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THE CHANGING ROLES OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS
IN AN ERA OF SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

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by
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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to explore how the No Child Left Behind Act has impacted the traditional responsibilities of high school counselors. Furthermore, if there have been changes in school counselor roles, how are school counselors managing the impact? The study findings also investigated school counselor professional development regarding school counseling reform initiatives and the alignment of school counselor practice with school counselor preparation. The research questions were explored through a case study design involving the participation of six high school administrators and six high school counselors from four school districts within the Central Intermediate Unit (CIU) 10 region of central Pennsylvania.

Employing a qualitative research design of in-depth interviewing and participant observation primarily from January 2006 until May of 2009, the data was analyzed in a comparative approach across the cases of study. The sample size and case similarities are its chief limitations. The foremost finding for the study was how school counselor roles have shifted to excessive amounts of time spent with testing tasks, taking time from students, and creating role-pull for the counselors. Findings also included changes in counselor roles regarding student remediation, career advisement, teacher and student perceptions, and possible increases in counselor and administrator teaming.

School counselors managed their roles by working extra hours, functioning with a sense of urgency, and altering their counseling styles to be more time efficient. Graduate program preparation, professional organization initiatives, and job tasks were found to be misaligned for the counselors, leading to “disconnectedness” between the academy, school counseling reform initiatives, and practice.
Recommendations from the participating counselors for other school counselors included stay focused on students, plan your day, manage time efficiently, be prepared for differing events, work with administrators to assist No Child Left Behind needs, seek a forum of colleagues, review situational case studies related to school counselor roles, use technology efficiently, and research school districts where seeking employment. In keeping with the essence of school accountability, recommendations for further research suggest investigating the impact of school counselors on NCLB through improved student achievement, versus the impact of NCLB on school counselors.
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The Changing Roles of School Counselors
in an Era of School Accountability

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Overview
The initial thoughts for this study began in March of 2004 when an 11th grade high school student presented to her school counselor, this researcher, school withdrawal papers. It was the morning of the first day she was to take her Grade 11 PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment), the state system of assessment in the form of standardized tests for Pennsylvanian students. She was scheduled to graduate with the High School Class of 2005. She approached me in the school cafeteria as all of the other 11th grade students took their seats, preparing for testing to begin. This student’s decision to withdraw from school was more predictable than surprising, she had recently turned seventeen and I knew she was not happy in school. Yet, the action became poignant in that she did it moments prior to the beginning of the tests, causing my attention to shift, from the necessary testing tasks at hand, to her papers.

As a school counselor I take the impact of a student wanting to leave school very seriously. It warrants a great deal of thought and consideration, and effort on my part. When students present withdrawal papers to me I usually spend a large part of my day with them discussing their choice to leave school. I call in their parent and together we talk about the student’s plans for being out of school. I question if they have a job, or if
they are seeking a job, question their life long goals and how they might achieve them if they leave school, and present possible options for success if they stay in school. Some of the options with staying in school might include providing them with additional support services, changes in their course schedule, possibly with a school to work option, or placement in our school’s alternative night school program. If their decision remains to withdraw, I offer Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) information, a list of community resources for out of school youth, and I call the local GED office and career assistance office to schedule appointments for the student and parent to seek further information.

Though I knew this student well, and we had previous conversations about her wanting to leave school, on this day, I gave her possibly three minutes of my time. She already had her teachers’ initials on the papers indicating her withdrawal grades and returned books. The resulting few minutes of our conversation went something like this: I asked, “Can we talk about it after the test?” She responded, “No, I want to leave now.” “Do your parents know?” “Yeah.” “Do you have a job?” “No, but I’ll get one.” “Will you call me if you need anything?” “Yeah, I will.” “Okay, I’ll call your parents later. Go see the principal, she’ll want to talk to you, she has to sign them [the papers] too.” I gave her a hug, wished her well, told her to come back to see me, and signed the withdrawal papers. The rest of the Class of 2005 was waiting to take their tests, and at that moment, the tests were more pressing than this one student’s presenting need for my time.

The tests, expressed as high-stakes tests, are tied to the accountability standards prompted by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, signed into law January 8th, 2002. The No Child Left Behind Act has instituted rigorous systems of concern and accountability for educational excellence and equity never previously experienced by
schools and students (The Education Trust, 2003, June 5). It has led to standardized forms of assessment being the fundamental tool driving school reform (Bosch, 2007). “The No Child Left Behind Act affects virtually every person employed in the public school system” (Whitney, 2009, p. 1), including high school counselors in their daily roles and responsibilities.

The mandate of this legislation, which calls for all critical players in the school setting to share responsibility to collectively remove barriers for students that impede learning and academic success, places school counselors in a new accountability mode that focuses on the school counseling program and its impact on student achievement and success (CSCA, 2009, p. 1).

Because I wondered if this one student had been left behind, I wanted to learn about the influence of NCLB on my school counselor roles, helping students in central Pennsylvania. The topic generated my sincere interest, and as a result, drove the development of this investigation.

On July 31, 2008, Judi Schmitz of the Pennsylvania School Counselor Association (PSCA) sent an email message to Pennsylvania School Counselors (See Appendix A). The email subject was “Important News.” The message title was, “Senator Robert Casey Introduces Bill to Add Counselors to Schools.” Schmitz wrote, “This is an exciting time for school counselors! Pennsylvania's Senator Bob Casey recognizes the importance of school counselors and the role we play in student success” (J. Schmitz, email communication, July 31, 2008). Her message cited a press release dated July 28, 2008, 
Casey Introduces Bill to Add Counselors to Schools. The press release described
Senator Robert Casey’s (D-PA) Put School Counselors Where they are Needed Act (Barkoff, 2008).

Noted in the press release, the goal of the Put School Counselors Where they are Needed Act is to reduce the drop out rates of low performing secondary schools. Competitive grant program funding within the No Child Left Behind Act is to assist struggling secondary schools with hiring additional school counselors in order to reduce the number of students per counselor caseload, termed counselor-to-student ratio. The current average counselor-to-student ratio in America's public schools is reported to be one school counselor to 476 students. This ratio barely permits counselors the time needed for intensive support for individual student attention (Barkoff, 2008).

The press release further noted that the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and the American Counseling Association (ACA) recommend one school counselor for every 250 students for all secondary schools. The ratio should be lower for counselors working primarily with students at risk for failure. “One of many challenges secondary school counselors face today is ensuring that every student receives the individualized support he or she needs….Low-performing secondary schools need our help to make sure they have enough counselors on staff so all students are given the opportunity to succeed” (Casey, as cited in Barkoff, 2008, p. 1).

For school counselors, the support endorsed by Senator Casey has been long awaited. The NCLB Act is primarily addressed to legislators, school administrators, teachers, students, and parents, but not school counselors. However, as acknowledged by Senator Casey, school counselors are vital to school success. Bunce (1999) proposes that school specialists such as school psychologists, school nurses, and school counselors play
critical roles within school systems regarding the social, emotional, and academic issues that affect student achievement. Students and schools need school counselors to provide comprehensive school counseling programs to help all students achieve (Sparks, 2008).

School counselors play vital roles towards assisting all students with the necessary resources to achieve to the best of their ability levels. Additionally, school counselors are increasingly essential to school communities. Given the escalating nature of school violence, bullying, the emphasis on academics and testing, how technology is changing personal interfaces, and generalized at risk behaviors; school counselors need to campaign for proactive school counseling programming (Holley, 2008). The U.S. Department of Statistics suggests that approximately 14 to 30 percent of local level school budgets go to employ non-teaching personnel (Antonuccio, 1998, as cited in Louis, Jones, & Barajas, 2001), which includes school counselors. Yet, Louis, Jones, and Barajas (2001) assert that what has not been addressed is how effectively “these highly trained additional personnel are deployed to reinforce the basic academic goal of the school, ensuring that all children will learn” (p. 1). Concomitantly, The Education Trust (2007) offers that,

School counselors have been all but left out of the dialogue and action of the standards-based reform movement and, today, those entering this changing field are too often being left unprepared to serve as effective advocates for all students, particularly low-income students and students of color, who most need our help. (p. 1)

At the school site, the initial responsibility of monitoring student completion of high school graduation requirements, inclusive of course credits for promotion and
meeting accountability proficiency standards, falls to high school counselors within high school counseling programs. Like the traditional comprehensive high school, all-purpose guidance programs, recently termed school counseling programs, have been reputed as one-stop shopping mall service sites (Herr, 2002). Comprehensive school counseling programs promoted by the American School Counseling Association and referred to by Brown and Trusty (2005) are considered to be different from traditional school counseling programs. Comprehensive school counseling programs are developmental, clearly defined, and accountable. They are proactive, preventive, purported as data-driven, and an integral part of educational programs (ASCA, 1997a; Brown & Trusty, 2005).

Addressing the evolving differences between comprehensive and developmental school counseling programs versus traditional school counseling programs, the opening sentences of Brown and Trusty’s (2005) text Designing and Leading Comprehensive School Counseling Programs, begin thusly:

Since the late 1900s school counseling practice has undergone many changes. Once again school counseling programs are at a historic juncture in the road of their evolution. One path leads to the continuation of school counseling programs that have little definition. The center of these programs is a cluster of school counselors with ill-defined roles who work in programs with poorly articulated goals. The other path leads to comprehensive school counseling programs with goals aligned squarely with those of the school in which school counselors work. (p. xvii)
Included within the comprehensive and developmental school counseling program guidelines, school counselors are to provide services within three domains: academic, career, and personal-social (CDE, 2001). School counselors coordinate counseling and non-counseling programs and activities, function as consultants, and counsel students as individuals and in groups. Their roles focus “on the relations and interactions between students and their school environment with the expressed purpose of reducing the effect of environmental and institutional barriers that impede academic success” (The Education Trust, 1999, as cited in DeVoss, 2004, p. 26).

School counselors in traditional school counseling programs advise and review the progress of students in individual course programs and offer assistance with student post-secondary planning. They have traditionally managed career advisement and standardized testing such as the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) and the Advanced Placement (AP) exams. They may be assigned to administrate the more recent state standards based tests, interpret test scores, and identify when student remediation and re-testing is needed. They may then set in place the needed remediation or local alternate assessment for students to meet proficiency as mandated by the state if they do not successfully master proficiency on the state assessment. School counselors also tend to be the primary mental health personnel in schools and respond to crises on an as needed basis. To do all of this, they act as team members with teachers, administrators, and support personnel regarding how to assist students with identifying their needs and overcoming difficulties, and are often the initial point of contact with families and community service agencies as students become at-risk for failure. But most notably, the school counselor’s “job is to love the unloved” (Nguyen, 2008, p. 39).
Lambie & Williamson (2004) discuss an additional move from school counseling to professional school counseling. They note, “Professional school counselors (PSCs) and the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) have been working diligently to recognize the professional identity of PSCs from its historical guidance epistemology to a comprehensive developmental model” (p. 1). The American School Counseling Association presents the roles to be played in school reform by professional school counselors as follows,

Professional school counselors serve a vital role in maximizing student success (Lapan, Gysbers, & Kayson, 2007; Stone & Dahir, 2006). Through leadership, advocacy and collaboration, professional school counselors promote equity and access to rigorous educational experiences for all students. Professional school counselors support a safe learning environment and work to safeguard the human rights of all members of the school community (Sandhu, 2000), and address the needs of all students through culturally relevant prevention and intervention programs that are a part of a comprehensive school counseling program (Lee, 2001). (ASCA, 2009b, p. 1)

School counseling programs began in schools as vocational guidance services late in the 1890s and into the early 1900s, with a Department of Vocational Guidance established by 1915. They came at a time when social reform and the education of a diverse and industrialized society needed to be addressed. At first, school counselors were teachers who managed the work without additional financial gains or relief from regular teaching duties. Over time, school counseling services became an increasingly integral part of the educational process and the field of school counseling evolved.
However, school counselor practices lacked uniformity, and centralized responsibility for their services did not exist. School principals became, and remain, dominant in interpreting and determining the roles of their counselors (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Herr, 2002; Schmidt, 1999; Paisley & Hayes, 2003; Louis et al, 2001).

Gysbers and Henderson (2000) note that by the 1920s concerns were expressed regarding the organization, perception, and practice of school counseling. They cite Brewer’s 1922 belief that the work was “commendable and promising” (p. 36), but the field lacked effective organization and supervision. “What was done and how well it was done were left up to individual principals and counselors” (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000, p. 6). This led to a perception of the profession that school counselor roles involve whatever will support students and administrators. It has created a sense that school counselors are behind-the-scenes professionals with unclear and nebulous roles. Consequently, this perception has diminished school counselor participation in school improvement (Louis et al., 2001).

Historically, the creation of school counselor roles and the emphasis school counselors give to their corresponding responsibilities has been shaped and impacted by school reform movements. Eilers (2004) contends that educational policy is the result of social, political, and economic pressures. Herr (2002) offers “that since the early beginnings of the Republic, the United States has constantly been in a process of educational reform….it is easy to target changes in political parties and national administrations as the source of the constant push for school reform” (p. 1). The establishment of school counseling itself was a means of educational reform, stemming from Jeffersonian values to educate an informed citizenry by way of traditional and
classical academic education, and Franklin’s purported beliefs to facilitate economic development through vocational education (Herr, 2002).

Although school counseling is not necessarily noted in the reform literature, school counseling has always been influenced by way of linkages and parallelism to reform waves (Herr, 2002; Sink & Stroh, 2003). In truth, educational history has so strongly fashioned school counseling services that shifts in the varying roles and role emphasis of school counselors are expected to occur in response to the current accountability movement formed by the NCLB Act. Brown and Trusty (2005) express that school counseling programs are being greatly impacted by recent school reform initiatives, even more than by the waves of educational reform that have occurred since the 1980s.

Innovations such as high-stakes testing, bonuses for the staffs of high-performing schools, sanctions against low-performing schools and their staffs, and legislation that allow students to transfer from low-performing schools to higher-performing schools have altered the educational landscape. These changes have prompted the American School Counseling Association (2003b) to rethink the delivery of school counseling services and to recommend development of comprehensive school counseling programs that place a high priority on the improvement of academic achievement. (Brown & Trusty, 2005, p. 19)

In response to these concerns the American School Counseling Association (ASCA, 2003a) created The National Model for School Counseling Programs. The Model offers, “one vision and one voice” for the development of school counseling
programs (Bowers & Hatch, 2002, p. 7). It seeks to address the questions, “What do school counselors do?” and “How are students different as a result of what they do?” (p. 8). The National Model encourages school counselors to become catalysts for educational change as advocates and collaborators by assuming leadership roles in educational reform (Bowers & Hatch, 2002). Through the National Model, the ASCA has additionally developed competencies to provide an improved vision for the school counseling profession. The aim of the competencies is to assist school counselor education programs with preparing aspiring school counselor students with knowing how to design and implement comprehensive school counseling programs at the school site through program foundation, delivery, management, and accountability (ASCA, 2008). Isaccs (2003) contends that “recent research has suggested that the core work of school counselors--implementing a school counseling program based on ASCA or similar state standards--can have positive impacts on core measures of student academic achievement as well as other areas critical to school improvement” (p. 3).

These aspirations for school counselors tie in with the hopes of school counselor leaders who envision the educational reform movement as an opportunity for school counselors to position school counseling programs more central to the overall educational mission and increase the importance of school counselors in schools (Brown & Trusty, 2005). The expectations for school counselors of the future are enormous. Appropriately trained school counselors will be advocates for students and school counseling programs. They will be educational leaders, collaborators, consultants, and creators of data driven comprehensive programs working in response to school reform efforts and closing the achievement gap (Brown & Trusty, 2005).
Citing Capuzzi 1998, House and Martin 1998, and Lee and Walz 1998, Stone (2001) suggests that new attitudes are needed for school counselors to join forces with principals. “The training that school counselors receive in communication, interpersonal relationships, problem solving, and conflict resolution give them the ability to encourage the collaboration among colleagues that promotes student achievement” and “collaboration between principals and school counselors is increasingly necessary to the operations of an effective instructional program” (Stone, 2001, p. 3). Additionally, school counselors have access to data that allows the identification of school practices that may be deterring equitable access of higher academic programs to all students (Stone, 2001). As members of core academic teams, counselors can collaboratively assist with the elimination of such practices and work towards equity and positive school change.

Unfortunately, school counselors and school counseling programs have not been considered crucial components to student achievement (ASCA, 2003b). Hence, school counselor roles at the school site are overwhelmed with non-counseling tasks and have been pulled away from school counseling purposes (Brinson, Jr., K. H., Rivera, J. C., & Windle, 2004; Lapan, Gysbers, & Kayson, 2007; Louis et al, 2001). “The leadership and advocacy role that school counselors could play, some argue, in a standards-based system has been overlooked” (Eilers, 2004, p. 2) as “references to school counselors are virtually absent in the burgeoning state and local policy initiatives related to school improvement” (Louis et al., 2001, p. 1).

In Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania School Counseling Association (PSCA) is actively working towards a transformation for school counseling through Pennsylvania’s high school reform initiative Project 720. Its purpose is to improve high school
instructional development, curriculum, graduation rates, and student postsecondary success. The school counseling component of Project 720 proposes to prepare school counselors as change agents to promote access, equity, and high academic student achievement through leadership, advocacy, and data driven programs (“Pennsylvania and Microsoft,” 2005; Coker, 2005; PDE, 2008, September).

Therefore, the study at hand focused on the roles of high school counselors located in central Pennsylvania and how their roles may be changing due to the No Child Left Behind Act. The investigation has value towards contributing to a research base for the professional development, preparation, and practice of school counselors that will further assist school and student success in meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals determined by the No Child Left Behind Act. Because, as noted by House and Hayes (2002), “What school counseling programs can contribute to the success of all students has not been successfully translated to other educators, …they do not recognize the potential for school counselors as key players in educational reform efforts” (p. 3).

Isaacs (2003) specifically notes concern for school counselor accountability as “it has become much more critical in recent years” (p. 2). Isaacs further notes that, “as in other areas of school reform, school counselors have been distant from the conversations and activities about results-oriented reforms and from the rewards or challenges that other educators face” (p. 2). For these reasons, the principal purpose of this exploratory case study was to investigate the potential changes in the roles of school counselors and school counseling services in view of the No Child Left Behind Act and the ensuing high-stakes school accountability movement. This included the need to explore what are school
administrator expectations of counselor roles, how school counselors are managing these changes, and how school counselors might be assisted through the transformation.

**Problem Statement**

School counselors are likely the persons in schools most in tune with knowing the whole child and orchestrating holistic programs for their success through academic advising and post-secondary planning. However, direct mention of school counseling services and future goals for school counselors are not included within the four guiding principles or five basic goals of the No Child Left Behind Act (Wayne County RESA, 2003). For the most, discussions regarding the roles of school counselors have been left out of the educational literature and mention in the current reform movement (Aubrey, 1985, as cited in Paisley & Hayes, 2003; House & Martin, 1998, as cited in Paisley & Hayes, 2003; House & Hayes, 2002; The Education Trust, 2003a; Eilers, 2004; Myrick, 2003). However, as stated by Herr (2002), “There is every reason to contend that school counselors are key actors in the success of school reform” (p. 9). Without doubt, the tasks for high school counselors with assisting students and schools in meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress goals of the No Child Left Behind Act are daunting.

Eilers (2004) argues that the first step to institutionalizing reform efforts relies on learning how organizational services are defined and rationalized. She is concerned that in the “flurry” to reform and “systemize” education, to high content standards and student achievement accountability measures, that little consideration has been offered for enhancing the skills of non-educative professionals such as school counselors (p. 1). Stone (2001) furthers that an alliance between school counselors and principals is needed
to bring school counselors out of the periphery of educational functions and into the mainstream of reform efforts. Understanding the roles of school counselors and how those roles may or may not align with current school requirements is valuable information. Inclusive with this need is contributing to the foundational knowledge of counselor education training programs. Therefore, research is needed regarding how the No Child Left Behind Act might be altering the responsibilities of high school counselors and how school counselors are managing the changes.

Skinner (2008) proposes that today’s school counselors should not blindly and unskillfully step into the future. They are obliged to take the appropriate actions required to effectively help students succeed. In order to do this, school counselors must begin with an awareness of their own deficiencies by reflecting on and taking inventory of school counseling contributions, or lack thereof, in managing their current barriers. To best serve their students, school counselors must actively collaborate with each other, commit to staying on the cutting edge of technology and the budding issues of tomorrow.

Research Questions

The overarching research question of this investigation was: As perceived by school counselors and school administrators, how are the primary responsibilities of high school counselors changing with respect towards meeting the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act?

Subsidiary research questions included:

1. What have been the traditional primary roles, responsibilities and expectations, of school counselors?
2. Have these changed with promulgation of the No Child Left Behind Act? In what ways?

3. If they have changed, how are school counselors managing these new roles, responsibilities, and expectations?

The study findings also explored school counselor professional development regarding school counseling reform initiatives and the alignment of school counselor practice with school counselor preparation. The questions were explored through a case study design involving the participation of six high school administrators and six high school counselors from four school districts within the Central Intermediate Unit (CIU) 10 region, of central Pennsylvania.

Significance of the Study

The overall objective for education, as recommended by *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for School Reform* (National Commission on Excellence, 1983), and now exemplified in the No Child Left Behind Act, is to close the achievement gap in American education. NCLB “aims to foster an environment in which every child can learn and succeed” (Paige, 2002, p. 1). However, as state and national pressure groups call for elevated student achievement and school accountability measures to systemize education, non-educative professionals as school counselors, who have significant roles to play in the “achievement team,” have escaped the accountability “radar screen” (Eilers, 2004, p. 3). How the roles of school counselors align with systemic reform initiatives has therefore come into question (Eilers, 2004).
It is rare to find a secondary school without a school counselor. The training and work of school counselors can be similar and different from the training and work of teachers and administrators. Unlike teachers whose jobs are to educate, and administrators who are to lead, understanding what school counselors do is often unclear (Bunce, 1999). Because of the nature of their positions within schools, it can be assumed that school counselors are the persons initially responsible for monitoring student competencies and assuring that initiatives are put into place to assist every student on their caseload with meeting requirements for graduation from high school. School counselors can play significant roles in student achievement. Yet relatively little attention is offered school counselors in educational literature.

School counselor roles may involve all aspects of the education process carried out at the school site. Yet the numbers of school counselors in schools tend to be limited. School counselors have high numbers of students assigned to their caseloads, and the daily tasks associated with assisting student needs can be overwhelming. Additionally, school counseling programs have been reported as education-based versus clinic-based (Downs, 2003). While at the same time, school counselors are considered the “frontline mental health specialists in the schools, who must deal with the wide variety of societal issues confronting today’s youth and their families” (Borders, 2002, p. 1). Consequently, school counselors are expected to be available for crisis intervention services, as well as provide educative structured activities for students, in order to be proactive versus reactive in their work (Downs, 2003). Furthermore, administrator, teacher, and community expectations for school counselors and their services may differ from professional counseling models and training (Bunce, 1999).
These issues have led to the absence of clarity in school counselor work (Huffman, 1993, as cited in Bunce, 1999). This has created speculation that school counselors might lack a clear sense of professional goals and values. Bunce (1999), citing Perry 1992, furthers that the main responsibility of school counselors lies in the advocacy of children to ensure their access to needed services for those who experience personal barriers to their academic success. However, this is not realistic. Advocating for children with personal issues is certainly a major school counselor responsibility as an integral part of overall school counselor duties, but as their main responsibility it potentially speaks more to concerns of equity than to excellence. It possibly minimizes academic advisement and school counselor accountability to students who do not have personal issues impeding their success.

An additional concern for school counselors is the high number of students to counselor ratios that lead to extremely difficult to manage school counselor caseloads. Previously mentioned, in 2008, the reported school student-to-counselor ratio was 476 to one (Barkoff, 2008). Such high caseload numbers limit the services that school counselors are capable of offering to students. Public Agenda's 2005 study, *Life After High School: Young People Talk About Their Hopes and Prospects* (Johnson, Duffett, & Ott, 2005), reported that young people across all demographic groups believed that high school counseling resources were limited. Fifty-three percent of the participants surveyed indicated there were “too few counselors” in their high school to assist with student postsecondary preparation. The quality of school counseling services received mixed responses. Fifty-two percent of the respondents felt their school counselor made a sincere
effort to get to know them. Forty-seven percent of the respondents felt as if they were just another face in the crowd to their school counselor (p. 7).

With this purported job ambiguity and high student to counselor ratios, school counselor job descriptions tend to be determined by administrators. School counselor roles often change with the entrance of a new principal and may vary tremendously from one administrative term to another and one school to another (Louis et al., 2001). Thus, principal preparation and principal exposure to school counselor roles and abilities can enormously impact the contribution school counselors can make towards improving student academic achievement.

Too often principals assign counselor roles based on a perception that because counselors do not teach classes they are available to perform extraneous duties. School counselors become “gofers” that facilitate non-counseling related school functions, manage unpredictable student crises, and coordinate numerous clerical tasks (Louis et al., 2001, p. 2). This leads to further uncertainty of school counselor job responsibilities. Because school counselors are used for clerical tasks as writing schedules and tracking credits they are omitted from the process of data analysis that is central to academic achievement and school counselor professionalism (Louis et al., 2001). Furthermore, there exists a generalized perception at the high school level that teachers do not understand how school counselors contribute to student success (Louis et al., 2001).

Therefore, the confusion of what counselors do, and should do, is a leading concern for the profession (Schmidt, 1999). Paisley and MacMahon (2001) suggest that the most significant challenge for school counselors may be the ongoing debate of role definition. To address the need for information on the defined roles of school counselors
“the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) conducted a survey on high school counseling in the spring of 2002 for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education” (NCES, 2003, p. 1). According to the NCES survey data, “helping students with their academic achievement in high school was the most emphasized goal of high school guidance programs” (NCES, 2003, p. 1). As such, it is considered that “school counselors have an enormous impact on the choices students make and their future options. They are ideally positioned in schools to serve as advocates, creating opportunities for all students to define, nurture, and accomplish high academic aspirations” (The Education Trust, 2003, June 5, p. 2). Because of this perceived impact, school counselors are “being challenged to redefine their role to better support the overall academic performance of students” (Fitch & Marshall, 2004, p. 1). This stated emphasized goal for counselors to support academic achievement is all encompassing but does not lead to specificity. Discussions involving the roles of school counselors “have been left out of the reform debate for too long” (The Education Trust, 2003, June 5, p. 2). The exclusion of school counselors is viewed as an “enormous mistake” because school counselors are in key positions to work proactively as leaders and collaborators towards closing the achievement gap for disadvantaged and less academically able students (House & Hayes, 2002, p. 1). Moreover, House and Hayes (2002) suggest, “Leaving school counselors out of school reform efforts may be one of the most serious mistakes that reformers make if the goals for K-12 education are to be attained in this new century” (p. 4). In truth, Hartman (1998) “cautioned policy makers not to overlook the unique and important contribution school counselors could have in the reform movement” (p. 1). “School counselors are especially well situated to play
proactive, catalytic roles in defining the future for programs that support the education of students” (Adelman & Taylor, 2002, p. 1). Despite the potential consequences, school counselors have been “conspicuously missing” (House & Hayes, 2002, p. 1) and “glaringly absent” (Hartman, 1998, p. 1) from reform discussions.

In light of the need to transform schooling and raise the achievement of all students, concerns have arisen to the practices of school counselors and school counseling preparation programs that have been marginalized and viewed as ancillary to standards-based reform initiatives. Nevertheless, the literature on transforming school counseling purports significant roles school counselors can play regarding advocacy, collaboration, data analysis and accountability, leadership, and school reform (The Education Trust, 2005). Offered by Dahir and Stone (2003):

The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) is a clear imperative for school counselors to accept the responsibility to support academic achievement, share the pressures of school accountability, and demonstrate advocacy for every student to experience success. …In this current climate it is essential that school counselors demonstrate how school counseling programs contribute to the school success agenda and to successful outcomes for children.

School counselors had not been held to the same accountability standards as other educators. They were rarely included in the conversations that impact the critical data elements that are publicly displayed on school report cards. By examining their practice and looking carefully at their way of working, school counselors can
articulate and communicate how their contributions positively impact student achievement, and thus share accountability for school improvement. (p. 1)

At the same time, The Education Trust’s national assessment of school counselor preparation programs found no unifying vision or substantive change measures in curriculum reflecting the overall school reform emphasis to address student achievement (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). Furthermore, higher education school counselor educators lacked school experience and were not in regular contact with practicing school counselors (Collison, Osborne, & Layton, 1998; The Education Trust, 1997, as cited in Paisley & Hayes, 2003). The majority of school counselor preparation programs focused more on how to address student mental health issues than academic achievement concerns. The situation with practicing school counselors was also problematic: “The picture in schools was hardly better with ‘large numbers of practicing school counselors functioning as highly paid clerical staff, quasi-administrators and/or inadequately trained therapeutic mental health providers with unmanageable client loads’”(Martin, 2002, p. 150, as cited in Paisley & Hayes, 2003, p. 2).

In spite of decades of debate on the roles of school counselors to be played in the reform movement, school counselor responsibilities continue to include academic advising, vocational planning, personal and individual counseling, reactive and crisis-oriented counseling, participation in special education student needs, test administration and scoring, and scheduling (Tang & Erford, 2004). Through the adherence of these roles school counselors have been accountable to their schools and students, however, at the same time, school counselors have struggled with offering students direct services or working as social change agents to improve school environments (Whiston, 2001, as
cited in Tang & Erford, 2004). As a result, it has been recommended that professional school counselors function as counselor, consultant, facilitator, and coordinator to successfully develop and implement comprehensive and developmental school counseling programs (Tang & Erford, 2004; Erford, 2003; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Schmidt, 1999).

DeVoss (2004) asserts that the issue towards role definition continues as a recognized challenge for school counselors, causing “considerable difficulty in daily practice, limiting credibility for the profession” (p. 25). DeVoss (2004) shared Baker’s, 2000, belief that school counselors should join professional organizations as the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), and American Counseling Association (ACA) to achieve change for counselor education programming on a national level. DeVoss notes Baker’s assertion that “less than half of all professional school counselors are members of any professional organization” (Baker, 2000, as cited in DeVoss, 2004, p. 31).

As a result, the quality of school counselor preparation, along with school counselor participation in professional organizations, has led to concerns for the associated alignment of school counselor practice and program development. The American School Counselor Association’s (ASCA, 2008) School Counselor Competencies, consistent with the ASCA National Model, provides an improved and cohesive vision for the school counseling profession. As previously noted, the aim of the competencies is to assist school counselor education programs to better prepare aspiring counselor education students in knowing how to design and implement comprehensive school counseling programs at the school site. High quality school counseling programs
can make a significant contribution to student success, particularly towards student social, emotional, academic, and career development. On the other hand, ineffective counselors and school counseling programs can have a detrimental impact on student development and success. If excluded from school reform initiatives, school counselors are in positions to possibly do more harm than good (House & Hayes, 2002).

Proposed advocacy, leadership, collaboration, data driven programs, systemic change, and demonstration of student benefits are considered departures from school counseling tradition (Brown & Trusty, 2005). As seen by tradition, changes for school counseling have always come from the parallelism of school counseling with reform movement swings and the occurrences of historical and political influences over time. Accordingly, Brown and Trusty (2005) suggest that at this time the push for change is due to the accountability measures exerted by the No Child Left Behind Act.

In Lightfoot’s (1983) work, *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture*, rationale for her subjective illustration of six secondary schools includes the following:

As the frustrations increased, it became apparent that we needed descriptions of life in schools that conveyed pictures of them, and that these portrayals needed to be relatively unencumbered by theoretical frames or rigid perspectives. The vivid descriptions could provide current material from which to work--road maps, texts of cultures that seemed distant from our abstractions. (p. 9)

In the same way, “portraits” offering a “holistic” and “contextual description of reality” (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 13) are needed for school counselor roles.
Therefore, this inquiry, offered through case study research, has significance for several reasons. The first reason is that school counselor roles are possibly ambiguous and in need of investigation for the sake of clarity and definition. The second reason is that school counselor roles tend to be impacted by educational reform movement initiatives so determining what changes may be occurring for them within the current reform movement has value for school counseling preparation and practice. The third reason is that school counselors have been left out of educational reform discussions, having escaped the accountability “radar screen” (Eilers, 2004, p. 3), for too long. Research is needed to examine the expectations and challenges school counselors face, offer insight to how their roles may be changing in view of NCLB, and explore how they may be managing those changes in this era of school accountability.
Chapter 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

Educational literature has traditionally painted a picture of dissatisfaction with the structures and processes of schooling. Due to this dissatisfaction, educational reform and school restructuring has been proposed as essential to the continuance of our American way of life. In fact, “Reform seems to be a constant part of the educational landscape. However, the details change frequently” (Linn, 2000, p. 1). Shifts in reform efforts, termed waves or pendulum swings, are dependent upon the guiding philosophies or themes that correspond to the ascendance of one ideological camp to another (Linn, 2000). Moriarity (2002) writes, “American egos were stunned when the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik in 1957.” “How could the U.S. have fallen second in the race for space?” (p. 1). One answer to this question was seen as the failure of schools in educating children.

This believed failure of schools put the pendulum for educational reform in motion. Initial changes were in the direction of science and math education with the passing of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958 (Moritz, 1999). Years later, with the peace movement influencing the 1960s and 70s, the pendulum was pushed the opposite direction with educational concerns moving towards social studies and the arts, taking precedence over math and science curriculum. The pendulum has not stopped, only to move into the 1980s, 90s, and the new century, with accountability being the current “sign of the times” (Moriarty, 2002, p. 1).
The waves and pendulum swings are much more complex than thusly presented, and began long before Sputnik. Our nation’s early history, that in particular at the turn of the twentieth century, is the foundation of contemporary schooling. The Progressive Reform Era and Industrial Revolution in American society, roughly the 1890s to the 1930s (Monahan, 1998), saw the origins and withstood the debates for education which included scientific management, standardized testing, secondary school comprehensiveness, and school counseling services. However, more important to current educational reform concerns are the swings occurring around the time, and since, the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for School Reform*; as these have evolved to standards-based reform and the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act. Of particular relevance to this study is the absence of reform measures directly addressing the roles of school counselors, with specific emphasis regarding school counselor preparation and practice at the secondary school level.

*A Nation at Risk* deemed that schools would continue to be at-risk to the *rising tide of mediocrity* if Americans did not respond to the report’s plea to implement its recommendations. Reform initiatives that focused on a press for excellence were determined imperative for the continuance of the American way of life due to increasing globalized economic competition and concerns to the loss of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual strengths of society (National Commission on Excellence, 1983). Findings of the report concluded, “declines in educational performance are in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way the educational process itself is often conducted” (National Commission on Excellence, 1983, p. 14). The report’s offered recommendations for reform addressed roles played by school administrators, teachers,
institutions of higher education, parents, students, and indeed, the general populous. Schools were to “adopt more rigorous and measurable standards, and higher expectations for academic performance” (National Commission on Excellence, 1983, p. 20).

This dream of excellence lives on with the promotion of standards-based reform through high-stakes testing within the No Child Left Behind Act. High-stakes testing refers to standardized tests associated with consequences for schools and students (ASCA, 2007). The standards drive instruction. School curriculum is mapped to the content of the standards, taught, and then assessed by the scores students receive on the standardized tests. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position Statement: High-Stakes Testing, written in 2002 and revised in 2007, the intent of high-stakes testing is to use test scores as a determinant for student achievement. Test results may be used as a means to establish student academic placement, promotion and retention, graduation, and necessary intervention services for school success. For schools, other decisions made using standardized test results include increased or reduced funding at the state or local level, revision of curriculum and teacher certification standards, accommodations for students with exceptional learning needs, and teacher evaluation (ASCA, 2007).

Consequently, the No Child Left Behind Act is termed an “an accountability bill” (Elmore, 2002, p. 1) intended to implement the recommendations initiated by A Nation At Risk in the early 1980s. Mandated by the federal government, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) provides an impetus for schools to reform according to student mastery of rigorous state performance standards. NCLB further mandates Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals to be met by schools as demonstrated by annual standardized testing, and
sets a single target year, 2014, in which all students must meet or exceed proficiency levels (Elmore, 2002).

Accountability is holding one responsible, determined by evaluations based on assessment (Moriarty, 2002). The No Child Left Behind Act is a means to assess student achievement, evaluate schools, and use evaluation results to improve achievement (EPIC, 2003). Through its passing, an era of accountability never before known to educators has occurred. “For the first time in history, schools are being held accountable for the achievement of all groups of students” (The Education Trust, 2004, p. 1). “In this era of educational reform, greater emphasis is being placed upon making school personnel accountable for bringing all students to high levels of academic performance (Ericksen, 1997; Fields & Hines, 2000)” (Paisley & Hayes, 2003, p. 1).

In Pennsylvania, “School Improvement is based on Chapter 4 standards found in the Pennsylvania School Code, the federal requirements of No Child Left Behind, and the Pennsylvania Accountability System” (PDE, 2009, p. 1). In order to comply with School Improvement criteria, student achievement levels for schools and districts are determined by student scores on the annual criterion-referenced Pennsylvania System of State Assessment (PSSA). Scores are offered in Advanced, Proficient, Basic, or Below Basic in Reading and Math for every Pennsylvania student in grades 3rd through 8th and 11th. Students in 5th, 8th, and 11th are also assessed in Writing (PDE, 2008, November 30). To show an acceptable demonstration of mastery in order to graduate, high school students must have a minimum score of Proficient on the Grade 11 PSSA Math, Reading, Writing, and most recently, Science. Students who earn Basic or Below Basic scores are permitted to re-test the PSSA the fall of their senior year by way of the Grade 12 PSSA Retest.
If students still do not manage at or above Proficiency on the Grade 12 PSSA Retest they must manage some form of remediation, possibly a school or district determined alternate assessment to show proficiency in Reading, Math, Writing and/or Science, prior to high school graduation. Though students may graduate with a locally determined proficiency standard, schools and districts are still held accountable to state standards. To more precisely explain the situation for schools,

No Child Left Behind requires states to measure ‘adequate yearly progress’ (AYP) for schools receiving Title I funds with the goal of all students reaching the proficient level on reading/language arts and mathematics tests by the 2013-2014 school year. States must define minimum levels of improvement as measured by standardized tests chosen by the state. AYP targets must be set for overall achievement and for subgroups of students, including major ethnic/racial groups, economically disadvantaged students, limited English proficient (LEP) students and students with disabilities. If a school receiving Title I funding fails to meet its AYP target for two or more consecutive years, the school is designated ‘in need of improvement’ and faces specific consequences. (GreatSchools.net, 2008, p. 1)

As all aspects of public education are experiencing inspection, the evaluation of school counselor roles within school counseling programs must also be included within accountability considerations (Curcio, Mathai, & Roberts, 2003). Brigman (2006) states, “school counselors are increasingly being asked to provide accountability data that document their impact on student behavioral and academic performance” (p. 421).

Additionally, because school counselors have a wide perspective regarding the needs of every student, they are clearly in key positions to serve as student advocates to ensure
student success through the significant roles they play (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). Brown and Trusty (2005) also address this role of school counselors as student advocates. As indicated by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model, Brown and Trusty offer that the primary role of school counselors as advocates is to “ascertain that students’ needs are met in a manner that allows them the opportunity to maximize their academic achievement” (p. 4).

How to address these concerns within the field of school counseling and how the current era of reform may be changing the traditional roles of school counselors was the impetus that shaped this investigation. The study’s primary purpose was to explore the potentially changing roles of school counselors and school counselor services in view of the NCLB Act and high-stakes school accountability. Writing on school counseling reform, several authors, Herr (2002), Lambie and Williamson (2004), and Brown and Trusty (2005), have presented literature reviews from a historical to contemporary context for changes seen in schooling, and in turn, the impact of those changes on school counseling. Somewhat similarly, historic school reform initiatives that have shaped school counseling are presented in this review. The rationale for this literature review is to offer further evidence to how school reform directly impacts school counseling. In so doing, the review supports the need for school counselors to be heard regarding the impact of how their roles may be changing.

The Comprehensive High School, Testing, and School Reform Efforts

Considering the condition of many young people's lives in the nation today, it has been purported that current systems of education fail to offer appropriate support for
academic achievement, student health, intellectual growth, and scholarly potential. The nation itself has been at-risk. Wagner (1998) believes that schools as we know them are “obsolete” and the “’assembly line’ forms of schooling no longer fit the needs of the new economy” (p. 513). Taylorism, Fordism, however factory modeled scientific management is termed, introduced as a paradigm for education in the early 1900s, has not worked (Gray, 1993; Clinchy, 1993; Martin, 1997).

These statements are not new. They are well known, overused, and have competed against multiple philosophies for education since the Progressive Era in education at the turn of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, discussions still continue on how school change should be addressed regarding the core purposes of schooling, and the roles and expectations of school professionals at all levels. Such discussions, often considered within a buffet (Shouse, 1998) or wide-ranging (Herr, 2002) menu for change, also include the role of student assessment, evaluation, standardized testing as a means of accountability for school and student performance, and the roles of school counselors.

The Comprehensive High School

The comprehensive high school is that which most of us have experienced. It is a product of our national history, established to meet the needs of a diverse society and assimilate large numbers of immigrants into an American culture. For the sake of the common good, local communities are delegated by state governments to provide free and appropriate education to all students. Nonetheless, the demographic composition of schools, the nature of individual school cultures, and the needs of differing student bodies, vary greatly across communities and school districts. In keeping with the
Jeffersonian doctrine that supports equitable education for all children in order to advance a democratic populace and meritocracy, the comprehensive high school grew from common school beginnings in the nineteenth century.

Paralleling the passing of the Smith-Hughes National Vocational Education Act in 1917, the further growth of the comprehensive high school came as an additional response to concerns created by the Industrial Revolution and the need to provide students with vocational education. The intent of the comprehensive high school was to counter the segregation, and consequential societal stratification, of students from differing socioeconomic and religious backgrounds. Decided to be the organization most suited for educating all of American youth, the comprehensive high school was to offer both unifying and specializing courses to meet the needs of all students (Wraga, 1998).

Some schools have evolved to nearly complete sites for learning that additionally address concerns to the social, emotional, mental, and physical health issues of students. These schools add on services, considered non-educative, outside those that are curriculum based, and are usually managed with the assistance of outside of school agencies (Dryfoos, 1994). Most schools offer a limited blend of non-educative services that function to meet the needs of students within the curriculum. School counseling services are one of these. However, the basic model of the comprehensive high school that shaped public education “continues to serve as the dominant model for secondary education in the United States” (Wraga, 1998, p. 1).

The comprehensive high school is considered an American phenomenon. It is referred to as comprehensive because it is responsible for providing an appropriate secondary education, academic and vocational, for all the high school age youth within
any given community (Gardner, President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, as cited in Conant, 1967). It has the believed capability to “break down artificial forms of social stratification, promote social mobility and equity, and produce the scientific and scholarly talent necessary for the nation’s social, economic, and military security” (Shouse, 2000, p. 1). In *School Reform and Perspectives on the Role of School Counselors: A Century of Proposals for Change*, Herr (2002) comments that in 1959 James B. Conant presented in his book *The American High School Today*, a firm belief in curriculum reform for high schools, the organization of homerooms, nonacademic elective programs, and special arrangements for academically talented students. “Most important, Conant argued that there should be one full-time counselor for every 250 to 300 pupils in the high school” (Herr, 2002, p. 4).

*The Role of Testing in Schools*

As with other aspects of comprehensive schooling, the role of testing has maintained its share of pendulum swings. From the early 1900s and continuing into present times, testing “connects to and informs many aspects of our social, economic, and political realities” (Monahan, 1998, p. 2), with the volume of testing having increased at an annual rate of 15 to 20 percent since 1950 (Haney & Madaus, 1989). Rees (2001) proposes that high-stakes standardized testing is the best example of Frederick Taylor’s ideas of scientific management functioning in schools today.

Having been used as a basis for student selection, retention, and tracking, or differently said, student educational opportunities; standardized testing has become a means for accountability that involves all aspects of schooling. Too, as testing became
popular in schools and the military, the fields of psychological testing and educational psychology expanded. Through this growth, standardized testing and educational psychology inevitably became intertwined with areas of study related to child and adolescent development, psychology, social psychology, teaching and curriculum development, and educational counseling (Perrone, 1991; Jacobsen & Berliner, 1999).

It was during their very beginning years that school counselors took on roles in testing, “the idea developed of the guidance worker as a trained professional, was wise in administering and interpreting scientific instruments for the prediction of vocational and educational success” (Cremin, 1964, p. 19, as cited in Herr, 2002, p. 4). Tests have been used as chief components of five waves of educational reform within the past sixty years. Tests were used in student tracking and selection through the 1950s, for program accountability in the 1960s, minimum competency testing programs in the 1970s, school and district accountability in the 1980s, and the standards-based accountability systems in the 1990s (Linn, 2000). Currently, high-stakes testing is seen in the form of state assessment systems within the No Child Left Behind Act. Through all these years, continuing into the current day, school counselors have participated in varying roles with test administration and interpretation, the application of results for educational programming, and now, the identification and remediation of students needing to master proficiency for graduation.

More recently, The Success For All Foundation (SFAF), in collaboration with the Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education (CDDRE), developed the 4Sight Benchmark Assessment to predict how students will perform on the state assessments. The 4Sight Benchmarks, referred to at the school site as 4Sight tests or just 4Sight, are
used to assess math and reading achievement levels, multiple times throughout the school year, for all students in grades 3 through 11. In Pennsylvania 4Sight tests are designed to mirror the PSSA. Through the comparative analysis of data for targeted individuals and groups, 4Sight test results can be used to help school districts identify where to focus professional development efforts in order to strengthen instruction towards improved student achievement (PSEA, 2007) (See Appendix M). Additionally in Pennsylvania, beginning with the students who will graduate high school in 2015, are the upcoming Keystone Exams (See Appendix N). It is yet to be seen what roles school counselors may play with their coordination and results.

School Reform Efforts

Why schools need to change has been addressed in the literature at several levels, national, state, and local. Varying school reform initiatives and agendas have, over many years now, been offered and supported by a national momentum aimed at the fundamental redesign of existing school systems. The attack on the comprehensive high school has been continuous since at least mid-twentieth century (Wraga, 1998). This momentum has become known as educational restructuring and systemic reform, and sometimes school renewal. The movements have focused on fostering academic achievement and at-risk student resilience. The goal has been to reclaim, sustain, and enhance the development of our youth towards a productive and competitive citizenry to recapture the nation within an international economy.

“Restructuring has no precise definition, but the term suggests that schooling needs to be comprehensively redesigned; simply improving parts of schools as we know
them isn't enough” (Newman & Wehlage 1995, p. 1). Reform initiatives include decentralization, shared decision making, school choice, schools within schools, flexible scheduling, team teaching, a required common academic curriculum for all students, reduction of ability grouping, external standards for school accountability, and new forms of assessment. Similarly to Shouse’s (1998) buffet for school change, Newman and Wehlage (1995) suggest, “there is no ‘magic bullet’ or simple recipe for successful school restructuring” (p. 1).

Regarding educational reform and school restructuring, assessment and accountability measures have played prominent roles since the time of World War II. Over the years, policymakers have found testing and assessment both controversial and preferred, with several reasons for their appeal: (a) they are relatively inexpensive in comparison to other school changes as increasing instructional time, hiring additional personnel, and implementing program initiatives, (b) they can be externally mandated at the state or district level, (c) assessment changes can be quickly implemented, as through the course of a political term of office, and (d) results are reportable and visible with increases generally occurring within the first few years of implementation (Linn, 2000).

With the No Child Left Behind Act “there is a tremendous push to expand national and state testing, including testing students with disabilities and limited English proficiency” (NCEO, 2002, p. 2, as cited in McDivitt, 2004, p. 408). As a result, “today’s tests have become a high stakes mechanism” affecting the opportunities of youth and “substantially defining the curriculum to which teachers will teach in order to have their students perform as well as possible in state assessments to which they are exposed” (Herr, 2001, p. 7, as cited in McDivitt, 2004, p. 408) The intent of the high-stakes tests is
to raise the academic achievement of all students, with high-stakes testing being “the key component of today’s educational reform movement” (McDivitt, 2004, p. 408).

The Waves of Reform

Three significant movements, or waves, of school reform/school restructuring have been identified as occurring since the early 1980s to the late 1990s. The first wave was prompted by the 1983 publication of A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for School Reform. The report opined that the American economy was losing in the race for global technology dominance and placed the blame squarely on a crisis in our schools. Excellence and intensification of educational programs with concern for achievement became the rallying cry for these reformers, leading to the first wave of reform. This first wave witnessed efforts towards a top-down expansion of educational inputs, as longer school days, increased requirements for graduation, and improved teacher preparedness.

The second wave of reform began around 1986. Rhetoric ensued from a belief that program and curriculum intensification alone would not reform public education. This wave focused on a bottom-up approach, changing the process of schooling on a level close to instruction. Decentralization, again the professionalization of teachers, more control to principals, and the conception that the school site was the basic unit of change, with emphasis on student outcomes, became the keys to reform. However, these elements of change within the second wave did not sufficiently motivate the instructional content and strategies needed to satisfy the perceived crisis in student achievement.

Smith and O'Day's (1990) 1990 plea for reform was to “change what happens at the most basic level of education--in the classrooms and schools” (p. 235) with support
from strong centralized efforts at the state level. They believed success would encompass positive school climates fostered by vision, mission, common instructional goals, and a focus on teaching and learning. Policies presented by a fragmented, complex, multi-layered educational governance to fortify conservatism and restrict true change.

“Sinking economic productivity, national debt, international commercial competition, trade deficits, and a declining dollar” were all noted as placing the country in economic “jeopardy.” Schooling was “seen as part of the problem and part of the solution” (Guthrie & Kirst, 1988, p. 4, as cited in Murphy, 1991, p. vii). Changes seen in the purposes of schooling paralleled the changing needs of society: industrial versus post-industrial, increases in the number of at-risk students, decreases in low-skilled jobs, and increases in the demand for high-skilled workers. With decreases occurring in the surplus of workers as the population aged, the pressure to restructure education through systemic change was “considerable” (Murphy, 1991, p. 8).

Therefore, a third wave of school reform, systemic reform, came about in the 1990s, mandating world-class curriculum, standards, and high-stakes testing. It sought a total reconceptualization of schooling, promoting empowerment to teachers, choice to parents, and comprehensive reform at the local, state, and federal levels. The supporters of systemic reform promoted that once the environment for change was set and unity among policies determined, systemic reform would raise achievement. Unity of policies included aligning curriculum with standards and assessment (O’Day & Smith 1993, as cited in Eilers, 2004), hence, standards-based assessment.

The educational response to these waves of school reform was quite complex. Boyd (1988) proposed that as America yielded to the Toyota problem, with the Japanese
technologically advancing, the U.S. could not compete in a globalized market. Through a combination of politics and use of the bully pulpit, Reagan's call for excellence, through A Nation at Risk, initiated school reform through top-down policy intervention at state and local levels. The task of reforming schools was seen similarly to punching a pillow; innovative thrusts are absorbed, only to soon resume its original shape (Boyd, 1988).

The intent of accountability policies is to redefine education to better serve the U.S. labor market economically and culturally within a global society (Lipman, 2001). With systemic reform came President Bush’s America 2000, later added to and named Goals 2000: Educate America Act, passed into law March of 1994. The Goals once again furthered a press to excellence through an intensification of curriculum and standards. Performance based accountability, achieved through testing, was “designed to bring a broad coalition together behind a single vision of reform” (Elmore, 2002, p. 3). Herr (2002) furthers Shanker’s 1990 supposition that reform was tinkering with traditional schools, not redesigning them. Elmore (2002) defines “the working theory” of “test-based accountability” thusly:

Students take tests that measure their academic performance in various subject areas. The results trigger certain consequences for students and schools--rewards, in the case of high performance, and sanctions for poor performance. Attaching stakes to test scores is supposed to create incentives for students and teachers to work harder and for school and district administrators to do a better job of monitoring their performance. If students, teachers, or schools are chronically low performing, presumably something more must be done: students must be denied diplomas or held back a grade; teachers or principals must be sanctioned or
dismissed; and failing schools must be fixed or simply closed. The threat of such measures is supposed to motivate students and schools to ever-higher levels of achievement. (Elmore, 2002, pp. 4-5)

Concerns to the Social Policy Arena

Paralleling the drive for excellence arose concerns to equity and the human side of education with consideration to the near Dickensian (Lugg & Boyd, 1993) or Dickens-like (Martin, 1997) condition of many young peoples’ lives. Consequently, systems of education need to simultaneously offer appropriate supports for student health towards intellectual growth and scholarly potential. Shalala (1994), Secretary of Health and Human Services, stated in a letter to Chairman William Ford, Committee on Education and Labor, that “educational goals for our children and youth cannot be met unless students are healthy and are receiving necessary health and social services” (p. 1).

This concern rings true as the twin goals of *A Nation at Risk*, those of “equity and high quality schooling,” remain with us into the NCLB Act. Permitting anything other than the two goals working together as one would profoundly affect our economy and society. It would deny our youth the opportunities to “learn and live by their aspirations and abilities” and potentially lead to a “generalized accommodation to mediocrity in our society on the one hand or the creation of an undemocratic elitism on the other” (National Commission on Excellence, 1983, p. 11).

Hence, as depicted by Brofenbrenner, 1979, cited in Cibulka and Kritek (1996), a new focus for education is emerging. “One aimed more at prevention than remediation, at investment in children, at designing structures that build and preserve families, and at
changes that address the whole ecology in which children learn and develop” (p. xi).
Therefore, issues of how to establish excellence and equity, in view of poverty and changing demographics, in addition to U.S. economic competitiveness, also shape school restructuring agendas. Early intervention and prevention mechanisms are important to school restructuring discussions. These discussions are supported by the belief that, “‘When you take care of children, you are taking care of the nation of tomorrow’” (Theodore Roosevelt, as cited in Cibulka & Kritek, 1996, p. 143).

Greenspan, Seeley, and Niemeyer (1993) declare there is an urgent need for mental health/social services in schools. Their research concluded that mental health/social services are needed to improve the ability of students to become successful learners. They additionally note that such services assist teachers and administrators in finding “better ways to give children a feeling of achievement and success” (p. 20). They emphatically state that, “Without provision of adequate mental health and social services in the schools, educational reform is doomed to failure” (p. 20). Mental health and social services, referred to as support services for at-risk students include: counseling of children and families, consultation to teachers and staff, improvement of school climate, and assistance to children and families with meeting their basic needs to alleviate stress.

Generally defined, students are considered at-risk for school failure, and, in turn, societal failure, if they have certain socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds, or engage in certain behaviors, which have been shown to diminish the likelihood of success. Poverty, parental divorce, lack of appropriate role models and caring persons to identify with, strong negative peer relations, sexual promiscuity, teen pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, increased chemical dependency, learning disabilities and
attention difficulties; all encompass what has been termed the *newer morbidities* for children and youth (AAP, 2001; Erford, 2003). The American Psychological Association (APA) (2002) proposes “students do not have adequate access to counseling and mental health services in schools. These services play a crucial role in ensuring a safe school environment, increasing academic achievement, promoting student well-being and development, and improving teacher effectiveness” (p. 1).

In public schools, the roles of school counselors include identifying students so defined as at-risk and working to assist their school success by establishing mental health, social, and/or individual learning needs support services. As a result, school counseling preparation programs adopted an orientation more towards mental health concerns that tended to minimize how school counselors might address student academic achievement (Collison, Osborne, & Layton, 1998, as cited in Paisley & Hayes, 2003). With No Child Left Behind, a shift for school counselor role emphasis towards the press for academic achievement seems likely to occur. School counseling preparation programs will need to follow suit. However, with this shift, the at-risk issues of children do not go away.

The presenting dilemma for school counselors thus becomes how best to support the holistic needs of any one child, to perform academically at a determined proficient level, while monitoring and encouraging the academic achievement of all children. Herr (2002) expresses concern for student differences seen in varying multiple and emotional intelligences and preparation to learn if school reform proposals are structured by enhancing academic achievement through raised standards and high-stakes testing. Given societal changes which place children increasingly more at-risk, school reform which facilitates “one size fits all” risks jeopardizing large numbers of students to school
withdrawal, or their disengagement from offered academic content and the educational process (Herr, 2002, p. 3). Herr explains this concern accordingly:

As suggested previously, school reform proposals have largely focused on the structure and content of schools, not on the changing circumstances that affect the development of children and youth….Some school reform proposals seem to suggest that ‘one size fits all.’ That if the content of schooling could be made harder and teachers were more accountable, children would learn and the problems of education would be solved. (p. 3)

Unfortunately, such views of school reform do not factor into their propositions that, in many cases, because of deteriorating situations in homes, schools have become one of the few places in their lives where many children find predictability, safety, support, and food. (p. 4)

The Evolution of School Counseling

Termed a Legacy of Social Action by Paisley and Hayes (2003, p. 2), the evolution of present school counseling programs emanated from the social reform movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. Concurrent to the growth of scientific management and educational testing, counseling services in schools developed within the Progressive Reform Era. While American education was managing the influences of an industrialized society, mass immigration, and compulsory education (Monahan, 1998), school counseling programs were initiated in response to increasingly
negative social conditions and injustices (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). Primarily, methods were needed to meet pressing concerns regarding vocational guidance (Schmidt, 1999).

Similarly to the philosophy that spurred the development of comprehensive high schools, traditional school counseling programs came about because early school counseling personnel believed social transformation towards productive citizenship could be achieved through education. This challenge continues for contemporary school counseling professionals as a means to address the improvement of American life and productive citizenship through education (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). Still, it was in vocational guidance, now known as career counseling, where school counseling found its roots (Brewer, 1922, as cited in Henderson & Gysbers, 1998).

Counseling as a profession, more so than just school counseling, began long before the Progressive Reform Era and Industrial Revolution. Counseling originated with the beginnings of culture and society as one person reached out to another, or was sought by another, or group of others, to help them. To help with information gathering, the exploration of options, and making decisions towards appropriate life choices (Schmidt, 1999). Professional counseling is thus defined as, “the process of establishing a relationship to identify people’s needs, design strategies and services to satisfy these needs, and actively assist in carrying out plans to help people make decisions, solve problems, develop self-awareness, and lead healthier lives” (Schmidt, 1999, p. 2).

As such, the history of counseling began thousands of centuries ago as helping and educative relationships developed among people and societal cultures as preventive measures to ensure safety and survival. Moving through time, from the means of basic survival developed the theories of ancient Greek philosophers, as Plato and Aristotle, as
they contributed to the fundamentals of current educational counseling, addressing the nature of humankind, the interplay of environmental influences, and the realization and importance of individual perception. With the rise of Judaism and Christianity arose counseling postulates regarding free will, self-determination, human value, and the basis of current democratic ideals. Counseling continued through the Middle Ages with the increase of Christianity and the roles played by priests and monks as educators, counselors, and confidantes—the few persons of the time that were literate, capable of understanding scholarly works, and trained to maintain confidentiality (Schmidt, 1999).

Informational texts about vocational choice began to appear in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These eventually led to the career counseling and guidance movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Noted authors include such names as Joseph Colyer, Edmund Carter, and Denis Diderot. Two examples of presented books on occupational exploration and choice at the time are: (a) *Tom of all Trades: Or the Plain Pathways to Preferment*, by Powell, 1631, which offered illustrations and information on differing occupations, how to enter them and the education needed; and (b) *The London Tradesmen*, by Campbell, 1747, a synopsis of all the trades in London, intended for parents to instruct youth on the selection of business (Schmidt, 1999).

In America, Benjamin Franklin furthered the needs of vocational education for American society (Herr, 2002). The aspiration to expand democratic ideals and transform society through education has always been a prevalent force in preparing youth for adulthood. As vocational education became part of this preparation, the entrance of school counselor roles in public education began to take shape in the late 1800s. Frank Parsons, noted as the father of vocational guidance, was a social reformer concerned that
schools provide the appropriate education needed by a society that was in transition from an agriculturally based economy to an economy that was primarily industrial (Herr, 2002). “Within such conditions, the process of adapting the new processes of vocational guidance to the schools was seen as a school reform” (Herr, 2002, p. 8).

The guidance movement in schools began with teachers being assigned part-time counseling roles to be carried out in addition to their teaching duties. They provided social, personal, and career assistance to students, as they were needed and able. The intent of school counseling at the time was to instruct children and youth on moral development, interpersonal relationships, and the world of work. Questions stirred as to what should be the nature, structure, and focus of school counseling programs regarding how they should be organized, who should lead and manage the programs, and how supervision and evaluation should be determined (Schmidt, 1999; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998). With a role emphasis placed on vocational guidance, duties assigned to these early on teacher-vocational counselor positions included:

1. To be representative of the Department of Vocational Guidance in the District.
2. To attend all meetings of counselors called by the Director of Vocational Guidance.
3. To be responsible for all material sent to the school by the Vocational Guidance Department.
4. To gather and keep on file occupational information.
5. To arrange with the local branch librarians about shelves of books on educational and vocational guidance.
6. To arrange for some lessons in occupations in connection with classes in Oral English and Vocational Civics, or wherever principal and counselor deem otherwise.

7. To recommend that teachers show the relationship of their work to occupational problems.

8. To interview pupils in grades six and above who are failing, attempt to find the reason, and suggest remedy.

9. To make use of the cumulative record card when advising children.

10. To consult records of intelligence tests when advising children.

11. To make careful study with grades seven and eight of the bulletin “A Guide to the Choice of Secondary School.”

12. To urge children to remain in school.

13. To recommend conferences with parents of children who are failing or leaving school.

14. To interview and check cards of all children leaving school, making clear to them the requirements for obtaining working certificates.

15. To be responsible for the fill in of Blank 249, and communicate recommendations to the Department of Vocational Guidance when children are in need of employment. (Ginn, 1924, pp. 5-7, as cited in Henderson & Gysbers, 1998, p. 4)

This list is not very different from what school counselor duties currently include.

However, as school counseling positions have vastly expanded over the years so have school counselor roles and lists of school counselor responsibilities.
Through the twentieth century, events that impacted the form and function of school counseling include: (a) the social reform movement at the turn of the twentieth century with regards to managing social injustices and vocational education, which includes the work of Frank Parsons and George Merrill in vocational guidance and the passing of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917; (b) the development and widespread use of standardized testing for schools in the early 1900s, and the military during World War I and II, that contributed to the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), first administered in 1926, and eventually the establishment of Educational Testing Services (ETS) in 1947; (c) the Great Depression during the 1930s with concerns to the large number of youth out of school and unemployed; (d) the passing of the George-Barden Act in 1946, that provided funds to develop and support school counseling services; (e) the Soviet launching of Sputnik in 1957, which led to passing the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958, which provided more funds to support and expand school counseling services; (f) the passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, to Title I amendments in 1994; (g) the Vocational Education Act of 1968; (h) the Education Act for All Handicapped Children of 1975, which expanded the roles of school counselors to include special education and support services; (i) the publication of *A Nation At Risk* in 1983; and to be seen (j) the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (Monahan, 1998; Schmidt, 1999; Perrone, 1991; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Herr, 2002).

It was the launching of Sputnik and the passing of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958 that solidified the roles of school counselors with testing. “School counselors were identified in the Act as the persons in the school charged with
testing students, identifying those capable of entering higher education in the sciences, and encouraging them to prepare to do so” (Herr, 2002, p. 5). For schools and school counseling programs to manage this daunting task, funds were allocated by state departments of education to pay for the development or further growth of school counseling programs, the provision of testing resource materials, and the employment of additional school counselors (Herr, 2002). As Herr (2002) writes,

The ripple effects of the National Defense Education Act had profound and positive effects on the number of school counselors, the availability of counselor education programs, the development of a professional literature in school counseling, the organization of K-12 programs of school guidance, and on the commitments of State Departments of Education to increase the certification requirements for school counselors. These results are too complex to discuss in depth here. Nevertheless, this legislation reaffirmed and extended the role of school counselors as a part of massive efforts in school reform. (p. 1)

These historical influences, combined with the concurrent growth of psychology and increasing concerns to child guidance led to the sustained presence and recognition of school counseling programs within public schools. Contributions from the field of psychology include the founding of child guidance clinics and clinics for delinquent youth in 1909; the induction of Trait and Factor Theory in the late 1930s, originating as a by-product of group testing and information analysis and assimilation; and with the 1940s, the dawn of Rogerian counseling philosophies, developed from the work of psychologist Carl Rogers. Rogerian philosophies focus on the rapport counselors have with their clients. Therapeutic aspects of the relationship between counselor and client
are based on non-directive approaches that reflect genuine care, empathetic understanding, and unconditional positive regard for the client (child) (Schmidt, 1999).

These processes have had a major influence on the child-centered and helping-relationship roles played by counselors. Still, keep in mind that counseling is not psychotherapy (Harrow, 2001). Harrow (2001) describes counseling as the art of helping mostly healthy people manage ordinary issues. These issues may be decisions, problems, and crises that happen to all of us when choosing a career, losing a parent, or going through a divorce. “Sometimes it just helps to have somebody to talk to, somebody whose compassion we trust and whose wisdom we respect” (p. 1).

Subsequently, school counseling roles and practices are directed by a host of guiding theories and objectives. These theories/philosophies and objectives are both educative and counseling oriented. Theories guided by educational philosophies, stemming from the 1960s National Defense Education Act, are thought to be directive approaches to counseling; those from Rogerian philosophies tend to be considered non-directive counseling approaches (ASCA, 2003a). The differing counseling perspectives found in these two paradigms have contributed to role confusion for school counselors (ASCA, 2003a). Regardless, school counseling’s overarching goal is to promote the well-being of children and youth as they develop into productive and concerned citizens.

The counseling profession relies on a broad knowledge of human development, psychology, sociology, and education. At the same time, it incorporates effective communication and leadership skills with the essential human qualities of caring, genuineness, regard, and respect for others. (Schmidt, 1999, p. 5)
Accordingly, the all-embracing intent of counselor roles is to be helpful. School counselors are to offer information and guidance for student and parent decision-making of student life choices.

Counselors, in schools or otherwise, maintain this fundamental and ancient awareness for helping others as a basis for all their work. In schools, the determination of counselor role emphasis varies with the grade level of children--elementary school, middle school, or high school. The goal of assisting individual student success--socially, emotionally, and academically--directs counselor responsibilities and drives the comprehensiveness of school counseling programs (Schmidt, 1999). School counseling also has a continuing commitment to individual rights, the facilitation of free and informed choice, and to helping persons develop intelligence about their personal characteristics and the opportunities available to them.

In addition, school counselors help students become more purposeful and active in the management of the educational, occupational, and personal/social options available to them; to bring order to the chaos they sometimes experience; to help them cope with physical or psychological loss, and to help them improve their interpersonal relations in the family, at school, and at work (Herr, 1979, as cited in Bunce, 1999). Hence, promoting overall student success through a focus on student advocacy, social/emotional stability, academic achievement, and career development are all crucial components of the roles played by school counselors (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, as cited in Bunce, 1999).
School Counselor Role Crisis

Consequently, the scope and sequence of school counseling has been determined more by forces outside of the profession than by the profession itself (Erford, 2003). School counselors themselves were partly at fault for this conundrum as their services lacked organization, focus, and cohesiveness (Erford, 2003). Accordingly, school counselor roles have been purported as overwhelming and “ambiguous” (Paisley & McMahon, 2001, p. 2). Bunce (1999) comments that understanding what school counselors do is often unclear. School counselor training and job expectations appear “disconnected” (The Education Trust, 1998, p. 6, as cited in Eilers, 2004, p. 11). All leading to a need to align counselor roles and services (The Education Trust, 1998, as cited in Eilers, 2004).

The reported vagueness of school counselor roles became a particular concern during the reform movements of the 1980s. With the onset of the accountability movement spurred by A Nation At Risk, school counseling felt the attack of criticism that was focused on all education. High school counselors were harshly attacked as they failed to provide “systematic and carefully organized” responses to adolescent problems (Myrick, 1993, p. 15, as cited in Schmidt, 1999, p. 21). At the time, many school districts eliminated school counseling positions. “During the 1980s, the need for school counselors to develop a clear identity and describe their roles and functions at the various levels of school practice became paramount” (Schmidt, 1999, p. 21). Recommended by Schmidt (1999), “this need to establish a clear professional identity continues” (p. 21).

As a result, role definition has been considered a recognized challenge for school counselors, causing “considerable difficulty in daily practice, limiting credibility for the
profession” (DeVoss, 2004, p. 25). Borders (2002) also writes on role confusion occurring for school counselors by reflecting on numerous authors’ contributions on the topic. Borders comments,

Baker (2001) and Gysbers (2001) provided a historical perspective on these questions. In particular, they described the numerous external forces that influenced the evolution of the profession--including forces that have expanded and continue to expand the scope of the profession as well as those that have limited its ability to define itself. As Baker and Gerler (2001) stated elsewhere, ‘There was no master plan’ (p. 289). Instead, the profession has sought to respond to--and keep up with--shifting educational philosophies, social movements, economic swings, and federal legislation that have driven the needs for and expectations of school counselors. (Borders, 2002, p. 1)

Borders (2002) addresses the resulting “polarized discussions” within the profession regarding what issues school counselors should place their focus (p. 1). Should school counselor role emphasis be placed on (a) student mental health concerns or educational goals, (b) the time given to counseling, versus consulting, versus coordinating, (c) the percentage of direct versus indirect services provided, and should (d) advocacy issues be of greatest importance (Borders, 2002)? Borders (2002), citing Paisley and McMahon (2001), furthers, “All are necessary, required, and critical….Does this perpetuate the dilemma of asking school counselors to try ‘to be all things to all people’ (Paisley & McMahon, 2001, p. 107). Certainly, at least to some extent” (Borders, 2002, p. 2).
Paisley and McMahon (2001) state the most significant challenge for school counselors rests in role definition. Individual counselors struggle with priorities. As school counselors attempt to prioritize, there have been calls for reexamination of school counselor preparation and practice. These calls for reexamination have ranged from the need for an active response to educational reform, to meeting the needs of at-risk students, to the belief that school counselors are not prepared or utilized in ways which best meet the needs of all students. School counselor involvement in these discussions still leaves many counselors questioning the focus of school counseling programs (Paisley & McMahon, 2001).

In What’s Going on in the Counselor’s Office? Brinson, Jr, Rivera, and Windle, (2004) present that school counselors are the adults within schools with whom students have the most individual, personal, and ongoing interactions. They advance school counselors as essential players in the school community to address the academic, career, and social/emotional developmental needs of students. School counselors are expected to foster an atmosphere of help and sensitivity, but counselor-student caseloads and ever-expanding job descriptions are overwhelming. School counselors are assigned non-counseling tasks potentially better suited to an assistant principal or clerical staff person. Brinson et al. question “are our school counselors as active and present in students’ lives as they’re trained to be? Are school administrators cognizant of the counselors’ role and function, and are the specialized skills they have acquired through education and training appropriately used?” (p. 1). Non-counseling activities take school counselors away from students, also raising a concern that as school counselors become overly frustrated by such tasks some may choose to leave the profession. “Resources and creative thinking are
needed to reduce or eliminate many of the non-counseling functions that school counselors are required to assimilate into their workday, so that they can spend their time helping students” (Brinson et al., 2004, p. 1).

Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

To establish clarity and purpose to school counseling services, the American School Counseling Association suggests developing comprehensive school counseling programs that are developmental, systematic, sequential, clearly defined, and accountable. Programming should employ components of developmental psychology, educational philosophy, and counseling methodology. Integral to the educational program, school counseling programs should be proactive and preventive to assist students’ academic achievement, career and self-awareness, and interpersonal communication skills (ASCA, 1997a). Furthermore, “A comprehensive school counseling program consists of counseling, consulting, coordinating, and appraisal of services offered in response to the identified needs of the school and community” (Schmidt, 1999, p. 39). The expectation is that school counselor roles should focus on individual and group counseling, consultation with parents, teachers, administrators, outside agency personnel, and employers; and the coordination of these services to best meet the needs of students.

Lapan, Gysbers, and Kayson (2007) investigated how implemented comprehensive school counseling programs improved academic achievement for students in Missouri. They indicate high school counselors in traditional school counseling programs spend excessive amounts of time performing non-counseling tasks. This shift in
time spent away from professional roles limits their ability to deliver effective school counseling services. Examples given were that 40 percent of high school counselors were spending their time testing for special education and gifted programs, coordinating school wide testing programs, handling transcripts, maintaining permanent records, calculating student grade point averages (GPAs), class ranks, and honor rolls. None of these reported tasks were considered school counseling duties within comprehensive programs. Subsequently, high school counselors reported significantly less time spent providing comprehensive school counseling program initiatives than elementary or middle school counselors (Lapan et al., 2007).

A Model Comprehensive, Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program for Texas Public Schools, a Guide for Program Development Pre-K-12th Grade, offered by the Texas Education Agency (2004) presents how all students should benefit from high quality developmental school counseling programs. The guide was written with school counseling program standards for educators to “develop, validate, or improve” their school counseling programs (p. v). It clearly illustrates characteristic differences between traditional school counseling programs and developmental school counseling programs, and what may be seen in low performing school counseling programs as compared to what should be seen in high performing programs.

Historically based, or traditional, low performing school counseling programs are considered reactive, managing crisis counseling, offering individual guidance and counseling only, with unstructured and unmeasured services, and oriented to clerical and administrative tasks. Such characteristics of low performing school counseling programs are depicted as having a set of loosely related services performed where students may fall
through the cracks. Counselors work in isolation from the school, district, and community without coordinated planning to meet student needs. Data is not used to improve services and, “School principals view counselors as quasi-administrators whose primary function is to schedule students into classes” (Texas Education Agency, 2004, p. 9).

Contemporary school counseling programs have been described as comprehensive, developmental, collaborative, and systemic (Borders, 2002; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Allen, 1994). These high performing school counseling programs have a well-defined planning process leading to well-coordinated services. Counselors are members of planning teams, data is used on a regular basis to advance student learning, and, “School principals emphasize the importance of the counselor as a monitor and promoter of student potential as well as a coordinator of the school’s guidance plan” (p. 9). They offer preventive counseling, group counseling, and consistent services to all students. They are also oriented towards student goal attainment through developmental curriculum that is evaluated and improved upon as determined by evaluation results (Texas Education Agency, 2004).

School counselors in contemporary school counseling programs are members of planning teams inclusive of school, district, and community members where data from regularly analyzed services is used to improve student learning. School principals emphasize the importance of school counselor roles in monitoring and promoting student potential (Texas Education Agency, 2004, p. 9). The Texas Education Agency (2004) provides an example of how a model school counseling program is developmentally designed. It includes the need for counselors to address “the utilization of test scores”
with a role played in “assessment” (p. 17). However, the role of assessment is seen as but one small component within the overall program design.

New Vision School Counseling


School counselors, although not mentioned in any national school reform publications, began feeling the pressure to be more visible….They needed to show how they were an integrated part of the educational process and were helping students learn more effectively and efficiently. (p. 1)

However, given the nature of school counselor day-to-day tasks, it may be difficult to discern if program initiatives meant to define and direct school counselor roles occur as anything more than rhetoric or punching pillows. In The Future Role of School Counselors, Welch and McCarroll (1993) render a narrative tale of a country at-risk for harm. It was threatened on every border by enemies unknown and unforeseen. It did not know when or where an attack would come and when it did the country felt unwarned and unprepared. The attack struck deep, wounding its very heartland….and from the wounded were heard cries of, “Why weren’t we warned? We could have prepared. We could have done something.” (p. 1).
Welch and McCarroll apply the story to making a point about the difficulties with trying to predict coming events and the need to prepare for them. Having learned from the past, and looking into the future, they present school counselor roles as what they have been, are currently, and what they could be. They foresee futuristic counselors as conduits between needs and resources, as providers of group and family counseling, as teachers and administrators, as members of a systems model, as planners for self-development, and as users of power as an educational tool rather than a political necessity. They present an analogy that counselors cannot drive into the future looking in a rearview mirror. Vision, imagination, and preparation are the traits needed for the “teacher-counselor-administrator” of the future (Welch & McCarroll, 1993, p. 53).

Subsequently, the profession is now faced with preparing for a new age in education. School counselors are confronted with a new kind of student body, one whose needs require participation in a technologically advanced international culture and new millennium. Once again, school counselors are needed to offer guidance to the lives of American youth through education (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). In the face of the economic hard times of the 1970s school counselors were challenged to be more accountable. In current times, strains on the economy once again place school counselors in a position of advocacy and accountability for survival (DeVoss, 2004). Therefore, a new vision for school counseling has been proposed (Paisley & Hayes, 2003; Alexander et al., 2003; The Education Trust, 2004; Perusse & Goodnough, 2001).

The new vision school counselor will be dedicated to attaining “documented outcomes that affirm a belief in the capacity of every child to become an effective and contributing citizen” (Paisley & Hayes, 2003, p. 3). Paisley and Hayes (2003) contend the
transition to this vision will require the “transformation” of school counseling “practice and preparation” (p. 4). Because, “In this era of educational reform, greater emphasis is being placed upon making school personnel accountable for bringing all students to high levels of academic performance” (Paisley & Hayes, 2003, p. 1).

NCES Portrait of High School Counseling

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) completed a national survey investigating high school counseling services and school counselor activities (NCES, 2003). The survey offers a research base of information to help identify and address the defined roles of school counselors. It came about from the perceived need for new directions for school counseling programs as indicated in recent school counseling literature. As noted within its Introduction, “no national data exist that provide a current picture of high school guidance counseling programs and activities” (NCES, 2003, p. 1).

The survey was conducted in the spring of 2002 for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education and the U.S. Department of Education using the NCES Fast Response Survey System (FRSS). It describes public high school counseling programs during the 2001-2002 school year, presenting national estimates on the goals, plans, and features of school counseling programs. The report compares its findings with the 1984 supplement to the High School and Beyond (HS&B) longitudinal survey and is the first to provide national data on school counseling since the 1984 HS&B survey (NCES, 2003).

Results showed that the most emphasized goal of high school counseling programs is helping students with high school academic achievement. In fact, 48 percent of all public high school counseling programs emphasized this goal the very most. Of
particular note, the 1984 HS&B survey compared to the 2002 FRSS survey, showed an increase from 35 percent to the previously mentioned 2002 survey with 48 percent of the proportion of public high schools indicating that helping students with their academic achievement in high school was the most emphasized school counseling goal (NCES, 2003).

About 49,500 school counseling staff, counselors and paraprofessionals, were assigned to public high school students. This represents an average of 284 students for every school counselor. This number includes full-time and part-time counselors. The ratio of high school students to full-time school counselors was found to be 315 students to one school counselor. The two services where school counselors spent most of their time, were first, the student choice of high school classes and the scheduling of these classes, and second, postsecondary education admissions and postsecondary selections. The third activity where school counselors spent most of their time regards student attendance, discipline, and other school and personal problems. One-third of public high schools reported that more than 20 percent of their school counseling staffs’ time was spent with these activities (NCES, 2003). Professional development and in-service training available for school counselors during the twelve months prior to the 2002 survey were also explored. Approximately two-thirds or 64 percent of the total number of schools surveyed reported the most common topic for counselor professional development was curriculum standards/frameworks or assessments (NCES, 2003).
School Counseling Reform Initiatives

The ESSCP

To equip new vision school counseling practice and preparation for the twenty-first century, the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program (ESSCP) previously known as the Elementary School Counseling Demonstration Program (ESCDP) is available to schools. It is a discretionary and competitive grant program offered by the federal government to provide grants to school districts to establish or expand comprehensive school counseling programs and mental health services through qualified school social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors. The ESSCP was reauthorized as part of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 (NASW, 2003; OSDFS, 2004; U. S. Department of Education, 2004).

The ASCA National Model, ASCA Professional Ethics, and CACREP

Aside from the ESSCP, numerous school counseling professional organization reform initiatives are attempting to improve the condition of school counseling. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA, 1997b) constructed nine National Standards for School Counseling Programs. The standards are organized as a means for school counseling programs to promote student growth comprehensively within the three generalized areas of academic development, career development, and personal/social development (Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Perusse, Goodnough, & Noel, 2001). The Standards provide a foundation for student knowledge, attitudes, and skills that should be the results of any school counseling program, those that can be measured, and are central to the mission of individual schools (Herr, 2002, p. 8). Downs (2003) contributes that, “A
comprehensive developmental guidance program provides the framework to accomplish these things. The National Standards are the competencies or content. The program components provide the process” (p. 1). The ASCA restructured the standards to The National Model for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2003a) to reflect a comprehensive approach to program foundation, delivery, and accountability. It serves as a step-by step framework for design, coordination, implementation, management, and evaluation of school counseling programs (ASCA, 2003a; Baker & Gerler, 2004).

The National Model for School Counseling Programs portrays the potential of the National Standards as they parallel education reform movements; including the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and No Child Left Behind Act. Accordingly, the National Standards for School Counseling Programs focus on increased accountability to federally funded programs and address the questions, “What do school counselors do?” and “How are students different as a result of what we do” (Bowers & Hatch, 2002, p. 8; ASCA, 2003b, p. 1)? Regarding school counseling reform initiatives, Brown and Trusty (2005) present the decision of the American School Counseling Association to align school counseling programs with the goals of the current accountability reform movement: “The ASCA National Model makes it clear that school counselors’ first duty is to promote student achievement” (p. 42).

The ASCA has also established Professional Ethics for professional school counselors that specify principles of behavior needed to maintain high standards of integrity, leadership, and professionalism among its members. The Ethical Standards for School Counselors were developed to make clear the nature of ethical responsibilities held in common by all school counseling professionals (ASCA, 2009c). The standards
address areas of school counselor responsibilities related to students, parents, their school and community, confidentiality, student records, counseling plans, group work, responsibility to colleagues, diversity, professionalism, the use of technology, and maintenance of professional standards (ASCA, 2009c).

The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (2001), established in 1981, accredits master’s degree programs in school counseling. CACREP has also contributed to information regarding needed skills to standardize school counseling roles and practice (Holcomb-McCoy, Bryan, & Rahill, 2002; Baker & Gerler, 2004). The CACREP standards require demonstrated knowledge and experiences of core areas of study and practice for pre-service preparation of all school counselors (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). CACREP is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as a specialized accrediting agency to provide measures of quality assurance for counselor preparation programs.

In December of 2004, the CACREP Standards Committee developed five criteria as guiding principles for the CACREP Standards for 2008, reflective of principles offered by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). The five guiding principles are (a) leadership, to maintain quality and advance change and improvement of the standards, (b) advocacy, to advocate for voluntary accreditation in counselor preparation within higher education, (c) core values, those central to higher education as reflected by CHEA, (d) inclusion, to sustain an environment of active consultation and participation within and throughout the larger population of counseling and higher education organizations, and (e) independence, as an autonomous and informed voice for the
strengthening of the standards for accreditation for counselor education programs within higher education (CACREP, 2005).

The Education Trust and TSCI

The Education Trust (2010) is additionally working towards national school counseling reform efforts to change school counseling and cause school counselors to be more responsive to student needs (Guerra, 1998, as cited in Baker & Gerler, 2004). The Trust was initially supported by a 1996 grant from the DeWitt Wallace Reader’s Digest Fund. Further funding from the Met Life Foundation permitted The Education Trust to initiate the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) (The Education Trust, 2003a; Baker & Gerler, 2004). More currently termed Transforming School Counseling (TSC) contained within the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC), the primary purpose of the Initiative is to put forth “a new vision in school counseling” (The Education Trust, 2010, p. 1). In School Counseling in the Academic Domain: Transformations in Preparation and Practice, Paisley and Hayes (2003), propose that the standards presented by CACREP and, in particular, the efforts of the Transforming School Counseling Initiative, are significant examples of attempts at paradigm shifts for school counseling.

“Initiated at a critical time when states, districts, and schools were raising standards and implementing accountability systems, the NCTSC works to ensure that counselors play a critical role in advancing the equity agenda” (The Education Trust, 2010, p. 1). The Education Trust (2010) further promotes that, “School counselors must focus attention on students for whom schools have been the least successful” (p. 1).
School counselors are to be “assertive advocates creating opportunities for all students to pursue dreams of high aspirations.” They are to be “a leader” and an “effective team member working with teachers, administrators, and other school personnel” and a “consultant” which “empowers families to act on behalf of their children by helping parents and guardians identify student needs and interests, and access available resources” (p. 1).

The Transforming School Counseling Initiative is a multi-level multi-year plan intended to improve professional school counseling by improving school counselor preparation programs. As a “vehicle for reform” (Eilers, 2004, p. 6), the TSCI came about from the realization that school counselors are ideally positioned to impact the essential needs of schooling. The Education Trust, through the TSCI and NCTSC, explains and promotes how new vision school counselor roles should be defined, because, as stated by Eilers (2004), “the reform era of standards and accountability is now well-established, organized, and systemized in nearly every state” (pp. 4-5).

Eilers’ (2004) research explores the implementation of TSCI as a major proposal to change school counseling. Eilers’ literature review cites Dahir, Sheldon, and Valiga, 1998; and Paisley and Borders, 1995. They report that school counseling professional organizations at the state and national levels, inclusive with some state departments of education, have called for school counseling programs to develop “a new focus” with “clarity in role and function” (p. 2). School counseling programs are to link demonstrated program effectiveness with current educational reform initiatives (Eilers, 2004).

Eilers investigated the institutionalization of TSCI in five states as a framework for school counseling preparation and practice. Study conclusions led to Eilers’
recommendation that “systemic reform does not occur in a policy vacuum, it happens through coherence and alignment” (Eilers, 2004, p. 26). For transformation to occur system components must support one another.

The theory of systemic reform in education suggests that when a component policy is designed to promote reform in one area, the existing policies in other areas must be aligned with and support this new policy. In this case presented here, if the universities are to implement and promote TSCI, then they must align the effort with state standards and assessment policies, state certification requirements, and the state institutional environment. (p. 26)

Data Driven School Counselor Accountability

Comprehensive school counseling programs, the ASCA National Model, the ASCA Professional Ethics, CACREP, TSCI, and NCTSC, all function to assist school counselor improvement, and enhance school counselor accountability. However, as evidenced within the objectives of these initiatives, and the goals of NCLB, because the definition of accountability for schooling has changed so has the traditional sense of accountability for school counselors. Achievement data is driving the school reform agenda. In order to be accountable school counselors must demonstrate successful results of their work through the implementation of data based services.

Isaacs (2003) quotes President George W. Bush’s belief regarding the No Child Left Behind legislation that,

Accountability is an exercise in hope. When we raise academic standards, children raise their academic sights. When children are regularly tested, teachers
know how to improve. When scores are known to parents, parents are empowered to push for change. When accountability for our schools is real, the results for our children are real. (p. 1)

Isaacs proposes that this quote “taken from a web-based presentation generated by the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs (SASA)” developed by the U.S Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), “sums up the national mood and the trend toward increased accountability” (Isaacs, 2003, p. 1). This message has translated to an expressed need for school counselors to demonstrate their professional accountability through data-driven decision making for assessment, planning, programming, and management (Isaacs, 2003). To further quote Isaacs:

The President’s quote and mission of SASA make clear the intent to use data and assessment to drive school improvement and to motivate educators to deliver student achievement at increasing levels. While counselors are not specifically mentioned, accountability and data-driven decisions are the nexus of much that is happening in school counseling and directing the role of counselors in school reform. (p. 1)

Isaacs explains as critical decisions are based on data, it is to every school counselor’s benefit to be well-versed and skilled in collecting data, to become data-driven decision-makers, and transform school counseling programs according to data-based information (p. 9). Discussing what is accountability for school counselors, Isaacs notes,

The kind of knowledge that makes school counselors powerful is the kind that relates directly to how school counseling programs are being measured in
achieving specified goals. These might translate readily into a basic set of questions:

- Are we effectively helping students achieve through our programs or individual interventions?
- Conversely, are we effectively identifying the barriers that need to be overcome for all or some students?
- How can we understand our population and thus design effective programs or interventions? And once implemented, what difference did these make?
- If we have knowledge, over what are we gaining power? (p. 4)

This last question posed by Isaacs regarding “gaining power” speaks to school counselors taking ownership and accountability for their profession by means of data-driven school counseling programming. As suggested by Isaacs,

There is potential for greater power over their destinies as professionals, connection to a demonstrable and important impact on the lives of students, a role in decisions about the daily operation and function of schools, information upon which to base professional behavior and evaluation of counselor performance (and the performance of counselor programs) to ensure full participation in schools. (p. 3)

Offered by Dahir and Stone (2003), “Accountability requires systematically collecting, analyzing, and using critical data elements to understand the current achievement story for students, and to begin to strategize, impact, and document how the school counseling program contributes toward supporting student success” (p. 1). To aid school counselors with determining critical data elements and developing data-driven
programming, Dahir and Stone present a step-by-step initiative termed *M.E.A.S.U.R.E.*, because, “With an accountable, data-driven school counseling program, school counselors are seen as powerful partners and collaborators in school improvement and central to the mission of schools” (p. 1).

M.E.A.S.U.R.E. is a seven-step process that assists school counselors in delivering a data-driven school counseling program that supports the accountability component of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (ASCA, 2003). M.E.A.S.U.R.E. is an acronym for Mission, Elements, Analyze, Stakeholders, Unite, Reanalyze, and Educate that helps school counselors to connect to the Mission of their school; examine critical data Elements that are part of their schools' report cards; Analyze those critical data elements to see which elements their program can positively impact; identify internal and external Stakeholders who can collaborate to impact the data; Unite with these stakeholders to form partnerships and assign strategies; and Reanalyze to determine which strategies should be replicated, redesigned or discarded. Finally, school counselors present their successes and Educate a wide audience as to how their program contributed toward moving critical data elements. (Dahir & Stone, 2003, p. 1)

Dolens (2008) furthers Dahir and Stone’s (2003) M.E.A.S.U.R.E. model, yet also presents other tools available for school counselors to help them establish data-driven services. Gathering data through surveys, case studies, behavioral observations, school counselor logs and record forms, appointment sheets, student profiles, student records, standardized test scores, student assessment portfolios, and anecdotal records are all
suggested as helpful resources (Muller-Ackerman, 2002; ASCA, 2008, as cited in Dolens, 2008).

Additionally, Dolens (2008) discusses the Support Personnel Accountability Report Card for Wisconsin, SPARC-W, as a means to aid school counselors with implementing services once data has been collected. Additionally, Boulden Publishing (2009) through the School Counselor Accountability & Task Analysis Program (SCAATAP) is working to assist school counselors with data-driven accountability programming. The SCAATAP is promoted as being linked to the ASCA National Model and incorporating the ASCA National Standards, while providing easy methods for school counselors to record activities to generate data.

These are but a few examples of restructuring initiatives proposed to support school counselors through possible changes in the profession due to NCLB. There are numerous other resources available to school counselors regarding how to use and understand data to demonstrate they are accountable as key players in educational reform (Stone & Dahir, 2009). For as offered by Dolens (2008), “It is critical for school counselors to provide data, and results that show just how effective school counseling programs are, and how much they contribute to the overall success of the school” (Dolens, 2008, p. 18).

**Pennsylvania’s Project 720**

Project 720, so named for the 720 school days of Pennsylvania high school programs, 9th through 12th grade, has been a major reform initiative for Pennsylvania’s high schools, and addresses the roles school counselors can play in school reform.
Through its funding to participating Project 720 schools, it has the potential to assist the transformation of school counseling programs. It was presented by Governor Rendell, supported by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and contributed to by $2,000,000 in funds from Microsoft Corporation through the Partners in Learning Initiative. The intent is to integrate technology with best teaching practices in participating schools by establishing a core curriculum in English, math, and science, to better prepare students for postsecondary success (“Pennsylvania and Microsoft,” 2005).

The Pennsylvania School Counseling Association (PSCA) participating with the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI), assisted by the Education Trust, believe school counselors can work to transform their programs through the grant funding offered by Project 720 (Bookhamer, 2004). Many of Project 720’s school reform strategies are directly linked to school counseling services with school counseling services identified as one of the project’s key components (Bookhamer, 2004). Pennsylvania’s Governor Rendell, as cited in an April 6, 2005 press release, "Pennsylvania and Microsoft Announce Joint Effort to Enhance Teacher Resources and High-School Reform" (“Pennsylvania and Microsoft,” 2005) presented that “A rigorous curriculum in English, math, and science will allow students to prepare for well-paying and high-skill careers in today’s economy” (p. 1).

The project’s three primary goals are to initially increase the rigor of educational programs, leading to improved student postsecondary access through enhanced student credentialing with Dual Enrollment programs, and in turn, the more advanced development of an active and productive citizenry. The need for these established goals relates back to a survey of Pennsylvania school districts that discovered that less than half
of the State’s school districts require four years of math, with less than a quarter of the
districts requiring four years of science in order for students to graduate. In a press
release dated August 4th of 2005, Phillips (2005) cites Governor Rendell to have said,

‘I am dedicated to transforming our public education system from pre-
kindergarten to our high schools, so every Pennsylvania student has the
opportunity to succeed and our economy has a highly skilled workforce that is
second to none,’ Rendell said. ‘Project 720 school districts are leading the
way to prepare every Pennsylvania student for college and careers.’ (p. 1)

Taken from the Pennsylvania Department of Education website December 2008,
Project 720 participating schools commit to implementing fundamental reform strategies
to create high school environments that are rigorous, results-focused, data informed, and
personalized. They are to be seamlessly supported by systems, resources, technology, and
shared leadership. However, it is noted that Project 720 offers funding within a system of
cohorts. In the fiscal year 2008-09, a total of $5.3 million was to be used to sustain grant
funding for 75 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with high schools in specific cohorts to enable them to continue implementation of planned reforms.

The fiscal year 2008-09 was to be the last year of funding for Cohort 2 high
schools. In fiscal year 2009-2010, a total of $2.8 million will be used for the third and
final year of grant funding for the remaining 43 Cohort 3 Local Education Agencies
(LEAs) with high schools enrolling approximately 52,000 students (PDE, 2008, October,
28, p. 1). Within the initiative, Dual Enrollment is to provide tuition funds for students to earn college credit while they are still in high school (PDE, 2009). Funding for Dual
Enrollment began in 2005 with a five million dollar state investment (PDE, 2006,
The impact of Project 720 and Dual Enrollment on Pennsylvania school counselor roles is unknown, but the monitoring of high school course credits and the management of student college credits taken while still in high school traditionally fall within the responsibilities of school counselors. Accordingly, coordinating student services associated with Dual Enrollment funding processes for college courses may likely fall to high school counselors.

_Mandated Career Education_

In Pennsylvania, with the 2006-2007 school year _The Career Education and Work Standards_, Chapter 4 of Title 22, became part of the State Board of Education’s regulations as required education for all students in Pennsylvania (PDE, 2008, July). School districts were instructed to incorporate the standards into curriculum and career counseling for students in accordance to Governor Rendell’s “strong focus on the importance of career education” (PDE, 2006, October). As noted in a press release, dated October 25th of 2006, issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s (PDE) website:

‘Under Governor Rendell’s leadership, Pennsylvania has placed a strong focus on the importance of career education,’ Secretary of Education Gerald L. Zahorchak said. ‘We know how crucial it is for our students to begin recognizing and exploring career and education options at an early age to make sure they can reach their full potential in life. That is why our career education starts as early as kindergarten or first grade and expands until high school graduation.’ (PDE, 2006, October, p. 1)
To paraphrase the press release, with the new career standards, students by 8th grade should begin their individual career plans and portfolios. These plans and portfolios are to be continuously developed throughout high school. By 11th grade students should be able to analyze career choices and post secondary career preparation opportunities such as industry or military training, or pursuing post secondary education degrees. Students should also have the skills to effectively interview for jobs. As noted, students should be able to “evaluate strategies for career retention and advancement in response to changes in the global workplace and the impact of lifelong learning on careers.” (PDE, 2006, October 25, p. 1)

The press release further cites Secretary of Education Gerald L. Zahorchak commenting on Rendell’s initiatives as Project 720, Dual Enrollment, and the new career standards, in stating, “With the addition of the new Academic Standards for Career Education and Work, Pennsylvania’s students now have a multitude of programs to ensure that they are competitive in the global workforce upon graduation” (PDE, October 25, 2006, p. 1). Because career education and counseling have traditionally fallen within the primary responsibilities of school counselors, the mandated career standards may tremendously impact the work roles of school counselors.

School Counselor-Principal Collaboration

To advance social advocacy and academic achievement for all students, and to move towards data-driven school counseling practices for the sake of accountability and closing the achievement gap, school counselors are being encouraged to align with school principals (Stone, 2001; House & Martin, 1998; Brown & Trusty, 2005; Bowers &
Hatch, 2002). As previously mentioned, Brinson et al. (2004) questioned, “Are school administrators cognizant of the counselors’ role and function, and are the specialized skills they have acquired through education and training appropriately used?” (p. 1). The Texas Education Agency (2004) brought forward, “School principals view counselors as quasi-administrators whose primary function is to schedule students into classes” (p. 9).

Given such viewpoints and the importance of collaborative teaming between counselors and principals, concern to counselor-principal relationships has been considered in the reform literature. It has been purported that school counselors, partnered with principals, acting as school leaders and assertive student advocates, can proactively work towards improved student achievement by providing nurturing school climates and opportunities for student success (Stone, 2001; House & Martin, 1998). As affirmed by Finkelstein (2009, May), “When principals and counselors can work effectively together, their efforts stand a far better chance of making a difference and helping all students achieve” (p. 2).

Recognizing the importance of the counselor-principal relationship, in the summer of 2008, the College Board, American School Counseling Association, and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) partnered to design a survey that would take a closer look at the counselor-principal relationship (Finkelstein, 2009, May). Counselors and principals who took the survey were from the NASSP and ASCA membership lists, or were attendees at a College Board counseling workshop the previous fall. A total of 1,957 counselors and 343 principals responded (Finkelstein, 2009, May, p. 5). The survey investigated what were considered the most important elements and biggest barriers in the counselor-principal relationship.
Important elements considered in the survey were communication, collaboration, respect, and shared vision. The key findings reported that of these four elements, communication and respect were the two most important elements to both counselors and principals, with principals ranking communication highest and counselors ranking respect highest. However, there were differences expressed in how the two groups defined these elements.

Principals more often mentioned the quality of the communication while counselors more often mentioned the frequency of the communication. Principals more often mentioned respect for their vision and goals while counselors more often mentioned personal respect for themselves and their expertise. (Finkelstein, 2009, May, p. 5)

Regarding barriers to counselor-principal relationships the counselors and principals reported that the lack of time for collaboration, particularly for shared decision making towards student success, was their biggest issue. Finkelstein reports that counselor tasks reported to take up more than moderate amounts of counselor time while being of less than moderate importance for improving student outcomes were:

- “Doing supportive administrative tasks such as clerical tasks and record keeping.”
- “Serving as coordinator/facilitator for standardized tests given in the school.”
- “Doing scheduling tasks such as creating a master schedule, processing schedule changes and maintaining student transcript information.” (p. 9)

Other salient features in the survey, concluded as key findings, are stated as follows:
• When asked what one thing they would change that would lead to an improved principal-counselor relationship within their own schools, both principals and counselors most frequently mentioned communication, followed by respect/understanding.

• Principals and counselors agreed that the most important activities for a counselor to engage in to improve student outcomes are helping to promote student personal growth and social development, and helping students with career planning.

• While both principals and counselors agreed that supportive administrative tasks are less important for counselors to engage in to improve student outcomes, principals saw these tasks as taking up less of counselors’ time than counselors said they took.

• Both principals and counselors saw state test scores as the area where gaps between subgroups most needed to be addressed in their schools.

• When asked about the roles of principals and counselors in education reform efforts, both principals and counselors most often said that the role of the principal is to be a leader and the role of the counselor is to be an advocate.

(p. 12)

The intent of the survey results is to assist “principals, counselors and all educators to examine their own principal-counselor relationships and their own perceptions, and work together toward improved success for all students” (Finkelstein, 2009, May, p. 12).
Summary

“In this age of accountability, all facets of education are undergoing scrutiny” (Curcio, et al. 2003, p. 1). School counseling programs are no different. For the most, the educational reform movements of the past 100 years have omitted the essential roles school counseling programs might play in educational change. This absence is especially noted since the 1980s and the publication of *A Nation At Risk*, which specifically led to wide-ranging and rigorous efforts to renew education in all other aspects. Aside from this oversight, the development of school counseling programs have paralleled and been shaped by the numerous and varied shifts seen in education. As determined by national events and changing educational philosophies, school counseling itself is an evolving result of educational reform.

The literature review has presented a historical synopsis of school reform as it relates to school counseling. The intent has been to illustrate and clarify events that have impacted school counseling programs the very most, social reform issues stemming from the Progressive Reform Era and Industrial Revolution, the development of comprehensive high schools, the growth of testing, and the continual occurrence of political, social, and economic influences on education which led to concerns regarding the failure of education and, in turn, educational reform movements. Language and metaphors to describe reform efforts appeared as pendulum swings, waves, the Toyota problem, punching a pillow, no magic bullet, tinkering, sign of the times, buffet, Dickensian or Dickens-like condition of many young peoples’ lives, one size of schooling fits all, riding the tide, and currently, accountability.
This mesh has formed a supposed crisis within the roles played by school counselors. In managing their roles, school counselors tend to be overwhelmed, with debates occurring as to how school counselors should prioritize their tasks. Though research shows their primary responsibility is furthering student academic achievement, student mental and emotional health concerns rise to the forefront with school counselors perceived as the frontline mental health personnel in the schools. With the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act, a shift for school counselor role emphasis towards the press for academic achievement and time allocation spent on testing is likely to occur, or questionably, has already occurred. Consequently, concerns persist to the roles of school counselors with state standardized testing and an assessment-based educational era.

There are advantages and disadvantages to aligning school counseling so closely with the educational enterprise. Given the current emphasis on school accountability and student performance, it is certainly prudent to note school counselors’ many and unique contributions to student success (Green & Keys, 2001). In addition, collaboration with other school personnel is critical to a counselor’s ability to function effectively within the school. Riding the wave of educational reform, however (whatever the reform movement focus of a particular time may be), does subject school counseling to the tides of public opinion and legislative decision making. (Borders, 2002, p. 2)

The American School Counselor Association documented a clear and cohesive mission for the school counseling profession in the ASCA National Model and School Counselor Competencies (ASCA, 2008). Additionally, there are numerous initiatives which function to assist school counselors with transforming their profession. In the
mean time, the every day needs of children seen to be at-risk as designated by the newer morbidities do not go away. Hopefully, the *Put School Counselors Where they are Needed Act* (Barkoff, 2008) will improve counselor-to-student ratios and allow more time for school counselors to assist students with success, be it academic, career, and/or personal/social. Therefore, the presenting dilemma for school counselors continues to be how to best address and support the holistic needs of any one child while monitoring and encouraging the achievement of all children.

The research methods addressed in the next chapter attend to the purposes of the investigation at hand. Its primary purpose was to explore the changing roles of school counselors and school counseling services in view of the No Child Left Behind Act and high-stakes school accountability. A second purpose was to examine how school counselors are managing the possible changes and seek suggestions towards how to assist others through the transformation. Because, research contributing to school counselor roles has value for the alignment of school counseling practice and professional development with accountability, preparation, and professional organization reform initiatives.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Orientation for the Research

This chapter presents the study’s rationale for a qualitative orientation for research, the selection of an exploratory case study design, and the study methodology employed. Qualitative research represents a legitimate form of scientific inquiry developed for the social sciences by anthropologists and sociologists (Patton, 1990). It is known, synonymously, as naturalistic, ethnographic, subjective, or post positivistic inquiry (Borg & Gall, 1989). Cohen and Manion (1985) refer to qualitative research as the anti-positivist movement. They denote it as a perspective adopted by humanist psychologists dedicated to studying individuals in preference to studying groups.

As a method of looking at social reality, anti-positivism depicts the way in which individuals create, modify, and interpret the world in which they find themselves. They also report qualitative research as generally represented by three schools of thought, or traditions: phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and ethnomethodology. These traditions share the commonality of studying an individual’s perceptions of a phenomenon. Cohen and Manion also describe anti-positivist research as research from an interpretive paradigm. This type of research is characterized by a concern for the individual, and a desire to understand the subjectiveness of the human experience. Efforts are made within the research methods to understand a person from within while maintaining the integrity of the phenomenon.

Miles and Huberman (1994) cite recurring features of qualitative research thusly:
- Conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a “field” or life situation, reflective of the everyday life of individuals, groups, or societies.
- The researcher’s role is to gain a “holistic” overview of the context under study.
- The researcher attempts to capture data from the perceptions of local actors “from the inside” through a process of deep attentiveness of empathetic understanding (*verstehen*).
- The researcher may isolate certain themes that can be reviewed with informants. (p. 6)

Therefore, “*qualitative inquiry* is an umbrella term for various philosophical orientations to interpretive research” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 1, as cited in Thomas, 2003, p. 3). Under this umbrella of qualitative inquiry, or *naturalistic* and *participatory inquiry*, is included a philosophical orientation for interpretive and emerging investigations known as *case study research*, which was the research orientation for this study. Specifically, this investigation can be termed exploratory, explanatory, and collective case study research.

Lightfoot (1983) presented a qualitative investigation of six secondary schools as case study research termed *portraits*; portraying holistic and complex contextual descriptions of reality (p. 13). She likened her case stories to portraits of herself. The first portrait she wrote of depicted a transformation of images that left her feeling unsettled. Painted “from the inside out” (p. 3), she expressed that it seemed as the truth of its essence emerged from within over the course of time. She wrote of subsequent portraits that always brought with them new learning, regarding herself, or the artistic process.
With each portrait she saw herself “evolve with that strange combination of shock and recognition” (p. 4). She noted,

   The portraits reflect a compelling paradox, of a moment in time and timelessness. That portraits make the subjects feel ‘seen’ in a way they have never felt seen before, fully attended to, wrapped up in an empathetic gaze. (p. 5)

It is this sense of Lightfoot’s empathetic view, developed from the inside out, which I sought to bring to this research, through the opportunities of description and portraiture permitted with qualitative case study inquiry.

   Case Study Research

Presented by Merriam (1998), case study design is used when in-depth meaning and understanding of a phenomenon is desired. The investigative interest is concerned more with the process of the phenomenon than with potential variable outcomes, and in discovery, and hence the building of theory, more so than with confirmation, and the testing of theory. Very importantly, case studies have value because, “Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research” (p. 19).

   The qualitative case study is a particularly suitable methodology for dealing with critical problems of practice and extending the knowledge base of various aspects of education. Thoughtful counselors, administrators, and instructors are vitally interested in the questions that emerge in their daily work life. A case study approach is often the best methodology for addressing these problems in which understanding is sought in order to improve practice. (Merriam, 1988, p. xiii)
“Becker, 1968,” as cited in Merriam (1998, p. 29) “defines the purposes of a case study as two fold, that is, ‘to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study’ and ‘to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process’ (p. 223)” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). Tellis (1997, July) furthers that, “Case study is done in a way that incorporates the views of the ‘actors’ in the case under study” (p. 3). Additionally, “Case study can be seen to satisfy three tenets of the qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining” (p. 3).

Case study methodology was especially well suited to meet the needs of this investigation for a number of reasons. Case studies (a) can demonstrate the effect of time and determine the occurrence of change, as expressed through participant opinions and the presentation of associated artifacts; (b) are heuristic in that they enlighten the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon; and (c) are particularistic in that they are bounded by their focus on a situation, event, or phenomenon, as they are rooted in the context of the phenomenon and therefore selected for its uniqueness. Case study research is also (d) descriptive, presented as complete entities depicting the accumulation of rich data through thick description and narrative portrayal. Analysis of case studies is thus offered through storytelling of the investigator’s inductive interpretations as they emerge through the processes of the investigation (Merriam, 1988; Merriam, 1998).

Corresponding to these characteristic traits, which made case study research a good choice for this study, were the intentions of this inquiry to (a) explore the change of counselor roles over time; (b) offer understanding regarding school counselor roles, particularly as they are possibly being impacted by the NCLB Act; and (c) focus on a particular phenomenon of interest, being the roles of school counselors, defined by a
targeted population of cases within the context of their high school environments.
Furthermore, (d) the research was descriptive, portrayed in its analysis through inductive interpretations and thick description of each case’s story.

*Exploratory, Explanatory, and Collective Case Study Research*

Tellis’s (1997, September) literature review offers that the case study protocol determines the type of case study research being employed as it shapes the scope of the investigation. The procedures contained within the protocol establish reliability. The types of questions being addressed drive the type of case study under investigation. Exploratory case studies are determined by questions seeking answers to “what” questions. Explanatory studies seek answers to “how” questions. This research was concerned with: “What” have been the traditional primary roles, responsibilities and expectations, of school counselors? Have these changed with the promulgation of the No Child Left Behind Act? In “what” ways? And, if they have changed, “how” are school counselors managing these new roles, responsibilities and expectations? Hence, as defined by Tellis (1997, September), this study was both exploratory and explanatory.

This study was also collective, in that it proposed to examine these questions from multiple sources, each representing its own entity of study. Collective or multiple case study approaches, as termed by Stake (2000) and Tellis (1997, September), follow a replication protocol where the accumulation and evaluation of multiple sources of data is recommended. This process is known as *triangulation* and serves to reinforce the validity of the research (Tellis, 1997, September). Through means of triangulation, investigators search for patterns found in the emergent meanings of the collective cases, or as termed
by Tellis (1997, July), the units of analysis. Evidences of triangulated sources for case research may be archival records and contemporary documents, direct observation, participant observation, and varying forms of interviewing techniques—as open-ended, focused, and structured (Tellis, 1997, September).

Tellis (1997, July) furthers that the use of pattern-matching techniques specifically ensures construct validity, which tends to be a weakness for case study research. As stated, “Multiple cases strengthen the results by replicating pattern-matching, thus increasing confidence in the robustness of theory” (p. 4). Miles and Huberman (1994) similarly offer that the use of collective cases, or multiple-case sampling, adds confidence to study findings by strengthening the precision, validity, and stability of the findings through replication. Stake (2000) notes the collection of cases “are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases” (p. 437).

Direct observation occurs when the researcher is able to visit the case site when gathering data, and participant observation occurs when the researcher is able to participate in the events being studied (Tellis, 1997, September). Both direct observation and participant observation were used for this study as data collection took place within the natural setting of the participants’ school counseling environments and where the researcher was employed. The use of open-ended interviews was the chief tool for this study, because, “In an open-ended interview, the researcher could ask for the informant’s opinion on events or fact” (Tellis, 1997, September, p. 9). It was this opportunity to question opinion that enabled the expression of changes seen in school counselor roles
since the enactment of NCLB. It was the principle reason why case study design was chosen as the best-fit method to investigate the purposes of the research.

Consequently, the assumptions of qualitative research theories point to case study design as a legitimate means of investigation to examine participant meaning and understanding of a phenomenon of interest. For the purposes of this study, case study research was used first and foremost because it has the ability to ascertain change over time. Open-ended interviews were the chief source of data. Methods of triangulation were also used to further validate research interpretations. The potential impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on the roles of school counselors was considered a phenomenon of interest. School counselors’ meaning of the phenomenon was examined within an exploratory and explanatory collective case study approach. A targeted population of secondary school counselors from four differing school districts bound the case, as their complex and multifaceted roles and positions within their high schools were considered particularistic and unique. The reliability of the study was dependent upon the strength of the case study protocol, the study’s design.

Research Methods

Open-ended in-depth interviewing was the key tool used by the researcher to investigate the meanings that high school counselors give to their work roles, as the No Child Left Behind Act has possibly impacted them. As viewed by Borg, Gall, and Gall (1993) qualitative researchers believe all research is value-laden, seeking to understand complex phenomena through contextual totality and subjective analysis. The task of the researcher is to interact personally with individual participants. They suggest interviews
as a form of measurement in qualitative research to offer adaptability and depth of information not available through other research techniques.

In-depth school counselor knowledge regarding their work roles, and again, the changes seen in school counselor roles since the enactment of the NCLB Act, was the primary interest of the investigation. Information regarding how the potential change in school counselor roles is being managed and suggestions for corresponding preparation and practice were also sought. The value in the research is how this information is determined and then shared with others. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, interviewing as a research tool was essential because it permitted the researcher to “share the world of others to find out what is going on, why people do what they do, and how they understand their world” (Rubin & Rubin 1995, p. 5, as cited in Bunce, 1999, p. 47).

Bunce (1999) furthers Rubin and Rubin’s (1995) *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* position that cultural researchers seek rich data to build theories that describe a setting or explain a phenomenon. Interviewing provides the opportunity to gather such data from the persons closest to, and most knowledgeable regarding, a particular phenomenon and setting (Bunce, 1999). “Interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information” (Tellis, 1997, July, p. 9). Interviews with key players in the case may offer insight into events, suggest solutions to concerns, and substantiate evidence obtained from other sources (Tellis, 1997, July). In other words, as demonstrated by Levy, 1988, and Yin, 1984, open-ended interviews expand the depth of data gathering and increase the number of sources for information (Tellis, 1997, July). Maxwell (1996) believes that interviewing is a valuable means of accessing events that occurred in the past. For that reason the occurrence of change can become evident.
In case study research the researcher is the primary instrument (Merriam, 1998). The researcher for this study was myself, a counselor educator employed by one of the cases studied, designated as Case A. Consequently, as the researcher, I also played a role as participant observer and key informant. Farber (2006) presents, “Observation allows the researcher to collect less visible data….Observations include all the senses. They include what one hears, sees, smells, tastes, and feels. They are the ‘aha’ moments of noticing. They are the feelings inside you that emerge” (p. 370). Accordingly, the less visible data that emerged through researcher participant observation became a vital component to this study’s data collection. Similar to Dale’s (1999) study methods regarding “observer effects,” “none of the data collected as a participant observer was from formal observations, but emerged from participating in naturally occurring job situations” (p. 110).

As a school counselor, I was trained and experienced with in-depth open-ended interviewing techniques and very familiar with the knowledge base of the research topic. However, as a counselor educator, relatively new to the field, approximately ten years, I was not familiar with the roles of school counselors across school districts, as they have evolved over time. Therefore, long-standing experience in the field did not bias research thinking. These criteria are considered important for the success of the study. As presented by Tellis (1997, September):

Yin (1994) suggested that the researcher must possess or acquire the following skills: the ability to ask good questions and to interpret the responses, be a good listener, be adaptive and flexible so as to react to
various situations, have a firm grasp of issues being studied, and be unbiased by preconceived notions. (Tellis, 1997, September, p. 5)

As a result, interviewing was vital to this study because it offered an occasion to guide inquiry towards the study’s essential questions, as expressed by those most knowledgeable regarding particular processes within their own environment. Data was concurrently drawn from the study environments across the time span of the conducted interviews, providing additional opportunity for direct and participatory observation that supported evidence to participant responses (Crowson, 1987, as cited in Bunce, 1999).

**Addressing the Research Questions Through Interviewing**

The open-ended interview questions for this investigation specifically addressed the research questions presented previously in this chapter and in Chapter 1. They were developed in light of the roles school counselors play in schools as presented in the literature review of Chapter 2. As designated by Bunce (1999) demographic information provides data that may contribute to further understanding of school counselor work situations. School counselor roles and priority of roles may be affected by their workload. Consideration to school counselor professional experience, education, and involvement in professional organizations may further enlighten the cases under study. Accordingly, initial interview information requested basic demographic information about each of the school counselor participants and the school counseling student caseloads:

- How long have you been in this position? How long have you worked as a school counselor? What did you do prior to becoming a school counselor?
What is your counselor to student responsibility (ratio) and grade level of students? Does this change from year to year?

- Do you belong to any professional organizations? Are you actively involved with any of them? How often and in what ways?
- When and where did you receive your counselor training? How well did that training relate to your work as a counselor?
- Do your counselor colleagues have different areas of responsibilities than you do? What are they?
- Do you have additional roles that you play within the school community aside from your school counselor responsibilities? What are they?
- What do you value most about your position?

Background information for school administrators questioned:

- What is your position?
- How long have you been in this position?
- What was your previous position?

The primary research question addressed through an open-ended discussion format within the interview was: How are the primary responsibilities of high school counselors changing with respect towards meeting the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act? Subsequent questions addressed were: What have been the traditional primary roles, responsibilities and expectations, of school counselors? Have these changed with promulgation of the No Child Left Behind Act? In what ways? If they have changed, how are school counselors managing these new roles, responsibilities and expectations? In response to these questions, it was also explored how changes in the roles of school
counselors align with their preparation and professional development towards school counseling reform initiatives. To investigate these questions the following interview items were posed of the participating school counselors:

- What do you feel have been the traditional primary roles and expectations of school counselors?
- We really don’t know what’s going on with high school counselors in light of the NCLB era. Have your roles changed with the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act? If they have, in what ways?
- Why have these changes occurred? If your roles have not changed, why not?
- What recommendations do you have for other school counselors, new and experienced, in managing their roles, especially in light of NCLB? If you could envision ideal school counselor roles what would they be?

The following questions were asked of the participating administrators:

- How often do you work with the school counselors?
- How much of this work involves factors related to NCLB? Can you offer some examples?
- What do you feel have been the traditional primary roles and expectations of school counselors?
- We really don’t know what’s going on with high school counselors in light of the NCLB era. Do you perceive school counselor roles as having changed because of NCLB? In what ways? Why or why not?
- What are your expectations for the roles school counselors should play in light of NCLB?
Do you have any suggestions regarding how school counselors might manage these expectations?

Because this was an exploratory study some of the questions and interview conversations varied slightly from one participant to another given the nature of their responses and opportunity for discussion. The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed at the conclusion of each interview meeting. They were then downloaded for storage into a computer. The transcribed responses offered thick description towards improved researcher understanding for each participant’s meaning. In Chapter 4, *Presentation and Analysis of Data*, excerpts of the interview responses are presented to support research analysis. Note taking did not occur during the interviews in order to minimize potential distraction to the participants. However, some notes regarding the nature of the case environment prior to and at the end of the interviews were taken for the sake of researcher reflection, presentation, and contribution to the triangulation of case data. An interview agenda of the questions previously presented was used to guide each interview (See Appendix E and Appendix F).

*Triangulation*

Yin (2003) suggests, “an important clue when doing fieldwork is to ask the same question of different sources of evidence” (p. 83). Its purpose is to establish a position within a geometric dimension occurring from the merging intersection of vectors that point to the substance of an event (Yin, 2003). Known as triangulation, it calls for the collection of multiple sources of data through multiple research methods to ascertain evidence, clarify meaning, and strengthen validity and reliability (Stake, 2000). Such
processes serve to “confirm the emerging findings” of a study offering “holistic understanding” of the situation to construct ‘plausible explanations about the phenomenon being studied” (Mathison, 1988, p. 17 as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 169) ....“to establish validity through pooled judgment” (Foreman, 1948, p. 413, as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 169). “The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies’” (Denzin, 1970, p. 308, as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 69). Hence, “The opportunity to use multiple methods of data collection is a major strength of case study research” (Merriam, 1988, p. 69).

Campbell and Fiske, 1959, as cited in Jick (1979), developed triangulation as “multiple operationalism.” “They argue that more than one method should be used in the validation process to ensure that the variance reflected is that of the trait and not of the method” (p. 602). Therefore, triangulation is “a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (Stake, 2000, p. 443), serving to “clarify meaning in identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen” (Flick, 1998 & Silverman, 1993, as cited in Stake, 2000, p. 443).

Sources of data for the purposes of triangulation within this study included (a) the in-depth open-ended interviews with participating secondary school counselors and administrators, (b) site visits, which permitted direct observations of participant work environments allowing further inferences drawn regarding participant perception and meaning (Maxwell, 1996), (c) participant observations in the case where the researcher was employed, and (d) relevant documents, archival and contemporary, defined as artifacts. Examples of artifacts applicable to this study included school profile
information found on the participating school districts websites; documentation of graduation requirements; high school course description guides; schedules of remediation services documenting tutoring assistance to students needing to meet proficiency for graduation; related school counseling program documents as testing calendars, testing spreadsheets, testing bell schedules, and school counselor job descriptions; email messages and school counselor meetings or in-service notes; local newspaper articles; and Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) press releases.

Study Sample

Six secondary school counselors and six high school principals considered key informants and “cases” for study, bound and provided uniqueness to the research. Participant selection for the four case schools chosen for this study was a non-random sample of convenience chosen by the researcher from the Central Intermediate Unit (CIU) 10 of Pennsylvania. Central Intermediate Unit 10 works in partnership with twelve public school districts, five charter schools, and three career and technical centers within three counties in the central Pennsylvania area. High school counselors and principals were specifically targeted for this study because the Grade 11 PSSA is closely associated with students needing to meet proficiency standards for high school graduation.

Within the twelve public school districts of CIU 10 were found fourteen high schools. Four of these high schools, designated as Case A, Case B, Case C, and Case D were selected for this investigation. Though the schools were considered particularistic and unique within their own school entity for the purposes of case study research, it was not determined if these case schools were truly particularistic and unique as compared to
each other, or if they were potentially representative of schools across Pennsylvania of similar size, resources, and demographics for the sake of generalizability. It was determined that the selected case schools were not extreme in their representation, in that they did not include the smallest or largest, or most rural, or most urban, of the CIU 10 schools. They were similar in that their school counseling programs could all be termed *traditional* school counseling programs. Also, the school counselors for each of the four case schools managed all of their school’s testing. Not all of the CIU 10 school counseling programs were similar in this regard. Some of the CIU 10 schools managed a blend of testing coordination tasks between the school counselors and building administrators while others maintained a separate test coordination entity aside from the school counselors and building administrators.

Though school counselors are only a few of the many persons in schools that play roles related to the state standardized assessment, they were chosen to be interviewed for this study as the persons most knowledgeable regarding how school counselor work roles are influenced by, and may be changing due to, accountability standards and assessment concerns related to NCLB. As previously noted, counselor roles often change with the entrance of a new principal and may vary tremendously from one administrative term to another and one school to another (Louis et al., 2001). School administrators are not always familiar with the education and training of school counselors (Brinson et al., 2004). Thus, principal preparation and principal exposure to school counselor roles and abilities impact the contribution counselors can make towards improving student academic achievement. Too often principals assign counselor roles based on a perception that because counselors do not teach classes they are available to perform extraneous
duties. School counselors become “gofers” that facilitate non-counseling related school functions, manage unpredictable student crises, and coordinate numerous clerical tasks (Louis et al., 2001, p. 2). This leads to further uncertainty of counselor job responsibilities. Additionally, because school counselors are used for clerical tasks as writing schedules and tracking credits, they are often omitted from the process of data analysis that is central to academic achievement and school counselor professionalism (Louis et al., 2001). For these reasons, high school principals were also chosen to interview for their perspectives on the changing roles of school counselors.

At minimum, one key informant school counselor and school principal was requested for study participation from each one of the four case schools. Within Case A where the researcher was a school counselor and hence participant observer, three school counselors, the head principal, and two vice principals were able to participate. Though the districts and corresponding interviewed participants may be identified by presented characteristic traits, an attempt to protect their anonymity was offered throughout the research by the use of fictitious names. The counselors are referred to by fictitious first names. The principals are indicated by the use of gender appropriate titles, either Ms. or Mr. and a corresponding fictitious surname. This was done to clearly identify the perspectives of the different positions. Additionally, the duration of the interviews with the administrators was considerably shorter than the interviews with the school counselors.

The interviews for this study began in January 2006 and concluded June of 2008. This time lapse was due to the busy nature of the participants’ positions. Their workload deterred availability and scheduling for interview time. However, this time lapse is seen
as a benefit to the study because of the numerous changes that occurred during the time lapse with (a) the state standardized assessments, (b) the participating school districts, and (c) the employment moves of participating school counselors and principals since the study began. These changes occurring in such a brief period of time indicate an ever-increasing need to address concerns for school counselor roles and how changes are affecting their roles. Over the course of data collection, the changes included:

- A change of employment for a school counselor from Case C to Case A.
- A change of employment of a vice principal at Case A’s high school to the district’s middle school, with a new vice principal at the high school.
- The change of employment of a vice principal at Case A to becoming the head principal at Case D.
- The addition of the Grade 11 PSSA Science.
- Introduction of the 4Sight assessments at Case A.
- Addition of state monitoring of school security procedures for the PSSA.
- The *Put School Counselors Where they are Needed Act* (Barkoff, 2008), signifying the importance of school counselor roles within the No Child Left Behind Act.

For the purposes of this investigation, PSSA and 4sight testing processes were considered direct representation of how the No Child Left Behind Act impacts school districts, and in turn, the roles of school counselors. For this reason, the presentation of case school demographics in Chapter 4 included PSSA and 4Sight references relevant to
the participating schools and school counselors. Similarly, Governor Rendell’s *Project 720* grant participation and *The Career Education and Work Standards* for schools were additionally viewed as No Child Left Behind initiatives potentially impacting school counselor responsibilities, and for that reason, are also noted in Chapter 4.

**Gaining Entry**

A letter of introduction and explanation requesting permission for the study, addressed to each school district superintendent or chief executive administrator, gained study entry (See Appendix B). Consideration to school board approval was of an initial concern but was not an issue because the investigation did not involve interviewing students. A district superintendent denied my entry to one of the initially targeted case schools. The superintendent’s secretary very kindly informed me by telephone that the superintendent felt the high school counselors did not have time for study participation. An alternate school district was approached as a substitute case and permission for study participation was given.

Once permission for the study was attained I individually contacted each participating member, first by letter and then by telephone (See Appendix C). In Case A where I was a participant observer, contact was made by letter and then by direct conversation with counselor and administrative colleagues. The interviews were determined as agreed upon by dates and times suitable to both parties at places of convenience determined by the participants. At the time of each interview further explanation of the study was offered to each participant and the Informed Consent Form for Behavioral Research Study was reviewed and signed (See Appendix D). For all but
one participant the interview took place in their home school. For that one participant the interview took place at the career and technical center that was on the way home from school for the participant. I was able to observe this counselor at work for a full school day prior to the close of data collection.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

It is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting--what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting--and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting….The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (Patton, 1985, p. 1, as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 16).

With qualitative research, the process of inquiry, data collection, and data analysis occurs concurrently. The researcher’s task is to produce credible and reliable findings. Analysis begins with the initial observation, the opening interview, and the earliest document read. Rigor in a case study is resultant from the investigator’s presence, their interaction with participants, the triangulation of data, and the interpretation of perceptions, through rich and thick description (Merriam, 1988). Such strategies must:

- Present phenomenological data that is representative of the participant’s worldview.
• Be empirical and naturalistic, acquiring first hand accounts of phenomena as they occur in real settings.

• Be holistic, seeking to construct descriptions of total phenomena within appropriate and various contexts.

• Employ a variety of research techniques for exploration. (LeCompte & Goetz, 1984)

Of primary importance within the conceptual framework of naturalistic inquiry is the need for the researcher to view and relay findings from the participants' point of view. This process is referred to as verstehen or emic analysis approach to the understanding and interpretation of events. The researcher then “inscribes social discourse; he writes it down. In so doing, he turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted” (Geertz, 1973, p. 19).

Regarding varying data collection techniques as transcriptions of open-ended interviewing, observation, and document review; field notes consisting of detailed descriptions of the setting, events, and interaction of participants are additionally invaluable for later data expansion and analysis (Cashman & McCraw, 1993). Simultaneous data collection and analysis offers the opportunity to derive meaning from information as it is accumulated. The researcher seeks “themes, strands, incidents and commonalities in the data as it is collected” (Cashman & McCraw, 1993, p. 5).

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) emphasize that everything occurring in the field is a potential source of data. While gathering data this study followed their suggestions that the researcher:
• Pay attention, watch, listen and concentrate.
• Move from a “wide angle” lens to a “narrow angle” lens.
• Be aware of “key words” in people’s language.
• Look to the sequence of conversations; focus on first and last words.
• Relive conversations and events in your mind.
• Leave the setting when you have observed all that you are able to remember for legitimate recording.
• Record field notes as soon as possible after observing the setting.
• Draw illustrations of the setting; trace your movements as they occurred.
• Make audio summaries of observations.
• Add to your notes as you continue to remember occurrences over time.
• Record impressions, interpretations, questions, and thoughts.

With regard to the researcher’s role as a participant observer, Taylor and Bogdan comment that participant observation itself depends on the recording of complete, accurate, and detailed field notes, “if it is not written down, it never happened” (p. 53). Noting further consideration to participant observation,

Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that the advantage of tacit knowledge and the ability to be infinitely adaptable make the human investigator ideal in situations in which design is emergent because the human ‘can sense out salient factors, think of ways to follow up on them, and make continuous changes, all while actively engaged in the inquiry itself’ (p. 107). In order for the human instrument to use all these abilities to the fullest extent, frequent, continuing, and meaningful
interactions between the investigator and the other respondents or other objects of investigation must exist (Meister, 1997, p. 24).

As guided by Meister’s (1997) work, interviewing the participants separately gave this researcher the opportunity to compare and connect participant responses. The interviews may have also given the respondents occasion to reflect on their roles as related to the interview questions, possibly facilitating further understanding of their own work. The research focused on perceptions of the participants, however, the depth of investigation as a participant observer allowed me to “hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do” (Marshall & Rossman 1995, p. 79, as cited in Meister, 1997, p. 24).

Again, similarly to Meister’s (1997) study rationale for employing participant observation; it is clear that the study would not have been so rich in data, understanding, and meaning without researcher participant observation. Because I was a participant observer, employed as a school counselor in Case A, more comprehensive background information was available for study with Case A than with Cases B, C, and D. Hence, the amount of data and the depth of data insight available on the subject of Case A assisted to establish context for participant responses and analysis across cases. The daily contact made with Case A participants over the course of the years of this study permitted me hands-on and side-by-side experience of the actual work of the participants. Having directly experienced the job enhanced my understanding of participant responses. Yin, 1984, as cited in Miles and Huberman (1994), also furthers this technique of studying one case in-depth, then examining successive cases, as a benefit for replication and pattern matching.
Data collection procedures and corresponding analysis followed Marshall and Rossman’s (1989), Miles and Huberman (1984), and Meister’s (1997) recommendations that encompass data reduction, data display, and conclusion verification throughout the study. Their methods suggest simultaneous analysis of information as it is attained, assimilated, reduced, and categorized. Additionally following the suggestions of Merriam (1998), Tellis (1997, September), Yin (2003), and Stake (2000), pattern-matching techniques were sought throughout as data was reduced and categorized.

For the sake of data reduction, the “invisibility” of everyday life needs to be brought forward in relation to the research questions (Erickson, 1986, as cited in Meister, 1997, p. 21). The persons closest to everyday processes do not necessarily realize the patterns of their everyday social interactions. Specific understanding offered through the documentation of detailed practice needs to be established. As previously stated, case study research is inductive in that case studies are rooted in the context of a phenomenon and presented as replete entities depicting the accumulation of rich data through thick description and narrative portrayal.

Analysis for this study was found through storytelling of the investigator’s inductive interpretations as the narratives emerged through the processes of the investigation. Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, as cited in Merriam (1998), offer, “the heart of narrative analysis rests in ‘the ways humans experience the world’” (p. 157). Therefore, case study research enables the highlighting of stories participants share and how these stories are communicated. For this exploratory case study the stories were shaped by participant responses to interview items and the researcher’s contexts for understanding their meaning through participant observation.
Following the recommendations of Miles and Huberman (1994) the data was then analyzed in a comparative approach across the four cases of study. Termed “cross-case analysis,” the method is promoted by Miles and Huberman as a means to enhance the confidence of generalizability while deepening understanding and explanation (p. 173). As offered, “each case must be understood in its own terms, yet we hunger for the understanding that comparative analysis can bring” (p. 172).

Prestine and Bowen’s (1993) and Lightfoot’s (1983) investigations were additionally helpful as exemplary examples of multiple case study analysis. Prestine and Bowen’s (1993) study results depicted themes as significant factors that emerged through the course of their inquiry on the process of school change in four single cases.

From the four single cases, then, data were aggregated across all schools for assessing the process of change and in searching for commonalities and shared themes. This basic thematic approach emphasizes the clustering and presentation of material by key themes found across the four cases rather than by an idiosyncratic, single case phenomena. As well, this approach allowed important themes and categories significant to phenomenon of the change process to emerge inductively from the data across the four cases (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yin, 1984). (p. 301)

Lightfoot (1983) wrote of images emerging through the processes of human interaction, seeking “to capture the essences, rather than the visible symbols, of school life” (p. 14). Approximating Lightfoot’s work, the participant observation component of this study added elements of perception from an insider’s view. It allowed the external images of
everyday occurrences for the participating school counselors to be more clearly understood through relevance and deep meaning.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations to this study may be considered its size, generalizability, reliability, and validity as its results may, or may not, be perceived as representative of the roles performed by the larger population of secondary school counselors across the state of Pennsylvania, or across the Nation. Additionally, as suggested by Dale’s (1999) research, bias of the observer could be a limitation, “addressed by the researcher distinguishing between the emic and etic perspectives when collecting, analyzing, and reporting data” (p. 110). However, case study research is not necessarily considered generalizable to the larger society. Case studies have small, purposeful, populations that define them as particularistic and selective. Triangulation adds strength as it reduces researcher biases and the limitations seen with the use of a single method (Maxwell, 1996). Nonetheless, reliability of the research is only good to the extent to which the research results can be replicated (Merriam, 1998). Yet, dimensions of social situations (Spradley, 1980) change from moment to moment, “human behavior is never static” (Merriam, 1998, p. 205). Given similar dimensional situations of a case, with similar interacting variables, reliability and generalizability can only be anticipated or inferred from one study to the next, and through those inferences can possibly be transferred.


*naturalistic generalization:*

Drawing on tacit knowledge, intuition, and personal experience, people look for
trends that explain their own experience as well as the events in the world
around them. ‘Full and thorough knowledge of the particular’ allows one to see
similarities in ‘new and foreign contexts.’ (Stake, 1978, p. 6, as cited in Merriam,
1998, p. 211)

Generalizability then, or termed external validity if preferred, can be considered on a
case-to-case transfer basis, to the degree that similar situations are applicable to the
study’s findings. Rich, thick description aids the transfer process with regard to the
reader’s determination of how nearly their situations match the study’s situations
(Merriam, 1998).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) present research suggestions that may improve study
transferability and reliability. These include: prolonged engagement, persistent
observation, member checks, which are the continuous testing of received information
from respondents with the investigators reconstruction, and the reporting of thick
descriptive data. Internal validity as defined by Merriam (1998) speaks to how closely the
study findings parallel reality. As analysis is synonymous with interpretation, it is the
development of theory through data grounded in complex social phenomenon (Strauss,
1987) that makes qualitative inquiry significant for social science.

Analysis allows researchers to continuously move between gathering data,
thinking about data, and generating strategies for collecting new data (Miles &
Huberman, 1984), employing reflexivity (Anderson, 1989; Hammersley, 1983) and
portraiture (Lightfoot, 1983) throughout the research sequence. With consideration to
these investigative fundamentals, it is researcher attention and accountability to truth,
logic, and detail within all these research methods and processes that makes research of everyday occurrences rigorous and valid. What makes the study a plausible account is its presentation (Cashman & McCraw, 1993). With data collection and analysis, of importance is the realization that the author-researcher must maintain a doctrine that serves to paint an accurate, though interpreted, picture of the case studied. As the researcher was the primary instrument, and interpreted meanings from a phenomenological view of the participants, the credibility of the research can only be as valid as the researcher is skilled and non-biased.

The life and color of qualitative research, and hence case study research, is that which brings the reader into the event studied. This is done through the written analysis of social discourse. Therefore, the data was first written as descriptive story-telling narratives, then categorized by interview item responses, reduced, interpreted, and cross-referenced in order to complete a comprehensive comparative cross-case analysis. Excerpts of the interview responses are presented in Chapter 4 as captured expressions of the tone and feel of the participants’ experiences representing their stories. This was done to give life to the study, preserve evidence towards meaning, and contribute to understanding. It is in itself what makes case study research valid and useful for educational research and led to the fundamental nature of this investigation. All to develop theory grounded in data for implications of practice, for the common person to appreciate and learn from, and as offered by Willower (1992), for the stories to help explain the “elemental connections” seen in schools for the sake of school improvement.

They gain realism of presentation, but unless inferences are made and insights are expressed, they remain merely descriptive. The work of inquiry continues to be
the creation of theories, which is to say explanations that are logically compelling and empirically credible. (p. 373)
Chapter 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Overview

The primary means of gathering data for this exploratory case study was through researcher in-depth interviewing, document analysis, direct observation, and participant observation. Case data and participant interviews were first written as descriptive narratives, categorized by interview item responses, reduced, interpreted, and cross-referenced for analysis. In sum, the analysis sought to explore the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on secondary school counselor roles in a comparative approach across the cases. Several themes of relevance to the research questions emerged from the cross case analysis of data. In keeping with Lightfoot’s (1983) method of portraiture, descriptive snapshots of each of the cases are presented. These are followed by a cross case analysis that directly addresses the research questions.

The cases studied were four high schools found within the Central Intermediate Unit (CIU) 10 of central Pennsylvania. Across the four cases were twelve study participants. Of those twelve there were six participating school counselors and six participating administrators. Four of the participating school counselors were male and two were female. Of the participating administrators four were male and two were female. The researcher was a participant observer at Case A. At Case A, each school counselor and building administrator employed at the time of interviewing participated in the study. In the other case schools I was permitted to interview one school counselor and one building administrator for study participation. The counselors interviewed at those
schools had 11th and 12th grade students as part of their caseloads. Working with these two grade levels of students was considered significant to the data because these students take the Grade 11 PSSA and Grade 12 PSSA Retest and are most concerned with meeting proficiency levels in addition to all their other requirements for graduation.

Years of school experience varied from one participant to another. Each participant was given a fictitious name for the sake of reporting data anonymously. The school counselors are referred to by fictitious first names, the administrators by fictitious surnames. Though each case school was considered unique within its own school entity, by and large, across the cases, the schools and participants were very similar with regard to generalized school demographics, participant graduate school preparation, and certain initiatives that were carried from one case school to another with employment moves of five of the participants across the cases. After reviewing data from all the schools it was determined that Case A represented a key case that could be considered to be largely representative of processes that occurred at the other case schools with only minor differences. All respondents appeared to be genuinely reflective in their responses and all were very accommodating.

Presentation of Case A: The Key Case

Participating High School A, or Case A, is a small town high school located midway across Pennsylvania, nestled among rolling hills and expansive landscapes. At the time of data collection, the school district’s borough had a population of approximately 7,000 people. The area history includes having been home to seven United States governors and very rich in the iron and lumber industries. The town maintains a
sense of small-town community warmth not touched to any large degree by the relatively recent completion of an interstate highway that has impacted the nature of the area’s overall environment. The school district has four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

The data collection for this study cut across several years, occurring primarily from January 2006 to May of 2009, a period of time that saw many changes occur in the high school. Data collection was re-visited at Case A for a brief period in October of 2009 to further investigate school counselor time spent with testing the PSSA Retest and 4Sight given that month. However, the bulk of the data collection was completed in the 2006-2007 school year. At that time there were approximately 1,000 students enrolled in the high school, 270 students were in the junior class, the graduating Class of 2008. These numbers stayed relatively consistent over the course of the investigation. The student population, grade level, and graduation year for the 2006-2007 school year is specifically noted for several reasons. It was this group of students during the 2006-2007 school year that needed to take the Grade 11 PSSA Writing, Reading, and Mathematics to meet state and graduation proficiency requirements. That school year the Grade 11 PSSA Science was given as a field-test. Along with this, the counseling responsibility for this group of students fell to this counselor-researcher. Hence, this class of students became the focal point for the participant observation of the counselor role and any concomitant changes in that role required by the new testing requirements.

The high school itself had three administrators, one head principal and two vice principals. At the end of the data collection period there were four school counselors, one school counselor per grade level, 9th through 12th grades. Prior to the 2006-2007 school
year there were three counselors sharing the four grades. The fourth counselor was hired after a plea the school counseling department chair made to the school board (with principal support) in the spring of 2006 regarding the increasingly overwhelming workloads of the school counselors (See Appendix G). There was also one full-time and one part-time secretary employed within the high school counseling department.

In June 2005, the high school began a thirty-five million dollar renovation project. For the 2006-2007 school year the high school underwent various phases of renovation that involved moving classrooms and offices to shifting areas of the building to accommodate renovation progress. Case A was not a Project 720 (Phillips, 2005, August 4) participant, nor did they receive Dual Enrollment grant funding (PDE, 2009) stemming from Governor Rendell’s Project 720 educational reform grant initiative, described in Chapter 2, until the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year. Regardless, students in the Class of 2008 could take college preparatory courses at the high school in terms of Carnegie units (credits) similar to the graduation course standards of rigor proposed by the Project 720 initiative (PDE, 2008, October 28). Senior students could also take courses at the nearby universities. It was within school counselor roles to manage the school schedules for these students coming to school late or leaving early and monitor their success in their college courses. Of the Class of 2008, 51% of the students reported planning to go on to a four-year college/university, 16% to a business/technical school or two-year college, 5% to the military (active duty/reserves), and 28% directly to employment.

For the 2006-2007 school year, the high school’s Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Academic Achievement Report indicated that the high school was at
Warning status level for not having met AYP target goals for the previous school year, 2005-2006. PSSA Warning status means that the district fell short of the AYP targets, but still has another year to achieve the targets before consequences are imposed (PDE, 2008, November 30). For the 2006-2007 school year the high school did meet AYP goals, partially due to AYP Safe Harbor and Confidence Interval. However, for the 2007-2008 school year, the high school was at Warning status again, having met only thirteen of their seventeen targets. The four targets that were not met for that year were in Academic Performance (PDE, 2008, November 20). As shared with me by the school counselor PSSA coordinator, the four academic performance targets missed for the high school were in IEP-Special Education Math and Reading and Economically Disadvantaged Math and Reading.

The coordination of all the standardized testing, which included the PSSA, and assisting with the identification and scheduling of students in need of remediation to meet PSSA proficiency, fell to the responsibilities of the school counselors. They also managed all of their traditional school counselor roles and responsibilities. Traditional roles included career education and advisement for students, with recent particular adherence to The Career Education and Work Standards (PDE, 2008, July).

Test Coordination for the School Counselors at Case A

As noted, the high school counselors in Case A coordinated all the standardized testing for the building. Each counselor had specific tests assigned as their individual responsibility. At the beginning of the data collection the tests included the Terra Nova achievement tests (replaced in 2006-07 by the 4Sight tests), the Grade 11 PSSA, the
Grade 12 PSSA Retest, the Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Test (PSAT), the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT), the Non-standard SAT, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), and Advanced Placement (AP) exams for varying content areas. The American College Test (ACT) Entrance Exam was added in February 2007.

**PSSA Coordination**

The coordination of the Grade 11 PSSA administration at Case A consumed tremendous amounts of school counselor time and energy. Counselors were basically self-taught on testing processes through PDE instructional booklets, web sites, and experiential knowledge gained from years of administering other tests and then sharing this knowledge and experience with their counselor colleagues. For the 2006-2007 school year, the array of tasks connected to the administration of the PSSA ranged from designating testing rooms and assigning students, providing in-service instruction to the proctoring teachers with regard to test security procedures, to re-writing the bell schedule to best meet testing time frame needs, arranging breakfast for the junior class all six days of testing during the math and reading sections of the PSSA, securing and tracking the tests once they arrived, monitoring test security in the school counseling suite area, going into junior homerooms or classrooms with test coaching messages for the students, and then finally managing the mechanics of the testing itself with the loading, distribution, and collection of testing boxes. After all this, the counselors proctored all the extended time testing students, the make-up tests, and finally boxed the materials for return to the district central office.
March 7, 2007, was a snow day for the district. The counselor assisting the PSSA coordinator called me at approximately 9:10 pm to give me instructions for the next day regarding how to further prepare students for the tests. He was just leaving the high school after working all day and evening on PSSA preparation. The other PSSA coordinator left the building close to 6:00 pm. His instructions directed me to deliver a message about testing processes to juniors in their English classes over the next two days.

As instructed, on the mornings of March 8th and 9th 2007, I went to all of the junior English classes for ten to fifteen minutes, with a script given to me by the PSSA coordinating counselor, informing the students what to expect for the upcoming six days of testing. The students were to go to the cafeteria after homeroom for a breakfast snack and then to report to their testing rooms. They were to know their testing room assignment prior to leaving homeroom, have pencils with them, non-mechanical pencils preferred, and they could also have a book to sit quietly and read once they finished each test. They were not to have Ipods or MP3 players with them. They would have all the time they needed to complete the tests, so they were not to be influenced by the clock or the person next to them turning pages. The intent of the message was to let them know that they had prepared for these tests since elementary school, there was nothing unfamiliar about them, and they should do their best. These were my caseload students. I knew them. I appreciated their apprehension regarding the PSSA, and realized the need for them to do well. As I addressed the students these two mornings, I said to them, “This is the real deal. The better you do now the more you will enjoy your senior year, without having to manage alternate forms of proficiency for graduation.”
The counselors were extremely cognizant of this “real deal” endeavor in all of their work. This is well illustrated by the PSSA testing the spring of 2007. The first day of testing for PSSA Reading and Math was Monday March 12, 2007. I was not available to experience it, having been previously assigned to read the Non-standard Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) to a qualifying student, which, as scheduled by the College Board, had to be done March 12th and 13th. I was available at the March 13th after-school school counseling department meeting when the assisting PSSA counselor coordinator was asked how the testing was going. He responded by pounding his fist on the table in front of him several times, simulating what a hallway of students heard while testing. The testing counselors had radioed an administrator to locate the renovation contractor to tell him construction had to be halted until after testing, only to have the same problem occur the next morning, and the morning following that.

Because the cafeteria staff had complained about the mess left on previous testing days, on March 14th three of the counselors collected breakfast trash with rolling double barrel trash bins while juniors were still eating. On March 15th I was picking trash up off the cafeteria floor and holding a dustpan for another counselor as he swept up trash. Soon after I was wiping down tables with a wet rag as students dismissed for testing.

The PSSA details were completely in the hands of the coordinating school counselors. As junior class counselor, I assisted enough to gain a feel for the labor involved, but could not appreciate the true meaning of the intensive time needed for all the associated tasks. The fourth counselor in the office also became involved, helping as needed. Never daunted by clerical roles, her comment at the time was, “this is quite the production.”
For the coordinating counselors, from the time the blank tests arrived from the central office until they were completed, re-packaged, and mailed back, the mechanics of the testing procedures took precedence over all other tasks. The counselors continued to see students, parents, and teachers for situations that could not wait, but tasks piled up waiting to be managed, contributing to a work situation of forever playing catch up.

On March 24th and 25th the Grade 11 PSSA Science Field Test was administered. It was not as much work for the counselors because it only required two days of testing versus six. A change in the school calendar due to snow days put the distribution of the third marking period report cards in homeroom directly before testing time on the second day of the PSSA Science. This was very poor timing, negatively affecting the attitude of many students, creating student behavior issues for the proctors and, in turn, the roles played by the school counselors. Fortunately, “It was only a field test.”

**4Sight Benchmark Assessment**

The 4Sight administration additionally required many uncounted hours of counselor time. The 2007-2008 4Sight testing days required that 40 proctor boxes be packed with test materials. As the coordinating counselor, I also had to manage getting the completed tests to math and English teachers for open-ended question scoring prior to the tests being returned to the central office secretary. The January 2008 administration of 4Sight was somewhat eventful for the school counselors, in that after testing was completed for the morning, the four counselors as a group were cleaning out the testing boxes. Coincidentally, the high school principal brought the district superintendent in to tour the building’s new school counseling suite. 4Sight materials were spread all over the
hallway outside of my office, with the school counselors working on the hall floor, or in and out of the school counseling records closet, as they sorted through the materials in the 40 boxes. They tossed materials to each other as they put away pencils, scratch paper, and test booklets, and stacked the emptied boxes for storage until the next testing time period. It was a wonderful opportunity to see the counselors working as a mechanized team to further district goals.

*Case A School Counselor Responsibilities*

School counselor combined responsibilities, work roles, and corresponding work tasks are well illustrated by activities in the first few months of 2007: An in-service day on *The Career Education and Work Standards* (PDE, 2008, July) with a representative from the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) was January 29th, the second 4Sight Assessment was January 30th and 31st, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) was given February 8th, and the American College Test (ACT) Entrance Exam was given February 10th. The administration for the Pennsylvania System of State Assessment (PSSA) Writing test window was February 12th to 28th (moved from February 23rd due to school snow days). The Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) was March 10th and the administration of the Non-standard SAT, as noted previously, March 12th and 13th, occurred at the beginning of the PSSA Math and Reading testing windows, March 12th to 23rd. The counselors were additionally involved with their everyday tasks of (a) monitoring student grades, (b) doing in-class presentations to schedule students for their course requests the next school year, (c) managing on-going student academic advising and crisis counseling, (d) lunch and locker
room duty, (e) attending IEP meetings and Student Assistance Program team meetings, (f) coordinating Act 504 Chapter 15 meetings, (g) consulting with administrators, the school psychologist, and teachers, (h) scheduling parent and teacher conferences, (i) coordinating and attending the 8th to 9th grade parent evening orientation, (j) addressing parent, teacher, student, and outside agency personnel concerns, (k) moving their offices for the second phase of the building renovation, and (l) responding to calls on their walkie-talkie radios.

**Presentation of Participants Case A**

While certainly subject to some personal bias, my perception was that the school counselors in Case A were endlessly energetic, extremely conscientious, and amazingly dedicated. I believe we exhibited an ability to think and act quickly and respond to crises calmly. On the one hand, we were highly self-motivated independent workers, yet we worked smoothly as a team for the betterment of our students and the high school as a whole. From my perspective, the school counseling office environment had a sense of continual immediacy, with very busy people being very busy all the time. From my own observations, it appeared that the counselors rarely took time for lunch breaks, social conversation with colleagues, or rest breaks. All of us often stayed late, took work home, and came into the office early, or on weekends. Though we were all very different in our strengths, weaknesses, and personality traits, I perceived that we were all very people-oriented and steadfast in our devotion to our work. My fellow counselors impressed me as being similar to Lightfoot’s (1983) rendition of teachers with “fearless and empathetic regard of students” (p. 342), doing whatever was needed and requested at any given time.
Over the course of data collection a shift was seen in the degree and style in which the counselors worked together. At the beginning of the data collection the counselors worked very autonomously within their individual prospective positions. We met at occasional intervals to discuss processes and policies as questions arose for the school counseling department. These concerns included items such as scheduling timelines, the management of warning letters to parents for students failing courses, financial aid evenings or parent orientations, and what days to work in the summer. By the end of the data collection period a change toward assisting each other with laborious tasks related to testing was apparent as we increasingly worked side-by-side.

Angela

At the time of our interview in January 2006 Angela had been in education approximately 26 years, and employed as a school counselor for eighteen years. She had taught English and French prior to becoming a counselor. She played a dual role as Case A’s school counseling department chair and was the counselor responsible for the 12th grade class of 215 students. Normally her student caseload averaged about 350 to 400 students. When she did not have seniors she had a full 10th or 11th grade and half the 9th grade. This changed in August 2006 with the school district hiring a fourth counselor for the high school; one counselor was then assigned per grade level.

Aside from her busy school counseling tasks Angela was very active, an avid runner, and during the 2006-2007 school year wore a pedometer to work every day, counting steps to Walk Across America. Her plan is to retire when the Class of 2010 graduates, the class she became responsible for beginning with the school year 2006-
2007. It was Angela who developed the *Counselor Duties* (See Appendix G) document that went to the school board to support the need for an additional counselor. With only minor input from the other two counselors in the department, she created and presented the document in full. The task added to her already heavy workload, but was integral in achieving the hiring of the fourth counselor.

Of all the counselors interviewed, Angela did not play any direct roles in the coordination of PSSA or 4Sight during the primary data collection period of January 2006 to May 2009. She had coordinated the Grade 12 PSSA Retest with her seniors in October of 2005 prior to the beginning of data collection in January 2006. For this reason, data collection was re-visited for a brief time in October of 2009 during the testing window for the 2009 Grade 12 PSSA Retest, which Angela was responsible for coordinating with her last class of seniors.

*Shelby*

When interviewed in February 2006, Shelby had been employed approximately twenty-three years as a school counselor at Case A. He had previously been a social studies teacher at Case A. He had also been an alternative education night school teacher for the district. The school year of our interview (2005-06) he was responsible for the junior class, which was approximately 260 students and half of the 9th grade, another 120-140 students. As a result, he was responsible for close to 400 students. He was also the PSSA coordinator. He coached for about 32 years, in numerous coaching positions that included head and assistant football, assistant wrestling, junior high wrestling, varsity swimming, junior high softball, junior varsity softball, and head softball. Coaching and
counseling presented something of a conflict for him. As a coach he needed to be authoritative and lead by example. Counseling required a more humanistic approach. He told me, “As a coach you have to be right, as counselor you may not be right. Counselors look at things differently.”

He had many “great stories and memories.” It was always fun in the office on the rare occasion he could offer up one of his stories, like how they used to come to school with gun racks on their trucks, or the time the bucket full of mice fell over on him from atop the girls’ gym lockers while he was searching for softballs. For Shelby the days went by very quickly, with the work different from moment to moment, each and every day. He was a leader of congeniality in the building, kind and gracious to everyone, his very presence exuded optimism and graciousness. Very sadly, on December 22, 2006 he suffered the loss of his 27-year-old daughter to a yearlong struggle with cancer, right before Christmas and her 28th birthday (December 28, 2006). In spite of his terrible grief, Shelby persevered with his great attitude towards life. He had a sign in his office that read “LAUGH.” It was something he did well and often. “SUPER!” would also resonate through the office with his rolling positive tone. He retired in June of 2008, but by October 2008 he was in the building nearly every day, working as a substitute teacher.

Ian

Ian and I met for our interview June 22, 2007. He was the newest hire to Case A’s school counseling department, and Case A’s first fourth counselor. He asked his anonymous name be after Ian McShane the actor who plays Al Swerengen on HBO’s series Deadwood. His assigned caseload was the 10th grade class, the Class of 2009,
approximately 270 students. He was from a nearby larger town and graduated from a larger school district where his dad had been a teacher and mom worked at the nearby university. As described in an article in the school newspaper, Ian attended The Pennsylvania State University where he earned a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Psychology and a Master’s of Education degree in Counselor Education. He served as a college advisor for The Pennsylvania State University Summer Study Program, as an election official, and as an ETS/ACT test proctor.

The previous year he had been a school counselor at Case C’s junior high school. He lost the position due to severe budget cuts in the district. The year prior to that he completed his school counseling internship at another county high school where he interned with a school counselor who had once been an intern for Shelby. By June of 2007 Ian had given up his Summer Study position at The Pennsylvania State University and had completed his first year working in the high school of Case A. He was well versed in the mandates of NCLB and PSSA and experienced with 4Sight from his previous position at Case C. We met in an empty classroom preparing for renovation a week after the close of school for 2006-2007. The room was devoid of all furniture so we had to bring in chairs from the counseling office to sit on. Because Ian was so new to the field we were able to explore conversations that did not arise with the other counselors.

For the 2008-2009 school year, Ian was the 12th grade counselor and his Class of 2009 would soon graduate. He was now the chief PSSA coordinator and as the 12th grade counselor was responsible for the Grade 12 PSSA Retest that year. The Retest materials arrived in the school counseling office the week of October 6, 2008. The testing window ended October 31st. On October 20, 2008, after the first day of proctoring the Grade 12
PSSA Retest, Ian returned to his office and his computer as he remarked, “The thing I hate about something like this is you come back to a million emails.” In spite of his complaint, he addressed his emails, attended to students and staff that wanted to see him, and reviewed and sent transcripts students had requested for college applications. At 3:15 he posted himself like a pillar outside the school counseling office suite door as he did every day to traffic monitor the students leaving the building.

Anna Belle (Ms. Belle)

Ms. Belle was the head principal of the high school. A stylishly stunning woman, she was interviewed February of 2006 in her office, which is now gone to the renovation project. She described her office décor as Parisian early vintage loft, very warm and inviting, representative of her worldly savoir-faire personality, depicting her personality through a combination of captivating styles of interest and beauty, and what she might refer to as a calming sense of Zen. What attracted me most in visiting her office was her miniature sand box and corresponding miniature rake; the temptation was to lose oneself in the therapeutic sand raking action.

Ms. Belle was in her fourth year as principal. She had been the Director of Special Education for the district for two years and assistant principal at the high school for one year. She had previously worked as an itinerant learning support teacher for Case B and had taught English and social studies and held a special education directorship in other state schools. In October of 2006, she learned she had a rare form of breast cancer. She impressively continued on in the principalship while managing her cancer treatments.
On June 22, 2007 Ms. Belle chaired a luncheon meeting with the four counselors. She bought us lunch delivered from the local favorite Italian restaurant. Topics of the meeting were the master schedule progress, the process for students dropping classes after the first six to nine days of the school year, and weighted percentage grades appearing on the report cards. We also discussed updating available technology to better streamline counselor credit monitoring and scheduling a time for the counselors to meet with technology personnel over the summer to better meet counselor technology needs. She was happy to announce she had completed her last radiation treatment, all in the midst of managing a major building renovation and mentoring a new vice principal, as her seasoned vice principal was preparing to leave to be the principal at Case D.

*Donald Gerrardi (Mr. G.)*

When I interviewed Mr. Gerrardi in January 2006, he was vice principal at the high school. Still a very young man, this was his second year as an administrator. Before taking the position at Case A he taught middle school math in a larger neighboring school district for seven years. Both his parents were teachers. Being an administrator for him was very different than being a teacher. As a teacher he felt that he could get much closer to a whole group of kids. As an assistant administrator he was only able to get close to a group of kids that were causing problems, establishing a special connection to them. As he commented, “As a teacher I used to say if you could teach lower groups of students you could teach any group. My thought changed as I went through teaching. They all need the same attention. I loved teaching. I love my position now. It’s very challenging.”
Mr. Gerrardi was always calm, very approachable, and extremely conscientious that all bases were covered to help students succeed; going well beyond expectations to be certain safeguards were put in place to help them. He once provided me with a free and reduced meal application for a student when they were not eating lunch due to a recent change in the family’s financial situation. He also once requested I meet with a pregnant teen when other students were teasing her. He clearly understood the dynamics of dysfunctional settings and used this sensitivity in his work. He relocated to be assistant principal at the middle school after his second year at the high school. He was there two years before he returned to teaching math, taking a position at Case C.

Rebecca Foster (Ms. Foster)

Ms. Foster became vice principal at the high school as the replacement for Mr. Gerrardi. She interviewed for this study on June 22, 2007. It was one week after school was out at the end of her first year as an administrator. She was formerly the district’s department chair for special education and a special education teacher at the high school. Ms. Foster was possibly only 30 years old when she became a school administrator. Her office, decorated in bright lime green ceramics, had a very neat and contemporary look and was reflective of her youth. Always forthright, she was very approachable and upbeat with a great laugh and quick sense of humor. My experience was that she was never critical, just real, and always offered a great deal of care to everyone. I knew her to be all heart, giving unending energy to students with a very natural and genuine manner. She was only a vice principal at the high school for two years until she moved to be assistant principal at the district’s middle school when Mr. Gerrardi left the position.
Summary Notes on Case A

By the conclusion of the data collection period my Class of 2008 had graduated, beginning with 270 students for the 2006-2007 school year they finished with 252 students in June of 2008. There were two different vice principals in the building along with Shelby’s replacement counselor who were not participants in this study. The building renovation was completed and celebrated with a dedication ceremony the morning of September 17, 2008. Staff members commented that the building seemed much calmer at the beginning of 2008-2009. There were times while classes were in session that a person would never know 1,000 plus adolescents were in the building. On an in-service day, October 2, 2008 the high school staff met in the afternoon to review PSSA assessment data gathered over the last several years, with particular emphasis on the 2006-2007 PSSA data. The guiding question for the day’s task was “How can I increase student achievement using research-based strategies, techniques, and practices?” This theme continued for in-services the remainder of the school year.

The 4Sight tests were given twice that school year, in October and February. The PSSA and other testing concerns continued on very similarly. Working as a substitute teacher Shelby was asked by administration to assist Ian with the Grade 11 PSSA Writing test given in February 2009. For the March 2009 PSSA Reading and Math, Angela stepped in to assist Ian with putting labels on booklets and sorting initial test materials. All four of the school counselors assisted with completing the final crucial inventory of accounting for every test booklet before packing them up and sending them on to central administration.
For the 2008-2009 school year, the counselors provided me the estimated amount of time they spent on testing away from other tasks in terms of days and weeks (See Appendix H). Realize that the school counselors managing the tests were now very experienced and, as much as possible, had streamlined their testing tasks. Having worked with PSSA coordination for several years, Ian commented that time spent on testing was greatly reduced for him than when he first came into the field when he had to learn everything with testing on his own, and all the related processes taking a great deal more of his time to complete than currently.

With the hiring of the fourth counselor, the administration let it be known that more counselor time coordinating and running student groups would be expected. Topics could include anger management, self-esteem and self-advocacy, teen issues, and/or career interests, to name a few. During the 2008-2009 school year, it was observed that the two counselors not directly responsible for coordinating PSSA or 4Sight took on the responsibility of running student groups. This illustration of collaborative behavior as well as the previously noted teaming during testing times clearly evidenced that enhanced counselor collaboration was needed to manage required roles and new duties.

As mentioned, to better establish a feel for the degree of time the counselors were spending with testing, in October 2009, data collection was re-visited for approximately one month, beginning a few weeks prior to the Grade 12 PSSA Retest window, which was October 26 to November 6, 2009. To reduce overall testing disruption to the bell schedule and instruction, the first 4Sight administration for the year was designated to occur at the same time as the Grade 12 PSSA Retest. Hence, the 4Sight Math and Reading for 9th, 10th, and 11th graders was held on October 26th and 27th. The Grade 12
PSSA Retest Math and Reading for eligible 12\textsuperscript{th} graders was given on the same two days. The Grade 12 PSSA Retest Writing and Science were given on October 28\textsuperscript{th} and 29\textsuperscript{th}.

Grade 12 PSSA Retest make-ups for all four PSSA tests were completed immediately following their initial testing times and days.

Though Angela coordinated the Grade 12 PSSA Retest and I managed the 4Sight, all four of the counselors, for several hours every morning of those first four days of testing, were involved with assisting test coordination or proctoring in some form. For example, on October 26\textsuperscript{th} and 27\textsuperscript{th} while I was consumed with managing the 4Sight for all of the 9\textsuperscript{th}, 10\textsuperscript{th}, and 11\textsuperscript{th} graders, Angela was proctoring the PSSA Retest in the cafeteria for eligible seniors. The other two counselors, Ian, and Shelby’s replacement after he retired, assisted Angela in the cafeteria with passing out materials and monitoring students. On October 28\textsuperscript{th} while I was completing the clean up for 4Sight and organizing the test answer sheets for teachers to grade the 4Sight open-ended responses, the other three counselors were managing the PSSA Writing Retest in the cafeteria. On October 29\textsuperscript{th} the other three counselors were now managing the Grade 12 Science Retest in the cafeteria while I also proctored the Grade 12 Science Retest with a small learning support group in a conference room within the school counseling suite.

October 27\textsuperscript{th}, prior to the tests beginning for the second day, Angela shared with me that she had thus far put in 40 hours of time with tasks related to the Grade 12 PSSA Retest. As described, she still had several days of regular testing ahead of her, with three tests, Reading, Writing, and Science, yet to be proctored. She would then proctor the make-up tests and complete the inventory and packing of all test materials. This amount
of time does not include the other three counselors’ time spent with the PSSA Retest, which, as noted, included myself.

Concurrent to the time Angela spent with the PSSA Retest related tasks, I spent approximately 40 hours of my school counselor time completing tasks required for the October 2009 4Sight administration, which did not include the approximate five hours the part time school counseling office secretary spent double checking my 4Sight student and proctor room lists for correctness. Now that the building renovation was completed, and testing room assignments were established with this first 4Sight test, less school counselor time for 4Sight tasks would be needed for the second administration to be given later in the school year. As testing rooms and proctors for 4Sight included all 11th grade students, coordination for the spring PSSA for 11th graders would be less time consuming. With few adjustments, the same testing rooms and test proctors would be used again. Updating testing room student lists to correct for students that moved in or out of the high school since October 26, 2009 would need to be done.

Presentation of Case B

Driving to Case B in July of 2006 I could not help but notice a large billboard placed near the edge of a farmer’s field that read “Welcome to Case B, the Highest Taxes in the County.” This sign was in the local news with some question to its validity. It stayed like that for a long time until one day I noticed it was changed to the “3rd” highest taxes in the county. In November of 2008 the sign had become a Vote for McCain-Palin billboard. Driving by in May of 2009 the board was blank.
The area is considered a rural, middle class, multi-occupational community. Geographically it is composed of beautiful farm fields and rolling hills. It supports an annual end-of-summer grange fair and encampment that has hosted generations of families living in the nearby areas. Though the area is growing with residential neighborhoods, a conservation association works to protect its communities’ waters, farmlands, and forests. During the 2006-2007 school year, the school district had an overall population of 10,300, representing nine small towns scattered across five townships, and was composed of three elementary schools, one area intermediate school, and one junior-senior high school 7th through 12th grades. It was the smallest and most rural of the case school districts.

The junior-senior high school had one principal, one assistant principal, two counselors, and one school counseling secretary. The school counselor responsible for 10th through 12th grades was a participant in this study along with the building principal. Case B school profile information indicated 60% of their 2008 graduation class planned to go on to a four-year college/university, 20% planned to go on to a two-year school, 5% to the military, and 15% directly to employment. All of the district schools met AYP on the 2006-2007 PSSA Scores. The previous year the high school had been identified for school improvement for the special education subgroup in mathematics. For the 2006-2007 school year that subgroup had made substantive progress leading to the best designation possible, *Making Progress*.

In November of 2008 two of the elementary schools received top honors by way of “Keystone Achievement Awards” for making AYP on the PSSA for the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. This was the fourth year in a row that both schools received
the award. One of the two elementary schools would receive $5,000 in addition to their Keystone Achievement Award, given to the top 25% of Keystone Achievement Award winners. Several teachers and the building administrator were asked to present their strategies for success at the State Title I School Improvement Conference. In a message from the high school principal October 1, 2008, it was noted that the school was working to build on past and current efforts to strengthen student support systems for all students in grades 7th to 12th. For the 2007-2008 school year the district met AYP goals. The high school’s status was in need of improvement, having met 16 of their 17 targets, with the one target missed in Academic Performance (PDE, 2008, November 20). The district was not participating in Project 720 nor receiving Dual Enrollment grant funding.

Presentation of Participants Case B

Ed

Ed and I met for our interview in May of 2007 at the local career and technical center (CTC) that serves students from both Case A and Case B. We met there as a location of convenience in a conference room with permission from the CTC secondary education director. At the time Ed had been a school counselor at Case B for fifteen years and three months. He grew up in a town about 50 miles away where his parents still resided. He continues to live in that area and faces a long commute every day. He impressed me as very professionally poised with a very calm demeanor. In our interview he spoke very highly of his school counseling secretary, school counselor colleague, and principal. He was the 10th, 11th, and 12th grade counselor with 425 students on his caseload and responsible for all his grade level testing. Though Ed and I did not meet for
our interview in Case B’s high school, I did have the opportunity to spend a full day in
the building in April 2009.

A comment Ed made during our interview stuck with me throughout the
remaining two years of data collection. He said the job was “kind of like a play….You do
similar things every year but the kids and parents are different, the teachers come and
go.” This thought changed my participant observation perception. From that moment I
viewed interactions as though they were scripted, with players entering and exiting their
roles on cue through varying scenes changing only slightly over time.

Joe Constantine (Mr. C)

I met with Mr. Constantine July 14, 2006, slightly prior to the 2006-2007 school
year. As I approached the high school I noticed construction occurring in front of the
building. As he came to meet me in the administrative area his approach was extremely
kind in demeanor, living up to everything I had heard about his outgoing personality. The
interview was conducted in a conference room within the administrative offices.

Mr. Constantine’s good nature exudes a sense of comfort to all who meet him. His
reputation for being a great guy and great leader extended well into the other local
districts where he was endearingly referred to as Big Joe or Mr. C. He did not live in the
district, but at the outer edge of the nearby larger university town school district. At the
time of our interview he had been principal at Case B for fifteen years, after serving as an
assistant principal in Case B. Before that he was an assistant principal at another school
district approximately thirty minutes away. He had initially taught social studies in a
neighboring county.
Mr. C. retired from Case B at the end of the 2006-2007 school year. On June 8, 2007 the front page of the local newspaper presented an article on his leaving. It was titled *A Career of Inspiration*. According to the article, hundreds of students, faculty, and staff gathered at 8:00 a.m. on the lawn of Case B’s high school, waiting for Mr. C. to arrive. They planned a full day of special events to honor him and say goodbye. The day’s events included a ride to school in a hired limousine, a pancake and sausage breakfast with the students, an hour-long assembly in the afternoon, and gifts from faculty, staff, and students. One gift was a giant superman t-shirt with his last name initial in place of the super S. The paper presented him as being jovial, approachable, and a principal who took the time to know his students.

**Presentation of Case C**

Case C sits in an opposite direction from Case A and Case B. The school is nestled in a very beautiful area of Pennsylvania. The district encompasses 222 square miles, three townships and five boroughs. During the 2006-2007 school year there were approximately 2,125 students enrolled in grades kindergarten through 12. The district has one senior high school, grades 9 to 12, one junior high school grades 7 to 8, and four elementary buildings, grades kindergarten to 6. The district committed nearly $14 million to renovating one of its elementary schools and its high school.

There were two high school counselors, however, the superintendent directed me to contact only one of the school counselors, the department chair, to interview. There had been three high school counselors, but a replacement counselor was not hired when one counselor retired at the end of the 2006-2007 school year. There was one school
counseling secretary. Of Case C’s Class of 2008, 44% of their graduates intended to go on to a four-year college or university, 28% to a two-year college or technical school, 21% into the workforce or military, and 7% were undecided. For the 2006-2007 school year all AYP targets were met. The district did not meet its AYP objectives for the 2007-2008 school year as it was placed on Warning status for *Graduation and Attendance* (PDE, 2008, November 20).

**Presentation of Participants Case C**

*Lori*

Lori’s interview was held in her high school counseling office on Tuesday May 15, 2007. It was an amazingly beautiful spring day. The forty-five minute drive was very scenic with rolling hillsides. I gained entry to the building though a side door buzzer. Being May 15<sup>th</sup> it was Election Day and election officials greeted me as I approached the building. I easily found the school counseling office. Her office was about a third the size of the counselor offices at Case A prior to their renovation. Lori had a small window that permitted the entry of a gentle breeze and there were pictures of her five grandchildren on the shelves above her desk. Lori resided in the large university town school district.

Lori was responsible for about 325 students, which she said was “too many, in addition to being in charge of the gifted program as of two years ago. We each have about twelve to fifteen Gifted IEPs to write, the meetings, all sorts of things which was a very burdensome responsibility, it probably doesn’t get as well done as it should because it just gets squeezed in among everything else.” Her caseload responsibility was 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade with a split alphabet A through K. She likes it that way and works to
keep it. She does the grade reporting, the report cards, the master schedule for the building, and all the state reports, which she stated as being “the principal’s reports.” She commented, “It takes me away some times too much from counseling but it sort of evolved that way.” Prior to becoming a school counselor Lori was a public health nurse and then a school nurse. She was the only counselor participant who was not from Pennsylvania, coming from New York when her husband’s job relocated. She made it clear that she found it difficult to separate changes seen in her roles as stemming from the district’s financial problems or No Child Left Behind.

Larry Martin (Mr. Martin)

I met with Mr. Martin July 15th of 2006, in his new superintendent office in the basement of the district’s elementary school. As with Case B, the front entry sidewalk outside his office was under construction and somewhat blocked. The drive to the school took forty-five minutes from where I live. It was a beautiful drive of plush green hillsides, with a mix of country roads and super highway. He had been superintendent of schools for a little over one week. He had been the high school principal for seven years and responded to my questions from his principal experience. He lived in Case A’s school district and his wife worked at the nearby large university. He had previously been an assistant principal at another local school district and a social studies teacher at Case A for fifteen years. He was considered to have taken on a huge task as superintendent. I found him extremely eloquent in his responses and well versed in educational initiatives.
Presentation of Case D

The area surrounding Case D was the closest to a small city. It was approximately a fifty-minute drive from my university hometown. I’ve passed by Case D’s town countless times while on my way to the neighboring small city, and beyond. In the university town where I live the area for Case D is considered to be economically depressed but reported to have been of “considerable commercial importance in the twentieth century” (Local area website, 2008, December). With a Pennsylvania railroad extension in the town, it was an outlet for county coalfields. It was also noted for its paper mills, and chemical and candy factories. The candy factory began in 1897 as a family store then grew to a chain of sixteen stores throughout Pennsylvania and Maryland. The candy is a local mall favorite.

The district has an elementary, middle, and high school. The middle school and high school are connected into one large building. The high school appeared very well cared for. School counseling at the high school was composed of two counselors, a secretary, and a social worker. I was directed by the high school principal to interview the school counselor who was responsible for the 11th and 12th graders, who also coordinated the PSSA. With the graduating Class of 2008, 51% of the students planned to go to a four-year college or university, 22% to two-year technical or trade schools, 2% to the military, 18% directly into the workforce, and 7% were undecided. The high school met its AYP targets, 9 of 9, for the 2006-2007 school year. For the 2006-2007 school year Case D received $82,189 in Project 720 grant funding for educational initiatives (“Government in PA” 2006, September). In 2007-2008 all district AYP targets were met (PDE, 2008, November 20).
**Presentation of Participants Case D**

**Mike**

Mike and I met on June 3, 2008. He struck me as embodying contradictions—physically imposing, yet soft-spoken; calm, yet hurried. His office within the school counseling suite was attached to the administrative offices through an interior hallway. His office appeared to belong to a very busy person, with stacks of neatly placed piles of documents on his desk and on the shelf just over his shoulder within ready reach. His radio was near him on his desk. Prior to becoming a school counselor Mike worked for two and a half years as a Therapeutic Staff Support (TSS) person and Mobile Therapist (MT). He stated that his current job was “a nice springboard from that position.” He was in his ninth year as a school counselor and at Case D. He was always the 11th and 12th grade counselor, which as he stated, “has its good things and bad things, so about 270 to 300 students in any given year.”

**Jack Moran (Mr. Moran)**

Mr. Moran was Principal of the high school for Case D. Interviewed in June of 2008 he was an extremely gracious host. I worked with Mr. Moran when he was a vice principal at Case A for five years. His characteristic leadership traits were very endearing, gracious, and considerate. He knew his staff as people more so than as employees. He had been a high school English teacher for ten years. He grew up in the area and continued to live about 20 minutes away. He was president of the board of his hometown county historical society and ambulance service and served twelve years on
the town’s borough council. His school office was warmly decorated. The framed photos on the walls portrayed his “heroes.” They included his Mother, Rev. Msgr. Francis Ackerson, Mark Twain, JFK, Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln, and Robert E. Lee. His home, a 1905 Queen Ann Victorian in period condition, had been featured in magazines, news articles, and the HGTV series *If Walls Could Talk*. He also wrote a monthly column for the local newspaper on his experiences growing up in the community.

**Data Analysis**

The demographics across the cases are quite similar. Three of four of the cases are within the same county. One of the cases does serve students living in two counties. The fourth case is in a neighboring county to the others. As reported by City-Data.com (2008, November 16) the population for all four of the cases was primarily Caucasian, designated as non-Hispanic, with minimal percentages of the case populations being foreign born. The participants varied in the number of years they worked in education. By nature of Pennsylvania certification criteria, all the participant school counselors had master’s degrees with their school counselor certificates and all of the responding administrators had principal certificates. None of them had doctorate degrees. The administrators’ areas of curriculum content as teachers prior to administration included gifted education, math, special education, social studies, and English.

Of the twelve participants, four of the counselors and five of the administrators either grew up within an hour’s drive of the school where they were now employed and/or moved from one local case school to another through the course of their
employment. Influence of this movement was seen as initiatives were carried with them from one case school to another. One example was the use of radios by the counselors at one case soon after the administrator came from another case school where radios were used. A second example was the concept of mentor teachers for one of the cases. It was initiated at another case school when the administrator was employed there as a teacher. The participants’ graduate preparation was also limited in diversity. One of the participating school counselors completed graduate coursework and counseling certification at St. Bonaventure University in New York. All the other school counselors finished their training, master’s and school counselor certification, at The Pennsylvania State University or Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Having acknowledged this consideration, relevant themes and sub-themes consistently emerged through the course of the data collection across the four cases. These themes have been categorized for explanation as (a) traditional school counseling roles, (b) stated changes due to the impact of NCLB, (c) the exhaustive and diverse nature of the job, (d) school counselor and administration collaboration, (e) what school counselor’s value most, (f) school counselor ideal visions, (g) professional organization participation, (h) school counselor preparation, and (i) recommendations for other counselors in the field. Noted in Chapter 3, Prestine and Bowen’s (1993) method of cross-case analysis has been used as a guiding reference to organize these themes as presented in the following pages. Excerpts from the data are provided to support researcher interpretation. As recommended by Prestine and Bowen, “these themes must be understood as being systemic, interactive, and interrelated” (p. 309).
Traditional School Counseling Roles

Traditional school counseling primary roles and responsibilities across cases were observed and reported as those involved with student course scheduling needs in accordance with their academic goals, monitoring academic progress, advising career and postsecondary planning, assisting with school to work transition, completing college applications, coordinating awards and scholarship programs, assisting with student special education services, counseling mental health concerns along with individual and group counseling, and coordinating standardized testing. Traditionally, coordinating standardized tests included the PSAT, SAT, AP, some form of district chosen achievement test, as the Terra Nova, and the ACT if the district participated with offering it. Other responsibilities included helping students on an as-needed basis, taking and returning phone calls, interviewing students regarding their postsecondary plans, keeping track of credits, and assisting with emotional and behavioral issues. As explained to me by a counselor that had been in the field for many years, “The counselor role is to pull all pieces together, to keep track of everything.” The job definitely entailed balancing tasks, as stated by one counselor, “it’s insanity.” All of the participating school counselors were managing all these traditional tasks as well as playing some role in coordinating or assisting with the PSSA, Grade 12 PSSA Retest, and/or 4Sight. They were also all involved with managing student remediation for meeting proficiency. When asked about traditional roles, one school counselor commented,

It depends on who you’re asking. Parents see us as someone who help get their kids into college, help them pick courses, so they want you [the counselor] to be academic counselors pretty much, most of them. Teachers see you doing that but
they also see the role of helping with emotional problems, or when they’re
[students] stressed, go to guidance. Principals see us as people who do an awful
lot of their work, paper work, and administrative work.

More specifically, in March of 2009, the human resource director at one of the
cases contacted the chair of the school counseling department requesting that the school
counselor job description, sent in an email attachment, be updated (See Appendix I). The
school counseling department chair could not recall ever seeing the document previously
but knew the job description had to be at least nine to ten years old. The job description
indicated counselors were to assist students through crisis intervention, identify and then
develop support programs for students at risk for academic deficiencies, coordinate
individual parent/teacher conferences, conduct academic counseling with students who
appear not to be working up to their academic potential, conduct placement counseling
with individual students, conduct personal counseling with students who may appear to
be having social, emotional, or personal problems through family changes such as death,
divorce, or separation, and conduct conflict resolution counseling with students. Within
this old job description, far down the bulleted list of Duties and Responsibilities, it stated
that counselors were to “Coordinate and manage all standardized testing programs.”
School counselors were to also “perform related duties as assigned.” This is similar to a
counselor who noted, “I go where I am called.”

Traditional school counseling roles as understood by the participating
administrators were fairly consistent and somewhat similar to the understandings of the
participating counselors. The administrators reported that prior to No Child Left Behind,
school counselors spent a lot of time organizing testing and scheduling, monitoring
students’ poor grades, and managing child services issues. However, they felt that the counselors did more individual counseling prior to NCLB. One of the participating administrators noted, “more time was spent with students discussing barriers to success, career paths, and future plans.” Another administrator added “counselors have to be part of the administrative team to deliver the full package to the whole child to make them what they need to be.” For one responding administrator, traditionally school counselors “were office paper pushers, doing testing, college admissions, and financial aid.” These contrary viewpoints regarding counselors spending time addressing student barriers, being part of the administrative team to deliver services to students, yet being “paper pushers” remained a prevalent theme throughout the data collection. But as changes in traditional roles became impacted by NCLB, a shift was seen in increased time spent with clerical tasks related to testing and remediation services, counter balanced by less time spent with students.

Stated Changes Due to the Impact of NCLB

The participating respondents unanimously reported having experienced changes in school counselor traditional tasks due to NCLB. When asked how NCLB has impacted school counselor roles, an administrator shared, “I’d say it all [school counselor work] relates to NCLB, counselors working by themselves and/or with me.” Yet for the most, reported changes as offered by the administrators and school counselors illustrated the shift of tasks from time with students to time with testing. As indicated above, prior to the enactment of NCLB, traditional testing in all four cases included counselors being responsible for all standardized testing at the high school level, which included the SAT,
PSAT, ASVAB, AP exams, Terra Nova achievement tests, and a form of the PSSA.

Discussing concerns to counselor roles changing with NCLB a counselor shared with me that changes have occurred as the PSSA has changed:

When we first gave the PSSA kids didn’t put their names on the test, scores weren’t a big deal, and then they put their name on it and it was voluntary, and then it wasn’t. It just keeps going to the next level, by 2014 everyone has to be proficient.

This counselor and others also saw additional changes with the switch from the Terra Nova achievement test to the 4Sight. Terra Nova was given once per year to 9th and 10th graders. The 4Sight taking its place as a predictor for PSSA results was offered multiple times per year, at least two times at one case school, but possibly four to five times at the other case schools. The number of times 4Sight tested depended on the number of data points the school wanted to generate, and given to 9th, 10th, and 11th graders. Therefore, changes seen for the counselors since the enactment of NCLB have occurred primarily in the tremendous number of non-counseling roles and responsibilities created by the PSSA and 4Sight tests. As shared by a counselor,

Testing has shifted to accountability. It has been the big one. It used to be more emphasis put on the more personal, social kind of counseling you could do. But now school districts have the PSSA and NCLB regimen from how many ever years ago. So in some school districts maybe there’s a testing coordinator, but if they don’t, so who will do this? Okay, school counseling will do it, it’s a test, they do SAT. That role has changed the biggest.
This shift in counselor time spent with testing and increased accountability issues took time away from students. However, it was also found that NCLB impacted school counselor responsibilities in other ways. As will be explained in more detail in the following pages, along with increases seen in their roles associated with testing and resulting time lost to students, NCLB further impacted the work of the participating school counselors as they were now obligated to deal with changing individual programs for students needing remedial services and finding alternate ways to meet proficiency; assisting students at risk for emotional and psychological needs; increased counselor isolation; spending increasing amounts of time with fewer students; and managing the changing perceptions of students and teachers regarding school counselor roles.

With regard to counselor attention to remedial services, NCLB accountability mandates afforded the school counselors at one case school opportunities to assist the success of their students through creative programming of services termed *Blended Services* that did not occur to the same extent in the past. Furthermore, increased counselor collaborative teaming with administrators was noted by several of the responding counselors and administrators. One counselor expressed the differences for counselors and the roles they play in the NCLB era thusly,

NCLB is here and does it impact the amount of time that we have to work with kids, yes, in a lot of ways, but it is still here. And we have school administrations who are very concerned about the impact of NCLB on their schools. So here we are in a position to take some of the burden off the administration, so in some ways it gives us additional leeway to help students in ways that we want to help.
Testing

The word testing was not used in any of the interview item questions. Yet when asked whether or not counselor roles had changed with the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act, respondents consistently used “testing” in responses to questions that referred to NCLB. It was as if testing was synonymous with “NCLB.” The participating counselor with the most years of experience was asked by me, “In light of NCLB have your roles changed,” he readily began,

We have so much more testing going on now. It takes a tremendous amount of time, manpower hours, just to manage it, organize it, follow-up with students who didn’t take the test, individual make-up is needed, it’s all very time consuming. Also with coordinating and monitoring the PSSA, we must try to deal with, take care of, disruptions as weather, bomb threats, students thrown out of the testing rooms, kids who are absent, make-ups, all within a two week time frame.

For another counselor respondent it had been the NCLB era since coming into the field. From the perspective of this counselor, his university preparation program presented a position that school counselors needed to fight to extricate themselves from the testing piece of NCLB and to not have a role in it, but to let someone else do it because it takes away time from your students. However, while discussing this with me, alongside his concern to the amount of time he spent with testing, this counselor commented, “Obviously, I’m right in the thick of PSSA, so I don’t know that I completely agree with that [preparation program position on testing]. From my way of thinking it’s sort of third and fourth order thinking about this whole NCLB thing.” When asked for further explanation to this statement, the counselor began a conversation with
me regarding why he did not completely agree that school counselors should extricate themselves from testing. He shared that it makes perfect sense for counselors to not be involved with testing when testing is only considered on the surface, “taken at face value,” or what he additionally termed as “first level” or “first order thinking.” Because, as he stated, “given a finite amount of time, testing does take counselor time away from students.” However, “first order thinking is concrete, only black and white.” He explained,

On the next level, the second order, beyond face value, if school counselors can have an impact on improving outcomes for the school--if it can help improve test scores for students--then it gives you as a counselor leeway in other ways that you can help students. Also, you can develop relationships with administrators by assisting with testing, something of a quid pro quo. You can then see when you dig deeper, to the second, third, fourth order of thinking how assisting with testing is a benefit to school counselors.

When asked how he felt about the clerical components of testing and delegating testing tasks to others, he shared, “There needs to be as few people as possible with hands on the testing materials.” He continued,

It’s difficult to have a lot of people involved in the testing process. Testing seems like clerical tasks at face value, but only on the face of it. A student’s entire PSSA testing history is related to those barcode labels so they are extremely important. I would not feel comfortable with someone else doing it. So as much as on the surface the tasks seem menial, they really have a great deal of meaning. They are
called high-stakes tests for good reason, and the whole process is high-stakes, and needs to be completed with delicate care and attention to detail.

I shared with this counselor that I completely understood his beliefs. It is this expressed form of deeper thinking that I use to rationalize my roles in student scheduling. Every time I input a course for a student into the computer, I think about the nature of the student’s personality, interests, abilities, and postsecondary plans; and how the course and its teacher will best fit the student’s educational program and overall success. Shaping a schedule is something like navigating a puzzle. It can be tedious and time consuming, and like testing tasks, needs to be done with considerable attention to detail. This viewpoint is how I am able to appreciate the clerical aspects of my counseling position with helping students, rather than believing a computer could be programmed to complete the tasks. In the same way, this counselor found purpose in his numerous and varied testing roles. He could see beyond the tedium of their immediate face value clerical aspects. In doing so, he associated their meaning to a bigger, deeper, and more comprehensive picture of how he was assisting his school and students, within the true spirit of the accountability movement and the No Child Left Behind Act.

Nevertheless, aside from this one counselor’s expressed views, across the interviews, which include his; it was how school counselor roles have been impacted by NCLB with references to time spent on testing that was heard, observed, and experienced most frequently, becoming the study’s primary emerging theme. When administrators were asked how NCLB has impacted counselor roles, one of the responding administrators noted the following,
Almost everything added [to counselor roles] the last few years has been related to the testing being done in the state, the assessment. The counselors spend a great deal of their time preparing for tests. They prepare sites, they prepare monitors, and they prepare time frames. They are the monitors of the tests and they safeguard the tests. They protect them, deliver them back, provide the information, and discuss how remediation will take place. The counselors also work with the staff independently, to make sure whatever the needs are, at whatever level, the needs are being met.

Another administrator stated, “A lot more of their time is consumed in testing, it’s a real bear, scheduling a whole building to do testing at one time.” As a result, testing times were observed and expressed to be miserable for the school counselors due to the amount of counselor time spent coordinating the PSSA or 4Sight while managing all their other responsibilities. At the time of their interviews, the school counselor participants who coordinated the PSSA, Grade 12 PSSA Retest, and/or 4sight offered the amount of time they spent with testing in terms of days, weeks, and months. These participants as well as two administrators commented on the amount of counselor time spent on testing as follows:

- “There’s preparation that is weeks upon weeks. All of February and March is pretty consumed with PSSA testing. So, for me if we could eliminate some of the clerical stuff that takes up a lot of our time, and if NCLB were gone, we would get two months of our job back.” (School Counselor, Case A)
• “I’m probably losing a month and a half of my school counseling life to that testing at least, along with packaging it up, and the whole nine yards.” (School Counselor, Case B)

• “I feel for example the 4Sight testing, I don’t know how you have it organized, but I find when I do our testing I lose between five to seven days doing clerical work.” (School Counselor, Case C)

• “In nine to ten months of the school year, three solid months will be devoted to testing. PSSA testing in February, March, April, that has been a huge shift.” (School Counselor, Case D)

• “Well, aside from running around if the child is in melt down because they don’t want to take a test, needing to talk to someone or misbehaving, it takes up so much of your [school counselor] school year, the organization, oh my goodness, is this room available, who’s proctoring this? It’s just a huge amazing task. It has to take up tons of your [school counselor] time. It has too.” (Administrator, Case A)

• “What you end up with right now is the counselors spend a great deal of their time preparing. So that’s a lot, and none of that was taking place seven to eight years ago, and since the test has escalated. Every year there’s another grade that ends up taking the test and another subject added to the test so that’s one of the concerns that we have.” (Administrator, Case B)

The exact amount of time spent on testing was never calculated. At a time after the interviews were completed, the school counselors at Case A shared with me their believed time spent with testing tasks in terms of days and weeks (See Appendix H). In
one instance I did observe a case counselor keeping track of where work time was spent. Interestingly, during the course of time for the primary data collection this particular counselor did not coordinate the PSSA, Grade 12 PSSA Retest, or 4sight. It was for this reason that data collection was re-visited for a short time in October 2009 when this counselor coordinated the Grade 12 PSSA Retest. As previously noted, on the morning of the second day of testing, prior to the test beginning, this counselor reported to me that 40 hours of time had already been spent coordinating needed processes for the Retest. This counted 40 hours did not include the days of testing ahead with time spent by this counselor and the other case counselors with test proctoring, proctoring make-ups, or completing the inventory and packing of the tests.

Remedial Services

Aside from testing tasks, NCLB accountability mandates afforded school counselors opportunities to assist the success of their students through the creative programming of services that had not occurred to the same extent in the past. Identifying students for proficiency remediation and putting remediation services in place for them was a relatively new responsibility for the participating school counselors. Students who did not meet, or were at-risk for not meeting, proficiency on their Grade 11 PSSA, were identified on multi-paged spreadsheets. The counselor at one school noted, “We have to keep lists of kids who are not proficient in reading, writing, and math.” This list for this counselor was nearly identical to the one I had for students who had not met proficiency at Case A. These listed students had to be placed in remedial services in order to master proficiency standards before graduation (See Appendix K).
Over the course of data collection it was observed that the reading and math specialists working as tutors did take over the primary responsibility for these students. Still, working with the administrators, tutors, and English and math teachers, it was the counselor’s role to manage individual student plans within their schedules for meeting the alternate local routes for proficiency (See Appendix K). One of the Case A counselors explained that alternative services involved, “honoring, coordinating, and monitoring the particular criteria for proficiency established by the state, school board, superintendent, and principal.” This counselor noted that due to these concerns, “there is much more counseling of services that we did not have, say, ten years ago, to meet proficiency.”

Regarding the counselors’ work towards assisting students to remediate or manage alternate routes to proficiency, one administrator noted,

I love the fact that we have these buffers or other ways to show that our kids are doing these things, because otherwise I don’t know how schools do it. I’m just thankful we do that for our kids because there would be so many kids not making it. If we did not have other ways to demonstrate that proficiency, can you imagine the drop-outs and everything?

The head principal at Case A offered an example of adaptations in the physical education program for learning support students. The counselors had to re-write student schedules to accommodate a basic skills reading course in place of their regular physical education course because students needed to fit a reading class into their schedules in order to master proficiency. The principal told me “The school counselors were to work as overseers with the program, and that has everything to do with No Child Left Behind.”
According to the principal, “This was a common role now for the counselors with special education, full inclusion, and the need for alternative programs.”

Coinciding with this need for counselors to be involved with alternate routes for student proficiency, the counselors were additionally involved with support services for students who were at high risk for failure. At one of the schools, these blended services were much more than reactive remedial services. As the principal noted, “Blended services are part of No Child Left Behind. Which truly, if you actually go with that you’ll know that you can do whatever it takes.” As stated in a handout offered by the principal for teacher in-servicing, blended services were for “any non-identified [non-identified for special education services] student struggling with a course and at-risk for failure and for whom other interventions have not proven successful when implemented by a regular classroom teacher” (See Appendix L).

The counselors at this case school were responsible for identifying students at risk for not meeting proficiency or graduating and hence eligible for blended services, and then putting the services in place for them. Related tasks included meeting with students’ parents, teachers, regular education and learning support, and administrators, and then creating accommodating student schedules to allow for support services. The counselor role was then to continually monitor the on-going progress of these students through follow-up meetings with the parents, teachers, administrators, and review of student grades.
Counselors Assisting Students At Risk for Emotional and Psychological Needs

Counselor roles being impacted by NCLB were also seen in the resulting impact of the tests themselves on the emotional needs and psychological states of students. For many students testing was very stressful. Being required to take the tests, often believing they would not do well because the tests were too hard, created anxiety for students. As one counselor shared, “Kids have the pressure of knowing they have to be proficient to graduate.” This pressure was often reflected in the moods and behavior of susceptible students. Referencing this concern one administrator stated,

I think a lot of the kids that are on your [school counselor] doorstep that may be a mess so to speak, is because of the expectations on a child of NCLB, like math has to be a 73%, or I have to pass this test and I can’t pass it. So, some of those emotional things that we deal with. I think that NCLB impacts these kids so much emotionally….I don’t know, I just think, it makes it probably more difficult in a lot of different ways you [me as a counselor] have to work harder, to try to get to know the kids, not that the counselors don’t do that, but they have to know that this year this kid has to take the 11th grade PSSA and we know that’s not going to go well. So what are we going to do when we know that and we have to set this kid up for at least some bit of success?

Another administrator noted,

The concern I have, personally, is that we begin to put so much emphasis on the test that we begin to lose the kids, that there are kids who have certain concerns and needs to be met, that there are some kids who have all of these issues on their
minds…. Every time they take these tests they run into this concrete wall and they have to keep thinking positive.

When I was the counselor to the 11th grade class I once had a student rip up an answer sheet during testing. Twice I had students sent out of testing for inappropriate and disruptive behavior. These students had to be calmed down and encouraged to try to continue testing, either the same day or the next. On several occasions students were removed from testing with one teacher to test with another teacher that they felt more comfortable with. This degree of impact was clearly experienced at Case A the day report cards were distributed shortly before the Grade 11 PSSA Science. One student became so angered with his report card grades that he could not think clearly and completed his PSSA very quickly, giving haphazard answers to test items. Then, having completed his test, he became disruptive to other students.

Responding to a radio call that the proctor needed assistance in this student’s testing room, I removed the disruptive student from the room. I spent the rest of the testing period with this student, forty-five minutes of the 60 minute testing time frame, helping him calm himself so he could appropriately manage the rest of his school day, and not spend it in the In School Suspension (ISS) room. Part of the issue was that a substitute was proctoring the test in his homeroom that day versus his regular teacher. He did not manage the change in proctors well, so a trigger, the poor report card grades, escalated his negative mood, resulting in a feeling of futility for taking the test, and leading to his poor choice behavior. He sacrificed his performance on the test and disrupted his classmates testing environment in order to gain some control for himself over its mandate.
This example for testing concerns further illustrates one of the processes for counselors coordinating testing. Counselors need to know which students will do well with which teachers, and in what environments, and under what conditions for testing. Those considerations are very important for smooth testing and school wide test score results. A consideration for that day would have been to hold the distribution of report cards until the end of testing. The situation was a noted lesson for future testing.

*Increasing Amounts of Counselor Time Spent with Fewer Students*

Another change seen over the course of this study was the increased amount of time spent on a smaller population of students than in years previous to NCLB. As mandated by No Child Left Behind, students must be proficient and they must graduate. Aside from testing tasks, scheduling, and monitoring credits, paralleling remediation concerns; the majority of counselor time was spent developing, and then putting into action, success plans for students who were identified as the very highest at-risk for not graduating. This specialized population generally included students with high absenteeism and/or poor academic and/or behavioral concerns, which possibly required aforementioned remedial services, extra learning support and/or emotional support services, and those placed in alternative education programs within the school or district.

For example, one counselor described a situation for their school counselors as having to administer all the paperwork associated with a population of students associated with a residential placement facility for delinquent adolescents located within the district. The counselors additionally had to manage all those students’ issues, which included emotional and special education needs, along with PSSA and 4Sight testing.
This alternative facility represented only a small population of at-risk students, yet they consumed tremendous school counselor time. The absenteeism of this population of students tended to be extremely high and their lack of interest in academics was at times oppositional.

One of the case counselors wondered if “sometimes as counselors we’re so busy, especially now, are we really doing anybody any good?” Another case counselor noted that, “If the student is motivated and they want to do something, then there’s no child left behind here in my opinion. Unfortunately, there are those who refuse to do anything and don’t put forth their best effort.” The trade-off was counselor time taken away from students who were eager for assistance and might make the most of counselor help.

This concern represents something of a dichotomous pull for counselors regarding how to best distribute their time to individual students, with varying students’ needs branching in different directions. As a result, school counselor attention to students with high absenteeism and behavioral and emotional concerns takes precedence over the needs of students demonstrating academic success. As a participating counselor presented,

Maybe it’s the result of No Child Left Behind, but I’ve found increasingly that 50% of my time is spent with 10% of the kids. It used to be different and I see it getting worse now, because of accountability. So much of your [school counselor] time is spent with such a small population. There’s 50% that are being overlooked. I don’t know what Joey’s plans are for college because I’ve spent so many meetings on why Jimmy won’t come to school. I don’t know if there is a higher need or what. But that can be frustrating because we have to do what’s best for the entire school population. I don’t mind spending the time with them but I
feel philosophically that we’ve done all we can, and I will never give up, but we’re devoting so much time to kids who won’t get up in the mornings. When do we give the kid some options? When these twelve kids maybe, just maybe, made honor roll and need recognition.

Student and Teacher Perceptions of School Counselors

The impact of NCLB also altered how teachers and students viewed school counselors. Changes in counselor roles with administering the tests, managing the logistics of the tests, and having to explain and teach others about the tests created numerous differences in how counselors were perceived. The teachers saw the counselors coordinating and explaining the testing, as well as working with the administrators, and literally being in charge of the tests as the testing schedule regularly disrupted all normal school activity. As noted by a school counselor “the whole school is judged on the test and how to test better and do remediation. The teachers see that,” so school counselor roles played in testing had somewhat elevated the teachers’ perceptions of the school counselors. The teachers knew who to go to with testing concerns. Over time, as the counselors became better skilled with test coordination and testing concerns became more heightened, teacher questioning of the counselors regarding the processes of the tests lessened. The teachers were seen as accepting the counselors’ processes with regard to proctor assignments, changes in the bell schedule for testing days, test security measures, and requests for their help in assisting students to meet proficiency.

One counselor noted, “School counseling itself has changed. In some ways it’s quasi-administrative. Some people think we have more power than what we do.”
result, three of the participating counselors questioned whether other school personnel really knew what they do. On the one hand, the counselors were consumed with tasks related to testing and helping administrators and students, yet they had to depend on the cooperation of teachers to schedule individual time with students. Noted by a counselor, a healthy and respectful relationship with teachers was imperative. As this counselor stated,

I realize we have to be team players with the teachers. Do they know what we are doing every day? Sometimes we have to fight the battle with the teachers. You have to establish yourself; you have to let them know that you care about what’s happening in the classroom as much as they do. I wish sometimes it wasn’t that extreme. You have to know the teachers with pulling a student from their class with how they will take it. Then there are times when you have to use professional judgment and other times when you just throw it out the window and don’t care if they get mad or not. It’s important that they respect what I’m doing. To me it’s a balance with that battle.

The counselors also noted changes in student perceptions as they became busy with testing tasks. They interpreted this as students seeing them as being busy all the time, possibly too busy to assist them, and possibly more connected with testing needs than their needs. As one counselor commented,

If anything, they [students] associate me with almost an administrative thing. ‘This guy’s going to give me more tests again,’ rather than seeing me as someone they can come to me with ‘My parents are splitting up,’ and know I can talk to them about their problems.
From a personal perspective, I experienced this concern myself in several ways. First, it seemed too many students perceived me as very busy, not wanting to burden me further they often seemed hesitant to ask for help. Students coming in my office or catching me in the hallway would begin with, “Are you busy?” My response was always, “What can I help you with?” or “Walk with me.” I always took time to address their needs, but wondered how many students had been warded off by my fast-paced persona.

Another participating counselor expressed this same frustration,

If only I had a nickel for every time I hear ‘Are you busy right now?’ I never say ‘Yes, I’m too busy to see you right now.’ I can’t answer ‘I don’t have time for you,’ so I just avoid the question. I say ‘What can I help you with?’ They say things like ‘I’ve been trying to see you for three days.’ So I apologize 50 times a day. I put aside the email that’s been sitting for two hours that is half started, half finished, and I’ll get to it when I can, sometimes in a rushed fashion.

Secondly, when setting students up for remedial services, they were often exceedingly grateful and I became something of a hero to them and their families. Conversely, a third change was that some students, and their parents, became upset when they felt they had to unnecessarily take time out of their day for remediation because of the test. Two other case counselors similarly supported this observation. One shared,

This past year [2007] students who scored Basic and Below Basic were placed in a PSSA remediation class. Some of them had to give up an elective that they wanted to take. So along with my secretary, letters went out to parents so they really had no choice. We looked at test scores and targeted those kids and juggled schedules.
Prior to the beginning of this study’s data collection in January 2006, similar required courses had existed at Case A for students who were identified to be in need of remediation. Students in the Class of 2005 who needed PSSA Reading or Math remediation were scheduled into remediation courses taught by the school’s reading specialist and math tutor. Counselors scheduled 9th grade students into these courses if their 8th grade Terra Nova achievement scores indicated they could be at risk for not meeting proficiency on their Grade 11 PSSA. The school counselors also scheduled 12th graders into these classes if they scored Basic or Below Basic on their Grade 11 PSSA. These seniors could use the courses to help improve their skills prior to taking the Grade 12 PSSA Retest, or as an alternate form to meet proficiency for graduation. These courses were assigned a .5 credit value and were scheduled for identified students unless a parent instructed the school counselors otherwise.

The title of the remedial course that appeared on a student’s transcript was PA Math Prof and/or PA Reading Prof. I experienced that the very nature and title of these remedial courses would sometimes anger parents. They would argue the test was given on a bad day for their child, or possibly their child never tests well. They felt their child should not be placed in a remediation course because of a test. The counselors at Case A would ask parents to sign waivers excusing their child from this form of remediation if they did not want them to be placed in the remediation course or courses.

With the 2006-2007 school year these courses were discontinued. Students would instead meet with the reading or math tutors privately, to work on Plato (Plato Learning, 2008) software, which was determined by the district as a sufficient alternate form of meeting proficiency (See Appendix K). Students would meet with the tutors during their
study halls or homeroom time to manage the needed remediation. Students were additionally given the option to complete this alternate form of proficiency remediation voluntarily, because over the course of time, students now had available a number of differing ways to meet proficiency. The choice to participate in tutoring sessions seemed to alleviate students’ and parents’ distressed feelings. With the change from students taking the remediation courses to students attending tutoring sessions, students were no longer offered any credit value for participation, nor did their participation in tutoring appear on their transcript.

The counselors at Case A no longer scheduled identified students into the PA Math Proficiency and PA Reading Proficiency courses, but they did assist with scheduling students with the tutors. Over time, as the counselors and administrators worked to better inform parents and students, regarding the state mandates and having to meet proficiency for graduation requirements, parents no longer disputed the associated need for remediation as they had in early years. In most instances the parents became very supportive and appreciative of their children working with the tutors. With regard to the developed student options towards achieving proficiency requirements, a participating counselor at Case A explained, “In certain content areas we currently have the ability to use senior grades in their English and math courses for proficiency, and the online Plato program for some online remediation. Now there are many ways proficiency can be accomplished.”
The Exhaustive and Diverse Nature of the Job

With test coordination and concomitant roles with student remediation, the climbing number of counselor tasks to be completed every day became progressively more evident. Every task took time away from something else, but it all had to be done. All these issues were seen to change the nature of the job tremendously. Changes in the position due to the increasing number of phone and email messages alone seemed significant, and were mentioned by several of the school counselors. One counselor participant noted, “Helping students as they come to the office door, writing down all the phone messages, returning calls, finding students, and you’ve got to write it all down. This is all time consuming, and you can play phone tag.” A second counselor stated, with increased technology, greater expectations, greater accountability--they want instant answers to questions, and could spend an hour each day checking phone messages and email. When you do that it takes an hour a day away from something else.

My own observation with the increase in email messages was an actual change in how the position needed to be managed. Attending to electronic mail opened a new venue for parent and teacher contact, increasing communication several fold. Initially the increased parent contact was wonderful. It was viewed very positively, it was convenient, and an efficient means of outreach. However, it also took tremendous time away from students, and I perceived it to be at times very overwhelming for the counselors. As previously shared, after the first day of proctoring the Grade 12 PSSA Retest in October 2008, Ian returned to his office and his computer as he remarked, “The thing I hate about something like this is you come back to a million emails.” One year later, for the
administration of the Grade 12 PSSA Retest in October 2009, on October 25, 2009

Angela set up an Out of Office automatic reply for her email that noted “Time for Testing” in the subject area. The automatic reply message stated: “The week of October 26, I will be busy with PSSA Retesting. I will respond to your email as soon as possible.”

To some degree, the increase in the use of electronic mail for the counselors can be attributed to the impact of NCLB. As parents, teachers, and administrators became more cognizant of the need for students to manage proficiency and course credits for graduation, an increased sense of accountability and need for communication with the counselors became more pressing for all stakeholders. During testing windows especially, email was constantly used to announce testing information to administrators and teachers, and at times parents as well. With concerns to accountability, documentation in the form of a saved email communication could circumvent an unpleasant situation from escalating with a parent or colleague. This was exemplified by one of the case counselors during our interview. An upset parent who wanted to know why her child was not going to graduate interrupted our interview. This counselor told me later that,

Email is fantastic in some cases, because the meeting I had earlier with the parent that came in, I had emailed the Dean of Students and said I met with the kid and told him about graduation so I had it to show the parent. But for that one, the number of emails are so many.

In two case schools, counselors were assigned radios and the calls stemming from radio calls resulted in the school counseling position being even more exhaustive and overwhelming than in the other case schools. As stated by a counselor, “I hate the radios. The first year I was ready to throw this radio against the wall and run out of the room
screaming. I thought I can’t do my job with this radio on.” Yet at times, within the
counselor role there were situations where the radios were very helpful and valued.
Further in the interview this same counselor shared, “I can handle it now. The radio use
has cut down some since the first year, so the radios are okay right now.” With regards to
having to be available at any moment, this counselor noted,

I try to plan for my day and I do what I do, but if one of my administrative bosses
need me, I drop everything, that’s reality, you have to do that. It’s hard to quantify
every little thing. I can want to do 100 things during the day but only get to two or
three of them.

Attending to the radios is just an example of the diverse tasks that the counselors
needed to continually manage. During my interview with one counselor, we were first
interrupted by the aforementioned parent unexpectedly coming in to see him; while the
counselor was meeting with the parent a call came over the radio stating, “There’s a fight
outside the nurse’s office.” The participating counselor responded to the call by quickly
leaving his office and the parent waiting, returning to the office possibly ten minutes
later. Referring to these situations afterwards in the interview, this counselor commented,

Those little things add up. It’s not one thing you can point to and say if I could
just get rid of one of those things it would be one less. I’m not getting any
younger and we’re accountable. The accountability is just through the roof. I just
feel like if the ball is dropped it eventually gets pointed back here and that’s a
tough position to be in. You need to feel comfortable and I don’t always feel that
way.
All the counselors exhibited this aura of anxiety, or discomfort, due to increased accountability that included, and in many ways were the result of, testing roles. What became vivid through the course of the investigation was a realization of the “balancing act” performed by school counselors as they dealt with their multiple responsibilities concurrently. As described by the counselors “you’re juggling many things,” “it’s crazy, it’s amazing,” and “it’s non-stop.” In the midst of these descriptors the counselors repeatedly articulated wanting more time with students. As one counselor noted,

You know it’s funny, I don’t mind doing this organizational type of work. I’m a pretty organized person so I don’t mind. I mind when it takes away from being with kids. I mind then. You know we have lunch duty and that’s just nonsense.

Another counselor offered, “There are so many pseudo-administrative duties each year that are probably not for the benefit for the counselor. Just something we have to do, we’re not asked if we have 25 kids coming in.”

An Abundance of Clerical Tasks

Corresponding to the exhaustive and diverse nature of the position, the abundance of clerical tasks also came to the forefront in the cross case analysis. The counselors perceived that they continued to find purpose in their roles with helping the school meet its goals and individual students succeed. Nevertheless, all of the counselors did express frustration with the amount of clerical work they had to complete, most of which was associated with testing stemming from NCLB.

As indicated in the following paragraphs, the counselors additionally expressed a pervasive sense of awareness that the nature of their clerical tasks were unlikely to
change. One counselor discussed the nature of not being able to further burden the secretarial staff, especially when they were already working so hard. This counselor shared,

The two secretaries are wonderful, but they are just killing themselves. They are here until 5:30 every day. It’s unfair and the pressure on them is awful, just terrible. They closed an elementary building and one was the principal’s secretary, as soon as there is an opening anywhere else she will transfer, because it’s nuts.

Another case school counselor noted, “I do everything. We used to have two full time secretaries in the school counseling office, then one, now one and a half.” A third counselor noted,

We’re at a time period right now where we are getting some big class sizes…. I don’t think they [administrators] realize how much paperwork we have…. and we have to keep track of credits. We have to do that, no matter how you do it, you still have to keep track of it and be sure the students have their credits.

Attending to phone and email messages and administrator, teacher, and parent meetings could take up a full day of work, completely excluding time for students. Testing itself at times could be another full-time endeavor. Also, several of the counselors had additional responsibilities, including chairing the district’s school counseling department, working with the career and technical center (CTC), or assisting with coordinating the gifted program. One counselor who took on the massive undertaking of completing the school’s master schedule responded,
When I first came we had a principal that did it [the master schedule] and we had 60% of our students sit in the library for the first two weeks of school that did not have schedules. The superintendent called me and asked would I be willing to do the master schedule next year and I’ll pay you. A few years ago I said I really didn’t want to stay until 8:30 at night so I said I would do it during the day and did not get paid. There were three of us [school counselors]. Now we’ve cut to two [school counselors] and I still do it and don’t get paid. When I leave I hope it doesn’t stay in the guidance department. The other counselor doesn’t have any desire to do it.

Moreover, these tasks that took up so much of their time were often purely clerical. Additional examples of such tasks included such mundane matters as counting and identifying numbers on test booklets, placing pencils and scrap paper in test boxes, and developing rosters of student names for testing rooms, indicating who needed large group testing versus small group testing. As one counselor expounded,

I guess I put my foot down about five years ago with the PSSA labels and said can we please have someone put the labels on for me because we can’t have students do that kind of work. There are certain things you can have done by student helpers but with confidentiality that’s not one of them. Someone has to put them on manually. Choose what you want me to do. Truly is that what you want a master’s person doing. There are only three people in the building who have the training to work with students in crisis.

This statement regarding the management of PSSA labels was very different from another responding counselor’s, yet from the perception of the counselors, these
non-counseling testing tasks contributed in general to counselor time and talents being
misused as a costly human resource. Combined, the school counselors had many years of
experience in teaching, nursing, mobile therapy, and school counseling. At more times
than desired, their efforts were being spent completing laborious tasks that, if not for
confidentiality’s sake, students could possibly complete. One case counselor
experiencing this misuse of counselor time did try to address it at the central
administrative level. The counselor stated the situation accordingly,

   When I went to a meeting with the superintendent about budget he had a board
   with my salary and the other counselor’s salary and I said to him you know that’s
   an awful lot of money to pay someone to alphabetize. It’s stupid. Hire somebody
   part time $7.00 per hour, who doesn’t get benefits, for 20 hours per week. You’re
   paying me over $60,000 per year to alphabetize. I’m sorry but it’s a waste, you
   know it’s a penny wise, a pound-foolish.

As one of the administrators admitted, “Where there isn’t a lot of funding, or funding is
limited, or it’s spread too far, the counselors just keep getting a heavier workload.” It
seems clear that NCLB has only exacerbated this situation and contributed to the misuse
or misalignment of school counselor skills and education with much of their work
experience.

   School Counselors Managing the Impact

   Across the cases the counselors managed their busy positions by coming into the
office early, on weekends, snow days, working late hours, taking work home, and taking
little to no time for breaks, or they ate in their offices or the school counseling suite lobby
area while visiting with students and staff. In order to help keep themselves organized several of the counselors spent a great deal of their time charting information about their students, as grades, the previously mentioned lists requiring remediation for proficiency needs, career and college interests, and community service hours still to be completed towards graduation. One school counselor commented,

I certainly see every kid that comes in, and certainly talk to every parent who calls; but I don’t go out and seek them as much as I should, because I don’t have time to go look when I should, because you just can’t. You have to do what you have to do. You stay late every night but there’s a limit.

Three of the participating school counselors had 12th grade students every year. The other three counselors cycled with their assigned class into the senior year. The difference was that the counselors who had seniors every year worked with other grade level students as well and therefore had smaller numbers of seniors. Working with seniors to complete college application deadlines, scholarship application deadlines, the schools’ spring senior awards programs, and the pressure to be sure students met impending graduation requirements created an intensified sense of exasperation for the counselors with tasks to be done on time.

I realized an impact on the position for myself with having to manage so many non-counseling tasks was that I re-shaped my counseling style with students, to being more hurried when meeting with them. During student interviews it was sometimes difficult to stay focused on the student’s presenting need and keep from thinking about all the other tasks I had waiting to be completed. Focus, good eye contact, signs of caring, and unconditional regard and respect require a relaxed persona that was at times difficult
to muster. As a coping technique I learned to talk with students while walking in the
building with them. It would get us out of my office to avoid spending time in long
counseling sessions. Also, the walks in the hallways tended to keep conversations more
positive, with students feeling okay with returning to class more readily. Thoughts of this
technique came to me when one of the other case school counselors expressed the change
in their own counseling personality, noting the following thoughts,

It has changed my style in that I would prefer to take more time to allow kids to
talk. You learn to pick up on things more quickly and be more observant, asking
students more direct questions than five to six years ago. With this position the
immediacy of getting things done requires a different style. I’ve got three minutes,
how am I going to get this kid to closure in three minutes? That’s how your mind
works.

Another counselor, one who was responsible for 10th, 11th, and 12th grade
students, shared that in years past, “I was probably spending more time one on one with
students.” An established coping technique for this counselor in recent years was to spend
the larger share of student time with 11th and 12th graders. The counselor stated,
“Unfortunately my 10th graders don’t get a lot of my time. Just because of the testing
demands. But they know who I am and I know who they are.”

A time efficient technique I observed with one other counselor was conversing
with students in the office while at the same time attending to email, phone calls, and
completing testing tasks on the computer. I also noticed this same counselor eating
breakfast or lunch while visiting with students doing homework at a table in the school
counseling suite lobby area. As a result, as seen through these effective forms of multi-
tasking, the counselors managed to expertly combine their non-counseling and counseling activities to have more time with more students. All to manage the aforementioned balancing act which characterized the position.

_Increased Counselor Isolation_

The counselors often worked very independently and autonomously, with the position observed to becoming increasingly more isolated over time. Though computer use was viewed as expediting many tasks, I observed the counselors spending progressively more time in front of the computer. This led to an increased degree of isolation with them alone in their offices and being less visible in the building outside the school counseling suite. Additionally, due to the increased amount of computer use, I perceived a difference in the way counselors interacted with students. Often counselors and students were in front of the computer together, with eye contact focused more on viewing what was on the computer screen in front of them than on each other. It was observed that the counselors’ backs were often to students, as students looked over their counselor’s shoulder to view what was on the computer. This began especially with the 2007-2008 school year when the counselors learned to do schedule changes for students directly on the computer, rather than give the hand written changes to the school counseling secretary as they had in previous years.

Testing tasks increased computer time as well. For myself, as the 4Sight testing coordinator at Case A, and one year the PSSA Retest coordinator, and for the counselors coordinating PSSA testing, spreadsheet creation and manipulation became a regular occurrence. In order to aid the management of numerous testing tasks, which included the
development of student testing rosters with proctor room assignments and the proctor bathroom break schedule, being well-versed in technology could make huge differences for the counselors with streamlining time spent on testing. These noted spreadsheets along with testing information notices to teachers were then sent out via email, creating even more computer tasks as teachers responded back with test related questions. Subsequently, I observed an increasing amount of computer time was isolating the school counselors from face to face contact with other people, largely because of testing.

It was also observed and experienced that for test security purposes the testing counselors were often behind closed doors during testing window periods. At times, I observed that people interaction became interruptive to counselor work while they were trying to manage testing tasks. Therefore, I perceived increasing isolation and to some degree, the way the counselors interacted with others, as another change for counselors in part due to NCLB related tasks.

This may not be something that came easily to the counselors’ intrinsically people oriented personalities, particularly as they all believed in open door policies to be available to whoever needed them at any time. For example, the counselors at Case A were often in their offices alone, working on the computer, with the door open and the radio on. A different case counselor spoke to this issue as being very fortunate to have a secretary that assisted with much of the computer work so it allowed the counselor’s work to continue as desired. However, this was the same case counselor that previously shared spending less time with 10th graders to allow what time there was available to be spent with 11th and 12th graders. Regarding time spent in front of the computer with emails and testing this counselor stated,
I don’t consider myself a computer guru but I’ve learned enough to make my life easier. And having a secretary that’s a whiz-bang, for lack of a better word, at all these spreadsheets and down loading and uploading, so it frees me up so I can keep spending the time with kids I need to. I really don’t close my door, and I guess that’s my style at school and you can ask the kids and teachers. My office is situated where I have pretty good privacy. Now other than if a girl or boy in my office is crying, or I’m calling Childline, my door is pretty much always open.

Therefore, with possibly the exception of this particular counselor whose secretary was very helpful and permitted work to go on for the counselor as desired, to a degree; I perceived the time school counselors were able to spend with students had clearly lessened. I believe that the form in which several of the counselors interacted with students and colleagues also changed. It was my observation that counselor temperaments often appeared more rushed, and the degree of isolation in the position for the counselors, specifically noted at Case A, had visibly increased over the years of data collection.

Administrative Awareness

Across the cases, the administrators seemed aware of the overwhelming nature of the counseling position and indicated an appreciation for concerns with managing test coordination. As one of the administrators noted, the counselors work with “a lot of the testing. Our high school is a 9 to 12 building so basically the 11th graders in writing, then reading, and math, science is coming.” Another administrator added that “yes, the test, the PSSA is coming and they [the counselors] set up the schedule and hope and pray that as many [students] as possible test proficient.” Similarly, a third administrator agreed that
counselors were also “getting the senior re-takes done, identifying and remediating seniors to get them prepared, which is another No Child Left Behind type thing, instituting the 4Sight testing, as sort of a No Child Left Behind drive thing as well.” A fourth administrator shared, “It puts a lot more pressure on those counselors now because they are setting up the whole testing environment.” Nevertheless, in spite of this voiced agreement, it was difficult to assess whether or not the administrators truly knew what was involved with all the testing tasks.

With so many of the testing tasks being completed by the counselors before or after school hours, behind closed doors, or on the counselors’ home computers, no one knew the amount of time involved. Given these conditions the limited awareness of the administrators can be understood. Regardless, none of the administrators asked how much time counselors were putting into testing tasks, or what was actually involved. Speaking to me as a school counselor versus a researcher, one administrator did offer a generalized appreciation for the school counselors’ situations as follows:

You’re going all the time. How often do you get to sit down and just do guidance counseling with a child? I’m sure you get to do it but probably not as traditionally as would be expected. I feel like guidance counselors in today’s education system are so much busier than they were that they cannot do that constant mental health maintenance and regular counseling with a child they would like to do. You guys are so busy that you get to sit down with a child when I think a child’s in meltdown but you don’t always get to be as proactive as you would like with the testing and NCLB. I think you guys are just spread out everywhere….With No Child Left Behind, whenever it’s testing time, Lord, help me if I need a counselor.
Really, because you guys are required to do so much and there’ll be days where yeah, I’m lucky to find a counselor because you can’t abandon the state testing. We live until you guys are available.

*School Counselor and Administrator Collaboration*

All of the school counselors involved in this study felt that they had very sincere administrators who really cared about kids. Since NCLB one school counselor shared that the “conscientiousness” of the administrators was “heightened on every single student.” Several of the participating school counselors believed the administrators have changed to being “more people-oriented” than before NCLB. As one school counselor noted, We have all this help and support and we have all these tutors so in that sense I don’t lose as much sleep at night because I used to feel it was all on me, because I was the only one; but I don’t feel that way anymore.

Throughout data collection and analysis, it was difficult to determine if improved school counselor and administrative collaborative teaming could be attributed to the impact of NCLB or the particular leadership traits of the principals. Since there had been a turnover in administrators since the beginning of the NCLB mandates in all but one case school, it seems likely that it was a mixture of both.

Two school counselors from one case school felt that the current administration was more appreciative of their efforts than past administrations, in part because they were more caring and considerate individuals, but also, because of NCLB. A counselor from a case school where the same principal had been there for many years felt a strong sense of
collaboration that carried across all the years of their work together, long before NCLB.

As noted,

I think it goes back to my principal and the way I’ve been treated positively. He was a head coach at one time and I think he uses that philosophy with his people. We’re all a team and we’re only as strong as our weakest person so let’s help each other out, not tear each other down. It’s easy to get caught up in that in a small school or any school sometimes. If that’s the way the conversation is going you just have to walk away from it or get people to change it to something else.

All of the participating administrators reported that they worked with their counselors often. For one administrator it was “Everyday, all the time, hour by hour, every fifteen minutes.” For another, “How many times a day depends on what’s going on that day, rarely a day goes by when there’s not some kind of contact.” And yet another administrator noted, “We’ve had discussions a lot more in the last couple of years than we did before. Because of the increased number of responsibilities they need to be in contact with me and we need to make sure we’re touching base.” Another administrator shared,

I don’t think there was a time prior to this position that I really understood what counselors do. This position has given me a whole new found knowledge of how the counseling office works….We have to help each other out here, we’re all in this together. In light of NCLB does that make a difference with collaboration? For me it’s not a one person job. It is a sum total of everyone working together.

However, the administrators were quite diverse in their responses on the nature of their work with the school counselors. For one administrator, most of their contact
revolved around student problems and testing. For another, the main issues of concern included student discipline and concerns related to helping kids reach NCLB proficiency levels and experience school success. In looking across the schools, though a tremendous increase in contact between the administrators and counselors had occurred in the post-NCLB years, it could not be determined how much of this was due to NCLB.

Regardless of the reasons, all of the school counselors and administrators saw their collaborative teaming as being very helpful to their work. Speaking to the collaborative counselor-principal relationship, one counselor commented that he had “learned a lot” from his principal. He noted, “We’ve developed this unspoken trust because I know where he stands on positions with kids and through that I’ve gained confidence in going ahead with things I know he’ll support without running to him for everything.” Another counselor shared, “I think the current admin is appreciative of school counselors, there is much more involvement with people caring about people, with the admin team playing a role with that.” From a personal perspective, I enjoyed working with my school principals, and in many ways I felt valued, experiencing with them a greater sense of camaraderie and purpose than with other personnel. In this study, the participating administrators appeared to exemplify this close collaboration with their counselors. Shared by one principal, “The counselors are just crucial to the kids and to us. The counselors know a whole lot more about the kids than I’ll know.” Another principal noted, “The counselors work so much more on a daily basis with all the kids.” As stated by a third administrator,
I like the way the administrators and counselors work in conjunction with each other here, meeting individual student concerns, particularly with academic and emotional needs connected to meeting proficiency.

*The Tangle of Administrator Expectations*

The administrators were unanimous in their assessment that because of NCLB school counselor roles had shifted. The counselors were now to support high expectations for student success and to know the options available for each child to meet those expectations. Across the administrators, there was a common expectation that counselors must be prepared to handle a number of sensitive issues, including, but not limited to acting as advocates for students who do not pass the PSSA and who probably will not pass their senior English class, assisting with finding alternates to help students succeed, and acting on those alternates. All the administrators expected school counselors to first and foremost know their students in order to assist them with emotional and psychological issues and with meeting proficiency requirements.

These expectations, exhibited across all four cases, presented as something of an issue for school counselors, with particular concern as to where school counselors should place their emphasis for time management. The administrators spoke highly of their counselors as colleagues. They trusted them to work towards the goals of NCLB, knowing they were keepers of the tests, and while they knew their counselors were inundated with testing tasks, they still expected them to put the success of students first. The expectations for counselors as noted by the participating administrators included a lengthy list of duties:
• The counselors need to do as much as possible to know their students. It helps tremendously if a problem comes up with a parent.

• If I could, I’d have a counselor at my disposal every moment of the day.

• No Child Left Behind impacts students emotionally, so the counselors assist with students in that regard.

• We need the guidance counselors to take a more active role in what we do because of changes in society and changes in the family structures of these kids, especially if it’s an ugly discipline situation. If the principal is giving out the discipline then someone else is there to support the child.

• Boy, everything from [students] having problems with a teacher to trying to get the teacher to work with a student, from [teachers] having problems with students. From seeing students too much in my office thinking there may be other problems to be addressed, and mediation with students having trouble with each other.

• I would say the role of the counselor, the personality, the beliefs, the philosophy of the counselor, they have to be ready to be flexible, be creative and be a team player to help these kids, number one to function, and two to be successful, or knowing how can we get them to be successful with what works for the kid.

• I think the counselor role is going to continue to grow over the years as kids come to school with more needs and baggage. They need someone to talk to, someone to believe in them. It just seems the administrators are connected to
discipline and the teachers have the grades hanging over them. The counselor is sort of neutral. People that can care about these kids and reach out to them.

- I equipped counselors with radios, so if there’s an emergency or an issue we can get them immediately with their student. I have stressed the need of counselors being a confidante and the counseling office being a place where kids can talk about their issues and problems as opposed to being somewhat sterile and about programming and testing and those kind of things.

- That’s a loss for every student whenever the counselor now becomes more concerned about issues that deal with NCLB. It’s an important thing, something we need to have, but the loss of time the counselors have with individual kids is what the cost is and that’s what we’re losing.

As offered above, these administrative expectations presented somewhat of a contradiction or a catch-22 for the counselors. While the administrators acknowledged that counselor time with students was highly important they continued to burden the counselors with a multitude of other tasks, such as the responsibility for entirely managing the tests, which clearly took time away from students. As one administrator told me, “the counselors do a lot of scheduling, but they also have to be part of the administrative team to deliver the full package to the whole child, to make them what they need to be.” Another administrator summed up the expectations for counselors very succinctly: “Their primary priority should be the kids. The tests and other activities associated with the tests should be put on the back burner. So it’s a matter of time management with what is appropriate at the time.” Another administrator noted that the “mental health triage components of the position will never go away,” that in itself is
something of an expectation. But again, the dilemma was to find a way to balance this imperative with the equally pressing imperatives pertaining to testing requirements.

One change in the school counselor position mentioned by several of the administrators involved a change for future roles towards a greater emphasis to be placed on analyzing data from the tests. According to one administrator the goal for the school counselor was to act “as the initial gatekeepers of the information, to begin to analyze the data, do the initial sorts, and assist teachers with the data to identify students who need remediation.” Regarding the topic of counselors being more involved with test data, another case administrator commented,

I suppose because of AYP we need more people to be looking at the data. So those responsibilities grow and test security grows and every time that happens they need more people to be strong in this testing, so it’s less time for those counselors to work with kids.

And a third case administrator noted,

There is an increasing need for people who can organize, prepare, and evaluate everything in a timely fashion, meet the deadlines, and understand the essence of what No Child Left Behind is about, to be certain all the students are getting an education.

Administrators’ expectations of school counselors can be surmised as follows: to know their students well; to assist students in whatever ways possible in order for them to be emotionally and psychologically healthy; to be knowledgeable of alternate routes for students to meet proficiency, through collaborative teaming, to implement those routes;
and to coordinate all aspects of testing, with future roles to include a greater role in test
data analysis and in assisting with programming to meet school AYP goals.

What Counselors Value Most

The participating school counselors’ all greatly valued their time with students,
and their working relationships with staff, colleagues, and administrators. They
impressed me as very friendly, outgoing, approachable, and caring persons who highly
valued close interactions and intimacies with people. They came into a people oriented
profession ready to collaborate closely with those around them towards helping students
succeed. When I asked the participating counselors what they most valued in the position
one counselor noted, “Working with the students, the other counselors, clerical staff, and
administrators, it makes it a good environment.” Three of the other counselors noted:

• “I value most to sit down with the kid and feel like we’ve gotten somewhere. I
guess it just comes with the job. The struggle is trying to find ways to balance
that out. I have not figured that out yet.”

• “Well this has been a tough year. I’m really unhappy that I have much less
time to work with kids. Just have to put stuff aside and stay after and do other
stuff, because they [the kids] need you.”

• “We’re just here for all the kids, and I don’t need my name in lights or
anything….Also, the relationships with the faculty and the principal who I’ve
worked with.”

Two of the counselors stated that gratitude from students and their parents meant
a great deal to them. As noted by one respondent, it was “the feeling that they appreciate
what you’re doing and they know you’re doing things well. So when they say thank you there’s nothing even close to that.” The other commented,

It’s rewarding to get the note, to get the email, to see the kids walk through [commencement], that maybe when you see the kids in 10th or 11th grade you thought if they make it this far we can all celebrate. Wow!

But more significantly, as noted by a yet another counselor, “the thing that has the most value is to have that ability to have a positive impact on a child’s current and future functioning. You can do a lot when you work with individual kids.”

The nature of the job with having something different occurring all the time was also highly valued by several of the participating counselors. Even though the counselors reported it was overwhelming, the job was never boring. One counselor noted, “The day goes very quickly, there’s not a lot of down time. It is different each day and every day, from moment to moment. I like that, never knowing what is going to happen.”

From my own perspective, I highly valued the diversity in my numerous roles. However, I most valued knowing that I assisted a student in some way that maybe someone else would not have thought of, or gone to the trouble with. It could have been in the form of support or programming that diminished their barriers, allowed some success, and brightened their prognosis for achievement and school completion. It wore on me when a day or several days would go by without having spent time with individual students. It seemed better if I had spent the days presenting information to large groups of students, as during presentations in students’ homerooms, or English, or social studies classes. I also enjoyed the freedom in the position. Not being restricted by the bell schedule as teachers were, I experienced great flexibility with planning my own time for
task completion and moving around the building at will, knowing I might have to alter
that plan at any given moment. That alone could be very exciting.

One counselor who had been a teacher for many years loved spending days
presenting in classrooms, because it gave a tremendous sense of concrete
accomplishment, even in view of coming back to the office and playing catch-up with
other tasks. Describing what was valued in the job, this counselor noted,

I like paperwork, there’s too much of it, but I like it because I like concrete and
it’s concrete. I’ve mulled this over for years and if you look at teaching versus
counseling….I’m more of the teacher, not the therapist, not so ever. So, it’s
interesting. Every day I’m fine going into it, but by the end of the day I’m
exhausted. As a teacher I went into the day knowing I am going to do this today.
At the end of the day as a teacher I was so satisfied. But with teaching you have to
be 100% every day. With being a counselor you can shut the door at times, and
kind of kick back at times, because there’s variety.

This counselor also noted enjoying the senior year with students the very most. The
senior year required the greatest number of clerical tasks to be completed, and was
associated with the most intense pressure for counselors managing student proficiency
and other graduation requirements. In spite of these responsibilities, it was extremely
rewarding to see students find success, plan for the future, and move on with their lives.

After attending the spring senior awards program, another counselor stated it was
“bittersweet.” The excitement of seeing students excel and step forward to adulthood was
paralleled with the sadness of knowing they would be gone from the high school and the
counselors’ daily lives. Attending commencement was also extremely rewarding, yet sad,
as it offered a degree of joy, yet closure. What helped this sense of empty nest for the school counselors was that they were so busy they did not have much time to think about the seniors leaving. Without delay, the counselors responsible for 12th graders turned their energies to sending out their students’ final transcripts and then attending to a new upcoming group of students. They edited their schedules for the approaching school year, and upon review of the PSSA results for the school that arrived in late June or early July, began discussions with the principal, special education teachers, and math and reading tutors regarding who needed remediation, and in what form.

*School Counselor Ideal Visions*

Directly related to the participating counselors people-oriented characteristic traits as noted above, when asked about their ideal visions for the position, consistent across all school counselor participant responses was their desire to have more time with students. One school counselor noted that their priority should be “on individual counseling,” but they did not have the time. As a group, they noted that in order to have this time with students, they would need the help of additional school counselors to allow smaller caseloads, and/or more clerical and/or intern support, or possibly the assistance of social workers or more school psychologists. The counselors were also in agreement that if testing were removed from the position it would come much closer to the ideal. One counselor stated,

If you could take away, or at least minimize the testing, particularly the PSSA; it would be much closer to an ideal world, at least it was for the first few years. As you know, you can’t get done what everyone is asking what they want you to do.
The counselors ideally desired less non-counseling tasks that took time away from students. Even though two of the counselors shared that they like organizational and clerical work, and felt they were good at it, it still took time from their students. Three of the participating case counselors shared that helpful support could be in the form of good secretaries or good interns. As previously indicated, several of the counselors expressed that they did not feel they could ask for additional help from their secretaries because the secretaries were already overloaded with overwhelming tasks. To reinforce this noted feeling, one counselor respondent stated,

Our secretary is wonderful, she sent out 1700 progress reports last week. She is responsible for alphabetizing them, putting them in envelopes, a copy to us, two copies to the principal, by alphabet and by teacher. That’s hours and hours, I can’t give her another duty with this 4Sight, and this is the worst program I’ve ever worked with. We’re doing it online, three times this year and next year we will do it four times.

Interns were cited by three of the counselors as a tremendous source of help, so their presence warrants further recognition. One counselor noted, “Thank goodness for good interns. I don’t know how you would get by without having them. Most people may not understand that, but I think our current admin does cut a little slack with that.” Another counselor noted,

We used to have interns shadow us, used to give them a couple of students to work with and say go for it and they’d work in depth with them. Now when I have an intern, everyday I say this is what we’re doing and there are your assignments.
If a student comes in I say this is my intern. That intern sees everything. I say you are the intern and you're going to work for me and we will do the job.

In my personal experience, I observed interns running student groups, assisting with Power Point presentations to the School Board, assisting with class presentations, proctoring tests, and advising students. Seeking assistance in the form of good interns raised concerns in my mind about whether school counseling interns should be used to manage clerical tasks as sorting test materials, but this was, in fact, the real world of work for the counselors, so the interns did what the counselors did. Generally, I observed at Case A, that the interns assisted with all tasks to some degree, but for the most, they were offered the opportunity to meet with students while the supervising counselor completed non-counseling clerical tasks.

Across the school counselors, a basic conundrum seemed to exemplify the position--no one can do it all, but counselors try, and in many ways, other than with testing, they may want to do it all. For example, the frustration of attempting to prioritize work roles and include interns was shared by one of the counselors as follows:

I can’t say as you walked by you saw all those sheets of paper with the Career Standards that I could say what activities are we doing. What are they [students] doing in English classes and how are we [teachers and counselors] doing it [Career Standards]? Those sheets are blank. They’re blank because you have to prioritize. With the PSSA when they say they sent you 152 tests you have to be certain you return 152 tests. So I can’t say we’ve made great strides in doing it [Career Standards], but I know we’re conscious of doing it [Career Standards]. So my interns have done things like PSSA test rosters. I try to get them involved. The
bad thing is if they [administration] ever yank that [intern assistance] out from underneath me there’s going to be one less body for me to rely on. So I try to make it reasonable for them [the interns] and manageable for me.

Overall, it appears from the data that the counselors knew ideal vision thinking was more wishful thinking than anything else. They were very aware of the financial situations for their districts, the pressure put on administrators to meet NCLB mandates, the limitations for assistance from secretaries and interns, and their own skills and talents as bright and willing workers who could and would take on any task at any time. Added to all of this was the fact that their positions within the schools permitted on-call availability. They could, and frequently were asked, to go from manipulating multi-tabbed computer spreadsheets to rushing to student crises. The counselors were also aware of their usefulness to their schools and districts when it came to testing. For example, when I asked one school counselor his perception of counselor roles related to NCLB, the response included:

We can get into debates about the merits of NCLB or not. I think it’s always a good thing to be striving for student success. Is it worth shutting down districts and shutting down student education [for testing] for 20 to 30 percent of the time they are in school? Probably not, and hopefully it doesn’t get re-upped or re-upped in its current form and we can go back to some semblance of normalcy. But if not, I don’t see the [counselor] roles changing a whole lot in that respect, not unless something changes with legislation. Because, as we know, the thresholds are just going to get higher and higher as we go on, and as the thresholds go higher, right in line with the apprehension of districts and students.
Participation in professional school counseling organizations was perceived as a choice for the participating school counselors, yet none of the counselors in this study participated in such groups. Though school counselors are required to maintain professional development, none of the school districts in this study required them to be versed in school counseling reform initiatives. Memberships in professional organizations were viewed as being costly. Though four of the six school counselors reported having belonged to the Pennsylvania School Counselor Association (PSCA), American Counseling Association (ACA), or the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), at one time or another, only one of them, the counselor most recently coming from graduate training, was a participating member at the time of this study. When asked about belonging to any professional organizations this counselor shared, “ACA, PSCA, I’m not very actively involved in any of them, I have my memberships for whatever I need.”

This lack of on-going development of professional organization knowledge is viewed as a primary concern for the profession in that reform initiative information is not reaching practicing school counselors. My impression from three of the counselor respondents in particular was that their jobs were overwhelmed with exhaustive non-counseling tasks. Time spent reading professional literature represented another cumbersome non-counseling activity, and one that had to be managed on their own time.

As noted in Chapter 2, the school counseling literature abounds with references in which school counseling professional organization initiatives are trying to transform the profession. However, several of the counselors in this study consistently argued that they
did not have time to know what was occurring with their professional organizations, or
the information was not relevant. As noted by one counselor respondent,

It’s tough. This job is so exhausting when I get home if I do anything school
related it’s something I have to do because it is either time sensitive or getting
myself organized for the next day. There’s this counselor email thing I signed up
for, I don’t even remember. When I look at it, it is all technology, but I don’t have
time to keep up with it. I keep up with what I need to at school.

This participating counselor did state, “I go to conferences that are related to my
job.” Which for this counselor included the Pennsylvania State System of Higher
Education (PASSHE) conferences, The American College Testing (ACT) conferences,
the College Board conferences, and college financial aid conferences; all in order to be
better versed when advising students. Another counselor stated, “It’s probably a short
coming of mine, but I have fifteen other things on my desk that I can think of within a
foot of me that I need to get done prior to worrying about an article.”

It is my impression that these comments represent a pervasive concern that, with
the exception of the one counselor who recently came from graduate training, the
participating school counselors were not cognizant of what was occurring with reform
initiatives within their professional organizations for the development of their practice. I
admit this occurrence for myself as well. Though I have been a member of the ASCA
and/or PSCA at times, it was more when I first joined as a counselor education student
and received a discount for membership, or when I wanted to go to a particular
conference and received a discount in the registration fee with membership. Within the
counseling department at Case A the school district does not cover the costs of
professional organization membership, therefore membership is an expense for the individual counselors.

With concerns to the participating counselors needing to prioritize their responsibilities, knowledge of professional organization reform initiatives was not on their to-do list. In all fairness to the counselors, I believe their everyday tasks were enough to manage, without wanting to re-live reading about it in the literature. For myself, after a full day spent in front of the computer, managing student scheduling needs, and/or attending to the fine details of testing tasks, or transcript or report card review, my eyes were very tired. Additional nighttime reading would exhaust what reserves my eyes had for the next day. We (the school counselors) needed someone to summarize the literature and present it to us.

At Case A the counselors sought their own opportunities for professional development, and set development goals each year to be discussed as part of their supervision/evaluation plan with the completion of a professional growth portfolio to be reviewed by the principal. The principal determined if the counselors’ choices for development were paralleling appropriate areas for professional growth. However, for counselors, related areas of professional growth can be expansive. As school counselors choose areas of high interest or need for their professional growth plans, professional growth in the area of reform initiatives can easily be excluded, especially if related goals would be difficult to implement on the job.

For example, Pennsylvania school counselors are required to complete Continuing Professional Education Act 48 hours. From my personal experience, on in-service days the counselors at my school were permitted to choose professional development activities
to fulfill these hours. The choices offered for these in-service days included topics on the newly mandated career standards, eating disorders, juvenile probation services, a field visit to local alternative educational placement facilities, the opportunity to update the Career and College Guide provided to students, and discuss timelines for particular school counseling services over the course of the school year and across grade levels. The chair of the school counseling department occasionally asked the counselors for in-service topic ideas. I once suggested bringing in a university scholar to discuss reform initiatives for the school counseling profession. The suggestion was quickly dismissed.

Across the schools the counselors were overwhelmed with continual add-ons to their roles, but it was my experience that when given opportunities to become more informed with how to cope with these changes the case counselors expressed little interest. Their choices for professional development interests were elsewhere. The counselors did not seek how to better their daily job situation through suggested reform literature or accessing nearby university assistance. All the participating counselors expressed wanting the testing components to go away, desiring additional counseling support or clerical help, but they did not show interest in exploring changes in the profession that could address program development that might alleviate what they were experiencing. If anything, my perception was that they viewed the reform initiatives as removed from them, not having time for them, as not being realistic for the job, and possibly contributing to the misalignment in what their jobs were versus how they had been academically prepared in their graduate programs. As an example to support this perception, a conversation I had with the one counselor who recently completed graduate counselor training went as follows:
I asked, “Do you think there is ASCA National Model awareness for school counselors in the profession?” The response was,

Not for counselors in the profession and have been for a while. I think they are trying to train more people who are willing to implement the National Model if the conditions are right, but out of Missouri, New Hampshire, and some of the states taking it as a statewide basis. I don’t think it is very well known.

I continued with, “The National Model furthers data driven program development, do you see that occurring?”

Not to the extent that ASCA would push for. I think there’s certainly more data used in schools in general, certainly than in the counseling world, but it has less to do with program development than with testing and the numbers that really matter for schools because that’s what the reality is for school districts and individual schools these days.

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Professional Preparation for School Counselors

While all the counselors could be characterized as extremely positive people in general, only one of the counselors felt completely positive about their counselor preparation. This counselor especially noted high regard for a particular counselor preparation professor at the time of training. The other counselor respondents were less enthusiastic. One counselor remarked, “I think it did. I don’t want to say I was baptized by fire, but you don’t know the job until you are faced with situations with kids and parents and until you have to call Child Line.” The other four participating counselors shared there were some good components of their preparation programs with regard to
theoretical knowledge and basic counseling tenets, but they were hedged in their responses, as if trying to make their preparation sound helpful. As one counselor noted, “We did some beginning level counseling type of techniques, reflective listening, and we did a lot of practice with it, but I would say my counselor training was lacking, definitely.” While discussing the challenges of first entering the position, this participating counselor, coming from years of teaching experience, expressed,

I spent the first three years trying to prioritize. Do I do this? Do that? I had five teachers at my desk needing this and students needing this and parents needing that, and how do we run parent conferences? I was thrown into it and I didn’t know what to do.

For another participating counselor, when asked if they felt well prepared, the response was, “Not very well.” Yet that counselor felt their internship was very real and a good experience. As the counselor noted, “We were being trained in the ASCA National Model and how it should be. Once we got into our internships we realized that’s just not realistic. That’s not the world.” The conclusive sentiment of all the counselors was “you have to live it.” As shared by another counselor respondent,

You get a lot of theoretical knowledge about counseling but that’s only maybe one third or one fourth of the job that you have to do here. I had no classes on College Board, no classes on financial aid, no how to administer tests, but how to judge test reliability and we don’t deal with that on this level. We administer the SAT, PSAT, we know our kids need a certain score, why are we going to worry about the test’s reliability. I do think that internships can be very valuable; unfortunately mine was not the greatest situation. I try to tell the interns to get the
most out of it they can. Honestly, by the time they’re done they look back and say ‘Wow! I would have never learned this or such and such in a classroom setting.’ And it may be impossible to teach it in a classroom setting. Sometimes you just have to get your hands dirty and I don’t know how to change that.

The counselor that completed counselor training in another state shared that her graduate training experience was somewhat similar to the school counselors trained in Pennsylvania. The out-of-state training program also offered more theoretical counseling information than information on the actual nature of the job. Lessons offered in this counselor’s training program regarding how to manage the realities of the position came from an instructor who worked as a school counselor. This counselor participant noted,

The certification [out-of-state] is different, it is an advanced certificate, and everybody gets K through 12 certification, so when I came to Pennsylvania they gave me both. I did my master’s program in counseling psychology, so I have a wide background. The master’s was a small program and the psychologists had a private practice. The PhD psychologists were very good but I didn’t get a lot of school counseling with the advanced certificate. The counseling programs were very theoretical. There was a school counselor who did some of the classes and he was very good. He was much more ‘this is what it’s really like.’

From a participating administrator’s view, counselor training needed to be far more comprehensive to better match up with the reality of counselors’ work. One administrator felt that counselor preparation programs should ready counselors for expansive issues, a team approach, and flexibility. “I just hope they’re not teaching the counselor to do scheduling, and do report cards, and we do counseling with kids, because
there’s so much more than these areas.” Hence, in the data, a discrepancy from their training was seen to have occurred for school counselors once they entered the job, and then a discrepancy appeared in the data again with what administrators wanted, or as previously brought forward, what administrators expected. One administrator, in speaking about past school experiences and perceptions of counselor activities, and then current expectations for counselors, noted,

I think kids need someone to talk to, and now, even more than then, the counselor is a natural connection…It [perception of counselors at a previous school position] was something of a mixed bag, because some of the counselors there really didn’t feel it was their job or position to be counseling kids, helping with their problems. They really looked at themselves as test administrators, financial aid seekers, college admissions writers. We’re 4Sight or Terra Nova, or whatever. So it was kind of difficult to put a different spin on that. It makes it more difficult to be on the humanistic side.

This administrator’s thoughts again represent the conundrum or catch-22 for counselors, as well as administrators’ lack of awareness for what their school counselors do, versus would prefer to do, as tasks have been put upon them by the nature of being responsible for testing. This administrator expressed a vision for counselors as being there for the students, to not be “paper pushers” and “test administrators,” to be “on the humanistic side.” Nevertheless, when addressing the question about counselor preparation, the counselor at the same case school as this cited administrator, noted, “I had the supervised practicum to counsel clients behind a two-way mirror. So the
techniques of working with people, but again, that’s probably maybe one third of the job. Everything else I’ve found that you learn as you go.” This particular counselor shared, “I do all the AP, SAT, PSAT, ASVAB, PSSA, NOCTI, and PSSA Retest. The NOCTI [National Occupational Competency Testing Institute] is another tough thing about this school district. Because we have a small CTC [career and technical center] you still have to do all of the testing. We have to organize the NOCTI. I just got the scores back today. So, this is just another thing thrown into the hat….For the last year and a half to two years I’ve done everything for the tests top to bottom, other than the labels for the PSSA. I do the test administration, I do the boxing, the counting of the tests, the return of the tests, setting up proctors, getting class coverage,…so pretty much everything.

It appeared that what the counselors were prepared for in counselor training was possibly closely aligned to what the administrators wanted of their counselors. However, these expressed components, what the counselors were prepared for and what administrators wanted, were very different from the actual nature of the job. Through the course of data collection, I did not experience any conversations regarding how preparation, practice, and administrative expectations may be more closely aligned.

In reality, a consideration for school counseling preparation programs might be the type of personalities needed in the field. Persons suited for counselor education in the future may be those who are people-oriented, technologically skilled, have a strong appreciation for detail and time-lines, are trained in test data analysis, and who find excitement in the exhilaration of multi-tasking. Counselors-in-training should know how to manage diverse tasks which could change from moment-to-moment, in an environment
where, at anytime, they may be called to help calm a student fight or meet with a student who may be contemplating harm to themselves, or has been harmed by someone else.

Recommendations from the Participating School Counselors to Other School Counselors

To succinctly summarize all the participating counselor recommendations for new and experienced school counselors in the field regarding how to survive the accountability era, advice from the counselor participants included the following: School counselors should keep their focus on their students, plan their day, seek a forum to share ideas with colleagues, find a book of situational case studies as they relate to school counselor roles, manage time efficiently, and be prepared for different tasks coming at you every minute. Furthermore, school counselors know how to use technology efficiently and research the resources of school districts where seeking employment. When possible, school counselors should laugh, and finally, school counselors should work with administrators to assist with NCLB needs.

The first of these recommendations, regarding keeping focus on students appeared in the data with two of the participating counselors. Because their positions are so exhaustive, and because their time is pulled away from students, one of the counselors stated that school counselors should understand, “they can’t save the world, can’t save everybody, but NCLB doesn’t listen to that.” To explain this thought, this particular counselor recounted an incident where a student had died from a medical condition. The impact on students when a classmate is lost is difficult for everyone, and expressly difficult for counselors who must be available to the students and adults who are hurting, in spite of their own sad feelings. Though their other roles can be put on hold to some degree, they do
not go away. Testing does not wait for grief. Along these lines, of staying focused, this counselor also recommended that other counselors should not take on any additional roles than they had to which would pull them away from students, to, “be careful what you volunteer for, just because you can do something doesn’t mean you should do it…. Keep your eye on the ball of individual counseling with students.”

A second school counselor participant additionally furthered this recommendation to stay focused on students. This counselor felt strongly about having to plan each day in order to stay focused, even though as stated, “I get teased about my plan book [carried over from being a teacher], but it helps me focus. I write down what I’m going to do each period, and who walks in, so I just write it down, whether it’s a clerical day, snow day. I try to plan.” Hence, this counselor’s recommendations to others included:

Try to focus, try to plan each day, even though the day won’t go that way, at least have a plan. Focus on three things: the academics, talking about them, and getting them [students] into the right courses, then what they are going to do when they graduate. In an emergency do everything else.

While discussing recommendations with this counselor, comments ensued how the counselors in the building, and in the local area, did not have much opportunity to meet to discuss how they managed their jobs. This counselor desired regular contact with other counselors as a supporting network for each other, and to share strategies for their school counseling processes; something in the way of a local school counselor forum. By way of recommendations, this counselor noted, “it would be nice if school counselors had planning time together each week so they could share ideas with how to do things.”

Wanting to know how other counselors manage the position, this counselor noted, “I
wish someone would write a book called No Child Left Behind for Counseling, just something I could read quick and easy…. We just need a book made more concrete for us like a case study analysis.” One counselor did speak of a counselor organization within their community of schools. The counselors would meet on occasion, plan a regional college fair, and discuss other work related issues. This counselor shared, “Our counselors group is good. We are all small schools, and we all have the same problems, and we commiserate.”

The data conclusively shows that school counselors need to be able to manage their time very efficiently. They need good organizational skills, and they need to be skilled with multi-tasking, or at least have adaptive characteristic traits to become skilled with multi-tasking, and they need to be able to shift tasks without prior notice. Therefore, one school counselor recommended that other school counselors should,

Make sure that they’re prepared to handle different tasks coming at you every minute, sometimes ten per minute. Be versatile. You find it difficult to sit down. I think you have to learn to manage your time very well.

One other counselor felt it particularly important for young people coming into the field, and people who were mid-career as he was, to know how to use technology effectively. I highly support this recommendation, as I observed technology expertise being extremely helpful to the counselors. Being computer savvy and most importantly, being fast, definitely streamlined many counselor tasks, especially those related to scheduling students into their courses, testing, and attending to email.

This same counselor also recommended counselors be informed when seeking employment. This recommendation was very insightful given the impact of NCLB on
counselor roles. The schools in this study have their counselors manage all the testing. In other schools this may not be the case. There may be a test coordinator, or central administration, or building principals, or main office personnel who are responsible for testing. The number of students on a counselor’s caseload, and the grade level of the students, makes a significant difference to counselor responsibilities and work tasks. Knowing the roles played by counselors with remediation for students is also a significant factor for counselors to be aware of regarding their work roles. Additionally, knowing if the counselor position includes working with the master schedule or gifted program, career and technical center, alternate placement facilities, or assisting with generalized administrative duties, is important. The counselor making this suggestion noted,

You have these people coming in, I know they go through theory and they have things they want to accomplish, but they really need to research the district where they want to go. See what’s the ratio of counselors to students, what’s the philosophy of the school, are the administrators and central office seasoned people or are they new? Are they at school improvement? What is the staff turnover?

This counselor spoke from experience, commenting,

Sometimes I think when I was looking for a job I didn’t research. I just wanted a job, and I wanted to do what I was trained for. But now it’s like if you get yourself in a school that’s in a certain category the demands are going to be greater or lesser depending on the structure.
When asked for recommendations for other school counselors, another counselor relayed the nature of the position with every task managed taking away from something else. This counselor shared,

You get those stressful situations that you have to deal with, hopefully in a positive manner. But how do you do it all at the same time? You gotta laugh. You have a lot of chances when you can, but there are some tough times too, when things are not funny.

I believe this recommendation to “laugh” to be very wise. But, most strongly, I recommend that school counselors have very collaborative relationships with school colleagues, particularly their principals. As evidenced previously, the roles school counselors can play in schools towards student advocacy and success can only be strengthened by mutual counselor-administrator respect, trust, and teaming.

By and large, though the participating counselors’ tasks were viewed as overwhelming, ever increasing, and sometimes undesirable, their jobs were wonderfully rewarding, with none of the participants cautioning anyone from coming into the field. The situation for school counselors with recommendations for success was nicely summed up by one of the participating counselors as follows:

In terms of the NCLB stuff I think it’s important again, where especially in districts where there isn’t a set testing apparatus that doesn’t involve school counselors, that there [testing] is certainly a place where school counselors can give a lot of capital, making themselves very useful to the school and district, their administration, helping to make things better for their students as a result… I think that we all, almost everyone involved in education can be united in that
NCLB is not ideal legislation, but that we have to understand that it is what it is until it changes. But it’s not going to help our department, our kids, or our district to try to sabotage it while it’s here, even though we might want to. So I think its just understanding ways to make it as painless as possible and as seamless as possible and get by as soon as possible and get help for our students to succeed as much as possible, and those are the things that we can do, that we have control over, as school counselors to sort of lessen the blow of NCLB.

Recommendations from the Participating Administrators to Other School Counselors

Regarding recommendations from the administrator respondents, one participating administrator did speak about the need for school counselors to move some traditional responsibilities off their plates. As previously reported, the counselors themselves had complained that as more and more tasks piled up, none were removed. While this discussion was clearly warranted, this did not ensure that what the counselors wanted as improvements, i.e., release from testing responsibilities, more clerical assistance, or the hiring of additional counselors, would come to pass. As suggested by one of the administrators, a prominent idea was simply to shift some of the counselors’ traditional tasks, i.e., academic and career advising, to classroom teachers. Along this line, this administrator advocated a teacher advisory initiative wherein teachers acted as academic and career advising mentors. Another administrator offered the example of a Safety Net initiative where teachers initially identified students who might otherwise fall below the radar and be in danger of failure to the principal. The principal would then refer the identified students to the appropriate school counselor.
These were admirable initiatives, ones in which clearly the counselors should work collaboratively with principals and teachers. However, these particular roles were embedded into the historical core of counselor function. An administrator commented that school counselors might feel some separation anxiety with the loss of such traditional roles, as academic advising and career planning, but it needed to occur. However, the counselors felt that teachers were not appropriately trained to advise students.

As reported by the participating counselors, they came into the field to be advisors, or work with students who were at-risk for social/emotional/behavioral issues. One counselor came into the field from teaching because she liked it when students came to her with their problems, another had been a school nurse, exemplifying a very caring and nurturing career interest; and yet another counselor had been a mobile therapist and felt school counseling was “a nice springboard from that position.” One other counselor noted that he chose to follow the path of being a school counselor because, “I love high school age kids, and working with them.”

Accordingly, I believe removing traditional primary responsibilities from the counselors, as recommended, would inarguably change the very essence of their professional purpose. Creating further occupational frustration for the counselors as the administrators considered counselors the persons most suitable to work with testing. I further believe this frustration will only amplify for school counselors, becoming evident as several of the administrators also discussed future testing responsibilities for their school counselors, as they disclosed that test data evaluation towards program planning would develop into future roles for their counselors.
To support this belief, administrators from three different schools indicated how the counselors will need to become more involved with encompassing testing concerns. One administrator noted,

As we go further the percentages increase and each year the pressure to meet the goals increase, especially in schools our size. You need to have people who can organize, prepare, and evaluate everything in a timely fashion, meeting the deadlines and get the essence of what No Child Left Behind is about, to make sure all the kids are getting an education.

Another administrator noted,

We haven’t even begun to delve into the next phase. Now we have these mountains of data and how do we interpret the data and analyze the data and more importantly how do we get this data to the teachers?

And, a third administrator stated,

I suppose No Child Left Behind would make it a little more difficult [for counselors] to move to the humanistic side. Because of AYP we need more people to be looking at the data. So those responsibilities grow and test security grows and every time that happens they need more people to be strong in this testing, so it’s less time for those counselors to work with kids.

Therefore, the nature of the position will continue to be impacted, potentially evolving to be very different in its fundamental structure from its traditional equivalent. The roles played by school counselors in testing programs and the analysis of test data, with involvement in ensuing educational programming, may possibly become primary.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

School counselors are rarely recognized as “key players” in educational reform efforts (House & Hayes, 2002, p. 3). However, Borders (2002) and Herr (2002) offer that historically external forces have always shaped school counselor roles, impacted their growth, and limited their role identity and definition. The current reform movement, focused on accountability and standards, can be expected to have much the same effect. As school counselors attempt to re-prioritize their responsibilities in this new era of reform, there is a need to also reexamine school counselor preparation and practice (Paisley & McMahon, 2001).

Traditionally, a consistent role for school counselors has been their focus on students that have been the least successful with schooling. By concentrating on strategies and interventions that assist these at-risk students, counselors have helped to close the achievement gap for all students (The Education Trust, 2003a). In addition, school counselors have impacted these students positively, as seen in evidence that includes improved attendance, behavior, grades, relationships, and enthusiasm towards generalized signs of overall well-being (Walendin, 2008). Previously presented, Adelman and Taylor (2002) believe that “school counselors are especially well situated to play proactive, catalytic roles in defining the future for programs that support the education of students” (p. 1) and the literature on transforming school counseling suggests that school counselors can play significant roles in school reform (The Education Trust, 2005).
Unfortunately, school counselors have been “conspicuously missing” (House & Hayes 2002, p. 1) and “glaringly absent” (Hartman, 1998, p. 1) from current reform discussions.

The school counseling profession was brought about from educational reform initiatives, which began with the social reform and vocational education movements in the early 1900s. Since those early years, a series of school reform movements have impacted the development of school counseling, including the launching of Sputnik in 1957 which led to the passing of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958; the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965; the Educational Act for All Handicapped Children of 1975; and the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (Monahan, 1998; Schmidt, 1999; Perrone, 1991, Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Herr, 2002; Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

Considering the evolution of school counseling programming and practices in view of the current school reform movement, Brown and Trusty (2005) offer that school counselors now “find themselves in the midst of a revolution that may be unprecedented in the history of education” (p. 19). They note, “school counselors need to understand the school reform movement, its ramifications for students and faculties, and its immediate potential impact on school counseling programs” (p. 19). These authors, with keen foresight, accurately predicted that, “one of the products of school reform, high-stakes tests, will have a profound influence on many school counseling programs” (p. 42).

Addressing similar concerns for the field, Bunce (1999) presents,

Much of the counselor literature appears to be idealized with a focus on what school counselors believe and do rather than addressing the reality of the
workplace. In order to examine the counselor’s role in ongoing school improvement, it is important to understand that reality. (p. 28)

As noted by Lambie and Williamson (2004), “Although the history of professional school counseling has been rich and ever-changing, it is essential that all counselors can articulate their current role” (p. 1). Initiatives to assist school counselors towards better understanding their roles within high-stakes testing school environments and align the profession with school reform efforts have been offered by numerous school counseling professional organizations. These organizations include the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) (2003a), through the development of School Counselor Competencies and the National Model for School Counseling Programs; the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (2001); the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) and the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC) (The Education Trust, 2003a; Baker & Gerler, 2004); and in Pennsylvania, Governor Rendell’s Project 720 (Pennsylvania and Microsoft,” 2005; Coker, 2005; PDE, 2008, September) and the Put School Counselors Where they are Needed Act (Barkoff, 2008).

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the potentially changing roles of school counselors and school counseling services occurring in central Pennsylvanian high schools in view of the No Child Left Behind Act from the perspective of the participating school counselors and school administrators. A second purpose of this study was to investigate how school counselors are managing these possible changes in their roles and to seek suggestions that might assist school counselors through the transformation. Therefore, this investigation contributes to a growing
research base that focuses on the professional development, preparation, and practice of school counselors.

The overarching research question of this investigation was, as perceived by school counselors and school administrators, how are the primary responsibilities of high school counselors changing with respect towards meeting the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act? Subsidiary research questions included:

1. What have been the traditional primary roles, responsibilities, and expectations, of school counselors?
2. Have these changed with the promulgation of the No Child Left Behind Act? In what ways?
3. If they have changed, how are school counselors managing these new roles, responsibilities and expectations?

Summary of Findings

The primary data collection for this case study began in January 2006 and was completed in May 2009. Data collection was re-visited for a brief time in October 2009. The methods of investigation included open-ended interviewing, direct observation, participant observation, and document analysis. The twelve participating school counselors and administrators were from four high schools from four separate school districts within the Central Intermediate Unit (CIU) 10 region of central Pennsylvania. I perceived the counselor educator participants involved in this study to be hard working and wonderfully kind, yet potentially careworn individuals. They worked autonomously within their individual caseload positions, but collaboratively together as members of
their school counseling departments, and as team players with administrators, teachers, and all staff collectively within their schools.

It was noted in this research that all of the participating school counselor roles and tasks were considered to be addressing an array of student needs, and these encompassed services related to the No Child Left Behind Act legislation. In addressing the main research question, it was found that the accountability standards related to NCLB have created numerous new tasks added to, and associated with, school counselors’ traditional primary roles and responsibilities. To this researcher, and based on the data gathered, it seemed that these changes were accepted as part of the position with relatively little impact on changes in the daily work life of the school counselors. The school counselors all exhibited a positive energy and a conscientious responsibility for achieving their job tasks and building goals with moment-to-moment flexibility for disruption, while at the same time exhibiting tremendous concern for their students. They did whatever was needed, as needed, to assist the goals of their schools and districts at any given time. It appeared as though the counselors completed tasks requested and expected of them in a timely fashion, with little attention brought to any differences or changes in the content or character of the duties. The participating counselors carried out their numerous roles while maintaining “the essential human qualities of caring, genuineness, regard, and respect for others” (Schmidt, 1999, p. 5) that are recognized as basic tenets within the counseling profession. Daily moment-to-moment change itself was the constant, which kept the participating school counselors always busy with continually diverse tasks, yet, tasks they were generally familiar with and completed without hesitation.
What became most obvious through the course of this study was the realization of “the balancing act” performed by school counselors as they manage all of their “new” and “old” responsibilities concurrently. The counselors managed their busy positions through a variety of means: coming into the office at odd hours, taking little to no time for breaks, and functioning during the day with a marked urgency. While they typically dropped everything to give time needed to administrator requests and student crises, generalized time with students not in crisis was possibly minimized or at least reduced to make way for other tasks. Due to changes in their positions that now demand managing countless non-counseling tasks, the majority of the participating school counselors did not feel prepared by their school counseling preparation programs. They were also not actively involved in professional school counselor organizations, or for the most, knowledgeable regarding reform initiatives geared toward their profession.

A job description for school counselors at the key case of study, undated but believed to be approximately ten years old, is likely representative of what were traditional school counselor roles. These roles included: assisting students through crisis intervention, identifying students and developing support programs for students at risk for academic deficiencies, coordinating individual parent/teacher conferences, conducting academic counseling with students who appear not to be working up to their academic potential, conducting placement counseling with individual students, conducting personal counseling with students who may appear to be having social, emotional, or personal problems through family changes such as death, divorce, or separation, and conducting conflict resolution counseling with students. School counselors were additionally to perform intake assessments to identify student needs, conduct group counseling in a
small group setting with students with similar concerns, counsel students referred by staff or administration, and, interestingly, to “coordinate and manage all standardized testing programs” (See Appendix I).

In May of 2009 revisions to this job description were made by two of the school counselors at the request of central administration at the aforementioned case. There were few changes made to the overall document. The above-mentioned duties remained as originally stated. However, with regard to standardized testing programming, the revised document now included the statement that “as designated by the School Counseling Department including, but not limited to: PSSA Writing, Math, Reading, and Science; 4Sight, College Board Tests (PSAT, SAT, AP), ACT, and ASVAB” (See Appendix J). This phrase was added to allow the school counselors to work more as a department team with test coordination rather than have the testing tasks for any one test be the burden of any one counselor.

This particular job description revision well illustrates how traditional school counselor roles have been impacted by NCLB, as tasks connected to standardized testing coordination changed significantly. Another important change for the school counselors identified in this study was the increased amount of time that counselors now spend identifying students at risk for failure and developing appropriate remedial support programs for them. Additional changes seen, but to a lesser degree, and not wholly examined in this study, regarded how NCLB has impacted school counselor roles in career advisement and career education programming as impacted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education career mandates (PDE, 2008, July); a difference in how teachers perceive school counselors, now as keepers of the tests; and possible changes in
the way students perceive their counselors, as test givers and being too busy to have time for them. Finally, data showed that there was an increase in school counselor and school administrator collaboration and teaming, although whether or not this was a direct result of the impact of NCLB was not clear.

As new tasks directly associated with the increasing accountability standards and high-stakes testing program increased there did not appear to be a concomitant decrease in the traditional roles and duties of the school counselors. Higher standards related to assessment, career education, and increased attention to students at-risk for failure all added to the growing list of duties that encompass the position. These changes in the position have also shaped school counselor counseling styles, moving them toward a more frenetic pace to allow for more time for the non-counseling activities that pull the counselors away from students, and possibly isolate the counselors within the school counseling suite.

Thus, the role of testing as well as the inherent responsibilities for testing and the time diverted from assisting individual students because of testing were major and recurring themes throughout the participating school counselor interviews. As one counselor noted, “Testing basically drives everything that happens. . . .” Another added, “It seems like everyone’s eyes are on student achievement and testing.” Finally, a third counselor commented,

It’s the overriding focus of what downtown thinks about. The kids are subjected to weeks upon weeks of testing. There are so many parts involved, the faculty, the administration and students, and everyone sort of does fall in the rhythm at some point. They understand we kind of all play the game. I’ve heard when it started,
the kids didn’t even put their names on the tests, and now we have barcodes. It’s like 1984 with science and math, very Orwellian.

A Caveat

A primary strength of this investigation was its detailed and descriptive participant observation component over the course of time. Having investigated only four cases with twelve responding participants is considered a limitation. Though each case was considered unique within its school entity, across the schools the cases were very similar in their case demographics and in school counselor participant graduate preparation. Therefore, this particular sample selection resulted in a large degree of similarity and consistency across the cases. Some of this is additionally attributable to the employment moves of several participants across the case schools, because as they changed job positions from one case district to another they carried program initiatives with them.

Another anomaly was that one case school underwent a major building renovation during the course of the study. The renovation work, involving demolition and construction, increased stress to administrators, teachers, students, and in turn the school counselors. The school counselor offices were moved four times between the summer of 2005 and fall of 2008, creating episodic disruption to counselor workspace organization. While the building was under construction and as classrooms were demolished and the new ones were completed, teachers were moved in and out of assigned classrooms, hall-to-hall, upstairs and downstairs. The movement contributed to extra work to school
counselor testing room coordination, requiring revisions for every testing cycle over the course of the building renovation.

In spite of these noted limitations and anomalies, the data collected from the study can be viewed as valid for these particular cases at the time of the investigation. Case study research is not necessarily considered generalizable to the larger society. But the information may be helpful towards developing similar small studies, a pilot, or a roadmap (Lightfoot, 1983) to springboard larger studies.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from this cross case study. The first of the conclusions for this study focuses on how consuming accountability concerns synonymous with high-stakes testing are re-shaping traditional school counselor responsibilities in unanticipated ways. A second conclusion addresses how exhaustive non-counseling duties are taking time away from students, creating role-pull for school counselors. A third, and final, conclusion concerns how graduate program preparation has been misaligned for the participating school counselors. Though these conclusions are discussed separately they are all interrelated as multifaceted issues for the participating school counselors.

Consuming Accountability Concerns, the Shift in Testing

First and foremost, the primary role played by the participating school counselors in standardized testing has shifted to overwhelming involvement with the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and the 4Sight test. Throughout the data collection
period with every PSSA and 4Sight testing event, a sense of immediacy for testing tasks was observed for all the school counselors at Case A. This responsibility fell especially heavily on the designated school counselor test coordinator while the tests were in the building. During the actual testing days and testing times, school counselors’ energies appeared to be directed toward the requirements of the tests and the accommodations required by the testing. As voiced by a school counselor respondent, “People just expect that the guidance office does the test because that’s what we do. At least in this school district, because that’s the way it’s been said.”

Brown and Trusty (2005) present two studies conducted in North Carolina which examined school counselors’ perceptions regarding the influence of high-stakes testing on their school counseling programs, students, and other components of their schools’ educational processes. They report that,

Not surprisingly, large numbers of counselors from both studies reported that the high-stakes testing program had a deleterious effect on their programs. Thirty-three percent of the counselors in study one reported that participation in the high-stakes testing program had reduced their time and availability to provide services to students. Seventy-six percent of the participants in study two listed inaccessibility to students as one of the problems associated with participation in the high-stakes testing program. Many counselors in both studies also believed that participation in the high-stakes testing program was distorting their perceptions of their roles, and about 8 percent of counselors in both studies felt their role in the high-stakes testing program had hurt their relationship with teachers. (p. 40)
The participating school counselors in this study expressed similar perceptions of testing, particularly with concerns that testing took their time away from students. The development of testing rosters, testing room schedules, testing bell schedules, placing barcode labels on the tests, instructing teachers on test administration and test security, preparing test materials for proctors, and packaging test materials for return to the central administrative office, introduced an entirely new set of non-negotiable regimes and responsibilities quite different from traditional responsibilities. School counseling has its roots in vocational counseling (Brewer, 1922, as cited in Henderson & Gysbers, 1998). Traditionally, testing services developed second to career counseling. However, for the counselors in the four case schools studied, it appeared that these two counselor functions reversed in their importance, even in view of *The Career Education and Work Standards* (PDE, 2008, July) initiated the 2006-2007 school year.

Related to the increasing roles with standardized testing was the evolution of a new role for school counselors in identifying and coordinating remediation services for students in danger of not meeting proficiency. This required efforts beyond and in addition to monitoring credits and identifying students for failing courses. Across the schools, the school counselors appeared to manage their associated roles and tasks with student remediation both proactively and reactively, most frequently focusing on the time period both before and after the administration of the Grade 11 PSSA.

Expressed the very most across the cases, was the shift in counselor time towards testing tasks that subsequently took time away from the counselors’ primary and more preferred roles with students and corresponding student services. The counselors noted either less amount of time or less quality of time spent one-on-one with students in order
to meet the demands for testing tasks. Amongst the respondents there was some
discussion how the changing nature of society itself has impacted traditional school
counselor roles, most often manifested in increasing instances of more high at-risk
behaviors by students. Defined as the newer morbidities for children and youth (AAP,
2001; Erford, 2003), the impact of testing appears to have pulled school counselors away
from mental health counseling components of the position. Yet these were noted as the
very components that the school counselors felt most prepared for and were highly
valued by the counselors. In addition to managing the emotional impact of testing on
certain students, the study revealed that school counselors were spending more of what
time they do have for students with students who tended to be at-risk for high
absenteeism, course failure, and those needing additional emotional support services and
proficiency remediation.

Role-Pull Resulting from Exhaustive Non-Counseling Duties

It seems clear that the overall press for students to achieve proficiency standards
has changed the school counselor role, moving it towards an emphasis on the
coordination of testing and the provision of remediation services. Time crunches resulting
from the new testing mandates led to counselor time being pulled away from traditional
school counseling roles and activities. Though all the counselor respondents confirmed
that traditional responsibilities continued to be met, there were concerns about the quality
of how these traditional roles were being delivered. One counselor commented on this
frustration as follows:
It would be nice if we had more ideal time for students because that’s when you get the feedback; because they get it, the parents, and the administrators—‘Mr. Smith is doing his job as a school counselor.’ Because they don’t know the time I’m putting into packing PSSA boxes.

Lambie and Williamson (2004) note that traditionally “school counseling roles have been vast and ever-changing, making it understandable that many school counselors struggle with role ambiguity and incongruence while feeling overwhelmed” (p. 1).

Lambie and Williamson further explain,

Role ambiguity exists when (a) an individual lacks information about his or her work role, (b) there is a lack of clarity about work objectives associated with the role, or (c) there is a lack of clarity about peer expectations of the scope and responsibility of the job (Lambie, 2002; Sears & Navin, 1983). (p 1)

Though school counselor time to develop school counselor programs was clearly limited, none of the participants viewed programming as haphazard. Counselor program roles appeared to be very clear. As stated by one counselor, “We know what to expect each month as the year goes on. There are really no surprises as far as what we need to accomplish, although, there are more things with the testing.” Thus, at least the participating school counselors in this study did not struggle with role clarity (Bunce, 1999) or role definition (Sears & Granello, 2002).

The counselors in this study also did not express that they struggled with “ambiguous” (Paisley & McMahon, 2001, p. 2) or “ill-defined roles” (Brown & Trusty, 2005, p. xvii). Furthermore, the counselors and administrators saw all school counselor roles and responsibilities as being related to school and student success. From the
perspective of the respondents, these were closely related services and not a “set of loosely related services” (as cited in Eilers, 2004, p. 11) noted by The Commission on Pre-College Guidance and Counseling in 1986.

The school counselors characterized their positions as overwhelming and exhausting, with “different tasks coming at you every minute.” It was the need to find time to prioritize and accomplish their duties, similarly portrayed by Paisley and MacMahon (2001) and reminiscent of Brown and Trusty’s (2005) portrait of “role dilemma” (p. 154), which came to the forefront throughout the study. The participating school counselors portrayed this prioritizing as an attempt to find a way to best manage time for students amid all their clerical, testing, and administrative tasks and duties. But their priorities were always clear. During testing window time frames, testing needs took precedence. Other than student crisis situations, all other tasks came second and were prioritized chronologically by required completion dates.

Burnham and Jackson 2000, as cited in Lambie and Williamson (2004), note that school counselors are “too often involved in non-counseling-related activities including multiple clerical tasks, which require an inordinate amount of time and pull them away from ‘more appropriate counseling activities’ (p. 47)” (Lambie & Williamson, 2004, p. 1). Similarly, as data from this study show, the school counselors and their administrators saw an increasing press toward attending to testing needs and loss of favored time for students as a result of NCLB. The ever-present desire for more time was articulated by one participating counselor’s belief of having become better skilled at getting students to the point quickly for the sake of time management. Another counselor expressed,
It seems like everyone’s eyes are on student achievement and testing--performance. We have a positive, comfortable climate. Sometimes we see a bit of that eroding because of all the pressures from the federal level. It’s not because we want to change as a school community but because it’s being done to us.

As a result, this study showed that the counselors were struggling with role-pull, as they were swamped with tasks often related to testing and other non-counseling tasks that took them away from more preferred tasks with students.

This concept of role-pull for school counselors was also brought to light by Cunanan and Maddy-Bernstein (1994) and Schmidt (1999). These authors suggest that school counselor customers, be they students, parents, teachers, school administrators, or outside agency personnel, feel slighted when they do not receive the full attention and priority of time they deem warranted. Additionally, school counseling programs have been viewed as supplemental, crisis-oriented, and removed from the instructional programs of schooling. School counselors act as confidantes, disciplinarians, consultants, schedulers, politicians, administrators, and psychological helpers. These conditions all lead to the afore-mentioned role pull for school counselors, contributing to increased counselor stress (Cunanan & Maddy-Bernstein, 1994; Schmidt, 1999).

All the school counselors in this study were clearly encumbered with fatiguing clerical and administrative tasks that limited their time with students. Their everyday jobs created a feel and content comparable to the school counselor frustrations presented by Borders (2002), Louis et al. (2001), and Brinson et al. (2004). These studies presented a view of high school counselors being inundated with non-counselor tasks. To reduce the number of add-ons to school counselor roles, Mullen (2008) proposed school counselors
should reject taking on overloading assignments. In the same way, one of this study’s participating counselors stated,

You have to be careful what you volunteer for. I’m the kind of person that says ‘I can do that.’ ‘I can take care of that, don’t worry about it.’ So I recommend people think about being careful with that--what jobs they take, what they volunteer to do just because they can do it, because they have to keep their priorities straight [on the kids, because they need you].

Brinson et al. (2004) questioned “if school administrators are cognizant of school counselors’ roles and functions, and are the specialized skills counselors have acquired through education and training being appropriately used?” (p. 1). This study’s participating administrators did acknowledge some understanding that the school counselors spend a lot of time with testing tasks. However, the participating administrators did not appear to be cognizant of real counselor time spent with testing demands as the counselors basically worked autonomously and independently, often developing testing rosters after work hours and completing testing tasks behind closed doors for test security purposes.

Disconnectedness for Practicing School Counselors

It was indicated in the interviews that several of the participating school counselors perceived their counselor education training as not appropriately preparing them for the position. While several of the counselors shared that internships were helpful, it was also suggested that there may not be a way to prepare for the position. As the school counselor respondents noted, “You have to live it,” or “get your hands dirty,”
or, be “baptized by fire.” This affirms the belief that counselor training and job expectations have been viewed as “disconnected” as noted by The Education Trust (1998, p. 6, as cited in Eilers, 2004, p. 11).

Brown and Trusty (2005) express a concern to “barriers” faced by school counselors “to using the skills they learned in their preparation program” (p. 160). Barriers to school counselor roles noted by Brown and Trusty include completing paperwork, scheduling tasks, and involvement in discipline situations. Similar tasks pulling the counselors in this study from utilizing skills presented in graduate preparation were identified. A school counselor respondent sharing thoughts on training university interns over the years commented:

Some counselors come from a counseling background other than school counseling and they find it difficult not to sit down for forty-five minutes as a therapeutic type of counselor. Rarely during the course of the day do you get that kind of time without this or that, a fight like we just experienced, or email. So I try to make sure they know the different theories, modifications, but they’re not going to get the chance to implement any of that stuff.

For the participants in this study, testing tasks can be viewed as a barrier to carrying out the ideal school counselor roles that are emphasized in graduate training, such as roles school counselors play in individual and group counseling and career advisement. Accordingly, a real dilemma seems evident for school counselors. This was well illustrated by the participating school counselor newest to the position. This participant mentioned that the American School Counseling Association’s reform initiatives to transform school counseling were stressed in his preparation program.
Though this young counselor had been advised in graduate training to extricate himself from testing tasks, once on the job and in the position of the high school’s new PSSA coordinator, he quickly became completely immersed in test coordination. At the same case school, the youngest building administrator noted that she felt the counselors were inundated with testing and clerical tasks. She posed her hope that graduate training for school counselors was not confined to managing testing and scheduling, but concentrated on the broader needs of students.

The participating school counselors were also largely disconnected from school counseling professional organizations. As offered by Brown and Trusty (2005), “Research has consistently shown that school counselors do not spend their time according to the guidelines advanced by professional organizations” (p. 159). To support this statement Brown and Trusty cite Burnham and Jackson’s 2000 study investigating how school counselors spend their time. There were 80 school counselors who participated in the study. The results indicated that:

- 90 percent of the counselors were involved in either coordinating the school testing program or some other aspect of the appraisal program.
- 70 percent of the counselors spent time in activities not related to school counseling, with nearly 14 percent spending half or more of their time in activities unrelated to the school counselor’s role. (Brown & Trusty, p. 159)

Brown and Trusty further noted,

Although the sample used by Burnham and Jackson (2000) was not representative of all school counselors, the results point out a problem inherent in idealistic recommendations regarding the school counselor’s roles. School counselors in all
likelihood must engage in some activities that are not part of an ideal role. Myrick (1997) was probably correct when he suggested that some school counselors may be so overwhelmed with these nonprofessional activities that they will be unable to implement the role for which they were trained. (Brown & Trusty, 2005, p. 159).

Mullen’s (2008) research found that school counselors consider membership in professional organizations to be a waste of time and money. While the counselors in this study never stated that membership in professional organizations was a waste of time and money, they did emphasize there simply was not enough time for membership. As one school counselor respondent noted: “This job is so exhausting when I get home if I do anything school related it’s something I have to do because it is either time sensitive or getting myself organized for the next day. You don’t have time.”

This statement speaks to participation in professional organizations and staying versed on current professional reform initiative topics as a choice to be managed on counselor personal time and consequently not a job priority. Hence, diminished time for improving school counselor programming and professional development regarding reform initiatives is seemingly endemic to the school counseling profession. These concerns about the disconnections between practitioners and professional organizations will likely only continue as testing demands increase. According to a responding administrator, “We haven’t even begun to delve into the next phase. Now we have these mountains of data and how do we interpret the data and analyze the data and, more importantly, how do we get this data to the teachers?”
School counselors are primary candidates in schools to assist with test data analysis. Because, as previously stated, historically, “the guidance worker as a trained professional, was wise in administering and interpreting scientific instruments for the prediction of vocational and educational success” (Cremin, 1964, p. 19, as cited in Herr, 2002, p. 4). Indicated by the data from this study, this traditional role appears to remain in place for school counselors, at least as evidenced in one of the participating case schools. As stated in their job description, school counselors are to “Interpret standardized tests to both students and staff.” In addition, two participating administrators and one school counselor commented that the roles school counselors play with test data analysis and corresponding educational programming will probably increase. As one counselor noted,

> In some bigger districts they hire either a testing coordinator or a person who is responsible for data analysis. Schools are going to have to look at that if they don’t have the counseling staff to take care of it because it does stretch you in quite a lot of ways.

The need for school counselors to play increasing roles in test data analysis may present yet another disconnect for practicing school counselors from graduate training preparation and professional organization reform initiatives. As this responsibility shifts for school counselors they will need to be better prepared through their training programs, and will need to consider options for professional development which are related to test data analysis.
Addressing the Disconnectedness

The literature on current school counseling professional organization reform initiatives addresses this disconnectedness through proposed school reform initiatives to align school counselor programming, practice, and preparation (Baker & Gerler, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy, Bryan, & Rahill, 2002; Paisley & Hayes, 2003; Eilers, 2004; CACREP, 2005; Brown & Trusty 2005). “In 2003 the ASCA published The ASCA National Model: A Framework for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs. …ASCA defines a school counseling program as one that is comprehensive, preventive in nature, developmental, and central to the primary mission of the school” (Brown & Trusty, 2005, p. 2). Further noted by Brown and Trusty (2005), “the concept of comprehensive, developmental school counseling programs is not new” (p. 2).

Many have written about the developmental, comprehensive guidance and counseling model as an effective delivery system (Borders & Drury, 1992; Good, Fischer, Johnston, & Heppner, 1994; Gyspers, 2002; Gyspers & Henderson, 1994; Henderson & Gyspers, 1998; Myrick, 1997; Paisley & Borders, 1995; Van Zandt & Hayslip, 1994; Wittmer, 2000). As Rowley (2000) stated, ‘What began as an experiment is now a movement’ (p. 225). Furthermore, Sink and MacDonald (1998) found that 43 states were implementing the comprehensive school counseling model in some form. (Lambie & Williamson, 2004, p. 4)

Hence, the move from traditional guidance programming to comprehensive school counseling programming, “in some form,” has occurred for school counselors in many states (Lambie & Williamson, 2004, p. 4). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2009a) lists 36 “states that have implemented statewide
comprehensive school counseling programs” (p. 1). Pennsylvania is not listed as one of them.

With regard to the need for school counselors to be accountable to student success, Dolens (2008) proposes,

School counselors are being asked to utilize accountability measures to support the value of their comprehensive programs (Curry & Lambie, 2007). School counselors must now provide evidence that what they do is effective and contributes to the success of students and overall mission of the school (Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Paisley & Hayes, 2003). (p. 5)

Additionally, Isaacs (2003) states,

Recent research has suggested that the core work of school counselors--implementing a school counseling program based on ASCA or similar state standards--can have positive impacts on core measures of student academic achievement as well as other areas critical to school improvement….It is thus no accident that there is an increased amount of attention on connecting school counseling programs with student academic achievement in empirical research. (p. 3)

Offered by Dolens (2008), “finding measures of accountability that a school counselor can implement into their comprehensive guidance programs is necessary to the solidity of the counselor’s career” (p. 5). School counselors may resist change in their professional practice with using and applying data. They may see more work ahead without the strength to move against counselor, teacher, or administrator colleagues (Dolens, 2008). Nevertheless, change based on data-driven programming as presented in
Chapter 2 needs to occur. To do so the participating school counselors in this study will have to move away from the clerical aspects of testing.

Brown and Trusty (2005) specifically discussed the American School Counseling Association’s initiatives towards transforming school counseling, noting “the ASCA (2003) has made it quite clear that it wished to align school counseling program goals with the goals of school reformers” (p. 11). Brown and Trusty suggest,

An aspect of the ASCA model (2003) that is unlikely to be well received by school reformers is a statement that contends that involvement with the coordination of testing programs is not a part of school counselors’ duties. High-stakes testing in the form of criterion-referenced tests that are linked to standard courses of study or nationally normed achievement batteries are included as a part of the school reform movement in every state. Research (Brown, Galassi, & Akos, in press) suggests that coordinating these programs may have a disastrous impact on school counselors’ ability to deliver services to students. (p. 11)

As predicted by Brown and Trusty (2005), the impact of testing has negatively influenced the traditional school counselor roles in this study. It has directed their time away from student advising and counseling needs, and away from developing processes to address the impact, although time spent on tasks implementing remediation services may be considered an exception. Recommended means to re-direct counseling roles more appropriately to comprehensive school counseling programming have been available within the profession for some time. However, they have not been translated for implementation to the school counseling programs of this study’s participating counselors. Enlightening principals to appropriate school counselor roles within current
reform initiatives needs to occur. Their assistance is absolutely necessary for change to come about.

There was no evidence in any of the case study schools of school counseling program development, as put forth by the American School Counseling Association National Model (ASCA, 2003a), the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (CACREP, 2005), or the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) (Eilers, 2004). There was also no evidence of any data-driven implemented school counseling services as promoted by Isaacs (2003), Dahir and Stone (2003), and Dolens (2008), to enhance and secure school counselor accountability. Initiatives to further school counseling data-driven programming were not specifically examined in this study, however, as presented in Ch 4, the following question was posed to the participating school counselor who most recently completed graduate training: “The National Model furthers data driven program development, do you see that occurring?” The response was,

Not to the extent that ASCA would push for. I think there’s certainly more data used in schools in general, certainly than in the counseling world, but it has less to do with program development than with testing and the numbers that really matter for schools because that’s what the reality is for school districts and individual schools these days.

Writing further on comprehensive school counseling program development and implementation, sanctioned by the American School Counseling Association’s National Model and the 2001 Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs’ (CACREP) Standards, Brown and Trusty (2005) cautioned,
Jaded counselor educators and other members of the school counseling profession who have observed and participated in numerous educational innovations may be inclined to dismiss the latest innovation in school counseling as a passing trend. This would be a mistake. (p. xviii)

The participating school counselors in this study did not appear to be “jaded,” but merely focused on surviving. Another school counselor participant disclosed their perception of the reality of the position thusly,

At times it’s nearly non-counselor like because you have to move on. That’s the damage of No Child Left Behind. I don’t know if I agree with it philosophically, but I want my paycheck. So I have to do this. I have to have ‘Satisfactory’ at the end of the school year for my evaluation.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Administrators

Based on the findings from this study, as well as the conclusions drawn, several areas for recommendations seem appropriate. It is recommended for this study’s participating school districts to consider hiring testing coordinators and testing clerical support to move the clerical aspects for testing related to No Child Left Behind away from the duties and tasks assigned to school counselors. Such personnel may be less costly to the districts than the professional salaries and benefits paid to school counselors.

Bunce (1999) contributes that school counselors “who perform many routinized tasks that can be accomplished by nonprofessionals may be perceived or themselves feel as less than professional” (p. 30). Bunce also offers Pfeffer’s (1978) belief that
“employees who perform non-routine tasks possess more power and can therefore
demand and gain more control and discretion within the organization” (Pfeffer, 1978, as
cited in Bunce, 1999, p. 30). A shift away from testing clerical tasks would allow school
counselors more time to (a) work with students as the administrators in this study have
emphasized, (b) analyze the data resulting from testing, (c) be more active in program
development towards enhancing student achievement and in turn proficiency on the state
assessments, and (d) re-configure school counselor roles to meet the press for
accountability and current school counseling reform initiatives. In addition, a shift away
from testing clerical tasks may improve school counselor self-esteem and their perceived
value to colleagues.

Though it was not an emerging theme, there was some mention in the data
regarding counseling generalists versus specialists. The participating counselors in this
investigation were all school counselor generalists; that is, counselors who manage the
full array of school counseling duties within a single counseling department (DeVoss,
2004). A specialist counselor may be a school counselor department team member with
specific departmental responsibilities based on an individual area of expertise (DeVoss,
2004). As the testing requirements of the PSSA and 4Sight continue to expand, test
 coordinators need to shift some responsibilities towards the other counselors, possibly
specialists, within their school counseling departments. As specialists, these individuals
could then pick up some of the student mental health crisis situations and career
education needs as they fit with their training and background. Thus, also recommended,
though more costly for districts than hiring additional clerical support, would be the
hiring of additional school counselors or possibly social workers with particular expertise
or specific assigned job duties toward specialty areas, as school counselors as testing specialists are already seen evolving in the participating schools.

Lambie and Williamson (2004) offer, “Research indicates that the support of the school principal in the implementation and maintenance of a school counseling program is essential (Beale, 1995; Coll & Freeman, 1997; Ribak-Rosenthal, 1994)” (p. 5). Previously presented in Chapter 1, Stone (2001) citing Capuzzi (1998), House and Martin (1998), and Lee and Walz (1998); suggests that new attitudes are needed for school counselors to join forces with principals. “The training that school counselors receive in communication, interpersonal relationships, problem solving, and conflict resolution give them the ability to encourage the collaboration among colleagues that promotes student achievement” and “collaboration between principals and school counselors is increasingly necessary to the operations of an effective instructional program” (Stone, 2001, p. 3). As members of core academic teams, counselors can collaboratively work towards equity and positive school change. Promoted by Stone (2001), an alliance between school counselors and principals is needed to bring school counselors out of the periphery of educational functions and into the mainstream of reform efforts. Noted by Dahir and Stone (2003):

School counselors, who partner with principals and key stakeholders to embrace accountability, promote systemic change with the expressed purpose of furthering the academic success of every student (Stone & Clark, 2001). Sharing accountability for school improvement with all stakeholders is a driving force for transforming the work of counselors in our nation's schools (p. 7).
For these reasons, the disconnectedness between the realities of the school counselor position, preparation, and professional organization initiatives for reform needs to be addressed through collaborative efforts between principals and school counselors at the school site. This was made clear by the impetus behind Finkelstein’s 2008 survey results as the College Board, American School Counseling Association (ASCA), and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) partnered to explore the counselor-principal relationship (Finkelstein, 2009, May). Therefore, it is recommended that implementation towards improvement in school counselor roles begin at the administrative level, with administrators acting as change agents and advocates for their school counseling programs in order to best assist practicing school counselors with role pull. As it is, the school counselors in this study will continue to be disillusioned, managing their busy positions as they can while being clueless to opportunities for improvement and their administrators being unsure of how to best help them.

If school counselors are to play roles in testing then those roles should likely be involved more with the scholastic preparation, data analysis, and post-test advisement of tests for test result improvement rather than setting up testing rooms, assigning testing proctors, and sorting testing materials. To advance school counselors into the current century, a departure from traditional roles is needed, with particular consideration to how their roles are being impacted by the accountability assessments related to NCLB, and specifically by the clerical demands of testing. Because, as presented in Chapter 2, “Resources and creative thinking are needed to reduce or eliminate many of the non-counseling functions that school counselors are required to assimilate into their workday, so that they can spend their time helping students” (Brinson et al., 2004, p. 1). For
counselor growth to occur, administrators need to provide release time and funding for professional development which address school counselor accountability concerns, along with in-service programs that motivate and encourage excellence towards school counselor role renewal and redefinition (Bunce, 1999).

Recommendations for School Counselors

Data from this study indicated that the participating school counselors’ ideal visions for their roles included reduced participation in testing, reduced student caseload numbers, shared planning time with school counselor colleagues, and some form of support to free up more time for students. The recommendations for new and experienced school counselors included focusing on students, planning and managing time efficiently, being prepared for a multitude of differing events which could occur at any time, working with administrators to assist NCLB needs, seek a forum where frustrations and ideas can be shared with colleagues, and review situational case studies as they relate to school counselor roles within No Child Left Behind. School counselors should also be well versed in technology, and they should research school districts where seeking employment.

If school counselors hope to move themselves away from the clerical aspects of testing they need to find improved ways to collaboratively partner with their principals and other educators to make their concerns and usefulness known. Through program evaluation and development, they need to demonstrate the positive impact their work has on core accountability data elements as student achievement and truancy. They need to move themselves to the front and center of the reform agenda as advocates and leaders by
working through the resistance presented by others (Isaacs, 2003; Stone & Dahir, 2009; Brigman, 2006). Consequently, also recommended for practicing school counselors is to become knowledgeable with reform initiatives for transforming school counseling. School counselors need to take ownership of their professional accountability, utilize interns, university scholars, and new hires to the school counseling field as resourceful consultants towards developing data-driven services for their school counseling programs. School counselors should seek help and embrace change.

**Recommendations for School Counseling Preparation Programs**

Aligning the practice of school counselors with academic preparation and professional school counseling initiatives is strongly recommended. The alignment in school counseling preparation and programming for practice should include the newer accountability roles played by school counselors in testing and remediation services. As administrators need increased assistance with test data analysis, alignment between preparation and practice will additionally need to include future roles that school counselors will play in test data analysis and corresponding educational program evaluation and planning. Brott (2006) suggests that developing professional identity begins during the training program. A parallel training process between graduate courses and school counseling practice permits counselor educators to be “accountability gatekeepers for the profession and to model program accountability by planning, analyzing, and improving the training program” (p. 2).

Instructing school counselor trainees to extricate themselves from testing, which was the experience of one participating school counselor, does not appear to be realistic.
Instructing them to extricate themselves from the clerical components of testing does have merit. School counselors will need help finding ways to manage such a task. Given increasing limited school resources, principals who do not choose to take on the tasks for testing within their administrative offices, and the intense level of conscientious responsibility required for high-stakes testing; the situation for school counselors working as testing coordinators appears bleak.

Nevertheless, school counselors coming into the field need to realize the impact they can have on improved student outcomes as they support and assist their schools and administrators with high-stakes testing needs. As recommended by the aforementioned counselor participant newest to the field, the roles played by school counselors in testing should not be evaluated at face value. Increased counselor time spent with testing tasks does initially mean less time for students. However, as further explained by this same counselor, looking beyond “first order, face value, thinking” to the comprehensive intent of the accountability movement and the No Child Left Behind Act; school counselor roles in testing should be viewed in light of how they are helping their schools be successful. This in turn enables school counselors to better serve their students overall.

Recommendations for School Counselor Professional Organizations and Educational Reformers

A concern seen in the results of this study was that as school counselors became busy with their every day work they lost touch with professional organization information and membership. Additionally, professional organization membership was an expense. Hence, reform messages may not have been ignored by the participating school
counselors in this study, as much as never having been received, understood, and/or appreciated. “Consequently, as in other areas of school reform, school counselors have been distant from the conversations and activities about results-oriented school reforms and from the rewards that other educators face” (Isacccs, 2003, p. 2).

The aspirations for school counselors must align with the hopes of school counselor leaders who envision the educational reform movement as an opportunity for school counselors to position school counseling programs more central to the overall educational mission (Brown & Trusty, 2005). Therefore, the expectations for school counselors of the future are enormous. Appropriately trained school counselors will be advocates for students and school counseling programs. They will be educational leaders, collaborators, consultants, and creators of data driven comprehensive programs working in response to school reform efforts and closing the achievement gap (Brown & Trusty, 2005).

If these goals are to occur, practicing school counselors will first need to be aware of them, second, appreciate their need, and third, be provided the resources to attain them. Noted in Ch 2, “systemic reform does not occur in a policy vacuum, it happens through coherence and alignment” (Eilers, 2004, p. 26). For transformation to occur system components must support one another. School counselor professional organizations and educational reformers need to increase their efforts to reach and educate practitioners. I recommend school counseling professional organizations be in close communication with school counselor preparation programs, but more importantly be in even closer communication with practicing school counselors and administrators. School counseling professional organizations and educational reformers need to find
ways to better market school counseling reform literature, supporting resources, and opportunities for discussions regarding school counselor frustrations and concerns for their practice, at minimal costs to school districts and easy access to all stakeholders.

Recommendations for Research

To better align school counselor practice, preparation, professional organizations, and educational reform initiatives, research is needed. Employing basic components of this study as a roadmap (Lightfoot, 1983) the research could be expanded to other CIU 10 schools, the rest of Pennsylvania, and the Nation. It needs to be determined to what extent the cases in this study were truly particularistic and unique, or similar, and to what degree the findings are generalizable to larger populations of school counselors. Quantitative studies, incorporating the qualitative nature of this investigation, could be developed by increasing the number of interviews completed. Surveys, versus interviews, in keeping with the intent of the purposes of this investigation could also be used.

With reference to the recommendations made, the results of this study could lead to future research considerations in many areas. School districts might examine the allocation of school resources needed to remove numerous clerical tasks, particularly those associated with testing, away from school counselor job responsibilities. At the same time, research could examine how school counselor time might be differently spent once clerical tasks are removed from their primary roles. Time on tasks analyses could investigate the amount of increased time school counselors would have with students, targeting social and academic concerns, career and postsecondary planning, and overall improved programming. Similarly to the College Board, American School Counseling
Association (ASCA), and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) 2008 survey (Finkelstein, 2009, May); components of this research and its finding could be used to further investigate school counselor-principal collaboration. Addressing the concerns of Brinson et al. (2004), examining administrative awareness of school counselor work could also be a focus for both qualitative and quantitative research.

School counseling preparation programs could also use components of this study as a reference for investigating deficiencies in their course offerings. School counseling professional organizations might explore why reform initiatives have been ineffective with reaching these practicing school counselors. Research is needed to discover how practicing school counselors might become active in transitioning their current traditional programs to developmentally reshape their practice. Therefore, research should consider how reformers might engage practitioners in establishing data-driven services for program comprehensiveness towards enhanced school counselor accountability.

Further review of the traditional primary responsibilities of school counselors is not recommended as a focus for future research. As evidenced in this case study and others, data suggest that in the last decade school counselors have been overwhelmed with non-counseling activities, many being specifically associated with test coordination. These activities have acted as barriers to the completion of roles related to time spent with students and school counseling planning and program development. To improve their situation,

Professional school counselors must be astute consumers of research in order to sift through the professional research literature for the practical interventions that will lead to showing they make a difference in student’s lives. In addition to
understanding relevant research, school counselors are increasingly being asked to provide accountability data that document their impact on student behavioral and academic performance. (Brigman, 2006, p. 421)

Therefore, future research might better contribute to the knowledge base not by exploring the impact of NCLB on traditional school counselor roles, but by examining the impact of school counselors’ roles on NCLB. Because, as Isaccs (2003), Dolens (2008), and Dahir and Stone (2003) indicate, moving away from traditional school counseling programs to establish data driven school counselor programs is vital to current school counselor accountability. I believe the participating school counselors in this study were all accountable in the traditional sense of the word, and their work undeniably impacted student success, yet as illustrated by the findings from this study, the reciprocal nature of this relationship for this particular group of school counselors has long been ignored. Noted by one of the participating school counselors,

It’s sort of a dance, the NCLB dance. The whole district and school community is involved in the dance together. The more of an impact we can have on the outcomes, the more effective, ultimately, you can become as a guidance department and guidance counselor working with students.
REFERENCES


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Appendix A

Email Message from Judi Schmitz July 31, 2008

Pennsylvania School Counselor’s Association

Senator Robert Casey

Introduces Bill to Add Counselors to Schools

This is an exciting time for school counselors! Pennsylvania's Senator Bob Casey recognizes the importance of school counselors and the role we play in student success. PSCA is proud to support Senator Casey in his efforts to reduce counselor/student ratios and to assist secondary schools to obtain funding for additional school counselors. Please read the excerpt below to learn more about Senate Bill 3347 from a recent press release. Join PSCA in contacting Senator Casey to encourage his continued support of school counselors through legislation.

http://casey.senate.gov/

July 28, 2008

WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) today introduced the Put School Counselors Where They're Needed Act which aims to put more counselors in struggling secondary schools. The bill would create a competitive grant program under No Child Left Behind to help reduce the drop out rates at low performing secondary schools.

"One of many challenges secondary school counselors face today is ensuring that every student receives the individualized support he or she needs," said Senator Casey. "Low-performing secondary schools need our help to make sure they have enough counselors on staff so all students are given the opportunity to succeed."

Currently, the average counselor-to-student ratio in America's public schools is one to 476, which hardly allows for individual attention and intensive support. The American School Counselor Association and the American Counseling Association recommend one school counselor for every 250 students for all schools and an even lower ratio for counselors working primarily with students at risk.

This bill is supported by the National PTA, the American School Counselor Association, the American Counseling Association and the National Association of College Admissions Counselors.

http://casey.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/?id=584d8f9b-2b32-4aa4-8c87-52b00c023dd8
Appendix B

Letter to Superintendents Gaining Entry to School Districts

Superintendent of Schools
Area School District
Pleasantville Avenue
Pleasantville, PA 99999

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Jeanie Miller and I am a school counselor at the Case Area High School and a candidate for a doctorate in Educational Leadership at The Pennsylvania State University. I am currently conducting research to investigate possible changes in high school counselor roles and services in view of the NCLB Act and the ensuing high-stakes school accountability movement. This includes exploring a) what are school administrator expectations of school counselor roles, b) how school counselors are coping with these changes, and c) how school counselors might be assisted through the transformation.

I would like to invite your high school principal and one secondary counselor from your district to participate in an unstructured interview to explore their perceptions regarding the above questions. Additionally, because this is exploratory case study research, any information in the way of documentation your staff, or District Web Site, might offer me regarding the support of their perceptions, as counselor newsletters, course description booklets, District Report Card, High School Profile, AYP goals and results, and guidance program goals for example, will be invaluable and somewhat essential to the investigation.

Your school district confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study. Certain characteristic traits disclosed in the study that may be unique to your district could identify the district and participants to a degree, however, the particular identity of the district and participants will not be revealed in any publication related to this study.

The investigation has value towards contributing to a research base for the professional development, preparation, and practice of school counselors that will further assist school and student success in meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress goals as determined by the No Child Left Behind Act. As a school counselor, I am aware of the tremendous demands on your time and on that of your staff, yet the time permitted for the study may add to measurable differences in the quality of school counseling and preparation programs. Your permission to conduct the study will be sincerely appreciated. I will be contacting you by telephone in the near future to discuss your district’s possible participation. If you prefer, I can work with a designated member of your administrative staff to make the necessary arrangements. I worked with Tom Yoder for the past five years at Bellefonte Area High School and continuing my work with him through an interview will be wonderful.

Thank you for your consideration, and please, feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Respectfully yours,

Jeanie Miller
Appendix C

Letter to Administrators and School Counselors Requesting Participation

Dear School Administrator or School Counselor,

My name is Jeanie Miller and I am a school counselor at the Case Area High School. I am also a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at The Pennsylvania State University. Your school district has graciously given me permission to ask for your participation in my dissertation study. I am currently conducting research to investigate possible changes in high school counselor roles and services in view of the NCLB Act and the ensuing high-stakes school accountability movement. This includes exploring a) what are school administrator expectations of school counselor roles, b) how school counselors are coping with these changes, and c) how school counselors might be assisted through the transformation.

I would like to invite you to participate in an initial unstructured interview to explore your perceptions regarding the above questions, and then possibly some follow up by way of phone calls. Additionally, because this is an exploratory case study research, any information in the way of documentation you or your staff might offer me regarding the support of your perceptions, as counselor newsletters, course description booklets, AYP goals and results, and guidance program goals for example, will be invaluable and somewhat essential to the investigation.

Your confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study. Certain characteristic traits disclosed in the study that may be unique to you and your school could identify you to a degree, however, your particular identity and of the high school where you are employed will not be revealed in any publication related to this study.

The investigation has value towards contributing to a research base for the professional development, preparation, and practice of school counselors that will further assist school and student success in meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress goals as determined by the No Child Left Behind Act. As a school counselor, I am aware of the tremendous demands on your time, yet the time permitted for the study may add to measurable differences in the quality of school counseling and preparation programs. Your participation in the study will be sincerely appreciated. I will be contacting you by telephone in the near future to discuss your district’s possible participation. If you have any questions at this time or at any time during the study please contact me.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Jeanie Miller
Appendix D
Informed Consent Form for Behavioral Research Study
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of project: The Changing Roles of School Counselors in an Era of School Accountability

Person in charge: Ms. Jeanie Miller

1. This section provides an explanation of the study in which you will be participating:

A. The study in which you will be participating is part of research intended to explore the traditional roles of school counselors and how those roles may or may not be changing in response to the current accountability measures for schools instituted by The No Child Left Behind Act. Inclusive with this need is offering advice towards how to best manage the changes for other counselors in the profession and contribute to foundational knowledge of counselor education training programs for upcoming counselors.

B. If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to participate in one in-depth interview and possibly one or two follow up interviews by phone or email discussion, however you feel most comfortable, to clarify and update material as it is explored throughout the duration of the study. You will also be asked to supply materials regarding your school counseling programs that are relevant to the study if possible, as they are available, that might further assist study information. Examples of such materials might include a counselor newsletter, information on your district’s AYP results, your High School Guidance Program goals.

C. Your initial participation in this research may take approximately one hour. This time can be interrupted as needed with respect to your work day. This time frame is very dependent on the time you have to allow with regard to the discussion of interview questions. A copy of the questions guiding the interview is enclosed.

D. This study will involve the use of a digital recorder. The recording will be transcribed by the researcher and downloaded onto a secure computer file. No other individuals will have access to the recording and computer file and the recording will be deleted from the file within one calendar year of research completion.

E. You will receive no compensation for your participation in this study.

2. This section describes your rights as a research participant:

A. You may ask questions about the research procedures. These questions will be answered by the person in charge.

B. Your participation in this research is confidential. Only the person in charge will have access to our identity and to information that can be associated with our identity. In the event this research is published, no personally identifying information will be disclosed.
To make sure your participation is confidential, you will be identified on the digital recorder with a fictitious name. Your fictitious name will not be associated with your real name for any part of the research. Because the research will be reported as descriptive narratives, your demographic information will be associated with your interview responses so your identity may be determined by others that know you to that degree. Therefore, you will have the opportunity to review and edit your responses as written by the researcher prior to any one else reading them.

C. Your participation is voluntary. You are free to stop participating in the research at any time, or to decline to answer any specific questions without penalty.

D. This study involves minimal risk; that is, no risks to your physical or mental health beyond those encountered in the normal course of everyday life.

3. **This section indicates that you are giving your informed consent to participate in the research:**

   **Participant:**

   I agree to participate in a graduate study investigation of school counselor role changes in view of the No Child Left Behind Act as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University.

   I understand the information given to me and I have received answers to any questions I may have had about the research procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described.

   To the best of my knowledge and belief, I have no physical or mental illness or difficulties that would increase any risk to me from participation in this study.

   I understand that I will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

   I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time by notifying the person in charge.

   I am 18 years of age or older.

   I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

   Signature __________________________________________ Date ______________

   **Researcher:**

   I certify that the informed consent procedure has been followed, and that I have answered any questions form the participant above as fully as possible.

   Signature __________________________________________ Date ______________
Appendix E

Interview Schedule for Meeting with School Counselors

Initial interview information requests basic demographic information about study participants and the school counseling programs where they are employed:

- How long have you been in this position? How long have you worked as a school counselor? What did you do prior to becoming a school counselor? What is your counselor to student responsibility (ratio), and grade level of students? Does this change from year to year?
- Do you belong to any professional organizations? Are you actively involved with any of them? How often and in what ways?
- When and where did you receive your counselor training? How well did that training relate to your work as a counselor?
- Do your counselor colleagues have different areas of responsibilities than you do? What are they?
- Do you have additional roles that you play within the school community aside from your school counselor responsibilities? What are they?
- What do you value most about your position?
- What do you feel have been the traditional primary roles and expectations of school counselors?
- We really don’t know what’s going on with high school counselors in light of the NCLB era. Have your roles changed with the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act? If they have, in what ways?
- Why have these changes occurred? If your roles have not changed, why not?
- What recommendations do you have for other school counselors, new and experienced, in managing their roles, especially in light of NCLB?
- If you could envision ideal school counselor roles what would they be?
Appendix F

Interview Schedule for Meeting with School Administrators

- What is your position? How long have you been in this position? What was your previous position?
- How often do you work with the school counselors?
- How much of this work involves factors related to NCLB? Can you offer some examples?
- What do you feel have been the traditional primary roles and expectations of school counselors?
- We really don’t know what’s going on with high school counselors in light of the NCLB era. Do you perceive school counselor roles as having changed because of NCLB? In what ways? Why or why not?
- What are your expectations for the roles school counselors should play in light of NCLB?
- Do you have any suggestions regarding how school counselors might manage these expectations?
Appendix G

CASE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
4/4/06

HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR REQUEST

FOR ADDITIONAL COUNSELOR

Counselor Caseloads for 06-07

Without 4th Counselor
1. Grade 12 Counselor 253
2. Grade 11/Half of 9th Counselor 407
3. Grade 10/Half of 9th Counselor 407

With 4th Counselor
1. Grade 12 Counselor 253
2. Grade 11 Counselor 269
3. Grade 10 Counselor 269
4. Grade 9 Counselor 275

Counselor’s Duties
1. Work closely with the administration on many student issues
2. Schedule students, track their courses, tally their credits for all years
3. Change student schedules as needed throughout the school year
4. Complete individual interviews with all students to discuss credits and post-secondary plans (grades 10, 11, 12 only)
5. Meet with students who are academically deficient at the mid-point and end of each marking period, starting with those who have 3 or more reports or D/F
6. Respond to a myriad of email and phone messages
7. Complete career activities with students on the CHOICES computer program
8. Set up and participate in parent-teacher conferences
9. Coordinate Educational Support Team process including setting up the meetings and gathering information
10. Respond to crises as needed and refer students to the CAN HELP Line
11. Be an active member of the Student Assistance Team which meets twice a week
12. Consult with probation
13. Consult with teachers
14. Consult with administration
15. Consult with agencies and mental health facilities...for example, The Meadows, Manito, Northwestern Academy...gather student information and work
16. Mediate to resolve student conflicts
17. Provide academic counseling and study skills assistance
18. Meet with new students and parents
19. Meet with potential new students and parents
20. Complete course histories for new students
21. Be an active liaison between the high school and CPI
22. Go to CPI if there is a crisis
23. Complete extra progress reports for students
24. Develop parent-student newsletters
25. Present information to students at grade level meetings
26. Meet with students during SS classes throughout the year: opening year overview, surveys, scheduling
27. Develop timeline and all forms for scheduling
28. Complete state reports
29. Update School Profile
30. Facilitate, set-up, and attend evening Financial Aid Programs
31. Facilitate, set-up, and attend Evening Conferences for Scheduling
32. Complete all paperwork necessary for students placement in Night School
33. Work with students who are placed in the AEP Program
34. Meet with students and parents to schedule students for online courses
35. Follow students who are taking online courses
36. Keep the administration up-to-date on students who are taking online courses
37. Run counseling groups for students who are placed in Night School
38. Process promotions and retentions
39. Testing-Coordinate, develop schedules for, administer, and complete make ups for the following tests:
   a. ASVAB
   b. ACT
   c. PSAT
   d. PSSA
   e. SAT
   f. AP-4 hours per test….one year had 56 hours of testing
   g. Terra Nova
   h. PSSA Retest
   i. Special needs testing for SAT and ACT
40. Plan and develop the 8th grade parent program
41. Meet with students who are moving or withdrawing from school
42. Meet with past graduates and give them information regarding career opportunities
43. Coordinate mailings of Terra Nova, PSSA results, special programs
44. Give students information regarding SAT and ACT testing
45. Register students for summer school
46. Monitor and address attendance issues
47. Set-up summer attendance make up days schedule
48. Update web page
49. Disseminate Chapter 15 Service Agreements
50. Set-up conferences to update Chapter 15 Service Agreements
51. Set-up homebound for students-complete paperwork and find the teacher
52. Counsel students on a variety of issues
53. Supervise maintenance of student records
54. Complete correspondence to parents including special failure letters
55. Work with international students
56. Review weekly mail to decide if information should be posted or placed on the
   morning announcements
57. Develop Guidance budget
58. Review, update, prepare for printing and distribution the Career Planning Guide
59. Attend workshops to keep up-to-date on a variety of issues including PSU, PCT,
   Financial Aid, College Board, State System, ACT
60. Arrange for post-secondary presentations
61. Process good driver applications for insurance companies
62. Attend IEP and Transition Meetings

ADDITIONAL GRADE SPECIFIC DUTIES

Grade 9
1. Arrange 9th grade field trip to CPI
2. Attend team meetings when possible

Grade 10
1. Coordinate the choosing of our HOBY representative
2. Complete paperwork for Governor's School applicants
3. Return and review PSAT tests

Grade 11
1. Complete paperwork for Governor's School applicants
2. Attend the following workshops: PSU, PCT, Financial Aid
3. Return and review PSAT test results
4. Return and review ASVAB test results
5. Coordinate "Outstanding Young Woman" selection process
6. Process preliminary NCAA Clearinghouse applications

Grade 12
1. Complete college applications and transcripts
2. Coordinate awards program including dissemination of Common Application and
   facilitation of choosing award winners for over 100 awards
3. Write recommendations for college
4. Attend the following workshops: PSU, PCT, Financial Aid
5. Complete the entire PSSA Retest process
6. Keep track of seniors Community Service Hours and PSSA Remediation
7. Develop the registered letters for all student failures throughout the year
8. Coordinate students taking college courses as seniors
9. Survey seniors and complete statistical report for School Board
10. Meet with parents of potential non-graduates
11. Meet with representatives from colleges and the military
12. Announce various scholarships for seniors
13. Maintain the Guidance Web Page for scholarships and awards
14. Complete, log, mail and write recommendations for scholarships for seniors
15. Asssist students with post-secondary plans
16. Meet with students and parents to review financial aid forms and processes
17. Coordinate placement of seniors in Internships
18. Process final NCAA Clearinghouse applications
19. Process military paperwork

Reasons for Adding a 4th Counselor at the High School Level
This counselor would begin with 9th grade and provide continuity for the students throughout their high school careers.

1. We would like to be proactive with 9th grade rather than reactive.
2. We would be able to give students in 9th grade more attention in general.
3. We do not have a lot of time to spend with 9th grade because our major concentration is with our core grade be it 10, 11, or 12.
4. We would be able to provide more adjustment to high school counseling.
5. We would be able to provide more academic counseling for students who are having academic difficulties.
6. We would be able to attend more 9th grade team meetings.
7. We would be better able to serve student needs either academically, emotionally, or socially.
8. A 4th counselor would complete summer review of schedules for incoming 9th grade students to make sure that they have a complete schedule and that all pre-requisites are met.
9. A 4th counselor could help with the ever-increasing demands of PSSA and other standardized testing.
10. A 9th grade counselor would coordinate the CPI visits and help with career speakers.
11. This counselor would be a part of the Career Program that will be more fully developed by the counseling department and would include work with the CHOICES computer program.

Current Career Education
(We are limited by the amount of time that we have to complete career guidance activities because we take time from either English or SS classes to complete them.)

1. Complete individual guidance interviews with students grades 10-12 at which time we explore career options
2. CHOICES-one day in a computer lab with each grade to work on Interest Inventory, College Search, Financial Aid & Scholarships, Job Bank, etc. depending on grade level
3. Coordinate classroom guest speakers from various post-secondary institutions
4. Make the guidance office available to recruiters including colleges and the military
5. Offer the ASVAB and follow-up to interested juniors and seniors
6. Make available to students the following tests: PSAT, SAT, ACT
7. Coordinate the SAT PREP course
8. Announce and attend the area college fair/sit on development committee with other school counselors and local post-secondary institutions
9. Provide internships
10. Provide job shadowing experiences
11. Work closely with the school-to-work coordinator
12. Keep current with our catalogues and guidance career library
13. Coordinate students who are taking college courses as seniors at PSU, LHU, South Hills

4th Counselor and Career Education
1. We would be able to add individual guidance interviews to grade 9 at which time we would be able to explore career options.
2. CHOICES-We could expand this to more than one day.
3. We could be proactive with job shadowing and internship experiences rather than reactive and add these experiences to other grade levels.
4. We could work more closely with the 9th grade team career speakers.
5. We would have more time to fully develop a 9-12 Career Program that could include trips to colleges, transition day activities, etc.
6. We could work more closely with the CPI students and faculty regarding career choices and post-secondary plans.
### Appendix H

**Case Area High School Assessment Calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
<th>Testing Window</th>
<th>Estimated Counselor Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-Sight Reading/Math Assessments</td>
<td>9(^{th}) grade students 10(^{th}) grade students 11(^{th}) grade students</td>
<td>October 27-November 8, 2008 January 26-February 6, 2008</td>
<td>5-7 Days Each Test Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSAT</td>
<td>Interested 10(^{th}) and 11(^{th}) grade students</td>
<td>October 18, 2008</td>
<td>4 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSSA-Reading/Math/ Writing 12(^{th}) Grade PSSA Retest</td>
<td>Identified eligible 12(^{th}) grade students</td>
<td>October 20-October 31, 2008</td>
<td>2 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASVAB</td>
<td>Interested 11(^{th}) and 12(^{th}) grade students</td>
<td>February 2, 2009</td>
<td>3 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Interested 10(^{th}), 11(^{th}), and 12(^{th}) grade students</td>
<td>February 7, 2009</td>
<td>2 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSSA-Writing Assessment</td>
<td>11(^{th}) grade students</td>
<td>February 9-20, 2008</td>
<td>2 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSSA-Reading and Math</td>
<td>11(^{th}) grade students</td>
<td>February 16-March 27, 2009</td>
<td>2 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>Interested 10(^{th}), 11(^{th}), and 12(^{th}) grade students</td>
<td>March 14, 2009</td>
<td>3 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSSA-Science Assessment</td>
<td>11(^{th}) grade students</td>
<td>April 27-May 8, 2009</td>
<td>2 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Placement Examinations</td>
<td>Interested 10(^{th}), 11(^{th}), and 12(^{th}) grade students</td>
<td>May, 2009</td>
<td>7-8 Days</td>
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</table>
Appendix I

CASE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Old High School Counselor Job Description Undated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Title:</th>
<th>High School Guidance Counselor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports To:</td>
<td>Building Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared By:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved By:</td>
<td>Board of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:
- To help students understand themselves, recognize their intrinsic worth as individuals, and their relationship to their environment.
- To help students understand and accept their aptitudes, interests, attitudes, values, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Aid students in self-evaluation, self-understanding, and self-direction enabling each to make decisions consistent with short and long range goals.
- Demonstrate respect for the worth, dignity, and quality of all students’ human rights.
- Show concern for and assist in the planning of the students’ educational, career, personal and social development.
- Assist students in the development of an awareness of the world of work and in the use of school and community resources.
- Help students to acquire a better understanding of the world of work through the acquisition of skills and attitudes and/or participation in work-related programs.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:
- Assist students through crisis intervention.
- Identify students and develop support programs for students at risk and/or with academic deficiencies.
- Coordinate individual parent/teacher conferences.
- Conduct academic counseling with students who appear not to be working up to their academic potential.
- Conduct placement counseling with individual students.
- Conduct personal counseling with students who may appear to be having social, emotional, or personal problems through family changes such as death, divorce, or separation.
- Conduct conflict resolution counseling with students.
- Perform intake assessment to identify student needs.
- Conduct group counseling in a small group setting with students with similar concerns.
- Counsel students referred by staff or administration.
• Provide individual and/or group instruction on various topics (e.g., life skills, study skills, building self-esteem, stress management, coping strategies, conflict resolution, communication skills).
• Serve as a liaison between parents, teachers, administration, and non-school agencies.
• Assist staff members in the interpretation of psychological evaluations.
• Interpret standardized tests to both students and staff.
• Provide feedback and advice to instructional staff relative to student needs, performance, or interpersonal conflicts.
• Serve as a consultant to administrators concerning student needs and academic considerations.
• Work with academically at-risk students and make recommendations for courses of action.
• Serve as a member of the Student Assistant Team.
• Identify students and develop support programs for students with academic deficiencies.
• Organize and oversee the peer tutorial program.
• Monitor credit loads to assure compliance with graduation requirements.
• Deliver course selection presentations.
• Counsel students regarding course selection.
• Provide information and direction for educational/vocational planning.
• Provide an ongoing Career Education Program.
• Arrange for speakers on career-related topics.
• Collect and disseminate career, educational, and personal/social information.
• Plan and organize Financial Aid presentations.
• Assist students and parents in financial/tuition planning.
• Identify sources of financial aid and recommend students who may be eligible.
• In-service faculty concerning various guidance functions and procedures.
• Plan and conduct specialized units of instruction (e.g., career, self-awareness).
• Administer a career awareness instrument to all ninth-grade students.
• Process referrals for student evaluations.
• Coordinate orientation and placement of new students.
• Arrange and conduct yearly guidance interviews to review progress, check demographics, and address student concerns.
• Develop, coordinate, and attend parent orientation programs.
• Coordinate the school psychologists’ schedules for conferences which may be either parent meetings or psychological testing for students in need.
• Coordinate and process Multi-Disciplinary Team, Child Study Team, and Individual Educational Plan conferences.
• Coordinate referrals for students who are to be placed on homebound instruction.
• Coordinate assessment activities of various teams whose function is to determine appropriate placement for students.
• Coordinate and manage all standardized testing programs.
• Administer standardized tests to those students in need of make-ups.
• Administer individualized tests for either placement or reevaluation to identify specific academic problems.
• Refer students with needs that are outside the scope of school resources to appropriate non-school agencies.
• Refer students to the Student Assistance Team.
• Screen referrals from faculty and administration to determine appropriate action.
• Refer students and/or parents to appropriate administrator for information, policy decisions, and disciplinary action.
• Assist in placing students in jobs with local employers who contact the school.
• Assist in identification and placement of students in such programs as STEP and Upward Bound.
• Identify and recommend students for school awards and special interest programs.
• Collect data for program development and needs assessment.
• Maintain school records.
• Develop budgets for guidance programs.
• Maintain category C records on students seen by a counselor for any extended period of time.
• Provide students with post-secondary placement in such matters as providing transcripts, test scores, recommendations, etc.
• Design and distribute a guidance newsletter to parents highlighting available guidance services.
• Supervise the Guidance Office Clerk and the Guidance Aide.
• Supervise and train graduate counseling interns.
• Attend appropriate professional development information/training workshops.
• Participate in in-service training programs.
• Attend scheduled staff meetings and committee meetings as needed.
• Work with agencies in such a way as to facilitate identification, evaluation, and IEP development prior to a child’s entrance to public school when required.
• Cooperate with personnel of community health and social welfare agencies.
• Keep abreast of developing trends in guidance counseling through classes and professional journals.
• Perform related duties as assigned.

EVALUATION:
• Performance of this job will be evaluated annually by the Building Principal in accordance with the provisions of the Board’s policy and PDE regulations governing evaluation of professional personnel.

EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE:
• Academic Preparation:

• Experience:
Minimum – Background in working with both elementary and secondary children.
Preferred – Experience as a classroom teacher.

LANGUAGE SKILLS:
- Ability to read, analyze and interpret general periodicals, professional journals, technical procedures, state and government regulations. Ability to effectively present information using a variety of medium and respond to questions from students, administrators, staff, and general public. Possesses a thorough and current knowledge of curriculum and effective teaching practices.

MATHEMATICAL SKILLS:
- Ability to calculate various statistical procedures and interpret same.

REASONING ABILITY:
- Ability to define problems collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions. Ability to interpret an extensive variety of curriculum documents and deal with several abstract and concrete variables.

OTHER SKILLS and ABILITIES:
- Effective communication and interpersonal skills.
- Ability to work with a wide range of individuals and gain respect and support of others.
- Effective leadership skills.
- Strong organizational skills.
- Skill in caring for detail and accuracy.
- Personal integrity, sense of humor, good character, and emotional stability.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS:
The demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to stand, walk, sit, talk, and hear. The employee is occasionally required to reach with hands and arms and stoop, kneel, crouch, and crawl. The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 40 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, and depth perception. Ability to hear with 40 decibel loss maximum. Some bending and twisting of the body is required. Ability to enter and exit vehicles such as vans, buses, etc. Ability to perform duties in inclement weather.

WORK ENVIRONMENT:
The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. The noise level in this environment is generally moderate to loud depending upon the activity in the particular part of the day. Candidate must be able to work in an active and busy environment.
Appendix J

CASE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
High School Counselor Job Description Revisions May 2009

Blue is add.
Red is remove.
Green is change to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Title: High School Guidance Counselor</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports To: Building Principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared By:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved By: Board of Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:
- To help students understand themselves, recognize their intrinsic worth as individuals, and their relationship to their environment.
- To help students understand and accept their aptitudes, interests, attitudes, values, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Aid students in self-evaluation, self-understanding, and self-direction enabling each to make decisions consistent with short and long range goals.
- Demonstrate respect for the worth, dignity, and quality of all students’ human rights.
- Show concern for and assist in the planning of the students’ educational, career, personal and social development.
- Assist students in the development of an awareness of the world of work and in the use of school and community resources.
- Help students to acquire a better understanding of the world of work through the acquisition of skills and attitudes and/or participation in work-related programs.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:
- Assist students through crisis intervention.
- Identify students and develop support programs for students at risk and/or with academic deficiencies.
- Coordinate individual parent/teacher conferences.
- Conduct academic counseling with students who appear not to be working up to their academic potential.
- **Conduct placement counseling with individual students.** (remove)
- **Collaborate with placement team to address students’ transition needs.** (add)
- Conduct personal counseling with students who may appear to be having social, emotional, or personal problems through family changes such as death, divorce, or separation.
- Conduct conflict resolution counseling with students.
• Perform intake assessment to identify student needs.
• Conduct group counseling in a small group setting with students with similar concerns.
• Counsel students referred by staff or administration.
• Provide individual and/or group instruction on various topics (e.g., life skills, study skills, building self-esteem, stress management, coping strategies, conflict resolution, communication skills).
• Serve as a liaison between parents, teachers, administration, and non-school agencies.
• Assist staff members in the interpretation of psychological evaluations.
• Interpret standardized tests to both students and staff.
• Provide feedback and advice to instructional staff relative to student needs, performance, or interpersonal conflicts.
• Serve as a consultant to administrators concerning student needs and academic considerations.
• Work with academically at-risk students and make recommendations for courses of action.
• Serve as a member of the Student Assistant Team.
• Identify students and develop support programs for students with academic deficiencies.
• Organize and oversee the peer tutorial program. (remove)
• Refer students for tutoring. (add)
• Monitor credit loads, Proficiency, and community service hours (add) to assure compliance with graduation requirements.
• Assist with student credit recovery needs including summer school recommendations, tutoring referrals, rescheduling of a course, and online remediation. (add)
• Coordinate the blended services process for student course selection. (add)
• Coordinate and monitor online and distance learning course enrollments. (add)
• Deliver course selection presentations.
• Counsel students regarding course selection.
• Coordinate the course selection process: course selection, schedule editing, and related tasks. (add)
• Provide information and direction for educational/vocational planning.
• Provide an ongoing Career Education Program.
• Arrange for speakers on career-related topics.
• Collect and disseminate career, educational, and personal/social information.
• Plan and organize Financial Aid presentations.
• Assist students and parents in financial/tuition planning.
• Identify sources of financial aid and recommend students who may be eligible.
• In-service faculty concerning various school counseling (change to) functions and procedures.
• Plan and conduct specialized units of instruction (e.g., career, self-awareness).
• Administer a career awareness instrument to all ninth-grade students. (remove ninth)
• Process referrals for student evaluations.
• Coordinate orientation and placement of new students.
• Arrange and conduct yearly school counseling (change to) interviews to review progress, check demographics, and address student concerns.
• Develop, coordinate, and attend parent orientation programs.
• Coordinate the school psychologists’ schedules for conferences which may be either parent meetings or psychological testing for students in need. (remove)
• Coordinate and process Multi-Disciplinary Team, Child Study Team, and Individual Educational Plan conferences. (remove)
• Coordinate Educational Support Team Meetings. (add)
• Coordinate referrals for students who are to be placed on homebound instruction.
• Coordinate assessment activities of various teams whose function is to determine appropriate placement for students. (remove)
• Coordinate and manage all standardized testing programs as designated by the School Counseling Department including, but not limited to: PSSA Writing, Math, Reading, and Science; 4Sight, College Board Tests (PSAT, SAT, AP), ACT, and ASVAB. (add)
• Facilitate and administer SAT and ACT tests to students with disabilities. (add)
• Keep abreast of current technology as needed by the School Counseling Department.
• Administer standardized tests to those students in need of make-ups.
• Administer individualized tests for either placement or reevaluation to identify specific academic problems. (remove)
• Refer students with needs that are outside the scope of school resources to appropriate non-school agencies.
• Refer students to the Student Assistance Team.
• Screen referrals from faculty and administration to determine appropriate action.
• Refer students and/or parents to appropriate administrator for information, policy decisions, and disciplinary action.
• Assist in placing students in jobs with local employers who contact the school.
• Assist in identification and placement of students in such programs as STEP and Upward Bound (remove) available mentoring programs. (add)
• Identify and recommend students for school awards and special interest programs. (remove)
• Oversee, manage, and participate in the senior awards application and selection process.
• Collect data for program development and needs assessment.
Maintain school records.
Develop budgets for school counseling programs.

* Maintain category C records on students seen by a counselor for any extended period of time. (remove)

* Assist students with post-secondary placement in such matters as providing transcripts, test scores, recommendations, etc.

* Assist with Dual Enrollment process for seniors. (add)

* Design and distribute a school counselor newsletter to parents highlighting available school counseling services.

* Supervise the School Counseling Office Clerk and the School Counseling Aide.

* Supervise and train graduate counseling interns.

* Participate in in-service training programs.

* Attend scheduled staff meetings and committee meetings as needed.

* Work with agencies in such a way as to facilitate identification, evaluation, and IEP development prior to a child’s entrance to public school when required. (remove)

* Cooperate with personnel of community health and social welfare agencies.

* Keep abreast of developing trends in school counseling through classes and professional journals.

* Perform related duties as assigned.

EVALUATION:
- Performance of this job will be evaluated annually by the Building Principal in accordance with the provisions of the Board’s policy and PDE regulations governing evaluation of professional personnel.

EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE:
- Academic Preparation:
  Minimum – Master’s degree in Secondary School Counseling and appropriate Pennsylvania teaching certification and program specialist certificate endorsed for Secondary Guidance Counseling. (Check with PDE with this. Can someone have a master’s degree in a related area with a certificate in school counseling?)

  Experience:
  Minimum – Background in working with both elementary and secondary children.
  Preferred – Experience as a classroom teacher.

LANGUAGE SKILLS:
- Ability to read, analyze and interpret general periodicals, professional journals, technical procedures, state and government regulations. Ability to effectively present information using a variety of medium and respond to questions from students, administrators, staff, and general public. Possesses a thorough and
current knowledge of curriculum and effective teaching practices,

**MATHEMATICAL SKILLS:**
- Ability to calculate various statistical procedures and interpret same.

**REASONING ABILITY:**
- Ability to define problems, collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions. Ability to interpret an extensive variety of curriculum documents and deal with several abstract and concrete variables.

**OTHER SKILLS and ABILITIES:**
- Effective communication and interpersonal skills.
- Ability to work with a wide range of individuals and gain respect and support of others.
- Effective leadership skills.
- Strong organizational skills.
- Skill in caring for detail and accuracy.
- Personal integrity, sense of humor, good character, and emotional stability.
- **Effectively work as a team member within the School Counseling Department. (add)**

**PHYSICAL DEMANDS:**
The demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to stand, walk, sit, talk, and hear. The employee is occasionally required to reach with hands and arms and stoop, kneel, crouch, and crawl. The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 40 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, and depth perception. Ability to hear with 40 decibel loss maximum. Some bending and twisting of the body is required. Ability to enter and exit vehicles such as vans, buses, etc. Ability to perform duties in inclement weather.

**WORK ENVIRONMENT:**
The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

The noise level in this environment is generally moderate to loud depending upon the activity in the particular part of the day. Candidate must be able to work in an active and busy environment.
Appendix K

12th Grade PSSA Remediation Procedures
For Grade 11 PSSA Scores

Math

1. Summer Before the Senior Year
   a. The Guidance Department will receive the junior year PSSA scores.
   b. The senior guidance counselor will immediately forward the PSSA math scores to the math tutors.

2. Late Summer/Beginning of the Senior Year
   a. The tutors will check to see what study halls the seniors have who scored at the Basic and Below Basic levels.
   b. The tutors will check to see what math class (if any) the seniors have who scored at the Basic and Below Basic levels.

3. Quarter One of the Senior Year
   a. Students who have scored at the Basic level will be tutored during a study hall in order to prepare for the PSSA Math Retest.
   b. Students who scored at the Below Basic level will be tutored if there is room in the tutors’ schedules.
   c. Students will be scheduled by permanent pass.
   d. The tutors will tell the senior guidance counselor which students will be receiving tutoring for the retest.
   e. Tutored students should take the retest that occurs around the end of October.

4. Quarter Two of the Senior Year
   a. Students who took the retest will be asked if they want to start remediation through PLATO or if they want to wait until the retest is returned the end of January.
   b. Students who remediate through PLATO must complete the program through Level G.
   c. IEP students will complete the program through the level determined by the tutor.
   d. The tutors will speak with all Basic and Below Basic seniors who have a C average or lower in their current math class and
Reading

1. Summer Before the Senior Year
   a. The Guidance Department will receive the junior year PSSA scores.
   b. The senior guidance counselor will immediately forward the PSSA reading scores to the reading tutor.

2. Late Summer/Beginning of the Senior Year
   a. The tutor will check to see what study halls the seniors have who have scored at the Basic or Below Basic levels.

3. Quarter One of the Senior Year
   a. Students who have scored at the Basic level will be tutored during a study hall in order to prepare for the PSSA Reading Retest.
   b. Students who scored at the Below Basic level will be tutored if there is room in the tutors' schedules.
   c. Students will be notified by letter.
   d. Students will be scheduled by permanent pass.
   e. The tutors will tell the senior guidance counselor which students will be receiving tutoring for the retest.
   f. Tutored students should take the retest that occurs around the end of October.
   g. Students who do not have space in their schedule or who do not want to tutor for the retest will receive a practice packet that they can do on their own time and meet with the tutor during homeroom.

4. Quarter Two of the Senior Year
   a. Students who took the retest will be asked if they want to start remediation through PLATO or if they want to wait until the retest is returned the end of January.
   b. Students who remediate through PLATO must complete the program through Level F plus researching and referencing modules.
   c. IEP students will complete the program through the level determined by the tutor.
   d. The tutors will speak with all Basic and Below Basic seniors who have a C average or lower in their current English class and ask them if they want to start PLATO even if they took the retest.
Appendix L

BLENDED SERVICES

Who? Any non-identified student struggling with a course and at-risk for failure and for whom other interventions have not proven successful when implemented by a regular classroom teacher. These interventions must be documented over a series of 4-5 weeks and must be course specified.

What? Interventions beyond what has been tried in the regular classroom which may include use of the testing room (if space is predetermined to be available), extended time on tests (up to 45 minutes) or on projects (up to 2 additional days), alternative response formats (dependent on availability of staff), or others as determined appropriate.

When? During course student is having difficulty with; as staff and space are available.

How? Meeting with student, parent(s)/guardian(s), guidance counselor, staff member referring, staff member providing service, and administrator to all concur on service(s) needed and duration of service(s).
Appendix M

Example of Comparative Report Using 4Sight Data

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Appendix N

Keystone Exams Information For School Counselors March 2010

STRONGER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions

On January 8, 2010, following approvals by the state’s Independent Regulatory Review Commission and the Attorney General, the State Board of Education published changes to Chapter 4 that set stronger, more consistent high school graduation requirements for students, beginning with the class of 2015 — today’s seventh graders.

Under the new regulation, students can meet graduation requirements through any or a combination of the following options:

1. Course completion, including state-developed final exam
2. Rigorous, independently-validated local assessments
3. Rigorous national assessments (AP or IB)

OR ANY COMBINATION

OPTION 1 — DEMONSTRATE PROFICIENCY IN CORE SUBJECTS: For the class of 2014-15, students will demonstrate proficiency in English composition, literature, algebra I and biology, with a Keystone final exam counting for one-third of the final course grade. In 2017, requirements under this option will be expanded to include:

- passing 2 English courses (composition and literature);
- passing 2 math courses (algebra I, algebra II, or geometry);
- passing 1 science course (biology or chemistry); and
- passing 1 social studies course (options include civics, American history or world history).

Like existing final exams, Keystone Exams will be short (approximately 2 to 2 ½ hours), subject-specific assessments that students take at the end of a course. Unlike existing final exams, students will be able to retake the assessments in whole or in part and students who do not test well can complete a project-based alternative assessment. Under the regulation, no student will be denied a high school diploma based on test scores alone as teacher-assigned grades will constitute a majority (67%) of the course grade.
OPTION 2 – PASS LOCAL ASSESSMENTS that have been independently validated. This regulation preserves local control but sets consistent standards for locally-developed measures to ensure rigorous assessments, fair administration, and reliable results. The state will share validation costs with local districts.

OPTION 3 – PASS RIGOROUS NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS such as Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) exams.

Importantly, the regulation also responds to calls to reduce the amount of testing in Pennsylvania’s high schools. Under this plan, beginning the 2012-13 school year, three Keystone Exams in algebra I, literature and biology will replace the 11th grade Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests. This change will reduce annual testing time by approximately 18 hours – the equivalent of three school days. The PSSA will be retained for use in the elementary and middle grades.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

LOCAL ASSESSMENT OPTION:

1. Our district is planning to use locally-developed assessments to comply with the new regulation. Must local assessments count for one-third of a student’s course grade?

   No. The state-designated 1/3 weight applies only to the state-developed Keystone Exams. The regulation does not set a weight for local assessments or Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams.

2. How will the state evaluate locally-developed assessments?

   For local assessments to satisfy state graduation requirements, they must meet the following criteria:

   1) Alignment with state academic standards;
   2) Rigorous expectations, comparable to those used for the Keystone Exams; and
   3) Administration to all students, except for those exempted by Individualized Education Plans or Gifted Individualized Education Plans

   Additional criteria will be established by the Local Assessment Validation Advisory Committee.

3. If a district plans to use local assessments for one subject, must they use local assessments for all subjects?

   No. The regulation permits districts to select assessment options by subject area from among the three options detailed on the previous page.
4. *If a district decides to use only local assessments for graduation determinations, will these count for AYP when the PSSA is replaced by the Keystone exams?*

No. Provided the U.S. Department of Education approves Keystone exams for AYP/NCLB purposes, students will have to take those Keystone exams (algebra 1, literature, and biology) to meet AYP/NCLB requirements and local assessments to meet state graduation requirements.

**KEYSTONE EXAMS:**

1. *Can students retake a Keystone Exam?*

   Yes. The regulation permits students who do not score proficient or above to retake the exam (or exam module) at the next available testing date.

2. *Can a student who scores proficient or advanced retake a Keystone Exam?*

   The regulation does not preclude proficient or advanced students from re-taking a Keystone Exam.

3. *Can students “test-out” of a course by passing a Keystone Exam?*

   Yes, at the district’s discretion and provided that the student scores “Advanced” on the related Keystone.

4. *What is the process and timeline for replacing the 11th grade PSSA with Keystone Exams?*

   The process requires PDE to document, collect, and submit evidence of test development and test quality for USDE peer review. We anticipate approval by 2013.

5. *Will Keystone Exam scores for students in middle school count toward high school graduation requirements?*

   Yes. For example, if a student takes the Keystone algebra I exam in 8th grade, it will count for one-third of that final mark. If the student passes the course, he/she will have met the requirement for graduation.

6. *When will the Keystone Exam scores for students in middle school count toward AYP?*

   For purposes of AYP, Keystone Exam scores will be attributed in 11th grade – even though students may – and likely, will – take the relevant courses and Keystones in an earlier grade.
What is the timeline for developing Keystone Exams and other voluntary instructional resources?

Please see the table below:

### KEYSTONE EXAM DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keystone Exam</th>
<th>Field Test</th>
<th>Available for all schools...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algebra I, Biology, Literature</td>
<td>Fall/Winter 2010</td>
<td>Spring 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chemistry, Civics &amp; Government, World History</td>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
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### CLASSROOM DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

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<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Field Test</th>
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<td>Fall 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
AP/IB OPTIONS:

What score is required on an AP or IB test to satisfy graduation requirements?

The Department will issue policy guidance on this question by July 1, 2010.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS:

1. How will students qualify to complete a project-based assessment?

Any student who does not score proficient on a Keystone Exam after two attempts will be eligible to complete a project-based assessment, provided the student has taken the course and met local attendance and supplemental instruction requirements.

2. Can a student who scores proficient or advanced complete a project-based assessment to raise their score?

The project-based assessment is designed expressly to help students supplement a Keystone Exam score in order to meet the graduation requirement of proficiency. A project-based assessment can raise a student’s Keystone score to the proficient cut score, but not beyond it.

3. If a project-based assessment raises a student’s Keystone score, will that proficient score count toward AYP?

No. The score from a student’s original exam is used for the purpose of determining AYP.

4. How will the Secretary evaluate waiver requests based on extenuating circumstances?

The regulation includes a waiver provision – modeled on the policy used in Massachusetts – that allows the Secretary to exempt individual students from the new graduation requirements based on personal or family crisis or other extenuating circumstances. The waiver request must be accompanied by an endorsement from the student’s local superintendent. The Department will issue additional policy guidance on this question by July 1, 2010.
VITA

Barbara Jean Miller

Barbara Jean Miller is a graduate of The Pennsylvania State University with a Bachelors of Science in Health Planning and Administration, which included a minor area of study in Nursing; a Master’s in Science in Curriculum and Instruction, Secondary Education Science; and a Master’s in Education in Counselor Education, Secondary Education. She began her doctoral studies in Educational Leadership in August of 1994. Through the course of those studies she received her Educational Specialist II certificate in Secondary School Counseling and her Principal Certification.

She has worked as an aide in schools for severely multi-handicapped children, has been a mental health counselor for children and youth at a psychiatric facility, a behavioral specialist consultant and mobile therapist for special needs children and youth; and for the past ten years has been employed as a high school counselor. For four years she was a graduate assistant to the Educational Administration Program and Center for Total Quality Schools at The Pennsylvania State University. While a graduate assistant she composed the Educational Administration Program's NCATE (National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education) certification compliance response document, August 1996; assisted with the College of Education’s Institutional Report for PDE (Pennsylvania Department of Education) certification compliance review, January 1997; was an Assistant Editor for Perspectives, PSSC (Pennsylvania School Study Council) Newsletter, September 1996 to May 1997; and represented the Educational Administration Program at the College of Education's PCCC (Professional Certification Coordinating Council) committee; August 1996 to May 1998.