

Title of Session: School Counselors Forum - New School Year

Moderator: Barbara Muller-Ackerman

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Room: On Tap Café

BjB: welcome to the School Counselors discussion.

BjB: I love the topic of a Brand new school year

CandaceJaG: I have been counseling a lot of students already this year

CandaceJaG: and BjB has been very helpful there

BjB: can we start with introductions, please?

BarbaraMu: I was just typing that!

BarbaraMu: My name is Barbara Muller-Ackerman and I am an elementary counselor in NJ n 2 campuses with 600 students.

DavidWe: I'm in New Jersey, near New York City. I help people with technology and support the HelpDesk in Tapped In

BjB: I'm an art teacher in a male juvenile correctional facility just starting an online course in special ed

BarbaraMu: We don't start school though till after Labor Day so I am curious where you are Candace!?

CandaceJaG: I am a high school teacher in Mound Bayou Mississippi

JeffC joined the room.

BarbaraMu: Hi Jeff. Would you like to introduce yourself?

JeffC: Hi... I'm a career educator with 14 years in the biz... interviewing for a job tomorrow!

BarbaraMu: Best of luck!

JeffC: thanks

CandaceJaG: Jeff, will light the candles and send out good vibes

JeffC: lol

BarbaraMu: Candace- you said you are already counseling a lot of students...are you in counseling or just thrust into that role in your room a lot?

CandaceJaG: I am thrust into 140 kids everyday

CandaceJaG: the seniors are what I spend most of my time with

CandaceJaG: college search or alternative after school

CandaceJaG: in economics

CandaceJaG: selective service

CandaceJaG: societal issues in other classes

CandaceJaG: mentor about 15 kids now

BarbaraMu: Okay...well, I geared this to school counselors so if anyone's needs aren't being met, please just ask and I will adjust the best I can

CandaceJaG: ok, I'm not a school counselor, but my kids use me like one

BarbaraMu: Right now, in school counseling, we are following the American School Counselor Associations national model.

CandaceJaG: I was just trying to help my kids out

SusanR joined the room.

BarbaraMu: It includes a curriculum which includes the personal/social, career and academic competencies.

BarbaraMu: Hi Sue.

SusanR: Hi Barbara

BarbaraMu: It also includes program management and delivery system information and the huge piece just added- which involves a lot of accountability. Counselors jobs are often in jeopardy and this is the piece we are hoping keeps us viable in ensuring our jobs and student academic success.

BarbaraMu: The national model, and information about it is at

www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=134

DavidWe . o O (program management...?)

BjB checks to see if everyone got the link

DavidWe nods

JeffC nods (and wonders if there is a K-12 Counselor group room here?)

SusanR: got it

BarbaraMu: A practical example of the model in action can be found through the Tucson Unified School District. Their handbook has all the forms and documents to administrate a school counseling program as well as the competencies they work on.

<http://instech.tusd.k12.az.us/counsel/counselor/handbook.htm>

BarbaraMu: Both BJ and Sue have talked to me about putting a room together...do you think it would be utilized?!

BarbaraMu: They have great information- like a counselor and principal agreement which allows the counselor and principal to clearly delineate how much time is spent in which areas in order to serve all students.

BarbaraMu: The old counselor spent 90% of their time with 10% of the students; the model shifts that in the opposite direction.

BarbaraMu: I don't think so!

BjB: what I was just going to say, Barbara, before I lost my connection, was that Jeff and Sue and David have group rooms...and they spend a good amount of time updating resources and making the group room a useful resource for their participants

DavidWe: I had next to no contact with my guidance counselor - I was a good student

DavidWe isn't sure he has done much of that but appreciates Bj connecting me with Sue and Jeff

BjB thinks it takes a while to build a good base

BjB . o O (group membership base)

DavidWe agrees

SusanR: It takes a bout a year

BarbaraMu: ASCA also has written a new description of the role of the counselor which they have under the career area of their website. The role statement is important to be able to share with staff, parents and administrators.

<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=240>

BjB: Jeff and Sue also use their group discussion board to keep in touch with their members

BarbaraMu: David- as an elementary counselor, I do a 40 minute lesson once every other week in each classroom. I cover bullying, conflict resolution, do peer mediation, friendship skills, anger management, perfectionism, etc. etc. All students know me at

school. I am not doing crisis counseling as an everyday event.

DavidWe: My understanding, Barbara, is that counselors are assigned a ridiculously high number of students to counsel

BarbaraMu: There are ideal numbers- then the reality. Where a 250-1 ratio would be great in elementary, the reality is that many have caseloads approaching 1000.

DavidWe: . o O (akin to Candace teaching 140 students)

BarbaraMu: Our high school has only 125 students for each counselor...so they are able to do a great job. I have 600 on 2 campuses and try to do a 5 day a week program in each building though that isn't the time I have.

BarbaraMu: That's where the counselor principal agreement sets out what is humane and do-able and what is unrealistic.

BarbaraMu: The Internet- to get to the technology aspect- adds tremendously. For each level, there are powerpoints, lesson plans, forms, documents, web pages, etc that really make reinventing the wheel unnecessary.

BarbaraMu: No one ever pulls them all together- which is what I spend a lot of time doing with the listserv I moderate....and what I think you are suggesting with a group room or even a backflip public room.

BarbaraMu: ?

DavidWe: sure, that sounds fine

DavidWe looks around

DavidWe: Barbara do you have a sense whether counselors use technology more/less/the same as classroom teachers?

DavidWe: Ah...

BarbaraMu: One of the things I do each year is to pull together the health, education, and national celebration dates as ways for counselors to tie in to what is already being celebrated nationally.

BarbaraMu: <http://www.njsca.org/resources/dates.htm>

BarbaraMu: Sorry- let me answer you David

DavidWe nods

DavidWe: No problem, Barbara

BarbaraMu: Like any other educator, it depends on their own comfort with the medium.

DavidWe: Just a way to try to answer your question about what technology might work better

DavidWe agrees

BarbaraMu: There are some really good programs for counseling with young students- cd rom that go through grief counseling and violence prevention and other topics we deal with.

DavidWe is glad to hear that

BarbaraMu: Jeff could probably speak more to what is being used at a higher level but certainly the high school counselors are very dependent on technology for career and college searches

DavidWe: Imagine that 9/11 was a big motivator for grief counseling

DavidWe: Yes, that I know

CandaceJaG: College searches. Thank goodness for BJB.

BarbaraMu: I think that has always been there. 9/11 was a big impetus for crisis management training more than grief work

CandaceJaG: my students were all given the local community college application

DavidWe: School shootings in the past X years

DavidWe: That's great, Candace

CandaceJaG: and ten of the 50 a waiver for ACT's

CandaceJaG: In my econ class all students must fill out an FAFSA

CandaceJaG: and select two colleges from the data base

CandaceJaG: in addition I set up a coach ACT

CandaceJaG: site so we can lick that in October

DavidWe: We worked with a group of students from Union City, NJ, largely Latino and brought them to Swarthmore - just so they would know about colleges outside of local colleges and universities in northern NJ

BarbaraMu: and at my level, we are trying to get the kids to go on field trips to the county college and to write letters asking for catalogues when they are in 3rd grade and learning letter writing.

CandaceJaG: We are now figuring out grade points

DavidWe: 3rd grade, really?

CandaceJaG: I use research field trips to disguise college trips

DavidWe finds that surprising

BarbaraMu: Think College Early, which is a govt site, has great information for middle schoolers.

DavidWe nods

CandaceJaG: then we do the a life decision problem making charts

CandaceJaG: using basic problem solving for career choices

BarbaraMu: We have a problem solving model (Elias and Clabby's Social Problem Solving/Decision Making Model) on the graphic of a ladder in every classroom, lunchroom, principals office, etc...when 2 kids have a conflict, they "take it to the ladder" and go through the steps. By having it school wide, everyone has a consistent language around problem solving

CandaceJaG: Yes, Barbara I proposed a peer court

CandaceJaG: it was shot down

JeffC: <http://www.ed.gov/students/prep/college/thinkcollege/early/edlite-index.html>

BarbaraMu: It sounds like you are doing great things with your kids Candace!

CandaceJaG: I'm stuck with the waiver thing for ACT applications

CandaceJaG: I would like to do more for the kids

CandaceJaG: I tried to initiate an ACT class

CandaceJaG: I just do it on Saturdays, and as I said through the network

CandaceJaG: works great

BarbaraMu: That's terrific. Thank you for what you are doing!!!

CandaceJaG: we do scholarship searches, I get teachers together

CandaceJaG: to write reference letters

BjB: what about parents, Candace?

CandaceJaG: nada

BjB nods

BarbaraMu: I spend a lot of time educating my administrator as to what a program can be and do for kids. With all the high stakes testing, if you could couch it in terms of helping to drive academic achievement, it might sell.

CandaceJaG: I do have a colleague that is going to work with me in a daughter/mother project to build up the girls

BarbaraMu: That's where counselors are now...doing a lot of pre and post testing and showing the results of having been through the program

CandaceJaG: Barbara, exactly looking for a network of counselors

CandaceJaG: to support the effort of academics

CandaceJaG: however, there are only a few that want to raise the bar

CandaceJaG: I also work on getting the students into summer programs

CandaceJaG: internships

CandaceJaG: and this year some shadowing

BarbaraMu: You could look up the Mississippi School Counselor Association on the web and see if there are any networks which sound interesting to jump into for support near you.

CandaceJaG: Bj, this year, I'm trying something with seniors and senior parents with the parent person

CandaceJaG: economics of college

BjB: sounds like a great idea, Candace

BarbaraMu: www.jobshadow.org does the big Groundhog job shadow day in February. Do you know of that program?

CandaceJaG: I have to step lightly Barbara thank you

CandaceJaG: yes Barbara I do know it

CandaceJaG: also I have a friend that runs a kids in court day

BarbaraMu: Sounds like we could learn a lot from you!

CandaceJaG: bare bones here

CandaceJaG: nah

CandaceJaG: just want to understand more of the counseling thing

CandaceJaG: to help my seniors

BarbaraMu: Well, we have competencies, and standards, as you do as a teacher.

DavidWe: <http://www.mca.web.com/>

DavidWe: . o O (Mississippi Counseling Association)

BarbaraMu: Probably the counseling association, David, of which the sca would be a branch. Many CA and SCAs have split but Mississippi is still united.

DavidWe is clueless

CandaceJaG: thanks all, I have lots to do for tomorrow, stock market game in a week, surf for hot tips and answer kids emails...peace ya'all

DavidWe waves night to Candace

BarbaraMu: There are wonderful lessons broken out, from k-12 on a number of sites. North Carolina has done a great job and you might find lesson plans that would hit counseling topics

CandaceJaG: thanks Barbara

CandaceJaG: I integrate a lot of what you mentioned

BarbaraMu: I will add them to the transcript and then you might look at them when you have time Candace.

CandaceJaG: social studies is great for that

CandaceJaG: thanks a lot, it will help

CandaceJaG: peace out

DavidWe: Bye

BarbaraMu: North Carolina Public Schools guidance curriculum site.

<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/Guidance/index.html>

BjB: Thanks, Barbara.

BarbaraMu: bye Candace

CandaceJaG left the room (signed off).

BarbaraMu: Is there anything that I can add for anyone?

BjB: can you tell us a little about what you have planned for next month?

BarbaraMu: I know you are all people who contribute a ton to your constituents and would love to be able to give you something...

BarbaraMu: yes. neurofeedback.

DavidWe smiles

BarbaraMu: it is brainwave training...like fitness and exercise for your body only directed to the brain and resetting the brainwaves into frequencies which help to optimize function.

BarbaraMu: It is been incredibly helpful as a non-medication way of correcting add, depression, anxiety, etc

BarbaraMu: It has been successful in the autism spectrum and with epilepsy.

BjB: This sounds really cool. I did read an article on it recently

BjB: there are some computer programs related to this?

BjB: . o O (where students control images on the computer screen)

BarbaraMu: It involves cognitive repatterning of the brainwaves which have been in a state of under or over arousal.

BarbaraMu: yes

DavidWe: NLP?

BarbaraMu: no joystick- no keyboard- their brainwaves control the pac man through the maze or the rocket ship toward the planet

BarbaraMu: no

DavidWe: like biofeedback?

BarbaraMu: there are electrodes on the scalp on the sensory motor strip, or the temporal lobe, or another portion of the brain. They are sensors which listen to the patterns currently there. The therapist shapes the waves by inhibiting the ones we don't want.

BarbaraMu: yes

DavidWe: shapes?

BarbaraMu: changes- challenges

BarbaraMu: rewarding the brainwave pattern we want the client to produce more of and inhibiting the overactive or underactive ones

DavidWe: and we determine what gets rewarded by...?

BarbaraMu: I have a nephew who is communication handicapped and so we are working over brochas area which controls speech

DavidWe raises his eyebrows

DavidWe: Okay, that I understand

BarbaraMu: knowing the frequencies that are optimal for task and performance

BjB: OK, everyone! Let Barbara save some of her presentation for September!!!

BarbaraMu: I have wonderful web sites that we never touched...guess its time to create that room, huh?

BarbaraMu: goodnight all...thanks for hanging in.

DavidWe: Thanks, Barbara

BjB: Thanks for your contributions to the discussion. I think you all were a great help to Candace.

SusanR . o O (looks forward to the creation of the K to 12 Counselor's K to 12 Group room)

BarbaraMu: ok- will get on it

BjB waves goodnight. I too look forward to that, Sue.

BjB: Barbara, if you need any help setting up the group room, let us know

DavidWe: Good luck, Barbara

BarbaraMu: good night