

Take Advantage Of All Your School Counselor Has To Offer

from the American Counseling Association

With every new school year comes new opportunities and challenges as kids head back into the classroom. It may be a new teacher to face, new friends to make, new tough subjects or a whole range of other issues that can leave a student at any age feeling anxious and worried.

And while most of those issues seem to work themselves out in the first few days or weeks of classes, there can be challenges for your child, both academically and socially, that might present real problems for the coming school year.

While the classroom teacher may be where most parents first turn for help for their child, an important resource that shouldn't be overlooked is the school counselor. That's especially true for students in middle school and higher when students may be spending only one period each day with a particular teacher. That classroom teacher may have a limited view of your child, while the school counselor is often able to gain a more encompassing picture of what may be happening.

Unfortunately, many parents do not realize how important a resource the school counselor can be. School counselors are probably among the best educated and trained professionals in your child's school. Every state requires school counselors to be certified by the State Department of Education. Most states require school counselors to have an undergraduate degree in elementary or secondary education and to meet the requirements to be certified as a teacher. Several states even require a number of years of classroom experience. Many school counselors are not only experienced classroom teachers, but hold a Masters degree in counseling or a related field.

As well-trained professional counselors, school counselors understand both the educational process and the developmental stages that children go through. They understand the significant self-concept developmental issues that can occur through puberty and early adolescence, and know how to help students facing difficulties at such times.

While a school counselor's primary job is to help the student, they can also provide valuable assistance to parents facing problems with their children, especially problems such as a child unhappy with school and reluctant to attend.

It's a good idea to make an appointment with your child's school counselor early in the school year. Find out what he or she, as a professional counselor, has to offer and how that expertise and experience can help benefit both your child and you.

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