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## Research Support for School Counseling

Masters-level, credentialed school counselors work with students in academic development, social and emotional skill development, and college/career development. Their work supports student success through education in these domains, improvement of skills, reduction of stress, and improvement in mental health functioning.

### Overall Effectiveness of School Counseling

A meta-analysis of school counseling outcome research (117 studies, 153 school counseling interventions, and 16,296 students) found an overall effect size of .30. Students who participated in the interventions improved almost a third of a standard deviation more than their peers who did not receive the interventions. In other words, school counseling interventions have a larger effect size than aspirin for preventing heart attacks (ES of .06) and an equivalent effect size to sertraline (“Zoloft”) compared to placebo, for treating major depressive disorder (ES of .31).

Whiston & Quinby (2009). Review of school counseling outcome research. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(3), 267-272. Schatzberg & Nemeroff (2009). *Textbook of Psychopharmacology*. Arlington, VA: The American Psychiatric Publisher.

A study of 22,601 students, after controlling for socioeconomic status and enrollment size, found that those attending middle schools with more fully implemented comprehensive programs reported feeling safer attending their schools, believed that their education was more relevant and important to their futures, were more satisfied with the quality of education available to them in their schools, had fewer problems related to the physical and interpersonal milieu in their schools, and earned higher grades.

Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski (2001). Helping seventh graders be safe and successful: A statewide study of the impact of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 79, 320-330.

After controlling for enrollment size and socioeconomic status, a state-wide study of Missouri high schools found that students in schools with more fully implemented school counseling programs were more likely to report that they had earned higher grades, their education was better preparing them for the future, their school made more career and college information available to them, and their school had a more positive climate (greater feelings of belonging and safety at school, classes less likely to be interrupted, peers behaving better).

Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun (1997). The impact of more fully implemented guidance programs on the school experiences of high school students: A statewide evaluation study. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 75, 292-302.

### College and Career Readiness

Several studies have found that school counselors are very effective in assisting students with career development and college counseling.

Blackhurst, Auger, & Wahl (2003). Children's perceptions of vocational preparation requirements. *Professional School Counseling*, 7(2), 58-67. Art & Science Group, Inc. (2000). *Student Poll 4:2*, 1-10. Available at [www.artsci.com](http://www.artsci.com). Peterson, Long, & Billups (1999). The effect of three career interventions on educational choices of eighth grade students. *Professional School Counseling*, 3:1, 34-42. Whiston, Sexton, & Lasoff (1998). Career-intervention outcome: A replication and extension of Oliver and Spokane (1988). *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 45, 150-165. Mau, Hitchcock, & Calvert (1998). High school students' career plans: The influence of others' expectations. *Professional School Counseling*, 2:2, 161-166. Lapan, Gysbers, Hughey, & Arni (2003). Preparing rural adolescents for post-high school transitions. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 81(3), 329-342.

Students who participate in career development curriculum show significantly more understanding of career possibilities, more future orientation, and greater self-efficacy and increased school engagement.

Dimmitt (2007). *The Real Game evaluation results*. Washington, DC: America's Career Resource Network. Available at [http://californiacareers.info/downloads/FinalReport\\_RG\\_Evaluation.pdf](http://californiacareers.info/downloads/FinalReport_RG_Evaluation.pdf); Lapan, Gysbers, Hughey, & Arni (1993). Evaluating a guidance and language arts unit for high school juniors. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 71, 444-451.

Career interventions done by school counselors with middle school students have a direct impact on students' abilities to understand their educational choices and the relationship between academic choices and careers.

Peterson, Long, & Billups (1999). The effect of three career interventions on the educational choices of eighth grade students. *Professional School Counseling*, 3(1), 34-42.

Middle school students demonstrate improved knowledge and performance in math and science courses after participating in a math and science career awareness intervention.

Fouad. (1995). Career linking: An intervention to promote math and science career awareness. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 73, 527-534.

Career interventions that do not use school counselors (e.g. computerized career guidance programs) have been found to be significantly less effective than groups, workshops and classes run by counselors.

Whiston, Brecheisen, & Stephens (2003). Does treatment modality affect career counseling effectiveness? *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 62, 390-410.

## Academic Achievement

Elementary school students do better on both national tests of academic knowledge and on state tests of academic achievement when there is a comprehensive developmental school counseling program in their school (sample of 5,618 students).

Sink & Stroh (2003). Raising achievement test scores of early elementary school students through comprehensive school counseling programs. *Professional School Counseling*, 6(5), 350-364.

High school students in schools with comprehensive school counseling programs are more academically successful, as measured by GPA.

Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun (1997). The impact of more fully implemented guidance programs on the school experiences of high school students: A statewide evaluation study. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 75, 292-302.

Elementary and middle school students who participate in school counseling curriculum and group interventions that focus on cognitive, social and self-management skills (Student Success Skills) have consistently shown significantly stronger math and reading scores on state tests.

Brigman & Campbell (2003). Helping students improve academic achievement and school success behavior. *Professional School Counseling*, 7, 91-98; Webb, Brigman, & Campbell (2005). Linking school counselors and student success: A replication of the Student Success Skills approach targeting the academic and social competencies of students. *Professional School Counseling*, 8, 407-413.

School counseling study skills interventions have been shown to improve middle school students' grades and to improve 4<sup>th</sup> graders' academic achievement as measured by CTBS.

St. Clair (1989). Middle school counseling research: A resource for school counselors. *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling*, 23, 219-226; Whiston & Sexton (1998). A review of school counseling outcome research: Implications for practice. *Journal of Counseling and Development* 76, 412-426.

Group counseling interventions for students at risk of failing have been found to effectively support improvement in student achievement.

Hoag & Burlingame (1997). Evaluating the effectiveness of child and adolescent group treatment: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 26(3), 234-246.

Classroom and counseling interventions about stress reduction techniques can reduce test anxiety and improve student self-concept, sense of locus of control, appropriate coping strategies, and test scores.

Cheek, Bradley, Reynolds, & Coy (2002). An intervention for helping elementary students reduce test anxiety. *Professional School Counseling* 6(2), 162-164; Eder & Whiston (2006). Does psychotherapy help some students? An overview of psychotherapy outcome research. *Professional School Counseling*, 9(5), 337-343.

Group counseling by school counselors has positive effects on academic achievement with underachieving elementary and middle school students.

Campbell & Brigman (2005). Closing the achievement gap: A structured approach to group counseling. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 30, 67-82.; Wilson (1986). Effects of a classroom guidance unit on sixth graders' examination performance. *Journal of Humanistic Education and Development*, 25(2), 70-79.

## Dropout Prevention

A dropout prevention program for middle school students that combined academic tutoring and group counseling resulted in improvements in students' academic achievement, behavior, and self esteem.

Edmondson & White (1998). A tutorial and counseling program: Helping students at-risk of dropping out of school. *Professional School Counseling*, 1(4), 43-51.

The School Dropout Assistance Program (1991-1996) found that counseling services were one of the key elements of effective dropout prevention initiatives.

Kaufman, Klein, & Frase (1999). Dropout Rates in the United States, 1997. Statistical Analysis Report. U.S. Department of Education.

## Promoting Positive Behaviors

A widely used school counseling comprehensive curriculum about positive social skills (Second Step) has been found to diminish physically aggressive behavior and to increase neutral/ prosocial behavior.

Grossman et al. (1997). Effectiveness of a violence prevention curriculum among children in elementary school. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 277(20), 1605-1611.

School Counseling decreases classroom disturbances by supporting teachers in the classroom and enabling teachers to provide quality instruction. Students in schools that provide counseling services indicated that their classes were less likely to be interrupted by other students and that their peers behaved better in school.

Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun. (1997). The impact of more fully implemented guidance programs on the school experiences of high school students: A statewide evaluation study. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 75, 292-302.

School counseling classroom curriculum designed to educate HS students about goal-setting, problem-solving, career exploration, and school resources has been found to significantly improve student behavior, attitude and knowledge in these areas.

Schlossberg, Morris, & Lieberman (2001). The effects of a counselor-led guidance intervention on students' behaviors and attitudes. *Professional School Counseling*, 4, 156-164.

School-based programs designed to decrease aggressive behavior show considerable success in impacting behaviors, related feelings of safety, and disciplinary events.

Wilson, Lipsey, & Derzon (2003). The effects of school-based intervention programs on aggressive behavior: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 71, 136-149.

A comprehensive drop-out prevention program involving counseling and tutoring significantly helped at-risk students in improving school achievement, self-esteem, and classroom behavior.

Edmondson & White (1998). A tutorial and counseling program: Helping students at-risk of dropping out of school. *Professional School Counseling*, 1(4), 43-51.

Group counseling has been found to be effective for social skills training at the elementary level and for relaxation training at the high school level.

Borders & Drury (1992). Comprehensive school counseling programs: A review for policymakers and practitioners. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 70, 487-498; Whiston & Sexton (1998). A review of

school counseling outcome research: Implications for practice. *Journal of Counseling and Development* 76, 412-426.

## Improving Mental Health Functioning

School-based psychotherapy has consistent significant beneficial effects on student well-being.

Prout & Demartino (1986). A meta-analysis of school-based studies of psychotherapy. *Journal of School Psychology*, 24, 285-292. Prout & Prout (1998). A meta-analysis of school-based studies of counseling and psychotherapy: An update. *Journal of School Psychology*, 36, 121-136.

A meta-analysis of school counseling responsive services, which includes individual counseling, group counseling, referral, consultation, and peer assistance programs, found an overall effect size of .35, or more than one third of a standard deviation of improvement compared to control groups.

Whiston & Quinby (2009). Review of school counseling outcome research. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(3), 267-272.

## Emerging Best Practices in School Counseling

As our culture and educational institutions change, school counseling practices are emerging to better meet the needs of today's students. School counselors are accomplishing this by, among other activities, the following:

- Preparing and delivering classroom guidance lessons which impact all students in a preventative and proactive manner
- Studying data to determine which students are not being adequately serviced
- Using data to improve program delivery and implementation
- Ensuring that all students are college-ready, whether or not they choose to enter a post-secondary education immediately after high school
- Providing the necessary college and career education so that all students can make informed choices
- Creating job readiness programs that include job shadowing, internships, and career education curriculum.

## For More Information

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