

What Should be the Duties of the Counselor?¹

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Two years ago some of the writer's students sent a carefully prepared questionnaire to a considerable number of counselors in junior and senior high schools, for the purpose of bringing together reliable information concerning their activities. In January of this year the writer requested directors of vocational guidance in several large cities to ask counselors to keep a careful record of their activities hour by hour for a week and send him the results for study in preparing this paper. Some of these directors sent in, also, analyses of their counselors' work which had been made previously. In addition, the writer has, of course, had access to numerous papers and reports on counseling, including the excellent paper entitled "Classified List of Duties of the Vocational Counselor in Schools," by May Rogers Lane, the report of the Vocational Guidance Committee of the White House Conference, and the discussions of the counselor's work in books on guidance.

From these sources the following interesting list of actual counselor activities was prepared:

Discussing with groups of pupils questions pertaining to subject choices, curriculum choices, and vocational choices.

Teaching classes in occupational information.

Teaching classes in other school subjects.

Conducting individual interviews with pupils concerning their educational and vocational plans.

Conducting special interviews with individual pupils who are maladjusted, as shown by their scholarship records.

Studying record cards before individual interviews.

Enrolling and placing new pupils in classes.

Making program adjustments for those pupils who fail, those whose physical condition makes it unwise for them to carry a full program, those who are promoted during the semester, and those gifted pupils who need to carry more than the regular load of school work.

Handling discipline cases referred to the counselor by teachers because of poor adjustment to classroom conditions.

Handling absence and tardiness cases.

Approving requests for transfer to other schools and checking the pupil out of the organization.

Assisting pupils to make personal and social adjustments in such matters as dress, personal habits, relations with fellow-pupils, and the like.

Granting permission to leave school at irregular times or to come late on account of illness, to go to the placement office, the dental clinic, other clinics, etc.

Assisting in construction of the

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school's program of classes each semester.

Furnishing the principal with information as to probable size of classes, number in each course, and definite personnel for each group.

Having charge of all school assembly programs.

Granting lunch permits.

Having charge of school clubs and the school social program, including dances.

Conferring with parents who come to the school.

Obtaining information from their homes concerning pupils who are doing unsatisfactory work.

Providing free books, supplies, and other special aid to needy pupils.

Keeping a list of available positions for pupils.

Dealing directly with outside agencies regarding placement of pupils leaving school.

Referring pupils to central placement office.

Explaining work certificate requirements.

Helping pupils obtain part-time and after-school employment as a means of keeping them in school.

Keeping records of interviews.

Presiding over study halls.

Lending money from school loan fund and receiving unpaid loans.

Conferring with principal, assistant principal, department heads, teachers, school psychologist, school nurse, school physician, attendance officers, representatives of social agencies, and others.

Gathering and preparing vocational information material.

Supervising school publications.

Performing corridor duty.

Assisting the librarian to make as large a contribution as possible to pupil guidance.

Assisting the teachers in procuring and imparting occupational information.

Giving intelligence and educational achievement tests.

Assigning backward pupils to and releasing them from remedial work in school subjects, such as reading or mathematics.

Here is, indeed, a formidable list of things which counselors do. It is obvious that many of these are essential to an effective guidance program and may properly be expected of a counselor. It is equally obvious that some of them are routine administrative or clerical matters which have nothing whatever to do with counseling. Evidently, under the guise of setting up a counseling program, some junior and senior high school principals have unloaded a large number of their office duties upon the counselor. At the meeting of this association seven years ago the writer called attention to this danger, pointing out that since the counselor has many hours each week without regular class assignments, he is likely to be considered the most readily available person for the odd jobs of the school. The danger seems still to be with us.

Our problem at this time appears to be to eliminate from the above list those items which cannot properly be considered as duties of a counselor, and to classify in a convenient manner the remaining items with such additions as may seem wise. In attacking this problem it is well to have in mind a fairly definite conception of what is meant by counseling. For this purpose the following brief statement will serve:

Counseling is the process of aiding an individual by conferring with him (a) to discover and evaluate his personal assets, liabilities, and possibilities in terms of the requirements and opportunities of courses of action which are open to him, and (b)

to make and carry through plans which are based upon this evaluation. In school counseling most of the courses of action dealt with are concerned directly or indirectly with the individual's vocational and educational interests.

Keeping in mind this conception of counseling, the following classified list of duties of the counselor is proposed:

A. Interviewing or conferring with individual pupils—

1. To gain information which the counselor will need concerning the individual's interests, aptitudes, and limitations.
2. To aid the pupil in discovering his own aptitudes and limitations.
3. To enlarge the pupil's knowledge of the opportunities and requirements of occupations which interest him.
4. To help him decide what occupation to follow, what subjects to take, what curriculum to pursue, what higher educational institution to enter.
5. To aid him in overcoming remediable personality handicaps and in taking advantage of personality assets.
6. To aid him in taking an inventory of his health in relation to his educational and vocational plans, and in taking proper steps to keep himself in good physical condition.
7. To aid him in overcoming financial obstacles which interfere with his educational and vocational plans. (After school and vacation employment, loan funds, scholarship funds, and grants and gifts through various agencies in case of immediate need.)
8. To check up the preparation of senior high school pupils who plan to go to college with the

entrance requirements of the colleges they wish to enter.

9. To advise the pupil who is about to leave school concerning the steps to be taken in obtaining suitable employment.
 10. To aid and encourage the pupil who is leaving school to make a plan for further preparation after employment begins.
- B. Meeting pupils in groups with the object of acquainting them—
1. With the nature and general requirements of the next higher grade or school.
 2. With the service provided by the counselor's office.
 3. With the steps necessary in order to obtain an employment permit and with the laws affecting employment of young workers.
 4. With occupational information on a group basis in cases where a number are interested in the same occupation. (This sometimes involves trips through industrial and business establishments.)
 5. With occupational information through regular class study of this subject.
- C. Conferring with teachers and other members of the school staff—
1. In order to obtain information concerning individual pupils.
 2. In order to enlist cooperation in meeting the needs of a particular pupil for health, personality, educational or vocational adjustment.
 3. In order to enlist the cooperation of the teacher in acquainting his classes with information concerning occupations which are related to the subject he teaches.
 4. In order to insure adequate li-

brary facilities for pupils who wish to learn about the entrance requirements and courses offered by certain higher educational institutions, or about specific occupations.

5. In order to encourage more attention by teachers to the exploratory values of their work and to secure from them more complete reports concerning pupils' interests and characteristics revealed by these experiences.

D. Conferring with special officers of the school system—

1. With the research bureau or psychological clinic with reference to giving intelligence, achievement, and aptitude tests and reporting upon test results.
2. With the attendance departments concerning attendance records and visits of attendance officers and visiting teachers to homes of pupils.
3. With the school health department concerning health examinations of particular pupils and the findings of such examinations.
4. With the central placement office concerning the placement of pupils who are about to leave school and concerning the success of these pupils after they have been in employment for a time.

E. Conferring with parents—

1. In order to acquaint parents with the school's efforts to help their children make wise educational and vocational plans.
2. In order to obtain additional information needed in interviews with pupils.
3. In order that there may be agreement and cooperation between school and home in the help

given pupils in making their plans.

F. Conferring with representatives of industry, business, and the professions—

1. In gathering information concerning occupations for use in the schools.
2. In arranging for occasional talks by successful workers in different occupations to groups of pupils.
3. In arranging for individual boys and girls to interview workers engaged in occupations which the boys and girls are thinking of entering.
4. In arranging for groups of pupils to visit industrial and business establishments.

G. Working with social agencies of the community outside the school system, such as boy and girl scout organizations, Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A., men's and women's service clubs, parent-teachers associations, juvenile court, welfare, and other agencies in ways that will—

1. Keep these organizations informed concerning the school's counseling program.
2. Gain needed information concerning particular pupils. (Sometimes these agencies have much information concerning individual pupils which would be of great value to the counselor.)
3. Obtain information as to the guidance activities of these various organizations and the relation of their activities to the work of the school.
4. Bring about a closer coordination of guidance effort in the community.
5. Focus the efforts of other agencies with those of the school upon difficult guidance cases.

H. In relation to records—

1. To see that satisfactory cumulative records for each pupil are readily available and kept up to date.
2. To record significant items from each interview with him.
3. To study a pupil's record carefully before each interview with him.
4. To send on each pupil's record to placement office or higher school.

I. With former pupils—

1. To provide opportunities for interviews with former pupils who are in need of counseling.

Counselors should be expected to perform some other duties than those essential to counseling. In certain cities they teach classes in occupations. The arrangement for counselors to do this teaching, if it does not take time which is supposed to be used for counseling, is usually valuable to the guidance program as a whole and to the regular work of the counselors. In fact, this arrangement has some decided advantages over full-time counseling. In small schools, those who do

counseling must devote most of the day to teaching regular school subjects. In all schools, counselors should enter into the general life of the school, serving on committees and the like. It should be recognized, however, that teaching classes is not counseling, even if they are classes in occupations, nor are these other duties which pertain to the general life of the school. And superintendents and principals who are genuinely interested in guidance will do all that they can under the conditions which exist to allow the counselor time for real counseling duties.

If there were time, it would be interesting to give attention, also, to the distribution of the counselor's time among his various duties. Of course, the very nature of counseling is such that the individual interview must be considered the heart of the counselor's work. And reports received on counselor activities indicate that this is becoming more generally recognized by school authorities. However, there are striking differences in different cities as to the proportion of counselor time actually given to interviewing individual pupils. A comprehensive study of this matter might very well be undertaken.