

Title of Session: Great Resources for School Counselors-Back to School

Moderator: Barbara Muller-Ackerman

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Room: Counselors' Corner

BJB2: no problem! Do you know Barbara?

TatyanaGst16: not really, only through the group

TatyanaGst16: for elementary school-counselors

BJB2: ahhh, cool.

BJB2: so this is your first visit to Tapped In?

TatyanaGst16: yep

BJB2: may I extend an invitation to get a free membership, Tatyana.

BJB2: members receive a transcript of the chat when they log out

TatyanaGst16: I would just sit here quietly, not make a mess and drink my tea :o)

BJB2: membership also allows you to have a private office

TatyanaGst16: sure, I'll try to do it while waiting

BJB2: and join special interest groups

BJB2: www.tappedin.org

BJB2: just takes a moment to fill out the membership form

TatyanaGst16: what do u mean private office

BJB2: each member can have a private office or space in Tapped In where you can store files and links, plan, or meet with colleagues

TatyanaGst16: hm, it's interesting. thanks. I'll do it

BarbaraMu joined the room.

BarbaraMu: Hi BJ

BarbaraMu: Hi Tatyana

BarbaraMu: Are you ready for the chat tonight?

TatyanaGst16: Hi

BarbaraMu: Have there been any announcements?

TatyanaGst16: if you are asking me then SURE

BJB2: hi, Barbara!

SharonMW joined the room.

BJB2: welcome, Sharon

TatyanaGst16: Hi Sharon

BarbaraMu: I don't know if anyone else is coming...but if you would introduce yourself and where you work...that would be great

DavidWe joined the room.

BJB2 . o O (a reminder to go to the actions menu in the top right of the chat window and click on DETACH. That will make your chat window larger and easier to read)

BJB2 waves hi to David

BarbaraMu: Hi Sharon...Hi David...could we get started with some introductions?

BarbaraMu: I am a counselor in NJ. Was elementary level for 13 years.

DavidWe: I'm David Weksler. I'm one of the Help Desk volunteers for Tapped In. I'm in Bucks County, PA, north of Philadelphia

BJB2: I'm a communications teacher in Pennsylvania and on Tapped In helpdesk

TatyanaGst16: I'm Tatyana in NC elementary sch. counselor

SharonMW: I'm in NC and have been an elementary counselor for 9 years and middle school counselor for 10 years in a former life

TatyanaGst16: Sharon where exactly in NC

SharonMW: Winston-Salem

BarbaraMu: SO for those of us in the northeast, school started just after Labor Day. Did the two of you in North Carolina start in August?

TatyanaGst16: we did Aug. 25, I think

BarbaraMu: This is the first of the chats for this school year and I thought it would be valuable to talk about and share some resources for the beginning of the year...

TatyanaGst16: it would be, I agree

TatyanaGst16: in advance I need to apologize for my spelling, English is my second language

BarbaraMu: things to help organize your year. Do you have any themes that you are currently using either from month to month or as an overarching theme for the year?

TatyanaGst16: I'm still fighting with teachers to get at least my toes in the door of their classrooms

SharonMW: I always begin the year with study skills school wide...listening for younger students and study skills for the upper grades

BarbaraMu: Sometimes, counselors have them from their program, sometimes the school itself has a theme- for example when there is a character ed program and the first month or marking period might focus on Responsibility or Respect

TatyanaGst16: I'm new at this school... people are helpful, but...

BarbaraMu: Tatyana- Have you had a chance to talk at the staff meeting...or give out a sign up sheet of classroom lesson times?

TatyanaGst16: I'm trying, also we just finished with our testing portion, and I'm in charge of that

TatyanaGst16: I did 4 time: first made a round personally introduced myself

TatyanaGst16: and asked teachers what and how...

TatyanaGst16: then I wrote a letter

TatyanaGst16: then I asked my assistant principle to help me out...

TatyanaGst16: I'm tempting to suggest for the next year to actually put my visits on a master schedule

SharonMW: I don't have any problems with the classroom portion of the program. Sometimes it is difficult to pull students for groups.

TatyanaGst16: is it too much?

BarbaraMu: I always had a schedule I gave out for the month.

BarbaraMu: Given the dynamic nature of counseling, and the amount of crises which come up and can't be counted on, writing yourself into a master schedule isn't practical

TatyanaGst16: Our school is an accelerated school and they try to do a looooooooooot of different things

GaryML joined the room.

BarbaraMu: Hi Gary

TatyanaGst16: I realize that very well too

GaryML: Hello

TatyanaGst16: I'm stuck, that's my problem

TatyanaGst16: Sharon, how many counselors are at your school?

BarbaraMu: Gary- could you introduce yourself- where you work and level?

SharonMW: I am the only one for 636 students.

GaryML: Well, I'm living in San Antonio and I teach 7th grade Texas History

TatyanaGst16: do you do assistance team?

BarbaraMu: I had a caseload of 600+ also...in 2 schools

TatyanaGst16: but less likely was a testing coordinator

BarbaraMu: an early childhood campus and a 1-4 building

TatyanaGst16: that's a lot

TatyanaGst16: I have currently 500= students

BarbaraMu: I think that the extra things counselors get assigned to (I never did the testing program) comes from a lot of administrators not really understanding what our program is and needs to be

BarbaraMu: it's a reason the counselor-principal agreement is so important in terms of how much time is to be spent on direct contact with students and on consultation and coordination of program

BarbaraMu: The ASCA National Model has a lot of information about the amount of time that should, ideally, be spent in each area

TatyanaGst16: I agree, I also think that there should be an advocate for counselor. Our system is centralized: one big county-we all do testing, and other things, and our Student Services Person doesn't want to do anything

TatyanaGst16: that's frustrating

TatyanaGst16: He says it's our problem...

SharonMW: We are in the beginning stages of implementing the national model and have done the time study which does help administrators understand what we are doing and how our time is spent.

BarbaraMu: The state of Indiana has a lot of resources for school counselors. One of the areas they get into is how to organize your time and how to do time and task analysis so that you spend time on the right things for the program and the students to succeed

BarbaraMu:

http://www.learnmoreindiana.org/@counselors/counselors_hs/evaluation/counselor_time_use/

TatyanaGst16: thank you for the site

BarbaraMu: Does everyone know how to jump into the sites? It's not complicated any more, right?

BJB2 nods to Barbara

BJB2 . o O (hold down the ctrl key on your keyboard when you click on a url if you have trouble opening the link or have a pop up blocker)

GaryML: What do you think the biggest problem facing counselors today is?

BarbaraMu: Could we throw that open to the others and then I will let you know what I think...

BarbaraMu: even those from other disciplines...

TatyanaGst16: That's a good idea, Barbara

SharonMW: The number of public mental health providers seems to be dwindling. It has become more difficult to make outside referrals.

BarbaraMu: Anyone else want to add a thought?

ReginaGst4 joined the room.

BJB2: Regina is on your list, Barbara

ReginaGst4 smiles

BarbaraMu: We were just trying to answer Gary's question about the greatest challenge school counselors are facing today

BarbaraMu: any thoughts?

GaryML: I notice our counselors struggle with a lot of things particularly scheduling

GaryML: and finding the time to talk to kids who need help

BJB2: bullying and values

BarbaraMu: I think that school counselors still do a poor job communicating what it is we do...and how we can really help the system...and so we wind up with a lot of peripheral tasks that take us away from what you just mentioned

TatyanaGst16: could you suggest something please?

GaryML: I think there's a perception at my school that the counselors don't do much (not saying it's true)

TatyanaGst16: as for values, I think it should be done in the classroom by the teachers, it will be more natural

ReginaGst4: I also think a lot of school systems at least in this area consider counselors as testers only

BarbaraMu: Where are you Regina...

ReginaGst4: North Carolina

TatyanaGst16: yep, testing is a huge time taker

BarbaraMu: Tatyana mentioned she is a testing coordinator also

ReginaGst4: I have children who are in school and when they were in public school, it didn't seem that the school counselors were able to really work with students one on one

BarbaraMu: Gary, what is it that you think the counselors are doing---

BarbaraMu: that goes back to counselors not doing a good job promoting their programs...which brings us back to themes. I had a theme for the month, a theme (schoolwide) for the character ed program, a weekly published schedule that the teachers would get to see how my time was being spent, and people were pretty clear about what I did.

GaryML: Well, it's a new school so I think they are busy straightening out records and forming files for our students, I also think they are busy coordinating with the special ed dept

BarbaraMu: School counselors have a curriculum like every other department

BarbaraMu: They work in three domain areas; personal/social skills, career, and academic

TatyanaGst16: or suppose to work :o)

BarbaraMu: The school year, for an elementary person, usually can be broken out so that the classroom lessons support those 3 domains, while asking the teams if there is anything they need in addition

BarbaraMu: aside from the lessons, counselors usually run groups, run individual sessions, chair the referral/intervention team (not child study), do parent workshops, teacher inservice,

TatyanaGst16: yes, if I'm allowed in the classroom. out of 30 classrooms, I have 5 who actually came up to me first day of school and said, please, come to us, the rest of them said smiling, oooooooooo, don't even worry about it, you will not have time!!! how would you react to it?

BarbaraMu: testing programs, run or sit on character ed committees, are on the crisis teams with their committee meetings...

GaryML: sounds like a thankless job

BarbaraMu: and at middle and hs level do scheduling (another non-counseling duty given to us)

BarbaraMu: We are usually the first to add something to our plates and the last to take stuff off....

TatyanaGst16: we don't have character ed committees

BarbaraMu: and it is usually a richly rewarding job

BarbaraMu: But time management and program coordination is imperative

TatyanaGst16: it is, but am I to do if they give me any times?

BarbaraMu: and making sure that the information about what we are doing gets to the staff and administrators is very important

BarbaraMu: I'm sorry- I am not clear on what you are asking....

TatyanaGst16: Believe me, I'm not easily scared off, I knock at all doors and windows...

BarbaraMu: If all the staff isn't on board, then start with the 5 who have embraced you

TatyanaGst16: that's what I'm going to do... I don't have any choices...

TatyanaGst16: it's just very frustrating, sorry, I didn't mean to be mean

BarbaraMu: At the end of the first marking period, the teachers should know the kids well enough to welcome groups beginning and should be willing to offer referrals to groups for academic success, adhd kids, social skills, etc

BarbaraMu: even if they don't want you in the room, they may welcome the time they can send some of the students out...

BarbaraMu: either way, the children get the benefit of what you are doing, and, if they can transfer some of those skills back in the classroom, you will build credibility

TatyanaGst16: at this point, I just make them familiar wit me. I understand that I also, in a way, have to earn their trust...

TatyanaGst16: also, it's interesting to note that younger teachers easier make a contact then older ones

BarbaraMu: Sharon, is there anything you were hoping to take away from the chat tonight? Gary were there any perceptions I could try to change for you...

BarbaraMu: Anyone else want to chime in?

BJB2 looks around the room and bangs on a pot lid to wake everyone up

BarbaraMu: October, coming up, is a wonderful month for Safe Schools focus since the nation is celebrating awareness weeks around school safety, around drug prevention, etc during that month.

SharonMW: I really need some resources to use with kindergarten. I have used Peace Making Skills for Little Kids and DUSO. I want something fresh! Any suggestions?

BarbaraMu: Counselors can use the themes currently in focus in school curriculum to add to what the teachers are doing- or to supply information for them

BarbaraMu: Conflict resolution and self esteem, the two large pieces of those 2 programs, are key concepts in kindergarten....those programs are great. You know that lots of counselors use literature to get the message across..

BarbaraMu: In October, Officer Buckle and Gloria is terrific for safety- read the book, have the kids put safety tips on stars, and hang them up around the class

TatyanaGst16: I'm starting a peace table

BarbaraMu: Or use the Gorps Gift for gun violence prevention

BarbaraMu: Have the kids do the Pledge to the Gorp and color them and hang them up or use other pledges at pledge.org

GaryML: sorry for the ignorance, but what is Gorp?

TatyanaGst16: I think it's more important when kids make up something of their own...

BarbaraMu: Red Ribbon Week has a ton of materials that you can find all over the web...using a healthy choices theme at kindergarten level can get you through the month.

SharonMW: Thanks! Those are some great suggestions. I wish I had your creativity!

TatyanaGst16: you can involve your art and music teachers

BarbaraMu: The Gorp is a character in Sheri Chesson's book...The National Day Against Gun Violence is about a decade old now and their website www.pledge.org is full of curriculum material.

BarbaraMu: For middle school, October is the month of the adolescent....

BarbaraMu: There are great materials on the National Middle School Associ. website www.nmsa.org

BarbaraMu: It's a great time to do parent workshops and teacher inservice on typical ages and stages of development of middle schoolers....

GaryML: interesting, I'll have to check that out, I wonder if the counselors or admin. at my school are familiar with this

BarbaraMu: Its really easy to theme out by education and health awareness dates and holidays since they are already acknowledged in the schools

BJB2: Barbara also has many resources in this group room and in the hurricane group room

BarbaraMu: There was a wonderful handbook that they used to do but they took it off the website. God bless the Wayback machine so that we can still retrieve it

BarbaraMu: Everyone aware of that?

SharonMW: What is the hurricane room?

BJB2: Hurricane Central Help Center

BarbaraMu: http://www.jefferson.k12.ky.us/Pubs/MS_Survival_book.pdf

BJB2: is a group room that was created after the hurricanes demolished the gulf coast.

BJB2: the room was created to provide support and resources for displaced teachers and their students

TatyanaGst16: <http://www.gameskidsplay.net/> here are the games and other stuff to do with younger kids

BarbaraMu: This is the guide. If it doesn't work, go to www.archive.org and type the url in the Wayback machine and you will be able to get it. Gary, it's great for middle school

BJB2 apologizes for interrupting the discussion

BarbaraMu: Its 10:00- if anyone would like anything else...any questions or resources...let me know...otherwise, I am happy to end.....

BarbaraMu: and catch my breath

SharonMW: Thanks everyone...good night!

GaryML: thanks

BJB2: Barbara has scheduled another counselor's discussion for October 26

TatyanaGst16: Barbara, thank you very much for you thoughts and support

BJB2: see you then!

BarbaraMu: G'night!

GaryML: thanks, I found out some interesting things tonight