

A brief history of counseling essay sample

[Business](#), [Strategy](#)



Review of the Literature

Introduction

There have been numerous studies and investigations into prevention and intervention strategies associated with student dropout rates in the United States. A student's disengagement from school can begin as early as the first grade. Not only are the school environment and family affected, but society as well in the form of unemployment, teenaged parents, drug addiction and crime (Marcus et al., 2000).

This study focuses on the use of Student Success Teams (SST) which are used by counselors in collaboration with school administration, educators, the student, the parents and community members in order to ensure a solid educational plan and future goals of a student in need. The SST is an effective tool to help support the students and builds relationships with the parents. The SST process is suited for all levels of education through 12th grade. A primary focus of this study is the potential effect of SSTs on the student dropout rates in the United States.

To understand the roles of school counselors today, one must review a brief history of counselor qualifications, education and improvements. Denise Beesley was successful at establishing a historical basis for modern day school counseling in her report, " Teachers Perceptions of School Counselor Effectiveness: Collaborating for Student Success (2004)." The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, holds Title 1 schools accountable for the success of their students; putting pressure on school administration and staff to take proper measures in intervening with low-achievers. " A Title I school is a school that

<https://assignbuster.com/a-brief-history-of-counseling-essay-sample/>

receives Title I money, the largest single federal funding source for education” (NCLB online, n. d.). Studies have shown the positive effects of Student Success Teams on intervention, planning and implementation of student success methods (2004).

Beesley compares the results of SST counseling to past school counseling strategies. The report demonstrated the inadequate and inconsistent counseling methods prior to 1990. Beesley (2004) contributes the inadequacies to the lack of consistent graduate requirements and curriculum, as well as, minimal amounts of on the job training for counselors. It wasn't until the American Association for Counseling and Development (AACD), American School Counselors Association (ASCA) and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) combined their efforts to explore the state of counseling and redefine competencies in the field of school counseling (2004).

Once investigated, the ASCAs National Standards for School Counseling was established ensuring consistent education and training of students studying the school counseling profession (2004). The standards set by the ASCA addressed two major discretions in the field of school counseling; 1) a lack of professional identity among school counselors and 2) the inadequacies of counselors' abilities to work with all types of students within the school system (2004).

The Education Trust in 1997 utilized counselor educators, school educators and counselors, principals and professional counseling services to implement an extensive review of the school counseling profession (2004). Foremost

among their observations were that current training programs did not adequately provide counselors with the knowledge and skills they need to be effective. They also emphasized that counselors in the 21st century should serve as advocates, leaders, team members and consultants to students, parents, teachers, principals and community agencies to ensure success for all students (Beesley, 2004).

This statement encompasses the basic principles of Student Success Teams. The Education Trust (1997) review resulted in a mandate issued to target the transformation of school counselor education and training with a focus on demonstrating maximum school services to school systems (2004).

Beesley also report a study conducted in the south-western United States which surveyed certified teachers for their opinions on 1) school counselor effectiveness, 2) the perceived strengths of counselors, and 3) suggestions for improving the role function of school counselors (2004). The study found, Overall, teachers are satisfied with school counseling services and report strengths in several areas of service provision, including classroom guidance, individual and group counseling, consultation and coordination of special education services (2004).

The most satisfaction, according to Beesley, was found in elementary school systems. Other higher-level schools reported needing improvement in the areas of, career counseling, academic planning and college preparation, community referrals and public relations.

Beesley's report gives historical evidence for the need for Student Success Teams and reliable, consistent counseling. The information gathered in this report provided accurate and reliable data for the implementation of SSTs with counselors working as team players with school, family and community members involved in the success of the student.

The Roles of a School Counselor

The National Model states that school counseling programs:

- Are focused on improving academic achievement and eliminating the achievement gap;
- Operate from a mission that is connected with the school district's mission and state and national educational reform agendas;
- Operate from a formal set of student learning objectives that are connected to the ASCA National Standards, aligned with state curriculum frameworks, aligned with district standards, and based on measurable student learning outcomes;
- Are data-driven and accountable for student outcomes (ASCA, 2005).

Professional school counselors deliver a comprehensive school counseling program encouraging all students' academic, career and personal/social development and helping all students in maximizing student achievement (ASCA, 2004). A school counselor is involved in not only the students' education, but also with parents of students, school staff and the community (2004). Some of the areas in which counselors are involved include a "school guidance curriculum," in which a counselor collaborates with other

school professionals to design a structured lesson plan for students with the goal of increasing student achievement and knowledge and skill goals based on student developmental level (2004).

A second area of counselor involvement is the coordination of “ systemic activities” for individual students; working with individual students, the counselor assists the student in establishing personal goals and prepares a solid plan for the future (2004). A third area of counselor involvement is the “ responsive services” in which a counselor uses preventative or intervening measures to assist students in immediate and future needs (2004). This area of responsibility is quite extensive for the school counselor.

Areas of responsive services include; individual or group counseling, group meetings with the student’s parents, teachers or other educators as well as making referrals to outside services such as community resources or other support services (2004). Schools that participate in Student Success Teams are very active in responsive services; the SST meeting is the first step to addressing a student problem or issue with support from many sources such as parents, teachers and community members involved in the student’s educational and social well being. “ Professional school counselors develop confidential relationships with students to help them resolve or cope with problems and developmental concerns” (Delivery section, para. 5, 2004).

School counselors must be committed to the “ continual personal and professional development and are proactively involved in professional organizations promoting school counseling at the local, state and national levels” (Delivery section, para. 5, 2004). The counselor incorporates

organizational processes and concrete tools, which are representative of the school's needs (2004).

Counselor Tools

Counselors work as team players with the rest of the school staff and administration; as such, they must work with the others in creating a agreed upon plan in the beginning of the year as to how the school counseling program will be organized as well as it's year long goals (2004). Once a plan is developed, an advisory board with members such as teachers, parents, students etc. should review the plan and make any necessary adjustments or recommendations.

The school counseling plan should include “ action plans for prevention and intervention services defining the desired student competencies and achievement results” (Management Section, para 6, 2004), as well as allowing a counselor's schedule to reflect the most amount of time to be dedicated to direct service with students (2004). Most importantly, a teamwork approach needs to be implemented, updates and used with consistent communication between students, school counselor and staff and community (2004).

Student Success Team Components

The overall philosophy of the SST strategy “ is based on the belief that the school, home and community need to work together to assist the student with obstacles to his/her success in school” (SST Tips, p. 1, n. d.). The “ SST Tips” publication describes the importance of the SSTs core (permanent)

<https://assignbuster.com/a-brief-history-of-counseling-essay-sample/>

members; as well as temporary members which are asked to join a certain student's SST based on the temporary member's relative input. A point was made that was not covered in other reviewed literature regarding the importance of preparing the students for the meeting. The meeting is student focused and can get very personal, which could be stressful for the student, however, it is best to prepare the student for what might be discussed and what feelings it might evoke in the student.

An SST Example. The San Francisco Unified School District's SST " Family Brochure" (p. 1, 2002) was helpful in demonstrating the key characteristics of an SST meeting. A brief background is given as to why SST meetings are held and who is involved. A questionnaire is included in the brochure for both student and parents, as preparation for the initial SST meeting. All the information gathered from the parents and students " can be very helpful for the SST to develop an effective program" (2002) for the student involved. The parents are encouraged to participate by providing their opinions and ideas at the first meeting. It is at this initial meeting, with the input of the student, parents and other SST members, that an individualized success plan can be formed for the student.

The brochure (2002) also addresses how a family member can begin the SST process by contacting the appropriate faculty member. Parents are encouraged to contact the school with a request for an SST meeting if they feel their child is having academic or social/emotional problems. The average SST meeting structure includes;

- 1) Introduction
- 2) A discussion of the purpose of the meeting
- 3) Identifying the students strengths
- 4) Reveal background information
- 5) Discuss concerns
- 6) Open forum for possible strategies
- 7) Summarize future actions
- 8) Discuss who will be in charge of the actions planned and deadlines for action completion
- 9) Make arrangements for follow-up SST meeting

This guideline is similar for all schools using SST meetings as means of improving student achievement. (p. 1, 2002)

The San Francisco Unified School District describes SST meetings as:

A partnership between the school and home that utilizes a problem-solving approach to help students to be more successful in school, at home, and in the community (p. 1, 2002). SST and Student Achievement. School staff and administration work as team members to increase student achievement. The beginning of school accountability in 2002, with the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), was risky for the school counselor profession (Dahir and Stone, 2003).

“ Some policy makers, school board members, and school system leaders who are held accountable for increasing student achievement have viewed the counseling programs as fiscally irresponsible and as an ineffective utilization of resources” (as cited in Dahir and Stone, p. 261, 2003). However,

<https://assignbuster.com/a-brief-history-of-counseling-essay-sample/>

counselors reporting a reduction in discipline referrals as a form of accurate accountability, school counselors have become major players in Student Success Teams. According to Dahir and Stone: School counselors impact the instructional program every day by motivating students to achieve academic success through raising student aspirations, and collaborating with teachers. School counselors, partnering with all school personnel, ensure that schools are safe, drug-free learning communities. Counselors also focus their efforts on creating a climate of respect among students, faculty and community (Dahir and Stone, p. 262, 2003).

The school counselor is able to collect data about student achievement and can then “ initiate, develop and coordinate prevention and intervention systems (p. 262, 2003).” Counselors have been proven to be essential members of the school team, which has taken on “ proactive and preventative” focus (2003) teaching students “ life long learning skills” and working with them one-on-one and in a team environment.

Although Dahir and Stone’s (2003) article does not specifically discuss SST, it makes a convincing argument for the need for team intervention strategies as well as the positive change of view of school counselor necessity as being unnecessary to indispensable. A study of school-based counseling in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties in Northern California demonstrated the importance of school counselors (Katz, 2005). The three-phased study involved one-on-one interviews with school-based counselors and nurses in fifty-one public and private schools, two focus groups with public school counselors and an Internet survey of public school counselors in the San

Mateo County (2005). While focusing on preteen students, Katz describes the necessity of a school counselor in a team-based environment.

For most preteens, school occupies the greatest part of their time spent outside the home, and school counselors are one of their most important sources of emotional health support and education. The primary duties of a school counselor, according to the San Mateo counselor survey, include “ identifying and treating student emotional and behavioral problems, and facilitating communications between students, faculty and families” (Executive Summary, p. ii, 2005). School counselors have the ability to help students develop positive behaviors, which could prevent future unhealthy behaviors. School counselors working as a team benefit the student in a variety of ways. As reported in “ Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Programs (2003)”, areas of proven positive results are:

- 1) Academic achievement
- 2) Increase in grade point average
- 3) Improvement in reading
- 4) Peer relations
- 5) Personal adjustment
- 6) School attendance
- 7) School adjustment
- 8) School attitudes
- 9) School anxiety
- 10) Self-concept
- 11) Self-esteem

- 12) Self-understanding
- 13) Teacher-pupil relationships
- 14) Reduction of inappropriate behavior
- 15) Intelligence test scores
- 16) Setting realistic goals (2002).

Students most in need for SSTs are usually ones in a disadvantage as the authors' of " Project IMPROVE" (2005) wrote:

Students who come to school with acquisition and performance deficits in the areas of social skills are at-risk for impaired relationships with teachers and peers. Deficits in teacher- and peer-related adjustments are associated with teacher rejection, social rejection, school failure, low performance expectations, and limited social involvement (Walker et al., 2004).

Counselors and teachers must realize the above-mentioned disadvantages when considering the referral of a student to SST, in order to estimate the most appropriate intervention method (2005). " Student Success Teams: A Blueprint for Building Student and School-wide Progress" (2006) is an excellent publication for " a complete sequential training format in the use of Student Success Teams to resolve many individual student needs and school-wide issues" (CA Dept. of Education, para. 1, 2006). This publication is an excerpt from the California Dropout Prevention Network's publication, " SST: Student Success Teams" in 2002. Factors of SST development covered in the original SST publication included,

- Identifying key elements of an effective SST process,
- using the SST as an early predictor and tool to prevent school violence,
- helping students to meet state standards through SST intervention,
- using interventions and strategies for diverse learning environments,
- implementing positive behavioral support vs. the punishment paradigm (para. 4 #, 2006).

The Every Child Can Learn Foundation based in San Francisco, California, has conducted several recent studies of the effectiveness of SSTs. The SST Case Management Tool is discussed on their website as being an intranet communications system for school personnel when first implementing the SST process in their school or district. The SST tool:

...guides team members in the execution of the SST Process in the proper sequence of effective and thorough team meetings. It also enhances the productivity and effectiveness of SSTs by supporting on-going team collaboration and a summary of key case activities, responsible parties, and progress reports which result in the timely provision of services to the student and information to other SST participants (SST Tips, n. d.).

“ Building Relationships for Student Success: School-Family-Community Partnerships and Student Achievement in the Northwest” (Dorfman & Fisher, 2002) is a publication for parents, teachers and administration; it provides research-based information on team strategies. The research came from interviews of parents, teachers and staff from “ six high-poverty, high-minority schools” (2002). Participants of the interviews were asked to “

provide their perspective on what research-based methods look like in practice” (para. 1, 2002).

The authors’ grouped reported strategies into three themes; “ using curriculum that makes connections between students’ lives and their families and communities, giving families tools to support their children (such as teaching them strategies for enhancing learning at home, explaining school policies and expectations, and linking with human services organizations)”, and, “ building mutual, respectful relationships (2002).”

The research conducted by Dorfman and Fisher helps give a better understanding of benefits gained when incorporating family, community and school counselor (and possible members of the school administration) participation when strategizing ways to increase a student’s achievement. Measuring Success. One way to measure the success of Student Success Teams is to hear what current members of SSTs think of the overall success. Principal Katsos address SST success in her article “ Learning Communities: Success for All Students (2005)”;

Recognizing our purpose can provide an enduring source of strength for school leaders and a clear target goal for staff. Proactive purpose and constructive change ultimately benefit all students, especially those who are struggling (para. 1 2005).

Katsos continues with her observations of what it means to change over from one student success method to SST, as well as the benefits of using SST; We began by calling our dialogues Student Success Team Meetings, instead of

Child Study or Referral Team meetings. Shifting focus can be the first step to changing attitudes. The process of improving the learning environment for all students meant that we had to change the nature of professional dialogue. During a Student Success Team Meeting, or SST, the focus of meetings between teachers would shift from ‘studying challenging children’ to ‘creating successful experiences’ for all students.

In order to do this, we had to change the focus from “What is the problem with this student?” to “What can we do, as teachers, to change the environment so that this student (and others) can succeed?” During SST, teachers are now pushed to assess their own practices and learning environments; to share strategies they have tried thus far, and work together as a team to come up with new strategies. The nature of the team is to encourage one another to reflect on how they may change their own practice to encourage student success, not simply to report student difficulties (para. 9, 2005).

Marti Spero (n. d.), another advocate for SSTs, believes that with the use of SSTs, effective intervention is achieved. The process of identifying the student’s strengths, discussing past intervention strategies and clarifying problems or concerns, results in a well-formed strategy for student success (Spero, n. d.).

Negative Aspects of SST

There have been negative opinions about Student Success Teams concerning “race, bias, and overrepresentation in the referral process”

(Knotek, 2003). When referring special education students to SST, the author found that, “ minority children are referred for, identified for, and receive special education services in greater numbers than their proportion” (p. 1, 2003). Another issue found in Knotek’s (2003) study of two elementary schools was that because the teacher is most familiar with the student involved, the teacher would have majority of the input on the student. It is the counselor’s main objective to establish a success plan for the student, which as Knotek describes, is difficult with such a narrow perception of the student’s perceived abilities (2003).

...the SST process is set up in such a way that the teacher discusses his or her problems with students in front of an administrator, the counselor, the school psychologist, and fellow teachers. It therefore should come as no surprise that the study teachers’ initial descriptions of the students were the most negative and evaluative of all the team members’.

Built into this process is an inherent bind for the teacher: By acknowledging that a student is having a problem, the teacher is implicitly acknowledging that she or he is also having difficulty and may need assistance. Before a single word has been spoken, a social context is set up in which the teacher is in the position of describing either the student or him- or herself as a problem. As noted, this is problematic in a setting in which teachers’ reputations are potentially being evaluated (p. 1, 2003).

Although there is limited literature on Student Success Teams, there are ample amounts of literature supporting the implementation of success strategies such as SST. Over the past decade, there have been numerous

publications supporting the need for school counselors to work with family and community members when designing a plan for success for a student in need.

Many schools already using SSTs provide outlines for other schools to use as guides when starting their own SST process. According to existing literature, each school should individualize their own SST; however certain elements must exist, such as, the school staff that must attend the meeting (counselor etc.), strategizing a plan among all members of the meeting including the student and checking on the student's progress with follow-up meetings. A student can reach his or her full achievement potential in school and the community with the help of Student Success Teams.

SST Meetings Effectiveness on Dropout Rate Reduction

Professional school counselors at all levels make a significant, vital and indispensable contribution toward the mental wellness of “ at-risk” students. School counselors work as a member of a team with other student service professionals including social workers, psychologists and nurses, in liaison with staff and parents, to provide comprehensive developmental counseling programs for all students including those identified as being potential dropouts or at-risk (ASCA, 1999).

Improving student achievement is a priority of the school counselor profession. Research has shown that establishing preventative strategies by using teamwork such as SSTs can increase student achievement, thus reducing dropout rates (McGannon, et al., 2005).

School failure has been identified as a research priority for the school counseling profession (Dimmitt & Carey, 2003). Research identifying successful interventions for students at risk of academic failure is critical to the field (McGannon, et al., 2005). Further study reveals that low student achievement resulting in the retention of students' is another indicator of student dropout. "...students who repeated one or more grades were twice as likely to drop out than those who had never been held back, and those who repeated more than one grade were four times as likely to leave school before completion (NWREL, 1995)."

Summary

Based on existing research, there is support for the implementation of SST as a school wide counseling program. Most research links student dropouts to the low level of student achievement and student retention rate. The SST supports the raising of student achievement by designing individual goal plans with the student and his or her support group, i. e., parents, community members, teacher, administration etc.

SST counselors work with the student to find an appropriate strategy to improve the student's success in school and their future. Incorporating not only school personnel but also parents and community members allows for a partnership between student and support system, giving the student alternate avenues to success. Raising student achievement and preventing dropouts is a school wide issue, which is why Student Success Teams can be very valuable and successful in the school system.