

SCHOOL COUNSELOR INDUCTION: KEEPING OUR PROMISE AND RETAINING OUR POTENTIAL

Jennifer R.
Curry, Ph. D.

Meagan St.
Pierre,
M.Ed. Candidate

Lauren
Treacy,
M.Ed. Candidate

WHO DO WE HAVE HERE?

How many years of experience do you have as a school counselor?

- Less than two
- Two to four
- Four to ten
- 10-20
- 20+

Were you a teacher before? For how long?

WHAT IS A NOVICE PROFESSIONAL?



- A new professional with less than 2 years of experience in their current setting.

***WHAT MAKES THE FIRST
TWO YEARS DIFFICULT
FOR NOVICE SCHOOL
COUNSELORS?***

****discuss
in a small
group****

WHAT IS INDUCTION?

Formal, planned activities that meet the personal and professional needs of novices.

Personal Needs:

Self-confidence, self-esteem, self-reliance, learning to handle stress, feelings of competence, and a sense of belonging

Professional Needs:

Knowledge, Skills, reflective practices, and professional effectiveness

(Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Gold, 1996; Wang & Odell, 2002)

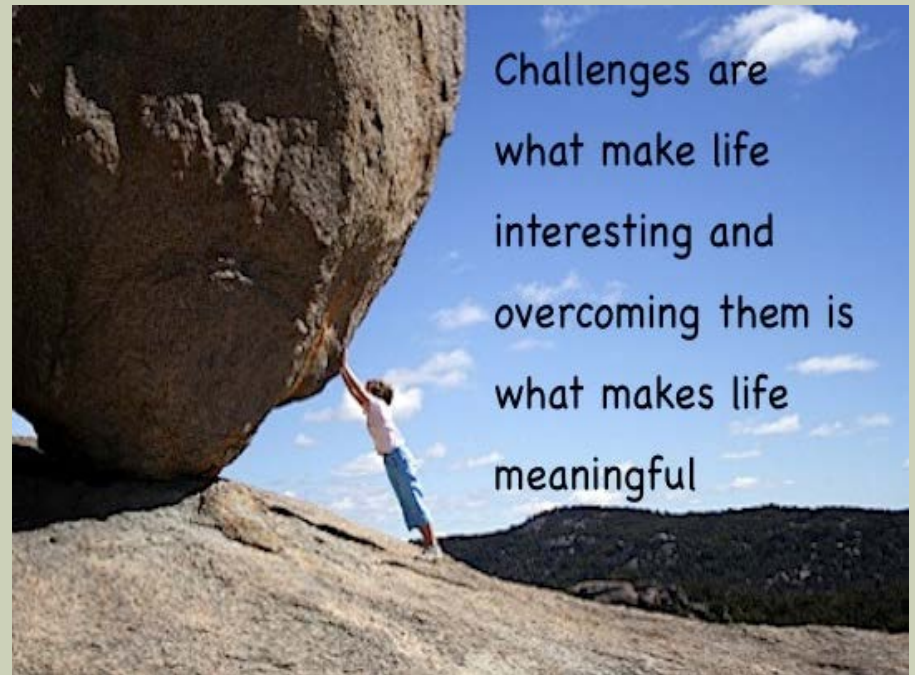
WHAT ARE INDUCTION ELEMENTS?

- Structured, formal, assigned mentorship
- Professionally tailored orientation programs
- **QUALITY** professional development
- Planned, formal interaction with administrators
- Consistent, formative and summative feedback
- Collaboration with colleagues



POSITIVE CORRELATES OF INDUCTION

- Lower attrition
- Increased career commitment
- Greater career satisfaction & retention
- Ingersoll and Smith (2003) determined that first year teacher attrition rates were reduced from 20% to 9% when teachers received multiple induction elements



Challenges are what make life interesting and overcoming them is what makes life meaningful

ONLY TWO STUDIES EXISTED IN THE SCHOOL LITERATURE ON PSC INDUCTION!

- Matthes (1992) used survey research to study school counselor induction. Though he had an extremely small sample ($N = 40$), his findings are critical: 11 first year novices in his study except one were expected to carry the same workload as experienced school counselors, 77% had not been assigned a mentor, and allocation of resources (i.e., discretionary funds, clerical staff, referral services) were inconsistent and minimal. Matthes described the novices situations as “sink or swim”.
- Stickel and Trimmer (1994) conducted a case study involving one school counselor’s first year on the job!
- Since Matthes (1992) and Stickel and Trimmer (1994) no one has systematically studied school counselor induction.

WHY DOES THAT MATTER????

SCHOOL COUNSELOR INDUCTION

- Only seven states require school counselors to have prior teaching experience so many school counselors have not had experience working in schools previously (ASCA, 2011; Bickmore & Curry, 2013)
- Many principals and districts do not have formal, planned orientation or professional development specific to school counselors (Curry & Bickmore, 2012)
- In some cases, school counselors might not have anyone else in their building who understand their unique role (i.e., elementary school counselors) (Bickmore & Curry, 2013)
- Induction reduces stress and emotional exhaustion, both of which are concerns in school counseling, a field with the propensity for burnout and impairment

MY RESEARCH

- Multiple Case studies
- Interviewed Principals
- District Leaders
- Novice School Counselors, multiple interviews throughout first two years
- “Mentor” Counselors
- Collaborative research with Dana Bickmore (Education Leadership)
- Interpretivist/Phenomenological, Recursive Coding
- Atlas T.I. Software

WHY DON'T WE INDUCT SCHOOL COUNSELORS? WHAT PRINCIPALS SAID...

- #1 Principals simply haven't thought of doing it!
- #2 Principals and district leaders lack a thorough understanding of effective school counselor training and practice
- #3 Happenstance of induction supports provided to novices

I had never thought much about induction for guidance counselors because I've had good experiences... I never really thought about it much, but I would say that it's lacking, it needs to be there to make sure that... counselors don't struggle in their early years.

At the district level, any new employee would go to an orientation; probably a half day orientation at the beginning of a school year ...but to my knowledge there is no district-wide support system for new counselors. If there is one and I don't know about it, I apologize for being ignorant.

METAPHORS OF NOVICE SCHOOL COUNSELORS: FRIGHTENING!

87 unique metaphors were used...metaphors are more than language, they are descriptors of experiences meant to convey messages and context to the message receiver. School counselor metaphors of their first two years ranged on a spectrum based on their degree of stress and can best be placed in three categories:

- 1. FED TO THE WOLVES**—metaphors in this category represented the most stressful, least supported contexts for novices
- 2. Keeping my head above water**—metaphors in this category were used by novices to demonstrate that they were struggling and barely making it
- 3. I'm on the right track**—metaphors in this category represented metaphoric expressions that showed gains in confidence and a degree of support

FED TO THE WOLVES

- A metaphor with British, U. S. and Australian origins that means to “sacrifice someone to the enemy in order to save yourself, betray without compunction” (Wilkinson, 2002, p. 306)
- Metaphors in this category were used to describe feelings of being totally overwhelmed with unmanageable stress and receiving no support
- Other metaphors in this category included drowning, trial by fire, sink or swim)

*Last year was my first year. I kind of got **fed to the wolves**... I did a whole lot because it was essentially myself and the other counselor, but she didn't do that much, so I did a lot. Probably more than I would have done in another school.*

The job is very different from what I was actually trained to do. So, it's kind of **trial by fire**, it's like **sink or swim**, we're throwing you into the pool now learn how to swim.

KEEPING MY HEAD ABOVE WATER

- The metaphor Keeping My Head Above Water means “to avoid disaster, remain solvent” (Wilkinson, 2002, p. 94).
- Metaphors in this category represent novices’ experience that although things were not good, they were still survivable. Within this category most novices expressed figuring things out along and problems with induction overall.

*... communication hasn't always been where it needs to be ...the communication is good if I go and seek it out...but, people may not always come to us [counselors] in every situation where we need to be brought **in the loop**. For example, we had a couple of pregnant students last year, and it wasn't immediately brought to our attention...*

*It was kind of unclear to me at the beginning who we report to. And I still don't exactly know. Sometimes I have to report to [the assistant principal]... sometimes we get, you know, like duties or whatever from other people...So I don't know. It's just kind of confusing...so that makes a little bit of **behind the scenes drama**.*

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

- Metaphors in this category denoted that novices were gaining confidence and beginning to feel a sense of accomplishment in their role as a school counselor. They also expressed more perceived support in this category.

*I got a lot of positive feedback from teachers and administrators. They flat out told me when I was doing a good job and so that was helpful in knowing “I’m **on the right track**. I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing.”...It was a very welcoming environment...*



WHAT THE DATA REVEALED

- We should not assume people will want to, or know how to, mentor.
- Buildings where there are no experienced counselors present the greatest challenges for novices.
- Novices cannot and should not be expected to take on the workload of experienced school counselors, it is not realistic!
- People need effective, school building level orientations. Tell them where the bathrooms are! How to use the intercom!
- Structured, formal interactions are the most meaningful when it comes to administration. “Open door policies” are great but don’t replace weekly scheduled meetings for novices.
- Professional development should match the role of school counselors, rather than have counselors attend reading workshops or whatever else is scheduled for the rest of the faculty.
- School counselors need coordination and planning time for services they deliver.
- Mechanisms need to be in place for formal feedback.

MENTORSHIP!



- What mentorship activities have you experienced or heard about that you think would be helpful for a novice school counselor?
- How should we prepare mentors for their role in mentorship?

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