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) are based on the belief that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve outcomes in education (Dahir, 2004). One premise of school reform is that all students can achieve, and school counselors are in a strategic position to advocate for students and to be leaders in helping students succeed (Brigman & Webb, 2007). While there are "pockets" of school counselors around the nation in our public schools implementing measurable and innovative school counseling practices in our public schools, such pockets are not sustainable to make a significant impact that will influence school counseling practices in public schools (Brown & Trusty, 2005).

With the emphasis on accountability, counselors must move beyond activities or actions performed and specifically examine their contributions that produce measurable results that demonstrate their "value added" to school improvement. Otherwise, without any data from school counselors that is shared with stakeholders, there is no method to

demonstrate their effectiveness. Unlike teachers and administrators, school counselors may have more of a burden to demonstrate their effectiveness by evaluating their practices. Data are critical as they allow counselors to determine specifically the type of services/interventions to provide to students (Dahir & Stone, 2009). School counselors must use data to identify whether or not their practices have improved outcomes for students, as this will help school counselors have a clear and significant role in school reform and school improvement (Isaacs, 2003).

With federal legislation following NCLB, everyone in a school is held accountable; in addition, in many states and districts it is expected that school counselors must engage in analyzing and collecting data to evaluate their intervention regardless of how arduous the process is to demonstrate their effectiveness. The key to school reform lies in improving the competence and skills of individuals to build their capacity for better performance. Hence, the effectiveness of teachers and administrators (leadership) has emerged in school reform efforts as playing critical roles and their impact on student learning (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Such an argument establishes the basis for which school counselors should correspondingly demonstrate their effectiveness. School counselors must engage in effective counseling practices to be seen as integral to improving student achievement in this time of increased accountability (Myrick, 2003). School counselors are no longer in a place where they can be perceived only as helpful; they also must be seen as supporting student success; otherwise, the specialized training that school counselors receive in their preparation programs will be underutilized, and their role will be seen as insignificant.

School counselors can enhance the school's effectiveness through data use and by focusing on measurable outcomes (Whiston & Sexton, 1998). Random acts of guidance are no longer satisfactory in the 21st century in an era of increased accountability (Bilzing, 1996). School counselors must have counseling activities, programs, and interventions that include identified outcomes, articulate desired results, and provide evidence that objectives have been met (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2005). For example, data use and program evaluation are tools that counselors can employ in their collaboration with principals.

Statement of Purpose

In light of the evolution in the role and expectations of school counselors in the 21st century and trends in education reform, it is suggested that the collaboration between school counselors and school principals can lead to improved school and student outcomes (Finkelstein, 2009; J. Hale, 2009; Janson & Militello, 2009). Thus, the purpose of this qualitative, descriptive study is to examine the working relationship between school principals and school counselors and to assess how school principal leadership practices influence school counselor practice and effectiveness.

Research Questions

This inquiry requires an investigation of the principal's leadership characteristics as well as the principal's perceptions and beliefs about the effectiveness of school counselor practices.

The following are the research questions addressed in this study:

- In what ways does a principal's style of work and leadership characteristics influence the school counselor's practice and effectiveness?
- What are the principal's beliefs about the role and function of school counselors?
- What are the principal's expectations regarding school counselor effectiveness including the use of data?

Overview of Method

The researcher conducted a descriptive, qualitative study. Interviews were used to collect data to investigate the significance of the working relationship between school principals and school counselors and how the leadership approach of the school principal influences school counselor practice and effectiveness. The subjects were 12 public school principals in Massachusetts. A demographic questionnaire was completed by each participant that asked participants to indicate age, gender, school setting, education level, number of years in current position, and previous school counselor experience.

Descriptive data from the interviews were organized according to the research questions. Descriptive data from the interviews were analyzed using the data analysis matrices, based on the eight elements of effective principal-counselor relationships by Janson and Militello (2009) (Appendix D), which is an instrument to organize coded participant responses to determine if the working relationship between the school principal and school counselor led to greater effectiveness of school counselor practice.

Rationale and Significance

Traditionally, school counselors have not engaged in practices that require them to demonstrate the effectiveness of their interventions with individual and groups of students nor their impact on their school improvement goals. There is little literature that explores the conditions that facilitate or impede evaluation of interventions and effectiveness by school counselors.

Furthermore, little guidance is provided to districts that are ready to embrace and implement 21st century school counseling practices to help counselors demonstrate that their practices are aligned with school/district improvement goals that yield student success. Studies have alluded to the role and influence of the school principals in contributing to improved school counseling outcomes. Thus, the findings of this study also have the potential to make a unique contribution to the literature.

Definition of Key Terms

The power of language provides opportunities for various explanations and understandings. In this qualitative study, definitions were suggested to define key terms for shared meaning and add clarity. Although some terms may be specialized in nature and easily defined, other words may be construed in many ways. The following definitions are provided to ensure consistency and understanding of these terms for the purposes of this study.

- American School Counselor Association (ASCA): This organization serves as the national organization for professional school counselors.
- ASCA National Model: The model was developed to serve as a framework for implementing comprehensive school counseling programs (referring to ASCA model years 2003, 2005, 2012).

- Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI): Promotes a new vision of school counseling in which school counselors advocate for educational equity, access to a rigorous college and career-readiness curriculum, and academic success for all students. It is the mission of TSCI to transform school counselors into powerful agents of change in schools to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement for low-income students and students of color (Education Trust, 1997a).
- National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA): Promotes the value of school counselors as leaders in school reform, student achievement and college readiness.
- Comprehensive Developmental School Counseling Programs (CDSCP): The program design, delivery system, and content are dedicated to enhancing the ability of all students to fully utilize the educational opportunities available to them. The program is delivered through the school counseling curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and system support. The three domains of academic development, personal/social growth, and career development are addressed in the program as it focuses on what all students—PreK-12— should know, understand, and be able to do within these domains in order to develop into contributing members of their communities. It is comprehensive in scope and preventative in design (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000).
- MEASURE: The acronym stands for Mission, Element, Stakeholders-Unite, Results, and Educate. MEASURE is a six-step accountability model for school counselors to identify and positively impact the critical data elements that are the important barometers of student success (Dahir & Stone, 2003).
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB): The reauthorization in 2002 of the Elementary & Secondary Education Act. It requires schools to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers. NCLB calls for stronger measures of accountability and an expanded option for parents to seek a high-quality educational experience for their children. NCLB includes five primary goals to be realized by 2013–2014.
- Distributed Forms of Leadership: Concentrates "upon the interactions, rather than the actions, of those formal and informal leadership roles who serve as multiple leaders" (Harris & Spillane, 2008, p. 31). "It is primarily concerned with leadership practice and how leadership influences organizational and instructional improvement" (Fallah, 2011, p. 364).
- Leadership: According to Gardner (1995), "is when an individual (or, rarely, a set of individuals) who significantly affects the thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors of a significant number of individuals" (p. 22). There are many definitions of leadership that exist. This definition was used for the purpose of this study.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1 contains an introduction, problem statement, statement of purpose, research questions, overview of methodology, rationale and significance, definition of key terminology, and the organization of this study. In Chapter 2, a conceptual and empirical literature review presents the origins of school counseling, accountability expectations as a result of education reform and school improvement, the impact of these efforts on new models of school counseling, exploration of effectiveness of school counselor practices, the principal and school counselor relationship, distributed forms of leadership, and school counselor practice. Chapter 3 describes the methodological framework and procedures, including research design, sampling design and recruitment of participants, data collection, data analysis, limitations, and reflection. Chapter 4 provides the results of the study. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the discussion section of the study and possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Introduction</u>

Chapter 2 explores the body of literature that is the foundation of the analytical framework that describes the counselor-principal relationship and its influence on school counselor practice and effectiveness. This issue is examined through the origins of the school counseling profession, including new paradigms and models that have transformed the school counselor's role and function in order to be relevant in public schools in the 21st century. Counselor challenges, accountability, and effectiveness of practice are described in the context of the importance of the counselor-principal relationship. Finally, the concept of distributed forms of leadership in the context of counselor-principal relationships is introduced.

The need for critical partnerships to exist between principals and school counselors positions school counselors as integral to improving student achievement (College Board, 2008; Stone & Clark, 2001). When school principals and school counselors truly partner for success, it is such partnerships that are vital to promote school reform efforts and improve student achievement (College Board, 2009a). It will require more than the individual efforts of principals and counselors to improve the achievements of students; it will necessitate principals and counselors working collaboratively. This entails having a common vision focused on common goals.

There is an increasing number of research studies and articles emerging that focus on school counselors implementing some type of accountability measure or practice in their school counseling programs that focuses on student results (Dahir & Stone, 2009;

Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007; Janson & Militello, 2009; Janson, Stone, & Clarke, 2009; I. Martin, Lopez, & Carey, 2009; Riddile, 2009). To facilitate such work, school counselors need school principals who understand the changing role of school counselors in a modern school. A barrier to effective principal and counselor relationships is the notion that most school principals do not fully understand the role or function of the school counselor in today's schools (Potter, 2000). As Zalaquett (2005) noted, it is important for school counselors to work with principals to "form a partnership based on knowledge, trust, and positive regard for what each professional does" (p. 456). However, in fairness to principals, if they lack understanding of appropriate counselor roles, they may unintentionally shift counseling programs into quasi-administrative directions that fail to take advantage of the talents and training of school counselors in promoting student growth, achievement and development (Armstrong, MacDonald, & Stillo, 2010). In order to maximize school counselor effectiveness, it is important for principals to understand the evolution of the school counseling profession and the factors that have both motivated and forced the profession to secure its place in 21st century schools.

Historical Origins of the School Counseling Profession

It was in the late 1800s when the first school counselors emerged (Beesley, 2004; Gysbers, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Paisley & Borders, 1995). This was a result of the public school system in the United States responding to the need to have students enter the work force in an industrial age (Schimmel, 2008). Therefore, the emphasis was on vocational training, which birthed the role of the vocational counselor. Early

vocational guidance counselors were often teachers appointed to assume the extra duties of the position in addition to their regular teaching responsibilities (Gysbers, 2001). It was the primary function of vocational counselors in the early years to prepare students to enter the workforce to become productive members of society (Gysbers, 2001).

As time went on, a professional organization called the National Vocational Guidance Association emerged, which legitimized vocational counselors (Gysbers, 2001). There was an increase in the number of vocational counselors in the field, and the focus went beyond vocational concerns to include other aspects of a student's life that warranted attention, which were social, educational, and personal in nature (Paisley & Borders, 1995). This model of counseling went on until the late 1950s when Russia launched the space satellite Sputnik in 1957. This spurred fears that other countries were outperforming the United States in the areas of science and mathematics (Krumboltz & Kolpin, n.d).

Since the 1960s, the profession continued to grow and be redefined with the National Defense Education Act (1958) and President Lyndon B. Johnson's passage of the Elementary and Secondary Act (1965) as a part of the War on Poverty (Economic Opportunity Act, 1964). The passage of these two acts increased funding opportunities for guidance institutes. The guidance institutes were designed to enhance the knowledge and performance of school counselors as well as to develop a pool of qualified candidates to fill positions that were much needed at the time (Baker, 2001; Wittmer, 2000). According to Wittmer, there was a span of approximately 10 years when the number of school counselors tripled. However, it was in the 1970s that the profession hit some turmoil. According to the U.S. Census (2001), after student enrollment peaked in 1970,

total elementary and high school enrollment fell during the 1970s and early 1980s. This caused staff reductions in schools, which resulted in many school counselors finding themselves at risk for being eliminated from their positions (Schimmel, 2008). According to Baker (2001) and Beesley (2004), school counselors were also vulnerable to having their positions eliminated because they were not able to show the positive outcomes of their work with students. This resulted in several articles about the need for school counselors to be central to what is happening in schools. Research emphasized the need to demonstrate the relevancy between school counseling on the needs of students (Froehle & Fuqua, 1981; Wilson, 1985; Wilson & Rotter, 1982). The 1980s ushered in the development of professional training standards and criteria for school counseling programs. This also marked a time of more intense evaluation of education and counseling programs in particular (Krumbolz & Kolpin, n.d). This movement in the 1980s led to the reorganization of school counseling around a comprehensive school counseling program. There was concern regarding the lack of organizational structure to counseling in schools (Starr & Gysbers, 1988). Further, Gysbers and his colleagues at the University of Missouri developed a Comprehensive Guidance Program Model that has been adopted by schools and statewide educational agencies throughout the country, from Alaska to New Hampshire (Starr & Gysbers, 1988). The purpose of the model is to help districts develop comprehensive and systematic developmental guidance programs. The school reform movement of the 1990s led to the development of national educational standards (Schimmel, 2008). Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) established national goals that are a framework to identify world-class academic standards, to measure student progress, and to provide the support that students may need to meet the

standards. However, the school reform movement did not include school counseling as a vital part of a student's total educational program (P. Martin, 2002). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) responded to this omission by developing national standards for school counseling programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). The standards specifically outlined what students need to know, understand, and be able to do by participating in a school counseling program. Additionally, these standards clearly defined the counselors' roles and responsibilities, the expected outcomes for students of school counseling programs, and showed the necessity of school counseling for the overall educational development of every student (ASCA, 2005). However, the accountability that school reform ushered in still did not yield the outcome data that were needed to evaluate school counseling programs.

The school counseling profession has gone through an evolution that started over a century ago. As the profession enters a second century, relevancy and intention are at the center of the profession in an era of increased accountability in public schools in America (Dahir, 2009). Gysbers (2004) asserts that accountability is not a one-time phenomenon, given the fact that the topic of accountability of school counselors continues to be a concern for the profession. It is not only the events of the past in the school counseling profession that have led to what is transpiring today; there also must be acknowledgment that the actions of school counselors will determine the future of the profession. Societal influences have shaped the profession over the last century, which has redefined and modernized the role of school counselors to be more aligned with a global society (House & Martin, 1998). According to Stone and Dahir (2007), the transformation in the school counseling profession is very similar to what has emerged in

other academic fields. This is consistent with emerging models in school leadership, emphasis on teacher quality, and professional development. Education reform has triggered a watershed moment that has provided a critical turning point in for our public schools in America. This has called for school counselors to articulate and re-examine their role and function as they search for contemporary relevance in today's public schools. The next section examines the literature on the revitalization of the role and function of the school counseling profession to remain relevant in the 21st century and the process for change in the profession.

The Challenge of Change in the Profession

In the school counseling profession, it is no longer business as usual (Dahir, 2009; P. Martin, 2002). Kuhn (1962) coined the popular term "paradigm shift" (p. 10). A paradigm shift is best described as a change from the norm to another way of thinking or doing things. Depending on the context, it can be described as a revolution, especially if it has resulted in some sort of transformation that was facilitated by change. Dahir (2009) addresses this paradigm shift by saying, "The future lies in the profession's ability to change with the times and rally to promote paradigms and practices that will forward the profession" (p. 4). The national standards of the American School Counselor Association (Campbell & Dahir, 1997), the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (Education Trust, 1997a), and the ASCA National Models in 2003, 2005, and 2012 have directed school counselors to honor the past, embrace the present, and outline a discernible plan with a renewed vision for the future.

This new paradigm for practice has not been embraced by all, as it is a shift from traditional school counseling services to comprehensive school counseling services. The table below describes this new paradigm:

Table 1: Traditional Versus Comprehensive School Counseling

Traditional	Comprehensive
Reactive	Proactive
Remediation	Prevention
Unstructured	Structured
Individual Counseling	Individual, group & classroom
What counselors do	What students learn
Some students	All students

Adapted from Education Trust (1997a).

Some scholars and leaders in the field have sounded the alarm and made a call to action (House & Martin, 1998). They have also articulated with an intensive focus on "shaking up" the educational system through education reform that counselors must make themselves indispensable (Cormany & Brantley, 1996). The greatest challenge facing counselors today is dispensability. With lean budgets due to our nation's economic upheaval, school committees/boards will always maintain instructional staff before ancillary staff. This will continue to be the case unless school counselors can demonstrate that they have a significant role and function in supporting the instructional mission of the school and the district (Stone & Dahir, 2010). Otherwise, the profession as we have known it will not survive. Isaacs (2003) summarizes it best:

> School counselors have run out of time and reasons to avoid developing standards-based programs and assessing their effectiveness. The pressures have converged, the supports within the profession are developed, the expectations are continuing to be clarified and increased, the skills of counselors are being upgraded and reorganized, school reform is here, and data-driven accountability is not going away. (p. 289)

The process of change in school environments is well documented and researched (Elmore, 2002; Fullan, 2005). School counselors are not exempt from the change process (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009). These authors have noted in their journal article that the review of literature has not revealed research on counselors' readiness to embrace a new way of work. Further, they have not been able to ascertain if the ASCA National Model has amalgamated elementary, middle, and high school counselors around ensured collaboration to balance school counselor program priorities based on academic, career, and personal-social development for their students (Dahir et al., 2009). This assertion will support the need for school counselors to build capacity as well as embrace the new paradigm for school counselors to align their work with student academic achievement.

Fullan (2001) asserts that real change must happen at the building level where implementation will take place.

> The question of implementation is simply whether or not a given idea, practice or program gets "put in place." In focusing on teaching and learning, for example, I have suggested that implementation consists of (1) using new materials, (2) engaging in new behaviors and practices and, (3) incorporating new beliefs. The logic is straightforward – no matter how promising a new idea may be, it cannot impact student learning if it is superficially implemented. (p. 2)

It is at the building level where implementation fidelity can have a positive effect on student learning. School counselors are hired primarily to support the instructional program of a school where they have a responsibility to ensure equity in program access for the students. While there is a framework that exists that makes counselor practice relevant to the mission of schools, the overall implementation occurs at the school level. Schmoker (2011) asserts that when strategies are implemented effectively, it improves the academic outcomes for students. The literature reviewed in this paper clearly articulates that school counselors must embrace and engage in a transformed manner to

remain relevant in public schools in the 21st century. The next section explores the development of comprehensive guidance programs in schools, which required a shift in the role and function of counselors, the transition from services-based to results-based programs, and the development of federal legislation supporting comprehensive guidance programs.

Shift in the Role and Function of School Counselors

The changing expectations for school counselors can be traced to the early history of the school counseling profession. With the ever-evolving role of the school counselor position, there was a need to transition school counseling programs from services-based to results-based (Gysbers, 1990). Norman Gysbers is considered the "father" of Comprehensive Developmental School Counseling Programs (CDSCP). Gysbers (1988) conducted research and written publications that speak to the need for school counselors to implement CDSCP that are sequential, developmental, and designed to benefit all students in preparation for their futures. Gysbers summarized it best in a 2002 ASCA Conference speech by stating the following:

> My vision for guidance and counseling is for every school district in the United States to have a fully implemented comprehensive guidance and counseling program, serving all students and their parents and staffed by active, involved school counselors working closely with parents, teachers, administrators and community members. When guidance and counseling is organized and implemented as a program, it places school counselors conceptually and structurally in the center of education, making it possible for them to contribute directly and substantially to their local school districts' educational goals. As a result, guidance and counseling becomes an integral and transformative program in the district, not a marginal and supplemental activity. (audio notes)

The educational landscape is always changing, as are the programs in school districts. Lapan (2001) emphasizes that one of the most valuable assets in school districts

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is the school counseling program. School counseling programs are not reactive; they are

proactive (Lapan, 2001). They are not restrictive; they are holistic. They are not stagnant;

they are ever-changing (Gysbers, 2004). As the needs of the district change, as the needs

of the students' change, the school counseling program must change, and the school

counselor must be the change agent (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007). This is consistent

with the following position statement from the American School Counselor Association

that asserts the importance of school counseling:

> Professional school counselors design and deliver comprehensive school
> counseling programs that promote student achievement. These programs are
> comprehensive in scope, preventative in design and developmental in nature.
> "The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs"
> (ASCA, 2012) outlines the components of a comprehensive school counseling
> program. The ASCA National Model brings professional school counselors
> together with one vision and one voice, which creates unity and focus toward
> improving student achievement and supporting student development. A
> comprehensive school counseling program is an integral component of the
> school's academic mission. Comprehensive school counseling programs, driven
> by student data and based on standards in academic, career and personal/social
> development, promote and enhance the learning process for all students. Effective
> school counseling programs are a collaborative effort between the professional
> school counselor, families and other educators to create an environment
> promoting student achievement. Education professionals, including professional
> school counselors, value and respond to the diversity and individual differences in
> our societies and communities. Comprehensive school counseling programs
> ensure equitable access to opportunities and rigorous curriculum for all students
> to participate fully in the educational process. (American School Counselor
> Association, 2012a, p. xii)

Lapan (2001) writes about the need for school-wide programs to be implemented

in response to comprehensive needs assessments of the entire school to include strategies

that address the needs of all children in the school. Also responding to the need for

counseling services to all students, the American Counseling Association (ACA) and

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) lobbied for the Elementary School

Demonstration Act in 1993, which was signed into law as the Elementary School

Counseling Demonstration Act of 1995 (Paisley & Borders, 1995). This legislation

required funding opportunities for schools to establish or expand elementary school and

secondary school counseling programs, with special consideration given to applicants

who can demonstrate the greatest need for counseling services in the schools to be

served, propose the most innovative and promising approaches, and show the greatest

potential for replication and dissemination (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The matter of the school counselor's role, professional identity, and practice have
been addressed extensively in the literature over the years, and such matters continue to
be discussed and challenged to redefine the role of the school counselor to better support
the overall academic performance of students (American School Counselor Association,
1996; Baker, 2001; Bowers & Hatch, 2002; Dahir, 2001; Education Trust, 1997a;
Gysbers, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Herr, 2002; Hughey, 2002; Whiston, 2002).
The next section reviews the literature that explores how school counselors are
responding to increased demands to demonstrate accountability results with data (Stone
& Dahir, 2007; White, 2007), as educators respond to the challenges that come with
school reform legislation.

The Impact of School Reform on Accountability

Accountability simply means the willingness to take responsibility for one's

actions (Accountability, 2010). Accountability is necessary to make sure people are doing

what they are supposed to do. School counseling programs are developed using data to

determine student needs and the impact of the program on student achievement

(American School Counselor Association, 2005). It is essential that evaluation procedures

are used to ensure that a program established to help students provides evidence of

program effectiveness. In public schools, accountability is directly linked to student

success (Myrick, 2003).

[Accountability] involves describing goals, and what is being done to meet them. It entails collecting information and data that support any accomplishments that may be claimed. It could also require documentation that shows compliance with state laws or school board directives. Every counselor must ask and answer a few basic questions: What am I trying to make happen? How do I do that? Am I effective? Are there better ways of achieving the same thing? How can I be counted as part of the total school program? (p. 174)

Isaacs (2003) asserts that when accountability metrics were established as a result of sweeping education reform, some school counselors thought that they were exempt and were not going to be held to the same accountability standards as their teacher counterparts in the schools. Isaacs further asserts that when school counselors overcome their resistance to engage in data-driven practices and share accountability for student success, they will have a clear and significant role in school reform and school improvement. School reform mandates, such as NCLB, were not directly monitoring the effectiveness of a school counseling program. Some educational professionals have asked, "What are school counselors accountable for?" (Gysbers, 2004, p. 1). While school counselors do not teach reading, writing, or math, they do support students in the acquisition of skills to be successful in the areas of reading, writing, or math, which leads to school completion (P. Martin, 2002). Lieberman (2004) has studied the need for clear counseling roles in which school administrators evaluate school counselors according to varying standards, rather than on data or concrete evidence of goal achievement based on their specialized skills and training (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; Cormany & Brantley, 1996; Murray, 1995; Studer & Allton, 1996; Studer & Sommers, 2000; Wittmer, 1993). Isaacs states, "School counselors' lack of attention to accountability means that others are evaluating the effectiveness and relevance of their roles and activities" (p. 289). Allowing others to evaluate the effectiveness of the roles and activities of the school counselor will

lead to a lack of clarity in the significant role counselors have in school reform and school improvement (Isaacs, 2003).

For example, a recent Public Agenda (2010) report suggests that the counseling that students receive in school is not in alignment with their postsecondary goals. Although external evaluation of counseling interventions may provide school counselors with the data that can help them ensure that counseling strategies are more effective, it is essential that school counselors themselves examine their practices and their relationships with those with whom they work on a daily basis. Role confusion and expectations persist (Gysbers & Henderson 2012; Sink, 2002). The National Association for Secondary School Principals (NASSP) proposed that the relationship between the principal and counselor can facilitate greater understanding of the scope of the school counselor's role (Mallory & Jackson, 2007). The role, professional identity, and practice of the school counselor have been addressed extensively in the literature over the years, and such matters continue to be discussed and challenged to redefine the role of the school counselor to better support the overall academic performance of students (ASCA, 1996; Baker, 2001; Bowers & Hatch, 2002; Dahir, 2001; Education Trust, 1997a; Gysbers, 2001; Herr, 2002; Hughey, 2002; Sink, 2002; Whiston, 2002). Expectations regarding the role, function, and effectiveness of the school counselor are highly influenced by the building principal, as real change must happen at the building level where implementation will take place (P. Martin, 2010). The American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) National Model for School Counseling provides a framework that makes counselor practice relevant to the mission of schools, with the overall implementation occurring as the school level. The next section explores the literature that

examines the new models of school counseling, which help school counselors prove the effectiveness of their practices and share accountability for student success.

New Models of School Counseling

It is the foundational work of the Education Trust's Transforming School Counseling Initiative's (TSCI) effort to include school counselors in school reform efforts and accountability practices through research and training. Education Trust generated a new model and vision for school counselor roles that emphasized preparation and training in data, leadership, advocacy, and collaboration. Further, Education Trust views the use of data as critical for school counselors and their ability to understand how to use data to meet the needs of students as well as to manage their school counseling program (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007; Education Trust, 1997a).

TSCI and ASCA have impelled school counselors to use data and demonstrate accountability. Prior to the 2009 Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Standards, counselor education programs did not have strong research requirements. The review of literature regarding why school counselors may not evaluate their practice has been clustered into three areas by Carey, Poynton, and Dimmitt (n.d.). None of these clusters have been fully investigated to examine the role that the school principal leadership practices may have on school counselors' effectiveness. The research by Carey et al. is summarized below:

Table 2: Literature Reviewing Barriers to Implementing Evidence Based Practices in School Counselor Education

Problem Area	Problem	Reference
Counselor Education Programs	Counselor Education programs neglect training in research design, statistics, and measurement.	Schaffer and Atkinson, 1983; Wilson, 1985
	School counselors have few opportunities to engage in evaluation and research during graduate training.	Fairchild and Seeley, 1995; Wilson, 1985
	Counselor Education programs underemphasize evaluation approaches that are the most appropriate for school counselors (e.g., single subject research and action research).	Astramovich and Coker, 2007; Foster, Watson, Meeks, and Young, 2002; Whiston, 1996
	Counselor Education programs do not infuse research and evaluation throughout the curriculum.	Campbell and Robinson, 1990
	Counselor Education programs fail to teach that evaluation and research are indispensable foundations for practice.	Bauman, 2004
School Counselor Attitudes toward Evaluation and Research	School counselors do not perceive evaluation as valuable and relevant to their work.	Lee and Workman, 1992; Wilson 1985
	School counselors commonly fear statistics.	Wilson, 1985
	Gender stereotypes may inhibit evaluation and research interest in female school counselors.	Bauman, 2004
Public Schools Present barriers to Evaluation and Research	Parents are reluctant to allow students to participate in research.	Wilson, 1985
	Classroom organization precludes strong research designs.	Wilson, 1985
	School counselor's actual role in school does not include research and evaluation.	Lee and Workman, 1992; Loesch, 1988; Wilson, 1985
	Reward structures do not encourage research.	Whiston and Sexton, 1998
	Evaluation is not a priority	

Adapted from Carey et al. (n.d.)

The development of the National Standards for School Counseling Programs by ASCA is related to what students should know and be able to do in academic, career, and personal/social domains (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). The standards outline expectations for all students. Embracing a developmental approach, a comprehensive program includes four components that provide a framework for counselors to deliver services:

1. The School Counseling Core Curriculum provides structured, competency-based activities in a classroom or in group situations, using the time to focus on areas such as self-knowledge, attitudes, social skills, and educational and career exploration and planning.
2. Individual Student Planning. Counselors help students establish personal goals and plans for the future. Student progress is evaluated and the transition from school to school and school to work is given attention.
3. Responsive Services. Counselors meet the immediate needs, concerns, and interests of students confronting personal or educational challenges.
4. System Support. Counselors work to sustain and enhance the implementation of comprehensive counseling and guidance programs, attending to the systemic aspect of the school and learning environment. Partnerships are formed and student data are analyzed, evaluated, and interpreted. (American School Counselor Association, 2012a)

Furthermore, the literature clearly establishes the expectations for counseling programs and practices in the ASCA School Counselor Competencies (ASCA, 2012a), the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012a), and role definitions (Education Trust, 1997b).

School Counseling Effectiveness

When school principals are monitoring school improvement efforts, evaluation is a method of determining if something is effective. According to Fullan (2000), only through a supportive culture of collaboration can schools truly become functional and successful institutions. Fullan further asserts that every member of the school team must be granted the opportunity to teach in a school organized for success and to develop and hone their skills as a professional every day of their career. Fullan emphasizes the importance of relationships and shared responsibility to describe the school principals' ability to lead a culture to improve student achievement.

School reform efforts have used student performance measures to determine if American public schools are effective. The school reform movement is now starting to examine the effectiveness of teacher instructional practices and their impact on student

achievement. Like teachers, effective school counseling practices begin with effective school counselor preparation programs. Education Trust (1997b) argues that those counselors entering the field often are unprepared to serve as effective advocates for the students who need help the most. School counselor effectiveness is central to the transformation of the school counseling profession in American public schools. This transformation has promoted rethinking and reframing the role of school counselors, which has been instrumental to the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (P. Martin, 2002).

Carey and Dimmitt (2008) argue that when moving to an evidenced-based practice model, school counselors achieve greater improvement in student learning and development and enhance their professional practice. Carey and Dimmitt further argue that operating from an evidence-based practice perspective means that counselors use evidence to define problems, to select effective interventions, and to determine whether interventions are effective when implemented at a school. Moreover, demands for evidence-based practices make clear the need for programmatic research to substantiate the effectiveness of school counseling practices and programs (Green & Keys 2001; Whiston, 2002; Whiston & Sexton, 1998).

There has been a considerable amount of literature that pertains to school counseling practices. The literature reviewed clearly articulates that the school counseling profession has been on an exciting and challenging journey to transform the school counseling profession by making it relevant in the standards-based educational movement (ASCA, 2005). The literature reveals that the school counseling profession has responded to education reform, economic landscape, and national policy by engaging in utilizing

data (Borders & Drury, 1992; Gysbers, 2004; Herr, 2001; House & Hayes, 2002; Paisley & Borders, 1995; Stone & Dahir, 2010). However, Isaacs (2003) emphasizes that change does not occur at once, and change in how school counselors evaluate their effectiveness has been slow. While there is existing literature around the urgency for school counselors to align their work to the mission of schools through the use of implementing strategies that yield positive student outcomes, there is little research that examines the conditions upon which school counselors evaluate their interventions/strategies.

The next section explores literature that examines how to foster partnerships between principals and counselors, emphasizing the influence school principals may have on counselor effectiveness.

Principal and School Counselor Relationships

Given that the literature has provided a very clear need for school counselor accountability, now more than ever there must be greater emphasis on moving beyond the status quo to allow the school counseling profession to continue to evolve in practices that close the opportunity and achievement gap (Dahir, 2009). In their research on the principal and counselor relationship, Janson and Militello (2009) identified the following eight elements in principal-counselor relationships that should lead to greater effectiveness:

Table 3: Eight Elements that Exist in Principal-Counselor Relationships

Element	Definition
Mutual Value	The principal and the school counselor value each other's job responsibilities, tasks, and contributions to the school and its educational mission.
Open and Reflective Communication	The principal and school counselor are accessible and available to each other to discuss issues related to their individual shared roles in the school as well as issues relevant to the educational mission of the school.
Shared Belief in Interdependency	The principal and school counselor believe that many aspects of their individual roles cannot be accomplished without contributions from the other.
Trust	The principal and school counselor trust one another to support their own individual practices as well as their individual contributions to the shared educational mission of the school.
Collective Enterprise	The principal and school counselor share in facilitating the development of the common educational mission of the school.
Awareness of the Other's Repertoire	The principal and school counselor understand each other's scope of training and professional expectations and standards.
Purposeful and Focused Collaboration	The principal and school counselor collaborate with intention around specific goals and strategies related to the common educational mission of the school.
Stretched Leadership	The principal and school counselor share in leadership tasks and practices related to meeting the educational mission of the school.

Adapted from Janson and Militello (2009, pp. 160-161).

The eight elements that exist in principal-counselor relationships that may lead to greater effectiveness could be central to school counselors who evaluate the effectiveness of their work (Janson & Militello, 2009). These eight elements are stated to foster effective relationships between principals and counselors. The elements that revolve around collective expertise, purposeful and focused collaboration, and stretch leadership describe the working relationship characteristics between the principal and counselor in which they share specific strategies and common goals around the mission of the school. Thus, the result will forge stronger relationships that will yield an academic atmosphere that prepares students for postsecondary experiences (college and career), which allows them to compete in a global society (College Board, 2008, 2009a).

The antithesis of this is the perspective that suggests that school counselors often function as overpaid clerks or quasi-administrators that can be described as a misuse of their education, skill, and role (Coy 1999; Dahir, 2009; House & Martin, 1998). When the role of the counselor is ambiguous, counselors may engage in relatively low-expertise activities, such as test book counting, hall monitoring, individual counseling, using a reactive approach to dealing with student issues/concerns, and working with a select group of students (ASCA, 2005). Also, some school principals use their counselors to assist with the overall management of the school. While the importance of management of schools cannot be minimized, it is also important that the role of the school counselor is aligned with national and state educational objectives that emphasize academic achievement (Beale & McCay, 2001; Bemak, 2000). This will ensure that the skill set of the school counselor is used to ensure equity, access, and academic success for all students, rather than just adding another layer of school management (Beale & McCay, 2001).

There are studies that suggest that school principals may benefit from being better informed about the role of the school counselor as defined by national and state models. Some studies suggest that the place to begin this work is when aspiring administrators are enrolled in educational administration preparation programs (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007; Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2005-2006; Shoffner & Briggs, 2001; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000; Williamson, Broughton, & Hobson, 2003). Amatea and Clark assert that it would be helpful for

colleges of education to initiate courses, seminars, and field experiences in which graduate students in counseling, educational leadership, and teaching are enrolled together so that they can learn what each has to offer and how to work as a team. (p. 25)

There are few studies regarding how counselor educators can work collaboratively with education administration preparation programs (Shoffner & Williamson, 2000).

Pérusse, Goodnough, and Bouknight (2007) conducted an exploratory survey of collaboration between counselor educators and educational administrator faculty. This study concluded that the actual role of school counselors in schools is not consistent with the views of the professional organizations of the school counseling profession where counselors are implementing data-driven school counseling programs (ASCA, 2005). Furthermore, the study implied that more work needs to be done to inform school principals about the current role of the school counselors. Finally, the study suggests that further research should be conducted to explore whether collaboration between counselor education and school administration preparation programs will result in school principals having a more informed understanding of the role and function of school counselors in a school setting, with an emphasis on improving student achievement as well as decreasing the clerical tasks that are inappropriate for counselors (Campbell & Dahir, 1997).

Additional research (Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2010; Dimmitt et al., 2007; Stone & Dahir, 2010) suggests that collaboration could result in a more effective delivery of services, a more likely achievement of the school's improvement goals, and ultimately improved student achievement. These factors might foster an environment of trust between the principal and counselor that might lead to better evaluation.

In the next section, there is an examination of the characteristics of distributed forms of leadership that are practiced by school principals that lead to engaging school

counselors in evaluating their interventions/strategies and sharing responsibility for school improvement goals.

Distributed Forms of Leadership and School Counselor Practice

Emerging bodies of literature in the field of school counseling have very similar themes relating to school counselors and their role in student achievement and the achievement gap (P. Martin, 2002). Some of those emerging themes are leadership, transformation, and equity. Education Trust's (2005) definition of a school counselor states that "the school counselor serves as a leader as well as an effective team member working with teachers, administrators, and other school personnel to help each student succeed" (Definition of School Counseling section, para. 2). It is such leadership qualities that school counselors must have to help them evaluate the effectiveness of their practices.

Current educational concerns and issues in our public schools have resulted in a greater awareness of the importance of leadership in improving student achievement. This has resulted in conversations that have placed emphasis on school leadership and how such leadership influences the practice of educators. The role of the principal has shifted over the years to the important leadership position that is has become. This evolution in school leadership has given rise to new roles for school principals to help students succeed (LaPointe, Darling-Hammond, & Meyerson, 2007). With these new roles, models of school leadership have emerged. Leadership models in schools include staff collaborating and working in teams to improve the outcomes for students (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

Distributed leadership has increasingly become part of the educational leadership landscape in the 21st century, reflecting the current emphasis on leadership as a collective in the general leadership field (Grint, 2011). However, some argue that distributed leadership is not a type of leadership or a style of leadership. It is not a model of leadership (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). According to Elmore (2000), distributed leadership does not mean that no one is responsible for the overall performance of the organization. It means, rather, that the job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization (Elmore, 2000). What has become the dominant perspective on leadership uses the analogy of distributed understanding to suggest that leadership is a set of practices stretched over leaders, followers, and the situation in which leadership is exercised (Spillane, Halvorson, & Diamond, 2001). What underlies this belief in the growing body of empirical work is the idea that leadership is seen as a kind of work, and that it can be identified with a specific set of tasks that must be accomplished for the organization to be successful (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Heller & Firestone, 1995). The popularity of distributed leadership reflects current changes in leadership practice in schools (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Harris (2004) asserts that it is a leadership practice that is focused on teams rather than on individuals and that it places greater emphasis on teachers, support staff, and students as leaders. Despite the widespread use of distributed leadership in educational settings, the concept of distributed leadership remains unclear (Youngs, 2009). Popular in educational settings, Harris and Spillane's research reveals limitations of distributed leadership that are worth underscoring. For example, they assert that distributed leadership can become a phrase that can be used as a comprehensive term to describe

shared or dispersed leadership, when actually it is merely a shared leadership practice that is a leadership characteristic that can be found in the leadership practices of school principals to improve schools.

Different patterns of leadership seem to influence different power structures in schools to improve student achievement. Rather than using distributed leadership practice as a singular term, school principals employ a range of leadership practices that can be considered distributed forms of leadership that can affect change in their schools (Marzano, Walters, & McNulty, 2005). Patterns of leadership distribution throughout schools can stimulate school staff to think differently about their work and their role in improving student achievement.

The literature reviewed for this study clearly articulates that school counselors must embrace and engage with a broadened set of skills that serve all students in order to remain relevant in public schools in the 21st century. However, for school counselors to engage in a transformed manner, they may need to work collaboratively with a school principal who utilizes forms of distributed leadership as a means to collaborate, develop, and count on leadership contributions of those on their staff. Principals who use distributed forms of leadership have a collaborative working style with faculty that seems to have a positive impact on student achievement (Cotton, 2003). This will forge a partnership in which the principal will understand that the counselor is vital to increasing student achievement and that the role of the counselor in a school is beyond "pushing papers." As a result, counselors are seen as collaborators who are members of a school team who have a shared goal of student success (College Board, 2009a; Dahir et al., 2010).

When everyone is able to work toward the goal of improving the quality of education for students and improved outcomes, data and results will be paramount to measuring success. School counselors who are in a school that employs a distributed form of leadership will understand their role in school improvement (Janson et al., 2008). This research asserts that principals who recognize the knowledge and skills of school counselors engaged them (counselors) in the school improvement process

The table below uses the literature to identify characteristics of principal/counselor relationships that may lead to effective school counselor practice:

Table 4: Literature Supporting the Analytic Framework

Characteristics of Working Relationships in Schools (Harris, 2005)	Beliefs Around the Characteristics of Working Relationships in Schools (Ritchie & Woods, 2007)	Principal/Counselor Relationship (Janson & Militello, 2009)	Implications Around Expectations of School Counselor Practice and Effectiveness (Borders & Drury, 1992; Myrick, 1987; Sutton & Fall, 1995)
Requires multiple levels of involvement in decision making	The culture is essentially collaborative, and structures exist to foster collaboration and teamwork.	Mutual value. The principal and the school counselor value each other's job responsibilities, tasks, and contributions to the school and its educational mission.	The school counselor will be involved in decision-making.
Is flexible and versatile (non-permanent grouping)	Involved in creating, sharing, and developing a collective vision	Open and reflective communication. The principal and school counselor are accessible and available to each other to discuss issues related to their individual shared roles in the school as well as issues relevant to the educational mission of the school.	Sense of accountability to colleagues.
Encompasses both formal and informal leaders	Feels valued and is regarded as a learner	Shared belief in interdependency. The principal and school counselor believe that many aspects of their individual roles cannot be accomplished without contributions from the other.	Evaluation as a source of learning
Is fluid and interchangeable	Feels trusted and supported by the head (leader)	Trust. The principal and school counselor trust one another to support their own individual practices as well as their individual contributions to the shared educational mission of the school.	Evaluation results will not be used against them.
Broad-based leadership	School has explicit values and aims	Collective enterprise. The principal and school counselor share in facilitating the development of the common educational mission of the school.	Alignment of school counselor practice to the school goals
Links to vertical and lateral leadership structures.	Appreciate the high degree of autonomy	Awareness of the other's repertoire. The principal and school counselor understand each other's scope of training and professional expectations and standards.	Role of evaluation in school counselor practice. Examination of job description.
Focuses primarily on improving classroom practice or instruction.	Feel supported and enabled to take risks	Purposeful and focused collaboration. The principal and school counselor collaborate with intention around specific goals and strategies related to the common educational mission of the school.	"Accountable talk" counselors are seen as important in improving learning and instruction.
Is ultimately concerned with improving leadership practice in order to influence teaching and learning.	Aware of their talents, of the impact of the school on their skill acquisition and of their own leadership potential.	Stretched leadership. The principal and school counselor share in leadership tasks and practices related to meeting the educational mission of the school.	Uses the same data cycle as teachers for continuous improvement.

Analytic Framework

The literature in the Table 4 above describes the relationship between concepts

from the literature that may lead to school counselors evaluating their interventions to

determine the effectiveness of their practices. The analytical framework (Figure 1) will be used to facilitate a deeper understanding and to formulate questions.

Figure 1. Johnson Analytic Framework

Summary

The review of literature indicates that there is insufficient research about the leadership practices of principals and the implication on school counselor practice and contributions to improving student achievement (MacDonald, Armstrong, & Henson, 2008). The literature also suggests that effective school counselors have principals who support working relationships with faculty, believe that these working relationships lead to greater effectiveness, believe in the importance of specifically building a relationship with the school counselor, have high expectations of school counselors' contributions, and whose leadership style influences school counselor practice and effectiveness. The analytic framework provided the foundation for the research and interview questions.

Chapter 3 describes the method that was used to gather information from school

principals in Springfield, Massachusetts.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Introduction

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, including an overview of population, instrumentation, and data collection. In this chapter, the researcher details the methods and procedures used to conduct the research, which includes the research questions, research design, recruitment, the description of the participants, sampling design, and procedures for collecting and analyzing the data. This is an appropriate method considering the exploratory nature of this study.

The purpose of the qualitative, descriptive study is to examine how the working relationship and way of work of the school principal influences the practice and effectiveness of the school counselor. As part of these analyses, this researcher also examined the relationship of the school principal with the school counselor and how the school principal's way of work and leadership style influences school counselor practice and effectiveness. Thus, school principals are central to this study.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions addressed in this study:

1. In what ways does a principal's way of work and leadership characteristics influence the school counselor's practice and effectiveness?
2. What are the principal's beliefs about the role and function of school counselors?
3. What are the principal's expectations regarding school counselor effectiveness including the use of data?

<u>Research Design</u>

Qualitative research is a complex field of inquiry that draws on many varied assumptions but comprises a few common characteristics and perspectives (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). It is a method of inductive exploration that strives to bring meaning and understanding as well as to increase learning through the lens of the researcher. Like quantitative research, the qualitative method is a systematic process that follows a deliberate and conscious process of making decisions. In contrast and at the same time, qualitative methodology is interpretative, holistic, and contextual (Creswell, 2013; Kvale, 1996; Stake, 2000).

Qualitative research as a paradigm was used because of the iterative nature of the approach. This approach relies on logic that is multifaceted, allowing the reasoning that is described to explore concepts that navigate from part to whole. This method was chosen because qualitative data are known for the virtue of openness and the ability to transcend a common-sense understanding (Kvale, 1996; Rossman & Rallis, 2012) and to be able to document chance happenings (Skinner, 1961) that lead to significant discoveries.

Qualitative research, according to Rossman and Rallis (2012), recognizes that an individual enters a context with a personal perspective that informs her actions, which are shaped by perceptions. As a result of these lived experiences, the qualitative method was used in this study because it enabled the researcher to explore the conceptual framework of induction as it is experienced by school principals, using guiding questions to gain deeper insights and understanding from their perspectives.

This descriptive qualitative study sought to gain an understanding of the school principal's way of work and how that influences school counselor practice and

effectiveness. These qualitative research interviews sought to describe and identify themes from the experiences of the school principal. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 1996). The qualitative method allowed this researcher to examine factors that potentially influenced behaviors, environments, or circumstances, with the goal of improving the practices of school principals in their work with school counselors.

Recruitment

The major criteria for participants to be eligible to participate in this study were to: 1) be in a current position as a school principal who has primary responsibility for one school, 2) be currently employed in a public school in Springfield, Massachusetts, and 3) have at least 2 years of principalship and/or administrative experience.

Authorization from the University of Massachusetts School of Education Institution Review Board was granted. A request to conduct research in the Springfield Public Schools was approved. This researcher announced this research study at a Principal's Meeting and subsequently contacted the school principal to request the participants' involvement.

Sampling Design and Participants

Purposive sampling and criterion sampling were used in this study. The subjects of this study were principals at 12 public schools in Springfield, Massachusetts. Purposive sampling is used when logic and the power of the selection method lies in

choosing information-rich cases for study (Patton, 2002). According to Patton, information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance related to the purpose of the inquiry.

Criterion sampling was used to comprise the sample. In 2009, the district revised its counseling policy, which aligned the practices of school counselors to school improvement goals. As a result of this work, a School Counselor Leadership Advisory Team was established by counselors who volunteered. The purpose of this team was to inform future professional development needs for counselors in order to implement the district's policy with fidelity as well as clearly define the work of school counselors in the 21st century. Among the 53 K-12 schools in the district (n=53), 20 of the schools had counselors that had served on this team. This researcher made phone contact with 20 of the principals who had a counselor that served on the team. Of the 20, 12 responded and agreed to participate. The remaining 8 did respond to participate in the study and expressed a desire to participate but could not commit due to some work constraints.

Once participants were identified, the researcher contacted them by phone and provided an overview of the purpose and process of the study, confirmed the selection criteria required for participation, discussed the time commitment involved in the study, provided an explanation of the study and a consent form, reviewed recording procedures, and scheduled the individual interview. Once an interview date was agreed upon, the researcher confirmed with an email and attached the letter of consent (Appendix A) and demographic survey (Appendix B). The unique characteristics of key informants help to explain why they were selected. Participants were also provided with the interview guide (Appendix C) so that they could reflect on the questions to be asked.

Participant Profiles

Six participants were African American, and the remainder (n=6) identified as Caucasian. Participant ages ranged between 29 and 61 years, with 9 of the 12 participants being 41 years and older. The range of principal/administrative experience varied from 2 to 19 years, with one participant reporting that he had experience as a school counselor. Nine participants hold master's degrees, 3 hold doctoral degrees, and 3 participants are currently enrolled in doctoral programs. Six of the participants were from elementary schools, 3 from middle schools, 1 from a middle-high school, and 2 from high school. The participants completed a brief demographic questionnaire, indicating their age, gender, school setting, education level, number of years in their current position, and previous school counselor experience. The demographic characteristics of each participant in this study are listed below in Table 5:

Table 5: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Question	Response	Age Range			
		<30	30-40	41-50	>51
		n=1	n=2	n=4	n=5
Gender	Female	0	0	3	4
	Male	1	2	1	1
Ethnicity	African American	1	0	2	3
	Caucasian	0	2	2	2
	No Answer	0	0	0	0
Experience as a school counselor	Yes	0	0	0	1
	No	0	0	0	0
	No Answer	0	0	0	0
Experience as a principal	2 to 5 Years	1	2	1	1
	6 to 10 Years	0	0	2	1
	>11 Years	0	0	1	3
Familiar with the district's School Counseling Program Guide and Policy	Yes	0	2	3	5
	No	1	0	0	0
	No Answer	0	0	1	0
Participated in workshops related to school counselor practice	Yes	0	0	1	0
	No	0	0	0	0
	No Answer	0	0	0	0

Pseudonyms were created for each participant as a way to: 1) protect confidentiality and 2) personalize individual comments. Below is the list of each individual by pseudonym, including each one's age, degree level, years of experience as a principal/administrator, and grade level of the school:

- Patricia: 53 years old, master's degree, 16 years experience, elementary school.

- Joyce: 61 years old, doctoral degree, 12 years experience, elementary school.

- Carol: 55 years old, master's degree, 2 years experience, elementary school.

- Vivian: 49 years old, master's degree, 7 years experience, middle school.

- Emilye: 41 years old, master's degree, 8 years experience, elementary school

- Sonia: 50 years old, master's degree, 2 years experience, middle school.

- Dan: 52 years old, master's degree, 8 years experience, elementary school.

- Jack: 34 years old, master's degree, currently in a doctoral program, 2 years experience, middle school.

- Tyrone: 48 years old, doctoral degree, 15 years experience, middle-high school.

- Matt: 39 years old, master's degree, currently in a doctoral program, 4 years experience, high school.

- Melinda: 55 years old, doctoral degree, 19 years experience, elementary school.

- Anthony: 29 years old, master's degree, currently in a doctoral program, 2 years experience, high school.

Data Collection

For this study, data were collected by conducting face-to-face interviews with 12 school principals, representing elementary, middle, and high schools. Each principal had at least one school counselor assigned to his or her school who also served on the district's School Counselor Leadership Team. A questionnaire followed the demographic questions and asked the following:

- Is your school counselor on your building-based Instructional Leadership Team?
- What is your understanding of the district's School Counseling Program Guide and Comprehensive School Counselor Policy?
- What is your understanding of the ASCA National Model for Comprehensive School Counseling?
- What is your understanding of the National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (College Board)?
- What is your understanding of the ASCA National Standards for School Counseling Programs?
- Can you explain the Transforming School Counselor Initiative?
- Have you attended any school counselor-related professional development at national conferences?

The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended to allow the participants to describe their own experiences. The researcher used an interview guide (Appendix C),

which included questions that had key themes and issues. In this type of interview, the order of questions can be changed depending on the direction of the interview, but there is an opportunity to ask additional questions (Corbetta, 2003). Participants were given the flexibility to express their unique experiences. Follow-up questions varied and were guided by the material provided by each participant. The interviews were digitally recorded and lasted from 10 to 30 minutes. This researcher was the only person conducting the interviews. All interviews took place in the school in which each principal works.

Interview Question Development

The interview questions were designed to elicit information regarding the principals' perspective in determining the effectiveness of school counselors practice. The interview questions centered on three major areas:

- How would you describe an exemplary principal-counselor relationship?

- What are your beliefs and perceptions about the role and function of school counselors?

- How does your counselor use data?

These primary questions were each followed by an additional subset of questions that pertained to the lived experiences of the principal. The secondary questions were as follows:

1a. What contributes to an exemplary principal-counselor relationship?

1b. What are some examples in your work with your counselor-principal relationship that exemplify this?

2a. What have been your experiences that have led you to have this belief and gave you this perception?

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2b. How do your beliefs and perceptions compare to what your experiences are with your school counselor?

2c. In your experiences working with counselors, what are your expectations?

3a. Can you provide examples of the types/kinds of data your school counselor uses?

3b. What does your counselor use the data to do?

3c. How does your counselor determine his/her effectiveness?

3d. How would you describe how a school counselor's use of data impacts school improvement goals?

Dr. Carol Dahir, Professor and Department Chair, School Counseling at New York Institute of Technology and Dr. Matthew Militello, Associate Professor in the Leadership, Policy, and Adult and Higher Education Department at North Carolina State University served as expert reviewers and made suggestions to improve the interview guide by reviewing and refining the guiding questions. The research of Ponec and Brock (2000) and Pérusse, Goodnough, Donegan, and Jones (2004) investigated what principals believe and their perceptions about school counselors. Both of these studies emphasized the principal-counselor relationship as key factors in school counselor effectiveness. A key factor includes educating principals about the role of school counselors. This ensured that the view that school principals have of counselors is consistent with the view that counselors have of themselves. The studies also found that good school counselor-principal relationships not only include mutual trust and clear communication but also continuous improvement.

Data Analysis

After all the interviews were completed, they were transcribed by a transcriptionist hired by the researcher. Descriptive data from the interviews were analyzed using the data analysis matrix (Appendix D), which is an instrument to code participant interview responses to determine if the relationships, perceptions, and leadership practices of school principals led to greater effectiveness of school counselor practices. The matrix design is based on the eight elements of effective principal-counselor relationships (Table 3) (Janson & Miletello, 2009). The researcher used this data matrix to organize the participants' responses to the interview questions.

After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher reviewed all of the information by looking for categories to emerge. Relevant quotes and information were highlighted and noted by the researcher. Coding for any purpose requires that the researcher is familiar with the data and ensures that the researcher gets closer to the data (Bazeley & Richards, 2000). This researcher utilized an open coding format. Coding is the process of examining categories to form descriptions and broad themes in the data. The object of the coding process is to make sense out of the text, examine codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapse these codes into specific themes (Creswell, 2007).

Summary

This chapter presented the methods used in this qualitative, descriptive study of how the school principal's way of work influences school counselor practice and effectiveness in Springfield, Massachusetts. The next chapter presents the results obtained with the methods of this study and the analysis of this data. Summary, conclusion, and recommendations are included in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents results and interpretation gathered through qualitative methods in this study. Interview sessions with building principals were aligned with the data matrix and additionally revealed emerging themes around leadership styles. Qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into the research setting to obtain understandings about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2008).

Wiersma (2000) explained that data analysis in qualitative research is a process of categorization, description, and synthesis. These tasks occurred repeatedly throughout the data collection and analysis process. During this time, the researcher interpreted what was revealed and categorized the data into groups of information according to the data matrix (Creswell, 2007; Janson & Militello, 2009). Merriam (1998) expressed that "devising categories is largely an intuitive process, but it is also systematic and informed by the study's purpose, the investigator's orientation and knowledge, and the meanings made explicit by the participants themselves" (p. 179).

The research by Janson and Militello (2009) on the eight elements that exist in principal-counselor relationships (explained in Table 3) was the matrix used to organize the findings. The eight elements are as follows:

1. Mutual Value

2. Open and Reflective Communication

3. Shared Belief in Interdependency

4. Trust

5. Collective Enterprise

6. Awareness of the Other's Repertoire

7. Purposeful and Focused Collaboration

8. Stretched Leadership

Data from the interviews are organized in the following sequence: 1) principal's perception of an exemplary principal-school counselor working relationship, 2) beliefs and perceptions about the role and function of school counselors, and 3) school counselor effectiveness. When developing the interview protocol, the researcher found it significant to explore the school principals' beliefs and perceptions regarding the role and function of school counselors prior to examining the principals' perception of school counselor effectiveness, which is a relatively new phenomenon in school counseling preparation programs. It was important to hear the principals' perspective to provide insight into how the role and function of the school counselor can be leveraged to improve student outcomes. It is important to note that there were not any specific criteria to determine and confirm the degree to which principals used any of the eight elements that lead to more effective principal-counselor relationships. For each of the thematic categories, what the principals reported was organized into the eight elements in principal-counselor relationships that may lead to school counselor effectiveness.

Principals' Perceptions of an Exemplary Principal-School Counselor Relationship

Mutual Value

All participants (n=12) shared that a strong relationship between the school principal and school counselor is integral to improving student achievement. Principals recognized that both the principal and the counselor had respect for the contributions that each of them made to the overall success of the school. For example, Carol shared that "you have to have the principal understanding what the counselor's job is, and you have to have the counselor understanding what the bigger picture is in the school as far as student achievement." For the principal and the counselor, this encouraged the sharing/teamwork that promotes creativity and professional success. Furthermore, one principal reported that the counselor must share the same commitment to the work as the principal and must accept no excuses for failure.

Several principals (n=9) reported that the counselor is a resource in the school to help students with removing any social/emotional barriers that may impact a student's ability to be successful academically. The counseling skills of the school counselor are regarded as contributions to the school's mission. Counseling skills can be utilized in responsive and supportive ways that increase the school counselor's ability to meet the academic benchmarks/school improvement goals. For example, Pat shared the following:

> [An]exemplary principal-counselor relationship involves the principal and the counselor working together as partners to solve problems within the school with teachers and parents, supporting students in whatever ways needed to work to make sure that youngsters are prepared for learning in the classroom; and if they are not, then we put supports in place for them.

A few participants (n=2) reported that having very clear role definitions was instrumental in the relationship between principals and counselors. However, several principals (n=7) reported that an important aspect of the principal-counselor relationship

was the need for counselors to understand how the school functions as a whole in order to achieve a common purpose for the change that is needed to transpire in the school to improve student outcomes. For example, Tyrone said, "I think in an ideal place, you have a principal who gets the importance of counseling, and counselors who can think whole school and can think like principals and not just think like counselors." All participants mentioned respect for the value and role each other has in the overall mission of the school. Emphasis was placed on recognizing that the contribution that counselors make to the school are just as important as the contributions of teachers, as the counselors' contributions are relevant to the mission of the school. For example, as Tyrone noted,

> Both parties have to have respect for the different responsibilities and for the different perspectives that come with the job; so counselors have to respect and understand the principal's perspective and responsibilities and pressures and vice versa, and then you have to respect not just responsibilities but the performance… see, everyone in the school must add value to the overall mission of the school. Unlike teachers, they [counselors] are not managing classrooms and kids, and they are not giving homework, and they are not responsible for grades and that kind of stuff, and that is just hooey because good counselors are doing a lot of work. Just like you have good teachers, there are good counselors. The goal at our school is that 100% of our students will get accepted to college. In order to accomplish this, my faculty and staff must rely on the skills, talents, contributions of others to meet this goal. While the teachers are taking care of business in the classroom, my counselors are writing 50/60 letters of recommendations for seniors that are really good letters, you know. They are not just milling out stuff.

Many (n=7) participants pointed out that a commitment to valuing each other's contributions to the school and its educational mission was important in principal-counselor relationships. Melinda shared that a principal-counselor relationship in which there is a commitment to the work, and the work means making certain that every child is provided with high educational opportunities, every classroom, every day. Melinda went on to share that "the principal and the counselor need to have a relationship where we understand, and we know our families." Melinda believed that if there were familiarity

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with families, then in her working relationship with her counselor, they were ensuring

that school programs/initiatives were responsive to the needs of families. This perspective

asserts that the counselor should be able to understand and know the vision that a

principal has set forth for the quality of services provided to the students. Melinda

maintained, "So I think that the counselor and principal relationship is one that is very

important, and counselors need to be immersed in student growth, student learning, and

know about good teaching and learning and how to help children succeed." Tyrone also

reiterated very similar sentiments as Melinda regarding understanding, knowing, and

being able to articulate the vision of the school principal. Tyrone indicated:

> Counselors are very much the voice and face of the school, and if they are not the
> tip of the spear, you know, they certainly are close to the tip of the spear like the
> principal. You have to make sure you are on the same message.

Open and Reflective Communication

Having the opportunity for sharing information, contributing ideas, and

developing school-wide strategies to improve student outcomes was an important aspect

in the principal-counselor relationship, particularly communication related to the

individual roles of the principal and counselor, and how those shared roles were relevant

to the educational mission of the school. All participants reported that open lines of

communication and consistent communication was an important aspect of the principal-

counselor relationship. For example, Jack shared the following:

> Rather than be two separate bodies because there can be so much overlap in who
> [counselors] are dealing with, what they are dealing with, why they are dealing
> with issues. So number one to me would be constant communication, which
> would be set up by consistent meeting times as well as, you know, skillful
> meeting with principals and counselors who can meet on the fly throughout the
> day, multiple times.

The majority of the participants (n=8) mentioned that having a structured time for meetings was an important aspect of the principal-counselor relationship. Three principals shared the following as being important in their relationship with their counselor. Carol said that

> I think an ideal one would be one that you would meet if not daily, at least three times a week where you are discussing specific students academically and emotionally, and the plans that are developed are in collaboration with the classroom and the teacher, but the counselor actually does like a service plan for the students."

According to Matt,

> the best relationship would be when there is open communication and the principal understands that if something isn't going right and they aren't able to fill their responsibilities to the students, then there needs to be changes to allow them that kind of access or that kind of time to access the students.

Pat believed that

> whatever it is to help those youngsters it is ongoing communication between the principal and the counselor via whatever so that we are all keeping up with what is going on. [This would mean m]eeting a few times a week, formally, certainly informally as much as possible around individual students and individual classroom situations to make sure that those teachers have what they need to make it happen in the classroom for students and so the students are prepared

Tyrone stressed the importance of

> making sure that there are clear lines of communication and a constant kind of checking in, but beyond that, you know, the principal needs to be checking in with counselors every day. What is going on? What is hopping? What kids or teachers are in need of support, [and w]here are we in the development of certain programs?

Beyond the structure of communicating using informal and formal meetings, principals found that meeting specifically to ensure that the academic needs of students were being met was vital. This included having conversations regarding barriers that may

interfere with counselors being able to be "connected" with their students. For example, Matt shared:

> We meet all the time, and obviously I am in the counselor's office, and they are in my office, and I ask [the counselor] how things are going and I [also] ask the students how things are going with the counselors. And you know, if there is an issue [then] I expect [the counselors] have to bring [issues] to me, whether it be a policy issue or a time issue. [Then] we try to collectively come up with ways for them to get freed up to fulfill their responsibility of meeting with the students and making sure that every kid is known to them and every kid has the support academically and socially that they need.

Two principals (Tyrone and Carol) pointed out that communication with their counselors also included opportunities for continuous development to ensure that improving student outcomes was always at the center of their communication, as this informed their next steps. Tyrone said

> I give them feedback, and it is critical feedback then I am giving it to them it is like we need to get better, and this is how I think, and this is how you can contribute to that level of improvement.

Carol explained that she and counselors

> meet regularly and go over kids, and I have learned more this year than last year where I give her or both of the counselors the opportunity to give their opinion on where they think it needs to go, and then I just go with it, and then we meet around the outcome of the situations."

The realities of what transpires in schools everyday often result in principals and counselors not being able to consistently and formally meet. However, in those situations, principals and counselors have found ways to ensure that effective communication takes place, to address relevant issues to ensure that students are progressing academically. Jack shared the following:

> I think that in certain areas in this relationship we [principal and counselor] haven't been able to stay on the same page [so] we have put systems in place. For example, my counselor gives me a sheet of notes every week from what she gets out of meeting with teams, and so that allows me to hold her accountable to meet

with the team and then also keeps me in touch with [the teams of teachers] she is in touch with . . . and that has been a really nice addition. She also does a really good job of telling me, "A five minute meeting is not going to be enough to do it right now, but we do need to meet after school today to go over such and such that I have to do." And when that time comes, we do meet, and we sit down quietly and close the door and get what we need to do done. The other thing that I think exemplified a good relationship for us is we are both new to our roles, and I have tried to answer every question she has, but I have also found her counseling colleagues. She has made those relationships work where literally last year we had a code where if she asked me something that I didn't know I would say "KB," and that was the initial for two other counselors that she would immediately call because she knew I couldn't answer the question.

Two participants shared that good communication and understanding the issues related to the school allowed for seamless problem solving because each person knew what the other would do or understood the expected outcome of a situation. Joyce noted "We are basically on the same page and answer each other's questions now," while Vivian said, "We are totally on the same page for what the kids need and trying to provide them with the services they need. We literally finish one another's sentences."

Shared Belief in Interdependency

Principals understand that there are aspects of leading a school that cannot be accomplished without the contributions from counselors. This reciprocal relationship is one where the principal and counselor in their respective roles are mutually dependent on one another. Principals noted their views on this interdependency, with Sonia maintaining that "a counselor and a principal relationship is symbiotic in which we would work as a team, and the counselor is there to support the teacher and the principal and the initiative and the goal of the school." To Matt, this interdependency is

> a relationship that obviously takes the expertise of both parties into account when making decisions.... Counselors are such an important asset to the school, and a principal and a counselor need to be on the same page in terms of student

achievement, respect for each other's work, and common goals towards the end result.

Joyce felt that

> there are the situations where students have needs that are supported by the school in order for them to be successful academically as well as in general in their personal lives, and [our counselor] has a really great connection with the community and is able to support us in this way so we can provide for students the needs that they have. Using the connection he has in the community, we are able to use in order to provide the best possible outcomes for kids.

Emilye articulated how mutual dependence can yield good outcomes for students:

> When working independently, having the same shared understanding in terms of the end results is important. You know, as a school, we have to have student achievement as the focus, and all those different pieces of the puzzle add up for student achievement so that is connections we have with students, connections that we have with parents… We simply cannot accomplish this work without one another.

Trust

The balance of the relationship between principal and counselor is delicate and requires that trust be built in over time. Simply put, trust means confidence, confidence that others' actions are consistent with their words, that the principal and counselor are concerned with one another's well-being and interest, and that the skills they have are respected and valued. This strengthens the relationship between the school principal and school counselor so that the school counselor is viewed by the principal as being integral in improving student achievement. In this researcher's interviews with principals, three principals explicitly spoke to the issue of trust. Dan considered trust as it relates to the counselor's professional abilities and their ability to work closely with him to support the needs of the school. For Dan, his counselor is a very important member of his team, so he also shares knowledge with his counselors so that his counselor grows professionally.

Dan said:

> You must have a level of trust . . . in the people that you work with. Having trust
> in their abilities [means that] if you hire someone [then] you have to place sole
> trust into them. So [then] you work with them, you work beside them, and you are
> willing to guide them . . . to support the goals of the school. So you definitely
> want to mentor your counselors because they are going to be part of your inner
> circle. So the relationship that I would look at to bring to an exemplary
> relationship between the counselor and the principal centers around trust.

Pat's perspective on trust was around her and her school counselor being able to discuss

and problem-solve matters that may be a barrier to school improvement goals.

Furthermore, Pat was clear in sharing that trust was also an important factor when the

counselor is working with school staff. Pat shared:

> I think the relationship is built between the individuals, but that strong bond they
> develop and the trust level is extremely important when working with staff,
> especially on issues that are critical and sometimes very complex that we run
> across to improve student achievement.

Another participant described the importance of having trust in the professional opinion

of his counselors as an important aspect of their relationship, particularly when students

are impacted. Matt said that it is essential to have "trust in their opinion and trust in their

beliefs and [to] collectively make adjustments to policies and schedules to allow them the

opportunity to go meet with students more regularly."

Collective Enterprise

Sharing in facilitating the development of strategies that are aligned to the mission

of the school was an important aspect of the principal and counselor relationship. This

ensures that there is a shared understanding of student success and ensures that the

practices of the school counselor are aligned to the school's goals. Participants shared

their perspectives on this issue, with Melinda stating the following:

It is essential that the counselor is immersed in the data, the student achievement data, the action research data, what's happening in the school, what's happening in the classrooms and what is affecting the children. What impact does the counselor have on helping the children feel important, develop those college and career readiness skills that we espouse and those buzz words that we use? But it has to go deeper than that. It has to be supporting them, helping them prepare to become those effective communicators and deep thinkers and those 21st century leaders that we are talking about in the big picture.

According to Dan:

Counselors certainly are going to have the pulse on what is going on in that building on any given day with the faculty and students, and should try to support the needs of everyone in the building. Therefore, it is key that the administration is tapping into that so they know where the pulse is in the building and where they need to provide services as well.

When it comes to the counselors facilitating programs at the school, Tyrone shared that with his counselors,

You know, anytime we pull people together I want to remind folks what is our mission, why are we here…. The event(s) that we are doing must tie into what our mission is, and if it isn't, then we shouldn't be doing it.

Joyce noted how the sharing of responsibilities is a part of her relationship with her counselor:

We share a lot of responsibilities together, and it really works well for me and for him, I think, because we are able to meet with children and their parents on a regular basis whether it is academic, social, emotional.

Another principal, Carol, pointed out that the counselors "are definitely more connected to academic achievement now than they ever have been."

Awareness of the Other's Repertoire

In the principal-counselor relationship, having an understanding of the specialized skill set that school counselors learned in graduate school fostered improved relationships. Emilye noted:

> The skills of school counselors allows them to be able to run effective teams, have relationships with students as well as parents, being a problem solver around issues that students may have student problems that may be a barrier to their academic performance.

Vivian, Matt, and Anthony spoke directly to training of the school counselors around their ability to carry out their professional responsibilities in order to support what needs to happen in a school. Sonia maintained:

> Whatever the counselor needs to do which is appropriate within her or his realm of duty, he [or] she should be willing to do so without coercion or any negative way a principal may have to make it happen. They should just do it because it is required to be done.

Dan noted:

> I have always been fortunate here at my school to have what I consider exemplary counselors…who have always been willing to go above and beyond what the job entailed for the benefit of the children, first and foremost, and [for] the benefit of the entire school and their colleagues that they work with.

Anthony pointed out, "Beyond respect and commitment, principals need to have great regard for the expertise of the school counselor. I need counselors who can use their expertise to build tiered intervention counseling interventions that support the goals of the school."

Matt spoke directly to the issue of school counselors engaging in "non-counseling" tasks:

> The principal really needs to allow them the ability to do the things that they are capable of doing, and I think often counselors are asked to do managerial/secretarial work and not actually work with the students, and so I

think … that is a priority working with the students and making sure that everybody knows who their counselor is and making sure they have an opportunity to see them if need be or just to check in.

Pat described a scenario in which her skills as a principal and the skills of the counselor complemented one another to address an issue that was impacting the performance of a student:

I view the counselor as the expert with respect to counseling and therapeutic issues because I do not have the expertise or the experience. Although I have been involved in a lot of counseling situations, it isn't my level of expertise, so I depend upon them and their expertise in that area, but I try to share with them my philosophy of working with staff and trying to understand each staff member and differentiating the kind of support that we give to staff based on their needs. It's not always experience, it's not always years of service, but people are individuals, and when it comes to social and emotional issues, their feelings come through. I think that we have to be really patient in guiding them to resolutions with students and with families so that youngsters can be productive beyond that, and so when I am working with them, those are the kinds of things I do. I will give an example of something. The counselor here had been working with a teacher, and this is the second year of them working together. And the teacher has some challenges with respect to behavioral issues with youngsters, and because she had some bad experiences, she withdraws somewhat with a youngster, and there is challenging behavior. The counselor felt that the teacher was giving up and just didn't want to work with the youngster, and I said, "I want you to think about where this teacher was and where they are now and how you can help them to be strong in these situations, knowing that they are a human being. And if they are fearful, then their fears are real, and we have to help them move beyond that and . . . help them to try to emphasize in our conversations with them the strides that they have made, and then try to work with them on it and [on] how to develop your capacity with them beyond that." So to meet with them, talk about what they have done well and then ask them questions around where do you think you can go next and how can I help you. And the counselor appreciates that because she was going in basically with the attitude that this person didn't care about the children, didn't want to try, didn't want to work with the child and the family, when I don't believe that was the teacher's approach. It may have been, but I don't think it was, and I wanted the counselor to really use her role as counselor to counsel the teacher as well and not to judge the teacher, and to really ask the teacher, "How can I help you next?" "Small steps," I kept saying to the counselor. We want the person to make small steps, to make effort toward improving, and if we shut them down, they will not do it at all. So we need to keep working with them. And she laughed and thanked me and said that is not the way she was thinking, "But you are probably right. That is what I should do." And she came back after the conversations and said, "You know, that really worked well with that person, and

I am going to have to step back and think in those terms." And I said, "Remember the teacher; for me, the teachers are the classroom just as the students are [in] their classroom, and I look at them in that way, and I give them what they need, and I try not to judge where they are and [instead] just guide them toward what I want them to be and what I want them to do."

Purposeful and Focused Collaboration

Working collaboratively with school counselors was viewed as important by school principals. One participant shared that a principal-counselor relationship was one that "fosters the same goals around student achievement." When describing the principal-counselor relationship, Pat shared that an

> exemplary principal/counselor relationship involves the principal and the counselor working together as partners to solve problems within the school with teachers and parents, supporting students in whatever ways needed to work to make sure that youngsters are prepared for learning in the classroom; and if they are not, then we put supports in place for them.

When asked to share more about working together as partners, Pat said:

> The counselor and I collaborate with teachers to develop general education interventions to help students achieve personal, social, and academic success. We use data to guide our decision-making process regarding instruction methods and delivery. Once outcomes are measured, we make any necessary adjustments to move toward continuous improvement, and we share this information with the parent.

Joyce and Melinda shared similar sentiments. Joyce said that her counselor

> brings a lot of value to our meetings about social-emotional needs of the students by helping teachers gain a more complete understanding of the issues behind the actions of the student. We start to set goals on how we are going to meet those goals and also consider the home component with families and getting them involved in the school. So he has a vital role to play here.

Melinda said:

> I think an exemplary relationship would be one where we are working in tandem, and that means children come first in every aspect of schooling—the academics, the community life, the academic engagement. Everything that is involved in

helping the development of children needs to be done in tandem with the principal.

One principal shared that he has to ensure that his staff who are not providing direct instructional support to students everyday are held to high standards. In discussing his relationship with his school counselor, Jack shared the following:

> I always tell the people that don't teach that we have to be twice as good because we are not doing the hardest part of the day. So, you know, I think that principals and counselors need to be seen as a unified group, as on the same page, as I model how we work as a team throughout the building. Students benefit academically when we work collaboratively to improve their performance.

Jack was asked how this expectation relates to his counselor who is not in the classroom teaching daily.

> My counselor delivers lessons in the classrooms that are proactive and [that] respond to the needs of our school. Her lessons provide the students with the skills to be good citizens and this supports the goals of the school, … supports student achievement.

Stretched Leadership

The ability of counselors to share in leadership tasks and roles related to meeting school improvement goals was very important to all of the participants (n=12). While not all participants used the word "leadership," there was a sharing of tasks and practices that led to meeting the academic goals of the school. For example, as Dan said:

> I think that the nature of the two roles has always brought administrators and counselors together much more so than other aspects that I have seen. I think counselors are certainly in a position [so that] the entire school accesses them, [and] the entire school accesses the administration. Ultimately, I think there [are] so many things that bring them together in their positions to help move the school forward instructionally.

According to Emilye,

> Counselors have the ability [to] change the culture and climate in the building, particularly when there may be low expectations for students because of their socioeconomic status. Leadership with common messaging allows the counselor to see the strengths in students and [to] really maximize and push students to student learning and student performance.

When speaking specifically about leadership, Emilye shared:

> You have to have the same mission… in regards to the students and the school and what those pieces of the puzzle are that [are] going to make that happen. So I would [say that] a counselor has got to be a positive role model and a leader in the school in their own capacity, really knowing their work and how it interconnects with everything else.

Emilye added the following about the leadership tasks her counselor takes on when

working with various teams:

> We have different teams, and we have worked really hard at looking at ourselves as different leaders and leadership roles and so our counselor is in charge or is the leader… so we look at issues in the school as problem solvers. She pretty much runs the meetings…. So she organizes, and she is the leader…. The counselor here also orchestrates and leads.

Emilye went on to say:

> [The counselor] currently is on our instructional leadership team. She was on it last year as well, and … with her input in terms of students and student achievement, she was directly connected to what instructional strategies we are using as a school to foster student comprehension and higher student achievement. So she really has put herself in a position of leadership, both social/emotional/Special Ed and problem solving, behavior contracts as well as academically, really putting herself in a position to be helpful in each of those capacities.

> Sonia spoke to assigning tasks as helpful, and it allows counselors to take a

leadership role to assist her:

> [We] have our counselor's meeting, and there is an issue, and the counselor speaks up [to give] her opinion and says, "Well, I will take this on and do this, and you don't have to worry about it." To me that is an example. That is one less thing on the plate that I have to do, and there is a good relationship and good

communication with the parent, and the parent feels as if he or she is being heard and respected.

Dan shared that his counselors took on tasks and practices that supported the entire school: "We [principal and counselors] have worked to help organize the building. The counseling department has always been an integral part of that, whatever we are doing."

He added:

> They have also been instrumental in leading a variety of initiatives within the building, whether it be college and career readiness week that we do annually with students, whether we do a transition night with grade five specifically, or whether we are doing a fundraiser for someone who has had a tragedy someplace and responding to that, whether it be in our school, locally or internationally. They are always . . . spearheading something somewhere in the building.

This section outlined the participants' perceptions of building principal-counselor relationships. Overall, an appreciation for the professional contribution of one another was very much an important aspect of the principal-counselor relationship to all participants. The working alliance between the principal and counselor is characterized by the eight elements as described by Janson and Militello (2009).

The next section examines, through the lens of the school principal, beliefs and perceptions regarding school counselors. This is important to consider in examining how school principals view their school counselors and how the role of the school counselor supports the overall goals of the school.

Principals' Beliefs and Perceptions Regarding the Role and Function of School Counselors

The following section provides examples of how past and present experiences of the school principal informed their beliefs and perceptions regarding the role and function of school counselors.

Mutual Value

Many (n=8) principals shared that the job of the counselor was important to the mission of the school. Pat said, "My beliefs are, they go back to the exemplary principal and counselor relationship where I believe that the counselor has to play a part in supporting instruction." Pat added, "My expectation is that the counselor will work with students to help them be prepared to meet the challenges of the educational environment. I also expect that they will work with teachers and parents based on the same purpose." Two participants shared the same sentiments as Pat. Joyce stated:

> [The] expectation is that they would be there to support the growth of students. So the role of the counselor becomes even more important as we are going to push kids to be all they are going to be. For us, here at our school, I think it is huge that he has those goals just like we do as educators in general.

Sonia shared:

> My expectation is that we be honest and fair and truthful to the situation and be respectful to each other and focus on the bigger picture to see that it is about the kids. It's about accessing working together academically, emotionally, and [making] sure this young person can achieve.

Few participants (n=3) reflected on their past administrative experience, their current experience with their counselor, and how some practices in the school district have informed and/or changed their beliefs and perceptions regarding their counselor. The school district where these participants are principals adopted a framework for

school counselors modeled after the American School Counselor Association's National Model. This framework aligns with the practices of counselors to school and district improvement goals. For example, as Vivian explained:

> When I first started in Administration, there was sort of a separation. There was sort of the adjustment counselor, [and] they did all the "adjustment counseling," for a lack of a better way to say it, and then there was the guidance counselor that did the other side of it, the paperwork side of it, the grading, some counseling, but it was more like clerical, and I don't mean it to sound that way, but it was almost clerical, and from the start, I truly believed that a counselor's role needs to be a dual role. The counselor needs to be doing, yes that paperwork needs to be done, and the grades need to be done, and the scheduling needs to be done, but again, first and foremost is the kids. If [counselors] are in charge of a grade level, they need to be in charge of the counseling that goes with that at the grade level, and the counseling needs to come up suddenly, which often happens at the middle school level, as well as [doing] the clerical side of it. It is really important that the counselor has the dual role and has the ability to multitask.

Vivian's perspective is an example of the expectation of the role of counselors to help students and promote their academic, physical, and emotional well-being. Counselors need to be able to address the social and academic needs of students.

One participant shared that while there is regard for the school counselor and the need to work collaboratively, he saw the need for balance between readily responding to the needs of the school community and providing the other services that counselors provide in order to make a positive contribution to the school. Balancing also means occasionally stepping into the role of the other, depending on the situation and if the need arises. For example, Jack shared:

> There has to be a balance, and my counselor has been very good about understanding [that] the need for balancing our work responsibilities requires our ability to respond to the demands of our school to meet our educational goals. And I think as much as I have developed her, she has developed me, so she is on walkie. And [although] she answers exactly zero discipline calls, we did need her on the walkie because her office is not in the main area.

Jack also recognized that his perceptions and beliefs about his school counselor's role and function had to do with understanding her contributions, given that they may differ from his.

> She does a lot of mediations for us, which are reactive to the moment, and she [responds to] a lot of kids [who] are crying, [as] I am not the right one to talk to until we get them to the counselor.

When Emilye was asked specifically about her beliefs and perceptions of school counselors, including her expectations around her school counselor's contributions to the school's educational goals by accessing community resources in preventing and ameliorating problems as well as leveraging those resources to meet school goals, Emilye said the following:

> That is a good question. I think it has changed over time. I think in the past, it was a person who would really deal with all the behavior issues and try to provide one-on-one therapy to students, and now I think the role has really evolved to being a support and resource to teachers as well as parents, to align the resources and the outside community, to align the resources that are inside the school community and try to help teachers and staff build some capacity around those areas in terms of behavior management, those behavior contracts, you know. [This means using] resources outside like DCF, not in a negative way, but outside community resources [that] can complement the inside community [resources] with … outside therapy. So I think that the job has really changed and evolved, [and] there is a lot of focus on career and college readiness, [for example] running a college month and having different activities focusing on college month.

However, Pat spoke specifically about the collaboration among herself, the counselor, and the teachers and how the perceptions of the teachers may be a barrier to working collaboratively:

> So I guess you would say I think it is challenging for the counselors to sometimes develop a relationship with teachers because I think teacher perceptions may not have evolved, and sometimes the counselor … is the person who takes away the child who is not living up to the expectations of the classroom. The counselor here understands quite clearly and articulates it very carefully to staff that she is there to support, and [that] she will go into classrooms to support as well as take children to her office, but it is a temporary condition. Her job is to prepare or

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repair the child and to get them back into the classroom as quickly as possible so that they can participate in the learning. So my counselors, all of my counselors, have worked with me in that way. And if I don't see them working with me in that way, then I use my professional capacity and my understanding of the role and my need to have them working with youngsters to assist them in living up to that capacity.

Pat's insight speaks to the shift in perspective regarding the beliefs and perceptions regarding the role and function of school counselors. Traditionally, school staff (teachers) viewed the school counselor's role as a position that was loosely defined and that removed students from the learning environment, attempting to resolve matters in isolation. Pat's insight shifts the focus from the individual to a system that mutually values learning, achievement, and supporting student success. This finding may be due to the district's counseling policy, which shifts the counselor's role from reacting to school needs to working more proactively to make contributions to the school. In order to work more proactively, the role of the school counselor along with the role and function of the school counselor must be valued.

Melinda shared how her past experiences as a student in a public school system has informed her perception and how she values the work of her school counselor, specifically how her school counselor is able to make a contribution to the school by ensuring that the focus of the role of her school counselor meets the needs of students:

> When I think about the counselors, I am not just thinking about my current counselor, but also counselors that I interfaced with when I was a student in school, and my perception of them at the time was unfavorable in that I would question the role of the counselor. The negative perception that I experienced with the counselor when I was a student was that rather than supporting me and helping me and encouraging me to realize my full potential, it was more a case of "I am not quite sure where you need to be or how I can help you." So my perceptions of counselors [have] changed somewhat, but I am not quite sure they perceive themselves in a way that … would be beneficial to children.

Based on Melinda's past experiences and how those experiences may have shaped her

perception and beliefs regarding the role and function of school counselors, she was

asked to share an example of how she works collaboratively with her counselor to ensure

that her counselor's role met the needs of the students:

> I expect my counselor to be a champion for all students. I want my counselor to advocate for poor students and students of color [so that] the academic and social needs of our students are met. I do not want a student in my school to ever have the same experience with any counselor in my school [similar to] my experience with my counselor when I was a student.

Anthony, who had previous administrative experience in another school district

prior to working in his current administrative job, shared his perspective of how his

leadership has allowed him to have more insight around how his beliefs and perceptions

contribute to his principal-counselor relationship:

> When I compare my two experiences, I see currently where somewhere in between we have people who are competent and people who have strong beliefs, but they might not be all in the same direction. And they need leadership that really understands counseling [in order] to be able to say on the spot, "No, that is not right. This is the right way to go and do it."

Open and Reflective Communication

Participants shared that the ability to have access and be available to one another to discuss matters related to their school counselor in order to have meaningful communication with one another was essential in the principal-counselor relationship. Participants indicated how communication provided the means for addressing issues related to their shared roles in the overall goals of the school, perceptions and beliefs around how this could be accomplished was varied.

Jack shared that he and his school counselor have found a balance to ensure that they are communicating that the needs of the school were being met while ensuring that their roles were respected. Jack revealed that when the balance shifts, communication becomes vital to ensure that her role and function is used to meet the needs of all kids. As Jack described the need for balance, he also shared the following:

> She pushes [the counseling model] more than anybody I ever worked with, so therefore she is in classrooms a lot, and we put a system in place where she brings a clipboard with business cards to the main office when she is going into a classroom, and the clipboard has a sign-in sheet for parents or students that need to see her when she is off-walkie. We know she is off-walkie because [if we call the principal, her] clerk says that [the principal] is in a classroom. She is able to turn her walkie off and focus on the college and career instruction that she is doing, and then if a parent comes in, she writes their number down, and the expectation is that she gets back to everybody that day. So that system has helped us a lot.

Another participant, Anthony, shared that his beliefs and perceptions of the role and function of his counselors rest solely in ensuring that students were successful in their postsecondary life, which was a goal of the school. Communication around shared roles was important to Anthony, who shared the following:

> I guess have a vision to be in communication with administrators around [the] building – a shared vision for [the] progression of students through a progression plan and providing them with different opportunities, whether it be internships

and an actual program of study that makes sense [or] something that will benefit them when they leave here and go to the next place.

Shared Belief in Interdependency

Participants recognized that it was important for school counselors to be able to perform the aspects of his/her roles independently of the principal to meet the goals of the school. Pat described the following:

My perception about the role and function is I have kind of seen it evolve over the years. When I first became a principal, counselors basically just dealt with children who were misbehaving, or children who were not able to function appropriately in the classroom. Also a major part of their role was to remove children from the classroom [in order] to provide counseling services, sometimes individual, sometimes group counseling, and so I have seen the role evolve into the counselor really being a very visible person in the school and participating with students without necessarily my direction.

Pat went on to share how her past experience has shaped her current beliefs:

I think it is the evolution of schools [from] many years ago [when] we were more compartmentalized, I would say. Counselors had a role. Reading teachers had a role. The classroom teachers had a role, and now everyone shares the responsibility of educating youngsters, and so … the expectations have changed for students and for teachers. I think that is what has led counselors to kind of establish themselves in different ways in the school. And so it [my beliefs] comes from the experiences that I have had over time in education and in my own school experience of administrator.

A few participants (n=3) shared how their perceptions have informed their beliefs and expectations for their counselors to be able to individually engage in counseling practices that are aligned with the goals of the school. Emilye stated, "You know, we really are having some shared expectations around instruction and getting into the classrooms, like implementing The Steps to Respect Program, which targets bullying and prevention, which all connect to that social and emotional and academic components."

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Dan said:

> In the past, the role of the counselor was very limited, and they only dealt with certain students. That was kind of … how they saw themselves and how others saw them too; that was kind of the standard fare for that. Clearly, that is not the option now. The pendulum has swung, and [we are] keeping first and foremost that they hold a licensure, like every teacher does. So, therefore, if they have some information that needs to be not just sent forward to people but be instructionalized to people … we have them going into the classrooms and taking their curriculum, taking the topics they have, whether it be transitioning or work[ing] on something that is more cooperative with students, anti-bullying and all those initiatives…. Whether it be working on decision-making or with children … they are in the classrooms, and they are learning … how to get that message across as a lesson, [with] the end goal being you just need to graduate and go to college, and I am here for [that] end. I am not here to get you through the entire process, which has changed, and I think the key all along now [is] to help get them through that process. That is how I foresee [the change in the role and function] for what is happening with them.

Jack explained:

> Once you have [systems in place] and you have a pretty sustainable building, you need the counselor to deliver a much more multidimensional program, because ... she is doing a ton of teaching right now with college stuff, and it has been great. Kids know much more about college now than [from] 10 months of being at [Hills South] last year. She also is an adjustment [counselor] and a guidance counselor, which again complicates things for her because she has a lot of IEP counselors and things she has to get done. She has groups with students; she does group counseling, sort of designed morning meeting type things, which is important as well. So much like the principal and assistant principal go in different directions, I think the counseling job does, too.

Carol spoke from her direct experiences as a former school counselor and how she has had to work with her counselors to ensure that their individual work supported the collective work of the school, which was improved student achievement. Carol explained how she had to gradually get her counselors to work independently, without needing her direct involvement: "I told my counselors, 'You develop your schedule. You develop what grade you are working on. You develop the kids, and then tell me what program you are using.' And it just is really working beautifully."

Carol went on to share her perspective regarding the expectation her principal had

of her when she was a school counselor:

> There wasn't one thing in that building that I didn't know about, or [one] student
> and their progress; it was really tied into what is the connection between school
> and family and their progress, so when the principal would [ask] what reading
> level [is a student] on, I was able to spit it out because that is what the expectation
> was. Then I would be able to explain it to the parent, so it really just completed
> the circle.

Trust

Participants shared that having an assurance and reliance on the abilities of their

school counselor was informed by their past experiences along with the principals'

beliefs, perceptions, and expectations about the role and function of school counselors.

Tyrone shared how his past experiences informed his hiring practices as well as the

significance of his hiring practices on a very important aspect of his school:

> When I started this school and hiring the counselors, as you know, counselors
> were the first two hires that I made. And with the crew being very [involved] in
> the design of the school, there is a huge investment in all teachers owning the
> responsibility of counselors. And so I think that absolutely, my past experiences
> have made me have [trust] in my counselor hires. The entire school is confident in
> their [the counselors'] abilities.

Two participants, Joyce and Melinda, shared how their past personal and

professional experiences did not lead them to trust the abilities of the school counselor.

According to Joyce,

> If I had listened to my school counselor, I would not have a doctorate today,
> because I don't think she believed that minorities could be successful, and so she
> was busy trying to steer me away from college . . . or [from] taking certain
> courses. So I brought my parents to school. You know [that] unfortunately, that is
> what happens. The [counselor] I have now … always starts every conversation
> with children by telling them how smart they are, and how capable they are, and
> … how bright [their future] could be, but they have to do this, that, and the other.
> He always ends on a positive note, and I find that so refreshing, but that certainly
> was not my experience as a high school student. No, no.

Melinda described how "children seemed to be bitter [because] it didn't feel like the counselors were essential in their quest for high quality education or opportunities or their quest to become productive citizens."

Sonia shared how her background in mental health services informed her and assured her that her counselors are making individual contributions to the goals of the school:

> I do have a background in mental health and know that you are what you believe with yourself and your experience impacts who you are. I felt that as an educator, in order for us as a school to achieve [for students], mental health services need to be available for [students] so that they [students] can access the curriculum. My experience has been [that] no matter how smart a child is, if he or she is encumbered [by] mental health issues, then their access to their education is going to be limited. I expect my counselors to [be] able to assist students in this manner, using school/district resources along with outside resources.

A few (n=3) participants were very explicit in sharing that they had confidence in knowing that the individual practices of their school counselor around student relationships was aligned with their expectations as principals of how those practices should contribute to the school environment. When sharing his individual expectations regarding the role and function of his counselor around student relationships, Jack said:

> My counselor is very active. Also important is student relationships. You can have the world's most highest functioning counselor and then they could not have good relationships with the kids and you would almost trade, just to have one that has good relationships. So that is something I have worked on with the counselor that I have now … especially as she was new and trying to get everything done that she was responsible for getting done. I felt that she wasn't developing the relationship that she still needed to develop, and she just needed a system in place to develop. [So] we put a couple in place, and she since [has] developed them, so the counselor having relationships with the kids is vital.

Two other participants shared their expectations around the access of the counselor to students and counselor visibility as ways to foster positive student relationships. According to Tyrone:

My expectations are that [counselors] work the hallways and they work the cafeteria and … they follow through, and … they can … have honest and sometimes hard conversations with colleagues and with students. My expectations are that they are part of the school-wide conversations, and they are not an island onto themselves, and … they are working as much with kids as classroom teachers are, and … they know kids long before senior year.

Matt said:

Obviously, an integral part is that the [counseling] staff be visible, again be able to relate to all types of children, and be able to relate to all types of parents, and be that conduit between the staff and the families, or at least assist in that kind of relationship.... Most importantly, [counselors should] be there for the kid and make sure every kid knows who their counselor is, and if there is an issue, they can go see them just as readily as [they can go see] a teacher, administrator, parent.

Anthony spoke directly about both his need to trust counselors to have a belief that all students can achieve and his expectations around how he expected his counselors to function to help the school accomplish its goals. He also described what he viewed as counselors who may not fully understand how they contribute to the goals of the school. Anthony said the following of his expectations of counselors:

I would say that they [need to] know their students on their caseload, that they are not going to know all of them perfectly and personally but [they should] have some records and documentations of meetings with them, so [while they] may not know them personally or remember everything, [they] can go somewhere to look and see what [they] have discussed, and [so they need] to have a plan to do that, to keep a schedule. [They also need] to be visible and at the same time not to hold students in [their] office all day and … keep them out of class.... [They also need] to care about the overall well-being of the kids and not to come in with their own beliefs and interpretations about what students can achieve, but to try to push them to the next level wherever they are. So the phrase, "Oh, that kid is not going to go to college," those things are just, you know, I can't take it. [Counselors] need to actually care. And I think caring is really broad, because that can look like different things. Right? A lot of people say they are caring, but I guess it is to expect more or expect the same from every student in the building that they would expect from their own child.

Collective Enterprise

Participants expressed that it was important for the school counselor to be able to share in facilitating the development of initiatives/programs designed to assist the school to meet school improvement goals. A few (n=4) participants shared that the practices of the school counselors supported the role of the principal in ensuring that students were successful academically. Pat said,

> The counselor interfaces with teachers, students, and families on a regular basis, based on needs, and I believe that it's a very important role in the school in that it needs to be nurtured and developed. The counselor is someone that every child sees and every child knows now, not just those few that may go visit the counselor for specific reasons. I think that I would like to see counselors more involved in instruction or more knowledgeable about instruction so that their role is – I don't want to say their role is incomplete now, but it would be more complete if that person really understood how instruction is delivered in the classroom, what the child faces when they have emotional and behavioral challenges, and how difficult it is for the teacher on the other side as well to work through those issues in order to serve the child well [in order] to see that the child does reach proficiency.

Melinda maintained the following:

> My beliefs are again the counselor should be an integral part of student development, student development and developing the whole child, the entire child, how we like to use the whole child but knowing the children, knowing the families, working with the academics personally, develop[ing] interpersonal skills that are going to help the child … be able to navigate these societal road blocks that might be out there. Helping them learn how to overcome challenges [by] utiliz[ing] counselors to solve problems that may interfere with students' success at school. My belief is that counselors offer counseling services (individual and group counseling) that support the academic mission of the school.

Joyce shared that while her expectation was that the role and function of the school counselors would be to work collaboratively with her to facilitate programs to assist students in their achievement, she recognized that such a task may be accomplished in an elementary school with one counselor versus with many counselors in a secondary school.

At the high school level, I have found that when I have a staff of maybe five or six [counselors] . . . [I] find that there are pockets of people who will be more involved in that kind of thing, but here in the small school, it is much easier to do.

Two participants shared that in their experience as an administrator in various schools/settings, the role and function of the school counselor to assist in facilitating programs with the school principal that was aligned to the mission of the school informed not only their current perception and expectation but also the counselor's commitment to supporting the work of the school principal. Jack stated:

My number one experience has been the counselor I have now, because a lot of counselors in the beginning of the year say, "I want to do this, I want to do that," and then once the ball gets going, so many other issues arise that [they] don't get to them. But the counselor I have now stays on me to do these things, so number one has been I have had a counselor who has made it hard for me to neglect what the real roles should be, so that is good.

Considering the "blurred" roles that may occur, Anthony said:

I saw them [counselors] mostly doing the academic stuff and really spen[ding] a lot of time with students at the beginning [of] scheduling. I also saw a lot more activity around scholarships, bringing in colleges, those kinds of things. However, when [counselors] also serve in other roles in the school, such as the union rep, in my experience, it was very blurred in terms of what this person's role was in the school and how that role supported the collective goals of the school. In my opinion, you can't share in working collaboratively with the principal to meet the needs of students if the collective bargaining needs of teachers come first, and it interferes with the counselor's ability to carry out his or her role.

Awareness of the Other's Repertoire

All participants shared that they had an understanding of the specialized training of the school counselor and how that position can support the overall goals of the school. Matt shared his perspective on hiring practices that align with his expectations:

That [my expectations] is vital, and I think that is why it is important to hire the best people. The … students need to be excited to see them, and they can't be afraid of them. They need to know that they are genuine, and they have the kids' best interests at heart, and they are knowledgeable. [But] unfortunately, a lot of

counselors are stuck doing surveys, filling out paperwork, managerial stuff and [cannot] see the students as they should. I think we have had a good change here, especially with the influx of new staff members, and I think five years ago kids had no idea who their counselors were, and nowadays I would be shocked if anyone didn't know who their counselor was. It is important that my counselors are visible and understand that they are professionals with specific skills to help students with their postsecondary options.

When describing his past experiences and perception about his counseling team, Matt said:

They are now in line [working collaboratively with one another]. Four years ago they were not, and that was a big issue for us, and I think we did a really good job of hiring, recruiting new staff members, and now it's 180 degree change. Kids are in the counselor's office, and counselors are meeting with students, and counselors enjoy the students. They are proactively seeking to support them, and the students feel that.

Some participants (n=5) spoke specifically about the role and function along with their expectations based on the specialized training of the counselors and how those skills can assist with helping students achieve academically. Pat stated:

Children are at times challenged just around receiving the instruction and then applying that knowledge in a variety of situations. I think when a child comes to school and there are some emotional pieces that they are bringing with them, it is difficult for them to access the curriculum that is offered, because that is a block that is in front of them, and I think that there is a level of frustration on the part of the teacher and the student when that happens, because the teacher has a mandate to deliver the instruction and engage the child and support them in applying that learning. And when a child has difficulty just acquiring the skill, it becomes a little more challenging for the teacher and the child. As time goes on and it continues, and there is no resolution to whatever those issues are, I think that the level of frustration increases on both sides and that at some point the teacher ends up [also] needing some counseling support, to help them move where they are in their beliefs and in their practice with that youngster in order to be able to open up to different ways of engaging the child. The expertise and skill of the counselor is vital to helping teachers work with students.

According to Sonia,

I feel the role of a school counselor is immensely important because in order for a child to access his or her education, he has to be emotionally healthy. So if the counselor has the skills and is able to tap into the child's emotions and the child

feels trusted – that they trust this person – then the mental health of the [student] will be that when he/she comes to school, he/she can feel that they are able to learn because there is a person there who can help him/her through the process.

When explaining the skill set of the school counselor to respond to an ever-changing school demographic and his expectations for the role and function, Dan shared:

When you look at any school, you know, the students have come forward with greater needs, so we can't remain as we were. That wouldn't service the purpose of anyone, and I look at it clearly this way. If I look at our graduation rate, okay, going on to college, I would say, well, I would have to ask the counselor, "Well, you actually must have a lot of time on your hands because they are not all going, so therefore, we need to do something different then we have done here, which may mean we need to deploy you in some other way." Counselors of course that are coming in now are coming in and [are] much more prepared to take on that role. I want to hire counselors that want to be a counselor, and maybe that is their lifelong ambition to be *the* counselor, you know, within the school.

Anthony shared his perspective regarding allowing counselors to work with students using their specialized skills and his expectations regarding their role and function:

I believe that counselors spend time counseling students academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally, and in previous schools that I have seen them doing a lot of that and in this district, I see a lot of compliance things that are put into their role, like the IEP counseling, some attendance responsibilities in terms of making phone calls, and documentation process.

Dan shared that he has a greater awareness of the role of the school counselor and how it has evolved in experience in the school district:

In my administrative experience and when I taught, there was not any clarity about what counselors do. No one was quite sure what that role had entailed, but you had a guidance counselor, and their job was basically for the most part to process transcripts, do letters of recommendations for colleges for kids, [and] perhaps meet with somebody if they were having an issue too, but nothing too extreme.

A participant who was formally a counselor prior to her administrative experience spoke candidly about her beliefs, perceptions, and experience regarding the role of the

school counselor. Speaking directly to how to utilize school counselors' expertise to meet the needs of students, Carol said:

> I think that they are critical. I think if you don't utilize your counselor effectively, then it's a wasted position. If it's not used in the benefit of academic and emotional achievements for the students, then you should just have another teacher. We have really looked at our counselors as an integral part of the school. They are not disciplinarians [in] any shape or form. They do assist when you say, "Can you get in touch with a parent or coordinate this meeting for me?" So they do some tasky stuff like that, but as far as relationships with students, they are what's bringing the understanding of why a kid is in school, and why it is important for them to achieve, and the focus they are really pushing [is for] teachers to be held responsible for … the kids' progress.

Based on her past experience when she was a counselor, Carol went on to say:

> I think it's the way I had been utilized when I was a counselor. I think it is a little biased there, but actually being an assistant principal and a principal and seeing the effectiveness of how the counselor has been used, I have seen where they [counselors] are just pals [to the principal], and they run for coffee, and they run for this, and they run for that, and you are like, "Oh, my goodness," and I have seen where they are now actually in the classrooms. [But] not when I first started.

> A participant spoke to the distinct need for school counselors to have the skills

and expertise to work broadly in a school. Tyrone stated:

> School counselors … need to design, promote, sustain, and provide positive, social, emotional culture in the school, both among faculty and staff and students. So … good school counselors are often as much there for their colleagues as they are for the students.

Furthermore, when explaining why such expertise is important, Tyrone said, "Counselors need to be responsible for helping students and families understand and navigate and advocate for themselves within the academic program. They are responsible for helping kids connect to what they may be doing in the future."

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Purposeful and Focused Collaboration

Participants shared that there was an expectation regarding the role and function of the school counselor to be able to engage with principals and collaborate around the specific goals and strategies to meet school goals. Several participants (n=8) shared that it was their expectation that counselors be able to collaborate with them around ensuring that the needs of the students were met so that students were able to improve their academic performance. This entailed counselors being able to understand the needs and to be able to contribute and respond accordingly. Some examples follow, beginning with Joyce.

> I think it is vital. I think that in order for students to be successful, they need to have all of their needs met. But not all of them are academic, and teachers tend to want to only be involved with academic issues, but the counselor gets a wealth of information about how children function [and] what affects them. If [students] are worried about something, they are likely to talk about that to the counselor, so we can work with that and work into how they are responding, whether it's academically or on the playground or wherever it is, and I think to try and separate that would be a huge mistake. The goals are the same. They need to talk about assessments. They need to talk about standards. They need to talk about the goals that students have for themselves, whether it is … to go to college, to get to high school, to be successful, wherever it is in the careers and society at large. So their role is just huge as a part of the school.

Melinda shared the following:

> I think … my experience with counselors and counseling over the years … have caused me to be very demanding. I am very demanding with my counselor in that counseling needs to make a difference. A counselor needs to make a difference in the life of a child or children, and they need to make a difference in their lives in school, so the counselor's role, as I see it, is if the counselor is effective [we] will have some evidence [that] he or she has made an impact. We are not going to get to every child, save every child, but you have to have some evidence that you are doing work that is meaningful, that is going to help someone, that is going to inspire someone, so that counselor should have a legacy of one of hope for the children. [A] counselor needs to go out of his or her way to help the child in every single facet of their lives. They need to know them. Accept no excuses for children, you know, encourage if they need to be encouraged, rather than accept

excuses for their failures, and [instead] help them, prevent them from taking the wrong path in life.

Vivian shared that in her experience working collectively with a counselor in looking at the school's progress toward meeting goals is the role and function of the school counselor. "The importance of having that counseling support system in place as needed is just critical to addressing issues related to achievement."

Another participant shared that her beliefs and expectations for her counselor were to be able to respond to the educational landscape to ensure that students graduated from high school with the skills necessary to be successful in the future. When sharing her expectations regarding relevant strategizing with her counselor around the academic goals of her school, Emilye said:

> Well, I think as we are learning more of what the 21st century skills are and how they are really being driven to us by the business community, not just in the Springfield area but nationally, globally, that we are not competing … like we used to compete nationally in addition to the global economy. I think the message has been given to us by the business community that our students are coming out, and they are not college- and career-ready, and you know, what are we going to do at the ground level and [during] the fundamental years to improve that? And then have that conversation with kids about college. What is college? What does it look like? What does it sound like? What are the expectations? How do you align your resources? And you know, really taking a look at what your strengths are, what do you want to be when you grow up, and that it is important to be a contributing citizen of the nation or of the city. And I think because of those outside expectations, they have drilled themselves down, and the message has been very clear as to what our roles and responsibilities have been or at least are to help students be successful. And you know, we are seeing in society that there are a lot more social/emotional issues that are coming out in terms of students and their needs. We are seeing that in a greater number than we have before. I expect my counselor to be able to assist with school goals around college and career readiness, as well as be able to assist with ensuring that social/emotional needs are met to help us reach our goals. Counselors and principals must be focused in their collaboration so that you have those resources aligned in order for students to be successful and also for parents to be successful. Having meaningful and focused opportunities to collaborate with my counselor ensures that we implement strategies to help families have access to resources that are going to help them not

just today, but in middle school and in high school. [We are] just really trying to frame that foundation.

Tyrone shared how he leverages internal and external resources when collaborating around specific school goals:

> A small group of us, you know a couple of counselors, myself, our assistant principal and … an outside kind of person who is working with the school to really help create this, [we] kind of see change and expectations the kids had for themselves and the experiences kids had to see themselves beyond [their] personal circumstances and that left a huge imprint, you know, on the [importance] of if you have killer counselors, you can change kids' lives, and if you have shit for counselors, you know, things just get worse.

Participants (n=3) shared the significance of the role and function of the school counselor when there are expectations regarding the counselor working collaboratively with the principal to meet school goals. Some participants (n=5) shared their perspectives about working with their counselor as a member of their team. Matt noted how he has experienced

> learning, and seeing the benefit of when it does operate properly, and seeing the cost when it doesn't, and so I think just seeing it firsthand really solidifies my belief in the proper principal-counselor relationship and how this collaboration can help the two work toward common goals.

Two other participants shared that having mutual intentions have shaped their expectations of the role and function of their counselor. Carol said:

> It is important to be on the same page, but more so because I am not sure that [counselors] were confident that I knew where I wanted to go with the goals of the school and how each person contributes to it. So I think that I have a great … working relationship with the counselors. I think I am clear on what the expectations are, and in return, they are clear to me on how they want to roll that out, which then makes it clear for the teachers, and then we all seem to be on the same page.

Emilye shared very similar sentiments about being on the "same page" when it comes to the goals of the school:

It is important for the counselor to understand what are our goals, how they will be achieved, and our progress toward achieving them. So, for example, we have two interns this year. Last year we had one intern. Now we have two interns who are working with students, and they are seeing that college career readiness embedded in the school. There is also the communication team, which serves as our problem-solving [group]. We use it for teachers to solve problems in a positive way, seeing staff members as leaders [who are] able to solve problems themselves, and the avenues to make that happen, in addition to the college and career readiness components, you know, taking kids on a college field trip and promoting the college aspects here at school. It is the expectation for the counselor to be involved and for the school to see her role as important to meeting our goals around college and career awareness.

Carol shared that her expectation around the role and function of her counselor was for her counselor to be able to connect how the academic and social-emotional needs of students were very much a part of the bigger picture when looking at school improvement.

There is all this academic stuff, but then we also do this outreach around the family needs in the community, the emotional part, so all of these components kind of balance all that for the school, and the counselor kind of directs us how we should be dealing with it to meet our school goals.

Two participants shared that there are times when, despite having expectations regarding the role and function of counselors, it can be difficult to work collaboratively around school goals when the counselor(s) may not share the same beliefs. Sonia said, "Counselors, they are all at different levels, and they buy into that belief system differently, so that is a struggle for me," while Vivian observed the following:

Two of the three counselors share the exact same beliefs as I do, and it is sort of difficult when one doesn't and is a little bit old school in their line of thinking. But I am not going to waver, and what is going to have to happen has to happen because their job is too important to our goals as a school.

Three participants shared that their expectations included working with their counselor collaboratively as a team and making children a priority. More specifically, these participants spoke to the old paradigm of school counselors in their offices doing

paperwork rather than a more transformed school counselor by working collaboratively

with a school team and providing direct services to students. For example, Sonia said:

> [Teamwork] is really critical for me. That is why with any counselor that I work
> with, we work as a team. They can't just sit in their office and do paperwork. It is
> collaboration with teams, collaboration with the staff, whomever, or the child's
> outside worker to make sure we mesh to help this child.

Vivian said, "Kids are first. Kids are first and foremost, and if we are late with our

paperwork, 'Sorry.' If there is a kid in crisis, that takes priority over everything."

Pat shared that she adjusts her level of collaboration with her counselor to align

with her expectation depending on the needs of her counselors.

> I think that I act upon what I see and what I think, and I am always changing,
> depending upon what the needs are. I always interacted with my school
> counselors, even from the beginning, and I try to make the time to do
> consultations with them, so I am aware what is going on with the youngsters as
> well as they are. I try to create opportunities for us to have communication
> regularly, so I think that my beliefs and perceptions compare accurately to the
> way that I behave. By doing this, I am able to ensure that we are working
> collaboratively around common goals.

When asked how she consults and collaborates with her counselors, Pat said:

> Sometimes our meetings are scheduled, and sometimes they are on the spot. Our
> regularly scheduled meetings are clearly focused on how we are progressing
> toward meeting school goals and the strategies the counselor is using to help meet
> those goals. Strategies include meeting with students individually and in groups,
> meeting and collaborating with grade level teachers, and any other initiatives [or]
> programs that may be in place to support school improvement goals. We meet on
> the spot when there are matters that arise to the level of a more immediate need
> for collaboration [and] when it may appear that we need to revisit a strategy or
> intervention that may not be working as planned.

When asked how she creates other opportunities for regular collaboration, Pat replied, "I

am easily accessible to my counselor. He is a key member of my team. We must have

opportunities to ensure that we are offering a learning environment where we are making

progress toward meeting our school improvement goals."

A participant stated that in collaborating with her counselor, she stressed the importance of looking at the services the counselor is delivering and how the practices of her counselor aligned with her expectations around collaboration on common goals. When asked about her beliefs and expectations around this, Emilye responded:

> That is a good question. I think my beliefs are more of the experiences, my expectation is … we need to be having conversations with children around Steps to Respect, and that is executed. If I have expectations around how we are promoting career and college readiness, those expectations are achieved. So I think having the same vision and mission and goal for student achievement and having a staff member that also has that same mission and vision makes those expectations reality, and … I think we are on the same page.

When Emilye was asked what makes her feel that she and her counselors are on the same page, she said, "We share the same thoughts and ideas around what our students need and how we will get there to meet our goals for student achievement."

Another principal shared how his overall expectation around school culture and climate shaped the level of collaboration and expectations he has for his counselors. When sharing the level of collaboration expected from his counselors, Dan said:

> It entails the instructional aspects of the school, being supportive, whatever it might be, and … every single one in the building is expected to do that. "I expect you to behave yourself. You need to work cooperatively with people." We are here together, and we work as a family and support each other and in doing so, hopefully that transfers to the community and the kids that are here.

One participant reflected on his experiences over the years in the district he works in regarding the expectations for the role and function of school counselors. When asked about how his beliefs and perceptions informed his current expectations around the role and function of school counselors, Jack replied:

> The biggest difference here – and I don't think it's my counselor, I think it is city-wide – [is] a rebirth of the dedication to doing the different components [foundation, delivery, management, and accountability systems] of the model, but certainly the counselor here has stuck to the different components more than most

of those that I have had in the past, [although] it wasn't to the fault of the people I have had in the past, it was just there is a lot going on. I have worked with some great counselors as I am sure you know, and I think one thing that has helped is that here we have a nice school with 290 kids, and I believe we have a good admin team, we have a great teaching team, and I just think we are able to go deeper with some stuff because of all the components we have in place. Doesn't mean we don't have crazy days, but … I think as much as my counselor has pressed me to make sure we push this model, I think the environment she is in has allowed her to have time to push that model, too.

Stretched Leadership

The ability for school counselors to share in leadership tasks and practices to improve student achievement was important. A few participants (n=4) shared that their beliefs and expectations of school counselors included the school counselor's ability to share and engage in leadership duties to assist in meeting the goals of the school. Melinda shared her expectation that counselors assume some leadership in assuring that students have the tools needed to be successful in school and that counselors need to be able to provide a range of services designed to facilitate this development.

> My expectation is that counselors are … providing counseling services to children and families and that counselors know how to navigate the system [educational and community agencies] to help provide children with the resources they may need to help them be successful in school and in life. So my expectation is that counselors are immersed in every facet of children's lives and the family. I share with my counselor [that] unless you know the family, you don't really know the child. But I just think that counselors need to see themselves as leaders … in this journey to provide high quality educational pathways for students. They need to be able to help them to chart their journeys.

Jack said that his counselor needed to have both a repertoire of skills to be responsive to the needs of the school and the leadership capacity needed by a school counselor.

> I have worked in three middle schools now, and you just realize how you have to hit the kids from so many different angles and just hope that one of the

relationships catches. And there is just counseling, instruction, and different classes, and there [are] different incentives and college and career-ready stuff, and there [are] programs from the outside, there is mentoring, and it is sort of the more darts you can throw at the dart board, the better chance you have of something to stick. [So] for you to have a successful school,… the counselor plays a big role in that, and engaging community programs to come in as much as the mentoring, as well as providing her own instruction and multidimensional leadership within the building for the students.

This section outlined the beliefs and expectations regarding the role and function of school counselors through the lens of school principals. It was important to hear the perspectives of the principals in this area in light of what the literature states regarding role ambiguity and the ever-evolving role of school counselors. The next section examines the principal's perception of school counselor effectiveness. This is also important to consider in examining how school principals view the effectiveness of school counselor practices in improving school goals.

Principals' Perceptions and Expectations Regarding School Counselor Effectiveness and Use of Data

To explore the principals' perception of school counselor effectiveness, it is important to investigate the principal's expectations of their counselors' use of data and commitment to accountability. The following section provides examples of how the principals' perceived the effectiveness of their school counselor and how the way of work between the principal and the school counselor may lead to greater effectiveness in the school counselor practices.

Mutual Value

Having value for the school counselor's job responsibilities, tasks, and contributions to the school using data to determine effectiveness was not an area where participants expressed assurance. Two participants shared their perspectives regarding the effectiveness of their counselor's contributions to the school and its educational mission. When Pat was asked if the practices of her school counselor had an impact on the goals of the school, she responded, "That's an interesting question, I don't know [that] it [her practices] has any impact." To the contrary, another participant shared that the responsibilities of her counselor impacted student outcomes. Joyce said:

> Well, if kids are learning, you see the results. If they are not learning, we don't see the results. So basically, you know, he is a vital part of this team, and that is how counselors have to see themselves. I think for too long people thought teachers are here and counselors are there and never the two should meet, but it is not that way, especially in this day and age when there are so many emotional needs. And I think the more support students have, whether they get it from their natural associations or through the skills or information that they provide for them so that they become change agents for the school, and for kids to get a variety of information, whether it's college-ready or career-ready, whatever it is, counselors play an integral part. I really believe that.

Open and Reflective Communication

When the question regarding the principals' perception of school counselors' effectiveness was asked, none of the participants indicated that communication was instrumental in determining the effectiveness of school counselors. Participants said that the tasks of counselors were more significant than communication. The next element provides some examples of this.

Shared Belief in Interdependency

When exploring how principals and counselors work independently to accomplish the goals of the school, few (n=4) participants said that these goals could not be accomplished without their counselor. Participants were asked to share how their counselor uses data to determine the effectiveness of their practices. Few participants (n=3) said that they cannot make progress toward improving the academic performance of students without their counselors, which was specifically focused on school improvement goals. When asked how their counselor would use data to determine their effectiveness, Tyrone said:

> We would use data to track how well our curriculum is…. [H]ow is our experience preparing kids for college and work? How good a job is our school doing preparing kids for high stakes exam stuff? Not just MCAS but ACTs and SAT and AP. Those are the kinds of things that matter outside of our walls. So data would inform that, and I would want to know which teachers are giving an unusually high number of failing marks and … that would be good data to have … in terms of where are our kids in completing the college process.

Vivian stated the following:

> We have three priorities. The first priority is, of course, instruction and curriculum and assessment. The second priority is building an effective school culture so that is where the counselor's role comes in. [The third priority is that it] is really, really important that they are working with the kids on anger management and the transition into middle school.

Sonia acknowledged that a discussion had not directly explored how her counselor uses data to determine effectiveness of their practices:

> That is a very good point. We still haven't discussed that yet, because we are still gathering data and trying to get kids in counseling and put it together, but I would say effectiveness, and I will talk about it next counseling meeting I have, is if the child succeeds, if he is able to go on to the next grade, or if the child has emotional issues and he is able to access his learning academically, more frequently as before. You can see there is less disciplinary issues than before and those are the ways to say, "Okay, I am being successful." So that is a very good question to ask: how to know if we are being successful. I like that question.

Trust

When exploring the principals' perception regarding the effectiveness of school counselors, issues around trust in the counselors' ability to use data and make decisions based on the data were evident. Principals expressed that the capacity of the school counselors' ability to engage with data to make informed decisions contributes to the school's mission. When asked what kind of data her counselor uses, Pat said:

> Now, that is interesting. I think it would depend upon the kind of data. I am not so sure that my counselor would. I think that she understands achievement data and assessment data. I am not quite so sure if she knows what to do with it…. If she understood the assessment data, she might want to know more about the instructional piece, and lately she has asked about participating in instruction, but I am not quite sure if she understands that connection yet. So I don't want somebody that doesn't have an academic background working with students on those issues, because clearly there are ways that we provide instruction, and you have to, you need to know what you are doing. So that is an interesting question. So I am not really sure how she would use data.

When discussing the impact of her counselor's practices on school improvement goals, Pat said, "[I] would like to see more prevention type of work. I think that she does some, but I would like to see more. More active presence."

Another participant had very clear expectations for her school counselor to use data. It was important to this principal that the counselor use data to determine effectiveness; however, the principal was not confident that the counselor had the skills and motivation to do this. Melinda stated:

> My counselor is expected to be immersed in the data. We had a conversation where what I said to her, what I shared was, "I expect that you know what the data are telling us about students and learning. You need to be able to utilize this data, identify those students who are at risk of our deficiencies, of perhaps not doing well, and then you need to know how you can help and support them. So you need to know the data, but not just the data, [you need to] utilize that data to make a difference for the struggling learners and to make a difference for those who are advanced learners [and consider] what else can we offer our students and you need to be a part of that."

Melinda went on to say:

> Our counselor needs to utilize that data, again, to identify those children who need the core plus more, identify those children who may be at risk of falling behind for his or her grade level, so the counselor needs to be immersed in that, develop success plans for them, work closely with the children [and] teacher, and monitor their academic progress. So that is heavy duty, and I am not sure [that] in the past counselors would see themselves as being accountable for the academic success of students or [would be] reviewing the data, utilizing the data and asking that very question that you have asked. Okay. How do you use this data? Now you see it, now what? And so what?

When Melinda was asked how her counselor determines the effectiveness of her

practices, she said:

> I am not sure that my counselor has really thought about that, other than when I asked her the question…. I asked her [whether] in her position as a counselor is she making a difference and or what difference her position/being in that position has made. Could we or could we not be successful with the counselor, and how important is *her* role, and I am saying *her,* but it could be he. Gender specific.

When asked if her counselor could answer how she determines her effectiveness,

Melinda replied:

> Well, my counselor was not able to answer that in a/the way I thought a counselor should answer that question. My expectation would be, "Yes, I see myself as a valuable person in this arena. No, you could not do [it] without me. I make a difference with the children, [and] the children certainly need me." I would expect it to be very positive and that the counselor would be able to answer that right away, especially if the principal is saying to you, "Does your role make a difference?"

This researcher asked Melinda if she feels that her counselor understands what

she (the principal) means when she is asked about her impact and effectiveness on

improving school goals.

> I am not sure that the counselors, in general, know how to respond to that, because I think they believe if they are sitting and having small groups of children sitting before them and have one or two children … in a conversation that they are being effective. So I am not sure that they do [know how to respond], because my questions would be, "How many home visits have you conducted? How have you addressed the students that appear in the DEWS system? What plan do you have

in place? What is the time line? What is the outcome and what evidence will you have that you have made a difference?" So I am not sure that counselors in general would be able to, would say some of those things in terms of being effective. I think they might say, "Yes, I have [a] good relationship with the children, or when they come to me for discipline, I am able to talk to them." But the counselor's role is not for discipline; it is actually to help children evolve into responsible young people who will become responsible adults, and [to] help them chart a course or a path and help them see a vision, the future, and how we get there, and help them understand the meaning of goals and future, and what does that mean.

Melinda went on to share her perspective about how the counselors can facilitate goal setting with students around improving academically to increase their postsecondary success based on school improvement goals, stating:

I think counselors should be able to articulate that to students and help them understand what that [goal setting] means and the purpose of schooling. So we had that conversation with my teachers and counselors in terms of as adults, as a school, as a district [we] have goals. And we have our school's vision. But do the children really understand the goal and the vision? Do they have their own goals and visions, and if they have goals, what are they? How is my goal going to help you realize your vision and your goal? And first of all, I think it is important that counselors know the vision of the children. You know, ask them something as simple as, "Okay, where do you want to be 10 years from now? Okay, what is your goal? What is your plan? How are we going to get there?" So we have implemented a student-friendly mission statement with the goals of the school. I had hoped that my counselor would take a lead role in that, but it worked out okay. The lead role [would mean] understanding that children need to know their purpose, [to] help children set goals. I think that is a big piece that is missing with our counselors, [and] I am not sure they see themselves as an integral person, helping students set goals and then determine a path or plan for reaching those goals. I think that more children would be successful if in fact they had a vision, there were goals, and then there was a plan for helping them meet the goals. The children's data would impact the dropout rate. They [parents] send the children to school, and half of them wouldn't even get to high school. [They] don't know how to reach their goals. What are your goals? [Children] don't know. "Okay, why do you go to school?" They don't know. But we have these great visions that we write … for the future. We have these great mission statements, but then in the big picture, children don't understand them unless we help them to process and understand [them,] and I think that counselors can do a lot with that.

When Melinda was asked to describe how her counselor uses of data to impact school improvement goals, she said:

To be truthful, our counselor works with a team when we are analyzing the data. I have her immersed in and understanding the data. I am not quite sure it is impacting student achievement right now. I will have to wait for the outcome. I have asked the counselor to identify a group, particularly from our sub-group [students that share the same classification] for a counseling group intervention, which she will be responsible to follow from beginning to end, based upon the data. And so we are waiting to see what the outcome will be – that is achievement data on the subgroup. Are you tutoring anyone? Identify a group of children who may need some small group tutoring. Are you working with specific families relevant to academic achievement for their children? So the counselor is really important and has to be a part of everything so [that] everyone is on the same page [and] it's just not the teacher's issue, it's everybody issue. But you have to be responsible for helping children based upon data – who have you identified, and how are you going to help them, and let's see what the outcome will be.

Two participants shared some confidence in their counselor's abilities and skills

to use data to determine their effectiveness. Joyce explained:

I think he gauges it [his effectiveness] by our school. He feels as if our school is under control. He always says our students cannot learn in chaos, so because of that, he works really very hard to make sure this is a place where student learning can take place and where teaching can take place, and I think that is how he gauges his effectiveness by [whether] kids are not constantly being thrown out of classrooms. As a matter of fact, he wants to go to the classroom to work through it rather than removing the kid. So I think that is how he gauges it.

Jack shared that if a particular data element requires revisiting, his expectation is that his

counselor is able to intervene accordingly.

Whatever she [his counselor] is working on, she is very good at using [data]. If she has to report on her counseling services, she [my counselor] has to share her [counselor] efforts, she [counselor] can share her data on what she is working on, and what she is doing with students. Everybody in education is using data to make decisions to determine what should be done differently to make improvements or change. So that is where she [my counselor] is running into challenges, understandably. So she will look at some data, set a goal, make a plan, but then it takes time to look at that data, and like everybody knows, time and the data in middle school is of the essence; so ideally she would go back to it [and] see if it has improved. So, for example, attendance – if she looks at student attendance and says, "I am going to address that with these 10 students, and I am going to start calling home more often, and I am going to implement the attendance plan with more fidelity."

When Jack was specifically asked about the effectiveness of his counselor's practices, he

replied:

> She has moved this year to pre- and post-tests, and we brought her Survey
> Monkey so she has been doing college lessons, and then she is going to move into
> career lessons. So she gives a survey before she does the class on Survey Monkey,
> and then she does the post-test, so [it's] pre-test and post-test. You could walk up
> to her right now, and she could tell you by grade what improvement there was in
> college understanding based on her lesson, so that was a great way to do it. As far
> as bigger data like DEWS and attendance, it's just that dedicating yourself to
> looking at it again. Another piece of data she started to look at is office referrals,
> especially with kids she is looking at in groups – [for example,] are they coming
> to the office less.

Anthony shared his expectation that counselors should be able to establish a

process where their effectiveness can be determined.

> I am trying to get the counselors to move to that process [looking at effectiveness]
> as well, and to really look and analyze their schedules and see where most of their
> time is going, and [then] adjust based on priorities and goals,… and then to be
> able to look at student data, to look at a student's data, even if you have five
> students and say these are the students I am going to spend time with and be able
> to chart their growth over time. If you have a caseload, especially in the case of
> grad coaches, then you are able to see your effectiveness based on whether or not
> that student is improving.

Some participants (n=5) shared how their counselors use data to determine the

effectiveness of their practices, with Carol saying:

> That is a tough one. We have actually talked about that, especially with the new
> eval. I think that I am not sure I have the answer to that. I think that is something
> that will come as the year goes on. There are certain kids [and about them we
> ask], "Are we able to move them? Are we able to get their family engaged and out
> in the community?" But I think that is almost like a year-to-year thing, and … I
> don't know if we look at it as, "How many times is a kid being sent out of the
> classroom and all that technical stuff," which is kind of like the day-to-day
> information that we need – you can view it there – but I think that for the
> counselor, it is a bigger picture. You know because anyone can help someone
> keep someone in a classroom for learning, but what is the impact on-going? Does
> it carry over from month to month, from day to day? Will it carry over to next
> year? Like what is that connection? And I think time will only [tell] whether or
> not they were effective. [With] the day-to-day stuff is easier to see their
> effectiveness.Vivian also offered this perspective:

Wow. That is a really good question. It is hard because that would be soft data. You know that would be seeing the student happy, seeing the student smile, seeing the student say they are doing better now as opposed to [the counselor] sees the student able to do conflict resolution and problem-solving in a more effective manner. And being able to handle their [students'] anger and count to 10 or use a stress ball instead of, you know, punching their friend in the head because they got mad at them. There is that sort of observational data and then there is, like I said, if we start seeing those grades go back up, or we start seeing the attendance getting better again, and we start seeing the tardiness decrease. You know I hate to say it, but the students start to chat. [For example] there is a girl who eats lunch because we know we have girls that don't eat because they think they shouldn't. So there is the observational data, and it is hard, it's hard to really, really measure effectiveness for a counselor.

Collective Enterprise

Working collaboratively with their school counselors to implement programs to support the goals of the school is important to some participants. Some participants (n=6) acknowledged that a counselor's facilitating activities that support school improvement goals was important. These participants shared that it was important for counselors to use relevant school-based data to determine counselors' effectiveness.

Participants were asked to share examples of the school-level data a counselor would use. Anthony said, "Course failure rates, grades in classes. Attendance data, different data that might come as a result of assessments and even assessment data as a team." He went on to say, "The teams that we have now, the counselors would sit on those teams and go to those team meetings, and so I guess it would be as informative to them if we have all of our incoming eighth graders."

Pat shared that although her counselor participates in school-based teams where data are being shared, she had reservations about her counselor's capacity to understand how the data informs instructional practices:

She [her counselor] does participate in our school-wide assessment data analysis opportunities, and I think she appreciates what she sees about the students. She questions, she is able to go into classrooms and observe youngsters and see the connection between stabilizing emotionality and behavior and how it impacts the data. I am not so sure she really understands the instructional piece.

Emilye shared the following when asked about the type of data the counselor utilizes:

That is a good question. I think now that I have been here for four years and have a good sense of the school and the culture and the climate of the schools more specifically, you know, looking at students that were more in that red zone, kids that were those five percenters and how we have moved them down into the yellow or the green. So, it's easy to say globally, because things move and kids move and things change, but taking a look at the number of kids that we have in those areas and what were we doing specifically to target those behaviors to reduce the number of kids that are flaring into crisis. So you know, that is something that I think can be explored, and we have had a lot of informal conversations about really compiling the data around 2010. What were the number of crisis incidents? What were the number of office referrals? What was the number of suspensions, you know and correlating that into attendance. Those I think are some really significant and concrete examples of an impact, an impact over time and we are seeing a shift in those things which is really exciting.

Anthony noted that the work of the counselor is beyond being passionate about the work:

Someone can be very passionate and have a vision for education [that] does not align with the school goals and mission and take us off track, and even if it's taking us off track, even if that vision is in the right direction by itself, it's taken the entire car off track, and the whole car is going off road. So I think the key is having everyone on the same page, same missions, and same directions and using that passion all going in that same direction.

Awareness of the Other's Repertoire

In exploring the principals' perception regarding school counselor effectiveness, none of the participants interviewed mentioned the expertise of the school counselor, job description, or training as being important in determining the effectiveness of their counselor. This finding could be a result of the limited focused discourse around how to

train principals and school counselors to understand each other's roles and

responsibilities.

Purposeful and Focused Collaboration

Participants shared that collaborating with counselors with specific intentions

around meeting a school goal was important. Some participants (n=5) shared that having

their counselor on a team that analyzed and reviewed relevant school data to meet school

goals ensured that counselors were sharing in the same outcomes. Joyce said the

following:

> My counselor is part of the team where we analyze data, so he has input, and we
> sit down and look at the reasons why students are not performing the way they
> should be. He is part of all of that, and so when he talks to kids, he can use that
> data in redirecting that behavior or whatever it is, and it is amazing sometimes to
> watch … how tactfully he gets them to see, "If you do well here, then this can
> happen, that can happen," or he might start to talk to them about their plans for [a]
> career. "Where are you planning to go, and do you understand [that] if you are
> going to be a police officer, you need to write? Do you understand if you want to
> be a doctor, you need to write?" and then he shows them ways, and I get in on the
> conversation, and so having that knowledge, he is able to guide the outcomes for
> them as well.

Emilye shared that her counselor is a member of the school's instructional team,

and they collaborate regarding improving various data elements.

> We use data, or the counselor looks at data ongoing. She pulls the attendance
> Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays and looks for students that are out often –
> students [who] are having difficulties – and problem solving around some of those
> behavioral issues and things that we are seeing in that data. As a member of the
> Instructional Leadership Team, she sits on the team where we look at the data in
> terms of our student achievement, our Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment
> System data, and [she] has conversations in terms of things that we can do to
> heighten those results and make things better for the students in terms of that, so
> we are constantly looking at data.

In sharing her perception around the counselor's use of data, Emilye said:

Data [are] taken into everything we do. If we have a lot of students that are not here, that is going to impact attendance, which also impacts academics, so everything kind of correlates, and she [the counselor] has been on many different teams or committees to develop specific strategies to improve student learning.

Furthermore, Emilye shared that as a result of working collaboratively with others to improve the academic performance of the school. "My counselor is able to participate in problem solving and creat[ing] action plans."

Many participants (n=8) shared that having their school counselor actively engaged with the overall goals of the school and the role they have in helping the school meet such goals was important. Looking specifically at data and determining the effectiveness of their counseling practices was also important.

Concerning the topic of collaborating around data to improve student outcomes, Sonia said that counselors "are connected and interconnected around what we need to do as a school, and then what everybody's role and responsibility is to do independently or individually to impact those things." Dan shared the process that is used with his counselors to establish the counselor's goals for the year based on the goals of the school:

> Annually we have to sit down because there is this wonderful form we have to complete that asks what percentage of time we devote to certain areas. There is the recommended time and the realistic time, [and] we look at that. They are very serious about that here in this building.... So when we sit down with them and say that we have to do goal-setting based on our SIP, I get to meet with them, but I put them on a special team – grade-level teams – in the goal-setting process. We have a bunch of different teams here, so there is a Pre-K team all the way to [a] Grade Five team. Every team has goals, including non-classroom staff. I meet with them [the teams] and talk about what everyone [needs to] do to support all of these other people in the classroom, specifically … the things they have said they need support with and that would include their goals."

Sharing similar thoughts as Dan, Carol said:

> We have goals, and they [counselors] are responsible for collecting some of the data, which I don't have, but when they present it to me, it helps me in a roundabout way hold teachers accountable to look at this as our bigger goal. If

you are not doing your part, how is this going to impact our school as a whole? So I think that is kind of an indirect way that benefits us that no one ever really thought about. [For instance], I don't think the teachers ever really thought they had to care whether they had the data for the counselors, [but] now they had to worry about whether they have it and how it reflects on them, which then ultimately reflects whether or not whatever we are looking at is affecting the students."

Participants were asked what their counselor does with the data. Those in the majority (n=9) shared that their counselor used various kinds of data elements to collaborate, share in decision-making, and implement interventions/strategies.

Four participants shared how the focus in the school district is to act on data to improve instruction and how data has become central to how principals lead and make decisions to improve student learning. This approach has allowed principals to include non-instructional staff in the collaboration. One principal shared how her counselors have used data to implement an initiative or program that is aligned to the goals of the school as well as her expectation for them to be familiar with the data. When asked how her counselors use data, Carol said:

> Oh, well, that is interesting, because we have one counselor that is data-driven completely [laughs], and the other one who knows [the data] but, like, doesn't flash it the way that she should. I think they need to use the data on whatever initiative they are working on. Right now, we are working on daily reading and nightly reading, collecting logs, and all that stuff. What teachers are participating? The data just says it right then and there who is encouraging their students to participate. They use it around attendance. They use data for attendance. They use data for, you know, like preparing for staff meetings and stuff like that. Like what does all this data mean really at a point where they are starting to interpret it and really know what the teachers know? I think they always felt themselves different. I think they are starting to realize [that] no, you are the same. You need to know this information, you need to know the standards, you need to know the new common core stuff there so all that data are coming in, and they are actively involved in our Achievement Network [ANET] data, you know, breaking down that data, breaking down the unwrapping [of] all those standards. They are connected to a grade level, to a group of teachers so when we get into our data meetings they immediately go there with their stuff, and then how do you transfer

that data information to other kids that aren't in that group but that you need to be responsible for? Special Education, the whole bit.

Two participants shared how the district's emphasis on data has been instrumental in making connections between the practices of the school counselors and the needs of the schools. When another participant was asked how her counselors use data, it was shared that not all of her counselors have welcomed the use of data to inform their practices as counselors. Sonia responded as follows:

> Well, this is really interesting because now we are in a data environment, and let's say some of my counselors are embracing it, because at some of my meetings we talk about data. When we talk about the student's success plan, we have to look at data. When we have to look at students who are suspended, we have to look at data because they are embracing it and working with it. And so it is coming to fruition now, because this is the day [when] everything is dictated by data, and this is the day that everything goes by this data.

Vivian shared how the data has facilitated conversations with her team to inform their understanding of student learning.

> We have become a hugely data-driven district, which is great…. We know what students are getting into trouble, if they are getting into trouble at certain times, if it is the same student getting into trouble over and over again. We have our attendance data and … the counselors are looking for patterns. If a student is getting a referral or getting in trouble in Social Studies every single time he or she is in Social Studies, the counselor needs to step in and work with the Social Studies teacher and find out why. If we all of a sudden see a student coming in late repeatedly, we have attendance meetings over and over again on a weekly basis, and they make phone calls, and they say, "Okay, is something going on? Why is this student late or absent?" and all of a sudden their attendance drops. If there is a drop in their grades, if a student is an A/B student and all of a sudden we are seeing C and D and F, red flags go up. We have 700 students, and we can't always be there, but if the data are there, then we [need] to look for those flags.

Pat shared how the use of the data the counselor collected around instructional strategies for students informed her that interventions and strategies were not being implemented with fidelity.

My counselor collects data around interventions and support systems. Last year she did post some data around Student Teacher Assistance Team [STAT] referrals, which was an eye-opener to a lot of folks because they didn't realize how many young folks they were referring to STAT and that it really wasn't changing what was happening in their classroom if they were not implementing strategies that were suggested.

Some participants (n=5) stated what their counselor does with the data to support the goals of the schools. What the counselors achieve based on the data is done in collaboration with others to ensure that strategies, interventions, and plans are relevant to the needs of the students as well as the school. For example, when Dan was asked what his counselors use the data to accomplish, he said, "I think they use data for a lot of things," and then elaborated:

> They [counselors] are going to look at the data, clearly; we look to see, you know, what are the achievements of the child, and data can also be providing not just an assessment that you are giving but also a, you know, behavioral, intervention plan. It could be a functional behavioral assessment that you are doing on the child, so all that is data to review. It's part of making a decision on how we are going to help a child.

Dan went on to share the following:

> Well, I think one of the ways we use the data are to develop plans for children, you know, trying to improve, whether it be academically or are we looking at a child who, hopefully, isn't in need of an intervention. I would start that. Is this the correct intervention? Do we need a double intervention with the child? Is it a child that needs services from outside? Because we are looking at some scales with a child coming in who may need some other assistance, not necessarily in the building, but outside. They are the ones who have coordinated our association with the agency that now services kids here in our school. So there are tremendous things they have done with our data for students, whether it be academically or social and emotionally. It is interesting to see this. One of the greatest pleasures I have with them is they are coming because they know from past training that they come in with how to help students socially/emotionally, and they want to be able to help academically, so one of the key aspects when we are going in to evaluate is they want to know the process, they want to know, how do I become a better teacher? You know, at least here I can say that, and so I have talked with them about it what is the basic construct of the lesson. You know you are going to start off with your activator, and you are going to do the same thing we do in every other classroom. You are going to have your point in which you

have your instruction, and they are going to have to listen to you and model what it is that you expect. Assess and guided practice and you are going to, you know, guide them through what they need to do and summarize and wrap it up, and so then we can do what is called prevent to learn (unclear) what to do with formative assessment. How will the kids, you know, acquire this knowledge to just get it?

Other participants also shared how they use data along with their counselor(s) to develop targeted support and interventions for students. Joyce described the valuable contribution her counselor made in a meeting regarding the placement of a student.

> There was discussion in a meeting regarding a student. He [the counselor] was there [in the meeting], and there was discussion regarding a student who needed to be moved to a different program. Because he has been so involved with her and watching how she has progressed or not progressed, actually he was really able to provide some good input.

Joyce went on to say:

> Data are important to make the right decisions for the students, because if students – you know, all students can learn, but they cannot all learn in the same way or they don't all learn in the same way. So in order to make the best possible decisions so that we can meet the needs of these students and so that they can be successful, he has to be able to use data effectively.

Two participants shared how their counselors worked collaboratively with them by using data to make adjustments to instructional plans for students based on assessment data.

Tyrone explained:

> We have about 40 kids that we are targeting for this intervention stuff that we are doing in the mornings and on Saturdays, and we chose those kids, and the guidance counselor did the work this week, and we had the conversation about who we wanted to get, and we decided we wanted to get kids who were in the high Needs Improvement on their Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System in either English or Math and had received a failure warning first quarter. So these are kids where, you know, what we thought we had is these are kids that we can move relatively quickly. Now the sessions are open for everyone, but we targeted so we looked at the overlapping sets – high Needs Improvement, Warning, Failing – where those two intersected, those are the two that we targeted not kind of anecdotal, not asking teachers who needs this, but based on boom, boom, boom. That's how we did that.

Dan shared similar thoughts, although [in his case] the intervention was specific to

implementing a counseling intervention as the primary method to improve the academic

achievement.

> A group of children who have been in that Need[s] Improvement low area and
> they [counselors] try to get like five or six of them, maybe eight on a certain grade
> level [math or reading level], and I try to work with them specifically if those
> children have had some social/emotional things that may have interfered with
> their academic progress, to work specifically on that and try to get those children
> to move up [to] another level.

Two participants mentioned the district's evaluation tool for counselors to frame the

conversation around what their counselor does with the data. The evaluation tool is

designed to measure performance around student academic outcomes (student learning

goals) along with professional practice goals. Jack discussed the use of data with his

counselor.

> That is another thing my counselors are very dedicated to, and she actually wrote
> her own professional practice goal around it and how to more effectively utilize
> data. She is trying to determine what data to look at. Obviously, the Dropout
> Early Warning System (DEWS) gives us a lot of data, but it doesn't change
> throughout the year. So the DEWS is a great baseline, but then you need data that
> happens to move, like Achievement Network, data that moves.

When Emilye was asked to share what her counselor does with the data to improve

instruction, she also referred to the district's evaluation tool.

> That is a good question. That is a good question. I think that as we are looking at
> our Springfield Effective Educator Development System (SEEDS) information
> and SEEDS is new for everyone. As we started to look at some of that
> information in terms of goal setting and creating goals, you do have some allies,
> like the gym teacher and the librarian, the art teacher, the counselor, like what
> data strands do we want to look at to see that we are making a difference or an
> impact in that. My suggestion was around attendance, because if students are not
> in school then they are not going to be successful.

The overall consensus from participants when discussing the issue of data was to ensure that they (their schools) were doing a good job, and to explain how they collaborated with their counselors to accomplish this. Tyrone shared:

> We have school goals. We look at data by looking at our kids' successes, you know, did we keep a kid in school who otherwise would have dropped out? Did we get kids to graduation who otherwise, you know, wouldn't have gotten to graduation? Are we hearing from our graduates [that] where they are at right now is the right fit for them? I think [what] is important is the, you know, data and helping us to figure out a way to use data and tell the story of the school; and in the telling of the story of the school, where do we need to go to get better, and where are we doing a good job?

The final interview question focused on the principals' perceptions in determining the effectiveness of their school counselor and how this is determined. While principals were not always able to consistently articulate specific counseling strategies/interventions and the connection to school improvement goals, they were able to make anecdotal connections between (a) the counselors' involvement and collaboration in school and district goals and (b) improved student academic outcomes.

Two participants specifically connected the effectiveness of the counselor to district and school improvement goals. Tyrone explained:

> There are district and school improvement goals, [and] they [counselors] help with attendance, they help with graduation rate, they help with discipline rate, and to some extent they help with the composite performance index (CPI) stuff – you know, in terms of identifying kids in need of intervention. As far as the goals that matter to me and to us, they are just as vital as getting all of our kids accepted to college or university.

Tyrone went on to share, "We couldn't have the school that we have and the results that we have unless we really had a top notch counseling program." Matt shared similar thoughts.

> Well, it drives our school improvement goals. We take a look at retention in the 9th grade, and we take a look at 8th grade. That is another thing I didn't mention is

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8th grade data coming into 9th grade academically, socially, you know, it drives where we place kids, and it drives our ability to give them some sort of interventions so they can pass the MCAS, and they can be on track to graduate. The same with the SAT and the same with the colleges and the acceptance stuff, graduation – you know, basic graduation requirements. Data are everything; data drives everything that they do.

Other participants, including Pat, spoke anecdotally about determining the

effectiveness of their school counselors.

Well, I think [our counselor] determines it based on the fewest number of referrals to her office. I never really had a conversation about that with her, but I think it is mainly that. But I think her function involves a lot more than just office referrals or calls for support and assistance. I think she can do a lot more than that with respect to some prevention kind of work, visiting classes more to see what is happening inside of classes and making commentary to teachers about things that are noted in the classroom to give support to students prior to a referral.

Pat when on to share:

I think that the tempo and the volume here is slow and low, and so the requirement to be more visible, although she is very visible, is … not as compelling as it might be in a place where there is a lot more activity. It is a very well-settled, calm environment where children are learning, and teachers are teaching, and so these things are less apparent, and there are very few referrals for her. I think she and I know very well the few, the handful of children that – I don't want to call it an ongoing basis, but here and there that go back and forth, many of whom are making progress but still need support.

Jack described the effectiveness of his counselor by saying, "Certainly, her connection to

family and attendance is directly connected to school improvement goals. So it's not as

easy to describe the direct effect, but what she is doing is vital, especially for at-risk

kids." Similar to Jack, Sonia explained how effectiveness is important by anecdotally

sharing how data determines the effectiveness of their counselors.

Oh, that [data] is an intricate part of it, [and] if the data are used correctly then our goal is for kids to achieve – [those] who need improvement – to go up to proficient and so forth. So if that is used correctly, then you see that change, and that will ultimately allow us to achieve our goals.

Two participants, including Matt, spoke of the outcomes that are influenced by the effectiveness of their school counselor's practices.

> I would say the graduation rate, the college rate, the Abigail Adams Scholarship, the college acceptance rate, the number of kids that take SAT, and the number of kids that pass MCAS, [the] number of kids that do well on SAT, where they go to college, how successful they are, the discipline, social and emotional. So, you know all aspects of any kind of human being or student.

Dan made a direct connection to the outcomes.

> I think clearly, you know, they are looking at the results too. It is that constant bit about reiterating it over and over again. What is the goal, what is the goal? Do you know what the goal is? I feel more confident now that we can step out in the hallways, and I can stop teachers and counselors and say, "What is the goal?" And you know, I would hope very much … we would say it is to reach high student achievement (this part a little unclear), and they realize that, and they realize the data are going to drive the instruction, and they are going to look at that data and use that for them, the counselors to put together the plan they think will support the teacher and the classroom with that child, whether it be academically or social and emotional.

Stretched Leadership

Many of the participants (n=9) shared that their counselor shares in leadership tasks and practices to meet the goals of the school to demonstrate their effectiveness. Some participants (n=5) were explicit in how the leadership role of the counselors was central to the mission of the school. Jack said, "I felt confident about what was going on in these walls, and this year we are very confident, so now it is time to open up, and the counselors are kind of leading that push."

To demonstrate their effectiveness, participants had expectations that their counselor could take on a leadership role to inform policy and initiatives. For example, Anthony explained, "They [counselors] make recommendations to Instruction Leadership

Team or School Leadership Team for programming or policy – all levels of policy and

programming."

Tyrone shared his expectation for his counselors to use data share in leadership

tasks to improve the goals of the school.

> We use it [data] to sell the school to the community. We use it to convince kids that what we are recommending is true and makes sense for them. We use it to identify places in our school program where we … need to get better or where we are doing a good job. We use it to identify kids in need of additional services because it's not the typical classroom and typical instruction.

Tyrone went on to say:

> I think it is important, you know, to use the data and the counselor helping us to figure out a way to use data, and tell the story of the school, and in the telling of the story of the school [to determine] where do we need to go to get better and where are we doing a good job?

Similar to Tyrone, Emilye shared:

> We [principal and counselor] are looking at data over time. But we really needed to be the catalyst to make that happen. There were a lot of networks to make improvements, so from being on the ILT, we looked at it from the lens of how is this impacting our student initiative achievement. When we looked at the school stat data, we had the highest number of suspensions for any of the elementary schools in the districts. So what are the perceptions? What are the realities and what are our roles to make improvement, when it all comes back to impacting student achievement? As a leader, you are afforded the ability for your counselor to see the information in a different capacity, with a different purpose, and how it all connects to student achievement.

This section not only explored the school principals' perceptions of the

effectiveness of school counselor practices; principals also shared their expectations

around school counselor practices to determine effectiveness in increasing student

achievement.

Summary

The data from these interviews examine the principals' perceptions of exemplary principal and school counselor relationships, beliefs and perceptions about the role and function of school counselors, and the principals' perceptions of school counselor effectiveness.

This chapter gave voice to school principals' experiences in working with school counselors in an era of increased accountability and aggressive metrics. This chapter presented narratives describing the principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of school counselor practices. The findings of this study confirm that the relationship between the principal and school counselor influences the effectiveness of the practices of school counselors. The next chapter includes the discussions of findings, implications, limitations, recommendations for future research, and conclusion.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

<u>Introduction</u>

Accountability pressures as a result of NCLB have required principals, faculty, and staff members to demonstrate how their respective role, function, outcomes, and contributions to student achievement help to meet student improvement benchmarks in order to show academic growth (Dahir et al., 2010). Principals have a significant influence on shaping the role of school counselors with whom they work (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Ponec & Brock, 2000). The importance of the principal-counselor relationship has been noted in the literature (MacDonald et al., 2008). In this study, interviews were used to describe the characteristics of the way principals and school counselors work together to improve student achievement. This chapter provides a thorough exposition of the themes that are ascertained from the study, and the implications for further study are discussed.

The findings described in Chapter 4 provide the evidence that extends the existing body of literature around the working relationship between the school principal and the school counselor. The research underscores that establishing a positive working relationship with principals is vital to the success of school counselors (Clemens, Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009; Finkelstein, 2009; Niebuhr, Niebuhr, & Cleveland, 1999; Ponec & Brock, 2000; Riddile, 2009). Furthermore, the teamwork of counselors and principals is a decisive factor in determining the effectiveness of comprehensive school counseling programs (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Kaplan, 1995; Lapan, Gysbers, & Kayson, 2007; O'Connor, 2002). As a result of these analyses, this research also

examined how the school principal's work attributes and leadership characteristics influence school counselor practice and effectiveness.

<u>Summary of Findings</u>

Findings in this study are consistent with other studies on school principal and school counselor relationships (Brock & Ponec, 1998; Janson et al., 2008; MacDonald et al., 2008; Ponec & Brock, 2000), supporting the importance of establishing mutual vision, promoting collaboration, ensuring communication, fostering respect, and sharing leadership in effective schools. Some of the findings also concur with earlier research done in the area of school counselor leadership (Dollarhide, 2003; Janson et al., 2009; Mason & McMahon, 2009) as principals work side by side with counselors on instructional tasks and professional development activities, use of data to make instructional decisions, and taking a collective approach to school-wide issues. Similar findings were also revealed regarding collective efficacy (Bodenhorn, 2001; Goddard, 2000; Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Goddard, Hoy, &Woolfolk, 2000; Sharpley & Ridgeway, 1993; Sutton & Fall, 1995), as effective principals are actively involved in setting a positive learning climate and establishing a tone for academic growth and school improvement, thus fostering improved school principal and school counselor relationships.

It is the school principal who essentially defines the role and function of the school counselor within the school (Ribak-Rosenthal, 1994). In order to explore all aspects of the principal and school counselor working relationship, the principal's perception of the role and function of the school counselor and how this may lend itself to

school counselor effectiveness was explored. This study showed that the participants had embraced a contemporary view of school counselors. This transformation happened as a result of having a comprehensive school counseling policy in the district where the study was conducted. This policy reshaped how school counselors were viewed while also establishing expectations for school counselor practice to help students achieve academic success. The analysis of the data revealed that participants recognized that for counselors to make significant contributions to student achievement, school improvement goals, and a positive learning environment, it was important that counselors be a part of school-based teams. Having school counselors serve on teams with instructional staff (teachers, specialist/coaches) is a shift from past expectations of the role and function of school counselors. Participants recognized that school counselors no longer work primarily with individual students who are in need but that school counselors worked with all students to enhance the learning process by implementing school counseling programs in the areas of academic, personal/social, and college and career readiness.

Participants in this study shared that school improvement is demonstrated by improvement in metrics, such as attendance, suspensions, academic proficiency (state assessment), course performance, graduation rates, college enrollment, and others. The findings revealed that data are central to school initiatives that are being implemented to improve student performance, and there were expectations that counselors had the skill set to positively impact improvement in data. Participants recognized that demonstrating effectiveness includes using data that are connected to measurable outcomes. This allowed the study participants to monitor progress towards meeting goals as well as to find opportunities to assess strategies to improve the effectiveness of an intervention. The

analysis of the findings showed that participants were interested in their counselor using data to determine the effectiveness of their practices. However, the participants were varied in their understanding of how their school counselors used data, how data were used to evaluate effectiveness, or whether the practices of their school counselor impacted school improvement goals.

This chapter provides an overview of the key findings, including a summary of the central themes related to the principals' responses, based on both the research questions and an analysis of the study results in the context of the analytical framework of concepts that may lead to school counselor effectiveness.

Principals' Perceptions of an Exemplary Principal-School Counselor Relationship

In this study, principals were able to frame the context of their working relationship with their school counselor by sharing their reported leadership practices around school reform efforts. With the implementation of NCLB, many of the new roles that principals have adopted have been written into law. Under Title II, Section 2113 (c), principals are now mandated to serve first and foremost as "instructional leaders" in their schools, educational coaches who possess the "skills necessary to help teachers teach" and "help students meet challenging state student academic achievement standards" (cited in Lockwood, 2005). This study found that principals require a working relationship with their counselors in which there is an alliance to establish counseling programs that support the school in meeting school improvement goals. This also supports prior studies that have noted the importance of strong principal-counselor relationships. For example, Tyrone shared that "the principal-counselor relationship is

formal and informal, with tight and loose couplings." He went on the say, "Counselors and principals need to enjoy time with each other and be able to laugh." Jack said, "You hope and pray that you get along with your counselor and that their working style matches your expectations and your working style." These statements by these two principals speak to the factors that exemplify the principal-counselor relationship.

There is no doubt that principals play a critical role in school improvement (Cotton, 2003; Sebring & Bryk, 2000). The principals shared that building relationships was essential to improving student achievement. However, the relationship between principals and counselors is a delicate one that needs to be built over time. Analysis of the data demonstrated that the leadership characteristics where principals and counselors are able to establish a partnership based on knowledge, trust, and deference for what each professional does fosters an environment of respect, openness, and communication. This resonates with the literature on principal and school counselor relationships (Janson & Militello, 2009) that explores the connection between principals and counselors around understanding how their relationship—when it works well—contributes to the academic growth of all students in the school. Moreover, these findings suggest that what principals shared as leadership practices and how it influenced counselor effectiveness align with the eight elements of effective principal and school counselor relationships (Janson & Militello, 2009).

In the research findings, principals reported that their working relationship with school counselors and others in the school required that they work closely with others to establish goals and strategies for improvement. Principals reported that such collaborative efforts develop a consistent set of expectations that keeps the entire staff focused on

meeting school-wide goals. The principals stated that they align everything they do with the goals of their school improvement plan. They felt that this was critical to the success of implementing any strategy. Furthermore, not only are staff and students held accountable for making progress toward these goals but all strategies and professional development activities are aligned to the goals. These principals recognized that in order to make progress toward meeting goals, they needed to provide the opportunities for staff to lead and to nurture their leadership strengths.

The participants who reported leadership practices recognized that whole school improvement relied on finding strengths in other staff and providing them with leadership roles. The principals included their school counselors in a variety of school teams/committees that had a central focus of improving student achievement. Collaborating with others provided a structure of support for staff and a process for continuous feedback, which is crucial to monitoring progress towards meeting school goals. Such findings support the research that counselors impact the instructional program by motivating students to achieve academic success through raising student aspirations and collaborating with teachers to meet school improvement goals (Stone & Clarke, 2001).

The findings reveal that the reported leadership practices of principal provided opportunities for school counselors to play an integral role in the school by communicating with staff about the school counseling program and how it aligns to school improvement goals. This leadership characteristic allows counselors to contribute to the critical decision-making that can impact whether students will graduate from high school college- and career-ready. Analysis of data suggests that leadership practices

reported by principals provided a structure to include their school counselor in opportunities to work collaboratively with others to meet school improvement goals and increase student achievement. The information in this study can be used to establish improved communication and understanding between school principals and school counselors as well as to strengthen the teamwork and collaboration. Furthermore, the study suggests that the principal's way of work fosters a working climate where counselors strive to meet diverse challenges of the students they serve, while ensuring academic success for all students in an environment of continuous improvement.

Principals' Beliefs and Perceptions Regarding the Role and Function of School Counselors

In this study, principals recognized that in light of school reform efforts and the level of engagement required by school staff to improve academic achievement, the expectations for school counselors had to align with meeting the goals of the school. This research reveals that principals recognized that the work [role and function] of school counselors has changed over time, and there is a need for them to be included as a member of the team and to work collaboratively with others. Findings suggest that school counselors are more connected to academic achievement than they ever have been before. The majority of the principals acknowledged that the district policy and framework for school counseling has changed the expectations. As a result, school counselors engage in direct work that includes providing counselor-led interventions to students in the form of groups and classroom presentations, participating on the school's instructional leadership team, and developing student learning goals as a part of their educator evaluation system. Research participants also leveraged their relationship with their school counselor to

ensure that the school counselor knew what was transpiring inside the classroom as it relates to implementing curriculum, ensuring that students are meeting the academic standards, and understanding assessment data.

Results also reveal that school counselors had to respond to national trends around implementation of the Common Core State Standards and understanding what 21st century skills students need to compete in a global economy. Moreover, the findings suggest that hiring a counselor with the skills and expertise needed to respond to an ever-changing educational landscape was critical to the counselor's ability to provide the leadership essential to implement school counseling programs that support increased student outcomes. This supports the literature that suggests that implementing comprehensive school counseling programs can increase student performance (Lapan et al., 2007).

Principals' Perceptions and Expectations Regarding School Counselor Effectiveness and Use of Data

In this study, principals found that analyzing data is a significant part of determining what and how to change existing instructional practices to improve student achievement. This allowed principals to understand what their students' and staff strengths and weaknesses are to in order to know where change is needed. Findings suggest that although principals are fully engaged in gathering and making effective use of data, evidence to determine the effectiveness of school counselors did not expand beyond counselors sitting on teams and collaborating with teachers. The findings suggest that in schools where principals had been exposed to school counselor professional development and/or met with their counselor to review data, more specific examples (i.e.,

MEASURE, attendance interventions, office referrals, completion of college applications) were provided to determine the effectiveness of school counselor practice.

Another important finding with practical implications is that the district's counseling framework was not uniformly implemented; therefore, consistent structures to determine effectiveness of school counselor practices were not evident. Findings suggest that while there was some knowledge of how counselors should utilize data and ensure that safety nets are in place for at-risk students, effectiveness of school counselor practice did not move beyond a supporting role of monitoring data and maintaining data, rather than a direct role in determining an intervention based on what the data reveals. While there was an expectation that school counselors use data, the participants were unsure of the best process for counselors to demonstrate effectiveness of their practices to support student achievement.

Implications

The impetus for the study was to examine the working relationship between school principals and school counselors in order to assess how school principal leadership practices influence school counselor practice and effectiveness. A review of the history of the school counseling profession revealed misunderstanding and a lack of clarity on the part of principals and other supervisors of school counseling professionals. The findings have clear implications for the Springfield Public School district as well. Several themes emerged that may be of value to building stronger relationships, develop mutual respect, and thus strengthen the effectiveness of school counselors.

School Principals

School leadership has been studied for decades. Researchers have examined the possible effects that school principals have on student achievement, school culture and climate, parental involvement, and many other factors. The job of a building principal is a complex one that demands many responsibilities of school leaders. This study has several implications for the leadership practices of school principals.

Principals should understand that collective efficacy increases when leadership is shared with school counselors regarding school decisions about the instructional program and ensuring that all students are achieving. Working together to address such instructional and academic issues brings counselors together with teachers, which establishes two separate areas of expertise with a larger wealth of knowledge and ideas that can have a greater impact. The commitment on the part of the school staff to do whatever is necessary to help students learn is strengthened by collective educator (teachers and counselors) efficacy. Marks and Printy (2003) suggest, that one of the most powerful phenomena that can occur is for the group to believe they can make a difference for all students. The literature review in Chapter 2 indicates that there is greater school counselor efficacy when school principals have an understanding of school counselor roles and appropriately utilize the expertise of school counselors.

School principals should make every effort to understand the importance of school counselor efficacy and the leadership practices that they can implement to increase effectiveness in their school counselors. Principals can enhance school counselor effectiveness by including counselors in the decision-making process and increasing their involvement in data-driven decision practices. Principals and counselors can share

leadership with each other, with parents, with the teachers, and even with students in order to plan for academic success.

While this study did not examine a specific leadership style, this researcher was interested in the way school principals worked with their school counselor. Principals reported a variety of leadership practices that align with a study (Janson et al., 2008) regarding the importance of strong principal-counselor relationships and the characteristics that make up such a relationship. The leadership characteristics of principals and how they influence their way of work cannot be enough, according to studies on school success. Concepts, such as shared goals and shared leadership, have been identified in other studies and mirror the 2009 survey conducted by the College Board on principals and counselors. The influence that shared leadership can have on schools has been noted by Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008). In this study, some aspect of this style was present in the principal's way of work with their school counselor formally or less formally around collaborating and working with others as a team. Leithwood et al. also suggest that school leaders improve the learning environment through their influence on faculty motivation, commitment, and working conditions. These factors were also themes found in the interviews when participants discussed trust and the willingness to work collaboratively toward common goals to improve student achievement.

This study confirmed that a more integrated model of leadership characteristics enhanced the way of work (relationships) between principals and counselors, as suggested by Janson and Militello (2009). This belief is supported by Watkinson (2013), who asserts that combining collaboration and leadership practices, when there is an

understanding of how school counseling outcomes address the mission and academic goals of their schools, results in greater effectiveness of school counselors. This study also provides insight into implications on a larger scale. School districts and central office administrators might also benefit from the findings in this study.

School Districts

While most of this section focuses on the implication for individual principals, school districts, superintendents, and central office administration, school committees need to understand how school counselors can support and contribute to student learning outcomes. The findings in this study suggest that when there is a counseling policy in existence in school districts that establishes guidelines to ensure a consistent framework for school counselor practice that addresses the developmental needs of students, expectations regarding the role and function of school counselors are consistently communicated. Findings further suggest that this would eliminate the disconnect in district office messaging regarding the role, function, and responsibilities of school counselors, which is consistent with what the research states about the consequence of role ambiguity. If the role and function is not clearly defined, administrators are left defining the school counselor's role and function (Oyaziwo & Imonike, 2002).

Public schools are charged with educating students. Therefore, teaching, learning, and student achievement are always at the core. Based on the findings from this study, school districts should provide opportunities for principals to increase their knowledge of the school counselors' roles that would allow principals to organize more effective comprehensive school counseling programs and better utilize the skills of school

counselors. Unless there are consistent expectations around the role and function of school counselors, counselors will find themselves justifying or defending their contributions to student success, only to further complicate the scope and focus of their work (Dahir et al., 2010). Districts should explore systemic models of change around the role and function of school counselors and comprehensive school counseling programs in the same manner that efforts are made around implementing reform efforts to improve student achievement. Despite the efforts of national organizations that represent principals, school district leaders, school counselors, and students—bringing attention to the value of school counselors as well as to the need to leverage their skills to improve student achievement—school counselors are left advocating for themselves to implement programs that can positively impact students.

School Counselors

There is no doubt that school counselors need to advocate for themselves in light of the research on school counselor perceptions of the responsibilities of the school counselor. School counselors must embrace a new way of work in the 21st century. This researcher found that the participants in this study had counselors in their respective schools that may not know how to align their practices to school improvement goals. According to the research by L. Hale (2012), counselors themselves look at the role and function of school counselors differently in regards to how their time should best be spent (Beesley, 2004; Fitch et al., 2001; Herr, 2002; Lieberman, 2004). Furthermore, Burnham and Jackson (2000) looked at discrepancies between what school counselors actually do versus what they should be doing, based on comprehensive guidance delivery models.

The authors asked school counselors to report how their time was consumed in comparison to different suggested comprehensive school counseling models. They found that counselors were performing some functions described in current program models (comprehensive school counseling programs), including small and large group counseling, classroom guidance, and consultation. However, they also found that counselors in this study reported performing duties that were not aligned to new models of school counseling. This confirms what this researcher concluded when exploring the principals' beliefs and perceptions regarding the role and function of school counselors.

Unless change around expectations for the role and function of the school counselor happens at the district level, school counselors will continue to be involved in tasks that are varied when it comes to direct services (individual and group counseling, classroom lessons) to students and management of schools (clerical duties, discipline, hall monitors). Systemic change happens at the district level, as it is at the district level where the blueprint for school improvement is established. There must also be explicit expectations for school counselors around their role and function. If the expectations are not clear, principals will be left to determine how to "engage" their school counselor in the school improvement process and how the school counselor's goals contribute to student achievement and progress. Otherwise, school counselors who have not transformed to a new way of delivering school counselor services that respond to educating students in the 21st century will not proactively engage with their school principal, which could continue to foster a misunderstanding around role clarity and the appropriate use of school counselors.

Bemak and Chung (2005) have criticized school counselors for maintaining the status quo and urge counselors to be more proactive in creating school counseling programs that are responsive to the needs of students who live within a diverse society. School districts would not hire or allow a reading teacher to maintain employment if the teacher did not teach students to read and develop literacy skills that were aligned to the school/district improvement goals. School counselors cannot be viewed as independent agents in schools who work alone and are isolated from curriculum and instruction and learning. Using the unique skill set of the school counselor to work not only at the individual student level but on the school and district platform, can positively impact student achievement.

The ultimate responsibility for determining how school staff are utilized belongs to the principal (Dollarhide et al., 2007; Lieberman, 2004). Therefore, the district must incorporate focused professional development opportunities for school principals and other district leaders that provide a clear picture of both the role of school counselors in fostering students' academic development and the counselor's role in fostering career and personal-social development. This will also assist principals with developing capacity to determine the effectiveness of school counselors' practice. The principals who participated in this study did not reveal a consistent understanding of how they determined if their counselor is effective and how they knew if their counselor made a difference in improved student outcomes. The participants spoke in phrases that generalized improvement in student achievement without consistently providing specific examples. Furthermore, principals should be aware that comprehensive school counseling programs that are driven by student data and based on standards in academic, career, and

personal-social development promote and enhance the equitable learning process for all students (ASCA, 2005).

It simply is not enough for school counselors to report the number of students seen, the number of classroom lessons presented, and the number of groups facilitated in a given week. Counselors must demonstrate that progress was made and that students respond differently, are acting differently, or are achieving different results because of their interventions. School principals and district administration must have an understanding of how counselors use data to set clear goals and develop strategies with measurable outcomes for student achievement and success.

Higher Education (Principals' Preparation Programs)

While districts are required to take on the responsibility for the ongoing professional development of school principals, college and universities also need to better prepare principals for the realities of public education. Rather than the "traditional" offerings of leadership theories, teacher supervision (educator evaluation), and ethical and legal issues (school law), programs need to include courses on models of leadership (shared leadership, transformational, instructional, etc.), data analysis, school improvement practices (data-driven practices), school mission, vision, and culture/climate. Coursework must include providing aspiring leaders with a range of data elements with the opportunity to understand the data to leverage resources (school personnel) to respond to accountability pressures.

Graduate programs that prepare future educational leaders (superintendents, principals, supervisors/directors) must intentionally respond to the educational landscape,

as school improvement will always be at the core of public school settings. Public schools must graduate students who can compete for jobs in an increasingly global workforce. While many would argue that it is difficult to respond to the educational reform trend of the moment, it is vital that graduate programs prepare leaders who will have the skills to understand the responsibility of faculty in student achievement and student success, which must extend beyond the role of the teacher in learning.

Research on graduate school programs in education confirms that most graduate programs do not work collaboratively with principals/administrators and counselors to develop a cohesive, grounded vision for the role of the counselor (Herrington & Ross, 2006). According to Herrington and Ross, there is a "gap" in the understanding of the role and function of those entering the school setting, and unless counselors and principals understand that a concerted effort is required to protect the integrity of guidance counseling services, students in schools will continue to be underserved. Programs should prepare leaders to understand the role of the school counselor and close gaps between theories professed and theories espoused regarding how counselor work is viewed (Herrington & Ross, 2006). This will allow each principal to leave his or her respective preparation program better prepared to serve students and will leverage the skills of school counselors to have a role in improving learning environments for students in a way that is aligned with comprehensive school counseling programs.

Limitations of the Study

Within any study, limitations exist. As with any qualitative study, the data cannot prove causal relationship (Berg, 2004). None of the principals who agreed to participate

in this study were Latino/Latina or Hispanic, which represents the largest student subgroup in the district where the study took place. Although noted as a limitation, it is not certain that there would have been a difference in the findings if a Latino/Latina were interviewed. This was noted because it was a missing perspective. This study was about principals' experiences, perceptions, and expectations of school counselors and having the perspective of all would have been helpful. The principals who agreed to participate in this study were limited to the schools where the counselors served on the District School Counselor Leadership Team. Thus, the scope of this study is limited to the perspectives of school principals, as school counselors were not interviewed. The research may have produced different results had school counselors been included in the sample and comparable questions asked. The study is limited by interpretations made by the researcher. Furthermore, the objectivity of the responses to the interview questions may be affected by personal biases of the respondents participating in the interview and their relationship with the interviewer. Since this study focused on the perceptions of 12 principals from Springfield, Massachusetts, the findings may not be generalizable to a broader population but do offer insight into characteristics of the successful working relationships between principals and school counselors and how this leads to school counselor effectiveness.

Recommendations for Future Research

The leadership practices of school principals are seen as critical in improving student achievement. The principal's way of work and the impact it can have on improving schools has been researched, and it suggests that such leaders foster a culture

of continuous learning where they learn which strategies will both make a difference and motivate faculty and staff members. The principal's working style allows him/her to foster a relationship with the school counselor that has mutual respect and a commitment to student success. The relationship between principals and counselors is critical and is the first step in understanding the role and function of the school counselor working collaboratively toward the same goals. This research study was an attempt to increase the understanding of how the working relationship between school principals and school counselors can influence school counselor effectiveness. The qualitative methodology used in this study offered a detailed examination of the experiences of 12 school principals and their way of work with their school counselor. Although this study identified similar findings as those in in the existing body of research on principal-counselor relationships, further research could expand an understanding of the characteristics that foster school counselor effectiveness:

- A study should be conducted at the universities that redesigned their counselor education programs as a part of the Transforming School Counselor Initiative (TSCI). School counselors graduated from TSCI programs to use their leadership skills to work as leaders in schools collaborating with all stakeholders and to use data to advocate for systemic changes that remove barriers that impede student achievement. An understanding of the knowledge and expertise of the principal's and counselor's preparation education and how these two important positions can complement, benefit, and promote the success of all students within the school, is imperative. This study would examine partnerships and collaboration between counselor education

programs and principal preparation programs at the participating TSCI
universities.

- It would be prudent to investigate the types of evidence (data) collected by the
  evaluator (school principal) to determine the effectiveness of school
  counselors who earned a "Proficient" or "Meets Expectations" rating on the
  school counselor evaluation tool. Nationally, districts are implementing new
  evaluation tools for educators that provide them with richer and more detailed
  views of an educator's performance, with a focus on specific strengths and
  opportunities for improvement. This will help assess the principals'
  understanding of what skills and knowledge an effective counselor must
  possess.

- Further research could explore the professional development opportunities for
  school principals in districts that have adopted a comprehensive school
  counseling program model. This study would investigate professional
  development efforts that are designed to provide the skills and knowledge to
  principals with the purpose of developing collaborative working relationships
  around school counselor effectiveness.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the working relationship between
school principals and school counselors to assess how school principals' leadership
practices influence school counselors' practice and effectiveness. The following discourse
provides an example of a school principal's inquiry regarding the effectiveness of school

counselor practice beyond the principal and counselor working relationship. The

researcher and one of the study's participants were attending a district administrator's

professional development training. During the break, the participant approached this

researcher and shared the following:

> Principal Sonia: It was so good to see you the other day! You'll have to visit
> Hope School [pseudonym] again very soon. You know, I've been thinking about
> our time together. Other than you, I have never had a conversation with anyone
> about my school counselor's effectiveness. I've always had a good rapport with
> [name of counselor], and we have always worked as a team. My counselor is a
> very important member of my school team, and she is respected by the teachers
> and parents. I found your questions to be helpful. And they made me think about
> things differently.

> Researcher: "I am pleased that our time together was helpful to you. What

specifically did I ask that was helpful?"

> Principal Sonia: It had to do with school improvement and data. I've always taken
> so much for granted. I always recognized the good work of [name of counselor].
> Now I am realizing that I did not look closely at any data [name of counselor] was
> collecting other than looking at the student assessment data we review in our ILT
> to monitor our progress and teacher practices to [interruption] – oops, our break is
> almost up – gotta run to the restroom. We'll talk more about this and what I can
> do to help [name of counselor] further develop her data skills and help me
> understand her work.

> Researcher: "Great, I would like that! I look forward to us connecting again."

Empirical findings in the area of leadership attributes make this a promising

opportunity for rethinking the principal and school counselor relationship along with how

this relationship influences school counselor effectiveness. Excellent leadership is

invariably one of the main factors in high performing schools (Bush & Jackson, 2002).

The school improvement literature makes similar links between principal leadership, the

motivation of faculty, and the quality of teaching and learning (Day, Harris, Hadfield,

Tolley, & Beresford, 2000; Fullan, 1992; Hopkins, 1994). The accountability measures

mandated by education reform have required leadership models that can move the entire educational system forward as it is no longer the responsibility of an individual. Central to this work is student achievement and postsecondary success for all students. Furthermore, school principals in this study asserted that engaging in collaborative leadership practices with their counselor was necessary to improve learning for all students.

This study was driven by the desire of the researcher to explore the elements of the principal's way of work and how this influences school counselor effectiveness. It is important to note that this study supports previous research, which asserts that a strong relationship between school principals and school counselors is integral to improving student achievement, especially for students from low-income, first-generation, and other traditionally underrepresented populations (ASCA, 2012b; Center for School Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation, 2011; Chen-Hayes, 2007; Holcomb-McCoy & Chen-Hayes, 2011; National Office for School Counselor Advocacy, 2011). Effective partnerships should lead to equitable student outcomes, which in turn should close the opportunity gap and, therefore, the achievement gap as well. "With this knowledge come both a professional imperative and an ethical obligation to increase those activities that best support student success" (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012, p. 151). This is of particular importance in regard to school principals who engage in substantive leadership practices that promote school counselor effectiveness, which demonstrate the power of a meaningful school principal-counselor relationship and yield improved student academic outcomes.

The participants in this study are leading schools in a public school environment of accountability. Many leaders in the business and public sector have stated, "What gets measured gets done" as a way to monitor progress to improve results. Data are imperative, not as a way to create a neat little box, but as a way to measure progress. Furthermore, data should be used to measure the effectiveness of school counseling activities, but they should also be used to consider the overall school counseling program for the purpose of producing continuous improvement. What gets done must be measured. It must emphasize the momentum toward the end goals in order to keep school staff engaged around expectations for student performance. The findings of this study reveal that while principals have leadership practices that foster collaborative working relationships, absent from this working relationship is how to leverage the relationship to increase school counselor's effectiveness. To accomplish this will take principals and counselors working more collaboratively and intentionally around developing skills, knowledge, and dispositions that will enable principals and counselors to establish guidelines to assess effectiveness.

The findings from this research reinforce the conclusion that the principal and school counselor working relationship cannot be overstated. This study confirmed that the phenomenon of school counselors engaging in accountability practices can lead to positive results for all students. This study also confirmed that principals and school counselors have embraced a new model of school counselors who are delivering counseling services in schools while being an instrumental member of school-based leadership teams. Results also affirmed that principals need awareness and understanding to better realize the multifaceted role and function of the school counselor and how these

principals can better recognize the impact of a school counseling program. Finally, this study maintains that the working relationship between principals and school counselors raises the crucial need to provide additional supports and training to principals and counselors in order to help counselors employ practices that engender positive outcomes and high standards of academic achievement for students. This study highlights the importance of principals and counselors establishing strong collaborative working relationships, which in turn will help counselors engage in practices that demonstrate their effectiveness and the impact of their work on student achievement and success in school.

EPILOGUE

"Wouldn't take nothing for my journey now" (Angelou, 1993).

Reflecting on this process, I have learned that there are advantages to conducting research in an environment where the researcher is familiar with the participants. Recruiting participants went without incident; there was good cooperation and an established rapport, and the participants were eager to assist me. This reflection provided me with some insight around lessons learned and what could have been different in conducting this study.

Due to the professional relationship between the participants and me, I may not have gleaned data that may have been gathered if I conducted this study in another school district. Given the purpose of this study, it would have been more advantageous to seek participants that were not familiar with me. My position in the research site and the close working relationship between me and school principals limited the depth of the responses to the interview questions. I was very familiar with the participants and the personnel they discussed. Hence, there may be a bias due to my awareness of the school counselor's practice in the actual school site and the manner in which the principal described the working relationship.

The participants in this study provided rich and detailed information about their working relationship, experiences, beliefs, expectations, and perceptions regarding their school counselor. There were opportunities where follow up questions could have been asked to prompt and encourage expansion of ideas deemed most relevant to the research questions. Probing questions could have been asked to get more depth and detail. For

example, when exploring the principals' expectations around the use of data and the

demonstration of school counselor effectiveness, one participant shared:

> In order for my counselor to make decisions based on data, yes, my counselor
> should use data. I think it would depend upon the kind of data. I am not so sure
> that my counselor would. I think that she understands achievement data and
> assessment data. I am not quite so sure if she knows what to do with it.

To follow up, I could have asked the principal to share the role that she has in working

with her counselor to understand and use data more effectively to help create goals and

strategies for change and improvement. I felt that asking such a follow up question may

have made the principal defensive. Reframing questions in a way to reduce any perceived

judgment would have been helpful. However, my position as a District Director in the

District Office compromised the level of depth I was looking for in their responses.

Further, I did not want the tone of the interview to change with the participants, as I did

not want the principals to feel that their leadership abilities and skills were being

questioned. I clearly underestimated my role as a District Administrator and the

implications it would have on my findings.

Because I have deeply rooted interest in school counselors, I set into this study

with the goal to understand the variables that led to effectiveness of school counselor

practice. While I did not make the "breakthrough" that I thought I would have made, I

have no regrets in how my study was conducted. This experience helped me to develop

my research experience. I found that an unintended consequence to interviewing

participants with whom I have a close professional relationship did not foster an

interview setting in which there was full disclosure around the research topic. I believe

this may have had to do with the Myth of Rationality. The premise behind rationality in

organizations is based on the notion that reasonable people will respond to their

environments by assessing known facts, estimating possible outcomes, and weighing those outcomes against their respective costs (Rozell, n.d.). This may translate to fear of losing their jobs and/or admitting something that they do not know, consequences of not implementing district policies, or not trusting the organization to support them in ways to seek understanding. Given what this process has taught me, the next time, I would:

1. Adopt an interview method that engenders discussion of the leadership style of each principal in order to further analyze the impact of developing counselor and principal relationships.
2. Utilize a method that will capture the "true story" of the school and principal's professional practice, without threat of professional judgment.
3. Explore the principal's knowledge of a Comprehensive School Counseling Program Model to have a common framework for discussing counselor roles.
4. Create a protocol of questions to ascertain the extent to which the principal utilized counselors in a school improvement leadership role.
5. Conduct the research in another district, where the researcher was not known as a district leader.

In qualitative research, there is no single truth but rather many. I have learned that the method to conduct a study in a setting such as the one where this study took place is critical. Moreover, there is a social context that is important to consider when conducting research. The social context has a direct and indirect influence on participants.

This study has been a valuable part of my doctoral studies and professional practice. I believe the skills and knowledge acquired through my research will carry on into the body of research and, more importantly, in my professional career. This dissertation is finished, but many paths remain still to be explored.

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear School Principal,

My name is Yolanda D. Johnson, and I am conducting a study for my doctorate research at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, School of Education. As a school principal, you have some familiarity with the role and the work of school counselors. I am interested in the extent to which you utilize school counselors to support school improvement goals. The findings of this study will be used in my dissertation and may be used in future publications and presentations.

If you choose to become a participant, I will ask that you participate in a 90-minute face-to-face interview with me. I will notify you in advance of the date, time, and location of the group interview. We can schedule a convenient date, time, and location for the interview. With your permission, I will tape record the interview; all tapes will be safeguarded under lock and key. All study materials will be safely stored for five years; if the data are not needed after that point, I will destroy all materials. I will protect both your identity and that of your school by giving pseudonyms. You should understand, however, that I will quote directly from our interviews but will not use your name in any part of the study and any identifying information will be disguised. You can withhold any information or decline to answer any question. You can also end the interview at any time if you do not want to continue.

I will be the only person reviewing and transcribing the interviews and will maintain your confidentiality by keeping the signed consent forms separate from the interview data. I will not use your name in any written materials, and every effort will be made to disguise your identity.

As a participant, there are benefits and risks. You will benefit from having a better understanding of current school counselor practices, what leadership characteristics foster evaluation of counselor interventions, and the opportunity to voice your perceptions of school counselor practice. Additional benefits include helping future principals and counselors examine how they can work collaboratively to improve student outcomes. This will allow researchers to gain a better understanding of principal and school counselor relationships. There are no foreseeable risks.

I appreciate your willingness to give your time to this important study and look forward to talking with you soon. If you are interested, upon request, I will provide you with an executive summary of the findings from this study for you to review. Your signature on this page indicates your agreement to participate in this study. Remember, you may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form if you choose to discontinue participation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (413) 530-4156 or email me at yolanda@acad.umass.edu or my Committee Chairperson, Dr. Sharon Rallis, at (413) 545-

1056 or sharonr@educ.umass.edu. Please keep a copy of the informed consent for your records.

Sincerely,

Yolanda D. Johnson

The study has been explained to me, and I understand the conditions described above. I freely agree to participate.

_____   _____

Participant Signature   Date

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Thank you again for agreeing to be interviewed for my project. To provide a little background, it would be helpful if you could complete the brief questionnaire below. Once it is complete, you can return it to me either in person, by mail, or as an email attachment to yolanda@acad.umass.edu. If you have any questions, you can call me at (413) 530-4156.

Date of Interview: _____   Location of Interview: _____

Interview Start Time: _____   Finish Time: _____

Name: _____   Email address: _____
   * A pseudonym will be used in final report

Number at which you can be reached: _____

Demographic Information

Age	
Gender	
Ethnicity (optional)	
Undergraduate college/university	
Major (s)	
Advanced Degrees	
How many years have you been a principal?	
Have you ever been a school counselor?	
If so, how long were you a school counselor?	
How many counselors are assigned to your school?	

Is your school counselor a member of your instructional leadership team?	
Please describe your understanding of the district's School Counseling Program Guide and Policy.	
Please share your understanding of the American School Counselor Association.	
Please share your understanding of the National Office for School Counselor Advocacy.	
Please explain the Transforming School Counselor Initiative through Education Trust.	
Please share your understanding of the counseling standards.	
Please share which workshops you attended regarding school counselors at national conferences.	

Thank you for your time! Please return this questionnaire to me either in person, by mail or as an email attachment to yolanda@acad.umass.edu

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interviews will be conducted using an open-ended, semi-structured format. The following questions will guide the interview, and the questions will be adapted as necessary to maximize participant responses and to increase the depth of the interview content.

1.   In what ways does a principal's way of work and leadership characteristics influence the school counselor's practice and effectiveness?

    a.   Describe an exemplary principal/counselor relationship?
    b.   What contributes to an exemplary principal/counselor relationship?
    c.   Provide examples in your work with your counselor/principal relationship that exemplifies this?

2.   What are the principal's beliefs about the role and function of school counselors?
    a.   What are your beliefs and perceptions about the role and function of school counselors?
    b.   What have been your experiences that have led you to have this belief and gave you this perception?
    c.   How do your beliefs and perceptions compare to what your experiences are with your school counselor?
    d.   In your experiences working with counselors, what are your expectations?

3.   What are the principal's perceptions and expectations regarding school counselor effectiveness and use of data?

    a.   How does your counselor use data?
    b.   Can you provide examples of the types/kinds of data your school counselor uses?
    c.   What does your counselor use the data to do?
    d.   How does your counselor determine his/her effectiveness?
    e.   Describe how school counselor's use of data impacts school improvement goals.

APPENDIX D

DATA ANALYSIS MATRIX – RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Eight elements that exist in principal-counselor relationships that lead to greater effectiveness.

Question 1: In what ways does a principal's way of work and leadership characteristics influence the school counselor's practice and effectiveness?

Participant	Mutual Value	Open & Reflective Communication	Shared Belief in Interdependency	Trust	Collective Enterprise	Awareness of the Other's Repertoire	Purposeful & Focused Collaboration	Stretched Leadership
Participant 1	x	x		x			x	x
Participant 2	x	x	x				x	x
Participant 3	x	x						x
Participant 4	x	x						x
Participant 5	x	x	x			x		x
Participant 6	x	x	x			x		x
Participant 7	x	x		x	X	x		x
Participant 8	x	x			X		x	x
Participant 9	x	x						x
Participant 10	x	x	x	x				x
Participant 11	x	x			X		x	x
Participant 12	x	x				x		x

APPENDIX E

DATA ANALYSIS MATRIX – RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Eight elements that exist in principal-counselor relationships that leads to greater effectiveness.

Question 2: What are the principal's beliefs about the role and function of school counselors?

Participant	Mutual Value	Open & Reflective Communication	Shared Belief in Interdependency	Trust	Collective Enterprise	Awareness of the Other's Repertoire	Purposeful & Focused Collaboration	Stretched Leadership
Participant 1	x		x		X	x	x	
Participant 2	x			x			x	
Participant 3			x			x	x	
Participant 4	x				X		x	
Participant 5	x		x				x	
Participant 6	x			x		x	x	
Participant 7	x		x			x	x	
Participant 8	x	x	x		X		x	x
Participant 9				x		x	x	
Participant 10				x		x	x	
Participant 11	x			x	X		x	x
Participant 12		x		x		x		

APPENDIX F

DATA ANALYSIS MATRIX – RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Eight elements that exist in principal-counselor relationships that leads to greater effectiveness.

Question 3: What are the principal's perception and expectations regarding school counselor effectiveness including the use of data?

Participant	Mutual Value	Open & Reflective Communication	Shared Belief in Interdependency	Trust	Collective Enterprise	Awareness of the Other's Repertoire	Purposeful & Focused Collaboration	Stretched Leadership
Participant 1	x			x	X			
Participant 2	x			x			x	
Participant 3				x			x	
Participant 4			x	x			x	
Participant 5				x	X		x	x
Participant 6			x				x	
Participant 7							x	x
Participant 8				x				x
Participant 9			x				x	x
Participant 10							x	
Participant 11				x				

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