A Sixth-Grade Classroom Guidance Lesson:

The Role of a School Counselor + Bullying Prevention

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Abstract

A school counselor’s role encompasses a wide range of skill and ability. According to the American School Counselor’s Association (ASCA), school counselors are trained to not only counsel, but to also be educators within the classroom setting. As a result, ASCA programs require school counselors to work with administration in implementing classroom guidance lessons throughout the school year. This specific classroom guidance lesson targets sixth-grade students at Shepard Middle School (SMS) in Durham, North Carolina. This paper seeks to highlight its rationale, procedures, the standards it addresses, as well as the theoretical orientation and techniques that are to be used.

Keywords: school counseling, classroom guidance, middle school, bullying
Introduction

Middle school has proved to be a difficult transition for sixth-grade students (Akos, 2006). Therefore, it is crucial that incoming students are aware of the counseling department and who can provide them with assistance in multiple assets of their lives. Additionally, kids entering middle school may be unaware of the prevalence and seriousness of bullying within the middle school halls. This plan seeks to offer students information on both what a school counselor is and how to access one, as well as what bullying is, how to prevent it, and how to seek out help when in a dangerous situation.

Rationale

Transitioning to middle school can be challenging for a variety of reasons: difficult classes, a new friendship pool, a change in school dynamics, a brand new set of teachers, exploration of one’s own unique identity, changes in puberty… the list at times can seem endless (Akos, 2006). As a result, it is critical that incoming sixth-grade students are aware of the help that is available to them as they face these obstacles, specifically the help of their school counselors.

ASCA (2014) states that it is important for school counselors to assist students in the academic, social/emotional, and career domains so that students may reach their full potential in all areas of their lives. Therefore, counselors must not only make themselves visible to the student body, but must also inform students of the counselor role, how counselors can be reached, and where the counseling offices are located. Ultimately, a classroom guidance plan that teaches incoming middle school students about these topics would be an effective tool in accomplishing this goal.
When implementing this classroom guidance plan within the sixth-grade classrooms, it would also be beneficial for counselors to weigh in on one challenge sixth-grade students are particularly susceptible to. According to Cunningham & Whitten (2007), bullying is most common in grades six through eight, otherwise known as middle school. This act of “bullying” is considered repeated, intentional, aggressive (or sometimes non-aggressive) behavior aimed at one person by another person or group of people with the goal of hurting that person in one way or another (Fitzpatrick, Dulin, & Piko, 2007; Patton, Hong, Williams, & Allen-Meares, 2013; Peleg-Oren, Cardenas, Comerford, & Galea, 2012; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). There are multiple forms of bullying, two of the most common being verbal and physical. Other forms include social bullying, emotional bullying, and cyber bullying (Patton, Hong, Williams, & Allen-Meares, 2013; Peleg-Oren, Cardenas, Comerford, & Galea, 2012). These different forms change as students themselves grow and mature in different ways (Cunningham & Whitten, 2007).

Teachers and faculty should take bullying seriously because the act of bullying can have a crucial impact on the future of both the victim and the bully. Victims of bullying are often more likely to become depressed, develop lower levels of self esteem, and exhibit more suicidal behaviors and thoughts than other students (Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2013; Cunningham & Whitten, 2007). Likewise, the bully tends to experience negative consequences as a result of their bullying other students. Research has shown that bullies are more likely to be convicted of crime in their futures as well as experience decreases in academic achievement (Patton, Hong, Williams, & Allen-Meares, 2013). Additionally, bullies tend to become less engaged in school activities and the school
community (Cunningham & Whitten, 2007). For both the bully and the victim, bullying can also lead to future acts of aggression such as in marriage, in the workplace, as well as other illegal offenses such as sexual harassment (Cunningham & Whitten, 2007). If school counselors could reach out to these students, they could potentially create better student futures. Many schools agree that taking this more proactive role in combating bullying rather than reactive role is the first step in overcoming such behavior.

**Multicultural considerations**

The demographics of SMS are approximately 85% black, 10% Hispanic, and 5% Other. These statistics are crucial because research shows that exposure to bullying is more prevalent among ethnic groups, particularly the African American youth (Fitzpatrick, Dulin, & Piko, 2007; Patton, Hong, Williams, & Allen-Meares, 2013). This same research reports that physical fighting is the most common form of bullying among this group. What is more interesting is that African American youth tend to fall highly on both the perpetrator side and the victim side of bullying (Patton, Hong, Williams, & Allen-Meares, 2013). Fitzpatrick, Dulin, & Piko (2007) say this could be due to the home environment such as family violence or family financial burdens. Noting the high percentage of African American students at SMS, this could indicate that bullying, especially physical fighting, will not only be common among students, but it may also be encouraged by student bystanders.

**ASCA Standards**

This is a list of the ASCA Standards that will be covered in this classroom guidance plan:
• A:A2.3 Use communications skills to know when and how to ask for help when needed
• A:B1.4 Seek information and support from faculty, staff, family and peers
• PS:A1.6 Distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior
• PS:C1.6 Identify resource people in the school and community and know how to seek their help

**North Carolina Essential Standards**

This is a list of the North Carolina Guidance Essential Standards that will be covered in this classroom guidance lesson:

• RED.SE.3.1 Use oral and written communication skills to share information with others.

• EEE.SE.1.1 Contrast appropriate and inappropriate physical contact.

**Logistics**

This classroom guidance plan is designed for a 50-minute, two-part session in which the class (approximately 15-20 students) will learn from the school counselor. Because SMS implements a classroom guidance plan to the sixth grade at the beginning of every school year, teachers are flexible in their planning and allow the counselors to work in their lessons without any problems.

Prior to setting the classroom guidance dates, the SMS school counselors communicated with teachers in setting up time blocks that the counselors could implement the plan. Additionally, counselors interviewed teachers and sat in on classes in order to gain a better understanding of class management and how to guide a classroom to successful and appropriate school behavior.
Theoretical Orientation and Techniques

The technique used in this classroom guidance plan will be psychoeducational. This means that the counselor will provide students with information on the role of a school counselor and how to make SMS a bullying-free zone. However, because the counselors will most likely individually counsel many of the students, it is important that the counselor does everything in his or her power to further the client-counselor relationship, even in the classroom environment. This includes incorporating some cognitive behavior therapy when engaging the students in discussion and classroom activities. For example, rather than just informing the students about the importance of anti-bullying procedures, it is important that the counselor also places some focus on what students are feeling, such as the fear of starting at a new school or anxiety in possibly being the victim in a bullying situation. With this theory, the counselor could change a cognition (such as the fear of being bullied) so as to change a behavior (such as the refusal to help someone who they see is being bullied) (Griffin, 2014). These techniques are important because they will both inform students as well as address valid concerns and feelings they may be experiencing. This is also significant because establishing a solid rapport and relationship in the classroom may prompt students to seek out the counselors more often.

Because cognitive behavioral therapy is based on a psychoeducational model, it fits well with this teaching curriculum in which the counselor will balance exploring student feelings with informing students on a school counselor’s role and bullying (Griffin, 2014).
The counselor may also choose to incorporate some solution-focused counseling techniques, such as identifying exceptions, into the classroom guidance plan. This would allow students to discuss when past experiences with previous counselors benefited them in other areas of their lives. The counselor may also ask students about people in their lives who have noticed these positive changes and how they responded to them. In turn, the counselor will cheerlead the students when they talk about previous positive experiences regarding counseling or when they stood up to a bully (Bolton, 2014). This is crucial because it allows the counselor to place focus on student strengths and the positive experiences students have had, possibly giving them more incentive to seek out counseling when needed or help prevent bullying at SMS.

**Evaluation Plan**

This classroom guidance lesson will be evaluated through process, perception, and outcome data.

**Process Data**

This classroom guidance lesson will reach all sixth-grade students at SMS.

**Perception Data**

Due to a time factor, only a small sample of all sixth-grade students at SMS will engage in a pre- and post-classroom guidance test. This sample will consist of 60 sixth-grade SMS students. The pre and post tests will consist of the same five questions and will be presented on paper as true/false and fill-in-the-blank format. These questions will test the students on the knowledge they have about the role of a counselor and bullying awareness both before and after the PowerPoint presentations.

**Outcome Data**
This classroom guidance lesson seeks to provide quantitative data on student knowledge of the role of a school counselor and how to make SMS a bullying-free zone. Via pre and post tests, data will be collected and analyzed at the beginning and end of each lesson.
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Appendix

Pre- and Post-Evaluation Test

1. The guidance office is located across from the ___________.
2. We always tell your parents when you come see the counselor. True / False
3. What sport do Ms. Davis and Mr. Perkins both do? ____________.
4. You should only report bullying when someone is bruised or bleeding. True / False
5. Name one type of bullying besides physical bullying. ________________
Lesson Plan Template

School: Shepard Middle School (SMS)
Classroom Guidance: Role of a School Counselor + Bullying Prevention Presentation
School Counselor: Sarah Davis       Date: 9/23/14       Grade(s): 6

ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success and NCGES Student Standards:
• A:A2.3 Use communications skills to know when and how to ask for help when needed
• A:B1.4 Seek information and support from faculty, staff, family and peers
• PS:A1.6 Distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior
• PS:C1.6 Identify resource people in the school and community and know how to seek their help
• RED.SE.3.1 Use oral and written communication skills to share information with others.
• EEE.SE.1.1 Contrast appropriate and inappropriate physical contact

Objective(s):
• Teach all sixth-grade students at SMS the role of a school counselor, how they can see their counselors, and where the counseling office is located
• Inform students on what bullying is and how to make SMS a bullying-free zone

Materials:
• Role of a School Counselor PowerPoint
• Bullying Awareness PowerPoint
• Overhead projector + laptop to display PowerPoints

Procedure: Counselors will –
• Administer a pre-classroom guidance test
• Deliver two PowerPoint presentations
• Actively engage students by asking them questions regarding the PowerPoint slides
• Incorporate CBT and strengths-based counseling when engaging students in discussion about school counseling and about bullying
• Administer a post-classroom guidance test

Plan for Evaluation:
Process Data: This classroom guidance lesson will reach all sixth-grade students at SMS
Perception Data: All sixth-grade students at SMS will engage in a pre- and post-classroom guidance test in which they will answer questions based upon the PowerPoint presentations that they just saw
Outcome Data: This classroom guidance lesson seeks to provide data on student knowledge of the role of a school counselor and how to make SMS a bullying-free zone.
What Does a School Counselor Do, Anyway?

Presented by:
Mrs. Angela Teal
Mr. Sam Perkins
SMS School Counselors

Intern:
Miss Sarah Davis

What does a School Counselor do?
Why have School Counselors?

- Our job is to help all students feel happy, safe and connected at school so they can achieve academic and personal success.

- We serve as student advocates.

How do We help students?

- Individual Counseling: Academic and Personal
- Conflict Resolution
- Crises (SIT)
- Groups: Support and Study Skills
- Classroom Guidance Lessons as requested by teachers
- Observations
- Clubs (NJHS and Peer Mediation)
Services and Groups We offer:

- Skills for Success (Study Skills)
- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution
- Grief, Anger, Stress Management
- Self-Confidence Boosters
- Lunch Bunches
- NJHS (Student Academic Leadership)
- Test-Taking and Study Skills
- Eighth Grade Groups

Reasons students see a School Counselor

- Ask a question or to join a group, club, or extra curricular activity
- Share an Academic or personal achievement
- Ask questions about school work, studying, organization and homework concerns.
- Help you cope with a stressful situation
- Friendship troubles
More Reasons to see a School Counselor

- Making and keeping friends
- Self Confidence concerns
- Be a part of a lunch bunch in counselors office
- Volunteer your ideas, time and assistance with service projects for our school and community

Even more reasons to see a School Counselor

- Teacher troubles (how to improve relationships with teacher)
- Anger, stress or worry management
- Grief issues (death or illness in the family, of a pet, of a friend etc.)
- Changing Family Concern: parents separation, divorce, remarriage, step family etc.
How Can You Help Us?

- Keep us informed regarding student changes (death, suicide ideation, family changes, changes in academic behavior)
- Be willing to meet with students
- Please be patient with us
- Collaborate with us, this is for the benefits of the student and their well-being
- Please remember, we are not disciplinarians and do not discipline

Key Benefits of seeing a School Counselor? (Teachers and Students)

1. Confidential and Private
2. Active Listener with Special Training
3. Help you come up with the best solutions for you.
Will the school counselor keep my secrets?

- Your conversation will be kept confidential/private with these exceptions:
  1. You are hurting yourself or someone else
  2. You or someone else are at risk of being harmed
  3. You agree to have me share information with others

Will parents/teachers/friends find out I went to see the counselor?

- We decide together what is shared with your parents, teachers, etc. unless it is one of the 3 exceptions.

- Part of a group/club: your parents must sign a permission slip.
How, when, and where do students see a School Counselor?

- Leave a note with their **full name**.
- See any school counselor before school, in halls, at lunch.
- Let a teacher know you need to see a counselor.
- Let Ms. Thompson know (located in the front of Guidance Suite).
- Complete referral form found at the guidance office or cafeteria doors.
- Offices are in Guidance Suite
Bullying

What It Is?
What You Can Do to help?
Why it is important to help?

Presented By:
Mrs. Angela Teal
Mr. Sam Perkins
Ms. Sarah Davis
What is Bullying?

Bullying is: **repeated**, **intentional**, **aggressive** behavior towards one person from another person or group of people.

Bullying involves: the **bully**, the **victim**, and the **bystander**.

Why is it important to discuss Bullying?

- Safety
- Distraction from learning
What is Bullying?

Bullying is:

- repeated, intentional, aggressive behavior towards one person from another person or group of people.

Bullying involves: the bully, the victim, and the bystander.

Bullying Has to be Repeated: One Time Incident vs. Bullying

- Who can give me an example of a one time incident?

- Who can give me an example of a bullying situation?
Who is involved in Bullying?

Who do you think has the *most* influence on the others?

The *bystander* has the most influence of the three! Why do you think this is?

Types of Bullying

4 Main Types

- 1. Physical Bullying
- 2. Emotional Bullying
- 3. Social Bullying
- 4. Cyber Bullying
Types of Bullying
4 Main Types (Defined)

- 1. **Physical Bullying**: shoving, hitting, kicking, breaking others’ things.
- 2. **Emotional Bullying**: (Verbal or written) name-calling, insulting, threatening, writing/drawing means notes and pictures.
- 3. **Social Bullying**: Spreading rumors, ignoring, excluding, making someone do something that they don’t want to do.
- 4. **Cyber Bullying**: Using the internet or social media to intimidate, threaten, or make fun of someone.

A Closer Look…

- What do all types of bullying have in common?
  - They're examples of ways one person can make another person feel hurt, afraid, or uncomfortable.
  - When these are done to someone more than once (and usually over and over again for a long period of time) that's bullying.
What Are Some Reasons That People Bully?

- Bullies come in all shapes and sizes. There’s not “one type” of bully. However, one thing that bullies usually have in common is:
  *Something or someone is making them feel insecure, so they’re bullying to make themselves feel better.*

- However, even though the bullies may have something else going on in their life, that does not mean that their behavior is acceptable!

Bullying: What Can You Do If You’re Being Bullied?

- Let someone know what is happening!
- It’s okay to ask for help.
- If you are being bullied, it is not your fault!!
- Who can you tell?
  - Parents, Teachers, School Counselors, Mr. Roberts, Ms. Boone
Bullying: How Not to be a Victim

1. Act and look CONFIDENT
   - Bullies go after those who appear weak
   - Bullies repeat actions to those who they think they can

2. If someone is picking on you don’t show them it hurts
   - It is okay to feel sad or hurt over what a bully says but try not to show them.
   - Express your feelings to your parents, friends and people you trust!

Strategies: What If You’re Being Bullied?

- Ignore what the bully or bullies say
- Agree with what they say- Bullies don’t get satisfaction if they don’t get a negative reaction
- Make a quick joke or a funny response
- Change the subject
- Communicate assertively
Communicating Assertively

“I messages” are helpful in communicating how you feel without attacking the other person or putting them on the defense:

I feel __________________________
because ________________________
and I would like you to _______
______________________________.

Bullying: How to Avoid Bad Situations

1. Stay in a group
   ● Surround yourself with people you feel safe with

2. Avoid “hot spots”
   ● Take a different path to classes
   ● Go to the restroom a little earlier
What Can You Do if You Witness Bullying?

Be a part of the solution!

- Do The Right Thing!
  - Don’t join in. Refuse to watch
  - Say something- “Hey don’t do that to him.” or “Chill out!”
  - Report Bullying to an adult
  - Invite the person being bullied to join your group
  - Be a friend to a person being bullied
  - Distract the bully so that he or she stops

Put Yourself in Someone Else’s Shoes

If you were being bullied…

- How would you feel?
- What would you do?
- What would you want others to do?
Think About It!!!

- Do you ever
  - Laugh when a classmate makes a mistake?
  - Make fun of people in a mean way?
  - Join in when someone is being teased?
  - Gossip or Spread Rumors?

Let’s Make Shepard…
Next Steps!

Any Questions?

- Does anyone have any questions about bullying?