Introduction to Comprehensive Competency-Based Guidance (CCBG): The Essential Elements

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Overview

Having been prepared as a school counselor in the late 1960's, having been a school counselor for five years, and having been closely aligned with the preparation of school counselors since that time, I was dreadfully aware how few major changes had taken place in school counseling since the inauguration of NDEA institutes in the 1950's. Then I began to hear about the Comprehensive Competency-Based Guidance (CCBG) work of Dr. Norm Gysbers and his associates while I was a school counselor in Missouri in the seventies. Unfortunately, I left Missouri and the public schools for counselor education positions in Michigan, Iowa, and ultimately, Arizona before I heard the entire CCBG story.

In Flagstaff, at the beginning of 1990's, I began to hear of the work of Dr. Tina Ammon at the Arizona Department of Education and her efforts to institute a series of Arizona Counselor Academies to teach counselors about a whole new way of doing business based on the Gysbers Model and the Model of Sharon and Clarence (Curly) Johnson. I became part of the Academy Cadre, attended an academy and then became involved in telling the CCBG story.

Much has been written about CCBG, but my relatively recent experience with CCBG has led me to the following concerns and conclusions: (a) The literature is most often written by professors for professors, (b) The literature is often devoid of practical suggestions as to how real-world school counselors have actually gone about CCBG program implementation, (c) The literature rarely includes data supporting the value of CCBG programs, (d) The literature rarely contains in one place enough information about CCBG competencies for a counselor to piece together a relevant set of competencies for his or her school or district and (e) The literature often gives diminutive attention to CCBG programs at the elementary school level. This digest then is intended to address these issues and concerns.

• First, I have gone to great lengths to obtain digests written by practitioners, and particularly by practitioners who work in schools or in districts where diversity is often their only commonality. Don Leigh’s digest, which highlights the contributions CCBG can make to Department of Defense Schools, is very different from Natalie Zeitlin’s digest on the inner city schools of Phoenix.

• Second, I have been fortunate to obtain many nuts and bolts suggestions from practitioners regarding program implementation. We in Arizona have been blessed with the presence of Stan Maliszewski, Supervisor of Guidance in the Omaha Public Schools, who is soon to be granted honorary citizenship in our state for his constant willingness to share his expertise and his Omaha CCBG successes.

• Third, I have been able to generate relatively hard data (survey information) and soft data (testimonials) regarding the effectiveness of CCBG programs. The efforts of Richard Montano and his colleagues in the Sunnyside district are truly outstanding. Also, an important contribution here is Ken Patch’s work outlining how CCBG is perceived in the world of business and industry.

• Fourth, these digests’ samples of competencies encourages the reader to be selective so that a set of school or district-wide competencies can be assembled in a matter of hours. Those competencies come from NOICC, Omaha Public Schools, Missouri Schools, and several districts in Arizona including Tucson, Sunnyside, and Round Valley.

• Finally, several outstanding elementary programs have been identified and are featured here, namely Casi Ruffo’s work in Sierra Vista, Luchi Alvarez’ work in Tucson, and Adele Bromiel’s work in Sunnyside.

Caveats

As is true of all the following digests, one cannot depend solely on this digest series for all information about CCBG programs. The reader is encouraged to review several recent publications that will greatly add to the depth of material presented here. Three, in particular, come to mind: Paisley and Hubbard’s Developmental School Counseling Programs: From Theory to Practice (1994) has much to say about the importance of the developmental aspect of school counseling programs such as CCBG. Starr and Gysbers’ Missouri Comprehensive Guidance: A Model for Program Development and Implementation (1993) is perhaps the most comprehensive and most widely researched publication on program development and implementation available to date. Gysbers’ Comprehensive Guidance Programs That Work (1990) presents both the comprehensive model and compelling descriptions of programs in different school settings. Finally, the work edited by Joe Wittmer, Managing Your School Counseling Program: K-12 Developmental Strategies (1993) presents important contributions from a wide variety of practitioners and theories. With these publications, plus the present ERIC CCBG Digest, one would be well armed to begin the task of designing and establishing an outstanding CCBG program.

The reader will note some repetition in the introductory materials of the three NOICC Competency digests and the four CCBG digests. The similarity is intentional so that counselors at the elementary, middle school, and high school level will all begin the process of competency identification and selection at the same point and with the same knowledge.
Defining Comprehensive Competency-Based Guidance Programs

Because much of the CCBG work I have observed is based on the work of Johnson and Johnson, or Gysbers and Henderson, I shall present both their definitions here.

Competency-based guidance provides a new paradigm that changes the perspective on counselors' contributions and responsibilities. There is more than one way to approach the development of a competency-based program that may or may not include addressing how guidance interacts with other aspects of the school educational program, such as counselor's time allocations, school climate and counselor responsibilities for others within the school. However, the one common focus is the need to ensure that all students gain specific competencies they need to be successful students and successful adults. (Johnson & Johnson, 1991). And

Guidance programs are developmental and comprehensive in that the activities are conducted on a regular and planned basis to assist students to achieve specific competencies. Although immediate and crisis needs of students are met, the major focus of a developmental program is to provide all students with experiences to help them grow and develop. Guidance programs are comprehensive in that a full range of activities and services such as assessment, information, consultation, counseling, referral, placement, follow-up, and follow-through are provided (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988).

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References


Gysbers, N., Comprehensive Guidance Programs That Work. Ann Arbor, MI: ERIC/CASS.


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