Using Your School Counseling Advisory Councils to Build School and Community Partnerships

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<table>
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<th>Which school are you?</th>
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<td>You are one of two school counselors in a rural middle school with 600 students. You have difficulty meeting all of the students, staff and community members due to the overwhelming demands of the job. You do not provide any extras in your program – no career days, little to no classroom guidance, are not able to adequately publicize events, have a hard time engaging parents/community members and do little-to-no data collection or analysis. There is no Advisory Council and little support from constituents.</td>
<td>You are one of two school counselors in a rural middle school with 600 students. You have a well functioning Advisory Council. You provide many extras in your program – numerous career days/fairs, classroom guidance lessons for all students each month, a great public relations system, no problems engaging with parents/community members and have completed excessive data collection and analysis. You meet with all of the students on your caseload individually at least 3 times a year and run several groups.</td>
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What is an Advisory Council

“An Advisory Council is a representative group of stakeholders selected to review and advise on the implementation of the school counseling program. The Council meets at least twice a year and maintains an agenda and minutes for each meeting.” pg. 47

ASCA National Model, 3rd Ed.
Monson’s Advisory Council

• Started in 2004-5; high school only ► failed
• Re-started in 2010-11 with a K-12 focus
• Membership includes
  ➢ 7 counseling staff
  ➢ 3 administrators – 1 from each building
  ➢ 3 parents - 1 from each building
  ➢ 3 staff - 1 from each building
  ➢ 3 high school students
  ➢ 10 community members – higher education; business representatives, mental health agencies, medical doctor, town librarian, law enforcement, DCF worker
Monson’s Advisory Council

• Meet every other month – 5 times per year – (Sept., Nov., Jan., Mar., & May) 3:30-5:00 p.m.

• Rotate meeting locations between school and community settings

• Assigned everyone to 1 of 3 sub-committees-
  ➢ Person/social
  ➢ Academic
  ➢ Career

• All 3 sub-committees are asked to produce an event each year and provide data to the Council from their activity(ies)
Monson’s Advisory Council

• We usually start with a guest speaker about a topic of interest, followed by a short all-committee meeting and then followed by sub-committee meeting time
  ➢ Over time, guest speakers represent all three sub-committees
  ➢ Solicit speakers from staff or sub-committees

• Chair provides frequent communications throughout the year, meeting minutes, invitations and thank you notes to ensure connectedness and engagement
When Creating a Council….

• Create an implementation plan
  ➢ Goals & Objectives – what do you want to do with the Council?
  ➢ Representation – Who do you want on the Council?
  ➢ Size – How big should the group be?
  ➢ Appropriate candidates – How do you select representatives from certain stakeholder groups?
  ➢ Leadership – Who chairs/leads the groups?
  ➢ Terms of membership – How long should members serve? Should there be set terms?
  ➢ Agenda – What do you want to accomplish in the time you have?
  ➢ Use of meeting time – How should your meeting time be structured?
Overarching beliefs about Advisory Councils

- Stakeholders are essential to school success
- Communication is critical to ensure student achievement
- Advisory councils provide much needed support and public relations for your school counseling program
- Few if any other such groups function in most schools/school districts
Benefits of School Counselor Advisory Councils

• Able to offer programs that benefit students
• Provide results and data that support the school counseling program
• Enthusiastic, supportive group of stakeholders
• Positive public relations
• A focus on school counseling
• Ability to conduct programs that otherwise would not likely happen
• Provide consistency and coordinated programs
Other Advisory Models to Consider

• One Council per school, especially in larger districts
  ➢ Size matters

• One Council per building level across the district

• Councils which are sub-committees of other groups (i.e.: School Councils, PTA, Special Education Advisory)

• Vary meeting times (afternoon vs. night)
What Next

- Work with key stakeholders (faculty, staff, administrators) to ensure they are supportive of your efforts and will encourage others to join.

- Visit (or talk with) other well-functioning Advisory Councils in your area to get a feel for how they work and see their successes. Bring with you key stakeholders to see first-hand how Councils work.

- Create a Annual Agreement with your principal or central office administrator(s) that includes the creation of an Advisory Council.
What Next (continued)

• Make the creation of an Advisory Council a part of your annual goal as part of your evaluation

• Invite speakers (school counseling, or administration, motivational, inspiring and visionary) to address the Council and other stakeholders

• Find reasons for members to keep coming back; they need to feel valued and connected to remain engaged.

• Meeting minutes and structure are critical.
Sharing of other advisory models

• What works
• What has not worked
• What could make your Advisory Council better
• What have been your challenges
• What have been your successes
Book Resources

ASCA National Model, 3rd Edition


Good to Great – Jim Collins

Good to Great & the Social Sectors – Jim Collins

How the Mighty Fall – Jim Collins

Fish: Remarkable Way to Boost Morale & Improve Results – Stephen Lundin

The Disney Way – Bill Capodagli & Lynn Jackson
For more information or to continue the discussion

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