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A Qualitative Study Investigating Elementary and Middle School Comprehensive School Counseling Programs and Secondary Schooling in Privately Funded and Publicly Funded Schools in Missouri

by

Natalie Rohlfing

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

A Qualitative Study Investigating Elementary and Middle School Comprehensive School Counseling Programs and Secondary Schooling in Privately Funded and Publicly Funded Schools in Missouri

by

Natalie Rohlfing

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Natalie Joan Rohlfing

Signature: _____ Date: 7/13/20

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my committee chair, Dr. Robyne Elder, for her helping me pick up all my pieces and put them together. Thank you to Dr. Robert Steffes and Dr. Jackie Ramey for serving on my committee. Thank you also to my husband and children who were patient with me throughout this entire process.

Abstract

The purpose of this proposed qualitative study was to explore whether the absence of Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (CSCP) in privately-funded elementary and middle school impacts student personal, social-emotional, and academic growth in secondary school. This researcher used surveys and focus groups to gather data. The information resulting from this study will provide private and public schools reliable data to be used to implement and/or improve school counseling programs in elementary and middle school.

A Comprehensive School Counseling Program is able to address the needs of students by facilitating their academic, career, and social-emotional development as well as helping create positive and safe learning climates in schools. At the same time, the program assists students as they face issues and resolve problems that may prevent their healthy development (obtained from Missouri Department of Early and Secondary Education, 2017).

This researcher used surveys and focus groups to collect data for this study. Participants consisted of students attending public and private schools, teachers working at public and private schools, and parents of students attending public and private schools. The results looked at the differences in opinion between public and private school parents, teachers, and students regarding the lack of or presence of CSCPs in schools. Repeating this study with the same participants in three to four years would be beneficial to see if any responses would change. The results of the study would be especially significant if there were any student transitions from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school. The need for a school counselor might be more prevalent among the populations who might not have necessarily needed a school counselor in previous school years.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

The Missouri Comprehensive School Counseling Association stated that the goal of the program was to ensure that all schools have a fully implemented comprehensive school counseling program that addressed the student's academic, career, and social-emotional development (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE}, 2017). To address these needs, the school counselors implemented counseling curriculum, student planning, and response services. According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there were six fundamental truths of school counseling. First, school counseling was considered a program that included student grade-level expectations (GLEs) and activities and processes to assist students in achieving the GLEs. School counselors were professionally certified, had materials and resources to aid in the success of the program, and had a results evaluation for the students he or she worked with. Second, school counseling programs were developmental and comprehensive. The program aided in the social-emotional development, career development, and academic success of the students. Third, school counseling programs assisted all students in completing a rigorous and relevant curriculum that resulted in earning a diploma and ensured preparation for multiple opportunities after high school. Fourth, school counseling was considered a team approach involving members of the staff, parents or guardians, community members, and mental health professionals. Fifth, school counseling programs were developed through a systematic process of planning curriculum, designing plans, implementing lessons, evaluating completed by the counselor and students, and enhancing the program. Finally, school counseling programs had established leadership (MODESE, 2017).

Successful school counseling programs encouraged desirable learning and social behaviors, student career planning, and the development of problem-solving skills (Yuen, Chan, & Lee, 2014). Many school staff members participated in all aspects of the comprehensive guidance program, including principals, teachers, counselors, and social workers. Comprehensive school counseling programs helped students develop life skills, including drug and alcohol awareness and healthy lifestyles (Yuen et al., 2014).

School counselors designed activities to help students become successful in multiple areas (Tonjes, 2006). Counseling in a school setting sought to provide eight functions: counseling, teaching and instruction, consulting, referrals, being a source of information, directing placement, assessments, and accountability (Hardesty & Dillard, 1994). Comprehensive School Counseling Programs in schools included assessments, information, consultation, counseling, referral, placement, follow-up, and follow-through (Tonjes, 2006). A Comprehensive School Counseling Program included personal and social development which focused on skills to aid in healthy decision making, understanding of self-concept, and improved interpersonal skills. School counselors were vital as middle school students go through physical and mental changes (Kesici, 2007). These programs also included academics and education where counselors worked with students to help them develop behaviors that led to academic successes (Tonjes, 2006).

School counseling helped prepare students for life in the areas of education, career, and social-emotional maturity (Kesici, 2007). Students who had their educational needs met efficiently studied, had good time-management skills, and were aware of their potential. School counseling programs focused on career or vocation in such a way that counselors worked with students to develop educational plans and helped them make career goals

(Tonjes, 2006). Students who understood their potential career options were aware of their abilities and interests (Kesici, 2007).

When evaluating school counseling programs, researchers found that benefits to students occurred when a school had fully implemented a Comprehensive School Counseling Program (Lapan, 2012). When school counselors had time, resources, and a Comprehensive School Counseling Program in place, they tended to impact student achievement and career development positively and developed a positive and safe learning environment (Sink & Stroh, 2003). Early elementary students who had participated in a thorough Comprehensive School Counseling Program tended to have higher test scores than those students who did not.

Some students had a positive relationship with their school counselor and benefited from the counseling curriculum; however, many students were not experiencing these same benefits (Lapan, 2012). When school counselors implemented the American School Counselor Association National Model, they researched direct correlations between their counseling programs and student achievement (Hartline & Cobia, 2012). Unfortunately, some students reported not having a personal relationship with their school counselor (Lapan, 2012). The students who reported lacking a personal relationship with their school counselor said they felt as if they were just another face in the crowd.

Rationale of the Study

The purpose of the Missouri Comprehensive School Counseling Program (MCSCP) was to provide students in kindergarten through grade 12 with successful educational experiences that promoted a positive and safe learning environment. Fully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Programs were likely to increase:

- Student academic performance

- Student mental health and social/emotional development
- Student achievement
- Career development
- Collaboration with parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, and the community
- Accountability through a comprehensive evaluation process (MODESE, 2017).

Sink and Stroh (2003) indicated that when middle school students took part in a Comprehensive School Counseling Program, they felt they did better academically and felt safer. When schools lacked counselors, the students often missed out on crucial components of their education.

Elementary school counselors used various techniques build rapport with students and help them understand and externalize problems (Eppler, Olsen, & Hidano, 2009). When counselors used these techniques, they created positive academic achievement, personal/social relationships, and career outcomes. When counselors used academic interventions and group counseling, student academic successes improve (Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007).

Elementary school counselors were crucial in promoting counseling services; however, many school districts did not acknowledge the need for school counselors (Lenhardt & Young, 2001). Students who received personalized counseling tended to go directly to college they also received financial aid and scholarships (Lapan, 2012). Students also had the expectation of obtaining a good job upon college graduation. It was important to identify students' problems before they escalated and disrupted learning and development (Lenhardt & Young, 2001). Not having elementary school counselors put the welfare of the students at risk.

According to MODESE (2017), seventh graders in Missouri middle schools with fully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Programs reported having earned higher grades, that school was more important to them, to have had positive relationships with their teachers, to be more satisfied with their education, and to have felt safe while at school. Students who attended high schools with fully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Programs tended to earn higher grades and were better prepared for the future. In Missouri, research indicated that when schools have successfully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Programs, they tended to yield higher Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores, better attendance, and fewer discipline problems (MODESE, 2017).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore whether the absence of Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (CSCP) in privately funded elementary and middle school impacted student personal, social-emotional, and academic growth in secondary school. This researcher administered surveys to private and public-school parents, students, and teachers. This researcher also provided focus groups for private school parents and teachers and public-school teachers to gather data.

For the purpose of this study and the participating schools and participants, elementary school was defined as kindergarten through fifth grade, middle school was defined as sixth grade through eighth grade, and secondary school (high school) was defined as ninth grade through 12th grade.

The participants for this study were parents, students, and teachers from Lutheran High School (St. Charles, MO) and Troy School District (Troy, MO). Upon an addendum to

the IRB, other participants completed surveys and participated in focus groups via social media. These participants were parents, teachers, and students from St. Louis, MO.

The information resulting from this study will provide private and public schools reliable data to be used to implement and/or improve school counseling programs in elementary and middle school.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: How did high school students in privately funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP perceive their career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes as compared to students in publicly-funded schools in Missouri with fully implemented CSCPs?

Research Question 2: How did teachers in privately-funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP perceive students' career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes?

Research Question 3: How did teachers in publicly-funded schools in Missouri with a fully implemented CSCP perceive students' career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes?

Research Question 4: How did parents of students in privately-funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP perceive their child's or children's career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes as compared to parents of students in publicly-funded schools in Missouri with fully implemented CSCPs?

Study Limitations

Receiving surveys back from participants was a limitation to this study. Due to the limited data received, an amendment to the IRB requested participants via social media.

Another limitation was limited participation in the focus groups. No students in either the private or public schools participated in the focus groups, and only one public school teacher participated in the focus group.

Definition of Terms

Academic Development: Academic School Counselor Association (ASCA) Student Standards for academic development guided school counseling programs to implement strategies and activities to support and maximize each student's ability to learn. Students acquired attitudes, knowledge, and skills that contributed to effective learning in schools. Students completed school with enough academic preparedness to choose from a range of post-secondary educational opportunities. Students understood the relationship between academics to the world of work and life at home in the community (ASCA, 2016).

Career Development: ASCA Student Standards for Career Development Guide School Counseling Programs to provide the foundations for acquisition of skills, attitudes, and knowledge that enabled students to make successful transitions for school to the world of work, and from job to job across a lifespan. Students learned how to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and made informed career decisions. Students achieved future career goals with success and satisfaction. They understood the relationship between personal qualities, education, and training to the world of work (ASCA, 2016).

Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP): Effective school counseling programs were a collaborative effort between the school counselor, families, community stakeholders, and other educators to create an environment that positively impacted student achievement. Education professionals, including school counselors, valued and responded to the diversity and individual differences in our societies and communities in culturally

sensitive and responsive ways. Comprehensive school counseling programs in both the brick-and-mortar and virtual settings ensured equitable access to opportunities and rigorous curriculum for all students to participate fully in the educational process (American School Counselor Association, 2016).

Elementary School: For the purposes of this study, an elementary school consists of a grade configuration of kindergarten – fifth grade.

Middle School: For the purposes of this study, a middle school consists of a grade configuration of sixth grade – eighth grade.

Personal/Social Development: ASCA Student Standards for personal/social development guide school counseling programs to provide the foundation for personal and social growth as students' progress through school and into adulthood. Students developed self-knowledge and interpersonal skills. Students also made decisions, set goals, and took action necessary to achieve their goals. They acquired personal safety skills in that they would be able to set boundaries and personal privacy, coped with peer pressure, and learned techniques for managing stress and conflict (ASCA, 2016).

Privately-Funded Schools: They were under the immediate control of a private corporation (religious or non-affiliated), not of a government agency or board; and they were supported primarily by private funds. Privately-funded schools are characterized by a process of double selection because the schools selected their teachers and students, and the parents selected the schools for their children (Private Schooling - What Is a Private School?, History of Private Schools in the United States, n.d.).

Publicly-Funded Schools: Any school that is open to the public, paid for by the public, and accountable to the public (Stitzlein & Albowitz, 2019).

Secondary School: For the purposes of this study, a secondary school is a high school that consists of a grade configuration of grades nine through twelve**.**

Social-Emotional: The social/emotional domain was composed of standards to help students manage emotions and learn and apply interpersonal skills as early as preschool and kindergarten. School counselors promoted mindsets and behaviors in all grade levels that enhance the learning process and create a culture of college and career readiness for all students in the area of social/emotional development (ASCA, 2016).

Summary

The American School Counselor Association National Model provided the means for school counselors to design, execute, and evaluate programs for students to succeed (Wilkerson, Perusse, & Hughes, 2013). Some research showed that career planning, group counseling sessions, and social-skills development attributed to having school counselors. Research by Hartline and Cobia (2012) found that school counselors who followed the American School Counselor Association Comprehensive School Counseling Program impacted student success (Hartline & Cobia, 2012). Certain studies indicated that interventions used by school counselors could have helped with problem-solving and potentially reduced disciplinary issues (Wilkerson et al., 2013). Comprehensive School Counseling Programs implemented at the elementary level yielded positive results in student achievement.

Researchers also found that there was a gap in schools delivering a comprehensive guidance program to students (Lapan, 2012). Elementary school counselors were a luxury, and certain school budgets did not have room to hire counselors (Hardesty & Dillard, 1994). Elementary school counselors encouraged social-emotional development in addition to

academic and career development. Elementary school counselors spent more time on counseling curriculum as compared to individual planning.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) provided the framework for successful school counseling programs, where the school counselors and counseling teams designed, implemented, and evaluated the programs for student academic success (Wilkerson et al., 2013). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model required school counselors to design, implement, evaluate, and report the effectiveness of their guidance programs (Hatch, 2008). School counselors were seen as valuable individuals in the decision- making processes in schools, as well as being leaders in the areas of data analysis, intervention, and reporting. There was much support for school counselor activities, including career planning, group counseling, and social skills training (Wilkerson et al., 2013).

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

History of the Development of School Counseling

For schools to effectively teach and help students succeed, school counselors needed to re-evaluate their programs and ensure the programs aligned with the Comprehensive School Counseling Program (Sink & Stroh, 2003). To have an effective school counseling program, school counselors should have assessed student needs using a data-based assessment (Thompson, Loesch, & Seraphine, 2003). Many elementary school counselors were not using data-based assessments.

In many schools, counselors developed programs and services that put the counselors, themselves, in leadership roles (Young & Bryan, 2015). Researchers found that school counselors in elementary and secondary schools worked together with other faculty and staff to improve academic success, address issues, and close the educational gap. School counseling practices that were effective and culturally responsive were important to successfully address the academic achievement gap in schools across the United States (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009). Only 10 states reported having used an evaluation system related to the Comprehensive Developmental School Counseling (CDSC) Programs (Martin & Carey, 2012). Because of the absence of the program evaluation, the guidance program failed to improve. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model recognizes that program evaluation was critical to successful counseling programs.

The ASCA viewed school counselors as leaders in incorporating the practices of the American School Counselor Association National Model, as well as, the comprehensive guidance programs (Young & Bryan, 2015). As leaders, school counselors trained other school counselors and enhanced their own leadership skills. Changes in society and other

various challenges indicated that students from pre-school to college level benefit from a comprehensive counseling program (Schmidt, Lanier, & Cope, 1999). Elementary and middle school counselors helped to develop programs in schools, led individual and group counseling, and planned classroom guidance activities. Counseling as a profession moved away from individual counseling to include a focus on the welfare of all students.

Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

Elementary school counselors used various techniques, including storytelling, in order to build rapport with students and help them understand and externalize problems (Eppler et al., 2009). Using these techniques helped create positive academic success, personal/social, and career outcomes. School counselors used narrative counseling in elementary, middle, and high schools (Nafziger & DeKruyf, 2013). Based on the stories we told about oneself as well as the stories others told about one another, narrative counseling did not completely focus on students telling stories. Instead, it focused on how students reworked stories into new realities.

Narrative counselors encouraged students to tell stories using their own words (Nafziger & DeKruyf, 2013). Narrative counseling was strength-based and brief and was able to provide counselors with a practical way to address mental health needs as well as academic success. It included telling and retelling stories in order to help students have an increase in positive behavior and self-esteem (Eppler et al., 2009). Some benefits of storytelling in schools included processing thoughts, feelings, and actions students might not be able to express verbally. It could be challenging for certain students to express themselves verbally; elementary school counselors had the students talk through characters in a story through displaced communication.

Narrative approaches to elementary school counseling allowed counselors to build on the strengths of the students with whom they are working (Eppler et al., 2009). The comprehensive school guidance program in Hong Kong sought to help students increase student awareness of their feelings, self-confidence, and self-esteem (Yuen et al., 2014). Recognized ASCA Model Programs (RAMP) expanded across the country, which allowed for additional research regarding the program's impacts on student achievement and other outcomes based on achievement (Wilkerson et al., 2013).

Play Therapy

Researchers used play therapy to help identify and address developmental concerns in children (Trice-Black, Bailey, & Riechel, 2013). Though schools were ideal for implementing play therapy, certain challenges existed for using this method. Research indicated that 1 in 4 children have a diagnosable mental disorder, which could negatively impact personal development and academic achievement. Many students in the K-12 setting struggled with mental health needs, and these particular needs were not being met at school (DeKruyf, Auger, & Trice-Black, 2013). Studies have shown that one in four students suffered from mental health issues, and 75% did not receive the help and support to address these needs. Researchers found that more than half of the students who drop out of school have a diagnosable mental disorder. When school counselors used play therapy in schools, they helped these students overcome any issues impacting academic achievement and personal development (Trice-Black et al., 2013).

The use of play therapy aligns with the American School Counselor Association National Model of a comprehensive guidance program (Trice-Black et al., 2013). Researchers suggested using play therapy at the elementary, middle, and secondary school

levels effectively met the needs of students with different challenges and abilities. Schools that implemented play therapy as a part of their guidance programs had a decline in student referrals and increased academic achievement. A key component of education was to provide opportunities for every student to reach their fullest potential with regard to personal, social-emotional, and educational development (Ullah & Ahmed, 2013). Secondary school counselors provided many services to students, including assessments, information service, and assistance. Directive school counseling was an avenue some students used to help solve any problems. In dealing with directive counseling, establishing rapport between the student and counselor was extremely important so that the student felt more secure and less anxious.

School Counseling and Mental Health

School counselors reported that they were confident in their ability to counsel students with different issues, yet they did express concerns with working with students who had mental health issues they felt ill-equipped to handle (Carlson & Kees, 2013). Because the mental health needs of students increased, schools faced great pressure to address these needs. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) standards for students' personal/social development stressed the importance of students' understanding of how to respect themselves and others (Goodman-Scott, Doyle, & Brott, 2013). Bullying programs correlated with the safe school and drug free school programs, which counselors promoted (Goodman-Scott et al., 2013). School counselors included bullying prevention strategies as a part of their Comprehensive School Counseling programs.

When students with mental health issues sought support, they were more likely to look at schools for help rather than in the community (Carlson & Kees, 2013). School-based mental health programs were especially prominent among minority students, students living

below the poverty line, and those students with limited access to outside mental health services. Considering the emotional and physical changes students experience upon entering high school, developing a comprehensive counseling program was strongly encouraged (Maddy-Bernstein & Dare, 1997). Peer pressure interrupted a student's academic achievement due to the student's desire for social acceptance. Ultimately, the students were able to make decisions regarding their career choices (Kesici, 2007). Middle school counselors played an important role in times of transition.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Researchers suggested peer mediation to promote positive peer interactions and decrease school violence (Schellenberg, Parks-Savage, & Rehfuss, 2007). Successful school mediation programs trained student mediators in negotiation skills and conflict resolution. School-wide positive behavior support programs were becoming more popular and effective in reducing behavioral disruptions in schools (Curtis, VanHorne, Robertson, & Karvonen, 2010). Students who identified more with their ethnic self as well as other aspects dealing with overall well-being reported to have higher self-esteem, life-purpose, and confidence. In dealing with problem behaviors in a school setting, school counselors turned to student self-reports to provide details that could potentially be influencing the negative behaviors (Johnson & Hannon, 2014). When students self-reported, they were able to express both internal and external stressors. In addition to self-reports, school counselors also relied on teachers to report potential problematic behaviors. Research had shown that negative behavior in school indicated lower academic performances, motivation, and attention. Additionally, researchers found that hyperactivity and poor peer relationships led to lower academic achievement. School counselors worked to develop relationships with students,

thus helping them effectively address negative behaviors. School counselors delivered activities and programs designed to meet the needs of the students in the school (Sink, 2011). School response services included school counselors, faculty, and staff to provide successful outcomes. The school counselor should have been a part of a whole team when dealing with responsive services (Sink, 2011).

All students were thought to be safe while at school, however, many schools still failed to provide these safe environments (Goodman-Scott, Betters-Bubon, & Donohue, 2015). Many schools recommend using Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) counselors were vital in implementing the PBIS program. The American School Counselor Association recommended that school counselors implemented both comprehensive guidance programs and PBIS strategies (Goodman-Scott et al., 2015).

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Elementary school counselors positively influenced Response to Intervention Response Services (RTI) in order to increase academic achievement in those students at risk (Sink, 2011). A study showed that the behavioral observations done by a school counselor improve Response to Intervention Services. When school counselors collaborated with other school administrators and faculty, they were all able to work together to enhance student development (Sink, 2011). Prevention strategies were most effective when they were comprehensive, proactive, and included not only counselors and students, but also other school personnel, parents, guardians, and community members (Goodman-Scott et al., 2013). Bullying prevention in relation to positive behavior support programs were integrated into the elementary guidance program. This specific approach put school counselors in leadership roles, allowing them to deliver lessons, and meet with school personnel. School counselor

data led to increased academic success, decreased suspension rates, and less frequent instances of being teased and bullied (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012). Overall, school counselors had a positive impact on students.

Schools showed an increasing need for comprehensive prevention efforts (Curtis, Van Horne, Robertson, & Karvonen, 2010). School-based prevention programs led to a reduction in behavioral problems. School-wide behavior support programs consisted of: a leadership team, brief school philosophy, behavioral guidelines for all school areas, classroom guidelines, and specific strategies for those students needing additional attention. RTI focused on students who may be struggling academically (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012). A majority of the states that implemented RTI included both academic and behavioral interventions. In these cases, the professional school counselors acted as interventionists; thus, the understanding of RTI and the role of the school counselor proved significant.

Professional school counselors worked with the RTI team to develop and implement assessments for schools (Ockerman et al., 2012). These assessments helped determine which areas of student development required the most attention. Studies showed that in high schools where school counselors worked with smaller numbers of students and spent more time focused on college and career counseling, a lower number of suspensions and disciplinary situations existed (Lapan, Whitcomb, & Aleman, 2012). Carey and Dimmitt (2012) found that when the ratio between a school counselor and a student were favorable, increased attendance rates and decreased disciplinary issues occurred. In a similar study in Nebraska, these favorable school counselor to student ratios led to decreased dropout rates and higher rates of completing career or vocational training (Clemens, Carey & Harrington, (2010). In a Missouri study, favorable ratios

led to higher attendance in high poverty schools and higher graduation rates (Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, 2001; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997; Sink et al., 2008; Sink & Stroh, 2003).

When school counselors implemented college and career lesson components to their guidance programs, fewer suspension rates, and instances that required discipline occurred (Lapan, Gusbers, Stanley, & Pierce, 2012). With fewer students to school counselors, the counselors built more personalized relationships with the students they worked with and motivated them to pursue higher education. Research by Lapan et al. (2012) indicated that early college planning was significant in high school course enrollment, academic success, and college attendance. Because many schools used Response to Interventions (RTI), professional school counselors defined their role in the process (Ockerman et al., 2012). School counselors comprehended how RTI impacted the students they worked with and concluded how to deliver their services effectively. The models of RTI and the Comprehensive School Counseling Programs were both seen as practice, data-driven, and whole-child focused. In addition, both programs focused on equal access to quality instruction for all students while promoting student achievement.

Career Development

Middle and high school students who attended schools with Comprehensive School Counseling Programs implemented yielded higher math and reading levels, lower suspension and discipline rates, increased attendance and graduation rates, and self-reports of feeling safe while at school (Burkhard, Gillen, Martinez, & Skytte, 2012). Students in middle school experienced physical, psychological, and social changes (Stott & Jackson, 2005). Students in middle school tended to look at different interests, took what they learned in the classroom and applied it to work and life, became very active and also often fatigued, sought reassurance

from peers in regard to personal identity, became independent from their parents, and looked to peers for comfort and approval. By implementing a comprehensive guidance curriculum, middle school counselors met the varying needs of a diverse student body.

Students began to have career awareness in elementary school (Gibson, 2005). By gaining career awareness, the student became increasingly more aware of personal characteristics, interests, aptitudes, skills, and diversity as it related to employment. Middle school students had begun looking at the various types of careers during elementary school. In a study by Carrey, Harrington, Martin, and Hoffman (2012), school counseling programs following the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model revealed significant outcomes related to suspension, discipline, and attendance rates, in addition to academic achievement in math and reading. The school counseling programs in the Nebraska suburban and rural high schools attributed to positive student outcomes. This study also indicated that those schools where lower student to school counselor ratios was present led to increased attendance, technical proficiency in career education, and an increased likelihood of student completion of career programs.

Because middle school students participated in more formal assessments of their aptitudes and interests, the school counselor developed a career portfolio for the student (Gibson, 2005). High school counselors helped to increase more awareness that began during elementary and middle school. Service-learning was a program that could be implemented by middle school counselors to allow middle school students to use what they learn in the classroom to provide service to their communities (Stott & Jackson, 2005). By taking part in service-learning, students developed critical thinking skills. Some examples of service-

learning in a middle school environment included tutoring programs or community service projects.

The Role of the School Counselor

The role of high school counselors was to support students as they further looked into post-secondary options (Gibson, 2005). Due to the differences in high school curriculum and middle school and elementary school curriculum, there was less time to spend with students exploring post-secondary possibilities. Studies showed that those students who participated in service-learning showed significant increases in personal-social development, civic responsibility, academic achievement, and career development (Stott & Jackson, 2005). In addition, studies indicated higher parental involvement with those students participating in service-learning.

Since the role of school counselors included preparation for college and career readiness, and the preparation begins as early as elementary school, they began by looking at academic difficulties (Barna & Brott, 2013). School counselors also used teaching strategies in both large and small groups. Group counseling interventions helped school counselors support the academic achievement of students (Steen, Henfield, & Booker, 2014). Some research even suggested that group counseling used in schools positively impacted personal-social development and academic achievement.

Group counseling provided opportunities for students to discuss barriers as well as opportunities that affected academic achievement while also building positive social networks (Steen et al., 2014). According to one study, some students indicated using certain study skills more because of participating in-group counseling. Researchers have found that elementary school counselors were motivated to implement interventions that best suit their

programs (Barna & Brott, 2013). Elementary school counseling programs significantly contributed to student achievement.

Non-Directive Counseling

Non-directive counseling took place when the counselor helped the student solve problems in ways that encouraged students to come up with solutions on their own (Ullah & Ahmed, 2013). Non-directive counseling proved to help students possess better organizational skills. Professional school counselors, along with teachers and students, looked at social, psychological, and academic concerns (McDougall & Smith, 2006). McDougall and Smith (2006) used the example that school counselors worked with certain students to help reduce negative behaviors while also working with other students to improve academic success. School counselors and students had to adapt to possible limitations, which is why it was important to utilize all resources effectively and efficiently.

When developing and leading group counseling, school counselors needed to consider a number of issues, including how they would integrate academic success and personal-social development, screening and choosing which students were appropriate for the group, speaking with parents and teachers to get as much information as possible on the potential group members, and finding appropriate support resources, if necessary, after the conclusion of the group (Steen et al., 2014). Small group counseling effectively met not only the academic needs of students but also the personal and social needs (Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007).

Achieving Success Every Day (ASE)

In secondary schools, the role teachers played was crucial in guidance services (Ullah & Ahmed, 2013). Counseling was important in the overall well-being of all school members. With counseling services available in schools, students could achieve academically and

personally. School counselors considered how to integrate academic achievement and personal or social development and collaboration among teachers and parents of students (Steen et al., 2014). School counselors used the Achieving Success Everyday (ASE) group counseling model to improve the students' learning environment. The ASE model proved to benefit group counseling in school settings. School counselors used the ASE structure to help students who were having academic and personal difficulties as well.

Many researchers believed that school counselors needed to reflect student growth in the areas of academics, career, and personal-social skills (Sink & Stroh, 2003). Schools ensured the counseling programs followed the guidelines of the comprehensive school counseling program (CSCP). Researchers suggested that school counselors enhanced student achievement in academics, and minimized the low socio-economic student population and students coming from a disadvantaged background. A study by Nelson, Bustamante, Wilson, and Onwuegbuzi (2008) indicated that school counselors should be advocates for students and leaders in the educational reform movement. School counselors needed to make sure that all students were receiving a quality education. Additionally, school counselors needed to work not only with students but also with staff and parents, advocate for those who were struggling socially, and learn how to work successfully in a diverse community.

School Counseling and Culture

Nine areas of cultural competence existed for school counselors: multicultural counseling, multicultural consultation, knowledge of racism and student resistance, multicultural development, multicultural family counseling, social advocacy, fostering school-family-community partnerships, and knowledge of cross-cultural interpersonal relationships (Nelson et al., 2008). All students had the right to go to school and have their diversity

accepted, respected, and free from bullying (Goodman-Scott et al., 2013). Students' behavior in relation to academic achievement improved due to the integration of group counseling and academic interventions (Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007). School counselors worked in collaboration with parents or guardians and school personnel when working on plans to increase student development. In addition to working toward academic success, school counselors tried to bridge the gap between students of varying socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds.

School counselors found it more challenging to address the needs of such a diverse student population (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001). By 2020, most school-aged students attending public schools would come from diverse backgrounds. Research by Sink and Stroh (2003) indicated that CSCPs positively impacted the lives of students. Students in elementary school who participated in well-established CSCPs yielded higher academic achievement than those not participating in CSCPs. Because of this shift in demographics, school counselors needed to incorporate cultural knowledge into training programs (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001). The American School Counselor Association stated that school counselors should ensure that students of diverse backgrounds have access to all opportunities to ensure personal growth and development.

A Missouri study indicated that lower ratios of students to school counselors led to higher graduation rates and decreased disciplinary incidents in high school (Lapan et al., 2012). In schools with high poverty student populations, the schools that met ASCA guidelines of one school counselor to every 250 students yielded increased attendance, graduation, and decreased disciplinary cases. Due to diverse student and family backgrounds, changes in the economy, violence in school and at home, divorce, mental illness, and

substance abuse, influences on personal-social development, career development, and academic achievement were likely. Comprehensive school counseling programs included racial identity development in order to meet the needs of a diverse student population (Nelson et al., 2008). School counselors should have all the tools needed to address a diverse student body and work closely with school administrators to assess how the implemented programs met or did not meet students' needs. Research by Washington (2015) indicated that professional school counselors tend to be less diverse than the population of students they work with. A study by Washington (2015) suggested that students who felt trusted by school counselors displayed more confidence in whether or not they could succeed, regardless of their goals. Diversity, working with people who might be different from each other, and advancements in technology just reinforced the fact that equality did not exist among all students (McMahon, Mason, Daluga-Guenther, & Ruiz, 2014). School counselors were put in a role to attempt to initiate an appreciation of diversity and to foster an ever-changing environment.

Because of changing demographics in schools and the effects these changes had on students, it was imperative that school counselors needed to implement an effective guidance program (Limberg & Lambie, 2011). School counselors needed to be knowledgeable of multicultural and diversity among the student population to deliver effective guidance programs. All educators, including school counselors, needed to promote a safe environment for all students. Many students did not match the criteria of what society views as a successful student (McMahon et al., 2014). Diversity in schools was significant in order to promote healthy and balanced lifestyles. Diverse faculty helped to improve student

achievement by allowing students from diverse backgrounds to identify and develop relationships with teachers and faculty of the same background.

A student's culture impacted all areas of their personal and academic development (Limberg & Lambie, 2011). The job of the school counselor was to identify the positive and negative impacts on student development and use this information to develop and implement guidance services that address students' needs. Because it was culturally sensitive, play therapy addressed the needs of diverse groups of students, as all the students communicated through play (Trice-Black et al., 2013). Research indicated that spirituality and family systems in regard to counseling led to positive change in the student. Research has also suggested that school counselors reportedly found spirituality to move away from the potential progress made during counseling. In addition, some counselors viewed spirituality or faith as inappropriate in a public-school setting. In dealing with closing the achievement gap, school counselors strategized ideas to close the gap and evaluate the tools used to do so (Hartline & Cobia, 2012). Not all students came from the same background or had the same resources; school counselors needed to develop programs to identify these inequities and decide if the program they deliver effectively meet students' needs.

Mental health functioning was seen as crucial to effective learning and academic achievement for students (Carlson & Kees, 2013). A school counseling need occurred when there was a lack of progress in a student's developmental need or when the student sought to speak to someone regarding a specific need (Thompson et al., 2003). Some elementary school students might not have been able to recognize when they needed to speak with someone about a concern. In this instance, a counselor would administer a needs assessment. Some research had found that school counselors lacked internal efficiency (Hatch, 2008). In

other words, school counselors could not make effective use of their time and ensure that the students they work with were receiving the best possible services. Researchers stressed that school counselors needed to prove that the programs they were implementing were effective and were positively impacting student academic success. Efficient school counselors evaluated their programs, measured their successes and failures, and used the data to improve the overall effectiveness. School counseling programs worked toward school reform, used evidence-based practices, and reported data based on their teaching programs that ensured accountability.

Student Safety

Bullying negatively affected students' physical, emotional, and mental health (Vera et al., 2015). Both the students who were victims of bullying and the students doing the bullying experienced negative repercussions. For example, bullies and victims of bullying were more likely to have decreased satisfaction in life and reduced support from teachers and peers. Students who were both victims of bullying as well as bullies themselves, had an increased risk of having physical and mental disorders. When a school counselor was present, he or she was able to work with the student, intervene, and refer when there is a mental health concern (Gruman, Marston, & Koon, 2013). School counselors had the ability to recognize and address behaviors that could potentially lead to self-harm, anxiety stemming from test-taking, and depression that could lead to a loss of interest in school or career planning. Gruman et al. (2013) found that school counselors were capable of helping school staff understand the correlation between mental health concerns and academic achievement. Because some students' mental health needs were not addressed, school counselors assumed the role of educational leader and mental health professional (DeKruyf et al., 2013). When

school counselors were both educational leaders and mental health professionals, they better served and supported the students they worked with. Students experiencing difficulties with ADHD, inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity were a concern to teachers, parents, and counselors (Schottlekorb & Ray, 2009). Students with ADHD tended to be more talkative, were two times more likely to exhibit off-task behavior, and were three times more likely to be oppositional than those students not diagnosed with ADHD.

Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD was the most common diagnosis of childhood; therefore, elementary school counselors implemented interventions to help decrease the frequency of symptoms (Schottlekorb & Ray, 2009). School counselors identified students' mental issues; however, this was difficult to accomplish given the work conditions at certain schools (Gruman et al, 2013). School counselors pinpointed behaviors such as social isolation that potentially led to self-harm, test-taker anxiety, and depression, which had negative impacts on education and career planning. Certain barriers that influenced school counselors not being able to meet students' mental health needs included intense job duties and limited time to work with students. According to the American School Counselor Association National Model, school counseling was a significant part of academic and student success (DeKruyf et al., 2013). Certain areas of concern for students transitioning into a new culture were the prevalence of anxiety and depression (Limberg & Lambie, 2011). Other factors included high-stress levels and a loss of control. School counselors informed school faculty of information regarding a student that fostered growth in academics and personal development.

School Safety

School violence was a growing concern (Schellenberg et al., 2007). School violence often created a hostile learning environment that negatively impacted student achievement. School counselors were trained and put in schools to help with the rising number of behavioral problems (Sherrod, Getch, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009). School counselors also worked to reduce the number of behavior referrals by putting their practices into place at the schools at which they worked. Studies showed that when schools successfully implemented positive behavior supports, students not only improved academically, but they also increased appropriate behaviors at school.

The school counselors' duty was to help provide a safe school environment while helping the development of student academic, career, and social-emotional development (Goodman-Scott et al., 2015). Implementing a Comprehensive School Counseling Program helped counselors achieve this with their students. School counseling programs tended to vary across many school districts (Hatch, 2008). There was a lack of goals or objectives, and in the instances where they were met, they were not linked to data-driven needs or analyzed for effectiveness. School counselors needed to be successful in positively impacting academic achievement (Sink & Stroh, 2003). When school counselors assumed a leadership role, they had the potential to help students see their fullest academic potential. Research indicated that when middle school students took part in a Comprehensive School Counseling Program, they felt more academically successful and safer.

School Counseling and Minority Students

Minority student populations could also be affected by school counseling programs or the lack thereof. Studies showed that students, parents, and teachers viewed African

American males as suspicious and threatening to schools, which caused African American males to feel ostracized in schools (Washington, 2015). Due to this feeling of alienation, some of these students dropped out of school before graduating. The high school graduation rate among Hispanic American males was 65%, and among African American males was 60% (Sanacore, 2017). White males had a high school graduation rate of 80%. The U.S. cities with the lowest high school graduation rates among males were Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Indianapolis, New York, and other various urban cities. Approximately 51% of students attending public schools in the U.S. were from low-income families.

Because of these stereotypes cast on African American male students, researchers suggested that school counselors develop positive relationships with these particular students (Washington, 2015). When school counselors looked past the stereotypes of these students, the students began to feel valued. Counselors and teachers could help minority student populations by engaging them emotionally and intellectually (Sancore, 2017). For example, more collaborative work where students could apply the skills, they have learned to meaningful situations could have more of a positive impact on these students over lectures. Other active learning examples for minority students could include problem-solving skills, receiving feedback from teachers, and talking with peers about solutions to issues (Sancore, 2017).

Spiritual Development

A professional school counselor's duty included supporting the academic success, career development, and personal-social development of all students (Davis, Lambie, & Ieva, 2011). School counselors also considered how a student's spirituality and family could influence his or her holistic development. Religious and spiritual identities were significant

when students were identifying with his or her culture (Giordono, Bevly, Tucker, & Prosek, 2018). Spirituality gave a person a sense of purpose and provides him or her with a connection to others. Religion was more structured as it encouraged expressions of spirituality based on practices and beliefs (Giordono et al., 2018). Another component of the school counselor's role was to address the immediate concerns of students, parents, and faculty (Gruman et al., 2013). The school counselor assumed an additional role in the school as more immediate or urgent issues arose. Immediate concerns could include dangerous situations, lack of teachers in the building, or testing situations. Because of the immediate needs of these groups of people, school counselors might have felt stretched too thin in their role (Gruman et al., 2013).

Accreditation

The state of Nebraska required schools seeking accreditation within their districts to have counseling programs in place (Carrey et al., 2012). Nebraska's state school counseling specialist did not just ensure the districts were meeting the minimum requirements; the focus was instead on making sure the comprehensive program was strong (Carrey et al., 2012). Missouri developed and put into place effective, comprehensive school guidance programs in order to address the current issues students were facing (Lapan et al., 2012). Guidance programs were part of Missouri's total educational programs. These guidance programs attempted to meet the needs of the student body by developing academic success, career development, and personal-social development. Additionally, these guidance programs helped students deal with challenges that were unhealthy for their development. Comprehensive guidance programs also helped to promote safe climates in schools.

Missouri did not have a statewide evaluation system (Martin & Carey, 2012). In addition, Missouri was critical in contributing to the CDSC movement. Missouri implemented tools, resources, and recognition systems that promoted program evaluation and advocacy for the school counselor. School counselors were responsible for documenting how different students were due to what school counselors were implementing (Mariani, Villares, Sink, Colvin, & Kuba, 2015). Many researchers recommended using interventions derived from data collected that support interventions related to academic achievement, social-emotional development, and career outcomes.

Researchers found that when school counselors implemented a comprehensive guidance program, they encouraged growth in the areas of academics, career, and social-emotional development (Mariani et al., 2015). Evidence existed connecting the implementation of a comprehensive guidance program and academic success, higher standardized test scores, increased attendance, increased rates of graduating, and lower behavioral issues. When school counselors implemented programs that could benefit school or classroom climate, student engagement, and peer relationships benefitted. School counselors were required to show how they contribute to improved academic success in students (Luck & Webb, 2009). In some school districts, school counselors implemented evidence-based guidance programs and academic success. When others saw school counselors as contributing to the school's philosophy and helped to improve academic achievement, they were seen as valuable.

School counselors improved the classrooms' climate when they incorporated social-emotional learning in their guidance programs (Mariani, 2015). When students learned socially and emotionally, they applied what they had learned and used it to understand and

process emotions, set goals, make appropriate decisions, and feel empathy. Barna and Brott (2013) stated that elementary school counselors had supported achievement in academics by implementing their guidance programs with increased academic competence. School counselors were encouraged to contribute to the academic achievement of students. The role of school counselors was essential in the early school years, because if programs were not implemented, it would have a negative impact on the students' success in school and in life. Barna and Brott (2013) found difficulties in aggression, stress, hyperactivity, and depression.

School counseling interventions positively impacted students by reducing disciplinary issues and increasing academic achievement and standardized test scores (Wilkerson et al., 2013). School counselors were trained to identify and shut down cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral barriers students faced that could negatively impact academic achievement (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009). School counselors addressed the need for using data in response to equality issues. Since school counseling was constantly changing and growing as a profession, principals supported school counselors and their involvement in discipline, academics, and registration (Shimoni, 2014). Principals often considered school counselors to have administrator and school leadership roles. Because of schools' change in needs, diversity and counselor personal feelings, the role of the school counselor lacked individuality. Oftentimes, school counselors were self-advocates about what their duties were in schools. School counselors had the ability to help others understand what it was they do, including advocating for students' academic success and social-emotional development.

School counselors made accountable decisions (Goodman-Scott et al., 2015). School counselors needed to show how students were affected by the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program and made decisions regarding the success of

students based on data gathered (Goodman-Scott et al., 2015). Many researchers suggested using research-based interventions in correlation with academic achievement, career choices, and social-emotional development. The profession of school counseling emphasized that evidence was needed to evaluate how effective guidance programs were (Kimbel & Clements, 2014). Today, school counselors needed to show how their curriculum was affecting students and helping to further grow and develop the school. Comprehensive School Counseling Programs led to lowered suspension rates and truancy, and led to higher academic successes. Overall, school counseling programs helped improve the effectiveness in schools.

School counselors evaluated their programs in order to make the most effective programs possible (Kimbel & Clements, 2014). Program evaluation included ways to determine program effectiveness and ways to determine if school counselors met students' needs. School counselors evaluated and measured the effectiveness of their guidance programs with self-report tools. As of 2020, no reliable measure on how students saw counseling programs existed. The American School Counseling Association stressed that program evaluation was a part of a comprehensive school counseling program (Bostick & Anderson, 2009). It was imperative for school counselors to become more accountable. Accountable school counseling programs included the following: programs were developed based on the present needs at the school, counselors implemented evidence-based interventions, counselors used valid and reliable assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs, and counselors collected, interpreted, and used data to improve upon their programs.

Multiple Roles of the School Counselor

When addressing student behavior, parents tended to be the most commonly looked upon parties, including school counselors (Johnson & Hannon, 2014). In these cases, parents tended to exaggerate how their child was behaving in school. When students self-reported on their personal experiences, school counselors could see potential influences on problematic behaviors. School counseling programs offered peer mentoring programs (Maddy-Bernstein & Dare, 1997). School counselors needed to be trained on how to effectively deal with the various areas affecting student lives. Counseling programs should focus on adolescent self-esteem and academic achievement.

Dimmitt, Wilkerson, and Lapan (2012) indicated positive correlations between the amount of school counseling a student receives and positive student outcomes. Interventions put into place by school counselors can potentially improve various student outcomes. Fully implemented guidance programs in schools indicated higher student academic achievement, more positive relationships with teachers and a higher likelihood of school satisfaction. All students benefited from having a comprehensive school counseling program in place. Being able to communicate effectively was the foundation of school counseling, and the ever-changing modern world of technology was not allowing school counselors to discuss sensitive and emotional topics over the computer (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2006). Computer technology was also enabling school counselors to deliver their guidance programs. Cyber-counseling involved therapeutic software in addition to online behavioral, cognitive, educational, and psychodynamic approaches. By participating in online counseling, school counselors communicated with remote areas that would not otherwise have had access to counseling services.

School counselors needed to effectively communicate and new technology was available to take the place of face to face communication (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2006). Counselors used computers to discuss sensitive information. Cyber-counseling included therapeutic software that focuses on behavioral, cognitive, educational, and psychodynamic approaches. Because this new technology had not kept up with the changing fields of school counseling, some breaches in ethics could occur, such as hacking, revealing confidential information, and academic fraud. Technological changes continued to influence the field of school counseling, therefore counselors needed to look at both the advantages and disadvantages of cyber-counseling. School counselors who were looking to expand the services they provide in order to effectively support students and their families might have looked to implement school-based family counseling (Davis et al., 2011). A majority of school families referred to outside counseling services never actually followed through. If school-based family counseling were present in the school, families would be more likely to seek additional counseling.

Counseling at the school had many pros, including it being less threatening and costly (Davis, 2001). While cyber-counseling might be more and more prevalent today, breaches of ethics did occur (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2006). Hacking, harassment, defamation, and academic fraud were a few of the ethical breaches that could occur. Technology was always changing and would allow new ways for counselors to practice and deliver guidance programs. School counselors should research the positive and negative impacts of this technological society. School counselors were vital in helping develop a caring school community (Lindwall & Coleman, 2008). Counselors helped foster belongingness by engaging in comprehensive, preventative, and developmental interventions. Previous research

suggested that schools should be set up like communities that can provide support and promote positive development of youth. This process built a sense of belongingness among the students, which then led to positive attitudes and involvement in the elementary, middle, and high school experience (Lindwall & Coleman, 2008).

American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and the National Center for Transforming School Counseling encouraged school counselors to work more systematically, lead and advocate for all students, and refer to data to look at inequities within the field of education (McMahon et al., 2014). School counselors also worked more with the communities surrounding the schools to improve academic success. The field of professional school counseling had historically dealt with a level of uncertainness, and because of this uncertainness, the duties or roles of the school counselor tended to come from the school principal as opposed to a professional organization or structure (Shimoni & Greenberger, 2014). Often, school counselors took on various roles that were not outlined by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). School counselors were expected to carry out ethical practices and values of the school at which they worked.

Since the development of school counseling, the field shifted into a multidisciplinary role in schools (Shimoni & Greenberger, 2014). The field of school counseling was ever-changing. Because of the evident ambiguity of the roles school counselors played, they might have felt pressured to more clearly define their roles according to principals or parents rather than aligning their roles with professional goals meeting the needs of all students. How principals viewed the duties of school counselors might not always match the standards of the ASCA. All school counselors should be using data to improve their professional development

(Young & Kaffenberger, 2015). However, many school counselors reported themselves as not trained, nor comfortable using data professionally. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model encouraged the use of data to assist in the decision making of guidance programs. Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (CSCP) was designed based on school and student data in order to deliver the most effective lessons and interventions that meet the needs of all students.

Professional Development

Though the use of data to enhance professional development had been in place for over 10 years, school counselors were still reluctant (Young & Kaffenberger, 2015). School counselors relied on district and trainer support to implement training strategies. Professional development for school counselors helped to strengthen the ability of the school counselors to increase academic success and encourage college and career readiness. Although school counselors needed to continue to advocate for their students, they also need to advocate for themselves by finding resources to accomplish their school counseling responsibilities (Cameron & Protivak, 2020). One way school counselors could strengthen their programs at school was by partnering with professionals outside their school. It was imperative for school counselors to have resources in order for them to accomplish their goals with their students. By developing a community resource directory, including agencies that could provide professional development, they were enhancing their programs (Cameron & Protivak, 2020).

Summary

School counselors who followed the American School Counselor Association National Model not only delivered guidance lessons, they also could observe students during these lessons (Johnson & Hannon, 2014). School counselors and teachers could collaborate and

observe student behaviors together. School counselors looked to multiple parties when gathering data on student behavior. Each party provided valuable insight the school counselor used to look further into behavioral issues.

Chapter Three: Research Method and Design

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore whether the absence of Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (CSCP) in privately funded elementary and middle school impacted student personal, social/emotional, and academic growth in secondary school. This researcher used surveys and focus groups to gather data. The information resulting from this study would potentially provide private and public schools reliable data to be used to implement and/or improve school counseling programs in elementary and middle school.

Surveys

Upon IRB approval from Lindenwood University, the researcher was able to begin distributing surveys. The researcher developed two student surveys. One survey was administered to those students enrolled in privately funded schools, and the other was administered to those enrolled in publicly funded schools. The student survey for students enrolled in privately funded schools was designed to measure student responses to career development, social/emotional, and academic successes. The student survey for students enrolled in publicly funded schools was designed to measure student responses to a fully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Program. All surveys used in this research can be located in Appendix A.

The researcher developed two parent surveys (see Appendix B). One survey was administered to parents of students attending privately funded schools, and the other survey was administered to parents of students attending publicly funded schools. The survey administered to the parents of students attending privately funded schools was designed to

measure parent responses to student career development, social/emotional, and academic successes. The surveys administered to parents of students attending publicly funded schools were designed to measure parent responses to fully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Programs.

The researcher developed two teacher surveys (see Appendix C). One survey was designed for teachers working in privately funded schools, and the other was designed for teachers working in publicly funded schools. The surveys administered to teachers working in privately funded schools were designed to measure teacher responses to student career development, social/emotional, and academic successes. The surveys administered to teachers working in publicly funded schools were designed to measure teacher responses to fully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Programs.

Completed Surveys

A total of 165 surveys were completed by students, parents, and teachers from both privately funded and publicly funded schools. Each survey was 10 questions and answered on a 5-point Likert Scale. A total of 20 students attending privately funded schools and 13 attending publicly funded schools completed surveys. A total of 31 parents of students attending privately funded schools and 36 parents of students attending publicly funded schools completed surveys. A total of 33 teachers working in private schools and 13 teachers working in public schools completed surveys.

Study Sites

The researcher chose three schools as the study sites. The co-ed private grade school was located in St. Charles County, Missouri, and educated grades preschool through eighth grade. The co-ed private high school was located in St. Charles, Missouri and educated

grades ninth through 12th. The participating co-ed public school district was located in Lincoln County, Missouri. An amendment to the IRB was submitted so the researcher could obtain more participants for this study via social media. Upon amendment approval, a message was posted on Facebook requesting students, parents, and teachers to participate in the research study. Surveys were all distributed online via email. As surveys were completed, they were tracked online through SurveyMonkey. Once all surveys were received, the researcher was able to analyze the results using SurveyMonkey. Bar graphs were generated based on the summaries of each question in each survey, so trends could be detected.

Questions

Research Question 1: How do high school students in privately funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP perceive their career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes as compared to students in publicly funded schools in Missouri with fully implemented CSCPs?

Research Question 2: How do teachers in privately funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP perceive students' career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes?

Research Question 3: How do teachers in publicly funded schools in Missouri with a fully implemented CSCP perceive students' career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes?

Research Question 4: How do parents of students in privately funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP perceive their child's or children's career

development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes as compared to parents of students in publicly funded schools in Missouri with fully implemented CSCPs?

Focus Groups

Once the surveys were completed, focus groups were held for each group. Focus groups were held for each group: private school teachers, public school teachers, private school parents, and public-school parents. The focus group for the private school teachers was arranged via the principal of the grade school. The focus group for the private school parents was arranged via email to the researcher. Once the participants agreed to participate, a consent form was emailed to them prior to the focus group. The researcher reached out to the parents and teachers of the public schools to schedule a focus group and did not receive a response except for one public school teacher. She was emailed a consent form prior to the focus group. The public and private school students were emailed to see if they were available to meet for a focus group, but they never responded back to the researcher.

Of the groups held, zero private school and public-school students attended the focus group, 12 private school teachers attended the focus group, one public school teacher attended the focus group, six private school parents attended the focus group, and zero public school parents attended the focus group. Each focus group lasted no longer than one hour.

Limitations

Lack of participants and finding school districts to work with was a hindrance in the current study. Per IRB, this researcher requested 30-50 surveys per group (public school teachers/private school teachers, public school parents/private school parents, and students attending public school/students attending private school). When less than 15 surveys per group were completed, an amendment to the IRB was completed to solicit participants via

social media in Missouri. Once approved, the number of surveys needed for this research study was reached when this researcher contacted potential participants via Facebook.

Many districts were already committed to other research studies, not interested, or did not return phone calls or emails to the researcher. This researcher contacted 32 publicly funded school districts in total. One privately funded grade school and privately funded high school were contacted, and they both agreed to participate in the research. Once school districts were secured, ensuring participants completed and returned the surveys was another limitation. Because the surveys were based on a 5-point Likert Scale, items might have been answered differently if participants were allowed to type in their responses.

Focus groups were held as a follow up to the surveys. This would allow for the participants to be able to expand on the survey items and voice any opinions. Only two focus groups were well attended. No students from either private or public schools attended the groups, which could have impacted the results of the research.

Data Analysis

The data from the surveys were collected electronically via SurveyMonkey immediately upon participant submission. Once all surveys were received, this researcher was able to access SurveyMonkey to look at the results from various viewpoints, such as per survey type, per question, and per individual responses. This researcher was also able to see any data trends via the SurveyMonkey website. All the surveys submitted were password protected on the SurveyMonkey website, where only this researcher had access. Any consent forms emailed electronically were kept in an email folder, which was also password protected. If consents were printed and mailed to this researcher, they were kept in a locked file cabinet in this researcher's home, where only this researcher had access.

Summary

This qualitative study was designed to explore the effectiveness of Comprehensive School Counseling Programs in elementary and middle schools in privately and publicly funded schools and their impact on secondary schooling. The researcher distributed surveys to participants and held focus groups for those participants. Holding focus groups in addition to gathering data from surveys allowed for participants to elaborate on their experience, or lack thereof, with Comprehensive School Counseling Programs. The next chapter details the results obtained from the qualitative study.

Chapter Four: Analysis

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore whether the absence of Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (CSCP) in privately funded elementary and middle school impacts students' personal, social-emotional, and academic growth in secondary school. The participants in this research study completed and submitted their surveys online through SurveyMonkey. Once all the surveys were collected, the researcher held focus groups for each group of participants: private school students, public school students, parents of students attending private schools, parents of students attending public schools, private school teachers, public school teachers. During the focus groups, the researcher recorded the session and took notes.

Questions

Research Question 1: How do high school students in privately funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP perceive their career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes as compared to students in publicly funded schools in Missouri with fully implemented CSCPs?

Research Question 2: How do teachers in privately funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP perceive students' career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes?

Research Question 3: How do teachers in publicly funded schools in Missouri with a fully implemented CSCP perceive students' career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes?

Research Question 4: How do parents of students in privately funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP perceive their child's or children's career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes as compared to parents of students in publicly funded schools in Missouri with fully implemented CSCPs?

Academic Success (Survey Items)

Of the 20 students who attended privately funded high schools participating in the research, 10 of them indicated that they strongly agreed that the teachers and programs at their school helped them succeed in their academics. Eight students agreed, whereas one student was neutral and one student disagreed. Of the 33 teachers working in privately funded schools participating in the research, 25 of them strongly agreed that the teachers and programs at their school enhanced students' academic successes, and eight teachers agreed. Thirty-two teachers at publicly funded schools were surveyed, and six strongly agreed that the CSCP in place at their school enhanced the academic success of students, while 14 teachers agreed. Seven teachers were neutral toward this statement, and five teachers disagreed. Figure 1 displays the results of these survey items.

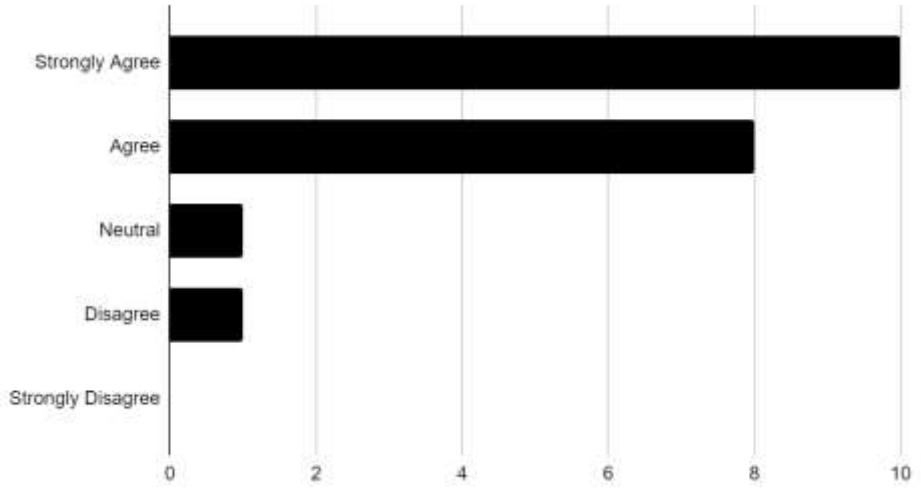

Figure 1a. Private school students.

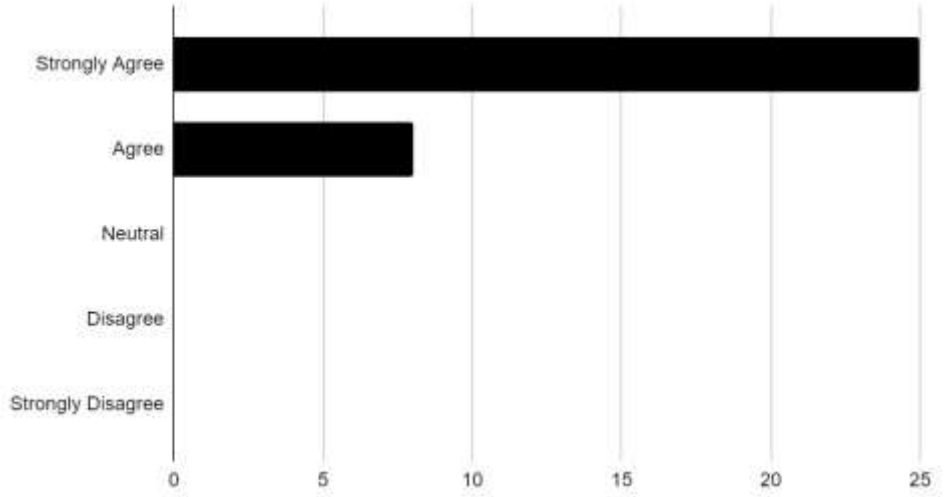

Figure 1b. Private school teachers.

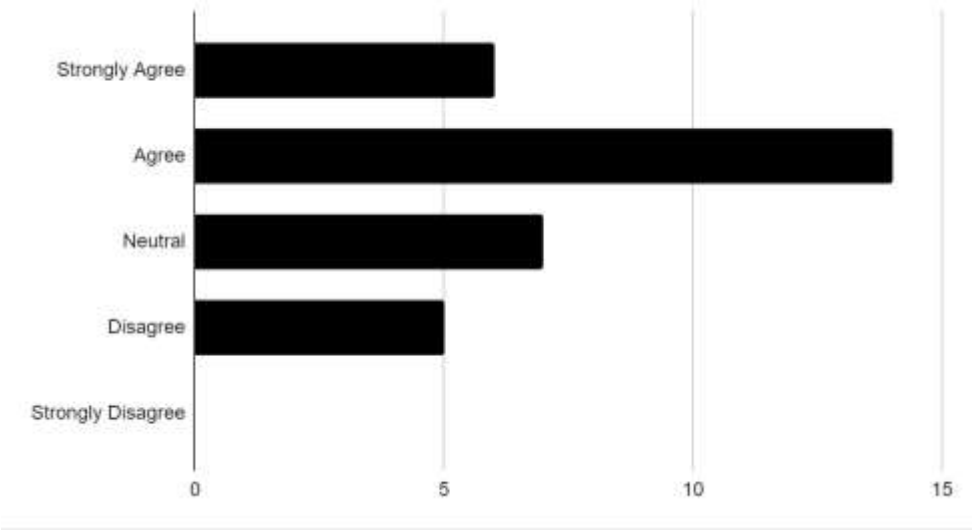

Figure 1c. Public school teachers.

Thirty-one parents of students attending privately funded schools participated in the research and responded to a similar survey item asking if they felt the teachers and programs at their child or children's school enhanced academic success. Eighteen parents strongly agreed that their child or children's academic success was enhanced, while 11 parents agreed. One parent was neutral toward this statement, while one parent disagreed. Thirty-six parents of students attending publicly funded schools participated in the research. They were asked via SurveyMonkey if they felt the Comprehensive School Counseling Program at their child or children's school enhanced their academic success. Of the 36 participants, nine parents strongly agreed, while 10 agreed. Nine parents were neutral toward the statement. Six parents disagreed, while two parents strongly disagreed with the statement. Figure 2 displays the results of these survey items.

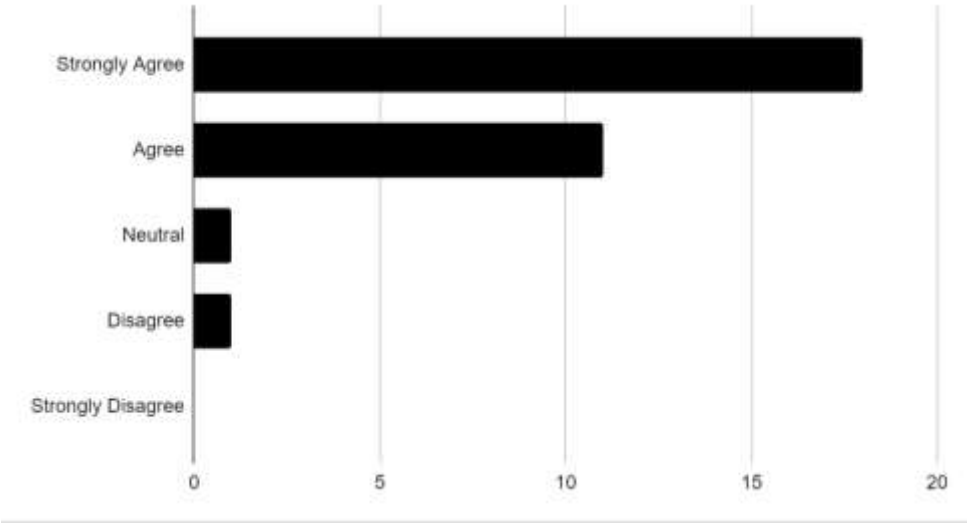

Figure 2a. Private school parents

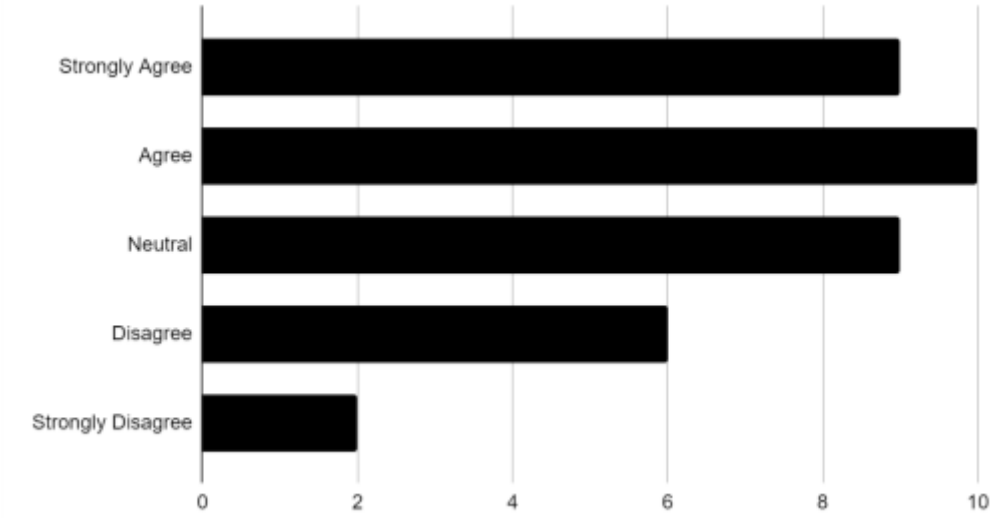

Figure 2b. Public school parents

Social-Emotional Growth (Survey Items)

The twenty students attending privately funded high schools were asked via SurveyMonkey if they felt the teachers and programs at their school enhanced their social-emotional well-being. Six students reported to strongly agree with this statement, while nine agreed. Four students were neutral toward this statement, whereas one student strongly disagreed. Thirty-three teachers at privately funded schools were also asked the same type of

question via SurveyMonkey. When asked if they felt the teachers and programs at their school enhanced the social-emotional well-being of the students, 24 teachers strongly agreed and eight teachers agreed. Of the 33 teachers, one teacher was neutral toward this statement. Thirty-two teachers at publicly funded schools were surveyed, and nine teachers strongly agreed that the CSCP at their school enhanced the social-emotional well-being of the students, while 19 agreed. Three teachers were neutral toward this statement, while two teachers disagreed. Figure 3 displays the survey results.

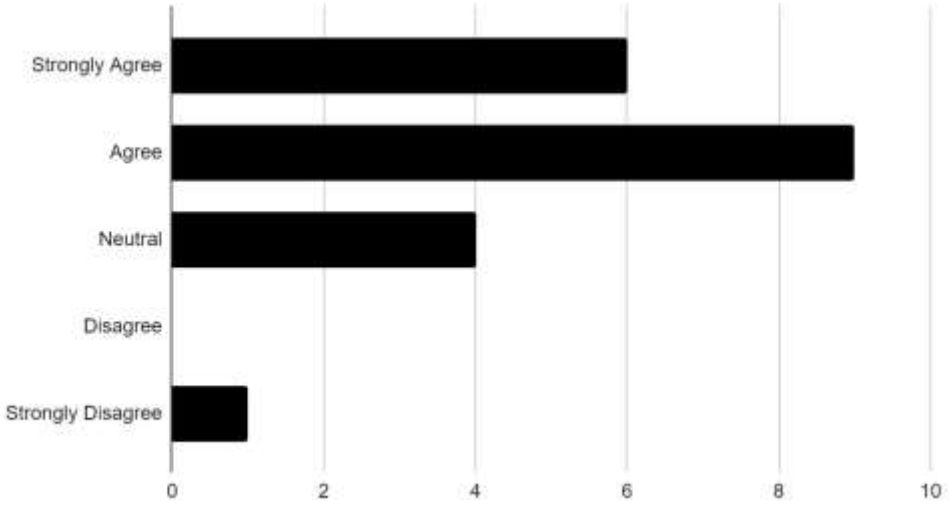

Figure 3a. Private school students

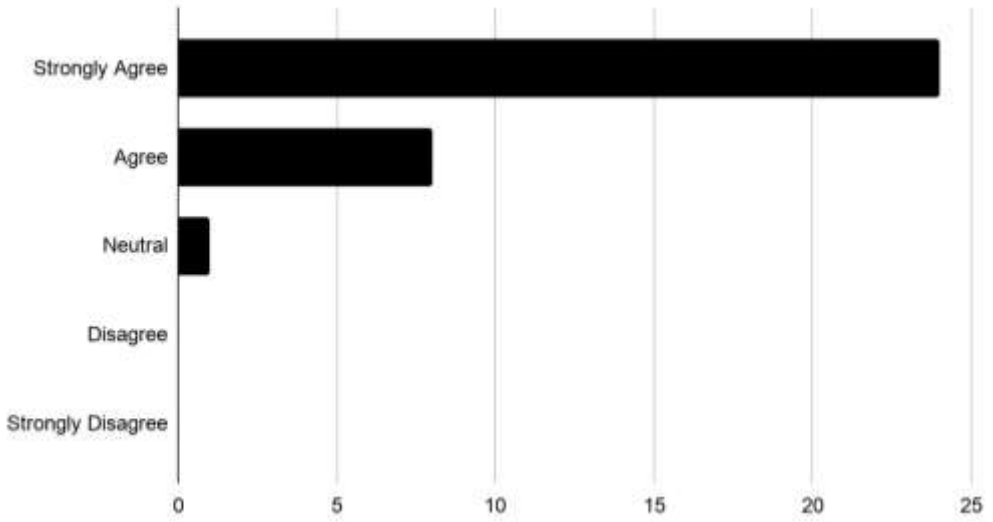

Figure 3b. Private school teachers

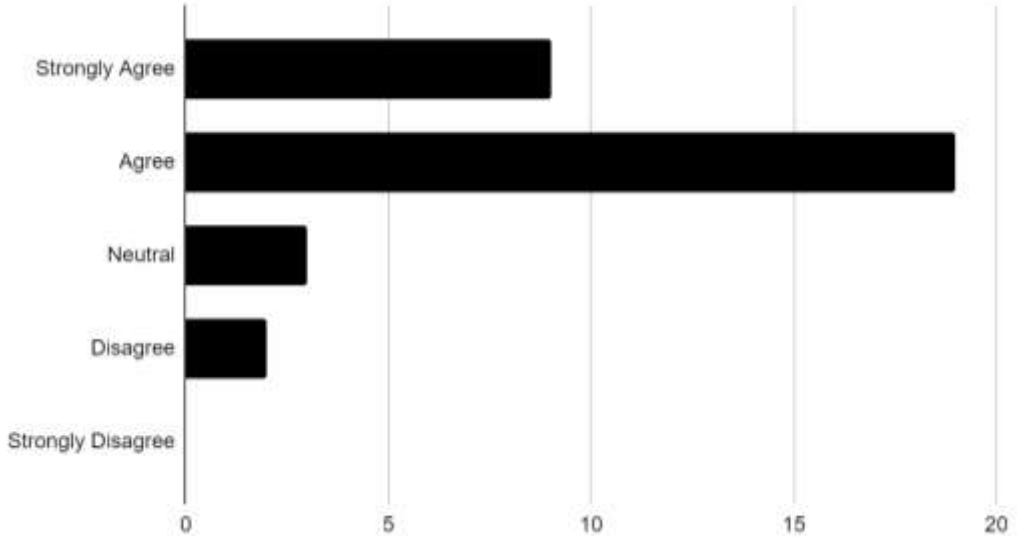

Figure 3c. Public school teachers

Parents of students attending privately funded schools were asked via SurveyMonkey if they felt the teachers and programs at their child or children's school enhanced the social-emotional well-being of their child or children. Of the 31 parents who responded, 14 strongly agreed with the statement, and 14 agreed with the statement. Two parents were neutral toward the statement, and one parent strongly disagreed with the statement. Parents of

students attending publicly funded schools were asked if they felt the Comprehensive School Counseling Program at their child or children's school enhanced the social-emotional well-being of their child or children. Of the 35 participants surveyed, eight parents strongly agreed with the statement, while 11 parents agreed. Nine parents were neutral toward the statement, whereas seven parents disagreed. Figure 4 displays the survey results.

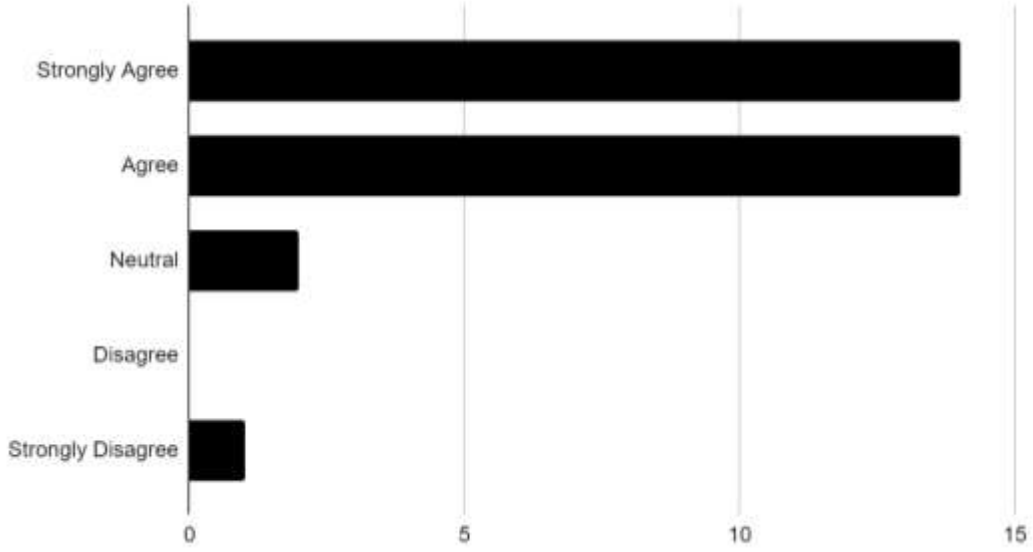

Figure 4a. Private school parents

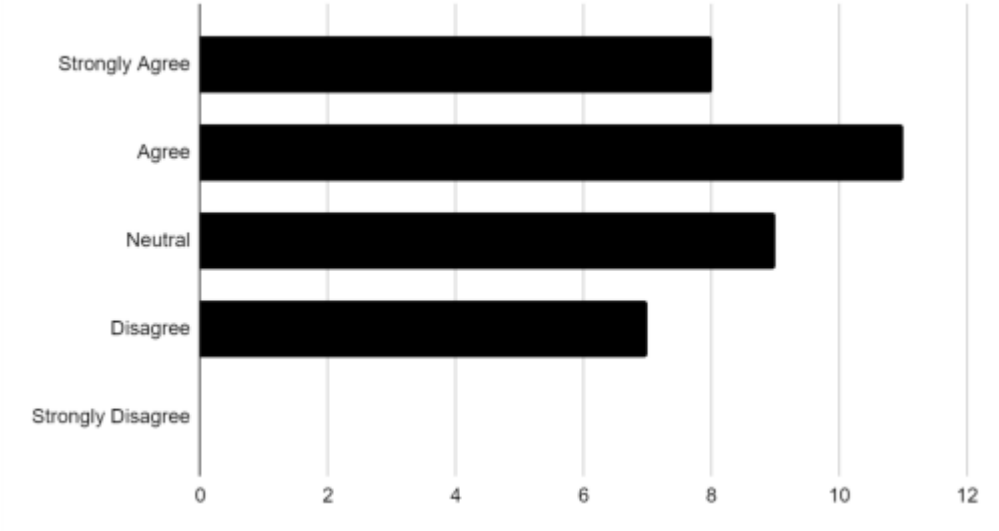

Figure 4b. Public school parents

A survey item for students attending privately funded high schools stated that the teachers and programs at their school had helped them to develop coping skills. Of the 20 students who responded, three students strongly agreed, and seven students agreed. Nine students were neutral toward this statement, while one student strongly disagreed. The teachers working at privately funded schools were asked if the teachers and programs at their school helped to enhance the ability to develop coping skills. Of the 33 teachers to respond, 13 strongly agreed with the statement, and 13 agreed. Six teachers were neutral toward the statement, while one teacher disagreed. Thirty-two teachers at publicly funded schools were surveyed, and 11 teachers strongly agreed that the CSCP at their school helped students develop coping skills, while 17 teachers agreed. Four teachers were neutral toward this statement. Figure 5 displays the survey results.

Figure 5a. Private school students

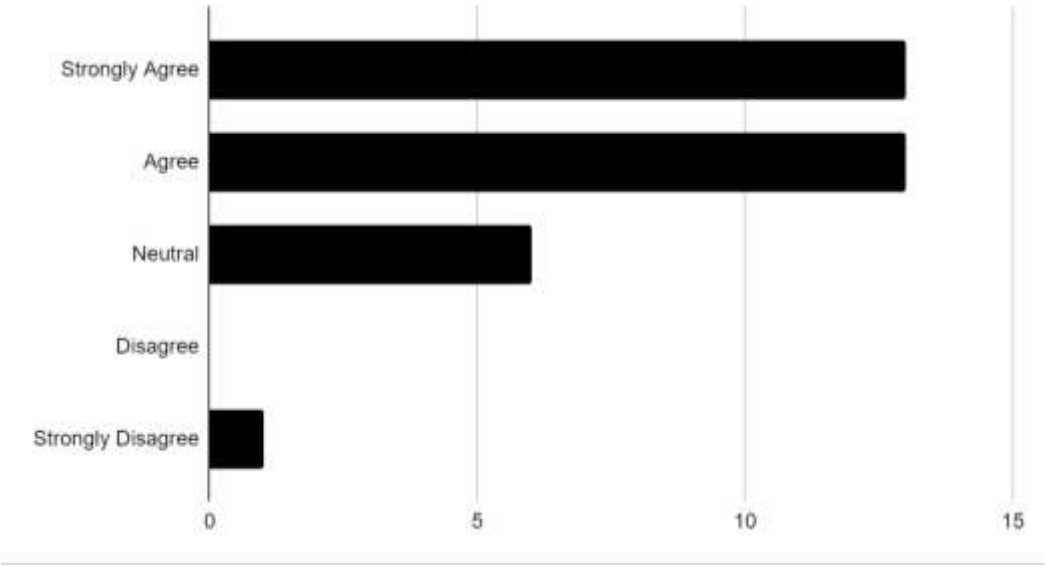

Figure 5b. Private school teachers

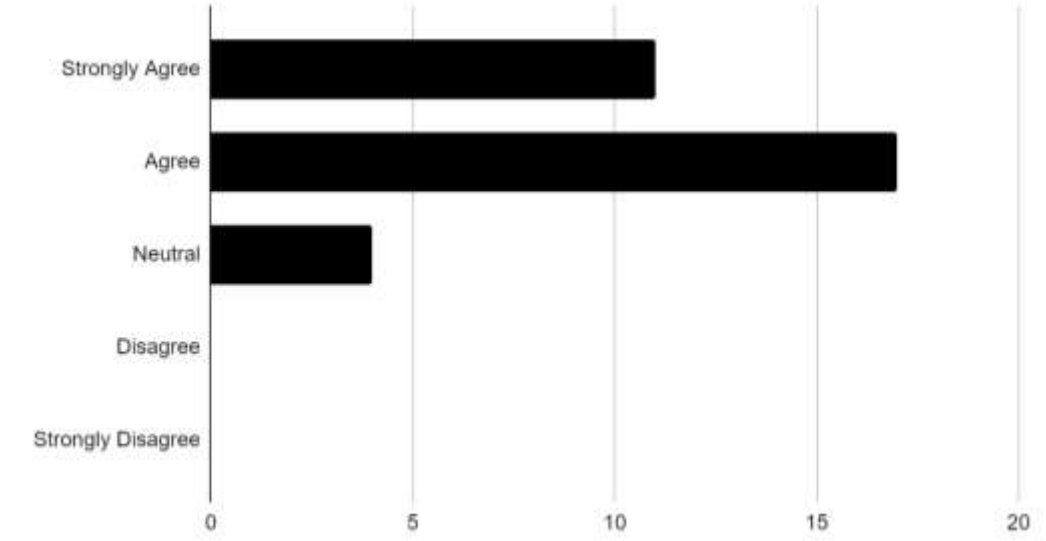

Figure 5c. Public school teachers

Parents of students attending privately funded schools were asked via SurveyMonkey if they felt the teachers and programs at their child or children's school helped to enhance their ability to develop coping skills. Of the 31 parents to respond, six strongly agreed with the statement, while 16 agreed. Seven parents were neutral toward the statement, while two parents disagreed. Parents of students attending publicly funded schools were asked if they

felt the Comprehensive School Counseling Program at their child or children's school helped to enhance their ability to develop life coping skills. Of the 35 participants surveyed, eight parents strongly agreed with the statement, while 13 parents agreed. Nine parents were neutral toward the statement, whereas five parents disagreed. Figure 6 displays the survey results.

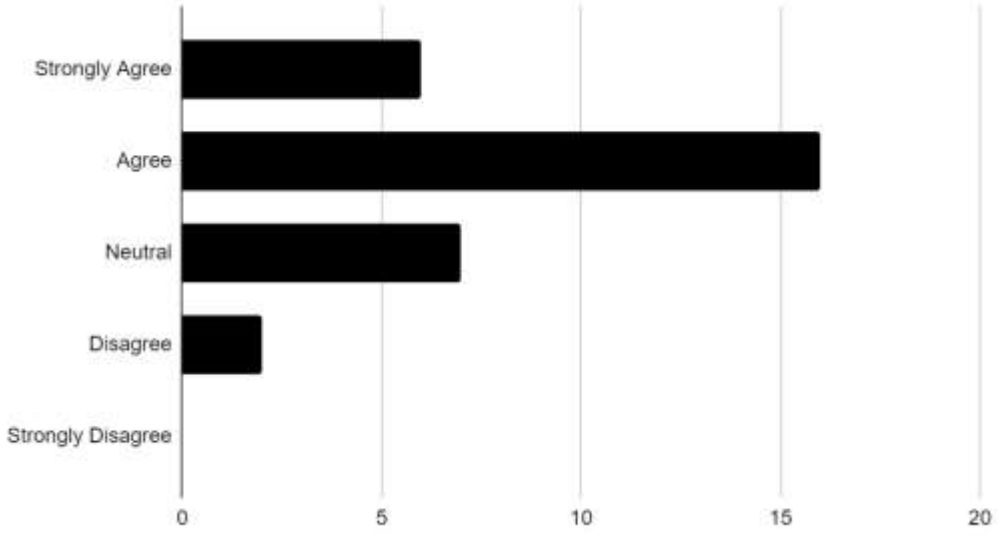

Figure 6a. Private school parents

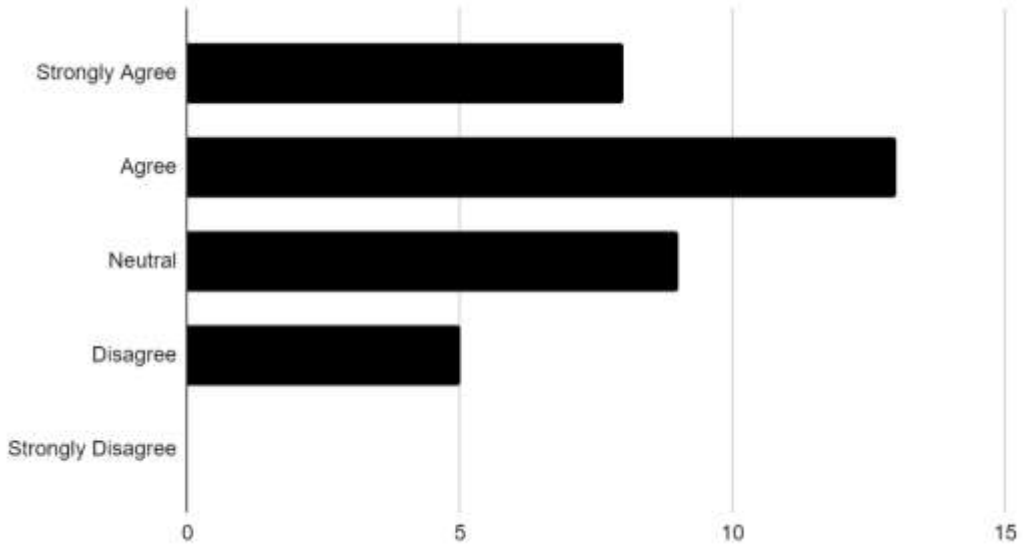

Figure 6b. Public school parents

When students at privately funded high schools were asked if they felt the teachers and programs at their school provided them with the emotional support they needed, five students strongly agreed, while seven students agreed. Six students were neutral toward the statement, and two students disagreed. Of the 33 private school teachers surveyed, 12 teachers strongly agreed with the statement, while 15 teachers agreed. Three teachers were neutral toward the statement, whereas two teachers disagreed. Thirty-two teachers at public schools were surveyed, and 13 strongly agreed that the CSCP at their school provided emotional support to the students, while 13 teachers agreed. Four teachers were neutral toward this statement, while two teachers were in disagreement. Figure 7 displays the survey results.

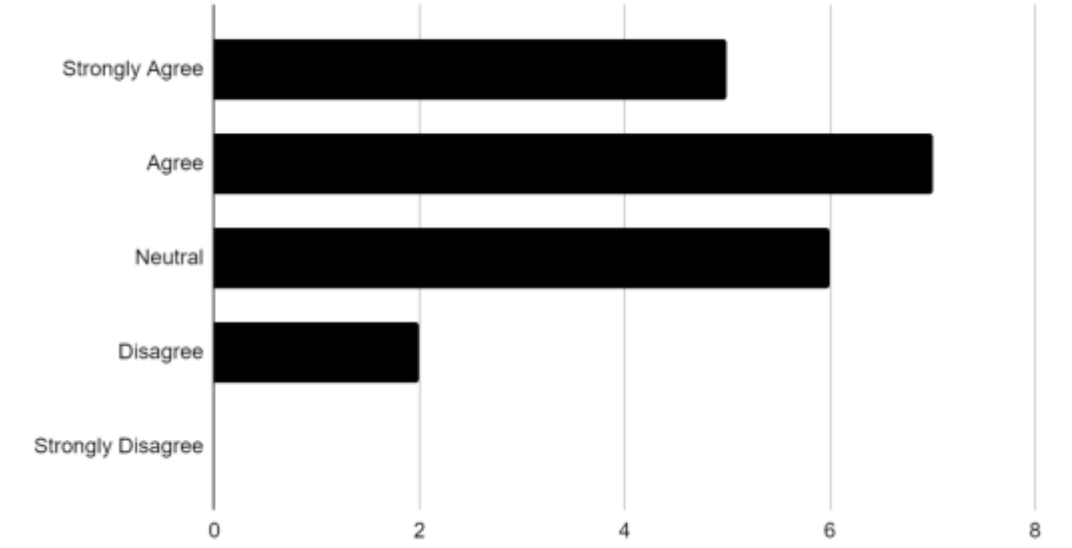

Figure 7a. Private school students

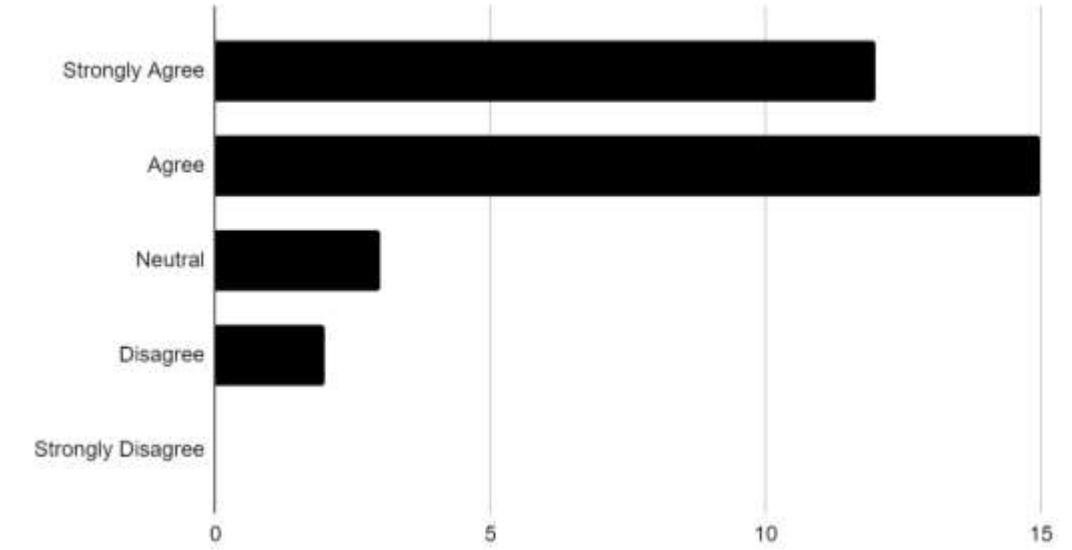

Figure 7b. Private school teachers

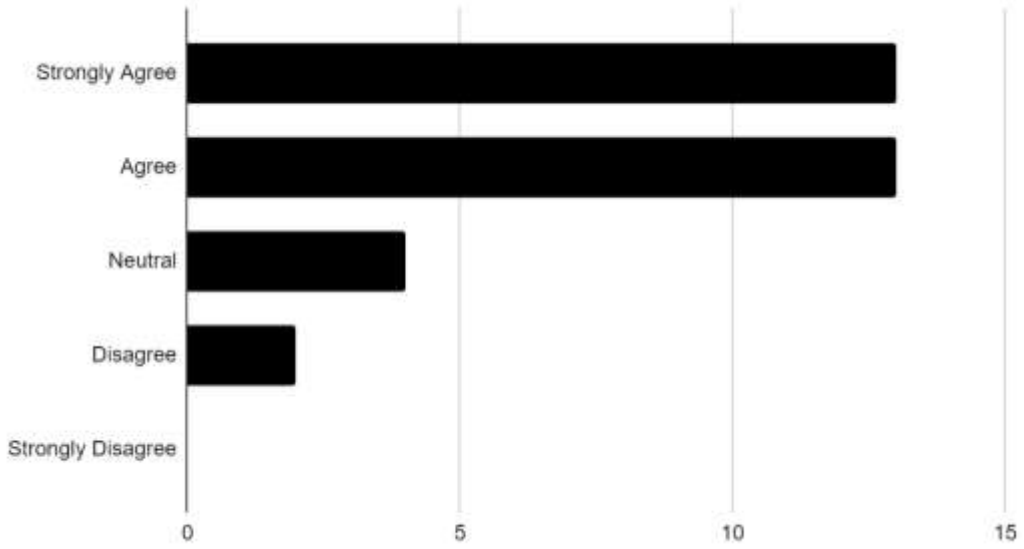

Figure 7c. Public school teachers

When parents of students at privately funded schools were asked if teachers and programs at their child or children's school provided them and their child or children with emotional support, eight parents strongly agreed, while 14 parents agreed. Six parents were neutral toward the statement. One parent disagreed, and two parents strongly disagreed. Parents of students at publicly funded high schools were asked if the Comprehensive School Counseling Program at their child or children's school provided parents and students with emotional support. Of the 35 participants surveyed, seven strongly agreed, while 12 agreed with the statement. Ten parents were neutral toward the statement. Five parents disagreed with the statement, whereas one parent strongly disagreed. Figure 8 displays the survey results.

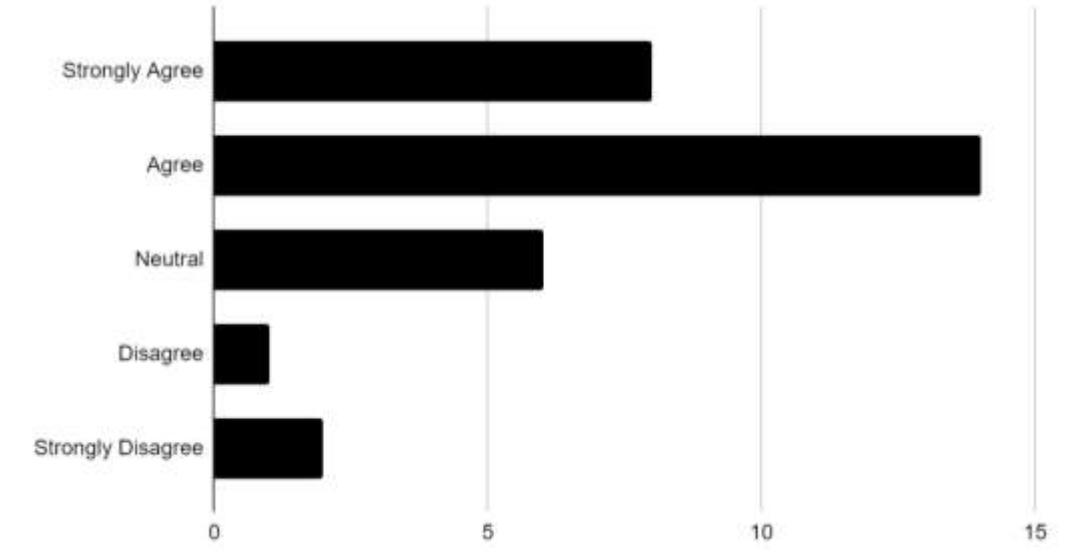

Figure 8a. Private school parents

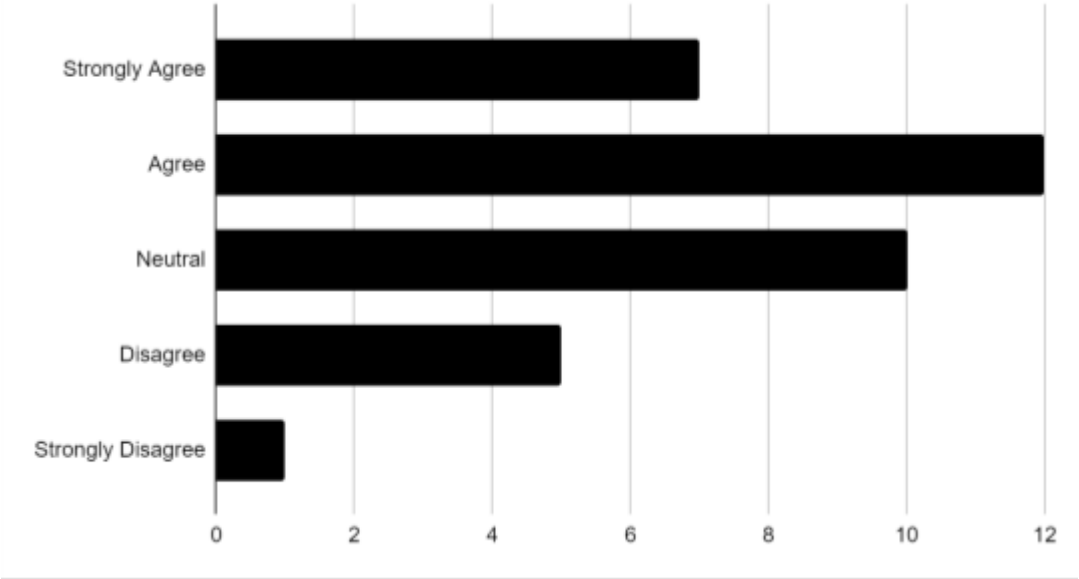

Figure 8b. Public school parents

Career Development (Survey Items)

Students attending privately funded high schools were surveyed on if they felt the teachers and programs at their school encouraged career development. Of the 19 students surveyed, six students strongly agreed, while 12 students agreed. One student strongly disagreed. Teachers at privately funded schools were surveyed and asked if they felt their

school encouraged student career development. Of the 33 participants, 13 teachers strongly agreed with the statement, while 14 teachers agreed. Five teachers were neutral toward the statement, whereas one teacher disagreed. Thirty-two public school teachers were surveyed, and four strongly agreed that the CSCP at their school encouraged student career development, while 10 agreed. Eleven teachers were neutral toward this statement. Six teachers disagreed, while 1 teacher strongly disagreed. Figure 9 displays the survey results.

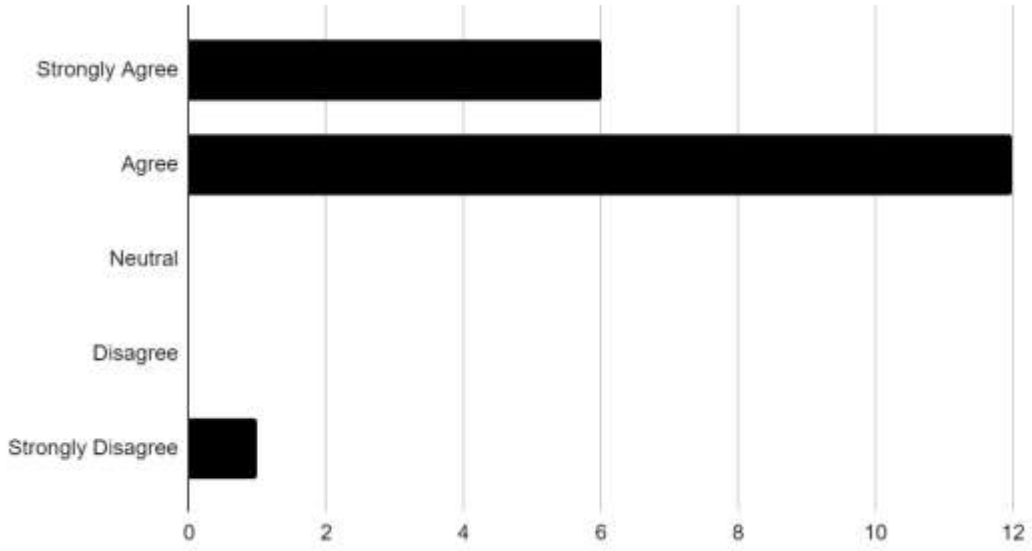

Figure 9a. Private school students

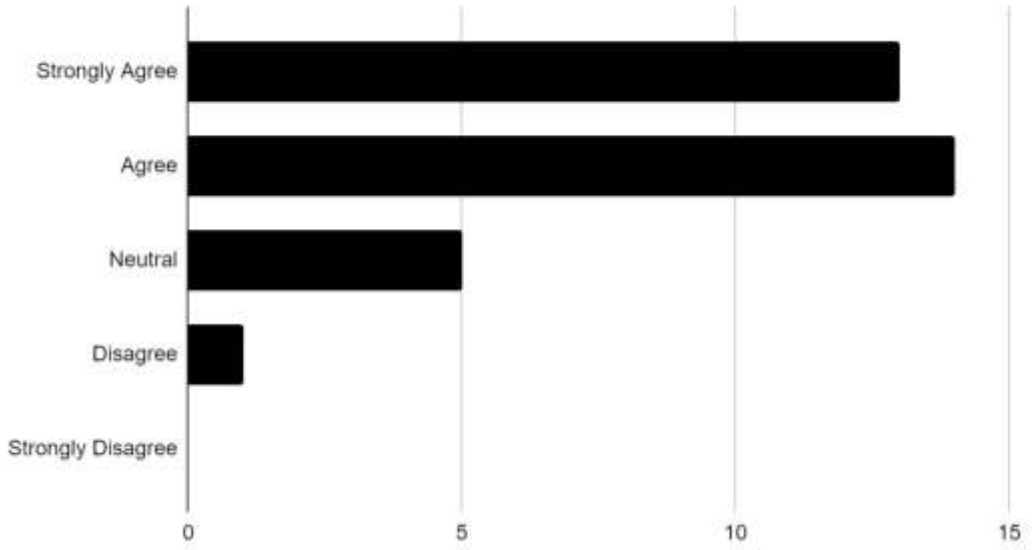

Figure 9b. Private school teachers

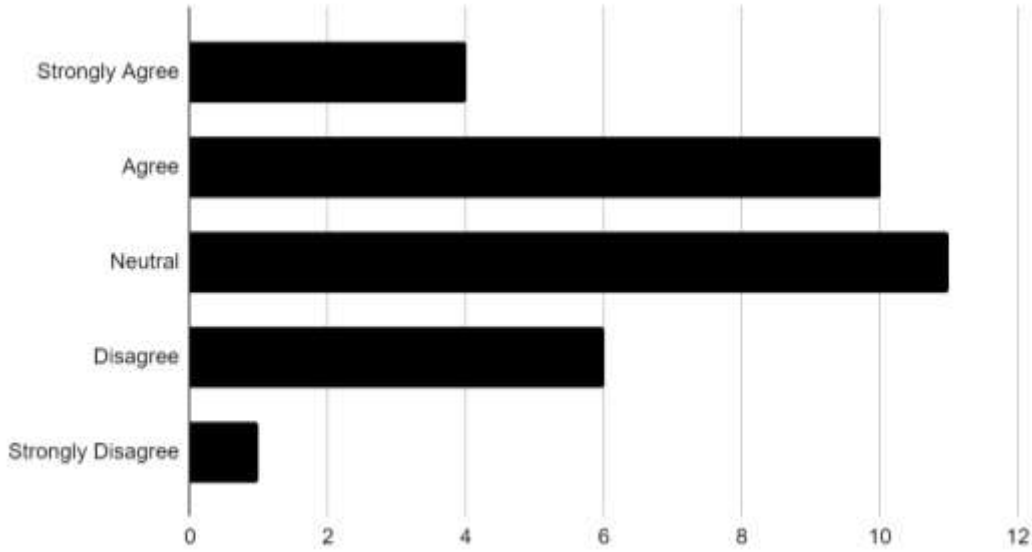

Figure 9c. Public school teachers

Parents of students attending privately funded schools were surveyed on whether they felt the teachers and programs at their child or children's school encouraged career development. Of the 31 participants, nine parents strongly agreed, while 11 parents agreed. Eight parents were neutral toward the statement. Two parents disagreed with the statement,

while one parent strongly disagreed. Parents of students attending publicly funded schools were surveyed on whether the Comprehensive School Counseling Program at their child or children's school encouraged career development. Of the 35 participants, three parents strongly agreed, while 10 parents agreed. Fourteen parents were neutral toward the statement. Six parents disagreed with the statement, whereas two parents strongly disagreed. Figure 10 displays the survey results.

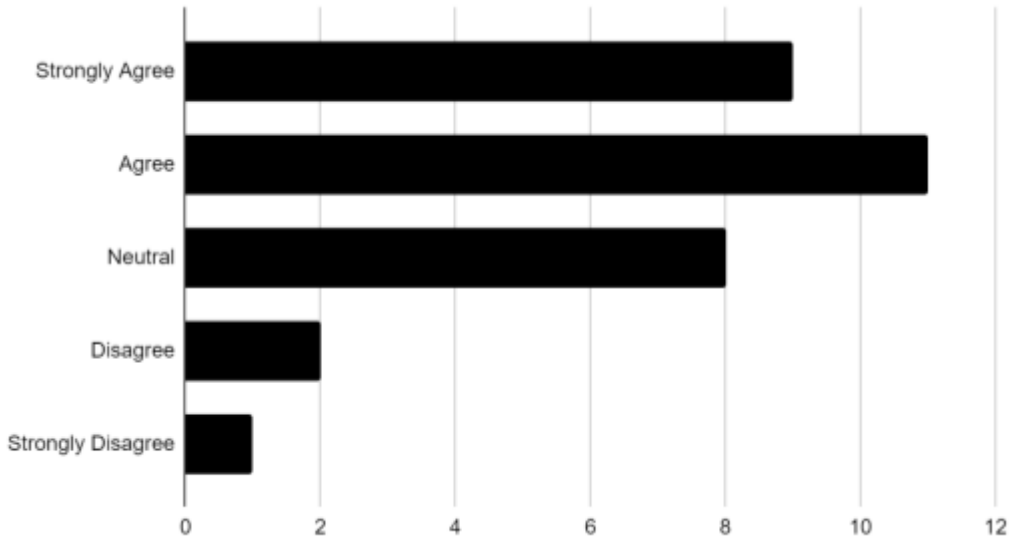

Figure 10a. Private school parents

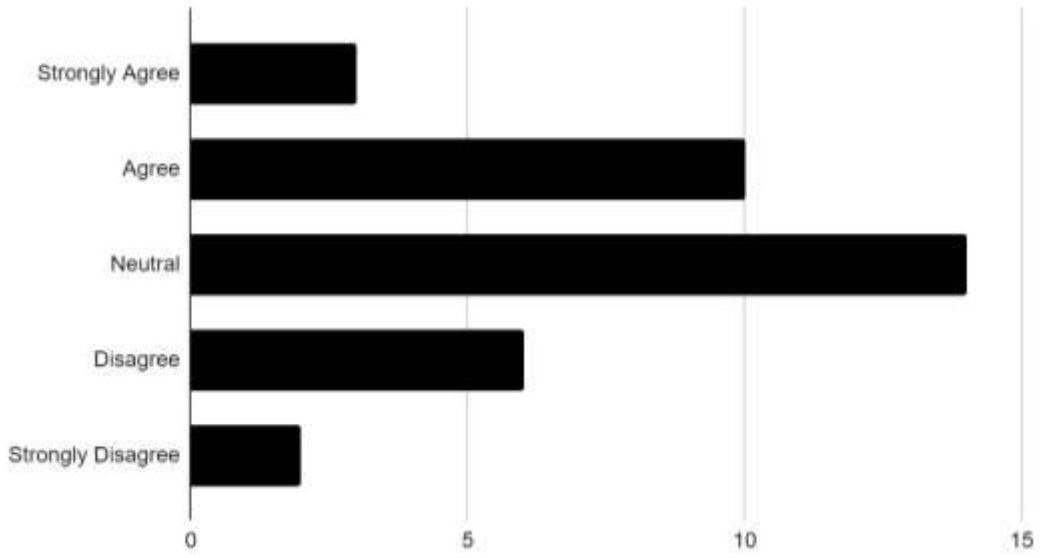

Figure 10b. Public school parents

Focus Groups

Focus groups were held for each group: private school teachers, public school teachers, private school parents, and public-school parents. Of the groups held, 12 private school teachers attended the focus group, one public school teacher attended the focus group, six private school parents attended the focus group, and zero public school parents attended the focus group. Each focus group lasted no longer than one hour (See Appendix D for lists of questions asked).

Each group of participants, private school teachers, public school teachers, private school parents, public school parents, private school students, public school students were asked to complete a short 10-question Survey Monkey survey regarding their views on the counseling programs in their schools. After receiving the surveys back, the participants were asked to participate in a focus group lasting no longer than one hour to discuss in further detail some of the items on the survey.

Academic Success (Focus Groups)

The first focus group that met was the private school teachers. When asked how they helped their students succeed academically, there were a variety of answers. One teacher stated that their teachers met or exceeded state standards, and because they were a small school, they had more freedom to provide 1:1 attention, tutoring, accommodations, and modifications. They participated in project-based learning to deepen the understanding of concepts and to provide more engaging and meaningful lessons. They incorporated STEM/STEAM programs and implemented real-life careers in the classroom (i.e., electrician). The teachers stressed the importance of self-talk, how to be independent, and thinking before asking for help.

The second focus group was with the public-school teacher. When asked how she helps her students succeed academically, she said she "feels kids need a safe place and a safe person to talk to. Sometimes this was not the teacher or the principal." She was the music teacher in her building, so she was able to provide a quiet and safe place outside the classroom.

The third focus group was with parents of children who attended private schools. When asked how their child's teacher or counselor helps their child succeed academically, one parent stated that "out of the two private schools her child has attended, she had only positive things to say." Four other parents stated that one private school did not help their child academically; they only helped him/her with social/emotional situations. There was only one counselor at the private grade school, and she was only there once a week. One parent said that "unless your child struggled, you did not know who she was or when she was there." Another parent said that she "did not realize who to even go through if she needed to

get my child help until she went to a private high school." Another parent stated that "my child was diagnosed with learning disabilities and received much academic attention from the school counselor at the grade school level."

Social-Emotional Growth (Focus Groups)

In terms of student social/emotional well-being, one teacher responded that she took time out through her curriculum. They participated in a "Show the Shield" program that was built into their school vision that encouraged empathy and recognized students who showed positive attributes as well as recognized parents who were role models for their children.

When focused on students developing coping skills, a kindergarten teacher spoke first. She stated that "this is something that my class struggles with and will probably continue to struggle with." She stopped a lesson to talk about coping skills and how students could deal with problems on their own by using empathy. They implemented Love and Logic (Positive Parenting Solutions & Educational Resources: Love & Logic, n.d.), and stressed social-emotional well-being before academics. It was important for the students to recognize they have choices. One teacher stated that she "makes sure my students know that they are safe, they are loved, they will be fine, and together they will make a plan."

When asked how they provided students with the emotional support they needed, one teacher stated that she "stops a lesson to see if they can learn the life lessons they need if it is more important." Another stated that "nine times out of 10 something is going on at home and they are lashing out at school so it is important for us to recognize this as teachers so we can get the students the help they need." The principal stated they have CARE Team (CARE Team and "Problem Solving") for kids in crisis and could bring in counselors to observe if needed.

As far as how she or her counselor enhances the students social-emotional well-being she stated that “the counselor is the go-to person in her school. She holds social skills groups, implements PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports), and has a teacher social skills group.” As a music teacher, she stated that she has the kids “sing and play instruments describing how they are feeling.”

When asked how she or her counselor provided students with the emotional support they needed, the public-school teacher said that “all the special teachers are assigned to her.” She and the teachers worked together if there was a student who needed extra support. She also worked closely with her school counselor if needed.

As far as whether or not her school counselor helped students develop coping skills, the teacher in the public school mentioned the social skills groups. Her school counselor has plush animals, bean bags, and games for the students to utilize. As a music teacher, she is able to play music to differentiate moods.

In speaking about their child’s teacher or counselor enhancing their child’s social-emotional well-being, one parent stated that “the counselors at the middle and high school are very encouraging and visibility is the key.” Another parent stated that “teachers are more helpful than the counselor.” Another stated that “no one would communicate with the parents unless the student has an issue.” Otherwise, the parents would have no idea anything negative was even going on.

When asked how their child’s teachers or counselors help their child to develop coping skills, no one in the group had a comment. Of the few who attended the same grade school, they said the school counselor there “did not help develop any coping skills.” When asked how their child’s teachers or counselor encourage parent involvement, one parent stated she

would “like to meet with more special teachers and not just homeroom teachers.” She also said she would “like to have student-led conferences. There is a disconnect if parents are only allowed to meet with homeroom teachers, especially if they have classes with multiple teachers.”

The parents talked about whether teachers or counselor provide their children with the emotional support they need. One parent referred back to her response to the first question. She said her daughter is “receiving all the help and support she needs now that she is in a different private school.” The counselors there are wonderful, and she is so impressed with the progress her daughter is making. No one else in the group had a comment.

Career Development (Focus Groups)

When asked how she or her counselor encouraged career development among the students, she stated that “as an elementary music teacher, I do not promote career development as much as I am in a unique position.” She tried to show the students that music was in everyday life.

One parent stated that “career development at school is non-existent.” Another parent stated that “at the high school level, the students are assumed to self-advocate.” Another parent at a different high school said that “senior year they schedule off-site career field trips to see what fields they might want to study in college.”

The fourth focus group would have consisted of public-school parents, and the same questions would have been asked as those of the private school parents. However, no public-school parents participated in the focus group.

Research Question 1 and Academic Success, Social-Emotional Growth, and Career Development

The Missouri Comprehensive School Counseling Association stated that the goal of the program was to ensure that all schools had a fully implemented comprehensive school counseling program that addressed the students' academic, career, and social-emotional development (DESE). Comprehensive school counseling programs were prevalent in publicly-funded schools in the state of Missouri; however, this was not always true in privately-funded schools in Missouri. Students' perceptions of how a comprehensive school counseling program was implemented in their school or how teachers and programs implemented in their school to help with academic success, career development, and social-emotional issues might have varied depending on the student. Research Question 1 focused on how high school students in privately-funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented comprehensive school counseling program perceive issues such as academic success, career development, and social-emotional growth as compared to students attending publicly-funded schools in Missouri with fully implemented comprehensive school counseling programs.

Although no focus groups took place due to lack of participants, both students attending privately-funded schools and publicly-funded schools did complete the surveys. Twenty total students attending privately funded schools completed surveys, and 13 total students attending publicly-funded schools completed surveys. As far as academic success in school, both students attending private and public schools agree that their CSCP, teachers, or programs help encourage academic success.

When surveyed about the social-emotional well-being, again the majority of both private and public-school students indicated that they agree the CSCP, teachers, or programs help encourage their emotional growth. Students attending private schools agreed that their teachers and programs helped them to develop coping skills, while students attending public schools were mostly neutral toward this statement or in disagreement. The majority of private school students and public-school students agreed or were neutral toward whether or not the CSCP, teachers, or programs at their school provided them with the emotional support and they needed and encouraged career development.

Research Question 2 and Academic Success, Social-Emotional Growth, and Career Development

Teachers' opinions regarding fully implemented comprehensive school counseling programs, in publicly funded schools, differed as far as how they view success rates as compared to teachers from privately funded schools without a fully implemented comprehensive school counseling program. If the teachers without a counseling program were assumed to overcompensate for the lack of a school counselor, they potentially had to find the delicate balance between being a teacher and playing the role of a school counselor. This would stretch the teachers too thin and they would not be able to give everything they were able to their students. Research Question 2 examined how teachers in privately-funded schools, without a fully implemented comprehensive school counseling program, viewed student academic success, career development, and social-emotional growth.

After reviewing the survey results and the statements made in the focus group, it was determined that all of the teachers in privately-funded schools who participated in this research agreed that they had successful programs in place that encouraged the academic

success in students. Upon review of the focus group statements, it was determined that the teachers in privately-funded schools felt that because they were in a small school setting, they were able to offer students a variety of academic opportunities. They offered STEM/STEAM programs, tutoring, modifications, and 1:1 attention.

When surveyed about the social-emotional growth, teachers at privately-funded schools felt as if their schools provided teachers or programs that enhanced the well-being of the students. When asked about coping skills within their school, only one teacher disagreed that there were no programs in place to assist the students. All the other teachers were either in agreement that there were programs in place to help students develop coping skills or they were neutral toward the statement. During the focus group, one teacher stated that having a lack of coping skills was an area where her class struggled, while other teachers stated that they used programs such as Love and Logic (Positive Parenting Solutions & Educational Resources: Love & Logic, n.d.) and had proven successful for them.

When asked if the teachers provided students with the emotional support they need, teachers at privately-funded schools agreed that they had programs in place or they provided support to those students who needed it. The focus group further confirmed that there were programs in place that helped students with social-emotional growth, such as “Show the Shield” and CARE team (CARE Team and “Problem Solving”).

Research Question 3 and Academic Success, Social-Emotional Growth, and Career Development

Similar to Research Question 2, Research Question 3 focused on the opinions and views of teachers who worked in publicly-funded schools with a fully implemented comprehensive school counseling program. Since these schools had employed school

counselors and had comprehensive school counseling programs in place, their views on whether the programs are successful differed. If they were used to having a counselor in their schools and having the support and programs available, their answers would vary from teachers in privately funded schools.

When focusing solely on academic success, the teachers surveyed responded in agreement that they had a CSCP in place to foster the academic success of their students. Only five of the 32 surveyed were in disagreement with that statement. The focus group consisted of only one public school teacher, and she felt as if she provided a safe place for students to succeed academically.

The public-school teachers surveyed agreed that the CSCP in place at their schools were successful in helping their students with social-emotional growth and coping skills. Only two teachers surveyed disagreed that the current CSCP met these needs of the students. The public- school teacher in the focus group held social skills groups and helped to implement PBIS. She felt she played an active role in the success of the CSCP at her school as far as helping students with social-emotional issues.

The public-school teachers surveyed on whether or not they felt their CSCP helped students with career development yielded a variety of answers. Most of the participants surveyed were neutral toward this statement, while 7 total teachers disagreed with the statement. There were 14 teachers who did agree that their CSCP helped with career development. The teacher in the focus group indicated that she did not promote career development much as she was a music teacher.

Research Question 4 and Academic Success, Social-Emotional Growth, and Career Development

Research Question 4 compared both parents of students at privately-funded schools and publicly-funded schools and whether or not the teachers, programs, or comprehensive school counseling programs helped with academic success, career development, and social-emotional growth. Like the surveys between the two different groups of teachers, these two groups of parents differed on how they felt about the teachers and programs at their child's school.

Parents of students in privately-funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP were surveyed about whether or not the teachers or programs at their child's school helped with the academic success of students. A vast majority of the parents in this group agreed with the statement, while only 1 disagreed. They seemed to agree that they were happy with the teachers and programs currently in place at the schools their children attend. The focus group of private-school parents seemed to yield different results. The answers were varied in that some parents were comfortable with the school's teachers and programs enhancing academic success. Other parents felt that they did not know who was supposed to be helping their child nor who the counselor was supposed to be. In this instance, the surveys seemed to be dramatically different from the responses from the focus group.

When surveyed about whether they felt the teachers and programs at their child's school enhanced the social-emotional well-being of their child, all parents were in agreement, regardless of the fact that there was no formal CSCP in place. When asked about whether they felt the teachers and programs at their child's school helped enhance their child's ability to develop coping skills, the majority agreed with only two in disagreement. When surveyed

about whether they felt the teachers and programs at their child's school provided their child with the emotional support needed, a majority of parents agreed with only three in disagreement. The focus group seemed to result in many of the same responses. Some were in complete agreement that their child developed coping skills and social-emotional growth, while others had no comment or stated that there was no coping skill development.

In dealing with career development at their child's school, a majority of parents felt as if the teachers and programs in their child's school encouraged career development. The focus group, again, yielded much different responses. The parents did not agree that their teacher or counselor helped with career development unless they were in high school. The students were supposed to self-advocate. These survey responses were completely different from the focus group responses.

Summary

This qualitative study indicated that overall, parents, teachers, and students in both privately-funded and publicly-funded schools were satisfied with the Comprehensive School Counseling Programs their respective schools had in place. While the surveys submitted seemed to indicate more satisfaction across the participants, the focus groups of the parents whose students attended a privately funded school seemed to differ. Upon discussion, the parents indicated that there could be improvements made to the counseling programs at the schools where their children attended. The following chapter discusses suggestions that could be put into place following this research.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The Missouri Comprehensive School Counseling Association stated that the goal of the program was to ensure that all schools had a fully implemented comprehensive school counseling program that addressed the student academic, career, and social emotional development (MODESE, 2017). In order to address these needs, the school counselors implemented counseling curriculum, student planning, and response services. According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, there were six fundamental truths of school counseling. First, school counseling was considered a program that includes student Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs) and activities and processes to assist students in achieving the GLEs.

School counselors would be professionally certified, had materials and resources to aid in the success of the program, and had results evaluation for the students he or she worked with. Second, school counseling programs would be developmental and comprehensive. The program aided in the social emotional development, career development, and academic success of the students. Third, school counseling programs assisted all students in completing a rigorous and relevant curriculum that resulted in earning a diploma and ensuring preparation for multiple opportunities after high school. Fourth, school counseling was a team approach involving members of the staff, parents or guardians, community members, and mental health professionals. Fifth, school counseling programs developed through a systematic process of planning curriculum, designing plans, implementing lessons, evaluating done by the counselor and students, and enhancing the program. Finally, school counseling programs established leadership (MODESE, 2017).

The purpose of this qualitative study explored whether the absence of Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (CSCP) in privately-funded elementary and middle school impacted students' personal, social/emotional, and academic growth in secondary school. Surveys administered to private and public-school parents, students, and teachers and focus groups held for private school parents and teachers, and public-school teachers were used to gather data. For the purpose of this study and the participating schools and participants, as the definition of elementary school was kindergarten through fifth grade, as the definition of middle school was sixth grade through eighth grade, and the definition of secondary school (high school) was ninth grade through 12th grade.

Chapter Five discusses the four qualitative research questions based on the results of the surveys and focus groups. Research from Chapter Two was presented with the findings discussed in the research questions. Implications and recommendations were presented, as well as a summary of the research.

Findings

Chapter Four included a detailed description of the survey results and the focus group sessions. The following section discusses the findings as related to each qualitative research question. Additionally, recommendations for future research are discussed.

Research Question 1: How do high school students in privately-funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP perceive their career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes as compared to students in publicly-funded schools in Missouri with fully implemented CSCPs?

Findings

The difficulty of finding a school district with which to work and receiving surveys back from students proved to be difficult throughout this study. Had more surveys been returned, additional data would yield stronger results for either the public or private sector. Based on the surveys returned, the private school students seemed more satisfied with their teachers/counselors than the public-school students.

Students began to have career awareness in elementary school (Gibson, 2005). By gaining career awareness, the students became increasingly more aware of personal characteristics, interests, aptitudes, skills, and diversity as it related to employment. Middle school students looked at the various types of careers during elementary school. In a study by Carrey, Harrington, Martin, and Hoffman (2012), school counseling programs that follow the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model revealed significant outcomes in relation to suspension, discipline, and attendance rates, in addition to academic achievement in math and reading.

School counselors improved climate in the classrooms when they incorporated social-emotional learning in their guidance programs (Mariani, 2015). When students learned socially and emotionally, they applied what they had learned and used it to understand and process emotions, set goals, make appropriate decisions, and feel empathy. Barna and Brott (2013) stated that elementary school counselors had supported achievement in academics by implementing their guidance programs with increased academic competence. School administrators encouraged school counselors to contribute to the academic achievement of students. The school counselors' role was essential in the early school years, because if schools did not implement programs, it would negatively impact the students' success in school and in life.

Research Question 2: How do teachers in privately-funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP perceive students' career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes?

Findings

Overall, the teachers who submitted a survey and participated in the focus group were satisfied with the way their school handles students in crisis, students who need to be challenged, career development of students, social emotional development, and academic successes. They had a plan in place for most situations, regardless of not having a full-time counselor on staff.

When addressing student behavior, parents tended to be the most commonly looked upon parties, including school counselors (Johnson & Hannon, 2014). In these cases, parents tended to exaggerate how their child was behaving in school. When students self-reported on their personal experiences, school counselors saw potential influences on problematic behaviors. School counseling programs offered peer mentoring programs (Maddy-Bernstein & Dare, 1997). School counselors needed training on how to effectively deal with the various areas affecting student lives. Counseling programs should focus on adolescent self-esteem and academic achievement.

Research Question 3: How do teachers in publicly funded schools in Missouri with a fully implemented CSCP perceive students' career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes?

Findings

Based on the surveys submitted, the teachers at the public schools were mostly satisfied with the way their CSCP is helping to shape the students’ career development,

social-emotional growth, and academic successes. Having more than one person in the focus group would help expand on exactly what worked in their districts and what areas could be improved.

It was imperative for school counselors to have resources for them to accomplish their goals with their students. By developing a community resource directory, including agencies that could provide professional development, they were enhancing their programs (Cameron & Protivak, 2020). School counselors who followed the American School Counselor Association National Model not only delivered guidance lessons, they also observed students during these lessons (Johnson & Hannon, 2014). School counselors and teachers collaborated and observed student behaviors together. School counselors looked to multiple parties when gathering data on student behavior. Each party provided valuable insight the school counselor used to look further into behavioral issues.

Research Question 4: How do parents of students in privately funded schools in Missouri without a fully implemented CSCP perceive their child's or children's career development, social-emotional growth, and academic successes as compared to parents of students in publicly funded schools in Missouri with fully implemented CSCPs?

Findings

Based on the surveys submitted, both private school parents and public-school parents had such varied responses. Based on the focus group, the private school parents had mixed reviews on how they viewed the counseling programs or lack thereof. Had they fully known and understood what it would have meant for their school to have a CSCP implemented and in place, it might have made a difference in their answers. Since no one from the public-

school parents attended a focus group, it was unclear what could be improved upon within their schools or what is successful.

When addressing student behavior, parents tended to be the most commonly looked upon parties, including school counselors (Johnson & Hannon, 2014). In these cases, parents tended to exaggerate how their child was behaving in school. When students self-reported on their personal experiences, school counselors saw potential influences on problematic behaviors. School counseling programs offered peer mentoring programs (Maddy-Bernstein & Dare, 1997). School counselors needed training on how to effectively deal with the various areas affecting student lives. Counseling programs focused on adolescent self-esteem and academic achievement.

Implications

If a school has a fully implemented CSCP, the children would benefit. If students attend schools where the teachers were involved not only in academic growth, but in the social-emotional well-being as well, the students would benefit. School counselors must be knowledgeable of the policies and procedures of surround the ethical and legal statues that surround mandated reporting (Tuttle, Ricks, & Taylor, 2019). Mandated reporting was just one of the many roles that the school counselor held. School counselors provided individual counseling to students, held meetings with administrators about students with special needs, helped implement problem-solving and/or conflict resolution techniques for students, helped to schedule classes for students, and provided career counseling services for students (Hall, 2015).

If students did not have a learning delay or do not struggle emotionally with peers, they might not have utilized the school counselor. If students were diagnosed with ADHD,

need to be pulled for testing, or have divorced parents, these students will need to know where the counselor's office is located. Although students might be identified as having needs requiring the services of a school counselor, some counselor education programs struggled to properly train new counselors with their changing roles in special education (Hall, 2015). It was imperative that school counselor education programs recognized the important role the school counselor plays in the lives of those students enrolled in special education programs. School counselors developed trusting relationships with their students (Tuttle et al., 2019).

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research would benefit from working with multiple school districts, both private and public sectors, and including parents, teachers, and students. School counselors could provide support and advocacy for students with special needs and typically developing students through individual and group counseling (Hall, 2015). Additionally, school counselors could implement class lessons and interventions. Repeating this current research study in three years would be beneficial to see if the results of the parents or students in both private and public sectors would have significantly changed. When examining the adjustment from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school, students not having a need to see a school counselor could develop a need based on the newly developed life change. This potential new counseling need could alter the survey results and the outcomes of the focus groups.

Instead of meeting as a focus group, meeting on an online forum, especially for students, would be beneficial. Online, students would remain anonymous if they chose to and could potentially be more liberated to say how they truly felt. An online forum might also work better for those working parents not able to easily login to a program from their home as

opposed to going out into the community to meet somewhere for a focus group. Even though only three of the focus groups met, most of the information was obtained from these meetings. During the focus groups, the parents and teachers opened up and disclosed how they felt about the teachers and counselors at their children's schools. The surveys were a good baseline to see how to shape the questions for the focus groups.

Recommendations for Counseling Programs

Teachers often play a dual role as teacher and counselor in schools where CSCPs did not exist. In instances such as this, it was recommended that the teachers incorporate an aspect of career development, social-emotional growth, and academic success into their lesson plans. By exposing students to these components of the CSCP, they ensured that their students received services and support that might not otherwise be available to them. Transitions from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school could trigger and adjustment period in students. When fully implemented CSCPs did not exist, the teachers needed to step in to help with this adjustment period. Collaborating with schools with fully implemented CSCPs benefited both the teachers and students. Teachers who worked in schools where there is not a school counselor present need to take on multiple roles to ensure the students are prepared academically and socially-emotionally.

In schools where fully implemented CSCPs did exist, these students were exposed to a guidance curriculum that included the components of career development, social-emotional growth, and academic success. Teachers and counselors worked together to ensure that all students are being reached throughout the guidance lessons. In schools where there were enough teachers and resources available to help build a community of support for the

students, this is a crucial step in ensuring that the counseling needs of the students were being met.

Discussion

Part of the role of the school counselor was to implement academic, career development, and social-emotional interventions to individual students or groups of students (Ockerman et al., 2012). While this could be done more conveniently with a school counselor, teachers, and other school personnel can assume these duties. When counselors used academic interventions and group counseling, student academic successes improve (Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007). Small group counseling was effective in offering services to a large number of students experiencing personal, social, and/or academic trouble. Topics discussed during small group counseling developed after collaborating with teachers, administrators, and parents. School counselors often met with parents, guardians, and school personnel when coming up with plans to promote student development (Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007).

Based on this research, teachers met with parents, guardians, and school personnel whenever there was not a school counselor employed within the school (Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007). The teachers absorbed the job of the counselor, according to the parents of the students who attend private schools where counselors are not always employed. When the school counselor met with parents and teachers, they developed specific goals for the students. Based on this current research, teachers helped students develop these goals with students if a counselor was not employed or available (Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007).

Conclusion

Depending on the student and family situation, the student might not have an immediate need to see the school counselor until he or she takes the ACT junior year of high school. Whether the student attended school in the public or private sector, the experience will be different. Students could have caring teachers who acted as counselors and helped to shape them into the individual they could become. Teachers and counselors promoted positive self-talk, coping skills, and parent involvement. Students could also attend a school with a fully implemented CSCP where counseling lessons were delivered weekly. In this situation, counselors taught about career development as early as kindergarten, and the students knew they could take part in a social skills group. Parents needed to ask teachers for assistance, and teachers needed to play a dual role in a school with no counselor. Just because a CSCP was not formally implemented, it did not mean it did not exist.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions (All sent via Survey Monkey with the responses of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Student Surveys (those attending privately funded schools):

1. The teachers and programs at my school help me to succeed in my academics.
2. The teachers and programs at my school enhance my social/emotional well-being.
3. The teachers and programs at my school encourage career development.
4. The teachers and programs at my school encourage me to work with my teachers.
5. The teachers and programs at my school encourage me to make my own decisions.
6. The teachers and programs at my school increase my awareness of the changing work world.
7. The teachers and programs at my school help me to develop coping skills.
8. The teachers and programs at my school encourage me to work with my parents with regard to my education.
9. The teachers and programs at my school encourage me to seek advice from my parents.
10. The teachers and programs at my school provide me the emotional support I need.

Student Surveys (those attending publicly funded schools)

1. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school helps me to succeed in my academics.
2. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school enhances my social/emotional well-being.
3. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school encourages career development.
4. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school encourages me to work with my teachers.
5. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school encourages me to make my own decisions.
6. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school increases my awareness of the changing work world.
7. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school has helped me to develop coping skills.
8. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school encourages me to work with my parents with regard to my education.
9. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school encourages me to seek advice from my parents.
10. The Comprehensive School Counseling program at my school provides me the emotional support I need.

Appendix B

Teacher Surveys (those teaching at privately funded schools)

1. The teachers and programs at my school enhance student academic success.
2. The teachers and programs at my school enhance the social/emotional well-being of students.
3. The teachers and programs at my school encourage student career development.
4. The teachers and programs at my school encourage collaboration among the school counselor, faculty, and staff.
5. The teachers and programs at my school encourage student decision-making skills.
6. The teachers and programs at my school increase student awareness of the ever-changing work world.
7. The teachers and programs at my school enhance student ability to develop coping skills.
8. The teachers and programs at my school encourage outreach for parents/guardians regarding each child's educational development.
9. The teachers and programs at my school encourage input from parents and/or guardians.
10. The teacher and programs at my school provide teachers, parents, guardians, and students with emotional support.

Teacher Surveys (those teaching at publicly funded schools)

1. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school enhances student academic successes.
2. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school enhances the social/emotional well-being of students.
3. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school encourages student career development.
4. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school encourages collaboration among the school counselor, faculty, and staff.
5. Having a fully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school encourages student decision-making skills.
6. Having a fully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school increases student awareness of the ever-changing work world.
7. Having a fully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school helps to enhance student ability to develop coping skills.
8. Having a fully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school encourages outreach for parents/guardians regarding each child's educational development.
9. Having a fully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school encourages input from parents and/or guardians.
10. Having a fully implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my school provides teachers, parents, guardians, and students with emotional support.

Appendix C

Parent Surveys (those whose child(ren) attend privately funded schools)

1. The teachers and programs at my child's school enhance his or her academic success.
2. The teachers and programs at my child's school enhance the social/emotional well-being of my child.
3. The teachers and programs at my child's school encourage career development for my child.
4. The teachers and programs at my child's school encourage collaboration with my child, faculty, and staff.
5. The teachers and programs at my child's school encourage student decision-making skills.
6. The teachers and programs at my child's school increase student awareness of the ever-changing work world.
7. The teachers and programs at my child's school help to enhance his or her ability to develop coping skills.
8. The teachers and programs at my child's school encourage outreach for parents/guardians regarding each child's educational development.
9. The teachers and programs at my child's school encourage input from parents and/or guardians.
10. The teachers and programs at my child's school provide parents, guardians, and students with emotional support.

Parent Surveys (those whose child(ren) attend publicly funded schools)

1. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my child's school enhances his or her academic success.
2. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my child's school enhances the social/emotional well-being of my child.
3. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my child's school encourages career development for my child.
4. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my child's school encourages collaboration with my child, faculty, and staff.
5. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my child's school encourages student decision making skills.
6. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my child's school increases student awareness of the ever-changing work world.
7. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my child's school helps to enhance his or her ability to develop life coping skills.
8. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my child's school encourages outreach for parents/guardians regarding each child's educational development.
9. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my child's school encourages input from parents and/or guardians.
10. The Comprehensive School Counseling Program at my child's school provides parents, guardians, and students with emotional support.

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

The following questions were asked of the teachers:

1. How do I or my school counselor help students succeed academically?
2. How do I or my school counselor encourage career development among the students?
3. How do I or my school counselor enhance the student social/emotional well-being?
4. How do I or my school counselor encourage the students to make their own decisions?
5. How do I or my school counselor help to develop student coping skills?
6. How do I or my school counselor encourage parent involvement in the student's education?
7. How do I or my school counselor provide the students with the emotional support they need?

The following questions were asked of the parents:

1. How does my child's teacher or counselor help my child succeed academically?
2. How does my child's teacher or counselor encourage career development among my child?
3. How does my child's teacher or counselor enhance my child's social/emotional well-being?
4. How does my child's teacher or counselor encourage my child to make their own decisions?
5. How do my child's teachers or counselors help to develop coping skills?
6. How does my child's teachers or counselors encourage my involvement with my child's education?
7. How do my child's teachers or counselors provide my child with the emotional support they need?

Vitae

Natalie Rohlfing

August 2016-present STEM Teacher at Our Lady of the Pillar School

Plan curriculum for grades Preschool-7th

Apply for funding for STEM programs and equipment

Leader of Clavius Robotics Team

Teacher of Robotics elective (middle school)

August 2015-May 2016 Preschool Teacher at Our Lady of Sorrows School

Intern—Coverdell Elementary, St. Charles, MO (Fall 2014)

School Psychological Examiner Internship

Shadow the School Psychological Examiner

Administer psychological tests to students

Write reports

Attend meetings

Classroom observations

Field Placement Student-- Wren Hollow Elementary School Ballwin, MO (2013-2014)

School Counseling Student

Shadow the school Guidance Counselor

Run support groups

Individual counseling

Classroom guidance lessons

Attend IEP meetings

Community Alternatives, Missouri St. Louis, MO (2013-2015)

Clinical Supervisor

Oversee Program Managers, supervisors, and consumers.

Coordinate intake meetings with family members and/or advocates

Work directly with the Department of Mental Health and the Division of Family Services

Community Alternatives, Missouri St. Louis, MO (2008 – 2013)

Program Director over the Independent Supported Living Arrangements Program (ISLA) for Adults with Developmental Disabilities/Mental Retardation

Interview, hire, and train all new direct support staff

Person Centered Plan writing/Develop goals and outcomes for each consumer depending on the needs

Annual grant writing

Monthly reports

Monthly billing

Work directly with the Department of Mental Health and the Division of Family Services

Direct oversight of support staff and of consumers

Conduct Quality Assurance Reviews

Intake of potential new consumers

Community Alternatives, Missouri St. Louis, MO (2003 – 2008)

Qualified Mental Retardation Professional (QMRP) for Adults with Developmental Disabilities and Mental Retardation

Interview, hire, and train all new direct support staff

Person Centered Plan writing/Develop goals and outcomes for each consumer depending on the needs

Monthly reports

Direct oversight of support staff and consumers

Work directly with the Department of Mental Health and the Division of Family Services

Conduct Quality Assurance Reviews

Education

1998 – 2002 Southeast Missouri State University Cape Girardeau, MO

B.S., Psychology

Minor, Criminal Justice

2011-2014 Lindenwood University St. Charles, MO

M.A., School Counseling; School Psychological Examiner Certification

2014-present Lindenwood University St. Charles, MO

Ed.D., Instructional Leadership (expected Summer 2020)

Certifications

School Psychological Examiner Certification

NSTA Member

Google Educator Certification—Level 1 & 2

MakerBot Educator Certification