

NOSCA Conference *Destination Equity*

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ENHANCING THE PRINCIPAL-SCHOOL COUNSELOR RELATIONSHIP

>Toolkit

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A National Survey of over 2,000 school counselors and principals

- Principals were more positive than school counselors
- They saw the same issues through very different lenses
- Four elements of the relationship were seen as the most important:

Communication

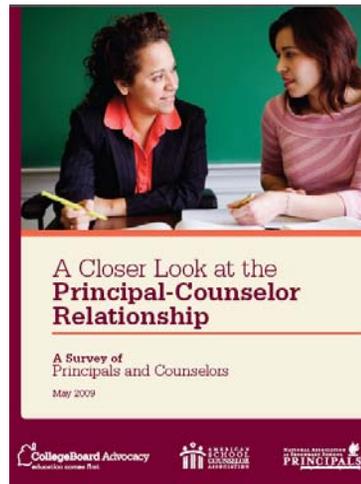
Collaboration

Respect

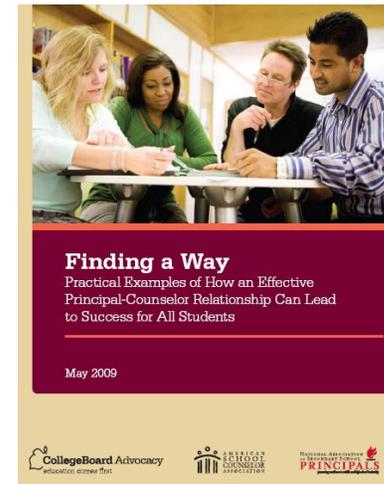
Shared Vision

Two Publications:

A Closer Look (Survey Findings)



Finding a Way (Interviews)



The Toolkit

- **Addresses the most common and elusive issues**
- **Based on input** from experienced school counselors and principals across the country
- **Extensive testing and feedback** from:
 - College Board Schools
 - Online school counselor community
 - Bulletin board feedback
 - In-person focus groups

Each section includes

- Real-world case study
- Background/Overview
- Tools
 - Self-assessments (for principals and school counselors)
 - Worksheets/Exercises
 - Discussion/Collaboration

Toolkit Sections

- 1 **Enhancing the Relationship**
- 2 **Communication**
- 3 **Trust and Respect**
- 4 **Leadership**
- 5 **Collaborative Planning**
- 6 **Advanced Practice**

Using the Toolkit

- **Where do we begin?**
 - Are any issues obvious (i.e., missed or misunderstood communications, etc.)
 - Use the data and relationship assessment tools
 - **How do we use the tools?**
 - As a group (Better)
 - As Individuals (Still Valuable)
 - **When should we use the tools?**
 - Professional Development Days
 - Staff Meetings
 - Other
- **Who should lead the discussions?**
 - District personnel (i.e., guidance supervisor)
 - Other external facilitators
 - Internal: principal, school counselor or teacher
 - **How do we start?** (Who decides to use the toolkit?)
 - Depends on the situation
 - Atmosphere must be safe
 - District office/principal/school counselors can suggest

What They Told Us



Absolutely could be a good way to get the year started – helps people identify our common ground and create a purpose for our work together.

—*Principal*

I'm not sure our Administration team would use this. I am sure they would like to see the “data” associated with it, but I get the sense that they are overwhelmed and may not be willing to take on something like this. Not sure they see the need to improve the relationship.

—*School Counselor*

1

Enhancing the Relationship: Getting Started

When principals and counselors work together, they are able to solve the most pressing issues in their school.

Issue	Counselor Rating	Principal Rating	Overall Rating
Drop-out rate			
Graduation rate			
State test score: Meets Expectations – English			
State test score: Meets Expectations – Math			
State test score: Exceeds Expectations – English			
State test score: Exceeds Expectations – Math			
College Entrance Exam participation (ACT & SAT)			
College Entrance Exam Average score (ACT)			
College Entrance Exam Average score (SAT)			
AP/IB Participation			
College-going rate (2-year)			
College-going rate (4-year)			

Exercise:

Principals and counselors each complete the following chart, ranking each issue on a scale of 1–12; one being the most critical issue and 12 the least.

Results:

Provide a consensus on the most critical Achievement issues in your school.

1

Enhancing the Relationship



I think this will help us to see where we each stand on this topic – as we tend to see many things through different lenses.

—*Guidance Director*

I believe it will lend to real open dialogue between professionals and the respect for each other's role can be much more easily understood and valued.

—*School Counselor at an Inner City School*

I think my principal may believe there is no need for this, that he has a handle on things, and that he has us doing what we should be doing. Whether we disagree or not, he may not change his views. However, my hope is that he would be open to it if the conversation is started by someone he trusts, respects, and if he has the time. (I hope this is anonymous.)

—*School Counselor*

This is a tool that will require a great deal of trust between the administration and the counselors. There may be Principals that will take offense if their rating and the counselors' are far apart.

—*Principal*

Communication

What constitutes effective communication?
Quality vs. Frequency

Assessing current communication practices



Understanding the viewpoint of the Principal and School Counselor

Strategies to effectively increase the level of communication

Communication

2.3 Principal-School Counselor Scenarios

The Situation	
<p>It is the first week of second semester of the school year, and the principal has held one meeting with the counseling department. That meeting was about the opening of school processes and how to handle schedule changes.</p>	<p>The principal is a hands-on manager who holds frequent meetings with his administrative staff but calls additional staff/department meetings on an “as needs basis.” The administrative meetings are scheduled for every Monday morning before students arrive and are seldom cancelled.</p> <p>The counselors view this as a direct slighting of them as professionals and discounting of their contributions to the school because the monthly scheduled meetings that were set up for their meetings with the principal are almost always cancelled.</p>

Communication



I think the scenario where the principal cancels the counselor meetings is priceless!...Coming up with our own scenarios unique to our school would really give us insight into how things happen and why and how others process the situation.

—*School Counselor*

This is a map for the principal to get to know the counselors better.

—*Principal*

As a principal, I'm not sure I would like the results of my own self-evaluation.

—*Principal*

[The principal] either doesn't think there's a problem or doesn't care as long as the job is getting done. Also, some relationships with some administrators (e.g. asst. principals) may be stronger or weaker than the one with the principal. So, I really recommend considering that this not be done just with a principal, as he may not always be the administrator the counseling staff works the most with.

—*School Counselor*

Trust and Respect

Fundamental components of an effective working relationship

Defining Respect:

- School counselors want personal respect;
- Principals look for respect for their goals and vision

In order to achieve the level of trust and respect needed, both counselors and principals need to:



Trust and Respect

3.6 Defining Trust in the Context of the School

Building trust is not easy, in part because it means different things in different contexts, requires different facets for different roles, and means different things to different people. (For example, in the military deference and obedience to higher ranks are vital, but less so in other professions.)

Time: 5–10 minutes to answer the questions; 1 hour for discussion.

Activity: Twenty aspects of trust are listed below, in random order, along with some blank slots for other aspects you believe are important. Rank each of these aspects from 1 to 5, with 1 being least important and 5 being most important.

1. Credibility _____
2. Consistency _____
3. Reliability _____
4. Honesty _____
5. Security _____
6. Belief _____
7. Courtesy _____
8. Competence _____
9. Open-mindedness _____
10. Dependability _____
11. Collegiality _____
12. Motivation _____
13. Attitude _____
14. Flexibility _____
15. Discretion _____
16. Respect _____
17. Safety _____
18. Willingness to Share _____
19. Ability to Listen _____
20. Focus on Others _____

Discussion

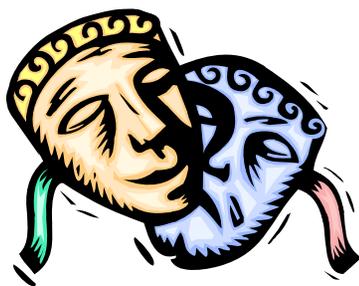
Have someone (a neutral moderator, if possible) collate and average the counselors' rankings and the principals' rankings. Compare the two, then note and discuss the differences. Some questions to ask include:

1. How do the two groups differ?
2. How are they the same?
3. Which aspects of trust are absolutely required?
4. Do any of the aspects of trust ever conflict with one another (i.e., courtesy and discretion versus honesty)? How do you work around this?
5. How might any discrepancies in answers affect your students?
6. Is there a difference between personal and professional trust? Is personal respect necessary?
7. Is it equally important for principals and counselors to trust one another?

Bring It Home

Think of some situations in your school in which particular aspects are needed, and what the effect of establishing trust in this way can have on your students' achievement. Begin with a successful situation that results in a positive outcome; then try to identify an issue with a less positive outcome in which trust could make a difference.

Trust and Respect



I think this is a great tool because it addresses how things work as a TEAM, as opposed to focusing on the traits of individuals. This lends itself to a more natural discussion.

—*School Counselor*

On closer examination, I now think it's ingenious, as it will get people to talk about problems in a constructive way. I'd like to try it.

—*Principal*

Anytime we dig this deep, we may not like the answers we come up with together. I hope it would stay positive.

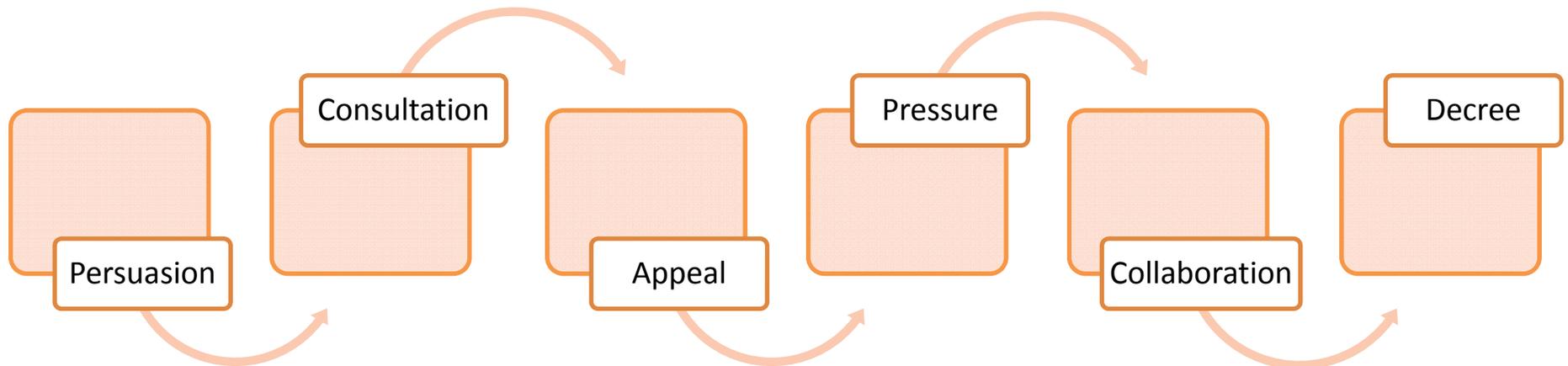
—*Principal*

I would like to think that everybody has trust and respect. Then I wake up.

—*School Counselor*

Leadership

Leadership Styles



- Which leadership styles work best?
- Leadership requires shared responsibility and commitment for student success
- A commitment to leadership supports student success

Leadership

Activity: Rate your commitment toward leadership:

School Counselors

School Counselor Participation on School Leadership Team	Yes	No
I participate on the school leadership team.		
I contribute relevant information in my expertise area to the leadership team.		
I contribute to key decisions that impact student achievement.		
Joint Responsibility in the Development of Goals and Metrics	Yes	No

Principals

School Counselor Participation on School Leadership Team	Yes	No
I allow school counselors to participate on the school leadership team(s).		
I value relevant information from my counselors in their area of expertise when it is presented to the leadership team.		
I welcome and encourage my counselors to contribute to key decisions that impact student achievement.		

Leadership



I believe our counselors are up for the challenge of taking leadership roles in our school. This provides a clear, thoughtful pathway.

—*Principal*

I think we underestimate ourselves as leaders. It would be eye-opening for me to realize I actually was a leader.

—*School Counselor*

I will say that while I support open communication and distributive leadership, and it's important for all people to have a voice, it is still important that people feel they have a leader.

—*Principal*

A little of the leadership section could potentially cause some unrest as I think sometimes administration considers counselors mini administrators to step in when they don't have time. Faculty thinks this way also. Putting us too much on the leadership team could jeopardize our relationship with students more than anything.

—*School Counselor*

Collaborative Planning

1. Make a list of your core values as they relate to education. What really matters, and why? (An example is provided.) Participants should include at least three examples of values and beliefs that can be directly affected by effective school counselors.

Core Value or Belief	Why This is Important
Ex. All children can learn and achieve at a high level.	Once we accept that all students are capable of excelling, we can no longer sit back comfortably if large numbers are failing.

2. Selecting completed forms at random, discuss the values presented. If principals and counselors from multiple schools are participating, divide into groups, mixing principals and school counselors. Assign completed worksheets at random, and discuss the values. Ask these questions:
 - Should this be a core value of our school?
 - How does this value or belief affect our students? Our staff? Our community?
 - Is there currently widespread belief in this value in the school? In the community?
 - How can we get buy-in from the key stakeholders — Including the community, parents, district supervisors, principals, counselors, teachers, other staff — and students?
3. Following your discussions, take a fresh belief chart and, working as a team, define your core beliefs and values, and describe why they are important to the school.

Collaborative Planning

Step 1: Directions: Rate each of the 13 counselor activities in the table below for both Importance and the Time you believe counselors spend on this activity as either “High” or “Low.” Rate each answer.

“High” (+) is defined as *of significant value and engagement.*

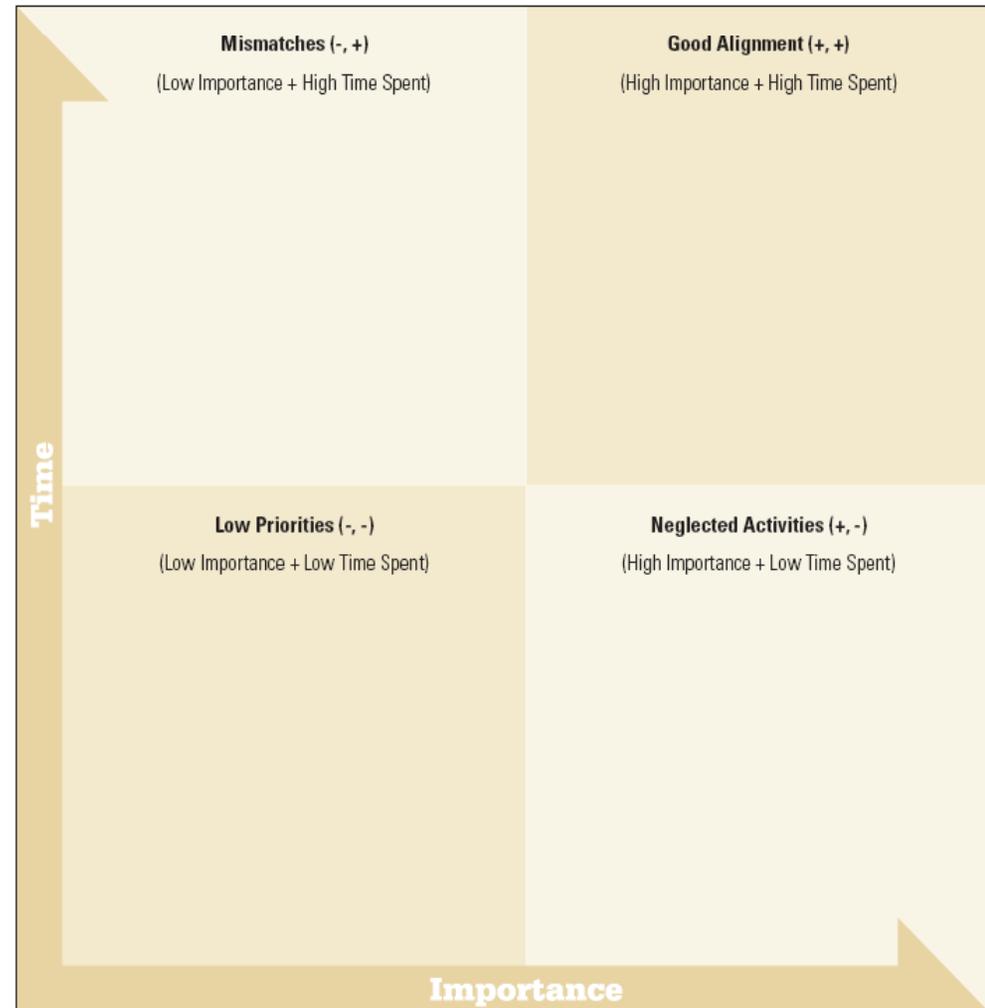
“Low” (-) is defined as *not of significant value or engagement.*

	Rating
Low Importance + High Time Spent	-, +
High Importance + High Time Spent	+, +
Low Importance + Low Time Spent	-, -
High Importance + Low Time Spent	+, -

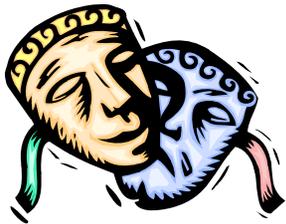
Activity	Importance	Time Spent	Rating
1. Using vertical teaming to ensure that students entering high school are prepared to enroll in rigorous and challenging course work			
2. Developing schoolwide strategies to increase the number of students enrolled in honors and/or advanced courses (such as AP, IB or dual enrollment)			
3. Implementing schoolwide strategies to increase graduation rates in the school			
4. Helping to promote student personal growth and social development			

Collaborative Planning

Step 2: Transfer each of your responses into the matching box in the grid below for further analysis of your responses.



Collaborative Planning



It shows everyone involved what the possibilities are and cements those with priorities from different perspectives that should merge if we are to think about kids.

—Principal

Only good things could come out of these exercises

—Principal

He [the principal] may find it valuable, but getting him to do it is another thing.

—School Counselor

She [the counselor] would have trouble if the results were negative and were a reflection on her performance.

—Principal

Advanced Practice

Rules of Engagement

MOVE FROM:

- Personal gripes
- Adult needs/wants
- Issues benefiting one or a few students
- Judgmental posture/remarks
- Sharing critical info when requested or problems occur
- Presenting problems
- Shutting down when faced with opposition

MOVE TO:

- Professional goals
- Plans/outcomes that benefit students
- Systemic issues that benefit whole school/community
- Consensus building posture/remarks
- Sharing critical info frequently to ensure team success
- Building solutions to problems presented
- Reframing, reconciling and use of data for making points

Advanced Practice

Finding a Way: Principal-Counselor Relationships — Solution-Finding Activity (Relationship Development, Collaborative Action, Equity)

Structured Situation 1:

Principal has set goal to increase the number of students in AP classes by directing that every student take at least one AP course during grades 10–12.

- Principal communicates the rule that all students will take at least one AP class before graduating from high school, part of the master plan to get all students college/career ready.
- Counselor tries to make sure only the students who have the capacity to earn a 3 or above are placed in AP classes because he or she does not want to set students up for failure.

Advanced Practice

Guiding Questions

Leadership

1. What are the benefits of having a school counselor on the leadership team in working on solutions for this situation?
2. Who owns the responsibility for success of the goals and metrics that are being sought for student success?
3. What happens when the solution finding sought represents a “win-win” for all — principal, counselor as well as the students/school community?

Relationship Development

1. How could the principal or counselor build mutual trust and respect in working to resolve these issues?
2. What would that look like? Words? Tone? Behavior? Expectations?

Collaborative Action

Advanced Practice



Have you been talking to my counselors? Very accurate scenarios. All have occurred.

—*Principal*

I can totally relate to all of the scenarios. I think this would be invaluable in bringing to light some of the differences in priorities.

—*School Counselor*

The principal may be skeptical, thinking "this is not necessary, I know what to do" but once done, he may view it as valuable.

—*School Counselor*

Although the goal is to engage the parties involved, some of the lessons could readily see participants at odds (particularly when comparing/contrasting ideas of scope of program /mission/etc.)

—*Principal*

Questions?



More Information

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■ Upcoming Presentations

- ASCA National Conference (June 2012)

■ Webinar

- View the November 30th, 2011 presentation at:
- <http://advocacy.collegeboard.org/college-preparation-access/national-office-school-counselor-advocacy-nosca/events/register-eight-com>

■ Download the toolkit:

- <http://advocacy.collegeboard.org/principal-counselor/principal-counselor-toolkit>

