

The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

School Counselors – A Valuable Resource For You

from the American Counseling Association

School counselors are certainly incredibly busy people. But our advice is that it's your job this school year to make sure they are even busier. We don't mean creating busy work, but rather taking advantage of all your school counselors have to offer.

School counselors can offer a wide range of assistance to both students and parents, yet, unfortunately, most parents know little just how much their child's school counselor can offer. So this year, early in your child's school year, make an effort to get to know his or her counselor and make the most of this very valuable educational resource.

All school counselors have a great deal of training and are certified or licensed by the state. In most states school counselors are required to hold at least a Masters degree.

These are professionals who are trained to understand young people and help them reach their educational goals. Through standardized testing and monitoring of classroom performance, counselors can advise teachers, students and parents about classes offering the appropriate challenges and the best educational outcomes.

That guidance portion of a school counselor's work progresses with older students to advising them on which classes can best fulfill their educational and career goals, as well as explaining options for colleges, technical training or other directions after high school.

And, as trained professional counselors, school counselors can also assist students facing potential problem areas. From drug issues to bullying situations to improving study skills, school counselors are there to help students, and families, better handle the challenges that students today face. They don't have magic wands but can offer proven techniques and approaches that can assist in coping with problem areas.

Don't wait for a crisis to talk with your child's school counselor. An introductory meeting early in the year provides a chance to meet the counselor, to discuss your child, and to learn what assistance might be available.

Even more important is to contact that counselor quickly when problems first appear. Slipping grades or abrupt changes in a child's attitude, behavior or friends, can all be signs that help is needed. That's when a professional counselor can make a real difference.

School counselors are professionals who have a great deal to offer our children. When we don't take advantage of their training, skills and experience, we're only shortchanging ourselves, our children and our children's educational experience.

Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

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