

METHODS BEING USED IN THE STATE OF WISCONSIN TO
MOTIVATE STUDENTS TO SEEK COUNSELING

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to survey methods used by high school guidance counselors to motivate students to seek out counseling.

An open-ended questionnaire was sent to high school guidance directors in ten different geographical locations in the state of Wisconsin. The open-ended questionnaire was also used by the investigator in personal interviews with guidance directors from ten Milwaukee, Wisconsin, area high schools.

Conclusions made as a result of the study were (1) All counselors indicated the need for using some type of method to motivate students to seek out counseling. (2) All counselors used a combination of methods to motivate students to seek out counseling. (3) Group counseling was the most widely used method of motivating students to seek out counseling. (4) Even though all counselors used positive methods of motivation, the methods did not seemingly motivate most of the school drop outs to seek counseling on their own.

Recommendations made as a result of this study were:

- (1) All school counselors should employ a combination of methods to motivate students to seek out counseling.
- (2) That counselors not using any methods make use of the methods reported in this paper.
- (3) All counselors devise new methods to motivate those students who do not seek counseling and ultimately drop out of school.
- (4) Research be done with high school drop outs as to their feelings toward guidance counselors and the guidance services available to them.

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CHAPTER I

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The school counselor in today's educational system has a difficult task to perform with the prevailing high counselor-student ratio. With the present ratio, counselors are kept busy with the routine tasks of program making, motivating underachievers, and in many school systems, teaching one or more classes a day. As a result of the above duties, students who need individual attention on personal problems and who are not referred by either the teacher or administrator, will not be identified and given help by the school counselors.

A sound method of motivating students to see the counselor, when they are concerned about something, may avert potential disciplinary problems, and may also result in the reduction of school dropouts.

The purpose of this study was to survey methods being used by guidance counselors to encourage students to seek counseling in high schools with a student population of 400 or more in the state of Wisconsin.

The method used in conducting the survey was the investigator interviewing counselors from ten Milwaukee, Wisconsin, area high schools, and sending questionnaires to ten different geographic locations in the state of Wisconsin.

The anticipated outcome was that the results of the

study would provide information and suggestions on methods that could be used to motivate students to seek counseling, therefore resulting in a positive counselor-counselee relationship from which the benefits of seeing the counselor on a routine basis can be achieved, and potential disciplinary problems and dropouts could possibly be prevented.

The problem investigated in this study was to survey methods used by guidance counselors to motivate students to seek counseling in ten Milwaukee, Wisconsin, area high schools and from ten high schools representing different geographical locations in the state of Wisconsin.

A selected review of literature pertinent to the need for counselors to motivate students to seek out counseling is presented in Chapter II.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

A review of research reveals that although little research has been conducted in methods that could be used to motivate students to seek out counseling, extensive material has been written, and opinions voiced on the needs and problems of all students.

Boy and Gibson (1) related that, in a typical high school, a student generally sees the counselor on a routine basis, or sometimes the student is referred to the counselor by the administration, or a teacher. This type of referral could be termed negative, in that someone of authority is forcing the student to see the counselor; therefore, the attitude of the student toward the counselor may be hostile. For example: Many times in the teacher referral of a student to the counselor, the referral pertains to misbehavior in the classroom. By a sound method of motivating students to see the counselor, when they are concerned about something, negative referrals could possibly be avoided, while positive counseling may avert potential disciplinary problems, and may also result in the reduction of school dropouts.

Rothney (9) states:

"... basic to the idea of counseling is the belief that to every youth there comes a time when he wants to talk things over at some length with someone who

is neither a teacher, preacher, principal, nor parent. He wants to be heard by someone who is not by definition and title primarily a subject matter specialist, a moralizer, a boss, or a person on whom he has long been dependent. And he wants to talk things over even though he has not exhibited deviant behavior or suffered from serious difficulties. He wants to discuss his plans with someone who understands what is involved in youth's planning and who can, with as little bias as possible, consider the problems without time restrictions."

Mathewson (7) has stated that: "... the key purpose of guidance is to improve the capability of the individual, to understand self and environment and to deal with self-situations effectively." If this is the goal, then it is necessary for a positive counselor-counselee relationship to exist so that all students will feel free to release their anxieties, emotions, and thoughts before behavior problems ensue.

The need of motivation for the student to seek the counselor seems to be implied by McDaniel (8) when he states that "... most full time counselors in American schools have case loads in excess of 600 during the school year." This is an impossible load. How should the school guidance worker determine which pupils need individual attention? Should the counselor depend on teacher referrals, pupil initiative, or parental pressure? McDaniel pointed out in an evaluation of guidance services of a suburban high school of 1000 students in California, "That sophomore and junior year counseling is limited to program making and 'jacking up' of deficient

students." This implies again that students with personal problems are being neglected.

The need for a method of student motivation to seek the counselor in early school years is brought out by Hill (4) in a study done by the State Department of Education in Ohio which showed that seniors tended to be more aware of the various guidance services than students in the earlier grades.

Duter (3), Superintendent Wisconsin School for Girls, delivered a speech at the first annual Wisconsin School Health Education Workshop which further pointed out the need for counselors to motivate students to seek out counseling. Mr. Duter related that most of the girls in the school came from fatherless families, with a family size from six to thirteen children. Most of the girls had not had a real relationship with an adult nor had a genuine interest shown in them by a responsible adult. He went on to state that seventy-five percent of the girls had never had any contact with the school guidance counselors.

Another aspect in which positive counseling may be deemed more helpful than routine counseling is that of diminishing the number of school dropouts. In a research study done on the types of dropouts, Wendling and Elliot (11) classified them in the following way: (1) retarded dropouts, (2) involuntary dropouts, and (3) intellectually capable dropouts. If sound methods of student motivation to see the counselor

were available, perhaps most of these students could have been retained in the school, especially the dropout group classified as the intellectually capable, as these are students who have the requisite abilities to do passing or even superior work in high school, but who may or may not be making satisfactory academic progress. These students leave school for reasons other than low ability.

The experimental study of potential dropouts done by Davis (2) was to determine what the effects of a deliberate attempt to inculcate a feeling of worth in potential dropouts would have on school behavior. In conducting the study Davis used forty-two graduating junior high freshman from an unmentioned school district. The forty-two freshmen were identified as students most likely to drop out of school in their sophomore year. The students were randomly divided into two groups. Group A received special treatment effects. Group B was exposed to the usual routine educational procedures in the high school. The special treatment effects for Group A were: (1) Teachers established friendly relationships with the students. (2) Students were invited to discuss with the staff, topics having to do with mental health, juvenile delinquency, holding power of schools, and under and over achievers. (3) Students were taken on field trip. (4) Students received formal and informal counseling interviews. The results of Davis' (2) study indicated that three

students from the B group dropped out of school prior to the end of their sophomore year while none of the A group students dropped out. The A group students received higher grades and were referred less often to the office for disciplinary reasons.

This study also indicates that potential dropouts need and desire counseling, but apparently the guidance programs are not motivating them to seek it.

Sando (10) did a study to determine reasons for student dropout in high school. In conducting the study Sando interviewed students who had dropped out of high school. The results of the investigation indicated that the basic guidance need of this group was the feeling that someone in the school really cares about them, as people and genuinely wants to help them. A warm personal relationship apparently is the most important factor in keeping the students in school. Sando's study emphasized the need for counselors to promote methods for students to seek counseling.

After reviewing educational literature the following methods of motivating the student to seek counseling were found. At Downey, California, the West Junior High School issues a fourteen-page illustrated booklet on the guidance program. According to Marshall (6), the booklet has proved a helpful aid in giving a picture of the counseling program. Orientating junior high school students to guidance and

counseling, Boy and Gibson (1) use group guidance meetings, playlets which are presented in group guidance meetings; filmstrips aimed at explaining the guidance program, and perhaps most important, displaying friendliness when passing students in the halls. Hutson (5) states "to help pupils at various rungs in the educational ladder acquire that information which is necessary to making of wise choices and easy adjustment, publications have been useful."

Summarizing the need for counselors to promote methods for students to seek counseling, Rothney (9) says that good counselors do not wait until problems have reached the acute stage. Rather they are concerned with the development of youth and they are aware that, in the process, many problems must arise. Good counselors try to help youth to anticipate problems and to plan ahead so that they can be avoided or adequately met.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to survey methods being used to motivate students to seek counseling in high schools with a student population of 400 or more in the state of Wisconsin.

The sources for data used in this study were counselors representing different geographical locations in the state of Wisconsin. In selecting the counselors to whom the questionnaire would be sent, a random draw was made from high schools in each of ten geographical locations with a student enrollment of 400 or more. A list of the schools included in the study is shown in Appendix A.

The procedures used in collecting data for this study were the investigator interviewing counselors from ten Milwaukee, Wisconsin, area high schools, and the sending of questionnaires by mail to ten high school counselors representing varied geographical locations in the state of Wisconsin.

Construction of Questionnaire

The open-end questionnaire and accompanying instructions used in the study explained the purpose of the survey, and the reason for this survey by the investigator. To obtain a high percentage of questionnaire returns the investigator

used a follow-up two weeks after sending the questionnaires. The follow-up consisted of sending letters to each counselor calling attention to the questionnaire. If there was not a response after the letter had been sent, post cards were sent reminding each counselor of the questionnaire. If there were still no response, the investigator sent another questionnaire and personal letter to each counselor. There was a 100% return on the questionnaires. A copy of the questionnaire is shown in Appendix B.

Administration of the Interview Schedule

The researcher contacted the selected interviewees for the study by telephone. They were asked if they would be willing to take part in the study by having an interview in their office. The researcher also asked the counselors if they objected to the interview being tape recorded. None of the counselors objected. Interview appointments were made with all of the head counselors in the selected sample.

In each interview situation, the counselor was informed that the individual schools would not be identified as such in the report of the study.

In conducting the interview the researcher used the same questionnaire that was sent to counselors from ten high schools representing different geographic locations in the state of Wisconsin.

Upon completion of the interview schedule the interviewees

usually made additional remarks concerning counseling in general.

The researcher in his own office, played back the interviewee's responses and recorded the responses on the questionnaire.

Analysis of the Data

The central problem of this study was to determine what positive methods, those which stimulated students to seek counseling on their own initiative, were being used by guidance counselors in the state of Wisconsin.

After the questionnaires were returned to the investigator and the ten interviews had been completed, a list was prepared of all methods that had been reported. The list, when studied, contained nine separate methods that counselors used to motivate students to seek out counseling. The nine methods were assigned a rank value according to frequency of appearance. For example, if thirteen counselors used group counseling as a method, the highest number for any one method used, group counseling was assigned a rank one. The nine methods were set forth in this paper according to rank of those methods most frequently used to those most infrequently used in motivating students to seek counseling. A description of each method used to motivate students to seek counseling on their own is as follows:

Method	Description
Group Counseling	Counselors, through visits to homerooms and classrooms make the students aware of counseling services available to students.
Announcements	Counselors, through the use of bulletins and public address systems, invite students to come to the guidance office.
Get-Acquainted Interviews	Counselors used "get-acquainted interviews" to establish rapport and to promote the student to seek counseling on his own.
Bulletin Boards	Counselors, through the use of informative bulletin boards which described the counseling services available to all students, encouraged students to seek counseling.
Open Door Policy	Students are invited to come to the guidance office during study halls without an appointment.
Films and Film Strips	Through the use of films and film strips, students are made aware of the counseling services available to them.
Guidance Newsletter	By means of a monthly guidance newsletter, students are informed of the counseling services available.
School Newspaper	Written articles for the school newspaper inform students of the counseling services available and being rendered to the student body.

Summer Visitation

Counselors in one school district visited the homes of future freshman to plan programs and inform students of guidance services.

Chapter IV deals with the results of the study. Tables indicate the methods used, the raw number of counselors using the methods, the percentage of counselors using the methods, and the ranking of each method.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Questionnaires were prepared and sent to ten counselors representing varied geographical locations in the state of Wisconsin. In addition, the questionnaire was used as a guideline in interviews conducted with head counselors from ten Milwaukee, Wisconsin, area high schools.

The counselors surveyed in this study were asked some questions pertaining to dropouts and counseling in general. They were asked the question of what method or methods they used to motivate students to seek out counseling on their own. In order to disguise the real motive of the survey, the question was rephrased and asked a second time. The answers to both questions correlated.

A copy of the questionnaire is shown in Appendix B.

The result of the survey revealed nine separate methods of motivating students to seek out counseling used by the twenty counselors in the survey.

The number and percentage of counselors using a specific method is given in Table I.

The methods are set forth in Table II according to rank, rank 1 being the most commonly used method through rank 8 and 9 being the least commonly used methods.

TABLE I

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF COUNSELORS USING A SPECIFIC
METHOD OF MOTIVATING STUDENTS TO SEEK OUT COUNSELING

Method	Counselors Using Method (n 20)	Percentage of Counselors Using Method
Group Counseling	13	65.00
Announcements	11	55.00
Get-Acquainted Interviews	9	45.00
Bulletin Boards	7	35.00
Open Door Policy	6	30.00
Films and Film Strips	4	20.00
Guidance Newsletter	2	10.00
School Newspaper	1	5.00
Summer Visitation at Homes of Prospective Freshmen	1	5.00

The group counseling method was reported as the most used method of motivating students to seek out counseling with thirteen of the twenty counselors reporting that they used this method. Announcements was used by eleven counselors and get-acquainted interviews was reported as used by nine counselors. The fourth most used method of motivating students, bulletin boards, was reported by seven, while the open door policy was used by six. The use of films and film strips was used by four of the twenty counselors. The

guidance newsletter was used by two of the twenty counselors and was ranked seventh. Use of the school newspaper was reported by one counselor, as was summer visitation at the homes of prospective freshmen.

In terms of percentages the uses of the nine kinds of methods ranged from a high of 65.00 percent for group counseling to a low of 5.00 percent for use of the school newspaper and summer visitation at the homes of prospective freshmen.

The investigator ranked each method according to frequency of appearance. Rank one being the most commonly used by the counselors to encourage students to seek out counseling on their own, to rank eight and nine being the least used method by counselors. Table II lists the methods and rank.

TABLE II
METHODS AND RANK

Method	Rank
Group Counseling	1
Announcements	2
Get-Acquainted Interviews	3
Bulletin Boards	4
Open Door Policy	5
Films and Film Strips	6

Method	Rank
Guidance Newsletter	7
School Newspaper	8
Summer Visitation at Homes of Prospective Freshmen	9

Although the main purpose of this study was to survey methods used by guidance counselors to motivate students to seek out counseling, another result was attained. This result pertained to the number of dropouts per school who had not voluntarily sought counseling prior to dropping out.

Fifteen counselors responded to questions three and six; what is the approximate student dropout rate at your school per year and of the student dropouts, how many of them voluntarily arranged to have a meeting with you or other counselors on the school staff? All counselors responded to question two; what is the present student enrollment in your school?

The average school enrollment was one thousand five hundred and seventy-two pupils. The average dropout rate was three percent or when converted to number of students, was forty-seven dropouts per year. Of the forty-seven dropouts, approximately twenty percent, or nine students, had voluntarily arranged to see a counselor, while the other thirty-eight did not.

In summary, then, it was found that all counselors used one or a combination of methods to motivate students to seek out counseling, with group counseling being ranked the most widely used method, announcements and get-acquainted interviews ranked second and third most widely used methods, bulletin boards and open door policy ranked as the fourth and fifth most widely used methods, films and film strips were ranked as the sixth most commonly used method, while use of the guidance newsletter was ranked seventh, and finally the school newspaper and summer orientation ranked eighth and ninth.

The study revealed that eighty percent of the school dropouts or thirty-eight students per school did not voluntarily seek out counseling services.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to survey methods being used by guidance counselors to motivate students to seek counseling in high schools with a student population of 400 or more in the state of Wisconsin.

The study was conducted by mailing open-ended questionnaires to high school guidance directors in ten different geographical locations in the state of Wisconsin. A one hundred percent return on all questionnaires was achieved. The open-ended questionnaire was used in interviewing guidance directors from ten Milwaukee, Wisconsin, area high schools.

The results of the study revealed nine separate methods of motivating students to seek out counseling. All counselors responded to having used one or more methods of motivating students to seek out counseling, with group counseling being the most widely used method.

The methods were set forth in this paper according to rank, rank 1 being the most commonly used method through rank 9 being the least common method.

Although the main purpose of this study was to survey methods used by guidance counselors to motivate students to

seek out counseling, it was also found that eighty percent of the school dropouts or thirty-eight students per school did not voluntarily seek counseling services.

A weakness of the study was the limited amount of questionnaires sent out. A larger sampling of the states counselors could have resulted in a more comprehensive survey.

Conclusions

Conclusions arrived at as a result of this survey are:

(1) All counselors indicated the need for using some type of method to motivate students to seek out counseling. (2) All counselors used a combination of methods to motivate students to seek out counseling. (3) Group counseling was the most widely used method. (4) Even though all counselors used positive methods of motivation, the methods did not seemingly motivate most of the school dropouts to seek counseling on their own.

Recommendations

The results of this study recommend that (1) All school counselors employ a combination of methods to motivate students to seek out counseling. (2) Counselors not using any methods of motivation make use of the methods reported in this paper. (3) All counselors devise new methods to motivate those students who do not seek counseling and ultimately drop out of school, and (4) more research be done with high school

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dropouts as to their feelings toward counselors and the counseling services available.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

ALPHABETIZED LIST OF SCHOOLS IN THE SAMPLE

<u>School</u>	<u>Location</u>
Central High School	La Cross
Custer High School	Milwaukee
East High School	Green Bay
East High School	Madison
Goodrich High School	Fond du Lac
Lincoln High School	Milwaukee
Memorial High School	Eau Claire
Menomonee Falls High School	Menomonee Falls
Nathan Hale High School	West Allis
New Berlin High School	New Berlin
Nicollet High School	Glendale
North Division High School	Milwaukee
Prairie du Chien High School	Prairie du Chien
South Milwaukee High School	South Milwaukee
Sparta High School	Sparta
Superior High School	Superior
Tremper High School	Kenosha
Wausau High School	Wausau
Whitnall High School	Hales Corners

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN STUDY

1. How many full time counselors are employed in you high school? _____
2. What is the present enrollment in your school? _____
3. What is the approximate student drop out rate at your school per year? _____
4. What method or methods do you use to encourage all students to seek your assistance if the students feel they need counseling?
5. What major reasons in your opinion, cause students to drop out of school? If you can classify them in order of the most frequent to the least frequent, would you do so?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
6. Of the student drop outs, how many of them voluntarily arranged to have a meeting with you or other counselors on the school staff? _____
7. How often if assigned a fixed number of students, do you see them per school year? _____

8. If assigned a fixed number of students, how much time is allowed each student per session? _____
9. Are disciplinary problems directed to your office or elsewhere?
10. What procedures do you use to stimulate students to seek counseling, when they have problems of an educational or emotional nature?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
11. In your estimation, do you feel students at your school feel free and are able to see you at any time during school hours if they feel they need guidance and counseling?

If there is a lack of writing space for any of the questions, would you please use the reverse side of each questionnaire sheet. Thank you.

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