

Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Counseling

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COSC 611: Counseling Children and Adolescents in Schools: Social-Emotional Development
and Exceptionalities

Introduction

In order to truly develop a comprehensive counseling practice and program, a variety of imperative aspects must be explored, and a multitude of differing theories, interventions, and practices must be utilized. Through exploring developmental considerations, individual counseling processes, ethical considerations, theoretical approaches, multicultural counseling, transition programming, and counseling unique and exceptional students including those considered at-risk, it becomes clear that in order to truly implement a comprehensive, new-vision focused counseling program, the school counselor must be knowledgeable and have expertise in a wide range of topics, while also exhibiting the character and ability to be a life-long learner. As the field of school, counseling continues to grow, develop, and change to meet the new demands and needs of an ever-evolving world, the school counselor can access and utilize this plethora of information and knowledge to truly serve the students, school, and community in which they work.

Developmental and Cultural Considerations in Counseling

In examining a case study in regards to 14-year-old Larissa, an array of developmental and cultural considerations come to light. Vernon and Schimmel (2019) classify early adolescence to be between the ages of 11-and 14, placing Larissa right on the cusp of mid-adolescent development. In regards to Larissa's developmental level, there are many important considerations to be aware of as the school counselor. One aspect of this developmental level is the search for self, or the push for autonomy (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Throughout this time, it is typical for the early adolescent to push away from their parents. This is important to keep in mind due to the fact that Larissa and her family are struggling with finding a balance between Larissa's growing independence and want for autonomy, and Larissa's family ties and family

functions that may play into her Mexican culture. Vernon and Schimmel (2019) also highlight the increase in social development, as well as the increasingly significant role that peers begin to play in the lives of children within this stage of development. This is an important consideration in regards to Larissa, as she has a desire to spend more time with her friends, mainly on the weekends, but is struggling to adjust to the compromise that her parents have suggested due to some cultural differences and self-esteem issues. To address some of the developmental issues that Larissa is facing, I would utilize some different counseling approaches. Some basic counseling approaches I would use are reflection of feelings, reflection of meaning, and also process questioning (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). I would also ensure that I am building rapport with Larissa. When building rapport with clients, especially clients who have been referred by an adult or their parents, it is important to build trust and maintain feelings of value, thoughtfulness, and integrity (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Once a relationship of trust and understanding is established, the school counselor can begin to utilize different interventions and techniques to serve the individual needs of the student.

There are also many cultural considerations in regards to Larissa. Larissa was born in Mexico and has lived in the United States for five years. The school counselor must ensure that they are knowledgeable about the culture of the client they are servicing. Larissa and her family may have different values and presenting problems than students and families with different cultural backgrounds. For example, Larissa is hesitant to have her friends over to her house because her parents do not speak much English. Many children within this cultural group do not use English as their primary language, and this can cause problems related to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and chronic stress (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). One way to have a more effective counseling process with this cultural group is through utilizing familiar or relevant

metaphors and proverbs, and by using visual aids to help in mutual understanding (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Another strategy that could be utilized in the case of Larissa has to do with leadership skills and advocacy. The school counselor has the ability and expertise to create an environment where families feel welcomed and comfortable, in order to maximize communication between families and school personnel (Better-Bubon & Schultz, 2017). The school counselor can advocate for a diverse student population and connect families to the school community through engaging in collaboration, using reciprocal communication, and getting involved through being a role model to school staff to showcase how family engagement and connections have a multitude of positive impacts and outcomes for all students (Better-Bubon & Schultz, 2017). In utilizing the above techniques and considerations the school counselor can begin to ensure that Larissa and her family's needs are being met.

Major Changes Throughout Development

Throughout lifetime development, there are many changes that occur. Beginning with early childhood, which ranges from the ages of 2 to 5, there are a variety of changes to note. Many children in early childhood development believe that they are proficient at everything, and therefore have confidence in trying out new tasks (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Due to this confidence, as they begin to master new skills and new ways of viewing the world, their mastery and competence begin to change and increase (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). A developmental theory that relates to this self-development is Erik Erikson's psychosocial development. During the first four childhood stages, the ego of the child begins to emerge, continues to develop, and is explored through social relationships with parents or other important adults in the life of the child (Knight, 2017). Another change during this stage of development has to do with communication. Although the expansion of vocabulary is present, children within this stage often

use behaviors to communicate how they are feelings (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Throughout this stage, children begin to change and adapt as they learn new ways of identifying and expressing emotions, and towards the end of the stage, many children have a better understanding of how to respond verbally or physically to different feelings (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Lastly, children in the early childhood stage have a fascinating worldview filled with imagination and creativity. Some characteristics that showcase this worldview are animism and artificialism (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Children may give life-like qualities to objects such as dolls or toys, or they may attribute different events or natural phenomena to be caused by people (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). These characteristics aid the child in their ability to explore the world around them and participate in many types of play.

The next stage of development is middle childhood. This stage is riddled with a variety of changes. A social change that occurs during this stage is an enhancement in perspective taking (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). During this stage, socialization comes to the forefront and is very important. The opportunity to associate with different types of peers aids in the ability to take on and understand differing perspectives (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Vygotsky's social development theory highlights this change. Vygotsky's theory states that in order for full cognitive development to be attained, social interaction is necessary and required (Hedges, 2021). Another developmental change that occurs in this stage has to do with emotional development. Children increase their ability to recognize emotions within themselves and also within others and with this increase in emotion recognition comes an expansion of complex emotions such as pride and empathy (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Lastly, there are a plethora of physical changes during this stage. Some examples of physical changes are height and weight, puberty, body composition, and muscularity becoming more defined (Vernon & Schimmel,

2019). It is important to note that these physical changes often bring feelings of self-consciousness and even embarrassment.

Within the early adolescence stage, the child continues to grow and change. One marked change during this stage of development is related to the cognitive development of the child and can be explored by utilizing Piaget's theory of cognitive development. During this time of development, there is a continuous growth of the brain. There is a shift in thinking from concrete to formal operational thought (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). When this change occurs, the child begins to acquire the capacity to exercise abstract thinking (Braun & Tenenbaum, 2018). Another change in regards to cognitive development is the ability to link events and actions. Vernon and Schimmel (2019) use the example of failing a test and the amount of time spent studying. Adolescents at this stage may be unable to identify that the reason they failed the test is directly linked to the amount of time they spent studying the material. Another change during this stage has to do with social development. There may be an increase in conflict with adults during this stage due to the overwhelming feeling that negative emotions can cause (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). For example, many adolescents may use the feeling and actions of anger to mask their insecurities or vulnerabilities which can result in a distancing from adults and the inability to recognize underlying feelings (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019).

Finally, the mid-adolescent stage of development is a time of increasing complexity, demands, and also freedom. Some changes in regards to the development of self can be seen through an increase in self-confidence, an increased ability to develop an identity, and also the ability to perceive and consider long-term consequences (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory reflects some of the changes in social development that are experienced during this unique time. Adolescents in this stage experience an increase in social

situations with their peers, and therefore have the ability to develop their personal beliefs in regard to self-efficacy (Agile Mind, 2019). This is an important skill as it can aid in an individual's personal beliefs about their ability to succeed in specific tasks and situations (Agile Mind, 2019). This is also a time when many changes in physical development occur. For example, females are typically experiencing menstruation while males may experience facial hair and a lowering of the voice (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Sexual urges and sexuality come to the forefront during this stage as well and can be the cause of risky behavior such as unprotected sex, this illustrates the importance of sex education throughout this stage of life (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019).

Resiliency Traits

Resiliency is a characteristic that can create a plethora of positive outcomes for children as well as adults. One important role of the school counselor is to ensure that each child is exposed to the main social-emotional learning competencies which include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2019). Resiliency is directly related to social-emotional learning as well as positive student development. Resiliency is a process that is built throughout a process of obtaining information and memory mechanisms (Mariani Wigley et al., 2021). One example of a resiliency trait that supports student learning and development as well as the social-emotional competencies outlined above is the ability to regulate emotions (Mariani Wigley et al., 2021). By fostering this ability to identify and regulate emotions, the skills and competencies of self-management and self-awareness can be practiced and explored. Another resiliency trait that supports responsible decision-making is the ability to use problem-solving skills and the ability to seek out resources to help solve problems independently (Chan et al., 2021). When a child has the ability to solve

problems independently, they are able to demonstrate abilities such as curiosity and open-mindedness, evaluating consequences, and also evaluating personal, interpersonal, and community impacts (CASEL, 2019). These skills nurture many positive outcomes, including academic success and social-emotional wellbeing. Lastly, another resiliency trait is the ability and willingness to employ family and/or community resources to help cope with challenges and also to help recover from a variety of setbacks (Chan et al., 2021). This trait relates to the social-emotional competencies of relationship skills, social awareness, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2019). For example, a child who exhibits positive relationship skills has the ability to collaborate with a team, seek and offer support, communicate effectively, and also advocate for self and for others (CASEL, 2019). These characteristics positively impact both student learning and development, while also providing the individual with coping strategies that can aid them in addressing conflicts as they arise throughout the lifetime.

Individual Counseling Process

In practicing the individual counseling process as a school counselor, there are many steps that must be followed. In regards to Nancy, a 12-year-old student who recently was adopted and is having difficulties adjusting to her new siblings, the first step the school counselor must take after informed consent and confidentiality is the process of building rapport with the client (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Building rapport has a variety of positive outcomes, however, most importantly it creates an opportunity to build a relationship and build trust with the client. Vernon and Schimmel (2019) offer two activities that can help build rapport, one of them being the pick-up straws activity. This activity would be developmentally appropriate for Nancy, as she has the ability to express herself through verbal communication at a higher level than students in the early childhood stage of development. The counselor should also ensure that the physical space

is set up in such a way that it creates a feeling of comfort, and should contain a variety of developmentally appropriate resources that the counselor can utilize (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). It is also important to involve the parents and caregivers during this stage in the counseling process. Because Nancy was in the foster care system but has now been adopted, it is imperative that the school counselor reach out to the adoptive parents, involve them in the counseling process and ensure that they have the necessary resources to aid in the relationship-building process with Nancy.

The next step in the counseling process for Nancy would be the intake and assessment stage (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). This process as well as the process of building rapport begins immediately for the school counselor. During the intake process for Nancy, the school counselor would review her file, and ensure that all information in regards to Nancy is available so that the counselor can have a full picture of Nancy and her life thus far. Due to Nancy being in the foster care system, she may have a team of support that the school counselor can contact to explore and learn more about Nancy and her background. The school counselor should also speak with parents, past guardians, and current and past teachers to facilitate and maintain a collaborative practice in regard to Nancy (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). At this time, the presenting problem for Nancy is her struggle and difficulties getting along with her new siblings. The school counselor may find that Nancy has other presenting problems as they continue the counseling process, however, at this time the school counselor could utilize an assessment to further collect information on Nancy and to determine a treatment plan (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). A great collaborative step for the school counselor to take with Nancy is to set up a time to meet with her adoptive parents in person to learn more about the reasoning behind their referral and to collect more information on what is happening at home with Nancy and her younger siblings. Lastly,

another helpful strategy the counselor could employ during this step of the process is the BASIC ID model (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). This model has been adapted for children to include the HELPING model. In utilizing this model with Nancy, the counselor can help to ensure they are getting a comprehensive look at Nancy (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019).

The next stage in the process for Nancy would be developing and utilizing different interventions to help with Nancy's presenting problem. During this time, the counselor and Nancy begin to work collaboratively and identify goals, Nancy's adoptive parents could also be involved in this part of the process (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). It is important for the school counselor to be aware of previous interventions that Nancy has had, and if they were successful or unsuccessful so that the counselor can build off that information moving forward with Nancy. It is very important for Nancy to maintain positive relationships and siblingship with her new siblings, as there are a variety of positive outcomes that research has proven in regard to the sibling relationship, whether they be blood-related or not (Meakings et al., 2017). Some positive outcomes include mutual support, companionship, social skills, identity formation, and social, emotional, and cognitive development (Meakings et al., 2017). Some interventions that the school counselor could implement with Nancy that are developmentally and culturally appropriate are the use of role-play and drama, music therapy, and story starters. Specifically, in regards to the music intervention, the counselor could have Nancy find songs that help her cope with her conflicts with her younger siblings and help her see things from a different perspective, as well as help her to develop her sense of self to promote self-expression (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019).

The next stage in the process for Nancy would be the termination stage. This stage can occur for a variety of reasons such as family relocation, custody issues, or because the client is

ready to move on and end the counseling process (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Due to Nancy's age, her parents would be involved in this part of the process. Another aspect of termination is referrals. Although referrals may not always be necessary, it is important to have the ability to develop and assess the client's needs, and that includes advocating for care beyond the counselor's scope of practice and abilities (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). In the case of Nancy, some community resources and opportunities to help her transition to her new adoptive home and family would be beneficial. There are a variety of resources and opportunities available, some of these include webinars on supporting families and helping build family relationships from foster care to adoption (*Child Welfare Information Gateway*, 2015). If, for example, Nancy and her family lived in Virginia, the Virginia Family Network provides a plethora of resources, supports, workshops, classes, and services to families and children. There are workshops and classes for parents, children, and also families (*NAMI Virginia*, 2016). Lastly, a post-adoption support group or program could be beneficial for Nancy and her adoptive family. The State of Virginia offers post-adoption support services that include mentoring for children/teens, peer support for parents, community-based therapy, camps and retreats, and educational support (*AdoptUSKids*, n.d.).

Explanation of Counseling Process and Cultural Considerations

Through the example of Nancy, it is clear that the explanation of the counseling process is an essential skill and duty of the counselor. As a school counselor, there will be a variety of different clients and individuals with a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and social developmental levels. It is important to keep these levels in mind when explaining the counseling process to the client and their family/guardians. For example, if a counselor was working with a young client, one strategy to use when explaining the process is nonverbal techniques that could

include art, creativity, and play (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). On the other hand, if the counselor is working with an adolescent, it is important to employ patience and empathy. It is typical for a client at this age to shut down if the counselor pries for information too early on in the process (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). This could cause the client to shut down emotionally and damage the client-counselor relationship. The school counselor will also enter counseling relationships with students who may exhibit a wide range of cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral abilities. For example, in counseling students with disabilities, there are many factors to explore in regards to explaining and utilizing the counseling process. Some factors include the severity of the disorders, emotional capacity, age, gender, and economic status (Pascariu, 2020). It is also crucial for the counselor to understand the discrimination that students with disabilities may have experienced, and to look deeply at how others view the role of interpersonal power, differences and diversity, social skills, and self-determination (Pascariu, 2020). Overall, there are many considerations that the counselor must acknowledge in explaining the counseling process to the wide variety of clients that they will come into contact with. It is important for the counselor to maintain flexibility, patience, love, and support, and to utilize a wide range of techniques including play when explaining and exploring the counseling process.

Another consideration in regards to explaining the counseling process has to do with diverse clients and cultures. The school counselor will be servicing a student population that will become increasingly diverse over time, therefore they must consider how to explain the counseling process to someone whose first language is different from their own. The counselor must consider factors such as cultural values, family unit characteristics and practices, presenting problems, and history (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Counselor bias must also be considered and explored in order to ensure that the counselor is working towards increasing their multicultural

competency (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). In working with students and families from diverse cultures, it is the duty of the school counselor to provide advocacy, leadership, collaboration, and data-informed decision-making (Johnson et al., 2019). Research shows that school counselors have a positive impact on English learners and can increase academic success by developing partnerships with linguistically varied families. One way that school counselors can service these families and students is by ensuring that there is a translator available, or a staff member who is able to communicate and speak the language fluently so that there is successful and mutual communication. This is imperative in working with students and families who speak a different language than the counselor. Communication is one of the keys to relationship and rapport building, therefore, by providing this type of service the school counselor can begin to ensure that they are implementing a multiculturally competent school counseling program and adequately explaining the counseling process to diverse students and families. For example, if a school counselor is working in a community where there is a large population of Spanish speakers, one way the school can support these families is by hiring a Spanish-speaking counselor, providing translating services, and providing culturally relevant counseling (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). This point also illustrates one of the reasons why explaining the counseling process is important. It provides a clear pathway into the counseling relationship and can provide a feeling of ease to the student and their family (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Some students and families may be uncomfortable with counseling, or may not understand the need for it. In opening the lines of clear, consistent communication the counselor can begin to build a bridge of support between the school and the community it serves.

Termination Issues in Counseling Children and Adolescents

One of the last stages in the counseling process is termination and outside referrals. Terminating the counseling process and relationship can create a variety of feelings and emotions depending on the nature of the termination and the developmental level of the client. Some issues in regard to termination include difficulties in ending the relationship, anxiety, and unsettling thoughts (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). This is true for both the client and also the counselor. The school counselor may experience feelings of loss and sadness when terminating a counseling relationship, especially in servicing young clients (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). The school counselor must continually monitor themselves during these times of transition and pay attention to boundary issues such as dependency (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019).

There are many strategies that the counselor can use to aid in the termination process for both the client and the counselor. First, the counselor can use language that models healthy, safe, and genuine feelings towards termination and saying goodbye to the client (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Second, if there is still proximity between client and counselor, the counselor can schedule check-ups to visit with and progress monitor the client, to help with slowly releasing the relationship (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Third, the counselor can utilize a creative termination activity such as a sticker chart or memory book (*Counseling Today*, 2019). This activity may work well with younger clients who may struggle with the concept of termination. Fourth, the counselor can use the making a case for counseling activity. In this activity, the client creates a case and fills it with objects, pictures, drawings, and writings that help to summarize their experience (*Counseling Today*, 2019). Fifth, the counselor and client can create a survivor tree. This termination activity can help to celebrate and foster resilience and can help clients identify their areas of growth, their future hopes, and aspirations, coping skills, and also struggles by creating a large tree that has branches, roots, and also dead leaves (*Counseling Today*, 2019).

Lastly, the aloha lei or hello-goodbye activity can be used. In this activity the counselor explains that aloha means both hello and goodbye, this is a great segway into a conversation about endings that lead to new beginnings (*Counseling Today*, 2019). During this activity, the client and counselor create paper flowers that will be made into a lei, where they will list notable takeaways (*Counseling Today*, 2019). The client's peers, teachers, and family members can also be included in this creative activity and can help summarize the counseling experience by utilizing a metaphor (*Counseling Today*, 2019). Overall, it is essential for the counselor to convey warmth, patience, compassion, and caring to the client while also maintaining the goal of empowerment and promotion of self-worth and self-advocacy (*Counseling Today*, 2019). The termination of the counseling relationship creates a new beginning for the client and counselor, this is something to be celebrated and remembered through utilizing various strategies and interventions.

Ethical Considerations and Theoretical Approaches

There are many research-proven theoretical approaches that school counselors can employ in their practice. It is important to note that no single theory is successful or effective for the wide range of young clients and their experiences (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). The two approaches that I plan on primarily utilizing are motivational interviewing and solution-focused brief therapy. Motivational interviewing is an evidence-based approach that provides a guiding style to communication, while also providing empowerment and honoring client autonomy (MINT, 2019). This type of approach is very appealing to me, as I have a strong conviction in some of the core beliefs that make up motivational interviewing. For example, motivational interviewing is a collaborative process and extends the belief that people are the experts in their own lives (MINT, 2019). Some techniques I would utilize with this approach relate to the core

skills of motivational interviewing. Affirmations are one of the core skills this approach uses. Affirmations focus on strengths, achievements, and successes which can be used to help build confidence in the ability to create a maintain change (MINT, 2019). Another approach that I would utilize is the evoking process. Within this process, the counselor explores and helps the client create their own why (MINT, 2019). The intention behind this is to help elicit change through the client's ideas and motivations (MINT, 2019). This approach also takes culture and diversity into account, and has been applied across a wide range of settings, populations, languages, treatment formats, and presenting concerns (MINT, 2019). As a school counselor, I know I will be servicing a diverse community of students, and motivational interviewing is an approach that has been used across a variety of populations as stated previously and is proven effective in treating many common presenting concerns that children and adolescents face (MINT, 2019).

Another approach that I plan to utilize is solution-focused brief counseling. This type of approach is focused on the future, is goal-directed, and targets solutions rather than problems (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). It also emphasizes resilience, which is a key characteristic and trait that I want to employ and help foster in my future clients. A concept that I will employ within this approach is the maintenance of positive expectations, and also a focus on the importance of perception. This type of approach also is typically completed within four to six sessions, making it very applicable in the school counseling setting (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). This approach is very versatile and can be used to address a variety of issues, populations, and formats.

Solution-focused brief therapy is focused on client goals and utilizes the client's belief systems as well as takes on a humanistic approach (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). This creates an opportunity to meet the needs of many diverse students within a variety of different cultures.

In discussing the importance of cultural considerations in counseling approaches, it is imperative for the school counselor to also examine faith, spirituality, and worldview within the secular school counseling setting. Many issues that arise during the school-age years relate directly to culturally specific issues that are often embedded in spirituality and worldview (Kimbel & Schellenberg, 2013). Therefore, it is vital for the school counselor to have a framework to use in order to meet the needs of the students they serve and to meet students where they are. One proposed framework is the Spiritual and Religious Competencies for School Counselors (Kimbel & Schellenberg, 2013). These competencies have been reviewed by a diverse group of school counselors with a wide range of professional accolades and experiences. One way that I would use this resource as a school counselor is by practicing and maintaining my own spiritual/religious belief system self-awareness to help aid in my awareness of any personal biases (Kimbel & Schellenberg, 2013). These beliefs and biases can have many impacts on the counselor and client relationship as well as the counseling process (Kimbel & Schellenberg, 2013). For example, if the counselor identifies as a spiritual person who places a high value on faith, and a student comes in and expresses ideas that relate to atheism, there may be an impact on the relationship if the counselor is not self-aware of personal biases and beliefs. Another example is seen through religion and cultural values. If the counselor has a student who is Muslim, and they come in for support during Ramadan, it is the duty and role of the counselor to ensure that they are educated and knowledgeable on this important religious holiday. This aspect of counseling is addressed in the spiritual and religious development competencies, and its importance is shown through this example. Although spiritual and religious competencies for school counselors do not formally exist, ASCA and CACREP identify spirituality and religion as

a critical developmental and cultural aspects of students' lives, and therefore the school counselor must be prepared to address this in the secular school setting (Kimbel & Schellenberg, 2013).

Legal and Ethical Concerns

There are a variety of ethical and legal considerations for the school counselor in regard to servicing a 7-year-old student who was referred by his or her teacher. One of the first things to consider is informed consent, and communicating at a developmentally appropriate level so that the student understands the limits of confidentiality (American School Counselor Association, 2016). Given that the student is in elementary school and is 7 years old, I think a good starting point would be to have a conversation with the student and to also have a poster or some sort of sign that explains confidentiality in a simple way. One example I have seen at the school I work at is stating it as, what you share in this room will stay in this room, unless someone is hurting you, you want to hurt someone, or you want to hurt yourself. It is also important to continue to review this with younger students so that it becomes a norm for the counseling relationship. Another thing to consider is that the student's teacher made the referral, so it is imperative for the school counselor to communicate and collaborate with the referring teacher to ensure that both parties are providing the appropriate services and interventions. This is a great opportunity for the counselor and teacher to advocate for the student in a collaborative way. The counselor must also ensure that the student's information is kept confidential unless there is serious foreseeable harm (American School Counselor Association, 2016). Part of the counseling relationship with the student is built on rapport and trust. Therefore, in order to meet the ethical standards that relate to supporting student development and success, the counselor must establish and maintain a positive and supportive relationship with the student, while also ensuring that all confidentiality

and privacy standards are utilized for ethical and legal practice (American School Counseling Association, 2016).

Many school districts have specific policies in regard to informing parents/guardians about the counseling relationship. The school counselor must be familiar with district policies, as well as the ASCA ethical standards. In general, if a counselor is providing individual counseling to a student more than a few times, the counselor should inform the parents/guardians. It is the duty of the school counselor to maintain a partnership with parents and guardians within the school community, as this can be key to meeting the needs of the student and supporting their academic, career, and social-emotional success (American School Counselor Association, 2016). The ASCA standards addressed in regard to this 7-year-old student can be found in sections A.1, A.2, A.4, A.6, A.9, and A.12 (American School Counselor Association, 2016).

There are many reasons why the counselor may need to refer the student and their family to outside resources. One example of this is found under section A.6. in the ASCA ethical standards (2016). This section states that an outside referral can be made if the student or their family requests additional resources, or if the presenting issues are outside of the realm of practice for the school counselor. Also, if the student comes to the school counselor for individual counseling sessions but is requiring more long-term support rather than short-term support, an outside referral may be necessary (American School Counselor Association, 2016).

Creative Approaches to Counseling

School counselors have the ability to utilize a wide variety of therapeutic approaches to meet the diverse needs of the students they serve. One type of therapy that has been proven to promote an inclusive environment that fosters well-being is creative arts therapy (Hannigan et al., 2019). A specific approach I would use as a school counselor is expressive art therapy, such

as painting or drawing to create a self-narrative for the student. Hannigan et al., (2019) use the example of a student who recently experienced her parents getting divorced, and during a few sessions, she created an artistic expression of her father and her standing at the edge of a waterfall, ready to fall off into the water. Painting and drawing were used by the counselor to help the student express and process the difficult experience of her parents getting a divorce (Hannigan et al., 2019). Throughout a few different sessions, the student-created various pieces of art expressing the relationship she had with her father, and it led to a discussion about how she feels that she gives a lot to her father, and does not get anything back in return (Hannigan et al., 2019). Through this example, it is clear that creative approaches to therapy can help students express themselves in a nonverbal, artistic, and imaginative way. The reason I specifically chose this example is that this year I am working with older students who struggle academically with reading and writing, and I feel that drawing and painting could be a very beneficial way for them to express themselves, without struggling through the process of writing. I believe they could feel successful and recognize that they have strength in creativity and imagination, and it could be a coping strategy for communication and emotional expression.

Multicultural Counseling and Transition Programming

There are a few strategies to employ to help develop awareness, knowledge, and skills in counseling diverse youth. The first one I want to focus on is self-awareness in regard to neurological processes within our brain. The human brain is neurologically wired to perceive differences as possible threats (Luke et al., 2020). This neurological principle can be seen through the formation of microaggressions, neural aggressions, bias, and prejudice (Luke, et al., 2020). It is the duty and role of the counselor to be aware of these tendencies, to notice and understand their manifestations in the body and the mind. This understanding, as well as ethical

and best practice-based effort that commits to an attitude and thought pattern of positive change, can supplement the school counselor's ability to achieve and grow their multicultural competence. Another essential strategy to help develop multiculturally awareness, knowledge, and skills are through continual education and enrichment. As stated previously, our country is extremely diverse, and throughout time that diversity is only increasing. With these ever-changing cultural dynamics, it is imperative for the school counselor to be seeking out professional learning, development, and education in regard to the various cultures that are seen in the school community in which they work (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). One example of a diverse group of students that the school counselor may be servicing is students and families within the LGBTQ+ community. If the school counselor is aware that many students within the school community identify as LGBTQ+, one way to help serve their specific needs as well as to act as a social justice advocate for these students is through education. By educating themselves on this community and the struggles, as well as triumphs they've faced, the school counselor can begin to understand and advocate for the community. This is the starting point in creating a safe and inclusive environment for all students and families. These two strategies discussed above directly relate to the multicultural competencies of counselors' awareness of their own cultural values and biases, and also the knowledge competencies that involve education and development of culturally appropriate knowledge (*AMCD Multicultural Counseling Competencies*, n.d.).

Culturally Appropriate Counseling Interventions

There are a wide variety of culturally appropriate counseling interventions that the counselor can utilize when working with diverse populations. For example, if the school counselor is working with young African American male clients, one research-proven intervention and strategy is the use of a strengths-based approach (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019).

Using this type of approach with a young African American male client can help to address some of the deep-rooted impacts of negative stereotypes within the culture (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Another example of a counseling intervention is in regard to working with Asian American and Pacific Islander youth. A culturally appropriate counseling intervention for this culture that may be especially beneficial is meditation and Tai Chi (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). This is due to the familiarity of meditation and Tai Chi within the Asian and Pacific Islander cultures, however, it is also useful because it can address and improve psychological, physiological, as well as neurological health in youth and adults (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Lastly, another culturally appropriate counseling intervention that can be utilized across cultures is through the use of music and also through storytelling, and bibliotherapy. Both can be used to help clients explore, establish, and expand upon their own understanding of culture, their sense of self, and other contextual factors (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Through having a wide range of culturally appropriate interventions and strategies, the school counselor can aid in their ability to meet the needs of all students.

Transition Programming Benefits

Transition programming is one of the ways in which school counselors can implement a comprehensive counseling program within the school community they work in. There are many scenarios in which transition programming is effective and beneficial. One scenario is in relation to employment. When working specifically with high school students, one important goal is gaining employment after graduation, one way that school counselors can help students reach this goal is through transition programming (*A School Counselor's Role in Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities*, n.d.). Some aspects of the transition program may include the development of cooperation and communication skills, and the ability to respond to feedback (*A*

School Counselor's Role in Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities, n.d.). Another aspect of the program may include educating students on professional work culture. Some aspects of this may include punctuality, responsibilities, appropriate socialization, dress codes, and time management (*A School Counselor's Role in Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities*, n.d.). Another scenario in which transition planning is beneficial is through recreation. Some students may want to focus on leisure activities, making social connections and building friendships, and pursuing hobbies (*A School Counselor's Role in Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities*, n.d.). These aspects of recreation are important in regard to teaching the whole child, and focusing on well-being. Some aspects of this transition program may include interest inventories, understanding your own interests, planning skills, social skills, and also the connection between interests and personal wellbeing (*A School Counselor's Role in Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities*, n.d.). Lastly, another scenario that transition programming would benefit is through the pursuit of high education opportunities. Many students may have the hopes of pursuing higher education or post-secondary education opportunities upon graduating. A transition program can help students and support them through this process. Some of the aspects of a transition program in regard to high education may be to help students with the ability to be more independent and live away from home, money and time management, socialization, self-advocacy, self-determination, and also adapting to new learning environments and challenges that may be present within high education in regard to academic success (*A School Counselor's Role in Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities*, n.d.). Through these three examples, it is clear that there are many benefits to transition programming within the field of school counseling.

Counseling At-Risk Children and Adolescents: 4 Step Framework

School counselors have the privilege of servicing a wide range of students, including counseling children and adolescents who are considered to be at-risk. Vernon & Schimmel (2019) outlines a 4-step framework for working with at-risk children and adolescents that includes assessment, prevention, intervention, and social advocacy. The first step in the framework is assessment and during this step, many important points are addressed. Typically, there are multiple competing issues that may arise, therefore, thorough and comprehensive assessments are used to ascertain where to begin the counseling process with the client (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). It is also important to gather data and information during this step. Some imperative information may be family history, educational details, career goal details, interest inventories, and medical histories (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). It is important to note the developmental level of the student during the assessment stage, as certain assessments are more appropriate for different levels of development and ages. The next step in the process is prevention. During this step, the counselor has a plethora of information about the client through the assessments done, and can now think about preventative measures to take with the client. The textbook gives the example of Ty, who experienced sexual abuse during his early childhood. Some preventative measures that Vernon & Schimmel (2019) outline for Ty include working on his capacity to handle stress and negative emotions, and also completing work to address the trauma that Ty experienced before he begins his medical transition to become a male. There are some frameworks used in the prevention stage, and one of those is provided by the CDC's violence prevention division, which is called the Essentials of Childhood (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). This program has three core tenets and is a comprehensive plan that brings together key stakeholders to help support and maintain progress within the prevention stage (Vernon &

Schimmel, 2019). The next stage in the framework outlined is intervention. There are many different types of interventions for the variety of traumatic experiences that students may have gone through, and as stated previously, no one intervention works for all (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). During this stage the school counselor must utilize all the information gathered during the assessment and prevention stage, to implement an appropriate intervention for the student. The textbook specifically mentions that utilizing creative arts therapies can be beneficial in providing more comprehensive treatment to the student, rather than focusing on traditional verbal techniques and practices (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). The last stage in the framework is social advocacy. In this stage, the school counselor must ensure they are knowledgeable on how to be an effective support system, and also how to identify and seek out educational opportunities that relate to the specific social justice issues that exist within the community they serve (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). An example of this is again seen through Ty's story of transition. In being a social advocate for Ty, the school counselor had to identify that Ty was unaware of the social supports that existed within the community in regard to his transition. Many partners in Ty's life, such as his employer and his church, wanted to help support him but did not know how. The counselor then created a resources packet that included helpful websites and resources (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). This example illustrates the importance of a comprehensive and holistic approach to school counseling, and how those approaches can help to bring about systematic, and also structural levels of change rather than focusing on individual change (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019).

Interventions for Problems Faced by At-Risk Children and Adolescents

At-risk children and adolescents may experience problems such as substance abuse, addiction, and depression. There are many possible interventions for these problems that the

school counselor can utilize. In regard to substance abuse and addiction, one intervention the school counselor can utilize is brief opportunistic interventions or BIs (Jhanhee, 2014). BIs have been found to be effective for high-risk behavior such as heavy drinking and tobacco dependence, however, it is important to note that if a client is exhibiting serious substance use problems such as addiction and dependency, the school counselor should begin an outside referral to ensure their needs are being met by the appropriate professional (Jhanhee, 2014). Another intervention for substance abuse and addiction is motivational interviewing. Motivational interviewing is used to help individuals analyze and resolve their hesitancy about their substance use to aid in them making positive behavioral as well as psychological changes (Jhanhee, 2014). For example, motivational interviewing has been studied in clients who abuse and are dependent on alcohol and was found to be an effective treatment for the reduction of harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption (Jhanee, 2014). Another common problem that at-risk youth face is in regard to depression. There are many research-based interventions that the school counselor can utilize in working with students who may be depressed. One intervention is cognitive-behavioral therapy, and this can be used as a primary, secondary, or tertiary prevention method (Evans et al., 2002). Some examples of activities that the school counselor can utilize are activity scheduling and relaxation training (Evans et al., 2002). For example, activity scheduling is a strategy that involves the planning of regular pleasurable or goal-directed activities to aid in the reduction of apathy, passivity, and aloofness and can aid individuals experiencing depression to create a daily schedule that includes pleasurable activities so that clients can reward themselves for successful completion of activities (Evans et al., 2002). Another intervention that the school counselor can use in servicing depressed clients is mindfulness-based interventions. An example of a mindfulness intervention specifically developed for adolescents is Learning to

Breathe (Gómez-Odrizola & Calvete, 2021). This intervention is given in a group format and was found to increase prosocial behaviors, increase self-concept, and decrease interpersonal difficulties (Gómez-Odrizola & Calvete, 2021). More research is needed to further study the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions for different developmental levels, however, it is an intervention that the school counselor can utilize to support and service children and adolescents who may be experiencing depression.

Crisis Planning and Management

Due to the variety of crises that may occur throughout a given school year, it is imperative that the school district have a crisis management plan in place. The purpose of a crisis management plan is to provide a method for helping students as well as the school community as a whole. This can be in terms of prevention, intervention, and also postvention (Plan, 2002). A crisis management plan is critical for school districts to have in place in order to help ensure a safe environment for all. It is important to note that although a school district may have a crisis management plan in place, there may be a variety of problems or gaps that may include reactive rather than proactive practices, outdated practices, and guides, excluding community safety personnel, failure to train school personnel on crisis plan, and also failure to practice drills which include community safety personnel (American Counseling Association, 2016). There are many reasons why having a crisis management plan is important, some of these reasons include that in the aftermath of a crisis, many strong emotions about safety and stability may bring chaos, psychological disequilibrium, anxiety, helplessness, and confusion (American Counseling Association, 2016). Unfortunately, school crisis events have only increased throughout time, and continue to increase, therefore, having a crisis management plan in place is imperative in creating a safe environment for all within the school community (American Counseling

Association, 2016). There is no sole crisis management plan that exists, however, many crisis management plans include similar characteristics and ideas. Some things that may be found in a crisis management plan are intervention procedures, crisis response procedures, critical incident procedures, and interagency agreements (Plan, 2002).

Another aspect of a crisis management plan is in regard to the crisis management team as well as the school counselor's role within the team and plan. The crisis management team may consist of a team chair or leader, an assistant chair, a coordinator of school counseling, a staff notification coordinator, a communications coordinator, a media coordinator, and a crowd management coordinator. These individuals may be school employees such as administrators, teachers, educators, support staff, district office staff, as well as community safety personnel (A Model for School-Based Crisis Preparedness and Response, n.d.). The school counselor may have a variety of roles within the crisis management team. However, as mentioned previously one role that is common for a school counselor on a crisis management team is the coordinator of counseling. Within this role, the school counselor would develop ongoing crisis training for team members and staff, identify and establish liaisons with community resources, determine counseling services needed in response to and in the prevention of crisis, and also oversee the mental health services being provided to students and staff (A Model for School-Based Crisis Preparedness and Response, n.d.). Through this, it is clear that the school counselor has a crucial role in regard to crisis management planning and implementation.

There are many different methods and techniques that school counselors can use when servicing students who experience a traumatic event. There are also three tiers of crisis prevention that the school counselor should utilize and be familiar with. The three tiers include primary, secondary, and tertiary intervention strategies. Some examples of primary strategies

include creating a safe and nurturing school environment, identifying students at risk for the violence of self or others, teaching social skills, and providing counseling services for students with emotional difficulties (American Counseling Association, 2016). Some examples of secondary intervention include the actions that are taken following a crisis to help minimize trauma (American Counseling Association, 2016). This could include classroom discussions, answering questions, and providing group counseling (American Counseling Association, 2016). Lastly, there are tertiary interventions. This can include debriefing strategies such as follow-up with students and other school staff, and caring for and servicing the victims following the tragedy or crisis that took place (American Counseling Association, 2016). Another response that school officials have used at the tertiary level is using police officers and metal detectors within the school (American Counseling Association, 2016). It is important to note that research has suggested that these types of practices can increase incidents of violence and contribute to aggressive acts rather than prevent and prepare (American Counseling Association, 2016).

One example of a traumatic event that a school community or student may experience is a natural disaster. In the case of a natural disaster, and the trauma it can cause, the school counselor can utilize cognitive-behavioral therapies and approaches to servicing the school community or students (Brown et al., 2017). Some examples of CBT interventions include cognitive coping, trauma narratives, psychoeducation, and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (Brown et al., 2017). For example, if a student experienced a natural disaster and is dealing with the trauma from that event, the school counselor could utilize narrative exposure therapy. Within this intervention, the student would write a script of the event and include a narrative lifeline in order to help integrate the traumatic event into the biography or narrative they are creating (Brown et al., 2017). It is important to note that this type of therapy must be performed by a trained

professional, and therefore could only be ethically used by the school counselor if they have the proper training (Brown et al., 2017). It is typically used in a small group or individual setting and can be completed within about 10 sessions (Brown et al., 2017). Some classroom interventions that could be used for mass trauma, including a mass trauma involving a natural disaster, the school counselor could use writing for recovery, mind-body skills groups, and also classroom guidance lessons, and individual counseling (Brown et al., 2017). These types of interventions can be ethically used by the school counselor or other mental health professionals within the school setting.

Evidence-Based Suicide Prevention Programs

In addressing the issue of suicide there are a variety of evidence-based programs that the school counselor and school district can utilize in order to help prevent and decrease student suicide. One program that is geared towards middle school and high school students is called the SOS Signs of Suicide Program. This program has a variety of goals and is also classified as a program with evidence of effectiveness based on its inclusion in SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (*SOS Signs of Suicide*, 2016). Some of the goals of this program include decreasing suicide and suicide attempts by increasing student knowledge, development of community-based partnerships to support student mental health, engage parents and school staff as partners in prevention, and the reduction of the stigma of mental illness and the acknowledgement of the importance of seeking help (*SOS Signs of Suicide*, 2016). This program includes a curriculum that can be utilized by the school counselor during classroom guidance lessons. Within a lesson students learn to identify warning signs of suicide and depression, they complete a screening for depression, and through the curriculum awareness about behavioral health is raised (*SOS Signs of Suicide*, 2016). This program also includes

teaching the students, staff, and community members to ACT, or acknowledge, care, and tell (*SOS Signs of Suicide*, 2016). This program includes training for staff, and also states that it is important to also have a school-based crisis management plan in place prior to implementing this program (*SOS Signs of Suicide*, 2016). It is important for school districts to utilize evidence-based prevention programs because student suicide is an issue that has been increasing throughout time, and by creating a preventative plan that utilizes protective factors, and a collaborative approach, the school district can help to ensure that education, guidance, and help are given to students who are in need of such services. Another evidence-based program that school districts can use to address student suicide is the Lifelines Prevention curriculum. This program is also designated as a program with evidence of its effectiveness through SAMHSA's registry, and is a component of the Lifelines comprehensive suicide awareness and responsiveness program for teens (*Lifelines Curriculum*, n.d.). Within this program, the overall goal is to aid in the promotion of a caring and competent school environment and community (*Lifelines Curriculum*, n.d.). Help seeking is encouraged and also modeled within this program, and suicidal behavior is addressed as an issue that cannot be kept a secret (*Lifelines Curriculum*, n.d.). This is a sequential program that can be utilized by the school counselor, school staff, school administration, and also the crisis management team. This program establishes guidelines and procedures for responding to student risk, trains staff to prepare for identification and response to suicidal students, and also provides workshops and informational materials to parents and community partners (*Lifelines Curriculum*, n.d.). This program is also a comprehensive program that includes and utilizes all stakeholders and resources within the school district and surrounding community. It is important that before a school district decides to implement this program, there are linkages and relationships with local mental health services already in place

(*Lifelines Curriculum*, n.d.). This program addresses community based programs that provide education and promote wellness to aid in the prevention of suicide, and also provides training to community groups that play a role in the prevention of suicide and risk behaviors (*Lifelines Curriculum*, n.d.).

Conclusion

Through utilizing a variety of resources including textbooks, websites, professional journals, and articles it is clear that in order to implement and maintain a comprehensive school counseling program there are many factors to consider. It is the duty and role of the school counselor to maintain and establish a comprehensive, new-vision role focused practice in order to meet the needs of an ever-evolving student population. Through exploring and creating a comprehensive school counseling program, and in addressing the variety of topics and issues that are present within the field, the school counselor can truly engage with the practice and continue on the path of education to truly model, represent, and maintain the attitude and character of being a lifelong learner in service of others.

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