



American Counseling Association

# School Counselor Connection

## Time Management: Strategies for School Counselors

Student-to-counselor ratio data collected by the U.S. Department of Education reflect the challenges that professional school counselors face in the delivery of services to students in the American education enterprise. Data for the 2014-2015 academic year reflects a student-counselor ration of 482-1, exceedingly higher than the 250-1 target recommended by the American School Counselor Association and the American Counseling Association.

Until these outrageously high ratios are addressed, school counselors may wish to consider the following twelve time management strategies to conserve and direct their energies in the service to students:

- Arrest your personal “time bandits” ~ Perform regular evaluations of your time use with an emphasis on behaviors that will promote efficiency.
- Consider new and innovative ways of performing tasks ~ Examine how other counselors work and copy behaviors that lead to greater personal efficiency. Avoid the “it’s always been done that way” mentality.
- Do the right thing ~ Recognize the difference between doing the right thing and doing things right.
- Get organized ~ Maintain “to do” lists and calendars that allow for orderly planning and performance.
- Rank tasks by their importance ~ Recognize “urgent” when it occurs. Learn to prioritize, as well as practice the art of “intelligent neglect.”
- Eliminate desk stress ~ Practice the principle of “one touch” and eliminate piles that impede progress and influence efficiency.
- Eliminate or control distractions ~ Learn how to say “no” or “not yet” when required.
- Learn to delegate ~ Evaluate how support staff and volunteers, including students, might perform role specific tasks and delegate accordingly.
- Use technology effectively ~ Assess the degree to which technological tools can be an ally and enlist its utilization.
- Apply the principles of program management (i.e., planning, design, implementation, evaluation and maintenance) in all aspects of the school counseling program.
- Ensure your personal wellness ~ Avoid coming early or staying late, practice healthy habits and strive for a desirable work-life balance.
- Reward yourself ~ Have a coffee, water or piece of fruit to celebrate the completion of a demanding task or assignment.

Never consider that any list of time management strategies contains the “magic bullet” that will target the personal behaviors of every individual and free their time for greater student engagement. School counselors should engage in a personal assessment of “what works” in their personal situations and perfect those strategies that are most compatible with their individual personalities, habits and competencies.

— Frank Burtnett, Ed.D.