

CASE STUDIES OF
EXEMPLARY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAMS IN
SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

BY

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(Abstract)

The Virginia Board of Education mandated that, by the Fall of 1989, all public elementary schools in the Commonwealth should establish elementary school guidance programs and employ an elementary school guidance counselor for every 500 students.

Since that time, eight years have passed, and a review of successful programs was in order. The purpose of this research was to describe exemplary elementary school guidance practices and programs in Southwest Virginia.

Based on the recommendations of three counselor educators from Virginia Tech, three elementary school divisions were identified for inclusion in the study. Rural, urban and suburban school divisions were chosen, so

that the results would reflect a broader spectrum of exemplary elementary school guidance practices and programs. Specific school sites were selected by the school superintendent or guidance supervisor.

During the Spring of 1997, the process of collecting data began. School counselors were asked to complete a questionnaire. Next, the researcher conducted site visits to each school, during which time ten structured interviews took place with those people who had interactions with the elementary school guidance program. While on the site, documents related to the elementary school guidance program were reviewed. Research results were presented in case study fashion.

The most frequently cited examples of exemplary elementary school guidance practices and programs were summarized. Results showed that rural, urban, and suburban elementary school guidance programs had striking commonalities. All three elementary school guidance programs reported strengths in fifteen areas, which were grouped into three categories: (1) focus on student development and achievement, (2) staff collaboration, and (3) focus on parents and volunteers. A detailed

description and discussion of each exemplary elementary school guidance practice and program concluded the study.

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**CASE STUDIES OF EXEMPLARY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE
PROGRAMS IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA**

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The last quarter of the twentieth century has been the setting for myriad societal trends: an increase in single-parent and blended families, families living in poverty, and teenage pregnancies, as well as an increase in drug abuse and violent crimes involving youth. Concurrent with these social changes, the need for preventive programs has been emphasized in public education. In response to societal need, the number of comprehensive developmental guidance programs in public elementary schools has grown significantly in Virginia during this generation. The need for school guidance programs is summarized in A Guide for Planning and Developing Guidance and Counseling Programs in Virginia's Public Schools:

"Guidance and counseling programs reflect a societal expression of concern for the individual. These programs exist, and must be provided, because young people need them. Student success now, and in the future, depends to a large degree upon the nature and quality of educational experiences"
(Commonwealth of Virginia, 1989, p. 1).

Research has demonstrated that developmental elementary school guidance programs are associated with positive student results. Burgess (1991) identified three beneficial student outcomes, including, improved: (1) school attitude and work habits; (2) peer relationships and communication skills; and (3) motivation, behavior, and grades. A positive correlation has been found to exist between these and other desirable outcomes, including; improved school attendance, increased numbers of students completing school, the development of employment skills, improved learning, and achievement (Burgess, 1991).

The need for developmental elementary school guidance programs has been identified and the benefits of such programs have been described. However, the characteristics and conditions associated with exemplary elementary school guidance programs still seem to be undetermined. Before taking a closer look at characteristics and conditions associated with exemplary elementary school guidance programs, a concise definition of "program" is needed.

Elementary School Guidance Program: Defined

A working definition of the term school guidance program is offered by Myrick (1987). He defined school

guidance program as a "generic set of personal development services offered to students. Counseling is one of those services. These services are provided through an organized guidance program with specific objectives which focus on the academic, personal, social, and career development of students" (Myrick, 1987, p. 6).

In Total Quality Counseling: A Comprehensive Manual for Elementary/Middle School Counselors, Burgess described elementary school guidance as "a program of [direct and indirect] services [school counselors] provide to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members" (Burgess, 1991, p. 6). Direct services refer to services which are delivered directly to the student, such as counseling, classroom guidance, and group guidance. Indirect services refer to services which support student learning, such as consulting, career education projects, peer helper programs, and coordinating functions (Burgess, 1991).

A review of literature of comprehensive school guidance programs which spans 30 years of empirical research served to enhance the definition of school guidance program. Borders and Drury (1992) identified four core principles. They found school guidance programs to

be: (1) distinct and comprehensive; (2) integral to and independent of the total education program; (3) based in human development theories; and (4) of service to all students equally.

In a national study, Gerstein and Lichtman (1990) identified four general characteristics associated with elementary school guidance programs nominated as exemplary. Exemplary elementary school guidance programs were found to: (1) be developmental and preventive in nature and available to all students; (2) promote the development of a realistic self-concept, decision-making and interpersonal skills, and academic development; (3) stress the integration of the guidance program into the total school curriculum; (4) emphasize the importance of program evaluation.

Timely Question

Whether examples of exemplary elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia could be described is a timely question because elementary school guidance programs are in jeopardy. On August 8, 1995, public hearings were held by the Virginia State Board of Education at five locations throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

These hearings allowed for public discussion of changes which had been proposed in school guidance regulations. Speakers included supporters of school guidance programs and those opposed to all, or certain aspects of this pupil personnel service.

On January 18, 1996, the Virginia State Board of Education adopted new regulations for school guidance programs, based on the Board's belief that, "local school boards are best equipped to set policies involving the scope of guidance services for the public schools in their communities" (Sgro, personal communication, January 29, 1996). The new policy required each local school board in Virginia to adopt a division-wide policy concerning their school guidance programs. By July 1, 1996, each school division in Virginia was required to develop: (1) an annual written notification to parents concerning the division's guidance programs, and (2) a provision with respect to personal/social counseling, stating the procedures by which parents may elect to have their child not participate in the guidance program, if they so desired. In a more recent Virginia State Board of Education decision, dated September, 1997, school divisions were given the option to hire either a reading specialist or an elementary school

guidance counselor with funds which had previously been earmarked for elementary school guidance counselors.

Along with legislative changes, school guidance programs in Virginia have experienced a decreased amount of leadership at the state level. On February 10, 1995, David Burgess, educational specialist in elementary guidance, resigned his position of program supervisor for the Elementary School Counseling Program with the State of Virginia Department of Education. Don Ayers Ed.D., educational specialist in secondary guidance retired on June 30, 1995. Since that time, no new appointments have been made to those positions. Rather, the Virginia Department of Education consolidated the supervision of elementary, middle, and secondary school guidance programs with the Department of Special Education, under the direction of Doug Cox.

Taken together, changing State Board of Education policies and the dispersion of professional leadership, allow for changes in the structure of school guidance programs in school divisions in the state of Virginia. The need for research institutions to take a leadership role in helping to identify and describe exemplary elementary school guidance programs at this time is apparent. Without

research, the service provided to students by elementary guidance programs may find itself "at risk" of being restricted in certain Virginia public elementary schools.

Problem Statement

Since the Virginia General Assembly mandated elementary school guidance programs and counselors starting in the Fall of 1989, eight years have passed and a look at exemplary programs was in order. To date, exemplary elementary school guidance programs and practices in Southwest Virginia have not been described.

Statement of Purpose

A review of the literature shows that information is generally available on the topic of school guidance programs, particularly secondary programs. Fewer studies, however have explored elementary school guidance (Gerstein & Lichtman, 1990; Carroll, 1993; Morse & Russell, 1988). Eight years after the mandate to implement elementary school guidance programs in Virginia schools, it is important to identify elementary school guidance programs perceived to be exemplary so that characteristics and conditions associated with these programs can be described.

A case study review of exemplary elementary school guidance programs in urban, suburban, and rural settings would:

- (1) foster the sharing of innovative and best practices,
- (2) challenge less effective programs and practices,
- (3) encourage future self-examination of elementary school guidance programs, and
- (4) serve as a showcase of elementary school guidance programs worthy of emulation.

After characteristics and conditions associated with exemplary elementary school guidance programs are identified and described through case studies, the resulting information could be shared statewide to foster the expansion of exemplary elementary school guidance practices, as well as encourage increased self-examination of elementary school guidance programs.

Research Question

Numerous programs have received recognition through journal publications or as a result of counselors' presentations at professional conferences, while other programs have remained decidedly less visible. Like the populations they serve, elementary school guidance programs have their differences, as well as similarities. If

exemplary elementary school guidance programs were identified, what specific practices and programs would be observed?

This research proposes a two stage study: (1) exemplary elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia would be identified; and (2) exemplary elementary school guidance practices and programs in Southwest Virginia would be described.

The purpose of this research is to:

STAGE ONE: Program Identification

1. Identify which public elementary schools in Southwest Virginia are perceived to have exemplary elementary school guidance programs.

STAGE TWO: Program Description

2. Describe what practices and programs are being implemented in the public elementary schools perceived to have exemplary elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia.

Limitations of the Study

Since the sampling population was limited to Southwest Virginia, the research findings were not representative of

elementary school guidance programs perceived to be exemplary statewide. In this research, another limitation was that the case study method did not take a longitudinal approach. Rather, it gave the affect of a "snap shot" picture of three elementary school guidance programs, as they presently exist.

Individuals' varying perception of exemplary influenced the findings reported in this research. For example, counselor educators identified specific school divisions for inclusion in the study based on their perceptions of exemplary. Also, those who responded to the questionnaire and structured interview questions based their answers on their perceptions of exemplary. When identifying "most effective practice" observed during the site visit, the researcher based her observations on her perceptions of exemplary.

Significance of the Study

Increased knowledge of exemplary elementary school guidance practices and programs carries with it the potential for fostering the expansion of exemplary practices throughout the state. As a result of this study, experienced professionals, and those who are new to the

field, may benefit from a showcase of exemplary program models worthy of emulation.

Definitions of Terms

Exemplary Public Elementary School Guidance Programs:

- Virginia public elementary school guidance programs worthy of emulation;
- including grades K-8, or some combination of those grades;
- representing urban, suburban, and rural settings in Southwest Virginia

Rural: a sparsely populated community with an economy largely dependent on agriculture

Urban: A densely populated community with an economy largely dependent on business and industry

Suburban: a residential community located on or near the outskirts of an urban area

School Guidance Program: refers to "a generic set of personal development services offered to students.

Counseling is one of those services. These services are provided through an organized guidance program with

specific objectives which focus on the academic, personal, social, and career development of students" (Myrick, 1987, p. 6). This study was focused on the elementary school guidance program rather than the elementary school counselor.

School Counseling: an individual or group "process through which a professionally trained counselor employs specific counseling techniques to assist students in the following:

- understanding self and others;
- gaining knowledge about education, work, and leisure; and
- exploring alternative courses of action and making realistic decisions and plans" (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1989).

Program Characteristics: functions which are essential to an effective school guidance program, including:

- (1) counseling (individual and small group);
- (2) group guidance;
- (3) consultation;
- (4) coordination;
- (5) information service;
- (6) individual assessment;

- (7) (7) placement; and
- (8) evaluation (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1989).

Program Conditions: distinguishing traits essential to an effective school guidance program, including:

- (1) endorsed guidance personnel;
 - (2) a specified student/counselor ratio;
 - (3) administrative support;
 - (4) appropriate guidance facilities;
 - (5) clerical assistance;
 - (6) teacher, parent, and community involvement, and;
 - (7) supervisory consultation and assistance
- (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1989)

Overview of the Study

In Chapter Two, a review of literature will describe the development of school counseling, particularly elementary school counseling. Characteristics and conditions associated with exemplary K-12 and elementary school guidance programs will be discussed. Methodological reports involving exemplary school guidance programs will be reviewed.

In Chapter Three, the qualitative methods used in this two stage research project will be described. The first stage of the research, which involves the identification of exemplary elementary school guidance programs, will be discussed. The second stage of the research project, consisting of case study reports, will also be described. Chapter Four will report the data collected from selected urban, suburban, and rural elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia. Chapter Five will summarize and interpret the data collected and make recommendations for further studies.

Summary

This research sought to describe exemplary elementary school guidance programs in urban, suburban, and rural school divisions in Southwest Virginia. Exemplary elementary school guidance programs were first identified by reputational method and then described using case study methods, including; observation, interview, and document review.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter Two examines the literature on the topic of elementary school guidance programs. For convenience, the discussion was reported in three sections: (1) the background and history of elementary school guidance, (2) a description of exemplary elementary school guidance program models, and (3) related research-based studies.

Background and History of Elementary

School Guidance

Those who work with elementary, middle, and secondary school guidance programs identify Frank Parsons the father of the school counseling movement. Parsons' book, Choosing a Vocation (1909), is generally thought to be the foundation for the guidance programs known in public schools today. Vocational guidance, once the focus of school guidance programs, is currently thought to be one of several important elements in a comprehensive school guidance program.

Elementary school guidance was reported to be an evolving specialty in the counseling profession (Paisley & Borders, 1995). Faust (1968b) identified three stages in the development of elementary school guidance counselor: (1) the traditionalist; (2) the neotraditionalist, and; (3) the developmentalist. Elementary school guidance programs first appeared in large urban areas in the 1920s, during which time elementary school guidance programs imitated their secondary forerunners (Myrick, 1987). Emphasis was put on scheduling, advisement, administering and/or interpreting test data, and duplicating the role and function of a psychologist. During the traditionalist period, the practice of one-on-one counseling predominated (Faust, 1968b) and the growth of elementary school guidance programs was insignificantly small (Myrick, 1987).

Books written by William Burnham's during the traditionalist period were influential to the future development of elementary school guidance programs. In The Normal Mind (1924), Great Teachers and Mental Health (1926), and The Wholesome Personality (1932), Burnham emphasized (1) preventive guidance services for all elementary school-aged students, (2) a positive learning climate, and (3) mental health services for teachers.

Toward the end of the traditionalist period, elementary school guidance started taking on a less remedial look (Lehman, 1990).

During the 1950s, the neotraditionalist emerged. Like the traditionalist, the neotraditionalist was child crisis-oriented, but was beginning to use an increasing number of preventive approaches. During this stage, considerably less emphasis was given to scheduling/advisement, testing, and career exploration, when compared to the traditionalist stage.

Faust (1968b) used the word "developmentalist" to describe the new elementary school counselor. This stage, which emerged during the 1960s, has been prevention-, rather than crisis-oriented. Addressing the developmental requirements of all children in the educative process has been the primary focus for this most recent group of elementary school counselors. Developmentalists have supported the increase of small group counseling and have expanded coordination and collaboration efforts (Faust, 1968b).

Significant legislation gave nourishment to the developing idea of elementary school guidance. The National Defense Education Act of 1958 (Public Law 85-864)

authorized monies to be spent at state and local levels for the improvement of counselor education and guidance services. An amendment to the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) made funds available specifically to elementary school guidance programs in 1964 (Kirk, 1990).

So important to elementary school guidance, Faust (1968b) likens the NDEA Amendment of 1964 to Congress signing the birth certificate of modern elementary school guidance. There were 3,837 elementary school counselors in 48 states by 1967 (Lehman, 1990). By 1969, there were over 6,000 elementary school counselors in all 50 states (Lehman, 1990). From a smoldering ember of the 1920s, elementary school guidance caught fire in the 1960s.

During the decade of the sixties, Norris (1963) addressed the occupational information needs of the elementary school student. Throughout elementary school, she proposed that students should: (1) develop wholesome attitudes toward work; (2) become aware of a variety of fields of work; (3) be given accurate information about occupations; and (4) understand the various rewards of work which extend beyond salary. Norris' proposals have been recognized as fundamental principles, integral to current comprehensive elementary school guidance programs.

Professional development of elementary school guidance has run parallel to state and national legislative changes. During a meeting of the American Personnel and Guidance Association in 1965, Don Dinkmeyer, Sr. volunteered to serve as a "coordinating point" for those who wanted to share information about an emerging concept: elementary school guidance (Dinkmeyer, 1989). A newsletter called Elementary School Guidance News and Views was established for the sharing of program ideas among 392 subscribers. Before the end of that year, the newsletter had 575 subscribers representing 46 states. After four volumes had been published, News and Views was re-organized in 1966 as a journal presently known as Elementary School Guidance & Counseling. Dinkmeyer was appointed the first editor of the new journal by the American School Counseling Association, a division of the American Personnel and Guidance Association.

In 1966, a preliminary statement on the elementary school counselor was made by a joint Association for Counselor Education and Supervision-American School Counselors Association committee (ACES-ASCA, 1966). In this statement, nationally acclaimed professionals in the field of counseling envisioned what would result in a state

mandate affecting Virginia public elementary schools twenty-one years later. The committee's vision about developmental elementary school guidance emphasized the following prophetic statements:

We believe that guidance for all children is an essential component of the total educational experience in the elementary school.

We envision a "counselor" as a member of the staff of each elementary school.

The "counselor" will have three major responsibilities: counseling, consultation, and coordination(ACES-ASCA, 1966).

Elementary school counselors were first hired on a counselor-teacher ratio, rather than counselor-student ratio (Myrick, 1987). Faust's book, Counselor-Consultant in the Elementary School (1968a), gave support to the importance of the consultant role, listing it first in a heirarchy of roles, followed by group counseling and individual counseling.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the role of the elementary school guidance program was further clarified. The concern over "why" elementary school counselors should be hired gave way to "how" elementary school counselors functioned and accomplished their program goals. The concept of an elementary school guidance team approach emerged while the

elementary school guidance program developed visibility outside of the guidance offices; at times practiced in the classrooms, on playgrounds, in the cafeterias, and in the hallways (Myrick, 1987).

History of Elementary School Guidance in Virginia

The Commonwealth of Virginia employed it's first full-time counselor in the public schools in 1936 (Kirk, 1990). Within four years, the Richmond Consultation Service was established for the purpose of advising out-of-school youth and adults. Branches of this agency were established across the state, and by 1947 it was renamed the State Consultation Service and placed under the supervision of the Division of Secondary Education within the State Department of Education (Kirk, 1990).

One year later, the Virginia State Department of Education assumed responsibility for guidance services in the public schools and the State Consultation Service was discontinued. One of the first recommendations from the newly formed guidance staff of the Virginia State Department of Education was for guidance services to be provided from grades 1 through 12 (Kirk, 1990). This

recommendation marks one of the beginning points of elementary school guidance in Virginia.

Using federal monies, the first elementary school guidance programs in Virginia started in scattered rural and urban school divisions during the early 1960s. When neighboring school divisions observed the benefits, elementary school guidance programs began to grow slowly, using federal and local funds to implement the new programs. At this time, not all school administrators were equally familiar with the benefits of implementing an elementary school guidance program. Proof was needed.

A pilot study of elementary school guidance programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia was conducted by the Virginia Department of Education from 1965 to 1969. Five school divisions collaborated. As a result of this study, administrators, teachers, and parents reported support for elementary school guidance programs. While interest in implementing elementary school guidance programs was growing during the late 1960s, federal funding was beginning to diminish. Since state funding had not yet been mandated, the actual growth in implementing new elementary school guidance programs slowed: by 1985 the

number of elementary school counselors only numbered 200 (Hoffman, 1989).

During 1979, the Virginia Elementary School Counselors Association (VESCA) State Legislative Committee was formed. This group, which consisted of elementary school counselors, counselor educators, state and local guidance supervisors, was concerned with making elementary school guidance available to all children in Virginia. To accomplish this goal, the committee established a support network for a state mandate for elementary school guidance programs, which included the Virginia Personnel and Guidance Association's (currently known as the Virginia Counselors Association) divisions and chapters (Hoffman, 1989).

A Guide for Planning and Developing Guidance and Counseling Programs in Virginia's Public Schools was developed in 1980 and published in 1983 by the Virginia State Department of Education. Reprinted in 1989, this publication combined guidelines for the development of comprehensive school guidance programs, applicable to elementary, middle, and secondary settings. The guide included four sections:

- (1) the rationale of school guidance programs and expected educational, personal-social, and career development outcomes;
- (2) school guidance program goals and objectives;
- (3) a systematic approach to the development of school guidance programs: planning, assessing needs, designing, and evaluating the program; and
- (4) role descriptions of other personnel with responsibility for the guidance program.

Two supplements to A Guide for Planning and Developing Guidance and Counseling Programs in Virginia's Public Schools were developed by the Virginia Department of Education in the mid-1980s. Career Guidance and Counseling appeared in 1984. This monograph, as well as previous research (Norris, 1963; Splete, 1982), gives support to the importance of implementing a comprehensive K-12 career development school guidance program. Counseling with Handicapped Students, published in 1985, focused attention on the developmental needs, educational goals, and counseling techniques recommended for school counselors working with students with disabilities.

A resolution recommending that elementary school guidance programs be included in all Virginia schools was

presented by the Virginia State Board of Education on May 23, 1986. As a result of a five year study by the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Feasibility of Requiring Guidance Counseling in the Public Elementary Schools, a four-year phase-in plan began in September, 1986. By the 1986-1987 school year, elementary school guidance programs had been established in 50 of the 139 school divisions in Virginia (Lehman, 1990). By the 1992-1993 school year, elementary school counselors numbered 1,251 in Virginia public schools (Murray, 1995).

An additional recommendation was made by the subcommittee on elementary guidance: that school divisions employ one school counselor per 500 elementary school students by the 1989-1990 school year (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1986). The Standards for Accrediting Schools in Virginia was modified by the Virginia State Board of Education on June 19, 1987 in accordance with the subcommittee's recommendations, providing for the inclusion of elementary school guidance programs in Virginia public schools (Lehman, 1990).

In an historical review of the development of elementary school guidance programs in Virginia, Hoffman (1989) cites three significant research projects (Whitlock

& Duncan, 1983; Ryan, 1984; and College Entrance Examination Board, 1986). In the first study, Whitlock and Duncan (1983) investigated Virginia elementary school principals' perceptions of support personnel. In this study, elementary principals identified the elementary school counselor the support professional who was unavailable, but deemed most necessary.

The second study consisted of a 1982-1984 evaluation of elementary school guidance programs in three Virginia school divisions (Ryan, 1984). Conducted by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory and the Virginia Department of Education, this research involved 29 elementary schools in Augusta County, Richmond City, and Williamsburg-James City County school divisions. Data showed elementary school guidance programs were being correctly administered and had high ratings from parents, principals, and staff.

Keeping the Options Open (College Entrance Examination Board, 1986) was a third study which gave support to elementary school guidance counseling program in Virginia. This national study of guidance programs urged the development and expansion of elementary and middle school guidance programs. School guidance programs which support

"at risk" students and improve family-school relations were recommended.

The Virginia Department of Education Division of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services office also contributed to the development of comprehensive guidance programs by developing position statements about counseling procedures. "Suggested School Counseling Activities", dated November 21, 1984, was a document used to define an accrediting standard: requiring a school guidance staff to devote 60 percent of its time to counseling students individually or in small groups (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1989). By 1987, the Virginia Board of Education amended its position, requiring each member of the guidance staff to conduct counseling activities 60 percent of the time. Procedures for Implementing the Sixty Percent Counseling Accreditation Standard in the Public Schools in Virginia was published in 1989, clarifying that the 60 percent counseling requirement and recommended documentation procedures also applied to elementary school counselors working part-time (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1989).

Description of Exemplary Elementary School Guidance

Program Models

Gysbers and Henderson (1994) and Myrick (1987) have developed well respected models for comprehensive school guidance programs. By examining the writings of these counselor educators, insight can be gained into ideal characteristics and conditions associated with comprehensive school guidance programs.

Gysbers (1990) observed how school counseling has evolved from position statements to program models. The current comprehensive developmental school guidance program model of the 1990s has enveloped the former counselor-clinical-services model of school counseling. In the former model, "the focus was on the position (counselor) and a process (counseling); not on the program (guidance)" (Gysbers, 1990, p. 1).

Five program axioms which form the foundation for current school guidance programs identified by Gysbers (1990) are:

- (1) Guidance is a program.
- (2) Guidance and counseling programs are

Developmental and comprehensive.

- (3) Guidance programs focus on individuals' competencies, not just their deficiencies.
- (4) Guidance and counseling programs are built on a team approach.
- (5) Guidance and counseling programs mandate articulation.

Using the five axioms of school guidance programs presented by Gysbers (1990), characteristics and conditions of exemplary school guidance programs K-12 will be described.

First, guidance is a program. Like other educational programs, the guidance program has certain recognizable characteristics, including: (a) learner outcomes/competencies; (b) activities and processes to assist learners; (c) professionally certified personnel; and (d) materials and resources. The guidance program targets key competencies, which include self-knowledge and interpersonal relations, decision making and planning, and knowledge of life roles, life settings, and life events (Gysbers, 1990).

Second, guidance and counseling programs are developmental and comprehensive. A developmental school guidance program has regularly planned guidance activities

to assist students in achieving learner competencies. A comprehensive school guidance program provides a wide range of activities and services from assessment, information, counseling, consultations, referral, and placement, to follow-up.

Third, school guidance programs focus on individuals' competencies, not just their deficiencies. Rather than focusing on obstacles and problems, the major emphasis in a school guidance program should focus on helping the individual expand existing competencies and identify areas for growth.

Fourth, school guidance programs are built on a team approach. While the professional certified counselor is a key element in an exemplary school guidance program, it is also a basic assumption that every member of the school staff has a responsibility to contribute to the comprehensive, developmental school guidance program.

Fifth, school guidance programs mandate articulation: a sequenced developmental and comprehensive curriculum, whose goals are clearly described to parents, teachers, administrators, students, and community resources. To assist guidance programs in articulation, regular meetings

involving the school division's guidance staff are recommended.

Using the five axioms proposed by Gysbers, a summary of school guidance program characteristics and conditions follow:

1. Expects learner outcomes
2. Provides activities and processes to assist learner outcomes
3. Staffed by professionally certified personnel
4. Uses specific materials and resources
5. Emphasizes developmental and comprehensive concepts
6. Focuses on student competencies rather than deficiencies
7. Uses a collaborative approach including all staff
8. Aids students in making transitions

Myrick (1987) identified eight goals which characterize most developmental guidance programs. These goals include: (1) understand the school environment; (2) understand self and others; (3) understand attitudes and behavior; (4) decision-making and problem-solving; (5) interpersonal and communication skills; (6) school success skills; (7) career awareness and educational planning; and

(8) community pride and involvement.

The eight goals identified by Myrick can be broken down into more specific, age-appropriate objectives which carry with them observable outcomes. In addition to guidance program goals, Myrick (1987) also describes seven principals of developmental guidance programs. The seven principals described by Myrick can direct program implementation and evaluation. The principals state that developmental guidance: (1) is for all students; (2) has an organized and planned curriculum; (3) is sequential and flexible; (4) is an integrated part of the total education process; (5) involves all school personnel; (6) helps students learn more effectively and efficiently; and (7) includes counselors who provide specialized counseling services and interventions (Myrick, 1987, p. 42).

Virginia Department of Education Program Model

Certain characteristics and conditions associated with school guidance programs have been identified by the Virginia Department of Education. In A Guide for Planning and Developing Guidance and Counseling Programs in Virginia

Public Schools (1989), it states, "An effective guidance and counseling program requires that certain conditions exist and that all levels perform a variety of functions" (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1989, p. 15). Eight characteristics of effective school guidance programs are described, which include the following functions: (1) counseling (individual and small group); (2) group guidance, (3) consultation; (4) coordination; (5) information services; (6) individual assessment; (7) placement; and (8) evaluation. In the following section, each of these eight characteristics will be examined.

1. Counseling (individual and small group)

Studies show that students receiving school counseling improved in academics (Gerler, Kinney, & Anderson, 1985), attitudes (Gerler, 1985), and behaviors (Gerler, 1985; Gerler, Kinney, & Anderson, 1985). Even though a vast number of topics would be appropriate for discussion during individual school counseling, there is one common denominator for this type of intervention: the goal. Myrick (1987) states that the goal of all school counseling is to "foster students' educational progress" (Borders & Drury, 1992, p. 491).

Time limited, structured small group counseling has been found to be an effective intervention for use with elementary school students (Myrick, 1985). Academic persistence and achievement, for example, have been shown to increase among elementary school students involved in group counseling (Deffenbacher & Kemper, 1974; Morse, 1987). Advantages of this intervention include a variety of benefits, including; positive feedback from students' peers, appropriate challenges to negative patterns of behavior, thoughts, and attitudes, and the development of coping strategies (Myrick, 1987).

2. Group Guidance

Group guidance is typically a "structured unit based on common developmental needs and interests of students at a particular level" (Borders & Drury, 1992, p. 492). Studies which support the positive effects of group guidance include those reporting improved classroom behavior among fourth graders (Myrick, Merhill, and Swanson, 1986), improved behavior and attitudes towards school (Gerler & Anderson, 1986), improved final exam grades among low-achieving sixth graders (Wilson, 1986), and improved school attendance among kindergarten and first grade students (Gerler, 1980).

3. Consultation

Consultation is best described as a collaborative effort on the part of the school counselor and consultee (parent, teacher, administrator, or specialist) to help the consultee improve interactions with the student (Borders & Drury, 1992). Empirical studies which demonstrate the benefit of consultation services by elementary school counselors, include studies showing students' improved academic performance, classroom behaviors, motivation, and self-concept (Borders & Drury, 1992; Bundy & Poppen, 1986). An indirect service provided by the school counselor, consultation can serve as an intervention, as well as prevention.

4. Coordination

A Guide for Planning and Developing Guidance and Counseling Programs in Virginia's Public Schools describes coordinating as the "clearinghouse" or the organization of "all the activities related to guidance and counseling into a continuous and meaningful sequence" (p. 18). Kameen (1985) states that "systematic coordination of guidance programs is paramount to effective delivery of services" (Kameen et al., 1985, p. 102). Coordination refers to a

variety of direct and indirect services, which include; facilitating referrals, participating in orientation and transition programs, and offering in-service programs.

5. Information

One function of the school guidance program is to collect, evaluate, and provide students with personal, educational, social, and career information so that the students can make informed decisions. Norris (1963) described the need for occupational and educational information at the elementary school level. This need has also been expanded by Splete (1982), Hoffman and McDaniels (1991), through National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC) career development guidelines (1989), and the Career Guidance and Counseling (1984) supplement to A Guide for Planning and Developing Guidance and Counseling Programs in Virginia's Public Schools (1989).

6. Individual Assessment

Individual assessment refers to the school guidance service of providing knowledge about student "needs, characteristics, backgrounds, achievements, and aspirations - so that professional school personnel may better assist them to gain self-knowledge and self-direction"

(Commonwealth of Virginia, 1989). Through individual assessment, students may receive assistance in using educational and career information, identifying interests and abilities, or academic problems. At the elementary school level, an important aspect of individual assessment includes the school counselor's coordination of the school testing program.

7. Placement

At the elementary school level, placement refers to assisting students to move on to the next level of education. This may involve transition activities from elementary to middle/high school, graduation ceremonies from the highest elementary school grade class, or planning a program of study for successive grades. When planning a program of study, the student's abilities, interests, and educational/occupational goals are most important considerations.

8. Evaluation

Evaluation refers to assessing the strengths and weaknesses of a school guidance program, based on program objectives, counselor functions (determined by students' needs), legislative mandates, and societal expectations

(Commonwealth of Virginia, 1989). A Guide for Planning and Developing Guidance and Counseling Programs in Virginia's Public Schools recommends using a combination of evaluative techniques for obtaining program data, including; follow-up, enumerative data, opinionnaires/questionnaires, case study techniques, and experimental research designs.

The importance of conducting a valid and reliable program evaluation is paramount. Hoffman (personal communication, October 31, 1995) sees guidance program evaluation as a key element in the identification of exemplary elementary school guidance programs, because without outcome data, evaluation, and program identification is impossible.

Related Research-Based Studies

Gerstein and Lichtman Study

Gerstein & Lichtman (1990) focused their nationwide study of exemplary school guidance programs on elementary schools. In their study, several common elements were found which applied to all elementary school guidance programs nominated as exemplary. All nominated programs were described as developmental, preventive, and as serving all students. Also, all exemplary school guidance programs nominated for the study were currently being funded under regular district funds.

In the Gerstein & Lichtman study, ten exemplary elementary guidance programs were chosen for closer investigation. Strengths perceived and reported by these exemplary elementary school guidance programs follow:

- 1. East Baton Rouge, Louisiana** - positive communication with parents ("happygrams"), pamphlet to parents describing the guidance program, age-appropriate suggestion lists to parents, materials on self-esteem

2. San Antonio, Texas - developmental classroom guidance every week, individual planning from fifth grade, small group counseling for academically unsuccessful, monthly meetings with counselors for purpose of sharing ideas

3. Roanoke County, Virginia - parent guidance committee in each school, peer counseling, commitment to research-based staff development, counselors usually only serve at one school

4. Eau Claire, Wisconsin - focus on developmental guidance for all students, organized, planned curriculum with specified student competencies, guidance deemed an integrated part of total education process, involves all school personnel

5. Wynne, Arkansas - supportive and cooperative staff and administration, open to new ideas, "Student Host Program" trains students to assist new students

6. Orlando, Florida - emphasis on small group counseling, classroom guidance focus on self-awareness, positive habits and attitudes, understanding human behavior, and decision-

making skills, "Way-less" program for weight control, peer facilitator program

7. La Porte, Indiana - peer facilitator program, child abuse unit taught in 2nd grade, transition program from kindergarten to grade one, study skills program at all levels, lunch groups with the counselor

8. Amherst, Massachusetts - focus on consultant model: including; individual and group counseling, consultation with teachers, parent meetings, classroom visits, involvement in referral to special education, in-service, testing, orientation and transition, committee work, special programs, and crisis intervention

9. Rochester, Minnesota - strong parent education component, crisis intervention, short-term counseling, numerous classroom guidance activities, resource list prepared by elementary counselor on program area topics

10. Columbia, South Carolina - focus on developmental guidance, structured parent education program, monthly

parent newsletter, peer facilitator program, resource center for helping teachers plan lessons, special lessons by counselor, on request of the teacher.

Gerstein and Lichtman: Methodological Reports

Gerstein and Lichtman's study (1990) was a national search for exemplary elementary school guidance programs, funded by a Christa McAuliffe Research Fellowship. Nominations for exemplary elementary school guidance programs were sought from a variety of professional sources, including: the state supervisors of guidance in the fifty states and District of Columbia; professors at universities with school counseling programs; professional leaders (from the American School Counselor Association, the Association of Counseling and Development, the National Education Association, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals); professional journal editors; and guidance supervisors who had been professionally active.

More than 200 nominations were received. Nominees were asked to complete a questionnaire concerning their exemplary program. The Delphi technique was used. A varied group of professionals were chosen to participate on

the panel including representatives from the field of counseling and education.

The object of this panel was to select ten outstanding programs which would be highlighted in the study. Using a four-point Likert scale, panel members rated the elementary school guidance programs for: objectives; strengths; exemplary features; and innovative, unusual, or highly effective practices. School counselors from selected programs were invited to make presentations at a conference on exemplary elementary school guidance programs at Virginia Tech in the spring of 1988.

Gerstein and Lichtman summarized data collected from 134 respondents by grouping the information into five domains; classroom guidance, small group guidance, individual counseling, consultation, and coordinating. A matrix was used to help clarify outstanding features of each exemplary elementary school guidance program which was nominated for the study. Strong comprehensive and developmental elementary school guidance programs were described in a book by Gerstein and Lichtman called *The Best for Our Kids: Exemplary Elementary Guidance and Counseling Programs* (1990).

Comprehensive Evaluation of Roanoke County

Elementary School Guidance

Lehman (1990) examined the overall effectiveness of one of the earliest and most comprehensive school guidance programs in Virginia, Roanoke County. The need for such a study seemed apparent since an external, formal evaluation of the program had not been done in fourteen years. To determine program effectiveness, Lehman designed and conducted a comprehensive evaluation.

Lehman's research addressed three questions:

- (1) Are the program objectives being met?
- (2) Are the student needs being met appropriately?
- (3) What are the attitudes of program participants toward the program?

Lehman used discussions with the guidance supervisor and elementary school counselors, as well as previous evaluations, and the Roanoke County Elementary Guidance & Counseling Activities & Techniques For Child Development Handbook (R.E.A.C.H. Manual) for help in determining research goals. Three evaluation questions evolved after the goals were determined:

- (1) Are the program objectives stated in the R.E.A.C.H. Manual being met? (ten objectives addressed)
- (2) What additional identified student needs can be met by the elementary school guidance program?
- (3) Do participants exhibit a favorable attitude toward the program?

All three evaluation questions were addressed by guidance counselors, teachers, principals, and students. Parents were only asked questions about their attitudes toward the elementary school guidance program.

A variety of methods were used to gather data. Focus groups were held with school counselors. Questionnaires were administered to fourteen randomly selected students. Thirty-four teachers were randomly selected to participate in a focus group and complete Likert-type items on questionnaires. Three elementary school principals were randomly selected to participate in individual structured interviews, while thirteen the remaining principals were asked to complete a questionnaire with the same items found on the teacher's questionnaire.

Two groups of parents were involved in data collection in the form of a questionnaire. One group was randomly

selected from the total population of parents of elementary school aged children attending Roanoke County Schools. The "selected" sample parent group had participated in the guidance program in the year prior to Lehman's study.

Frequency distributions and percentages of responses for questionnaire items were calculated using the SAS Program. Data was cross-tabulated to identify differences which were school-, sex-, or grade-specific. Open-ended questions were categorized by program goals which had been identified during a previous program evaluation. The categories were: (1) Self-Concepts Concerns; (2) Academic Concerns; and (3) Relationship Concerns.

Analysis of the data showed that program objectives were being met and that no additional student needs could be identified. Program participant attitudes were favorable. Lehman made seven recommendations based on data analysis, which involved various topics; career infusion, restructuring school counselors' managerial styles, hiring of additional staff, improving public relations with parents, improving staff development, addressing relationship skills specific to intermediate-aged students, and scheduling systematic comprehensive program evaluations.

Model Development of an Elementary School Guidance Program

In her dissertation, Dodson (1977) developed a model for an elementary school guidance program, using a case study approach. Program development, implementation, and evaluation procedures of the elementary school guidance program in Norfolk, Virginia were observed. The targeted population focused on disadvantaged K-4 pupils enrolled in a Title I instructional program. In her study, Dodson sought to address the following research questions:

- (1) What was the conceptual framework for the development of the program?
- (2) What were the sequential steps in initiating the program?
- (3) How was the program implemented?
- (4) From the analysis of the data, what indices were derived as basic elements of a model?

Data were compiled from five sources, including; counselors' monthly reports, teachers' opinionnaires, student questionnaires, parent study group evaluation forms, and case studies. Examining monthly reports allowed the researcher to identify counselors' use of time. Teachers from eighteen Title I elementary schools answered

a 34-item opinionnaire to determine the extent to which each program objective was accomplished. An open-ended question concerning suggestions for improving the basic guidance program was also included on the teachers' opinionnaire. Title I students in grades 3 and 4 were asked to complete a 30-item questionnaire. Forty of ninety parents who attended parent-study group sessions completed an eight-item evaluation instrument. Forty-seven student case studies submitted by nine elementary school counselors were also used in the analysis. As a result of her study, Dodson synthesized a model for an elementary school guidance program which encompassed program development and implementation, as well as evaluation.

Exemplary Career Development Programs

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE) and the U. S. Department of Education have collaborated for three successive years to identify and describe exemplary career guidance programs. Research-based criteria was used by nationally recognized professionals in the field to rank twenty exemplary programs which had completed the application process.

Based on the rankings, seven programs received site visits, at which time participants in the programs were interviewed. As a result of the site visit and interview process, three career guidance programs were validated as exemplary and three others received an honorable mention by the U.S. Department of Education and National Center for Research in Vocational Education.

The search for exemplary career guidance programs, coordinated by Maddy-Bernstein (1997), focused on three clusters of components to identify exemplary career guidance programs: (1) career guidance and counseling program plan; (2) collaboration, articulation, and communication; and (3) institutional support, leadership, and program evaluation.

School Counseling Programs Assessed Through External Review

Schmidt, professor of school counseling at East Carolina University, designed and implemented a method for assessing comprehensive K-12 school counseling programs (1995). In his external review of the school counseling programs in two school systems, a team of consultants made site visits and conducted written surveys of students, parents, and teachers. Data gathering also included

structured interviews with the principal, school counselor, school superintendent, selected central office personnel, and a group of teachers. The results of Schmidt's study showed that neither school system had a "well-defined comprehensive school counseling program" (Schmidt, 1995, p. 117), or a systematic approach to developing and evaluating a comprehensive K-12 school guidance program. Since neither school system had a job description for the school counselor's position, role confusion and inconsistent services resulted. In one school system, school counselors were expected to perform such a wide variety of duties that counselors and principals reported that the counseling responsibilities were not always met. In both school systems, one-on-one services and individual counseling were perceived by the school counselor and principal to be the most important services performed by the school counselor, while clerical work, and coordinating the state testing program were perceived to be the least important services. Both school systems were challenged by the review to provide more time in the school counselors' schedule for individual counseling and one-on-one services.

Research on Counselor's Time Use and

Counselor: Student Ratio

Research on elementary school guidance programs has included important information on the school counselor's use of time and counselor:student ratio. The following section will describe the research on these two important variables.

1. School Counselor's Use of Time

Cole (1977) examined the per cent of time middle school counselors spent in specific roles, including; counseling (individuals and groups), consultation, coordinating, curriculum specialist, as well as the per cent of time spent alone. Dodson (1977) reported the percent of time elementary school counselors spent conducting guidance activities, including; counseling (individual and group) group guidance, consultation, coordination, child study, career development, parent groups, and reports. Gysbers and Henderson (1994) suggest that a majority of school counselor's time should be spent on providing direct services to students in a 80/20 or 75/25 ratio. The State Department of Education currently

expects school counselors in Virginia to meet no less than 60% to 40% counseling to guidance ratio.

The Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Program Model, field tested from 1984-1988 by school counselors and administrators in Missouri, suggested the following time allocations for elementary school guidance programs:

Guidance Curriculum 35-45%

Individual Planning 5-10%

Responsive Services 30-40%

System Support 10-15% (Starr & Gysbers, 1992).

These suggestions were made as points of departure, since the percent of time spent by school counselors on the four program components tends to vary with grade level, school, and community needs (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994).

2. Student-Counselor Ratio

Large variations may be observed in student-counselor ratios in school guidance programs. Fifteen of 134 elementary school guidance programs in Gerstein and Lichtman's study reported a student-counselor ratio of more than 1,000 students per counselor. While an urban elementary school program in San Diego reported 1,700

students per school counselor, Clifton Park, New York reported 45 students to one school counselor.

In Virginia, the Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1987) requires, "that certified elementary school counselors be employed in Virginia's public elementary schools at a counselor-pupil ratio of one per 500 by the 1989-90 school year" (Hoffman, 1989, p. 36). For public elementary schools with an enrollment smaller or larger than 500 pupils, the provision was made for an elementary school counselor to work one hour per day per 100 pupils, or major fraction.

Summary

This chapter examined the background and history of elementary school counseling outside and inside Virginia, examined descriptions of exemplary elementary school guidance program models, and reviewed related research-based studies.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter was to: (1) describe the research methodology used in this study; (2) explain the selection of the participants; (3) explain how the data was collected; and (4) describe the method of analysis of the data.

Research Methodology

A two-stage process was used to identify and describe exemplary elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia. First, the process of identifying exemplary elementary school guidance programs will be discussed. Second, the description of exemplary elementary school guidance programs, using case study reviews, will be described.

STAGE ONE:

Selection of the Participants

Selection of the participants constituted stage one of the study. The participants included three elementary school guidance school programs with exemplary reputations in the Southwest region of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Individuals who were knowledgeable about elementary guidance programs in Southwest Virginia were asked to nominate the school divisions with reputations for having exemplary elementary guidance programs. These nominators included three university faculty members/counselor educators from the Blacksburg campus of Virginia Tech. Each of the nominators had more than twenty years experience in the field of school counseling.

Nominators were asked to identify rural, urban, and suburban school divisions in Southwest Virginia which demonstrated exemplary elementary school guidance programs. A variety of settings were sought so that the findings of the study would represent a wider spectrum of elementary school guidance programs and practices. The criterion for selection was that the school division nominated had established the reputation of having an exemplary elementary school guidance program worthy of emulation.

After three school divisions were identified by counselor educators for inclusion in the study, the superintendents of selected school divisions were contacted for permission to conduct case studies of their elementary school guidance programs, during the 1996-97 school year (Appendix G). Anonymity of the school systems was insured

by the researcher. Permission granted, the school division superintendent or supervisor of guidance was then asked to nominate a specific elementary school for participation in the study. By this method, the specific elementary schools participating in the study were identified.

STAGE TWO:

Program Description

Stage two of the study utilized questionnaires, site visits, structured interviews, and document reviews to address the research question: **What practices and programs are being implemented in the elementary schools perceived to have exemplary elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia?**

The resulting data were synthesized and reported in narrative/case study fashion (Stake, 1995). Special emphasis was given to examples of exemplary elementary school guidance practices and programs cited by the majority of respondents. Quantifiable data, such as a comparison of school counselors' time allocations was also collected for each school site (Cole, 1977; Dodson, 1977; and Gysbers & Henderson, 1994) and reported in Appendix A.

The following sections describe the data collection process in more detail.

Questionnaire

Three elementary school counselors, members of the New River Valley Chapter of the Virginia Counselor's Association, were asked to field test a questionnaire modeled after the one used by Gerstein and Lichtman in a nationwide study of exemplary elementary school guidance programs (1990). Using their recommendations, needed changes were made.

After permission was obtained by the school divisions involved, the three elementary school guidance programs selected for the study were sent cover letters and the school counselors were asked to complete the questionnaire (Appendix C).

The questionnaire asked the three elementary school guidance counselors associated with the nominated programs to "describe innovative, unusual, or highly effective practices implemented in your elementary school guidance program", and to give "specific examples of effective practices used with students, parents, teachers, combination of students, parents, and teachers, and

volunteers". Other program-related items on the questionnaire focused on publicity, use of community resources, funding, overcoming obstacles, and the school counselor's use of time.

Demographic information was also gathered through items on the questionnaire; for example, one question concerned the number of students participating in the elementary school guidance program. This information was used to better understand the scope of the student population.

Conducting the Site Visits

Each of the schools involved in the study received one site visit during the Spring of 1997. Four schools received site visits, since one elementary school guidance counselor had a split appointment between two schools. During the site visits, observations were made of the best elementary school guidance programs and practices, structured interviews took place (or arrangements were made for telephone interviews to take place at a later time), and related documents were reviewed.

The rationale for site visits was to:

- (1) verify research findings through observation; and

- (2) more fully develop the profiles of the exemplary elementary school guidance programs in urban, suburban, and rural public elementary schools in Southwest Virginia.

Structured Interviews

School visits involved structured interviews, patterned after structured interview questions used by Schmidt (1995). A variety of people who could share their observations about the strengths of the elementary school guidance program participated, including central office personnel, PTA president, a student, with parental permission (Appendix G), a representative from Social Services serving the locality, a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, the media specialist, and the physical education teacher (Appendix D). Each respondent was asked to, "Talk about the overall strengths of the elementary school guidance program" by answering five questions. All interviews made in person were tape recorded. In some cases, however, arrangements had to be made for telephone interviews, which were not taped.

Guidance Supervisor's and Principal's Interview

The elementary school principal and central office were also asked to respond to structured interview questions (Appendix D), however they responded to five additional questions (Schmidt, 1995). Critical issues were included, such as:

- the relationship of the counseling program to school goals;
- how all students' needs were met by the counseling program;
- how the elementary school counselor was supervised and how the guidance program was evaluated;
- examples of collaborative efforts;
- parent involvement;
- the role of the principal in the exemplary elementary guidance program; and
- the outlook for future funding of the elementary school guidance program.

School Counselor's Interview

The school counselor responded to a different set of ten structured interview questions (Schmidt, 1995). The

school counselor was asked to "tell about" the following important issues:

- the elementary school guidance program's goals and objectives;
- counselor supervision and program evaluation;
- how priorities were determined;
- which students utilized the elementary school guidance program;
- what small counseling groups were offered;
- adequacy of the elementary school guidance program facilities;
- administrative support;
- how the elementary school guidance program was publicized/promoted (Appendix E).

Document Review

During the site visit, critical documents were reviewed. From this document review, certain data was collected, including: school guidance budget, number of schools served by the school counselor, written elementary school guidance plan, log/monitor sheet assessing counselor's time allocation, demographics of the school

community, number of underprivileged students receiving free or reduced lunch, or Title I services, and the percent of students in the school who had passed the Literacy Passport Test in 1996 on the first attempt.

Case Study Reviews

After collecting data from questionnaires, site visits, structured interviews, and document reviews, the information was written in case study fashion (Stake, 1995; Hamel, 1993; Yin, 1993). Each school division was described separately. In a summary of all three school divisions, similarities and unique features among rural, urban, and suburban elementary school guidance programs were also identified.

Method of Analysis of the Data

After data collection was completed, a synthesis of the material took place. Questionnaire responses, structured interviews, and information gained from document reviews were summarized. Examples of exemplary elementary school guidance practices and programs most frequently cited by a majority of the respondents were grouped into three categories and described in detail.

FLOW CHART

February, 1996
School Divisions Identified

July, 1996
Field Test

February, 1997
Superintendents Contacted:
Permission Granted
Specific School Sites Identified

February, 1997
School Counselors Sent Questionnaire
Site Visits Arranged by Phone

February/March, 1997
Site Visits and Data Collection

November, 1997
Data Synthesized and Reported

Summary

In this study, the research question was addressed through a two stage process: (1) exemplary elementary school guidance programs were identified, using a reputational method, and (2) exemplary elementary guidance programs were described, using a narrative report.

Questionnaires, structured interviews, document reviews, and site visits were utilized. Observations of best elementary school guidance programs and practices were made during site visits, synthesized, and reported using case study methods (Hamel, 1993; Stake, 1995; and Yin, 1993). Exemplary elementary school guidance practices and programs which were reported by a majority of respondents in all three school settings were described and summarized.

The researcher sought to find similarities and differences in exemplary elementary school guidance programs in rural, urban, and suburban settings. Results from both stages of the research are reported in Chapter Four and interpreted in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter reports results of research conducted during the Spring of 1997, which focused on elementary school guidance programs perceived to be exemplary in Southwest Virginia. The purpose of this chapter is to describe how the research was used to answer the research question: **What practices and programs are being implemented in elementary schools perceived to have exemplary elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia?**

Presentation of Data Collected From Three School Divisions

Questionnaire responses, site visit observations, structured interview responses, and document reviews were reported for each elementary school guidance program. For clarity, data was presented one school setting at a time, beginning with the rural setting, progressing to a discussion of the urban, then the suburban settings.

Rural Setting

Description of the Rural School

The rural elementary school guidance program was established in 1989, when the Virginia State Board of Education mandate required that an elementary school counselor be employed for each elementary school serving 500 students. Since 1989, the rural school had the same elementary school counselor. During the Spring of 1997, the elementary school counselor served 360 elementary and shared the responsibility of counseling 112 middle school students with the high school counselor. Demographics showed that 30 percent of the student population received free or reduced lunch, 18 percent of the students participated in Title I activities, and 60 percent of the 6th grade students passed the Virginia Passport Literacy Test on the first attempt in 1996.

According to the Virginia Statistical Abstract: 1996-97, the per capita personal income in the rural jurisdiction was \$15,168, the population count was 4,700, and a total of 420 students were reported to be enrolled in the K-7 elementary school program. The rural land area

measured 330 square miles (Virginia Bureau of the Census, 1994).

Data Collected from Rural Questionnaire Responses

A questionnaire concerning the elementary school guidance program was completed by the school counselor (Appendix C). Open-ended questions were asked, such as, "Give three to five specific examples of effective practices used with: (a) students; (b) parents; (c) teachers; (d) combinations of students, parents, and teachers; and (e) volunteers." In the rural setting, the school counselor cited numerous effective programs and practices. Ten examples are described below:

1. Classroom Guidance Units

The school counselor coordinated the classroom guidance units with teachers and tailored her presentations to individual classroom needs. Teachers, in turn, followed-up on classroom guidance themes. In the primary grades different puppets/mascots were used at different grade levels.

The school counselor taught a wide variety of classroom guidance units, for example:

- (1) Friendship (1st and 2nd grades)
- (2) Goal-Setting (3rd grade)
- (3) "Good Student Hall of Fame" (4th grade)
- (4) Goal-Setting and Careers (5th and 6th grades)

2. Individual and Small Group Counseling

Another effective practice mentioned in the rural setting included the use of individual counseling and small counseling groups. The principal and the teachers recommended students to the school counselor for participation in individual counseling or small counseling groups on topics such as coping with divorce/family changes, coping with death/loss, conflict resolution/anger control, friendship, communication, goal-setting, and problem-solving.

3. Career Day/Positive Pastime/Health-Wellness-Safety Day

Career Day/Positive Pastime Day/Health-Wellness-Safety Day was offered on a three-year rotating basis. It gave students the opportunity to explore careers and meet positive role models from the community.

4. Use of Volunteers

While not counseling, such as the use of volunteers was a practice which served to aid the counseling program. Volunteers helped plan special events, such as Career Day/Positive Pastime Day/Health-Wellness-Safety Day. They made presentations and saw to it that things ran smoothly. In addition to serving on planning committees, volunteers also contributed valuable time listening to students read, reading to students, monitoring students' work, and helping teachers.

5. Parent Involvement

Parent involvement was cited by the school counselor as an important practice. The school counselor involved parents by asking them to review guidance materials and make suggestions concerning the elementary school guidance program. Parents were also involved in classroom guidance homework assignments. For example, parents verified when 4th grade students had accomplished "Good Student Hall of Fame" goals. Parents also contributed food and served a formal meal to students who achieved all the goals.

6. Good Communication

To facilitate good communication with the parents and staff, the school counselor sent a letter home to parents at the beginning and end of each classroom unit which described the goals of the unit which was studied. Letters were also sent home to inform parents about small counseling groups which were available to their children. The same information was also shared with the classroom teachers.

7. Parent Education

With another staff member, the school counselor taught a series of parenting classes during the fall and spring. Classes were held in the evening because that was the time which was more convenient for working parents to attend. Active Parenting materials were used to help facilitate the discussion groups. During the Spring, an additional class was offered for parents of pre-school children in the Head Start and pre-school handicapped programs on the topic of parenting skills and four parenting discussion groups were held on the topics of self-esteem, responsibility, logical discipline, and communication/problem-solving.

8. Kindergarten Orientation

Another effective practice was kindergarten orientation, held in the Spring. On this occasion, the school counselor met incoming kindergartners and discussed school readiness with parents individually and as a group.

9. Guidance Folders

To facilitate a better understanding of the elementary school guidance program, the school counselor provided teachers with a guidance folder at the beginning of the new school year. The folder was entitled, "Grin" ("Guidance Really Is Neat"). The guidance folder included referral forms, outlines for guidance units taught, and suggestions for possible groups. At the end of the year, the guidance folder was collected and updated for return during the beginning of the next school year.

10. Coordinated Referrals

In the rural setting, the school counselor coordinated referrals, such as referrals for special services, special education, and gifted programs, as well as referrals to the Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT). These

referrals "require a lot of working together, ... clarification", according to the school counselor.

Most Effective Practice

When she responded to the questionnaire, the school counselor identified classroom guidance as the most effective elementary school guidance practice. She described it as most effective because classroom guidance "reached all students" and it focused on issues related to development and achievement, which were identified by the school counselor as elementary school guidance program goals.

The school counselor also added a comment about the faculty and administration. She described them as being "very supportive" of the elementary school guidance program, although no evaluative data were made available.

Additional Data Gathered from the Questionnaire

How the Rural Elementary School Guidance Program is

Publicized/Promoted:

The program was publicized in several ways: a description of program was put in school handbook, guidance

unit letters were sent home to parents, newspaper articles were written, parent group advertisements and flyers were distributed, a presentation to PTA/Open House was made by the school counselor, and guidance materials were displayed in the hall.

**How the Rural Elementary School Guidance Program Works With
Community Resources:**

The school counselor reported that she collaborated with many community resources, including the DARE officer, Blue Ridge Community Services (Prevention Plus Services), and the school prevention specialist. The school counselor also made referrals and worked cooperatively with other community resources, including Child and Adolescent Outpatient Counseling Services, Social Services, and Court Services.

**Major Obstacles Overcome in Conducting Rural Elementary
School Guidance Program:**

Obstacles which were overcome in the rural setting were reported by the school counselor to be: (1) inadequate funding for consumable classroom guidance materials, and (2) inadequate space for housing parent resource materials.

Words Which Best Describe the Program:

The school counselor described the program as "focused on students' success and achievement in academic and personal/social concerns, well-supported by faculty, administration, and parents".

Evidence of Program Evaluations, Studies, Reports, or Articles Concerning Your Rural Elementary School Guidance

Program Over the Past Five Years:

The school counselor reported that no program evaluations had been made over the past five years.

Data Collected from a Site Visit:

A site visit was made to an elementary school guidance program in a rural school division in Southwest Virginia in February, 1997. During the visit, eight structured interviews took place and two other interviews were scheduled. Within several days of the site visit, the remaining interviews were conducted via telephone.

While visiting the rural site, the school counselor was observed conducting a Child Study meeting, teaching two

classroom guidance lessons, and presiding over a fourth grade friendship group during lunch.

The guidance office was used as a base of operations and the school counselor was migratory. Whether in the hall, in the cafeteria, or during the fire-drill, the school counselor was out and about throughout the day, continually making informal contacts with students and teachers in an apparent atmosphere where the welfare of the students was a mutual concern.

The best practice in the rural setting observed by the researcher was the school counselor's ability to coordinate activities. The rural elementary school guidance program exemplified the "clearinghouse" or organization of "all the activities related to guidance and counseling into a continuous and meaningful sequence" as described in *A Guide for Planning and Developing Guidance and Counseling Programs in Virginia's Public Schools* (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1989, p. 18).

Data Collected from Structured Interviews

When participants in the rural study were asked five structured interview questions (Appendix D), three

strengths of the program were mentioned most often by a majority of respondents:

- (1) developmental classroom guidance lessons,
- (2) small group and individual counseling, and
- (3) elementary school guidance programs which involved parent and teacher participation.

These strengths will be described in some detail in the section to follow:

1. Developmental Classroom Guidance

Twice a year, a six-week classroom guidance unit was offered to each grade level by the school counselor, who consulted closely with classroom teachers to determine which topics to cover during classroom guidance lessons. With teacher input, the school counselor designed 40-minute long developmentally-appropriate classroom guidance lessons which sought to address the goals and objectives for elementary school guidance programs identified by the Virginia State Board of Education: "to aid children to master the academic, personal, and career development tasks which are essential for positive growth" (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1989, p. 3). Parent received letters describing the topics which were covered during each unit so that they

can be informed and interact with their children about the topics which were taught.

One example of a classroom guidance unit taught by the school counselor was the fourth grade unit called the "Good Student Hall of Fame". In this unit, students moved toward a clearly defined set of expectations, and progressed toward a visible goal with tangible rewards. After designing paper race cars, students moved their cars, by mileposts, along a wall in one of the fourth grade classes. As they achieved each goal, the students progressed toward the next milepost. When all the expectations were met, the students' paper race cars progressed toward the goal, in this case the teacher's door. Rewards for students who achieved the "Good Student Hall of Fame" varied each month. One festive occasion was a catered meal, served to the students by parents dressed in formal attire. Students who did not achieve the expectations set by the program were offered small group counseling to help them become more successful at school.

One parent described the classroom guidance lessons as "age-appropriate" and "relevant to the children". The parent also explained that activities are varied and there was "never a dull moment"! For example, puppets were used

to help teach classroom guidance lessons in the primary grades. Kindergarten students experienced DUSO the dolphin when developing understanding of themselves and others. First graders become acquainted with PAL when learning good study habits. Second graders got to know Barney Bear when learning more about the behaviors expected of a good student. Third graders studied a decision-making curriculum with Danda Panda. This unit focused on the concept that: "**Decisions Are Necessary In Daily Activities**".

The puppets at the primary level were perceived to be fun, as well as effective. When second graders participating in a lunch group were asked what their grade level puppet, Barney Bear, had taught them, four boys and one girl replied, "To pay attention", "Listen", "Try hard", "Don't bother others", and that, "We choose what to do when we have a problem."

In the upper elementary grades, classroom guidance lessons continued to focus on developmentally-appropriate issues. At this age, decision-making and goal-setting were identified as learning objectives. A series of videos called, Big Changes, Big Choices, specifically designed for students in grades 5-9, was used to supplement the

classroom guidance lessons. This material seemed to hold the attention of an observed group of 6th grade students by using humor, popular music, and testimonials by positive role models.

To reinforce the objective being taught, the school counselor left a suggested follow-up classroom activity with the classroom teacher after each classroom guidance lesson was completed. Students earned an English grade for completing the suggested activities.

2. Small Group and Individual Counseling

Small counseling groups were formed based on students' needs. Early during the school year, groups on motivation were formed. These groups were based on "The Achievers' Club," a concept described by David Burgess, who recently worked as program supervisor for the elementary school counseling program at the Virginia State Department of Education. Other groups were held throughout the year, as needed, and included a variety of topics, such as coping with divorce/family changes, coping with death/loss, conflict resolution/anger control, friendship, communication, goal-setting, and problem-solving. Approximately six peers with like needs formed a group.

The participants were required to have parental permission before they attended the lunchtime sessions. The duration of most groups was six to eight weeks.

Teachers recommended certain students to the school counselor for small group counseling. The school counselor reported that teachers followed-up on counseling sessions and tried to make needed adjustments. A special education teacher who was interviewed felt that the small group counseling for students in need was "immediate". A regular education teacher also commented on the immediacy factor, saying that the school counselor "makes time" for students. In a similar vein, a supervisor commented that the school counselor was "there for the kids right away", and that there was "no waiting list" because the school counselor "does priorities."

When a site visit was made, a fourth grade student labeled with a "behavior disorder" was observed. The student was asked to choose peers to invite for lunch with the school counselor once each week. This was "not a counseling session," the school counselor explained, but a way for the counselor to develop rapport, and an opportunity for the student to develop or strengthen friendships among peers.

When asked to identify the most important elementary school guidance program provided, the media specialist commented on the availability of small group and individual counseling. She stated that the students knew the school counselor was there for them and that the counselor was "in tune with what they are doing." A regular education teacher also commented that individual counseling was needed quite often when a problem exists which didn't require the help of the principal. The school counselor also saw individual and group counseling as the most important service she provided, with crisis intervention taking highest priority.

3. School Guidance Programs Involving Parents and Teachers

Those who responded to the structured interview questions repeatedly mentioned three elementary school guidance program initiatives which involved parents and teachers:

- (1) Career Day, (2) Positive Pastimes Day, and 3) Health/Wellness/Safety Day were special events held on a three-year rotation cycle. Parents were involved in the planning, coordination, and implementation of

these special days and saw to it that everything ran smoothly. These events "involve the whole community", explained a child protective worker from the local Social Services office. During the Positive Pastimes event, a CEO from a local business was found displaying his coin collection, and grandparents demonstrated the art of quilting, or wreath-making, for example.

- Parent education classes were reported to be an important part of this elementary school guidance program. Using Active Parenting materials as a starting point, the school counselor offered parenting classes twice during the year. Parents were invited to attend through letters sent home with report cards. Parenting classes were offered to parents of children in the pre-school handicapped and Head Start programs. Parenting discussion groups were also held on four evenings in the Spring, which covered a variety of topics, including self-esteem, responsibility, discipline, and communication/problem-solving. Teachers helped to identify parents who might benefit

from parent education classes. The school counselor acted as co-facilitator of the groups with the help of another faculty member. Parenting groups were held in the evenings because it was more convenient for working parents and parents who had to travel a long distance to the school.

- Parent resource materials were displayed in prominent places in the school. For example, materials were placed on a cart, table, or display case in the foyer of the school. The display was changed frequently by the school counselor and was used as a lending library.

Data Collected From Interviews with Rural

Supervisor/ Principal

Although the rural school did not have a guidance supervisor, the Special Education Supervisor worked closely with the elementary school counselor, so structured interview questions were directed to the Special Education Supervisor. The school principal and supervisor responded to ten structured interview questions in all, while other participants in the study responded to only five questions

(Appendix D).

Relationship of Elementary School Guidance Program Goals to
School Division/School Goals

When asked to describe the elementary school's guidance program's relationship to school division/school goals, both principal and supervisor responded that the goals were "the same". The principal stated that both goals were to "help the students become better citizens", while the supervisor further explained that the "goals of the program and school goals match up very well" and that the school counselor was student-focused and "here for the students".

Supervision and Evaluation of Rural Elementary School
Guidance Program

Both supervisor and principal explained that the school counselor is supervised and evaluated by the principal, who confers with the school superintendent. Like classroom teachers, the school counselor was observed by the principal once per semester and evaluated at the end of the school year. The principal stated, evaluation and supervision were an "on-going process" in this rural

setting, since the school counselor and principal met to discuss the progress of students on a regular basis.

Interactions Between the Rural Elementary School Guidance Program and Other Student Services Professionals

"Liaison" is the word the principal used when asked to describe the kinds of interactions this elementary school guidance program has with other student service professionals, and gave the Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT) and high school transition as examples. The supervisor also gave numerous examples of interactions the school counselor had with other professionals, including her representation on the: School Health Advisory Board, Gifted and Talented Committee, FAPT, Mental Health Association, Community Services Board, in addition to referrals the school counselor made to the Social Services and Health Departments.

Future Funding of the Rural Elementary School Guidance Program

Both supervisor and principal stated that there was no additional money from the school division available or planned for the elementary school guidance program in the

future. At that time, however, the principal had heard "no talk about the elimination of state support". He explained that because there have been enough "success stories" to support the program, the state funding would probably continue.

School Leaders' Involvement in the Rural Elementary School

Guidance Program

There was agreement between principal and supervisor when they responded to a question about their involvement in the elementary school guidance program. Close daily/weekly contact with the school counselor was stressed. In the case of the supervisor, most contacts stemmed from special education referrals. With the principal, most contacts developed from referrals he gave the school counselor, and he also explained that the school counselor "deals with the situations I recommend".

Data Collected From Interview With School Counselor

Relationship Between Elementary School Guidance

Program Goals and School Goals

Like the supervisor and principal, the school counselor described the elementary school guidance program and school goals as "exactly the same". Not a written, separate program, the elementary school guidance program was based on the Virginia state goals and centered on "student achievement".

Supervision and Evaluation of Elementary School

Guidance Program

The school counselor explained that the principal was responsible for supervision and evaluation, since there was no guidance supervisor. Supervision and evaluation were based on observation and classroom guidance activities. As needed, the principal recommended students to the school counselor to participate in small counseling groups. No distinction was made between the school counselor's evaluation and the evaluation of the elementary school guidance program.

How Elementary School Guidance Program

Priorities Are Determined

The Virginia State Department of Education's recommendation which proposed that school counselors use at least 60 percent of their time in counseling activities was used as a guideline for establishing program priorities in the rural setting. "Crises" are given priority, as well, according to the school counselor. The school counselor stressed that a cooperative approach was used to plan priorities using input from the principal, the teachers, and parents.

Elementary School Guidance Budget and Materials

The elementary school guidance program in the rural setting was allowed the same budget as classroom teachers, an amount of \$250.00 per year. Drug-Free School money was also available to the elementary school guidance program when a need arose. In addition, monies from the PTA and general budget were available when the school counselor made a special request, such as materials to teach parenting classes to parents of students in the pre-school handicapped and Head Start programs.

Students Who Utilize the Elementary School

Guidance Program

When asked which students get the most out of the elementary school guidance program, (utilized services, took more of the school counselor's time), the school counselor responded that "all students in grades K-7" are served equally through classroom guidance activities. No one in the rural setting had opted out of classroom guidance, but occasionally a parent had informally asked that a child not participate in a small counseling group.

Small Group Counseling

The school counselor explained that small counseling groups were driven by need. Examples of small counseling groups in the rural setting were those which focused on friendship (6th grade), goal-setting (4th grade), divorce, death/loss, conflict resolution, and motivation.

Effect of Virginia State Board of Education Regulations

The school counselor reported "no changes", when asked how the rural elementary school guidance program had been affected by the Virginia State Board of Education

regulations of July, 1996 (which required local school divisions to inform parents about the guidance and counseling program and offer an opt-out procedure for parents if they chose for their children not to participate in the program). When given the choice, none of the parents had formally chosen to opt out of the elementary school guidance program.

The Virginia State Board of Education regulations did not represent a change in operating procedure in the rural setting. Since the beginning of the rural elementary school guidance program in 1989, the school counselor had made a practice of contacting parents before asking a student to join a small counseling group and letters were routinely sent home to parents to communicate objectives being covered during classroom guidance units.

Data Collected From Document Reviews:

Elementary School Guidance Budget:

The guidance program budget was reported by the school counselor to be part of the general budget, not a separate line item. Like teachers, the school counselor was allotted \$250.00 annually. Some funding for guidance

materials was derived from the Drug Free Schools Grants and the PTA.

Is there a written elementary school guidance plan?

In the rural setting, there was no separate written elementary school guidance plan; instead the Virginia Department of Education guidelines for School Counseling Programs was used.

What type of log/monitor sheet is used?

The school counselor used a one-page log, incorporated into the weekly planner to record counseling sessions. The Virginia State Department of Education recommendation that at least 60% of a school counselor's time be spent in counseling activities and no more than 40% be spent in guidance activities was used as a guideline for time use. The rural school counselor's use of time was varied depending on her classroom guidance schedule, which changed periodically. The rural school counselor estimated that she spent 50 to 60 percent of her time in the counseling role; with 30 percent used in individual counseling and 20 percent used in group counseling.

Describe the elementary school counselor's schedule/duties:

The school counselor's schedule/duties included: individual counseling, group counseling, classroom guidance, parent counseling, parenting classes, coordination and consultation with outside agencies, Child Study coordination, Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT) Team membership, and Gifted/Talented testing and coordination.

Urban Setting

Description of the Urban School

The urban elementary school guidance program was in existence before the 1989 Virginia State Board of Education mandate which established elementary school guidance programs in Virginia's public elementary schools. The school counselor who participated in the study had a split-appointment between two schools and served 273 primary and 238 intermediate students. Of this population, 59 percent of the primary and 58 percent of the intermediate students received free or reduced lunch, 19 percent of the primary students and 0 percent of the intermediate students participated in the Title I program, and 16 percent of the

6th grade students passed the Virginia Passport Literacy Test on the first attempt in 1996.

According to the Virginia Statistical Abstract: 1996-97, the population count for the urban jurisdiction was 96,500, the per capita income was \$20,642, and the membership in the K-7 elementary program was 8,550. The Bureau of the Census (1994) reported the urban land area to be 43 square miles.

Data Collected from Questionnaire Responses

When she responded to the questionnaire, the urban school counselor identified several effective practices used with students in the paired schools. These nine programs and practices will be described below.

1. Classroom Guidance Units

Approximately ten classroom guidance lessons were taught by the school counselor to K-4 graders on the topic of conflict resolution. Fifth graders received weekly classroom guidance lessons on a variety of topics, which included; decision-making, peer pressure, career exploration, preparing for middle school, and the Family Life Curriculum.

2. "Caught Being Good" Program

Students in the primary school participated in a school-wide program called "Caught Being Good". A monthly assembly was held to recognize one student selected from each classroom for good behavior. From this group, one student was selected to be student of the month, and was invited to eat lunch with the principal at a local buffet-style restaurant.

3. Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation Program

In the intermediate school, a conflict resolution mini-course was taught throughout the year on a weekly basis to rotating small groups of students. Fifth graders are selected, through application, and received intensive training from the school counselor before they served as peer mediators. The school counselor and intermediate school principal made presentations to other urban elementary and middle schools and principals to explain the peer mediation program. Parents were informed about the conflict resolution and peer mediation program when the school counselor made a presentation during PTA Back to School Night.

4. Parent Workshops

An example of an effective practice used in the urban school with parents of K-3 students was the Parent Information Exchange ("P.I.E."). These parent workshops were held during both the day and evening, to accommodate parents who worked close enough to the school to attend a lunchtime meeting, as well as those parents who could only attend meetings at night. The goal of the parent workshops was to teach parents good communication skills, to teach about the difference between discipline and abuse, and to help parents and children deal with violence on television.

5. Parent Resource Center and Workshops

Another effective practice cited by the urban school counselor was the establishment of the Parent Resource Center, which opened during the 1996-97 school year. This project was developed by two teachers in the school, but it served to extend the elementary school guidance program. Through the Parent Resource Center, parents borrowed needed resources and activities covering a variety of developmental or crisis-related issues. Also, evening workshops were provided through the Parent Resource Center

on various topics, such as: "Firm, But Fair Discipline, ADHD, and Communication.

6. Home Visits

When needed, the school counselor visited students' homes. The purpose of a home visit was to work with the family to enable an at-risk student become more successful in school. She also visited students when they were hospitalized, or made visits to funeral homes, when a student experienced a death in the family.

7. Participation of School Counselor in Parent-Teacher Conferences

One effective elementary school guidance program practice utilized with teachers in the urban setting was the school counselor's participation in conferences held with parents and teachers.

8. Use of Volunteers

This elementary school guidance counselor was highly involved with volunteers. With the help of a co-coordinator, the school counselor trained and placed volunteers: in classrooms, with teachers, with students,

and at special events. At the end of the year, a celebration was held when volunteers were recognized for their contributions.

9. Participation in Committee Work

In the primary urban school, the elementary school guidance program involved the school counselor in a great number of committees. These involvements afforded opportunities for effective practices used in combination with students, parents, and teachers. Two of the committees directly involved assistance to, and placement of students; including: (1) the educational assessment, and (2) eligibility/student support committees. Other committee involvement enabled the school counselor to act as a facilitator and liaison. For example, she coordinated the student/teacher recognition program, acted as volunteer coordinator, chaired the crisis committee, and acted as media/special events liaison. At both the primary and intermediate level, the school counselor was active in the PTA. At the intermediate school level, she was also a member of the site base council.

Most Effective Practice

When asked to identify the most effective of all the practices of the elementary school guidance program, the school counselor responded that the students "are the primary focus", therefore, those programs which directly "impact upon primary children" are most effective (i.e., classroom guidance units on conflict resolution and peer mediation, "Caught Being Good" program, conflict resolution mini-course, and peer mediation program). She imaged an effective elementary school guidance program, "as prevention and intervention to situations children are exposed".

Additional Data Gathered from Questionnaire

How the Program was Publicized/Promoted:

The urban elementary school guidance program was publicized through various kinds of newsletters, including: the school newsletter, a neighborhood paper, and a school division newsletter. Individual notes and letters, and personal contacts with parents were also used as a means of publicity/promotion.

How the Program Worked with Community Resources:

The school counselor collaborated with several community resources, one being Community Service Board: Prevention Services. This group worked to help students with disabilities in the classroom setting. Another community resource was a local church, which provided tutoring services to the students. The school counselor also collaborated with Project Self-Sufficient, which promoted welfare independency and housing concerns.

Major Obstacles Overcome:

Space and time are two major constraints the school counselor cited as obstacles which she attempted to overcome when conducting her elementary school guidance program. Because this elementary school guidance position was a split assignment between two paired schools, the school counselor reported herself as always "asking students, teachers, everyone, to please just be on hold until the day after tomorrow". She further explained that there was "never enough time to complete everything". In both schools, the guidance office was shared with as many as ten different specialists.

Words Which Best Describe The Program:

The terms "comprehensive and developmental" were used by the school counselor to describe the program. She also stated that "each grade level's curriculum was based on the previous" year's curriculum. Her comments referred to the use of sequenced, age-appropriate materials.

Evidence of Program Evaluations:

A School Safety Specialist from the Virginia State Department of Education wrote a letter of appreciation to the school counselor as a result of the school's participation in a peer mediators workshop demonstration. Also, two representatives from the Virginia House of Delegates wrote congratulatory letters to the school counselor when the primary school qualified for a second year as one of the top 50 schools in the United States of America in the "Set A Good Example" competition.

Additional Comments About this Urban Elementary School

Guidance Program:

In her closing questionnaire remarks, the school counselor gave additional emphasis to the importance of prevention and intervention, saying, "Youth are exposed to

so much more, that prevention is now more crucial." She concluded, "Any situation encountered by a teen or an adult has been experienced or has impacted an elementary school-age child."

Data Collected From A Site Visit:

A site visit was made to the urban elementary school guidance program on a Friday in March, 1997, when the school counselor divided her day between the primary and intermediate schools. Three classroom guidance lessons were observed when conflict resolution was taught to first and second graders. In addition to teaching classroom guidance lessons, the school counselor had lunch with students who had recently experienced the death of a family member, then consulted with the principal over a student's behavior problem, and made arrangements for a volunteer to work with a teacher.

The best practice observed by the researcher during the site visit took place during the first grade classroom guidance lesson. When two students had a disagreement between themselves, the school counselor asked them to go to the "Talk It Out" corner. The students moved to an area in the classroom with upholstered chairs and began talking

quietly while the school counselor continued her guidance lesson. Due to teacher in-service training led by the school counselor, each classroom had a designated place for students to talk out their differences. The students' appropriate response demonstrated the effectiveness of the practice.

Data Collected from Structured Interviews:

Promoting improved behavior, conflict resolution, and peer mediation were reported by those interviewed to be the primary goals of this elementary school guidance program. Effective programs mentioned most often during the structured interviews are described below.

- In the primary school (consisting of grades K-2) the school counselor taught classroom guidance lessons on the topic of conflict resolution. Using a program called, "How To Talk It Out", the school counselor attempted, in her words to, "expose young ones earlier" to important problem solving techniques. Classroom guidance lessons were done weekly in fifteen classrooms. Classroom teachers received in-service in the "How To Talk It Out" curriculum and were

encouraged to establish a corner in each classroom where students practiced talking out their differences.

- In the intermediate school (grades 3 - 5), third grade students studied conflict resolution in a 10-week classroom guidance unit, and used the "How To Talk It Out" curriculum. Fourth graders were introduced to peer mediation through a 10-week classroom guidance unit. At the end of fourth grade, peer mediators were nominated by classmates. From those nominated, fifteen students were selected to serve as peer mediators during 5th grade. Students completed their training by attending intensive small group sessions during the summer. For time spent serving as peer mediators, students earned points, which were converted into currency called "micro-dollars" which were used to buy small gifts and school supplies in the school store.
- Using closed circuit television, the school counselor assisted students in presenting panel discussions

concerning conflict resolution. One example of a topic discussed by the panel was the importance of not spreading rumors. Another topic was how keep a friendship with two other friends when they are disagreeing with each other. The panel discussions were a preventive measure presented in a fashion which was available to all intermediate school students.

- "Caught Being Good" was another elementary school guidance program used in this urban setting. Each month an assembly was held in the primary school and one student from each homeroom was recognized for having had good behavior. To be selected, the teacher first added a student's name to the collection of names of students who were "caught" when good behavior was demonstrated in the classroom each month. At the assembly, students' names were randomly selected from each homeroom. Of these winners, one was selected as the grand prize winner and was invited to eat lunch with the principal at a local buffet-style restaurant. The school counselor reported that the students enjoyed the assemblies, even if they were not selected

as the "winner" that month. Featured at each assembly was an inspirational speaker who addressed the importance of doing one's best work and being well behaved.

- Parent Information Exchange ("P.I.E.") Workshops were offered for several years by the school counselor as a component of this urban elementary school guidance program. Topics covered during "P.I.E." Workshops have included communication, discipline vs. abuse, and television violence. Both daytime and evening sessions have been offered so more parents would be able to attend the sessions. Clever program titles were used, such as "Donuts for Dad" and "Munchies for Mom".
- The Parent Resource Center was established in 1996-97 at the urban primary school. The school counselor worked in collaboration with two other faculty members to provide this lending library of resources for parents. Parent Resource Workshops, a function of the Parent Resource Center, have also been provided in the

evening on topics including, discipline, attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder, and communication.

- The school counselor participated as a member of numerous committees, including: Volunteer Committee - chair, Student/Teacher Recognition, Eligibility/Student Support, Educational Assessment, Crisis Committee, Media/Special Events Liaison, and Parent Teacher Association. Of these many activities, the Eligibility/Student Support Committee was mentioned most often by the school counselor and her colleagues. Through weekly Student Support Committee meetings, "at-risk" students were identified and strategies to assist the identified students were developed to assist the students in having a more successful school experience.

**Data Collected From Interviews with Urban Supervisor/
Principal**

Unlike the rural school division, the elementary school guidance program in the urban setting was directed by a guidance supervisor. Five additional structured

interview questions were asked of the guidance supervisor, and both primary and intermediate school principals who worked with this elementary school guidance program (Appendix D). Their responses are reported below.

Relationship of Elementary School Guidance Program Goals to School Division/School Goals

When asked to describe the elementary school guidance program's relationship to school division/school goals, the supervisor explained that the goals of the urban elementary school guidance program corresponded to academic goals: to help students achieve their potential, to succeed academically, socially, and personally. Two principals were in agreement, one saying that the program goals were "right on target". Multicultural/Career Day activities and conflict resolution were cited by the principals as examples of program initiatives which exemplified two School Board priorities: (1) to become aware of the world of work, and (2) to introduce career exploration.

Supervision and Evaluation

In response to a question concerning how the school counselor was supervised and how the elementary school

guidance program was evaluated, the supervisor and principals all described the same process: the school counselor was primarily supervised by the principal at her "base school", with input from the principal at the paired school. The guidance supervisor participated in the supervision, as needed. Specific examples of strategies used for program evaluation were not cited by any of the respondents.

Interaction Between Urban Elementary School Guidance
Program and Other Student Service Professionals

When asked to describe the kinds of interactions the urban elementary school guidance program had with other student service professionals, the supervisor cited the school health nurse, Student Support Team, as well as other outside agencies as examples. The principals also mentioned the school nurse and Student Support Team, as well as many other professionals, such as the school psychologist, Social Service representatives, and mental health professionals from public and private counseling services outside the school. Since the school counselor worked at paired schools, she was also described as a "liaison"

between professionals at the paired schools, especially when the primary students made the transition to the intermediate school.

Future Funding of the Urban Elementary School

Guidance Program

When asked about the future funding of this elementary school guidance program, the supervisor explained that the program would probably continue to be funded by the local budget: which actually represented a contribution of both state and local money. One principal explained the funding of a full-time counselor was dependent on whether the school became a "Magnet School", which offers a variety of educational incentives to encourage students to attend. The second principal commented that a full-time school counselor was needed at both schools, and hoped that a full-time position would be funded in the future.

School Leaders' Involvement in Urban Elementary School

Guidance Program

The guidance supervisor and principals were also asked to describe their involvement, as school leaders, in the exemplary elementary school guidance program. The

supervisor cited several examples: planning the overall curriculum, establishing goals and objectives which are consistent with state and school division goals, supervision of personnel, and in-service training for school counselors. Both principals responded that they support all initiatives in their schools. One principal gave specific examples of support: training of peer mediators, earmarking money for peer mediators' t-shirts, providing materials, budgeting funds, and permitting other teachers to attend peer mediation training, and "protecting the school counselor from doing too much". As a result of the principal's support, all teachers had a "Talk It Out" corner in their classrooms for students to use during conflict resolution.

Data Collected From Interview With School Counselor

Relationship Between Elementary School Guidance Program Goals and School Goals

When asked about the relationship between the elementary school guidance program goals and school goals, the school counselor responded that the goals were "similar": to promote and improve behavior, to increase the

students' awareness to the world of work, to increase self-esteem, and to promote conflict resolution.

Supervision and Evaluation of Urban Elementary School

Guidance Program

The school counselor described a process of on-going supervision by the primary school principal. The school counselor was observed working with students, in small groups, with teachers, and parents. Evaluations took place at mid-year and at the end of each school year.

How Urban Elementary School Guidance Program

Priorities Are Determined

The school counselor and principal used the technique known as "brainstorming" at the beginning of the school year to determine priorities. The highest priorities addressed during the Spring of 1997 were conflict resolution and career education.

Urban Elementary School Guidance Budget and Materials

In the school budget, the elementary school guidance program was allowed one dollar per student for materials. Monies were also obtained through mini-grants obtained from

the urban school division. For example, \$300.00 of start-up money was granted to support the "Talk It Out" conflict resolution program initiative.

Students Who Utilize the Elementary School Guidance Program

The school counselor reported that children with "social skills problems" utilize the elementary school guidance program more than other students, and require more of the school counselor's time.

Small Group Counseling

Three types of small counseling groups were identified by the school counselor in the urban setting: groups addressing crises, peer mediation, and divorce.

Effect of State Board of Education Regulations

The school counselor reported that State Board of Education regulations, dated July, 1996, which required school divisions to inform parents about the guidance and counseling program and to offer an opt out policy resulted in "no effect on guidance" in the urban school setting. As a result of the regulation, there were no parent requests

for children not to participate in the urban elementary school guidance program.

Data Collected From Document Reviews:

Elementary School Guidance Budget:

Primary School - \$275.00 per year

Intermediate School - \$210.00 per year

Is there a written elementary school guidance plan?

Yes, guidance was included as one part of the school biennial plan for 1995-98. The biennial guidance goals were two-fold: (1) to become aware of the world of work, and (2) to introduce career exploration.

What type of log/monitor sheet is used?

The school counselor recorded her daily activities in a notebook, which were summarized in a monthly report to her guidance supervisor. According to the counselor's report, 50 percent of her time was spent in the counseling role, 10 to 20 percent of that time was spent counseling individuals, and 10 percent was spent counseling groups.

Describe the elementary school guidance counselor's schedule/duties.

The school counselor worked alternately at the primary and intermediate schools. Her duties included individual and small group counseling, classroom guidance, educational assessment, teaching the Family Life curriculum, parent workshops, and numerous committee memberships; including the Volunteer, Crisis, Student Support, and Child Study Teams.

Suburban Setting

Description of the Suburban School

The suburban elementary school guidance program was in existence before the Virginia State Board of Education mandate established elementary school guidance programs in Virginia's public elementary schools. The suburban elementary school counselor served 559 students. Of this population, 3 percent of the students received free or reduced lunch, 0 percent participated in Title I activities, and 78 percent of the 6th graders had passed the Virginia Literacy Passport Test on the first attempt in 1996.

According to the Virginia Statistical Abstract: 1996-97, the population of the suburban jurisdiction was reported to be 82,400, the per capita income was \$23,145, and there were 8,368 students in the K-7 elementary program. The Virginia Bureau of the Census (1994) reported the suburban land area to be 251 square miles.

Data Collected from Questionnaire Responses

When responding to the questionnaire, the suburban school counselor identified numerous elementary school guidance programs and practices as effective. A discussion of eight of the best programs and practices were highlighted in this discussion.

1. "Random Acts Of Kindness" Program

One example of an effective practice was the school-wide "Acts of Kindness" program, which was initially introduced through classroom guidance activities. This program taught students to perform kind acts for others even when the deed may otherwise go unrewarded. Students who were identified by teachers or parents for performing a random act of kindness received recognition by having their names and the deed recorded on a bulletin board in the main hallway of the school. The school counselor modeled kindness towards teachers, with the belief that the teachers would, in turn, "become increasingly aware of the need to model kindness towards their students".

2. Lunch With the School Counselor

Another effective practice was the school counselor's invitation to eat lunch in her office. Lunch with the school counselor helped her get to know students better, and was a valuable opportunity for students who needed to do some problem-solving. New students were also invited to lunch with the school counselor to help them feel more welcome in their new school and to help them begin to establish positive peer relations.

3. Use of Teacher and Student Input

Another effective practice was the school counselor's use of input. When designing new elementary school guidance programs or counseling groups, the school counselor "makes a concerted effort" to discuss any new program initiates with teachers and students so that the services provided would be based on identified needs. Also, parents had input into the curriculum through the Guidance Advisory Committee. Teachers were involved in the planning of classroom guidance units and the school counselor noted that it was most important to follow-up on teacher referrals. If the school counselor was

"backlogged", she would inform the classroom teacher if there was going to be delay in seeing the student.

4. Parent Orientation Program

A parent orientation program was offered for parents whose children would be entering kindergarten in the fall. As the school counselor explained, this program "affords the opportunity to get to know families from the outset".

5. Parent Involvement

Parents were asked to serve on the parent guidance committee. The school counselor described this committee as a "valuable resource for the guidance program". Parents were also asked to help plan parent education programs for the school, which were accomplished through the elementary school guidance program.

In this particular suburban school, the school counselor reported that she had a "high degree of contact with the parent community" and she felt that she "served as a resource for parents needing assistance with problems". The school counselor made a concerted effort to keep parents informed of programs and practices and follow-up on parent referrals.

6. Teacher Inservices Provided

The school counselor stressed the importance of being "sensitive to teachers' needs". To accomplish this goal, the guidance program sponsored in-service programs for teachers on stress management and health-related issues.

7. Involvement in Parent-Teacher Conferences

When teachers and parents conferenced over concerns about a child, the school counselor was often included in the meeting. At a later point in the meeting, the school counselor worked to involve the student, "in order to be sure the student understands his/her role and to give the student the opportunity to have input/suggestions". The school counselor acted as a consultant for teachers and a liaison between school and home when a teacher made a contract with a child. The school counselor believed that "if a parent can reinforce what the school is doing, we have a greater success rate".

8. Use of Volunteers

In the suburban setting, volunteers were utilized to enhance the delivery of the elementary school guidance program. For example, volunteers who served on the Parent

Guidance Committee acted as resources for the elementary school guidance program. Volunteers acted as a "sounding board and advising group when the guidance department implements a new program". For the Random Acts of Kindness Program, parents helped design a slogan, and design an attractive hall display to promote the concept. Volunteer parents were also instrumental in designing a parent education program involving three other suburban schools. To support the parent education program, volunteers designed a logo and helped to advertise the program.

Most Effective Practice

When asked which of the practices the school counselor felt was most effective, she responded that "any practice which directly impacts my students is of importance". She continued, "I feel counseling is the most valuable of the services I offer". In her explanation, counseling included individual and group counseling with students, as well as the counseling done with parents.

Additional Data Gathered from Questionnaire

How the Program is Publicized/Promoted:

The suburban elementary school guidance program was publicized/promoted through counselor contacts with parents. The school counselor reported that there was "a high degree of parent involvement at this school, and I have extensive interaction with parents. I try to be responsive to parents needs and referrals". Also, parents who participated in need-based parent education programs, publicized and promoted the elementary school guidance program to other parents.

How the Program Works With Community Resources

The school counselor reported several ways she worked with community resources. By availing herself of community education programs and meeting new community personnel, the school counselor familiarized herself with new therapists in the community and broaden her referral base. When referring parents to an outside resource, the school counselor always offered three options because she felt it was "very important to have a good match between the client

and therapist in order to have a successful counseling relationship". When parents were referred to outside counseling, they were asked to sign a release form which allows the school counselor to confer with counselor. Another effective practice included the school counselor's participation in the division-wide parent fair held each spring at a local shopping mall. She also served as a speaker for outside agencies and the outside agencies reciprocated when the suburban elementary school guidance programs necessitated a speaker.

Major Obstacles Overcome:

When asked about obstacles, the suburban school counselor responded that, "you must work hard to prove yourself when you are new to a school". She suggested being highly visible with the parent community. A new counselor must also "work hard" to let teachers know you have a sincere interest in helping them. To overcome some role confusion, the school counselor presented a PTA program to parents and teachers explaining the elementary school guidance program. Additional challenges mentioned by the school counselor include the size of the school (559 students) and the school counselor's varied obligations.

To overcome these obstacles, she suggested persistence and prioritizing goals.

Words Which Best Describe the Program:

The school counselor described this suburban elementary school guidance program as "developmentally-based to serve all children based on identified needs at various ages and stages of development". She emphasized that this elementary school guidance program served all students. In addition to serving all students' needs, the school counselor reported it to be "very important" to meet the needs of the parent community.

Evidence of Program Evaluation:

At least two previous division-wide evaluations of the suburban elementary school guidance program had been completed at the time this research was conducted. Both reflected positively on the suburban elementary school guidance program, when it was examined on a division-wide level.

On the school level, evaluations were done, but no empirical data were compiled. For example, when a small counseling group concluded, students were asked by the

counselor to reflect on changes in their behavior or attitudes. Students also responded to evaluative questions about the elementary school guidance program at the end of the school year. Another form of evaluation was when the school participated in the administrative review process.

Data Collected from a Site Visit:

A site visit was made to the suburban elementary school guidance program in April, 1997. The suburban school counselor was observed having a lunch group with four fifth grade boys and the assistant principal to problem-solve a situation which concerned a new student. This informal setting for small group counseling was perhaps the best practice observed during the site visit.

Data Collected from Structured Interviews:

"Direct service to students" was the highest priority provided by this, and any, elementary school guidance program, according to the supervisor of guidance in the suburban school division participating in this study. Direct service takes many different forms, including; individual and small group counseling, classroom guidance, and group guidance lessons (Burgess, 1991). The following section describes examples of direct, as well as indirect initiatives, reported by those interviewed in the suburban elementary school setting.

- Individual and small group counseling for students was mentioned as a strength of the elementary school guidance program by all those who were interviewed in the suburban elementary school setting. In this school, two children had died in the previous two school years. To help students, parents, and faculty cope with these losses, the school counselor offered individual and small group sessions for students, as well as for teachers. The media specialist described

the elementary school guidance program as "in tune with the students' needs".

- Classroom guidance lessons were offered throughout the year to all students. Age-appropriate topics, including how to make and keep friends, improving test-taking skills, self-esteem, school anxiety, and conflict management were mentioned as examples of classroom guidance units taught by the school counselor. When appropriate, the classroom guidance lesson included the use of puppets. The school counselor offered twelve lessons per grade level each year: four lessons per unit/three units per year. Materials used for classroom guidance units included; DUSO, Friends and Me (K), SVE Lollipop Dragon Testing Skills, "Bernstein Bears, Forget Their Manners" (grade 1), Barney Bear Study Skills, SVE Lollipop Dragon Testing Skills (grade 2), Friendship self-esteem Pickle Packet (grade 3), Britannica Study Skills: Strategies and Techniques "Study Zone" filmstrips (grade 4), transition to middle school problem-solving, decision-making, and career planning series "Moving On" by Douglas Productions (grade 5).

- Contact with the parents was deemed "most important" by the school counselor. For that reason, a variety of methods were used to facilitate this line of communication. A parent advisory committee was selected each year and parent education classes were offered. Parent workshops were held in cooperation with other elementary school guidance programs from the same school division. During the 1996-97 school year, a series of three brown bag lunches were offered. Four schools participated in the planning and implementation of the series, which focused on positive discipline in the 90's. Topics discussed included; (1) children and stress, (2) school anxiety, and (3) children and grief. Speakers included a therapist, a school counselor, and a panel of counselors. During the evening, a drug education class was offered for parents. For this presentation, the Dare officer and the vice squad supervisor of the police force collaborated with the school counselor.
- In this K-5 elementary school, one priority of the elementary school guidance program was helping students make a successful transition to junior high

school. A student explained that, through classroom guidance activities, the school counselor "gets you ready" for the transition. During one classroom guidance lesson, students practiced using a combination lock, like the ones used on sixth grade lockers. Students were introduced to their new school by taking a field trip to the junior high school in the spring of their fifth grade year. Parents are also included in the students' transition. During the parenting workshop on stress, the topic of transition to junior high was discussed.

- Another aspect of the elementary school guidance program was a variety of teacher in-services. Topics were tailored to fit the needs of the faculty. For example, in-services were frequently held to communicate information about the school testing program. When the school experienced the death of a child, the topic of coping with death and loss discussed with faculty. Due to the age of the predominately female faculty, an in-service was offered on the topic of stress and menopause. At another teacher in-service, the school counselor

elicited the help of teachers in recognizing students who were observed doing "random acts of kindness" (students performing selfless acts of kindness had their names and a description of the deed recorded on the bulletin board in the main hallway).

Data Collected From Interviews With Guidance Supervisor and Principal

Five additional structured interview questions were asked of the suburban school principal and guidance supervisor. Their responses are reported below.

Relationship Between Suburban Elementary School Guidance Program's Goals and School Division/School Goals

When asked to describe the relationship of the elementary school guidance program to school division/school goals, both the principal and supervisor reported that the elementary school guidance program goals and school goals were the same. The supervisor explained that the elementary school guidance program was not an ancillary, but an integrated part of the school, and that the goals were developed in concert with school goals. The supervisor referred to the school division's guidance

handbook when he answered, while the principal referred to the school division six-year school plan.

Supervision and Evaluation

Both the principal and supervisor described a process whereby the school counselor was supervised and evaluated by the principal, with input from the supervisor, as needed. The school counselor was observed by the principal when she taught classroom guidance lessons and an evaluation specific to school counseling was also used to assess performance.

The guidance supervisor also explained that all school counselors in the school division were trained in peer supervision. Peer supervision involved sharing videotapes of counseling sessions among other school counselors. After viewing, the videotaped counseling session was discussed among the school counselor's peers, with the goal of encouraging professional growth.

Interactions the Suburban Elementary School Guidance Program Has With Other Student Services Professionals

Answers from the principal and supervisor were most varied when asked to describe the kinds of interactions

this elementary school guidance program had with other student services professionals. The supervisor described the elementary school guidance program as having "good linkage between referral sources". The school counselor attended monthly meetings held for elementary school counselors within the suburban school division and used a referral booklet compiled by the group of school counselors when she referred to counseling agencies outside the school setting.

The principal explained that, compared to other schools where he had worked, this school population required much less interaction with other student services professionals. While Child Protective Services were occasionally contacted, other services were not required at all, including, for example, referrals to the Health Department, the Lion's Club eye care program for the needy, and a variety of programs which offered clothing to needy families and help in buying Christmas presents which were not utilized by this school population.

Future Funding

When the principal was asked to discuss the future funding of this elementary school guidance program, he

related that \$300.00 was allocated by the central office for the school counselor to order materials. The school counselor also received \$300.00 to \$400.00 from the PTA and some supplemental funds from the principal's office. The supervisor replied to the question in terms of staffing. He hoped that two additional part-time elementary school counseling positions would be filled before the 1997-98 school year, so that no elementary school counselor would serve a school population greater than 500 students.

School Leader's Relationship to Suburban Elementary

School Guidance Program

In response to a question about the role the school leader plays in the elementary school guidance program, the supervisor replied that his role was the staff development of 55 school counselors, which included elementary and secondary school counselors. The principal answered more personally. He said that as a principal, his role in the elementary school guidance program was a "very active" and "key role". He explained that he used the "team approach" and he stressed that the support he gave the elementary school guidance program must be "seen by the teachers". He further explained that his relationship with

the school counselor was "one of trust" and that, in this relationship, it was important to "protect confidentially".

Data Collected From Interview With School Counselor

Relationship Between Elementary School Guidance

Program Goals and School Goals

When asked about goals, the school counselor responded that the elementary school guidance program goals and school goals were "similar": to prepare students academically. The school counselor emphasized that the developmentally-based elementary school guidance program also helped students to grow in the social/emotional areas and to develop skills in problem-solving.

Supervision and Evaluation of Suburban Elementary School

Guidance Program

In the suburban setting, the school counselor was supervised directly by the school principal and indirectly by the guidance supervisor. To account for the percentage of time the school counselor spent in counseling activities, a monthly calendar was used. In the suburban setting, school counselors were also trained in peer

supervision, a professional growth experience which asked school counselors to review and discuss tapes submitted by their peers. Evaluative methods used to assess peer supervision were not described.

How Suburban Elementary School Guidance Program

Priorities Are Determined

The school counselor determined priorities by becoming "familiar with the needs of the school population" using teacher and parent input. For example, topics to be covered in classroom guidance were determined using teacher input while parent education classes were developed using parent input.

Suburban Elementary School Guidance Program

Budget and Materials

The suburban elementary school guidance program budget allowed \$209.00 from the guidance supervisor for materials. An additional amount of \$200.00 was provided by the PTA for use, as needed. (This dollar amount reported by the school counselor differed from the amount reported by the principal. This discrepancy may be attributed to the fact that the principal participated in a phone

interview from his home, where he could not access his records).

Students Who Utilize the Suburban Elementary School

Guidance Program

The school counselor explained that the student use of the elementary school guidance program varied with the demands of the school year. However, as a rule, first through fifth graders were reported to use more counseling time than kindergartners, and third grade teachers required more consultation services.

Small Group Counseling

In the suburban setting various types of small counseling groups were held, including those which focused on: intensive grief, friendship (4th grade), and divorce (1st grade).

Effect of Virginia State Board of Education Regulations

Counseling activities were delayed by six weeks to give parents the opportunity to respond to letters which described new Virginia State Board of Education regulations, dated July, 1996. (The regulations required

school divisions to inform parents about the guidance and counseling program and to offer an opportunity for parents to opt a child out of guidance and/or counseling activities.) The end result was that no one chose to opt out of guidance and counseling activities.

Data Collected From Document Reviews:

Elementary School Guidance Budget:

No mention was made of a written budget. However, on a yearly basis, this suburban elementary school guidance program received a sum of \$209.00 from the school division for expenses. In addition to this, the PTA granted an additional \$200.00 per year to help cover program needs.

Is there a written elementary school guidance plan?

Yes, there was a written plan. The elementary school guidance program was summarized in three documents: "Guidance Program Framework", "Basic Elements of a Guidance Program", and the school division's guidance handbook.

What type of log/monitor sheet is used?

The school counselor recorded daily activities in a notebook and determined the percent of time she used to perform performing guidance and counseling activities. A report which summarized the percent of time spent in guidance and counseling activities was sent to the guidance supervisor on a monthly basis. The suburban school counselor reported spending 45 to 50 percent of her time in the counseling role, and of that time, 70 to 75 percent of her time spent with individuals, and 20 percent of her time spent counseling small groups.

Describe the elementary school guidance counselor's schedule/duties:

In addition to counseling individuals and small groups, teaching guidance classes, counseling parents, and offering parenting classes, the school counselor coordinated the Child Study Team. She attended all eligibility meetings, triennial reviews, and made parent contacts.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reported the results from a study of elementary school guidance programs and practices in Southwest Virginia. It addressed the research question: What practices and programs are being implemented in elementary schools perceived to have exemplary guidance programs in Southwest Virginia?.

Questionnaires, site visits, structured interviews, and document reviews were used to collect data. After data were collected, examples of exemplary elementary school guidance practices and programs cited most often respondents were summarized. A synthesis of the data showed that fifteen exemplary programs and practices had been reported by a majority of respondents in all three school divisions. For a better understanding, the fifteen best programs and practices were grouped into three categories:

- (1) focus on student development and achievement,
- (2) staff collaboration, and
- (3) focus on parents and volunteers.

These exemplary programs and practices, grouped by three headings, will be discussed in Chapter Five, as well as clinical observations, recommendations for exemplary

elementary school guidance programs, and implications for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction and Purpose

Since the Virginia General Assembly mandated elementary school guidance programs and counselors starting in Fall, 1989, eight years have passed, and a look at exemplary programs was in order. In that length of time, Virginia public schools have seen legislative changes in the school guidance and counseling programs and a reduction in the number of educational specialists working in the Virginia State Department of Education.

Those who have followed the changes in Virginia State Department of Education School board policy will recall that the original purpose of the comprehensive and developmental guidance program mandated to begin in 1989 was to provide for the personal/social, academic, and career needs of all public school children in kindergarten through grade twelve. In 1996, public hearings were held which focused, in part, on the state-wide K-12 comprehensive school guidance program. As a result of those hearings, a new Virginia State Board of Education policy went into effect. By July 1, 1996, each school

division in Virginia was required to develop: (1) an annual written notification to parents explaining the school division's guidance programs, and (2) a provision with respect to personal/social counseling, stating procedures whereby parents may elect to have their child not participate in the guidance program, if they so desired. In September, 1997 the Virginia State School Board policy underwent additional changes. At that time, school divisions were given the option to use monies which funded the guidance program for either an elementary school guidance counselor or a reading specialist.

Also, since the 1989 elementary school guidance program mandate, two elementary specialists in guidance, Don Ayers, Ed.D. and David Burgess left their positions with the Virginia State Department of Education in 1995. Rather than fill these two important positions, the Virginia State Department of Education choose to the combine school guidance and counseling and special education departments.

Taken together, changing Virginia State Board of Education policies, and a decline in professional

leadership, point to the need for elementary school guidance programs in Virginia to step up their pace in working together and keeping informed about the best school guidance programs and practices currently being utilized.

In this two-part study, (1) elementary school guidance programs which were perceived to be exemplary were identified, and (2) the best programs and practices of elementary school guidance programs which were perceived to be exemplary were described. It was hoped that this study would:

- foster the sharing of innovative and best
- practices,
- challenge less effective programs and
- practices,
- encourage future self-examination of
- elementary school guidance programs, and
- serve as a showcase of elementary school guidance
- programs worthy of emulation.

Increased knowledge of exemplary elementary school guidance programs and practices carries with it the potential for fostering the expansion of exemplary practices throughout the state. As a result of this study,

experienced professionals, and those who are new to the field, may benefit from a showcase of exemplary program models worthy of emulation.

Research Procedures

This study, conducted during the Spring of 1997, addressed the following research question: **What practices and programs are being implemented in elementary schools perceived to have exemplary guidance programs in Southwest Virginia?.**

Prior to addressing the research question, exemplary elementary school guidance programs had to be identified. To accomplish this goal, three counselor educators from Virginia Tech with expertise in the field of school counseling and knowledge of the school divisions in Southwest Virginia were asked to make recommendations. Based on their reputations, three school divisions were suggested for inclusion in the study, including a rural, an urban, and a suburban school division. A variety of settings were included so that the research would reflect a broad spectrum of the best elementary school guidance program and practices.

After the three school divisions were recommended, the

school division superintendents were contacted by letter. Permission for each school division to participate in the study was obtained, and the anonymity of the school divisions was insured by the researcher. Either the school superintendent or guidance supervisor was asked to select the specific school site for inclusion in the study.

To answer the research question, several methods were used to gather data, including: (1) a questionnaire, (2) a site visit, (3) structured interview questions, and (4) a document review. Instruments were reviewed by elementary school counselors from the New River Valley chapter of the Virginia Counselor's Association and revisions were made by the researcher.

The questionnaire was mailed to each school setting and completed by the school counselor. The questionnaire asked the school counselor to describe "innovative, unusual, or highly effective practices" which were being implemented in the elementary school guidance program with: (a) students; (b) parents; (c) teachers; (d) combinations of students, parents, and teachers; and (e) volunteers (Appendix C).

Next, the researcher made a site visit to each school. During the site visit, structured interviews were arranged

with individuals who interacted with the elementary school counseling program, including the following: (1) school principal, (2) guidance supervisor, (3) school counselor, (4) regular education teacher, (5) special education teacher, (6) physical education teacher, (7) media specialist, (8) parent who was a PTA officer, (9) student, and (10) representative from the Department of Social Services. The structured interview questions asked the respondents to describe the strengths of the elementary school guidance programs when working with students, parents, teachers, and volunteers (Appendices D and E).

During the site visits, documents common to elementary school guidance programs were reviewed. The documents which were reviewed included the following: (1) the elementary school guidance budget, (2) the elementary school guidance plan, (3) the type of log/monitor sheet used, and (4) the elementary school counselor's schedule/duties. At this time, demographic information was also gathered on the:

- (1) percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch,
- (2) percent of students participating in Title I programs,
- (3) percent of sixth grade students passing the Virginia Passport Test on the first attempt, and

(4) counselor:student ratio (Appendix F).

Summary of Findings

Results revealed that similarities exist among the rural, urban, and suburban elementary school guidance programs which participated in the study of exemplary elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia during the Spring of 1997. These programs, which reached 360 rural, 511 urban, and 559 suburban students, showed some striking commonalities.

After the data were collected and synthesized, fifteen strengths reported by all three elementary school guidance programs were identified. These findings were then grouped into three categories:

- (1) focus on student development and achievement,
- (2) staff collaboration, and
- (3) focus on parents and volunteers.

Programs which were unique to a specific school setting were also observed. In the following section, the fifteen strengths identified by a majority of respondents in all three elementary school guidance programs will be discussed.

I. Focus on Student Development and Achievement

1. Developmental Classroom Guidance Units Focused on Personal/Social Issues, Academic Success, and Career Education.

All three elementary school guidance programs participating in the study considered a major strength of their elementary school guidance program to be classroom guidance. Units focused on personal/social issues, academic success, and career education. Respondents described developmentally-based classroom guidance units, which were caught within a comprehensive K-12 setting. Classroom guidance was described by the rural school counselor as the "most effective" program because it reached all the students.

None of the parents in the rural, urban, or suburban school settings had opted their children out of classroom guidance, which meant that these programs reached the largest population of students in any setting. The classroom guidance topics which were reported were varied, and ranged from: friendship, study skills, and careers in the rural setting, to; conflict resolution/peer mediation, decision-making, transition to middle school, and the Family Life curriculum in the urban setting, to; making and

keeping friends, test-taking skills, self-esteem, handling school anxiety, conflict management, transition to junior high, and "Random Acts of Kindness" in the suburban setting.

2. Individual and Small Counseling Groups

Individual and small group counseling were also reported by those interviewed to be strengths of all three elementary school guidance programs which participated in the study. School counselors described counseling to be "driven by need". The Virginia State Board of Education mandate that school counselors use at least 60% of their time providing small group or individual counseling was used by all three school counselors as a guideline for time use.

The rural school counselor offered a wide variety of small groups on topics such as: motivation, coping with divorce/family changes, coping with death/loss, conflict resolution/anger control, friendship, communication, goal-setting, and problem-solving. In the urban setting, three types of counseling groups were mentioned by those interviewed: groups which addressed crises, peer mediation, and divorce. In the suburban, the school

counselor identified individual and small group counseling as the most valuable service provided by the elementary school guidance program. In this setting small counseling groups focused on intensive grief, friendship, and divorce.

3. Student Recognition Programs for Achievement/Behavior

From examples cited, it was observed that all three elementary school guidance program in the study recognized students for achievement/behavior. In the rural setting, the classroom guidance unit, "Good Student Hall of Fame" gave recognition to fourth grade students who achieved specified study skills. In the urban school, the "Caught Being Good" Program was in place to recognize students who demonstrated good academic and social skills. The "Random Acts of Kindness" Program in the suburban school served the purpose of recognizing students for performing exceptionally kind interpersonal deeds.

4. Innovative Career Education Programs Offered

Career education was a strength of all three elementary school guidance programs. In the rural setting, Career Day was held on a three year rotating basis, alternating with Positive Pastimes Day, and Health-

Wellness-Safety Day. In the urban school, Career Day was combined with Multicultural Awareness Day. Another outstanding feature of the urban intermediate school was that the school was based on the "Micro-village" concept. In the "Micro-village", students practiced job skills by becoming producers and consumers of goods and services. In the more affluent suburban school, the "Random Acts of Kindness" Program was used to encourage students to develop charitable attitudes toward others, even when payments or rewards were not expected.

5. Elementary School Guidance Programs Were Focused on Students' Success

All three elementary school guidance counselors gave allegiance verbally, and in practice, to a student-centered approach to school counseling. The school counselor described the rural elementary school guidance program as "focused on students' success and achievement in academic and personal/social concerns". The urban counselor responded that the students were "the primary focus" of the elementary school guidance program. The suburban school counselor described that elementary school guidance program as "developmentally-based to serve all children based on

identified needs at various ages and stages of development".

II. Staff Collaboration

6. Supportive Administration at Both School and Division Levels

During site visits to all three elementary school guidance programs, strong administrative support was apparent. This practice was also a constant theme stressed throughout the structured interview responses. For example, when asked about future funding, the rural principal said he did not predict that funding would be threatened because there were too many elementary school guidance program "success stories" to be told. In the urban setting, the principal showed support for the elementary school guidance program by being highly involved in the conflict resolution/peer mediation program: by promoting peer mediation training for teachers, and by asking the teachers to set aside a "Talk It Out" corner for conflict resolution in each classroom. In the suburban setting, the school counselor reported the administrators at the school and division levels to be "very responsive and supportive". The suburban guidance supervisor volunteered that he had encouraged the school division to

fund an additional elementary school guidance position to help reduce any elementary school counselor's workload in schools with populations greater than 500 students. (The suburban program which participated in the study had a counselor:student ratio of 1:559).

7. Teacher In-Services Offered by School Counselor

Teacher in-service training was offered by the school counselors in all three settings. Topics covered during in-service training varied. For example, in the rural setting, in-service training was done to update teachers on the elementary school guidance program, and the guidance folder "G.R.I.N." (Guidance Is Really Neat) was distributed. In the suburban setting, teachers were given in-service training by the school counselor on the topics of conflict resolution and peer mediation. As a result of the in-service training, and with the support of the administration, each classroom teacher established a "Talk It Out" Corner, which was used by students for resolving differences. The suburban school counselor introduced the "Random Acts of Kindness" Program during a teacher in-service program. She also addressed stress, the stages of grief, and health-related issues (the effects of

menopause) during teacher in-service programs.

8. School Counselor Practiced Good Communication Skills

All three school counselors demonstrated that good communication was the business of an effective elementary school guidance program. A variety of forms of communication were used to deliver information. Naturally, some methods were more formal than others. Parent letters at the beginning and end of each guidance unit, school/division newsletters, and local newspapers were used, as well as home visits, personal notes, and telephone calls. The school counselors demonstrated an invitational manner when communicating with others, which helped to establish reciprocal relationships and open-door policies. For example, in each school, the school counselor and teachers freely stopped in each other's rooms, and spoke in the hall, to share appropriate up-dates on students' most recent accomplishments, or trials.

9. School Counselors Served on Several Committees, Including the Child Study Team

One way school counselors maintained an open line of communication with teachers was through committee

involvement. They developed collaborative relationships by contributing to the Student Support and Child Study Teams, as well as by serving on the volunteer, crisis, media/special events committees, and the PTA.

Of all the committees mentioned, the Child Study Team was the most time-intensive in all three settings. In the rural setting, the school counselor coordinated the Child Study Team, and was responsible for taking minutes. In the urban setting, the school counselor performed the task of educational assessment (testing students for eligibility for special services and triennial testing). In the suburban setting, the school counselor was responsible for attending all eligibility and triennial meetings, making the agenda, contacting parents, and scheduling meetings.

10. Elementary School Guidance Programs Were Actively Promoted and Publicized

Another commonality among the three school settings was that each one took deliberate steps to publicize/promote their elementary school guidance program. For instance, the rural school put a description of the program in the school handbook and used guidance letters to inform parents about classroom guidance activities and

small groups being offered. Newspaper articles, flyers advertising parent groups, and a presentation to the PTA during Open House were other successful practices employed by the rural school counselor. In the urban setting, the school counselor used various kinds of newsletters: the school newspaper, one from the neighborhood, and a school division paper were used to publicize the elementary school guidance program. Notes, Letters, and other personal contacts were also used to disseminate information about the urban elementary school guidance program. The suburban counselor used extensive individual parent contacts. When parent education workshops were held, parents volunteered to contact other parents in order to promote/publicize the programs being offered.

11. School Counselors Overcame Obstacles in All Settings

Into each elementary school guidance program, some "rain" was thought to fall. When asked what major obstacles had been overcome when the school counselors conducted their elementary school guidance programs, each one admitted to having surmounted some difficulties. The rural counselor (who thought her office was going to be moved) reported inadequate funding and space. The urban

counselor (with a split appointment between two schools) cited space and time. The suburban counselor (relatively new to the school) described the difficulty she originally encountered earning the trust of parents and teachers. In the suburban setting, the size of the student population, 559, and the counselor's varied obligations were also mentioned as obstacles, which the school counselor suggested would be remedied by 'persistence and prioritizing'.

III. Focus on Parents and Volunteers

12. Parent Education Made Available Through Classes, Workshops, and Resource Centers.

All three elementary school guidance programs put a strong emphasis on parent education. In the rural setting, the school counselor co-facilitated a parent education group Twice each year based on Active Parenting materials. A pre-school program was offered to parents of children in the Head Start and pre-school handicapped programs and four parenting discussion groups were also offered. In the rural setting, parent education classes took place in the

evening to accommodate parents who couldn't leave workplaces and travel long distances to the school for midday meetings. Kindergarten orientation was held in the spring to increase rural parents' awareness of readiness skills needed by incoming kindergartners. Resource materials were also made available on a variety of topics related to child development in the form of a lending library for parents, as well as teachers in the rural school.

In the urban setting, the school counselor gave parents an opportunity to share information or learn new coping strategies at parent meetings called "Parent Information Exchange" (P.I.E.). Discipline, television violence, and communication skills were topics covered. The Parent Resource Center, a lending library of parenting information, was also available and sponsored workshops on topics such as discipline, attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder, and communication. The timing of parent education programs in the urban setting was varied to accommodate for parents' different schedules. Some meetings took place during the day, while others were scheduled for evening. Some parents who lived or worked near school attended meetings during their lunch hour,

while others parents found that meeting during the evening was more convenient.

In the suburban setting, the school counselor collaborated with two other elementary school guidance programs and jointly sponsored a panel discussion series focused on "Positive Discipline in the 90's". Community resources were asked to make presentations on topics such as children and stress, children and grief, and school anxiety. In another parent education workshop, the topic of drug use prevention was discussed by the DARE officer and vice squad supervisor. Suburban parenting classes were generally held during the evening.

13. Strong Parent Involvement Was Encouraged

Strong parent involvement in many different forms was evident in all three elementary school guidance programs. Rather than being threatened or annoyed by parent input, the school counselors used parents as resources to strengthened and extend their elementary school guidance programs. For example, suburban parents acted as members of the Guidance Advisory Committee, generated ideas for, and promoted parenting workshops. In the rural setting, parents cooked and served a formal meal to fourth grade

students who had achieved specified academic goals. They also shared expertise in vocations and avocations by acting as presenters during Career Day/Positive Pastime Day/Health-Wellness-Safety Day activities. Likewise, parents in the urban setting contributed to Career/Multicultural Day activities.

14. Use of Volunteers Broadened the Elementary School Guidance Programs

All three elementary school guidance programs reported the extensive use of volunteers. In the urban setting, the school counselor co-chaired the volunteer committee and was involved in matching the needs of the teachers and students to the volunteers. Volunteers contributed a variety of skills to benefit the students directly, serving as tutors, and indirectly, assisting teachers in grading papers and with art assignments. In both the rural and urban settings, volunteers participated in career fair activities by publicizing the event, setting up displays, or by making actual presentations. In the suburban school, volunteers helped promote the parent education and "Random Acts of Kindness" programs.

15. Community Resources Used to Strengthen and Extend the Elementary School Guidance Program

Each of the elementary school guidance programs in the study used a broad base of community resources to broaden the program's scope. For example, without community resources, the rural Career Day/Positive Pastime/Health-Wellness-Safety Day activities would not have been possible. The rural school counselor also worked with a variety of community resources, such as: the Blue Ridge Community Services (Prevention Plus Services), the DARE officer, and the school prevention specialist. When referrals were made, the rural school counselor worked cooperatively with representatives from Child and Adolescent Outpatient Counseling Services, the Department of Social Services, and Court Services.

The urban elementary school guidance program collaborated with several community resources, including the Community Service Board: Prevention Services, whose representatives worked directly in the classroom with students with disabilities. A local church group also contributed tutoring services to students and served as a valuable urban resource. In an effort to promote welfare independency and housing concerns, the urban school

counselor also collaborated with representatives from Project Self-Sufficient.

The suburban school counselor availed herself of community education programs in an effort to broaden her referral base. When parent workshops were offered, professionals from the community were asked to participate in panel discussions. The school counselor reciprocated when community agencies asked her to speak. On another occasion, the suburban school counselor acted as a resource, she participated in the division-wide annual parent fair held in a shopping mall during the spring.

Discussion of Research Question

This research attempted to describe the best practices in three elementary school guidance programs. Using a variety of research methods: questionnaire responses, site visits, structured interviews, and document reviews; similarities were found between effective elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia. This finding's significance is heightened by the knowledge that three different school environments were included in the study, including a rural, an urban, and a suburban

school. Since the research was gathered from diverse school settings, it paints a broader spectrum of effective elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia.

A common denominator of fifteen exemplary programs and practices were reported by all three elementary school guidance programs. Of these fifteen programs and practices reported to be exemplary, classroom guidance was the program mentioned most often by those interviewed.

Classroom guidance may have been reported most often because it was such a highly visible program. It also was the most inclusive program, since all students were included in classroom guidance activities.

Even though their settings were diverse, all three elementary school guidance programs shared the distinction that no parents had officially chosen to opt their children out of all, or part, of the elementary school guidance program. This fact may have resulted from the practice of good communication. Prior to the Virginia State Board of Education mandate, dated July, 1996, the school counselors involved in the study voluntarily informed parents about the elementary school guidance program goals. Good communication skills, reported to be a strength in

the rural, urban, and suburban settings, may have helped the elementary school classroom guidance programs to maintain an elementary school guidance program which was inclusive of all students.

In A Guide for Planning and Developing Guidance and Counseling Programs in Virginia Public Schools (1989), it stated that, "An effective guidance and counseling program requires that certain conditions exist and that all levels perform a variety of functions" (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1989, p. 15). Eight **program characteristics** identified with effective school guidance programs were described, including: (1) counseling for individuals or small groups; (2) group guidance; (3) consultation; (4) coordination; (5) information services; (6) individual assessment; (7) placement; and (8) evaluation. Of the eight program characteristics, the three elementary school guidance programs which participated in the study demonstrated the greatest strength in the areas of counseling, group guidance, consultation, coordination, individual assessment, and placement. The elementary school guidance programs participating in this study appeared to be less strong in the areas of information services and (program) evaluation.

In A Guide for Planning and Developing Guidance Programs in Virginia Public Schools (1989) other distinguishing traits, or program conditions, were identified as essential to an effective school guidance program. These program conditions include: endorsed guidance personnel; a specified student/counselor ratio; administrative support; appropriate guidance facilities; clerical assistance; teacher, parent, and community involvement; and supervisory consultation and assistance. When responses from the three elementary school guidance programs participating in the study were compared with these criteria, it appeared that all programs were especially strong in two areas: administrative support; and teacher, parent, and community involvement.

Relationship of the Study to Research

Similarities existed between the elementary school guidance programs included in this study and the exemplary elementary school guidance programs identified in Gerstein and Lichtman's national study (1990). For example, all were described as developmental, preventive, and as serving all students. The three schools which participated in the study emphasized the importance of career guidance, as

described by Maddy-Bernstein (1997). The elementary school guidance programs observed in this study appeared to be less strong in program evaluation based on empirical data, which was an issue discussed by Lehman (1990), Dodson (1977), and Schmidt (1995).

Clinical Observations

Some clinical observations were made of the three elementary school guidance programs, which will be discussed below. Although not the foci of this research project, these points may be worthy of further research.

1. The Virginia State Board of Education recommendation stated that one elementary school guidance counselor serve no more than five hundred students. However, two of three elementary school guidance programs involved in the study had a counselor:student ratio greater than 1:500. Due to their heavy workload, the school counselors prioritized the most important matters and quite often took paperwork home. It seems vitally important to honor the original counselor:student ratio limit so that elementary school counselors would be able develop and maintain a personal and caring relationship with all the students, and therefore better serve the students' needs.

2. Unlike the rural and suburban school counselors, the urban school counselor served two schools. The urban students, however, were more likely to be described "at risk" of not completing school when compared to the two other populations. For example, 59 percent of urban students qualified for free and reduced lunch, compared to 30 percent of rural and 3 percent of suburban students. Only 16 percent of sixth grade urban students passed the Virginia Literacy Passport Test on their first attempt in 1996, compared to 60 percent of rural students and 78 percent of suburban students. In this, and similar at risk situations, it would likely enhance the students' ability to achieve success if each school had a full-time school counselor.

3. School counselors' time use varied with the assignments given to them by their principals. One school principal explained that she tried to, "protect the school counselor from doing too much". However, the same school counselor was responsible for conducting educational assessments on students who were being evaluated for eligibility for special services, and was also responsible for teaching the Family Life curriculum. Both are jobs which could be performed by other school professionals. Elementary school

guidance programs would be strengthened if school counselors were not asked to do tasks/duties which could be performed by other school professionals.

4. None of the three elementary school guidance programs emphasized conducting systematic, on-going empirical program evaluations of their individual school guidance programs. The school counselors, however, had been evaluated. The annual evaluation of a school counselor conducted by the school principal does not substitute for systematic empirical evaluation of an elementary school guidance program. School-based empirical program evaluations are imperative if the elementary school guidance program's effectiveness is to be assessed, corrected, or publicized (Leham, 1990).

Conclusions

Based on research conducted during the Spring of 1997 involving three elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Developmental classroom guidance programs were an effective means for including all students when discussing personal/social issues, encouraging academic success, and stimulating interest in career education.

2. Individual and small group counseling was identified as a strength of all effective elementary school guidance programs.

3. Parents were actively involved in effective elementary school guidance programs, through participation in parent education classes, workshops, or as volunteers.

4. Effective elementary school guidance programs were focused on students' success, and sponsored recognition programs for achievement and behavior.

5. The support of school administrators for effective elementary school guidance programs was evident at both the school and division levels.

6. The school counselor was actively involved in the work of the Child Study Committee, as well as other committees.

7. A variety of teacher in-services were offered by the school counselors.

8. Community resources were used to strengthen and extend the elementary school guidance program.

9. Innovative career education programs were offered.

Guidance Programs

From these implications, the following data-based recommendations seem tenable:

1. All school counselors should expect to overcome obstacles when developing their elementary school guidance programs. Time, adequate/private space, funding, and being accepted into a new school were issues which had been addressed by the school counselors in the study.

Persistence and prioritizing on the part of the school counselor, as well as administrative support, were reported to help in resolving these problems.

2. Effective elementary school guidance programs should be actively promoted and publicized. The school counselors involved in the study made a concerted effort to disseminate information concerning the elementary school guidance programs. Parents were informed about classroom guidance activities, small group offerings, and opportunities for parent education. In these exemplary programs, involved parents became publicists for the program.

3. In effective elementary school programs, the school goals and elementary school guidance program goals

were developed in concert with the school goals. As the suburban guidance supervisor explained, the goals of the elementary school guidance program are "not ancillary, not an appendage, but an integrated part of the school". The elementary school guidance program is not a "one-way street", rather, the elementary school guidance program should "support others in carrying out their SOL objectives".

Implications for Future Research

1. Research and implement a systematic plan to more objectively evaluate the effectiveness of elementary school guidance programs.

2. Update the nationwide study of exemplary elementary school guidance programs, described in *The Best For Our Kids: Exemplary Elementary Guidance and Counseling Programs*, by Gerstein and Lichtman (1990).

3. Conduct a longitudinal study of students from exemplary elementary school guidance programs through middle school and high school to determine if being exposed to an exemplary elementary school guidance program made a significant difference in the students' levels of achievement.

4. Working through local chapters of the Virginia Counselor Association, conduct a statewide effort to identify exemplary elementary school guidance programs in Virginia.

5. Duplicate this study of elementary school guidance programs in different regions of Virginia, comparing similarities and differences.

Summary

This chapter briefly describes a study of exemplary elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia, which was conducted in the Spring of 1997.

Results from rural, urban, and suburban school settings show similarities in elementary school guidance practices and programs. Fifteen best programs and practices were found to exist in all three school settings. These best programs and practices were grouped into three categories:

- (1) focus on student development and achievement,
- (2) staff development,
- (3) focus on parents and volunteerism.

Also included in this chapter was a discussion of the research question, the relationship of this study to

reviewed research, clinical observations, conclusions,
recommendations for exemplary school guidance programs, and
implications for future research.

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APPENDIX A

Points of Comparison

Summary

Rural, Urban, and Suburban Elementary School Guidance Programs

Percent of Time School Counselor Spent in Different Roles

	Counseling	Consulting	Coordinating	Other
Rural	50~60%	10%	10%	20~30%
Urban	50%	10%	10%	10%
Suburban	45-50%	15%	25%	1%

Percent of Time School Counselor Spent in Different Settings

	Ind. Counseling	Group Counseling	Time Alone
Rural	30%	20%	10%
Urban	10-20%	10%	0-1%
Suburban	7~75%	20%	5-10%

Was this Elementary School Guidance Program In Operation Before 1989?

Rural	No
Urban	Yes
Suburban	Yes

Number of Students Participating in This Elementary School Guidance Program

Rural elementary - 360 students and middle - 112 students

Urban primary - 273 students and intermediate - 238 students

Suburban elementary - 559 students

Percent of 6th Grade Students Passing the Virginia Passport Literacy Test on the First Attempt

Rural 59.90%

Urban 16%

Suburban 78%

Counselor:Student Ratio

Rural 1:360 elementary students and 2:112 middle school students

Urban 1:273 primary school students and 1:238 intermediate school students

Suburban 1:559 elementary school students

Major Obstacles Which Were Overcome When Conducting the Elementary

School Guidance Program

Rural - funding, space

Urban - space, time

Suburban - when establishing herself as a new counselor to the school, the school counselor had to gain the confidence and trust of parents and teacher, role confusion, and counselor:student ratio (1:559)

Supervision and Evaluation of the Elementary School Guidance Program

Rural - by principal, no guidance supervisor

Urban - by primary school principal, with input from guidance supervisor, if needed

Suburban - by principal, with input by guidance supervisor, if needed, also used peer supervision

Elementary School Guidance Budget

Rural - allowed \$250.00/year, also Drug-Free School, PTA, and additional monies from the general budget were made available for specific projects

Urban - allowed one dollar per student, also additional monies from school division mini-grants were available

Suburban - school counselor reported that \$209.00/year was allowed by the guidance supervisor, while principal reported the amount to be \$300.00 school counselor reported that \$200.00 additional funds came from the PTA, while the principal reported that \$400.00 supplemental funds came from the PTA and supplemental funds from the principal's office

Was There a Written Elementary School Guidance Plan?

Rural - no, used Virginia Department of Education guidelines for School Counseling Programs

Urban - yes, included in the school biennial plan

Suburban - yes

What Type of Log/Monitor Sheet Was Used by the School Counselor?

Rural - recorded daily activities in a weekly planner

Urban - recorded daily activities in a notebook

Suburban - recorded daily activities in a notebook, reported percentage of time spent in guidance and counseling activities to guidance supervisor monthly

APPENDIX B

EXEMPLARY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE
PRACTICES and PROGRAMS
GROUPED INTO THREE CATEGORIES

I. Focus on Student Development and Achievement

1. Developmental classroom guidance units:
personal/social, academic success, and career
2. Individual and small group counseling groups
3. Student recognition programs for achievement and
behavior
4. Innovative career guidance programs were offered
5. Elementary school guidance programs were focused on
students' success

II. Staff Collaboration

6. Supportive administration at both school and division
Levels
7. Teacher in-service programs offered by school
counselor
8. School counselor practiced good communication skills
9. School counselor served on several committees,
including the Child Study Team
10. Elementary school guidance programs were actively
promoted/publicized
11. School counselors overcame obstacles in every setting

III. Focus on Parents and Volunteers

12. Parent education offered through classes, workshops,
and resource centers
13. Strong parent involvement broadened the program

14. Use of volunteers strengthened the elementary school guidance program
15. Community resources used to extend the elementary school guidance program

APPENDIX C

204 Primrose Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060
Spring, 1997

School Counselor
XXX Elementary School
XXX, Virginia

Dear School Counselor,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research project featuring exemplary elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia. I am very pleased to be able to include a description of your program in my dissertation: a case study report, describing rural, urban, and suburban elementary school guidance programs.

As I mentioned during our phone conversation, I am a Ph.D candidate in the College of Human Resources and Education at Virginia Tech. I also work as an elementary school guidance counselor and have a natural interest in learning what innovative and effective practices are taking place in elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia.

For inclusion in this study, those involved in the elementary guidance program are asked to contribute information in various ways; such as:

- (1) complete the enclosed questionnaire,
- (2) participate in structured interviews,
- (3) share program related-documents (such as log/monitor sheets, guidance budget information, and school demographics), and
- (4) host at least one site visit during Spring, 1997.

I greatly appreciate your participation in this study. If there are any questions, please feel free to call me at home (540) 951-2351 or at work (540) 626-7281. I will look forward to visiting you at XXX Elementary on Monday, March 24.

Sincerely,

Patti Loop, School Counselor
Eastern Elementary/Middle School
P. O. Box 569
Pembroke, VA 24136

F. Which of these five practices do you think is most effective? Why?

2. Have you or your program ever received recognition for having an outstanding elementary school guidance program such as Virginia Counselors Association: Chapter Member of the Year, Division Member of the Year, Counselor of the Year, an award from the PTA, or school board, etc.)? If so, describe.

3. Describe three to five ways you publicize/promote your elementary school guidance program.

4. Describe three to five ways you work with community resources.

5. What major obstacles have you overcome in conducting your program? Describe.

6. A. What percent of time do you spend in the following roles?

Counseling _____%
Consulting _____%
Coordinating _____%
Other _____%

B. What percentage of your time on the job do you
C. Spend in these settings:

Individual counseling _____%
Group counseling _____%
Time spent alone _____%

7. Was this program in operation before 1989? Circle one:
Yes
No

8. Total number of students participating in this elementary school guidance program:

- Fewer than 100
- Between 100 and 300
- Between 301 and 500
- Between 501 and 700
- Between 701 and 900
- More than 900

9. What words/terms best characterize your elementary school guidance program?

10. Describe or enclose any program evaluation studies, reports, or articles which concern your elementary school guidance program over the past five years.

Finally, are there any other things about your elementary school guidance program you would like to tell us?

In conclusion:

I greatly appreciate your participation in this study.

Please use the attached stamped envelope to return your questionnaire within the next ten days.

I will be calling you to make arrangements for a site visit. What day and time would you prefer me to call?

Please send the completed questionnaire to:

Mrs. Patti Loop
204 Primrose Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 951-2351 home (540) 626-7281 work

APPENDIX D

EXEMPLARY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAMS
Structured Interview

Name _____
Position _____
School _____

Questions 1-5 will be asked of the PTA president, SCA president (with parental permission), a representative from Social Services, a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, the media specialist, and the physical education teacher.

Questions 1-10 will be asked of supervisors/principals.

1. Highlight three to five strengths of your elementary school's guidance program.
2. What is the most important service provided by the elementary school guidance program?
3. How does this elementary school guidance program meet all students' needs, including exceptional children (e.g., children-at-risk and gifted students)?
4. What are three to five effective practices this elementary school guidance program demonstrates when working with students? Parents? Teachers? Volunteers?
5. How does your school guidance program make itself known to others?

Supervisors/Principals:

6. Describe the elementary school guidance program's relationship to school division/school goals.
7. Talk about how the school counselor is supervised and how the elementary school guidance program is evaluated.
8. Describe the kinds of interactions this elementary school guidance program has with other student service professionals.
9. Talk about the future funding of your elementary school guidance program.
10. As a school leader, what is your involvement in this exemplary elementary school guidance program?

At the completion of each interview: Is there anything else you want to share about this elementary school guidance program?

APPENDIX E

EXEMPLARY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAM
Structured Interview

Counselor _____
School _____

1. Talk about the relationship between the elementary school guidance program's goals and school goals.
2. Describe how you are supervised and how the elementary school guidance program is evaluated.
3. Tell how program priorities are determined. What is the most important elementary school guidance program provided?
4. Is there a budget for this program? How do you purchase materials?
5. Which students get the most from this elementary school guidance program? Utilize services most? Take the most of your time?
6. Talk about group services, in particular, small group counseling.
7. How has your program been affected by the implementation of the State Board of Education regulations?
8. What do you think about your facilities? (Is there adequate space, privacy, a private phone line?)
9. How is administrative support at the central office and at the school level for your elementary school guidance program?
10. Are you involved with the child study team? If so, talk about the role you play.

Is there anything else you want to share about this elementary school guidance program? Is there anything you would like to clarify about the questionnaire responses?

APPENDIX F

DOCUMENT REVIEW

Elementary school guidance counselor: Please complete the following questions.

1. Please describe the budget for your elementary school guidance program.

2. Is there a written elementary school guidance plan? (Yes or No). If yes, what plan/guide do you follow?

3. Do you use a log/monitor sheet summary? (Yes or No). If yes, please describe.

4. Please describe the elementary school guidance counselor's schedule/duties.

5. Please describe the demographics of the school community:

A. percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch _____%

B. percent of students participating in Title I _____%

C. percent of 6th grade students passing the Virginia Passport Literacy Test on the first attempt last year: 1996 _____ %

D. counselor/student ratio:
first/only assignment _____ students:counselor
second assignment _____ students:counselor

APPENDIX G

204 Primrose Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060
February 22, 1997

School Superintendent
XXX Public Schools
XXX, VA
Dear School Superintendent,

I am writing to ask your permission for an elementary school in your school division to participate in a research project I am doing as a Ph.D. candidate in the College of Human Resources and Education at Virginia Tech. The topic I am researching is elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia. Briefly, the purpose of my study is to describe exemplary elementary school guidance programs in rural, urban, and suburban settings.

Those people involved in the study of exemplary elementary school guidance programs would be asked to contribute information in various ways; such as:

- (1) complete a questionnaire,
- (2) participate in structured interviews,
- (3) share program-related documents (such as log/monitor sheets, guidance budget information, and school demographics), and
- (4) host at least one site visit during Spring, 1997.

Since privacy issues are a concern, I would like to assure you that I will preserve the anonymity of all participants when reporting my findings. I will not reveal the identity or include identifiable characteristics of the school or school division unless authorized to do so by the Superintendent.

I hope you will grant permission for your school division to participate in the described study. Please feel free to call me if there are any questions. My number is (540) 951-2351 at home and (540) 626-7281 at work.

Sincerely,

Patti Loop, School Counselor
Eastern Elementary/Middle School
P. O. Box 569
Pembroke, VA 24060

APPENDIX H

March 11, 1997

Dear Parent,

This letter is to request your permission for a doctoral candidate from Virginia Tech to interview your child. Responses will assist the researcher in obtaining information concerning a dissertation topic: elementary school guidance programs in Southwest Virginia. The interview would take place at school and would be taped recorded. At no time would your child's identity be reported in the study.

I give permission for my child to participate in the interview.

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date

APPENDIX I

204 Primrose Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060
February 22, 1997

School Counselor
XXX Elementary School
XXX, VA

Dear School Counselor,

I am looking forward to visiting you at XXX Elementary School next Friday, February 28. Meanwhile, I thought you might want to look over the enclosed structured interview questions. There are actually two sets of interview questions, one for the school counselor and another set for the others I hope to interview during the site visit. Those "others" include:

- (1) the PTA President,
- (2) a student (parental permission letter enclosed),
- (3) a representative from Social Service,
- (4) a regular education teacher,
- (5) a special education teacher,
- (6) the media specialist,
- (7) physical education teacher,
- (8) the principal, and
- (9) a guidance supervisor/administrator.

Any help you could give me in identifying people and arranging for the interviews would be greatly appreciated.

I am also sending a list of documents I would like to review for inclusion in the study. I appreciate the time you are putting into this project and look forward to being with you next week.

Sincerely,

Patti Loop, School Counselor
Eastern Elementary Middle School
P. O. Box 569
Pembroke, VA 24136

APPENDIX J

204 Primrose Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060
February 27, 1997

Rural School Counselor
XXX Elementary School
XXX, VA

Dear School Counselor,

Thank you for allowing me to visit your school last week. I enjoyed being with you at XXX Elementary School; a most pleasant setting. Please extend my thanks to those who took the time to answer my interview questions. Everyone was very complimentary of your elementary school guidance program. You have worked to establish an outstanding program and, in doing so, rightfully earned the respect of your colleagues.

In reviewing the notes I made during my interviews, there are certain themes which seem to surface. I thought I would mention these to you, as you may want to expand on these areas in your questionnaire responses.

The areas are:

1. parenting classes offered, collaborative effort
2. regular classroom guidance for all grade levels
3. collaborative work with prevention specialist, Robin Dobbins
4. presentations to PTA and faculty
5. small group topics covered
6. parent resource materials made available, displayed openly
7. teacher folders updated every fall
8. letters to parents at the beginning of a unit
9. collaborative effort with teachers to plan units
10. career/hobby day involving community resources
11. child study & gifted coordination, FAPT representative

If you can give any more specific information concerning these areas, it would be helpful when I am describing your program. Your school secretary may be able to give the information I need on the document review summary sheet (enclosed). Any information describing the county/demographics would also be useful.

Thank you very much for your help. I appreciate your gifts of time and effort. I hope my findings will be beneficial to you, as well as the XXX School System.

Sincerely,

Patti Loop, School Counselor
Eastern Elementary Middle School
P. O. Box 569
Pembroke, VA 24136

APPENDIX K

204 Primrose Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060
March 1, 1997

Urban School Counselor
XXX Elementary Schools
XXX, VA

Dear School Counselor,

Thank you for allowing me to visit your schools last week. I enjoyed being with you at XXX and XXX Schools: two very pleasant settings. Please extend my thanks to those who took the time to answer my interview questions. Everyone was very complimentary of your work with the children. You have worked hard to establish an outstanding program and, in doing so, rightfully earned the respect of your colleagues.

In reviewing the notes I made during my interviews, there are certain themes which seem to surface. I thought I would mention these to you, as you may want to expand on these areas in your questionnaire responses. The areas are:

1. teaches conflict resolution in classroom guidance (K-2)
2. teaches conflict resolution & peer mediation c.g. (3-5)
3. runs peer mediators group (5th graders work with gr. 3-4)
4. runs small groups on various topics - divorce, death
5. teaches family life curriculum at all grade levels
6. member of student support and child study teams
7. collaborates with mental health professions
8. performs educational testing assessment for eligibility meetings
9. offers parenting seminars on various topics
(hyperactivity in children, discipline, etc.)
- 10 chairs the volunteer committee - school liaison
- 11 promotes student recognition/reward - "Caught Being Good".

If you can give any more specific information concerning these areas, it would be helpful when I am describing your program. Your school secretary may be able to give the information I need on the document review summary sheet (enclosed). Any information describing the city/demographics would also be useful.

Thank you very much for your help. I appreciate your gifts of time and effort. I hope my findings will be beneficial to you, as well as the XXX School System.

Sincerely,

Patti Loop, School Counselor
Eastern Elementary Middle School
P. O. Box 569
Pembroke, VA 24136

APPENDIX L

204 Primrose Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060
March 1, 1997

Urban School Counselor
XXX Elementary Schools
XXX, VA

Dear School Counselor,

Thank you for allowing me to visit your schools last week. I enjoyed being with you at XXX and XXX Schools: two very pleasant settings. Please extend my thanks to those who took the time to answer my interview questions. Everyone was very complimentary of your work with the children. You have worked hard to establish an outstanding program and, in doing so, rightfully earned the respect of your colleagues.

In reviewing the notes I made during my interviews, there are certain themes which seem to surface. I thought I would mention these to you, as you may want to expand on these areas in your questionnaire responses. The areas are:

1. teaches conflict resolution in classroom guidance (K-2)
2. teaches conflict resolution & peer mediation c.g. (3-5)
3. runs peer mediators group (5th graders work with gr. 3-4)
4. runs small groups on various topics - divorce, death
5. teaches family life curriculum at all grade levels
6. member of student support and child study teams
7. collaborates with mental health professions
8. performs educational testing assessment for eligibility meetings
9. offers parenting seminars on various topics
(hyperactivity in children, discipline, etc.)
- 10 chairs the volunteer committee - school liaison
- 11 promotes student recognition/reward - "Caught Being Good".

If you can give any more specific information concerning these areas, it would be helpful when I am describing your program. Your school secretary may be able to give the information I need on the document review summary sheet (enclosed). Any information describing the city/demographics would also be useful.

Thank you very much for your help. I appreciate your gifts of time and effort. I hope my findings will be beneficial to you, as well as the XXX School System.

Sincerely,

Patti Loop, School Counselor
Eastern Elementary Middle School
P. O. Box 569
Pembroke, VA 24136

VITA

Patti Ann Gaskins Loop hails from Portsmouth, Virginia. Born on May 17, 1954, she was the only daughter of Nathaniel and Miriam Gaskins and has four older brothers, Larry, Jim, Richard, and Tom.

In 1971, Patti graduated from Western Branch High School in Chesapeake. She entered James Madison University, and graduated Magna Cum Laude in 1976 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Home Economics Education.

Patti taught home economics in Greensville County for one year and in Stafford County for seven years. In 1984, she began work towards a Masters of Arts Degree in Student Personnel Services at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, which she received in 1989.

In 1989, Patti began her work as the first school counselor at Eastern Elementary Middle School in Giles County, Virginia. Also, during that time, she continued her graduate studies in school counseling, and in 1994, was awarded her Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Student Personnel Services from Virginia Polytechnic

Institute and State University. Later, while studying for her doctorate, Patti was chosen as a co-recipient of the Robert Hoppock Scholarship.

During 1997, Patti became a National Certified Counselor. Other professional involvements include participation in Virginia Counselors Association, American counseling Association, Virginia School Counselor Association, Chi Sigma Iota National Counseling Honor Society - Tau Eta Kappa Chapter, Virginia Tech.

Patti is married to Don Loop and resides in Blacksburg, Virginia. She continues to work as the school counselor for K-7 grade students at Eastern Elementary Middle School in Giles County. Her hobbies include beachcombing, gardening, knitting, and creative writing. She loves children and looks to God for strength.