Comprehensive Competency-Based Guidance: A Sampling of State Models

Dan Bernard and Kim Bloss

Overview

Connolly and Bruner (1974) suggest that competence is not just one’s capacity to interact effectively with his or her external environment, but is also the ability to change one’s personal environment. The American School Counselors Association (ASCA) describes comprehensive developmental guidance programs as having specific educational objectives, with accountability, that students attain at various stages of developmental growth (ASCA, 1984). These definitions make up the core of the Comprehensive Competency-Based Guidance (CCBG) models reviewed by the authors. The following is a brief comparison of the CCBG models adopted by Idaho (ID) (Idaho Department of Education, 1989), Indiana (IN) (Indiana State Department of Education, 1990), and New Hampshire (NH) (New Hampshire Department of Education, 1987). All three affirm the vital importance of developmental school counseling programs within the total educational system.

Purpose of CCBG Models

The primary purpose of the CCBG, as described by each of the three subject states, is to provide a model for schools to use in developing local guidance and counseling programs. The purpose statements of all three models emphasize student outcomes relative to individual student growth. An interesting difference in the statement of purpose for the NH model is an additional provision for “quality time” for counselors in their interactions with students.

Philosophy of CCBG Models

Although the philosophy of each state model has a different title (i.e., philosophy (ID), assumptions (IN), tenets and beliefs (NH)), the content of each is similar. Common to each CCBG model is a statement describing the CCBG model as (a) a program, not a service; (b) a curriculum based on the needs of the student; (c) having either measurable competencies or student outcomes; (d) being part of the school’s total educational package; (e) involving students, parents, school personnel, and the community; (f) having identifiable outcomes or student competencies; and (g) being evaluated on a regular basis. Although all three models include applicable grade levels, they are not for the same duration (i.e., ID prescribes levels K - 12, IN prescribes Pre kindergarten - 12, and NH uses the term “all educational levels”).

Common to the philosophy of ID and NH is a CCBG program described as (a) seeking educational excellence through individual excellence; (b) being consistent with expected developmental stages of learning; (c) providing developmental as well as preventive and remedial services; and (d) having an ongoing program for developing counselors’ professional development. Common to the philosophy of ID and IN is a provision for the coordination and implementation of the program by a certified or licensed school counselor. Unique to IN is the declaration that the CCBG model is essential to students’ academic success.

Rationale of CCBG Models

Each state’s model incorporates an integral part of a school’s educational program, is developmental by design, and is structured sequentially as preschool children become adolescents. In addition, the rationale for all three CCBG models delineates four delivery systems: (a) guidance curriculum (identifies student competencies to be attained); (b) developmental areas of personal/social, education, and career; (c) responsive services (counseling, consultation, and referral); and (d) system support (effective program management and accountability).

The ID and NH models are organized and implemented by certified school counselors, with the support of teachers, parents, administrators, and the community. A unique aspect of the NH rationale is the inclusion of a statement mandating that students not only be provided with basic job skills, but also that they learn what employers describe as “employability skills” (i.e., teamwork, reliability, honesty, and knowing how to learn). Such skills are necessary if students are to avoid a mismatch between occupational roles and life roles.

Program Benefits of CCBG Models

The authors of the IN and NH programs, as did the originators of the ID model, elected to address rationale and benefits separately. Specific school populations that will benefit from the CCBG program, and a schedule of benefits for each population, are delineated in each model. Populations common to each model are administrators, teachers, school counselors, students, and parents. The IN model also lists school boards, student services staff, and business-industry-labor as populations benefiting from CCBG programming.

Consistent with the intent of this manuscript (i.e., a brief review of three CCBG models) only the benefits to students are described herein. Benefits common to the models are increases in (a) knowledge and assistance in career exploration; (b) decision-making skills; (c) knowledge of self and others; (d) knowledge of a changing world; and (e) opportunities for counselor-student interaction. In addition, ID includes increases in opportunities for consistent counseling services throughout a student’s school career and increases in class performance. The NH schedule of student benefits includes the ability to identify and learn life skills.

Student Competencies in CCBG Models

Idaho

Student competencies are divided into three separate domains: (a) personal/social development, (b)
educational development, and (c) career development. Within each domain a schedule of student outcomes is provided with specific criteria for satisfying each student outcome. Adjacent to the specific criteria is a matrix system that is used to determine educational level (i.e., Elementary, Middle/Junior High, and High School) and which is applicable to each criterion and one or two of the three options (i.e., introduce, develop, or reinforce the skill concept).

**Indiana**

The number of competencies and criteria in the IN model exceeds that of the ID model. Student competencies are divided into three separate domains described as Learning to Live, Learning to Learn, and Learning to Work, with specific competencies and criteria listed within each domain. A separate schedule of the three domains, student competencies, and criteria is provided for each of three educational levels (i.e., Pre-K/Elementary, Junior High/Middle School, and Senior High School). Encoding of the four delivery systems is provided for program planning purposes. The codes are C (school curriculum), I (individual planning), R (responsive services) and S (system support). One of the four codes, or a combination thereof, is scheduled in a column to the right of the applicable criterion.

**New Hampshire**

The NH model, similar to the ID and IN, is composed of the three domains (i.e., personal-social, educational, and career) and delivery systems (i.e., guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support). However, this model is slightly more complex and has considerably more competencies. The competencies are scheduled under nine separate categories (i.e., self-understanding, global and social understanding and skills, decision making, intellectual development, school world understanding, understanding personal economics, task skills and marketability, work world understanding, and leisure time planning). The categories are prioritized to meet the developmental needs of the learner.

**Conclusion**

There are more similarities than differences in the above models. This is particularly true in terms of similarities in program components, competencies, delivery systems, and desired program outcomes. Overall the states' efforts are primarily directed toward designing a “process” for developing, implementing, and achieving goals based on the attainment of certain student competencies within a developmental structure. The envisioned “outcomes” of the process are fully functioning students who are capable of self-understanding, planning their lives, and successfully implementing those plans.

**References**


Dan Bernard is an Assistant Professor of Counselor Education at The University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, LA.

Kim Bloss is an Assistant Professor of Counselor Education, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, LA