

# Why Middle School Counseling?

School Counseling has come a long way over the years. Why is it critical for your middle school child to know who their counselor is?

Middle school students are characterized by rapid physical growth, curiosity about their world and an emerging self-identity. Through a comprehensive developmental school counseling program, counselors work as a team member with school staff, parents and the community to create a caring, supportive climate and atmosphere whereby young adolescents can achieve academic success. Middle school counselors enhance the learning process and promote academic achievement. School counseling programs are essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set appropriate career goals and realize full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community. The professional middle school counselor holds a master's degree and required state certification in school counseling. Maintaining certification includes on-going professional development to stay current with education reform and challenges facing today's students. Professional association membership is encouraged as it enhances the school counselor's knowledge and effectiveness.

"Today's young people are living in an exciting time, with an increasingly diverse society, new technologies, and expanding opportunities. To help ensure that they are prepared to become the next generation of parents, workers, leaders, and citizens", every student needs support, guidance, and opportunities during adolescence, a time of rapid growth and change. Early adolescents face unique and diverse challenges, both personally and developmentally, that have an impact on academic achievement.

## **Middle School Students' Developmental Needs**

Middle school is an exciting, yet challenging time for students, their parents and teachers. During this passage from childhood to adolescence, middle school students are characterized by a need to explore a variety of interests, connecting their learning in the classroom to its practical application in life and work; high levels of activity coupled with frequent fatigue due to rapid growth; a search for their own unique identity as they begin turning more frequently to peers rather than parents for ideas and affirmation; extreme sensitivity to the comments from others; and heavy reliance on friends to provide comfort, understanding and approval.

## **Meeting the Challenge**

Middle school counselors are professional educators with a mental health perspective who understand and respond to the challenges presented by today's diverse student population. Middle school counselors do not work in isolation; rather they are integral to the total educational program. They provide proactive leadership that engages all stakeholders in the delivery of programs and services to help students achieve success in school. Professional school counselors align with the school's mission to support the academic achievement of all students as they prepare for the ever-changing world of the 21st century. This mission is accomplished through the design, development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive, developmental and systematic school counseling program. The ASCA National Standards in the academic, National Model: A Framework For School Counseling Programs, with its data driven and results-based focus serves as a guide for today's school counselor who is uniquely trained to implement this program.

## **Middle School Counselors Implement the Counseling Program by Providing:**

### **School Guidance Curriculum**

Academic skills support  
Organizational, study and test-taking skills  
Education in understanding self and others  
Coping strategies  
Peer relationships and effective social skills  
Communication, problem-solving, decision-making and conflict resolution  
Career awareness, exploration and planning  
Substance abuse education  
Multicultural/diversity awareness

### **Individual Student Planning**

Goal-setting/decision- making  
Academic planning  
Career planning  
Education in understanding of self, including strengths and weaknesses  
Transition planning

### **Responsive Services**

Individual and small group counseling  
Individual/family/school crisis intervention  
Peer facilitation  
Consultation/collaboration  
Referrals

### **System Support**

Professional development  
Consultation, collaboration and teaming  
Program management and operation

## **Middle School Counselors Collaborate With:**

### **Parents**

Parent information nights  
Communication/networking  
Academic planning programs  
Parent and family education  
One-on-one parent conferencing  
Assessment results interpretation  
Resource referrals  
College/career exploration

### **Teachers**

Career portfolio development  
Assistance with students' academic plans  
Classroom guidance activities on study skills, career development, etc.  
Academic support, learning style assessment and education to help students succeed academically  
Classroom career speakers  
At-risk student identification and implementation of interventions to enhance success  
Parent communication/education

**Administrators**

School climate

Behavioral management plans

School-wide needs assessment

Student data and results

Student assistance team building

Leadership

**Students**

Peer education

Peer support

Academic support

School climate

Leadership development

**Community**

Job shadowing, service learning

Crisis interventions

Referrals

Parenting classes

Support groups

Career education