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Potential Impact of Lead Management Principles on Academic Achievement When Implemented in Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this manuscript is to examine the potential impact lead management principles can have on academic achievement when implemented in comprehensive school counseling programs. The core tenets of the basic program components of the American School Counselor Association's National Model (ASCA) and also lead management principles are reviewed in terms of pertinent literature. This is followed by the current status of academic achievement in the United States. Lastly, specific emphasis will be placed on the potential impact lead management principles/concepts can have on academic achievement when applied to the three program components of the ASCA National Model that provide direct services to students.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) published *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* in 2003 (Wittmer & Clark, 2007). The ASCA National Model's framework includes the three domains of academic achievement, career decision-making, and personal/social development. Over the decades of the past century, a number of writers have discussed the proper place of guidance and counseling in education and also the significance of comprehensive developmental models. Some stressed the point of view that guidance and counseling are an integral part of education (Meyers, 1923) while others, particularly Jones and Hand (1938), viewed guidance and counseling as an inseparable part of education. They emphasized that effective teaching involved both guidance and instruction.

The significance of comprehensive school counseling programs has been well documented. For instance, a clear connection between school counseling programs and student academic achievement was made by Myrick (2003) who used a variety of examples to illustrate that developmental guidance programs positively impact student learning. In addition, a previous study by Gerler, Kinney, and Anderson (1985) revealed that underachieving students who received counseling improved significantly on the Self-

Rating Scale of Classroom Behavior and also in mathematics and language arts grades. Furthermore, Schlossberg, Morris, and Lieberman (2001) suggested that counselor-led, developmental guidance units presented in ninth-grade classrooms have the potential to improve students' expressed behavior and general school attitudes while also addressing their developmental needs.

Comprehensive guidance and counseling programs have standards that identify the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn as a result of their involvement in the program. Therefore, school counselors are expected to spend a considerable amount of their time in classrooms. They present developmental guidance lessons to support and enhance academic achievement. In fact, because of the expectation for counselors to impact academic achievement, university training programs have changed from a theory based program to an education based program (House & Martin, 1998).

ASCA National Model

In addition to the time element, the organizational framework for the ASCA National Model includes the structural components and the program components (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). The structural components (definition, rationale, and assumptions) are significant. These elements describe the nature of the program and also provide a philosophical basis for it. They clearly define the program, state the rationale for the program, and list the assumptions on which the program is based.

The definition outlines the purpose of the program; it includes a set of principles which guides the development, implementation, and evaluation of the entire program. This element is usually followed by the rationale which is based on the goals of the school, community, and state. It focuses on reasons why students need to have access to the assistance that professional school counselors provide. Points for emphasis include student development, self-knowledge, decision making, changing environments, transition assistance, career focus, and academic achievement. The assumptions are statements that clearly define the student, staff, and program conditions necessary for the effective implementation of the comprehensive guidance and counseling program. The structural components should be developed by an Advisory Committee composed of administrators, counselors, teachers, parents, and community leaders (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). The Program Components will be discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

The techniques, methods, and resources that counselors employ to deliver the ASCA National Model are framed within four interactive program components: guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and system support (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). These elements serve as organizers for the many guidance and counseling activities required in a comprehensive guidance and counseling program. Each component makes specific contributions to enhance academic achievement, career decision making, and personal/social development for students (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).

Squires (2005) defined curriculum as a document that "describes (in writing) the most important outcomes of the schooling process; thus, the curriculum is a document in which resides the district's 'collected wisdom' about what is most important to teach" (p. 3). A curriculum is discipline specific and according to Squires, "a curriculum is based on

standards" (p. 3). Standards typically describe appropriate content to be mastered by students over a specific range of grade levels. In the ASCA National Model, standards identify the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills important for students to acquire as they progress from kindergarten to 12th grade. These elements are usually grouped under domain titles such as academics, career, and personal/social. School counselors teach, team teach, or support the teaching of guidance curriculum units. Guidance curriculum activities may be conducted in the classroom, guidance center, or other school facilities (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).

The Individual Student Planning component of the ASCA National Model assists students with developing and using individual learning plans. Gysbers and Moore (1981) introduced the idea that the Individual Student Planning component is a major element of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs and its significance is equal to that of the guidance curriculum, responsive services, and system support. Within this component, students explore and evaluate their education, career options, and personal goals. School counselors work closely with students on an individual basis. The significance of the personalized learning is that it allows each student to understand who he or she is, what adult roles seem most desirable, and how to get from where he or she is to there in the most productive way (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004). Several states have passed legislation requiring or recommending that individual student planning activities take place in schools (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).

The Responsive Services component is designed to work with students whose personal circumstances are threatening to interfere with or are interfering with their personal, social, career, or academic development. This element organizes guidance and counseling techniques to respond to student concerns as they occur. Services in this component are implemented through individual counseling, small-group counseling, consultation, or referral.

The System Support program component provides administration and management activities that establish, maintain, and enhance activities in the other three program components. This component is typically implemented in the areas of research and development, professional development, staff and community public relations, community outreach, program management, community and advisory boards, and fair-share responsibilities (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). Now that the basic components of the ASCA National Model have been reviewed, the following paragraphs will address the core tenets of lead management principles.

Lead Management Principles

Lead management is the term William Glasser (1990, 1991, 1996) used to describe a democratic style of management and its accompanying communication techniques. The lead manager is, in many ways, the opposite of the boss manager. A significant difference in management styles between boss and lead management in schools is that the lead manager attempts to involve students, faculty, and staff in decision making and also appeals to intrinsic motivation rather than relying on external stimuli of rewards and punishment to keep control.

The lead management system is based on choice theory (Glasser, 1996) which contends that all humans have five sources of internal motivation. These basic needs are:

1. Survival (physical needs)
2. Belonging
3. Power or Achievement
4. Freedom
5. Fun

When these needs are fulfilled at school, the impact on students is consistently positive. They behave better, learn more, and also see education as valuable and important to them (Glasser & Wubbolding, 1997).

When educators utilize the lead management approach, they create a school environment that is fun, friendly, and fair. They implement the following three principles:

Principle One

Elicit input from all students. Use the guidance curriculum program component to engage students in discussions on a variety of subjects relevant to them and their education. Specifically, ask students about what quality work is and how they would recognize it. Ask them about quality behavior. Ask them what they consider their best effort and also what rules should be established for the classroom. Also, ask students how they think they can best learn the content of their classes. It is important for students to feel that the school counselors and teachers listen to them. Moreover, eliciting student input helps meet students' needs for power and freedom (Glasser & Wubbolding, 1997). Lastly, ask students what rules should be established in the classroom, put them in writing, and ask all students to sign the paper indicating their agreement.

Principle Two

Learn to use the WDEP system of reality therapy (Glasser, 1965; Wubbolding, 1988, 1991, 1996). The acronym WDEP is used to describe the basic procedures of reality therapy. Each letter refers to a cluster of strategies that are designed to promote change: W=wants and needs; D=direction and doing; E=self-evaluation; and P=planning (Wubbolding, 2000). This system facilitates the implementation of choice theory in a lead management fashion. Choice theory teaches that beginning shortly after birth and continuing all our lives, we store information inside our minds and build a file of wants called our Quality World. This world is completely based on our wants and needs. It consists of images of people, activities, beliefs, possessions, and situations that fulfill one or more of our basic needs (Wubbolding, 2000). People are the most important component of our Quality World, and these are the individuals clients are closer to and most enjoy being with. Those who enter therapy and many of our students usually have no one in their Quality World or they have someone in their Quality World that they are unable to relate to in a satisfying way. It is important to note that a therapist must be the kind of person a client would consider putting in his or her Quality World if therapy is to be successful. Therefore, getting into the client's Quality World is the art of therapy. When therapists are able to get into the client's Quality World, it is from this relationship with the therapist that the client begins to learn how to get close to the people he or she needs.

Choice theory also teaches that all behavior is chosen; therefore, it is purposeful. Behavior comes from the inside and is designed to close the gap between what individuals want at the time and what they perceive they are getting (Wubbolding, 2000).

In schools seeking to improve academic achievement, the administration, faculty, staff, students, and parents learn skills summarized by the WDEP system. A basic goal of reality therapy is to help clients learn better ways of fulfilling their needs. The procedures that lead to change are based on two specific assumptions (Glasser, 1992). The first assumption is that their present behavior is not getting them what they want; the second assumption is that humans are motivated to change when they believe they can choose other behaviors that will get them closer to what they want.

During guidance curriculum sessions, ask students what they *Want* from their specific classes, from the school, from themselves, and from the teachers. Follow up with questions about how hard they are willing to work to get what they *Want.* The next questions in the system focus on what students are *Doing*, especially when they misbehave.

It is important for counselors to ask students to *Evaluate* their behavior, their effort, and their school work. Ask if what they are doing is helping or hurting themselves or their class. Moreover, ask if what they are doing is against the rules that they have agreed to keep (Glasser & Wubbolding, 1997).

The last letter of the acronym (P) focuses on the *Plan* for change. Work with students to develop an action *Plan.* The *Plan* should be in writing and it should be realistic. Wubbolding (2000) uses the acronym *SAMIC* to capture the essence of an effective plan: simple, attainable, measurable, immediate, consistent, committed to, and controlled by the student.

Principle Three

Focus on meeting students' needs rather than controlling students' behavior. Ask fundamental questions about how to help students and faculty tap into the five basic human motivations; abandon questions about how to control students' behavior. When students' needs are met, their school experiences "feel good." Use faculty meetings to discuss possibilities for meeting students' needs. Relate the eagerness and appreciation students feel for athletics, art, drama, music, or other school activities to the academic curriculum. Ask why students are excited to learn and work in some areas but not in others. There are no simple answers; but there are answers (Glasser & Wubbolding, 1997).

Lead management assumes that people in positions of authority practice the seven connecting or choice theory habits of caring, listening, supporting, contributing, encouraging, trusting, and befriending. In addition, lead management assumes that people in positions of authority avoid the seven deadly habits of criticizing, blaming, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing, and bribing or rewarding to control. The overall goal is to get closer to students, not to control them. Lead managers know that caring "costs nothing" and has a "huge return" (Glasser, 1998). They also know choice theory and use it in a way that is apparent. Moreover, lead managers use every opportunity they have to teach that the essence of quality is continual improvement.

Student Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is a primary focus of the ASCA National Model. This objective is strongly supported by the U.S. Government which spends more money on

education than most other industrialized nations. Yet, Feller (2003) reported that students in the United States ranked below students in the top ten countries in areas ranging from high school graduation rates to test scores in mathematics, science, and reading. In a more recent comparison of academic performance in 57 countries (Wilde, 2008), Finland came out on top overall while students in the United States performed near the middle of the group. On average, 16 industrialized countries scored above the United States in science, and 23 scored above the United States in mathematics. Researchers noted that the United States' scores remained basically the same in mathematics between 2003 and 2006, the two most recent years the Programme for International Student Assessment was given. It was also reported that some nations improved their scores during that time and moved past the U.S. In addition, researchers made note of the fact that the United States has one of the largest gaps between high- and low-performing students in industrialized nations while Finland has one of the smallest. Furthermore, test results indicate that students in Finland perform exceptionally well on academic assessment exercises regardless of the school they attend.

Moreover, an article published in *Education Week* (Cavanaugh, 2012) reported that 15-year-olds in the U.S. scored at the international average of industrialized nations in science and reading and below the international average in mathematics on the most recent Programme for International Student Assessment. This information dismays many American policymakers who contend that the country needs to raise its academic performance or risk becoming a less prosperous, less productive, and less innovative nation. These data seem to highlight the need to consider the implementation of counselor preparation program revisions.

Discussion

The promotion of academic development is a primary focus of the ASCA National Model which has a framework that includes the three domains of academic achievement, personal/social adjustment, and career decision-making. This objective is strongly supported by the U.S. Government which spends more money on education than most other industrialized nations (Feller, 2003). Furthermore, the most recent revision in school counselor preparation standards at the national level is consistent with the increased emphasis on an academic focus in school counseling (Galassi & Akos, 2012). The 2009 Standards for the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) includes standards explicit to academic development (School Counseling K2, L1, L2). These standards require programs to demonstrate learning and competence for school counselors in (a) closing the achievement gap, (b) promoting student academic success, (c) preventing students from dropping out of school, and (d) preparing youth for a full range of postsecondary options (CACREP, 2009). After reviewing documents describing the current status of academic achievement in the United States, it seems reasonable to suggest that there is room for improvement. A further analysis of those reports seems to suggest that perhaps the problem with student academic achievement has more to do with a lack of intrinsic motivation than the extrinsic elements of rewards and punishment.

This idea is not new. For example, Glasser (1990, 1993) adapted the Deming philosophy to education by stressing that the fundamental element for a successful school

is healthy human relationships. He states, "Good relationships are the core of mental health and happiness" (Glasser, 2003, p. 55). Students are able to learn when they are happy and they are happy when they have healthy interpersonal relationships. Consequently, the effort to increase quality in schools is built around an environment that is not only firm and fair but also friendly and supportive. Creating an appropriate school climate for enhanced academic achievement could possibly result from the implementation of a democratic style of management called lead management (Glasser, 1990, 1993; Glasser & Wubbolding, 1997).

The lead management system is based on choice theory (Glasser, 1996) which contends that all humans have five sources of internal motivation. These basic needs are:

1. Survival (physical needs)
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When these needs are fulfilled at school, students behave better, learn more, and also see education as valuable and important to them (Glasser & Wubbolding, 1997).

When choice theory principles are used for the purpose of school improvement, one of the basic goals is to establish a school environment in which students can attain a sense of belonging, maintain the belief that they have some control over their academic achievement, make appropriate and meaningful choices, and appreciate school as an enjoyable place. In this environment, the seven deadly habits of criticizing, blaming, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing, bribing, or rewarding for control are eliminated. These toxins are replaced with the seven caring habits of supporting, encouraging, listening, accepting, trusting, respecting, and negotiating differences. These personal attributes of counselors facilitate healthy human relationships that are internally satisfying to students and the expected result is joy, pride, competency, security, and even excitement about the educational process (Wubbolding, 2009).

Lead managers are also skilled in the use of reality therapy. Similarly, reality therapy emphasizes an understanding and supportive relationship which is the foundation for effective outcomes (Wubbolding & Brickell, 2005). Counselors who have reality therapy training possess the personal characteristics of warmth, sincerity, congruence, understanding, acceptance, concern, respect for the student, openness, and the willingness to be challenged by others. One of their primary goals is to establish positive relationships with students and motivate them to do quality work.

In addition to teaching the concepts of choice theory and reality therapy to students, the lead manager is democratic, straightforward, and lives by the following principles:

1. Involves people in decisions which affect them.
2. Listens to all viewpoints before decisions are made.
3. Models the behavior which is desired in others.
4. Helps students to learn to assess themselves.
5. Supports and encourages the development of ideas.
6. Teaches that sustained quality requires continuous improvement.

7. Emphasizes that the entire school needs to be seen as a friendly place – a place where teachers, staff, and students can fulfill their basic needs for survival, belonging, achievement, fun, and freedom.

In summary, the lead manager knows and practices the principles of choice theory and reality therapy. This type school environment should lead teachers, staff, and students to unleash their creativity in responsible and productive ways (Wubbolding & Brickell, 2007).

When school counselors with lead management training interact with students in the guidance curriculum program component and ask them about quality work, quality behavior, and their best efforts, there is reason to believe that students will be motivated to be more serious about their school work. In addition, when school counselors with lead management training meet with students for individual planning sessions, there is reason to believe that their personal characteristics will help to motivate students to set more realistic goals for themselves and also to do their best to reach those goals. Likewise, when school counselors with lead management training assist students in the responsive services component, there is reason to believe that this training will facilitate the organization of guidance and counseling techniques necessary to respond appropriately to student concerns.

Finally, based on the information provided in this manuscript, it is recommended that school counseling preparation programs include the introduction of lead management training in the appropriate course offerings. Lead managers assume that people in positions of authority practice the seven choice theory habits of caring, listening, supporting, contributing, encouraging, trusting, and befriending. In addition, lead managers use every opportunity they have to teach that the essence of quality is continual improvement. For example, the summer school program at Victor J. Andrews High School in Orland Park, Illinois focuses on incoming students who have had academic difficulties at the junior high level. The program includes concentrated opportunities to learn the traditional subjects of math, science, reading, and English. The philosophy behind the program is lead management as described by Glasser. Students learn the inner motivational components of choice theory and reality therapy in detail and practice these methods under guidance. According to John Hackett (1998), the program organizer, 4 years of data have shown significant gains in vocabulary, comprehension, math, and other areas.

It is also recommended that students enrolled in school counseling programs be required to complete the reality therapy certification process. At the heart of effective reality therapy in schools is the ability of counselors to connect with students and to teach them to self-evaluate and make plans to fulfill their basic needs through appropriate behaviors. School counselors who have completed reality therapy training programs understand the importance of developing positive relationships with students. When students feel connected to a school and to their teachers, change takes place, as is evident from the results achieved in the first Glasserian quality school in Wyoming, Michigan (Ludwig & Mentley, 1997). These proposed changes have the potential to improve the rank of American students on future international academic performance reports. More important, these proposed changes have the potential to enhance the academic achievement for all students while also creating a school environment that is fun, friendly, and fair.

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