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Evidence-Based School Counseling: An Evolving Paradigm

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EBSCC March 12, 2022

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*EVIDENCE-BASED
SCHOOL
COUNSELING: AN
EVOLVING PARADIGM*

Session Objectives

Participants will compare-and-contrast the traditional model of evidence-based school counseling with an evolved, social justice-oriented evidence-based school counseling lens.

Participants will analyze their own work through the evolved evidence-based school counseling lens to identify areas of growth in their programs and practice.

Participants will discuss the future of evidence-based school counseling (EBSC) and how EBSC can advance anti-racist school counseling and social justice efforts.



Evidence-Based School Counseling

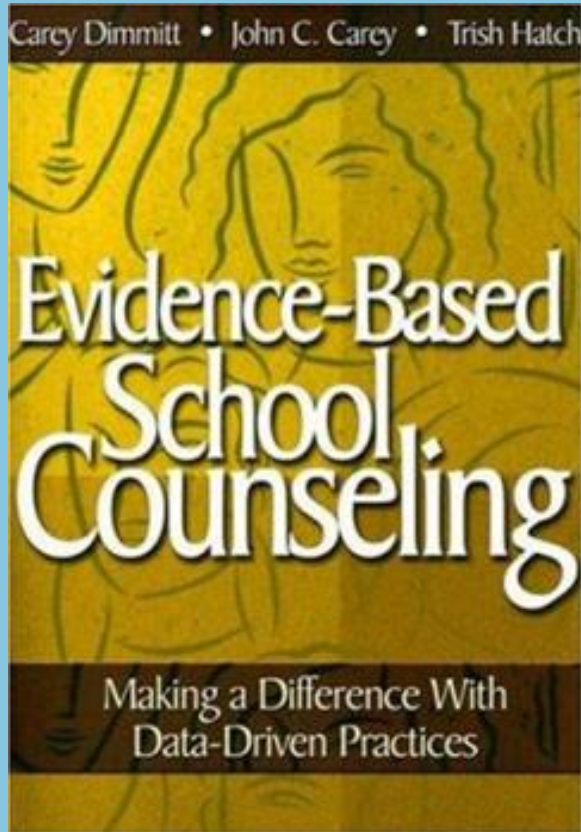
Think back to 2007 when Carey and co-authors published the evidence-based school counseling book.

What words come to mind when you think of evidence-based school counseling in that time period?

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How Can EBSC Contribute to the Current School Context?

If we consider EBSC (2007 version) to be:

- Using data to identify problems and student deficits
 - Finding manualized interventions
 - Focusing on specific academic outcomes
- ~ We may not find as much utility for its use to support students as they persist through today's complex educational and social contexts

Foundational Contexts 1

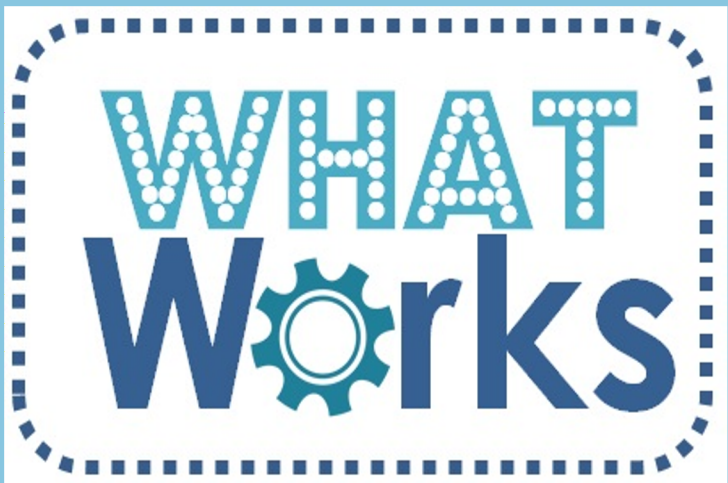
Naming resources and barriers at both the **systemic** and **student levels** acknowledges the complexities of schools and reminds us to address how multidetermined—especially in complex institutions like schools—human experiences really are.

It also reminds us to take a step back and make sure our schools or programs are not holding students accountable for a situation they did not create and that they don't have the institutional power to shift.

With this lens, EBSC = multi-faceted systems work + student-level work



Foundational Contexts 2



We believe in using evidence-based interventions (EBIs) or research-supported activities or approaches (e.g. to address system change)

- We know they work (if validated with population matched to ours)
- They save us time

Our job, then, is to choose interventions (if available) that research studies have shown are effective with student populations, or system change efforts, similar to what we are supporting. We can then base our decisions on the best possible research knowledge about the issue.

Foundational Contexts 3

If we prioritize addressing student-identified needs, such as anxiety, feelings of belonging, feeling safe at school, indicators of trauma, and levels of hope

→ improvements in the outcome variables (i.e., behavior referrals and academic achievement) are likely to soon follow

Being able to articulate the relationship between these levels of change is an important skill.



How Can EBSC Contribute to the Current School Context?



We can consider EBSC evolving to become a PROCESS:

- Exploring the (complex) nature of the situation we hope to impact
 - Investigating what is known about how best to create change in that situation
 - Thoughtfully assessing to determine if change has occurred
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How Can EBSC Contribute to the Current School Context?

With the latter definition in mind, the EBSC approach **can be used to address widespread, systemic barriers to student holistic life success that may be due to the pandemic, the profound negative impacts of institutionalized racism, or the multiple mental health difficulties that students are experiencing.**

NOW

What Could EBSCC Look Like?

Ideally, when the EBSC approach is applied in a multilayered and intentional manner it can:

- identify barriers at multiple levels
- address systemic issues
- show us where to invest in students personally
- track the results of those efforts

Understanding EBSC as a Series of Opportunities

When the focus is primarily using data, or choosing evidence-based interventions, we can miss the vital, larger ecological issues that are creating the student-level challenges we are attempting to address with our interventions in the first place.

- How do we support our students' resilience in addressing ongoing racism and multiple types of prejudice they may experience?
- How do we make sure our schools promote mental health and even wellbeing for all people - adults and students?
- How can we use root cause analysis to better understand the nature of the problem?
- How can we work transparently and in collaboration during the investigation into what is known about how to best address the problem?
- How can we use culturally-informed assessments to measure success?



School Counselors Are Well-Situated...

We believe that school counselors are ideally situated to implement preventative and developmental interventions that **increase wellness and social justice outcomes** (see reference list at the end of this ppt).

The question is not if the issues exist, or if they are within our purview as SC to address, but rather whether we are defining these issues as the problems of practice to which we give our time and expertise.



Before We Even Start the EBSC Process



- How do our own identities and potential biases impact our approach to our School Counseling work?
 - How do our lenses shape what we prioritize and what we notice?
 - What we define as the goals of our work can constrict or expand the choices we make going forward...
 - What assumptions do we have about schooling, our students, mental health, success, achievement, etc. and how might those shape our decisions?
 - What political demands or contexts might be shaping our practice?
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Opportunities at the First Step - Use of Data

Are we looking at data that prioritizes student needs and best interests?

Are the data we are using reinforcing existing inequities or oppressive practices?

Is there data that can provide a comprehensive and holistic view of the academic and social/emotional outcomes for our students?

Can we find data that provides an ecologically coherent picture of root causes of both the struggles and the inherent strengths of our student and their school/ family/ community contexts?

➤ What data opportunities exist in your contexts?



Opportunities at the First Step - Use of Data

Multilayered data

Data that can identify strengths and challenges

Systemic and individual level data

What changes will successfully address an identified problem?

Reminds us

- of the complexities of schools
- to address how multidetermined human experiences are
- **to make sure we are not holding students accountable for a situation they did not create and that they don't have the institutional power to shift!**

Opportunities at the Second Step

- What Do We Know Works?



Multi-tiered activities and interventions to address what was identified in the first step:

- Evidence-based interventions
- Research-supported interventions
- Research-supported practices at the systemic level
- Self-created - when and where?

Where are we intervening, and what are our goals?

What is worth spending time, money, and energy on?

- What opportunities exist for you in your contexts related to doing what works?

Opportunities at the Third Step – Assessing and Communicating Impact

To assess impact, we need to know the change process that occurs between a targeted intervention, student and systemic changes, and any related data shifts

How can you know that change has happened?
Who/what/when/how?

Are we measuring engagement, feelings of connectedness and belonging, feelings of safety, resilience, and noncognitive assets in addition to academic outcomes?

Share the impact you've made with all involved, including families and communities...

What opportunities exist for you in your contexts at the third step?

Evidence-Based School Counseling

Takeaways: After our conversation today . . .

What words come to mind when you think of evidence-based school counseling?



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