



Guidelines for Developing Comprehensive Guidance Programs

in California Public Schools:
Kindergarten
Through Adult School

Trish Hatch

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Through Adult School**

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Foreword

Guidance programs for our children have been understaffed and underfunded far too long. As school budgets have become tighter, counseling and psychological services have been among the first to be eliminated. And student-counselor ratios of 500 to one are ridiculous if meaningful service is what is needed. At a time when even adults are hard-pressed in our fast changing society, student-psychologist ratios of 2,000 to one result in many of our children feeling lost in the shuffle.

For years I have fostered the notion that school climate and personal development are basic components in a child's education. Children learn in a supportive atmosphere and thrive on positive experiences. It is impossible to separate a learning experience from personal experience for schoolchildren.

We cannot divide students into segments. We cannot deal with basic skills and ignore students' self-concepts, goals, values, and problems. It is meaningless to upgrade the curriculum if students receive no help in understanding what academic subjects they need to take to prepare them for productive futures. Giving our students information about career possibilities is a vital service. It is part of education, and it is particularly important for disadvantaged children, whose only guidance may come through the school.

All of the ideas I have cited are reflected in legislation that brought school improvement programs into 3,600 California schools. And we see the ideas in action in fine schools throughout the state. When self-concept and a positive school environment are program focal points, along with reading, writing, and mathematics skills, children are well on their way toward developing into competent, responsible, and caring adults.

These areas of affective development are part of the School Improvement Program and the Master Plan for Special Education. And in June of last year, the State Board of Education affirmed the importance of guidance programs and established high priority for them. The policy requires all state plans, guidelines, handbooks, and frameworks to include guidance as a priority component. The State Board also accepted a recommendation that schools and districts develop comprehensive guidance plans for meeting student needs. That means that each school and school district in California is charged with assessing guidance needs, setting goals and objectives, establishing strategies for achieving them, and stating expected outcomes for students, schools, and school districts.

The State Board policy included specific reference to those who should be involved in the planning. Parents, students, and community representatives are to participate with school people in developing the plans. And I hope that those of you now putting together school guidance plans, and those of you just beginning to think about it, will include all of these elements in an effective way. I know that encouraging participation can be time-consuming. But I also know that effective implementation of any plan depends on the ownership which those involved feel. We are all committed to the programs we help plan. We have a direct stake in their success. And any good plan dealing with our children's personal development is so important, it has to succeed! And success depends on the commitment—the faith—of everyone involved. Besides, we all get some good ideas when we tap unconventional sources. A comprehensive schoolwide guidance plan that makes use of teachers as implementers and makes use of psychologists and counselors as directors, resource people, and trainers may be one of the most creative uses of time and talent that we have seen in a long time.

Three approaches to providing guidance services that make sense to me are the following:

- Address the predictable needs of children in programs that engage all of the school's personnel. Integrating the elements of guidance and counseling programs into the curriculum, the total education plan, has to be excellent use of time and staff. And it is easy to see how quickly and directly the school atmosphere can be affected when the whole staff is participating.

- Establish specific proficiencies for students in personal development. Specific goals are so much easier to work with than unarticulated ones are. You can see where you are going and tell when you have reached your destination.
- Tap community resources when they are appropriate. Schools, children, and parents do not exist in a vacuum. We miss all kinds of opportunities when we fail to establish a community context for services. We also remove ourselves from reality. I know that many of you have used community resources—mental health workers, for example—for years. I have watched School Improvement Program schools turn into community schools as community participation and an exchange of ideas enriched the total environment for everybody.

This publication, *Guidelines for Developing Comprehensive Guidance Programs in California Schools*, looks to me like an excellent document. I hope it will help you develop guidance programs with as much joy and as little difficulty as possible. The whole idea of a comprehensive schoolwide program for meeting the guidance needs of children is so practical, so workable, that it is a pleasure to contemplate. It is a challenge, certainly; but it is a welcome challenge.



Superintendent of Public Instruction

Preface

The concerns that give shape to the materials in this publication are not new concerns, as many readers will immediately recognize. For several years, in fact, there has been a growing awareness of the need for improved guidance services in California schools—for increased attention to the personal, social, educational, and career development of students.

That such a need exists has been documented in a variety of reports in the past decade. The Guidance and Counseling Task Force of the California State Department of Education addressed this issue in its report entitled *Pupil Personnel Services in California Public Schools: Needs, Problems, and a Plan for Solutions* (1975). The study, involving approximately 55,000 students and 1,200 adults in a random sample of schools throughout the state, revealed that students were dissatisfied with the assistance they were receiving in the areas of personal, social, educational, and career development. The study further revealed that few coordinated guidance programs existed in California. Three years after the report was completed, its findings were supported by the *Report of the California Commission for Reform of Intermediate and Secondary Education (RISE)* (1975). Authors of the highly publicized report identified the need to provide California's students with more personalized attention, better career guidance, and relationships on a continuing basis with adults who could provide timely advice and assistance.

Since 1975 the State Department of Education has attempted to assist schools in strengthening their guidance services by actively promoting the development of comprehensive guidance and counseling plans and programs. That there is still much to be done is reflected in such studies as *Lost in the Shuffle: A Report on the Guidance System in California Secondary Schools* (1979). Conducted between January and August of 1978, the study revealed that large numbers of students continue to have personal, social, educational, and career decisions to make while in school and that they are not receiving sufficient assistance in making those decisions.

Guidelines for Developing Comprehensive Guidance Programs in California Schools represents part of the State Department of Education's continuing efforts to assist schools in meeting identified student needs. In 1978 the Personal and Career Development Services Unit organized a statewide committee and charged it with the following:

- Examine the "state of the art" in counseling and guidance services in the public schools of California, and identify principal areas to address in a statewide guidance system.
- Define the basic components and characteristics of a model guidance delivery system that can serve as a guideline for schools in developing their comprehensive guidance programs.
- Clarify the role and function of the guidance specialist in the educational setting.
- Identify available resources that will assist school staffs in the development of their comprehensive guidance programs.

The committee's work was encouraged along the way by several important expressions of support for the comprehensive approach to guidance. One of the Citizen's Policy Center's nine recommendations, aimed primarily at state policymakers, was for the development of "comprehensive guidance programs that address all student needs." This same recommendation was included in the *Report of Statewide Task Force on School Counseling* (1979). Convened by Assemblyman Gary K. Hart, Chairman of the Assembly Subcommittee on Educational Reform, the task force recommended that schools have comprehensive guidance and counseling plans addressing the needs of all students. Finally, at its June, 1980, meeting, the State Board of Education adopted as one of its policies the following:

The Board believes that a beginning first step toward providing quality guidance and counseling programs and services to students would be the development of a comprehensive plan as an integral part of a total educational plan. . . .

All state plans, guidelines, handbooks and frameworks developed, even where funding is not a factor, shall include guidance and counseling as a priority component unless incompatible with the program or specifically excluded by law.

In developing these materials, the committee was fully aware that (1) there are already exciting and innovative things happening in a number of school guidance programs in California; (2) many schools are working under severe financial constraints; and (3) the successful development and implementation of *any* guidance program must have the support not only of the guidance personnel but also of the decision makers, teachers, students, and parents. These considerations have reinforced the committee's belief in the timeliness of these guidelines.

Committee members will be assisting in the implementation of comprehensive guidance programs throughout the state in conjunction with the California State Department of Education's School Improvement Program.

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