



School Counselors and Library Staff: Working Together to Support Youth

Working together school counselors and library staff help teens succeed in school and beyond.



By Angela Cleveland

The role of the school counselor has changed significantly, yet many people still recall the “guidance counselor” from their high school days as the person who created their course schedule and processed college transcripts. The new title “school counselor” conveys a more holistic approach to meeting the needs of ALL students. Today’s school counselor uses data-informed practices to develop, manage, and evaluate a comprehensive school counseling program that highlights the collaborative role of the school counselor with students, families, teachers, administrators, and community members. Counselors are connectors of people and resources. They are partners in providing pathways to equity and access for academic and social-emotional support for their students.

Providing these supports means that counselors consider multi-tiered systems of support both within the structure of the school day and within the community. They recognize barriers to educational access and they

make sure opportunity gaps are not simply solved during the hours of the school day. They do this with a focus on a systemic approach to supporting the needs of students and by regularly connecting students and families to local sources of support. The more school counselors know about the community, including the school and public library, and resources available throughout their neighborhood, the more equipped they are to assist families and to foster school, home, and community relationships. This community engagement is similar to what library staff in school and public libraries work to achieve. Therefore, school counselors and library staff are uniquely positioned to collaborate on meeting the needs of students and their families.

Working Together

When considering counselor and library collaboration, keep these ideas in mind:

- School counselors and library staff each understand the critical value

Resources

- [Encouraging Students Toward Computer Science Learning](#)
- [Bridging the Encouragement Gap in Computing](#)
- [Developing Inclusive Learners and Citizens – American Association of School Librarians](#)
- [Guide for Schools & Students: Programs for Free Internet, Computers and Tech](#)
- [Partnerships to Support Teens in Computing: Library Staff and School Counselors Can Team Up](#)
- [Making a Difference: Integrating Community Service in Making Activities](#)
- [Archive of Twitter Chat 12/04/2019](#)

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of creating an inclusive, welcoming, supportive, and safe space for everyone. Both counselors and library staff work with populations who are struggling and looking for support. One way to provide this support is for counselors and library staff to connect youth and families to resources such as, “[Guide for Schools & Students: Programs for Free Internet, Computers and Tech.](#)”

- School counselors seek culturally-relevant materials for students. It can be difficult for them to navigate the many resources available to develop an inclusive “mini-library” for their counselor department. These materials send a message about potential topics for conversation and about the people who are welcome in school and library spaces. Library staff can provide counselors with insights on how to curate resources with materials that resonate with students.
- School counselors can help library staff learn about medical, social emotional, academic or other needs of students and families. Counselors often have the pulse on trends and on challenges families face. Counselors can provide this information in a general way without breaching confidentiality. The library can provide resources and other supports based on this information from the counselor.
- When schools address specific topics such as career awareness, character education, mindfulness, with their entire community, library staff can support these themes through activities, resource lists, and connecting students and counselors to community partners and experts.
- School counselors emphasize the development of skills that prepare all students for the future of work. This includes providing learning opportunities for all students to learn about computer science as

advances in computer science are changing every career. However, research shows that many girls are not receiving encouragement telling them that they would be good at computer science. [Girls often don't see role models who look like them in the media.](#) School counselors and library staff can provide students with resources and bring in diverse speakers to bridge this encouragement gap. Learn more about this in [Bridging the Encouragement Gap in Computing.](#)

- Many school counselors haven't received formal training in their graduate school programs to learn about careers in STEM, and many libraries are now incorporating makerspaces to engage students in STEM related activities. Library staff can invite the school counselor to play, learn, and be inspired by

the skills students are developing as makers. Growth mindset, perseverance, flexible thinking, collaboration, and teamwork are integrated in makerspaces, and these are behaviors that counselors foster in their work with students.

- Many students are avid technology users, and it can be challenging for schools and families to provide current, meaningful resources to navigate the rapidly changing digital world. One of the most common ways that school counselors and library staff collaborate is by providing resources and programming to families and students to support responsible digital citizenship and make family decisions about technology use.
- While many people consider the school counselor's role as providing support for students, they also





provide families with resources. A family member who has been laid off or requires job skills training has an impact on the home and the student. The school counselor and library staff can work together to connect a student's family members to opportunities that can facilitate employment and training.

Library staff and school counselors are often in a similar position in highlighting how their roles have evolved and how they are each separately and both together advocates for equity. School counselors and

library staff are leaders in comprehensive, inclusive programming that meet a variety of stakeholder needs. In a Twitter Chat on 12/04/2019, school counselors and library staff shared ways they are collaborating with each other and ways they want to collaborate to support future-ready students. [Check out the archive of this chat, which includes many creative ideas!](#)

Are you overdue for a conversation with your school counselor? Reach out and book an appointment with them today! ■

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