

**THE FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS IN
NORTHERN VIRGINIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Counselor Education

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April, 12, 2000

Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: School Counseling, Functions, Time Allocation, Northern Virginia

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(ABSTRACT)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a shift from traditional to comprehensive, developmental counseling programs focusing on prevention programs to assist the “whole” child (e.g., meeting social, emotional, academic, and career needs). This shift has been slow and inconsistent, bringing great variability to the role of school counselor. This study investigates the current functions of school counselors in Northern Virginia. Five research questions are posed: (1) How do counselors spend their time? (2) In what way do counselors want to change their allocation of time to various counseling activities? (3) How do school counselors feel about their preparation to perform various counseling activities? (4) What factors (work setting, gender, level of education, teaching experience, counseling experience, student-to-counselor ratio, desire to change time allocation, and level of preparation) affect how counselors allocate their time? (5) Do differences exist between school counselors’ allocation of time to various counseling activities and the mandate of the Virginia Department of Education? Seventy-three Northern Virginia school counselors (45% response rate) responded to a survey on activities in the four major categories recommended by ASCA (counseling, consulting, guidance, and coordination) and in administrative/support services. Participants also were asked to fill-out a one-day log describing their typical counseling functions on any chosen workday. Results indicated that, on an average, Northern Virginia school counselors feel well prepared to conduct counseling activities and allocate 46% of their time to counseling, 17% to consultation, 12% to guidance, 7% to coordination, and 18% to administrative/support services. Counselors desire to spend more time working with students individually and in small groups, and less time in test coordination and administrative tasks. Statistical analyses ($p < .05$) indicate that allocation of time was significantly affected by work setting, gender, desire to change present time allocation, and level of preparation. These results suggest that Northern Virginia school counselors in this study are performing the functions recommended by the American School Counselor Association and by the Virginia Department of Education. Implications for future research are explored.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to our schools' counselors who dedicate themselves wholeheartedly, diligently, and often anonymously to improving the lives of our children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a dissertation is a collaborative process that involves close relationships among people. Relationships with professors, colleagues, classmates, friends, and family have proven invaluable to my research. In particular, I am deeply indebted to Dr. Octavia Madison-Colmore. Her trust, faith, and encouragement in and of my work have been immeasurable. Dr. Madison-Colmore has provided me with exemplary leadership and dedication essential for doctoral work. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Marilyn Lichtman, Dr. Claire C. Vaught, Dr. Sandra Stith, and Dr. Marcia Rosal. Their guidance and assistance went beyond the fundamentals of my research. They and I have discovered that determination, perseverance, strength, and tolerance characterized this difficult journey. For that, I thank all and everyone who has crossed my path and walked with me to this end.

I am incredibly grateful and forever indebted to my family. My husband Mike and two children, John Carlos and Clarissa, have provided me with insurmountable patience and support without which this degree would not have been possible. Nor would this work have been undertaken without the encouragement of my father Carlos Ballbe, who taught me the value of hard work and perseverance in a foreign land, and my mother, Mercedes, whose dedication to the primary school experience was nothing less than inspiring.

Perhaps most especially I thank the school counselors who participated in this research. May their voice be recognized in this and future studies.

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