

THE HOPATCONG BOROUGH SCHOOL'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAM

PREFACE

Elementary school guidance programs recognize the unique nature of children with their own diverse and varying needs, the importance of meeting these individual needs, and the necessity for providing a supportive learning environment. While counselors are committed to supporting the academic goals of the district, they also acknowledge the multi-dimensional aspects of fostering successful students which must include emotional, psychological and social health.

Elementary school is the foundation of a student's academic career. Research supports that a child's experience in elementary school has a significant impact on their coping skills for later in life. A longitudinal study on intelligence conducted by Benjamin Bloom, "Evaluation to Improve Learning (1981)," revealed that the environment, in addition to heredity, is a significant factor in determining the educational achievement of children. Bloom states that approximately 80% of a child's intellectual growth takes place during the first eight years of life. Since the period of most rapid growth takes place during a child's early years of development, environmental experiences during those years are most critical. Consequently, elementary school years provide an excellent opportunity for teachers and counselors to have a positive impact on the overall and long range development of children.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Hopatcong Borough School's elementary school guidance program functions as an integral part of the entire educational process. The elementary school guidance program provides comprehensive, developmental and personal services to students in grades kindergarten through five. These services are consistent with the philosophy and objectives of the schools and district, and share the commitment toward students, parents, and community with the administration and teaching staff. In addition, these services strive to meet the National Standards for School Counseling programs. Counselors strive to identify and respond to specific academic, emotional and social needs of students and families through various modes of outreach. The mission of the guidance program is to foster a learning community where students, staff and families value themselves and others, become lifelong learners, and make positive contributions in our world.

PROGRAM DEFINITION:

The Hopatcong Borough's Elementary School Guidance Program is available to help students, parents and teachers to develop positive learning experiences. The program utilizes a variety of services and activities in order to meet individualized needs of children and their families. The provision

of services will be based upon referrals from faculty and staff, parents/guardians, and/or student request. Teachers and staff will receive referral forms upon the commencement of the academic year. All elementary school counselors will utilize a uniform referral form. Parents/ guardians will be notified of the school's guidance and counseling services through open night and/or school newsletters. In addition, school counselors will introduce themselves, and the purpose of the program to each classroom at the commencement of the academic year.

During the course of the school year, teachers and parents/guardians may refer students to the guidance department for counseling in these general areas:

1. Difficulty in interpersonal relationships
2. Academic difficulty
3. Scholastic difficulty
4. Negative changes in behavior
5. Self-esteem issues
6. Family separation or divorce
7. Family remarriage
8. Family relocation
9. Physical or sexual abuse issues
10. Neglect issues
11. Substance abuse issues
12. Health related issues
13. Fears and/or anxieties
14. Death and the grieving process
15. Natural disasters (floods, tornadoes, fires)
16. School incidents (accidents, gun/bomb threats)

The aforementioned issues, as well as other educational information and topics, will be addressed through the utilization of one or more of the following services: Individual Counseling: School counselors will provide individual sessions for students to assist with a variety of educational and personal issues. The primary focus of these sessions is to help students to explore their concerns, make appropriate plans of action, and to be successful in following through with their plans.

Individual counseling will also aim to assist students to develop effective coping, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, as well as provide necessary linkages for support. Group Counseling: School counselors will provide support counseling to small groups of students with common needs or problems. Topics may center around changing families, social skills, and academic improvement. Groups will meet on a weekly to a bi-weekly basis depending on specific needs of the students. Group counseling provides an opportunity for students to provide and receive peer support and feedback which may help them to feel less isolated and less understood. Classroom Guidance Curriculum: Throughout the school year, counselors will meet with students and teachers in a

classroom setting at each grade level. The topics that will be addressed in these sessions will be in response to specific classroom needs as identified by the teacher or principal, observance of special events or commemorations, and/or curriculum by the National Standards. Conferences: School counselors are available to meet with the parents of any student to discuss academic, emotional, social or family concerns. Parents may contact the guidance office during the school day to schedule an appointment. However, counselors will make all attempts to accommodate parents who come directly to the guidance office without a prior appointment.

Collaborative Interdisciplinary Conferences: The school counselor will meet with the school's Information and Referral Services (I&RS) team to communicate specific needs or issues of students that have been previously referred for guidance services. Counselors may also receive new referrals through I&RS team meetings. I&RS team members may include individuals from the Child Study Team (CST), school principal, appropriate teachers, guidance counselor and parents. The purpose of the I&RS teams is to determine whether there is a need for CST evaluation in order to provide special education services. Counselors may also assist the teacher with suggestions of specific strategies to assist the particular student prior to a CST intervention. **Referral:** School counselors will serve as referral agents to help students and their families to receive needed and/or requested assistance from other programs and services within the school system, as well as community agencies. Counselors will work closely with teachers and administrators in these referral processes.

Transitional Services for Students Graduating to New Schools:

In order to ensure a smooth transition to each new school, elementary school counselors will meet with one another at the conclusion of the school year to provide relevant information regarding students that have received guidance services. The information that will be exchanged will ensure that the new counselor will continue to meet existing needs of specific students, thus ensuring a smooth transition for students who have previously received services.

Coordination of Special Events:

Counselors will assist with the coordination of various school-wide events to acknowledge special topics, commemorations, and/or holidays. These special events will aim to reach the full student population to foster a sense of community, social awareness, and respect for diverse celebrations and issues. A holiday gift collection in December for families in need of financial assistance is an example of a special annual event within the elementary schools. A list of various student observances/events, which may be acknowledged throughout the school year, is attached below.

THEMATIC GUIDANCE PROGRAMS/ACTIVITIES:

In order to provide a consistent learning and social environment throughout the elementary schools, the guidance program will provide thematic programs and/or activities throughout the school year. All elementary school counselors will facilitate an annual campaign entitled, "Kids Care." Activities and educational programs, supporting compassion and kindness, will be developed by school counselors. This may be accomplished through a variety of venues including: poster contests, random acts of kindness, bulletin boards, community activities, and classroom discussions. Elementary school counselors will also celebrate National Counselor's Week through the distribution of lessons and/or school-wide activities.

October: Red Ribbon Week: Substance Abuse Awareness

December: Social Decision Making and Problem Solving

February: Celebrating diversity/respecting each other

April: Violence prevention

June: Safety Education

STUDENT WELLNESS OBSERVANCES & SPECIAL EVENTS:

September

09/08/03: International Literacy Day

09/11/03: World Trade Center and Pentagon attack remembrance/observance

>09/16/03: International Day of Peace

October

whole month: National Disabilities Awareness Month

10/6-10/10: Fire Prevention Week

10/20-10/24: America's Safe Schools Week

10/20-10/24: National School Bus Safety Week

10/18-10/24: Red Ribbon Week

November

11/20/03 National Parental Involvement Day

February

whole month: National African-American History Month

2/2-2/6/04: National School Counseling Week

March

whole month: National Women's History Month
3/04: Read Across America Day/Dr. Seuss' Birthday
3/21-3/25/04: National Poison Prevention Week
3/29-34/04: National Youth Violence Prevention Week

April

whole month: National Child Abuse Prevention Month
4/22/04 Earth Day

May

whole month: National Mental Health Month
5/4-5/10/04: Teacher Appreciation Week

June

whole month: National Safety Month

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS:

The National Standards for School Counseling Programs provide the guidance, direction and the framework for states, school systems and individual schools to develop effective school counseling programs. The National Standards facilitate student development in three broad areas: academic development, career development, and personal/social development. Each area is delineated by three separate standards. These nine standards are followed by a list of student competencies or desired student learning outcomes, which define the specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills which students should obtain or demonstrate as a result of participating in a school counseling program. These competencies form a foundation which can be used as a basis to develop measurable indicators of student performance. Hopatcong's elementary school guidance program strives to meet the National Standards through the utilization of the aforementioned counseling, educational and social services and activities.

Academic Development:

The academic standards serve as a guide for the school counseling program to implement strategies and activities that support and maximize student learning. Academic development includes the following: acquiring skills, attitudes, and knowledge to learn effectively; employing strategies to achieve success in school; and understanding the relationship of academics to the world of work, and to life at home and in the community.

Standard A: Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.

Student Competencies:

1. Improve academic self-concept
2. Acquire skills for improving learning
3. Achieve school success

Standard B: Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial postsecondary options, including college.

Student Competencies:

1. Improve learning
2. Plan to achieve goals

Standard C: Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work, and to life at home and in the community.

Student Competencies:

1. Relate school to life experiences.

Career Development Program standards for career development service as a guide for the school counseling program to provide the foundation for acquiring the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that enable students to make a successful transition from school to the world of work. Career development includes the following: strategies to achieve future career success and job satisfaction; fostering an understanding of the relationship between personal qualities, education and training, and the world of work; and the development of career goals by all students as a result of career awareness and experiential activities.

>Standard A: Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.

Student Competencies:

1. Develop career awareness
2. Develop employment readiness

Standard B: Students will employ strategies to achieve future career goals with success and satisfaction.

Student Competencies:

1. Acquire career information
2. Identify career goals

Standard C: Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training, and the world of work.

Students Competencies:

1. Acquire knowledge to achieve career goals
2. Apply skills to achieve career goals

Personal/Social Development Program standards for personal/social development serve as a guide for the school counseling program to provide the foundation for personal and social growth which contributes to academic and career success. Personal/social development includes the following: the acquisition of skills, attitudes, and knowledge which helps students to respect self and others; the use of effective interpersonal skills; the employment of safety and survival skills; understanding the obligation to be a member of our society; and the ability to negotiate successfully and safety in the increasingly complex and diverse world of the 21st century.

Standard A: Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

Student Competencies:

1. Acquire self-knowledge
2. Acquire interpersonal skills

Standard B: Students will make decisions, set goals, and take necessary action to achieve goals.

Student Competencies:

1. Self-knowledge applications

Standard C: Students will understand safety and survival skills.

Student Competencies:

1. Acquire personal safety skills.