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A Working System of School Counselor Supervision

School counselors acknowledge the need for supervision but rarely receive it. This article describes the counselor performance improvement system in one school district. Supervision is embedded in a process that assesses counselors' levels of professionalism on a matrix of competence and commitment. Administrative and clinical supervisors determine which of four quadrants from the matrix best describes an individual counselor's current performance, and they tailor their responses accordingly. Examples of counselors in each of the categories are provided.

The existing literature on supervision of practicing school counselors reveals a wealth of information regarding the lack of, and the need for, more supervision. A national survey in the early 1990s found that school counselors received less supervision than counselors in other settings (Borders & Usher, 1992). Results of state and national surveys reveal that only 23% to 30% of school counselors reported receiving clinical supervision, even though the majority of school counselors indicated a desire for it (Page, Pietrzak, & Sutton, 2001; Roberts & Borders, 1994; Sutton & Page, 1994). One survey in North Carolina found that most school counselors received some administrative supervision, but a much smaller percentage reported receiving clinical supervision (Roberts & Borders).

It is becoming increasingly difficult for school counselors to have the breadth of knowledge and skills to provide adequate counseling services for the diverse counseling issues and student groups represented in their schools (Borders, 1991; Crutchfield & Borders, 2006; Henderson & Gysbers, 2006). Their demanding, constantly changing roles necessitate ongoing supervision to improve skills, develop new areas of competence, and provide needed support (Borders). Clinical supervision of school counselors results in a variety of positive outcomes including increased professionally relevant dialogues and the professionally invigorating experience of having one's work observed and analyzed (Henderson & Lampe, 1992). Other outcomes include sharing new ideas and strategies and developing meaningful professional goals. Lack of sufficient supervisory support can increase stress and intensify negative feelings resulting from immense workloads, causing school counselors to become less effective and contributing to feelings of burnout and role dissatisfaction (Crutchfield & Borders).

Examples of effective supervision practices are needed. We worked in a Texas school system that provides counselors with support for their professional development in the context of a comprehensive school guidance and counseling program (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2005; Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Northside Independent School District [NISD], 1985, 1994) and a performance improvement system that incorporates appropriate and helpful clinical and administrative supervision (NISD, 1997). The school district's system and its installation are fully described by Henderson and Gysbers (1998). Readers interested in obtaining additional information and consultation about the implementation and use of the system employed in the NISD are invited to contact the authors. This article briefly describes the system and its evolution, and then highlights clinical and administrative supervision as provided through a professionalism assessment and response process, complete with illustrative cases.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM: DEFINITION AND EVOLUTION IN THE NISD

A performance improvement system promotes higher levels of professionalism and provides meaningful assistance to school counselors as they provide their services to students and perform their various duties. The four interrelated facets of such a system are job definition, supervision, performance evaluation, and goal setting for professionalism enhancement. Development of the NISD system has been evolving since the 1980s, after initial implementation of the Comprehensive Guidance Program (NISD, 1985;
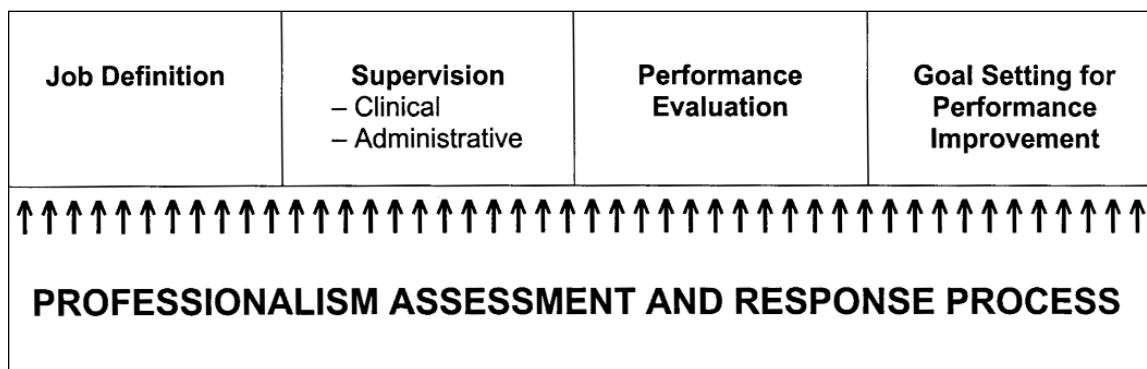
Job Definition	Supervision – Clinical – Administrative	Performance Evaluation	Goal Setting for Performance Improvement

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PROFESSIONALISM ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE PROCESS

Figure 1. Components of the Northside Independent School District performance improvement system.

see also Gysbers & Henderson, 2006).

The program established the context and standards that *define school counselors' jobs* as including guidance, counseling, consultation, coordination, assessment, program management, and professionalism (NISD, 1986, 1997). Based on these standards, school counselors and their administrative supervisors share responsibility for establishing appropriate and mutually understood expectations for each counselor's job. This unique job description provides the standards base for subsequent performance improvement efforts, including goal setting for professionalism enhancement. Since the mid-1980s, goal-setting activities have supported this supervisee-centered facet. Primary responsibility for improving their competence and commitment belongs to individual counselors, but their clinical and administrative supervisors share responsibility by providing guidance, direction, and support in their efforts (NISD, 1986).

Clarification of school counselors' job expectations led to recognition of the need for a professionally relevant *performance evaluation* system and form. The purposes of this facet are not only to provide information to each counselor but also to have legitimate grounds for rating counselors' performance on a continuum from excellent to unsatisfactory. It includes self-evaluations as well as summative evaluations by appropriate administrative supervisors. Evaluation responsibilities are assigned to head counselors at the middle and high schools. Cluster leaders were selected to provide professional counseling assistance to counselors and principals at their assigned elementary schools (NISD, 1997). Training for these counseling department leaders is provided by the district director of guidance (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998).

Based on work in counseling and instruction (Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, 1989; Barret & Schmidt, 1986; Borders et al., 1991; Glickman, 1981; Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982; Stoltenberg, 1981), the *supervision* facet was fully initiated by the early 1990s. Its

purpose is to provide individual counselors with specific feedback regarding the quality of their performance in their daily work (Henderson, in press). Leadership training continues through director-led supervision of supervision, consisting of supervisee case consultations, provided during regular monthly meetings. Through these sessions a professionalism assessment and supervisory response process evolved based on two factors of professionalism: competence and commitment (Henderson, 1992-1993). It is used in all the performance improvement system activities (NISD, 1997), and it also is defined and exemplified in this article. Figure 1 presents a graphic display of the relationship of the four facets of the NISD performance improvement system with the professionalism assessment and response process.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CLINICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPERVISION

Supervision provides school counselors with specific feedback to assist with enhancement of their professionalism (i.e., their levels of competence and commitment). Clinical supervision and administrative supervision provide two distinct structures for delivering data-based feedback to assist school counselors in examining their work in comparison to professional standards. Clinical supervision provides a focus on the development and improvement of clinical skills, while administrative supervision provides assurance of the delivery of the highest-quality counseling services in alignment with the school's mission and goals (ASCA, 2005; Haynes, Corey, & Moulton, 2003; Henderson, in press).

Clinical supervision involves observing and providing feedback regarding school counselors' micro performance in a time-defined and specific counseling activity. It is implemented through a five-step process. The first step, the pre-observation conference, involves a meeting between clinical supervisors and supervisees to determine the goals for the upcoming supervision experience based on specific professional standards. The second step is the obser-

vation of supervisees during specific counseling events. The third step is data analysis. Supervisors and supervisees separately analyze the data and assess the observed performance in reference to identified goals from the pre-observation conference and relevant professional standards. In the fourth step, the post-observation conference, clinical supervisors select and deliver appropriate feedback for supervisees. The final step, analysis of the post-observation conference, involves both parties reflecting on the effectiveness of this supervision experience.

By contrast, administrative supervision generally focuses on supervisees' macro performance, or observed patterns of behavior over time. Goals for administrative supervision include "providing efficient, effective, and culturally responsive services to diverse clients; encouraging highest levels of counselor competence and commitment; and contributing to achievement of the agency's goals and adherence to its policies and rules" (Henderson, in press). Administrative supervisors and their supervisees target selected professional standards to enhance school counselors' competence and commitment to the school counseling program's mission and goals, contributions to and distractions from the work environment, and job suitability. For example, selected standards may focus on job-related behaviors such as managing and implementing the campus program, performing roles with cultural sensitivity, establishing and maintaining professional relationships with campus staff and community members, and performing responsibilities in a timely and dependable manner (NISD, 1997).

NISD PROFESSIONALISM ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE PROCESS

The NISD professionalism assessment and response process provides a framework that supervisors use in both clinical and administrative supervision. Once supervisors assess counselors' levels of professionalism, they are able to select responses tailored to the counselors' needs. By intentionally selecting responses designed to challenge and support counselors at their individual levels of professionalism, effective supervisors maximize the benefit that counselors receive from the supervision process.

Professionalism Assessment
Professionalism factors. To assess a school counselor's level of professionalism, supervisors examine the two factors of competence and commitment. *Competence* refers to abilities to perform job-related tasks. In Texas, the competencies that school counselors are expected to possess are categorized into eight domains: program management, guidance, counseling, consultation, coordination, student

assessment, professional behavior, and professional standards (Texas Counseling Association [TCA], 2004). Each domain contains standards of performance and each standard of performance is further specified by a list of descriptors. Counselors' abilities to perform each of these descriptors are an indication of their professional functioning on the competency factor of professionalism (TCA). For example, one of the standards of performance for the counseling domain is as follows: "Uses accepted theories and effective techniques to provide group developmental, preventive, remedial, and/or crisis counseling" (TCA, p. 24). Following is one of the nine descriptors that provide evidence of meeting this standard: "Uses group counseling with students such as those who are at risk of dropping out of school, of becoming substance abusers, of participating in gang activity, or of committing suicide" (TCA, p. 24).

The second factor of professionalism, *commitment*, refers to the attitudes and values school counselors hold regarding their students and their work, including personal motivations and work habits. Accepted professional ethical values are the principles of autonomy, justice, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and fidelity (Forester-Miller & Davis, 1996). Other professional values are respect for others, self-respect, empathy, authenticity, altruism, and advocacy (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998). Our school district delineated commitment to include professional identity, respect for individual differences, purpose and direction, personal motivation, respect for others, respect for self, and advocacy (NISD, 1997). Each of these commitment indicators is also further specified with descriptors. For example, descriptors for the indicator of "respect for others" include, "Believe in the worth and dignity of other individuals," "Believe that individuals are able rather than unable," and "Believe that individuals want to do what is right rather than what is wrong" (NISD, pp. 42–43). School counselors mindful of these principles in their practice demonstrate commitment to the legitimate purpose of counseling.

Professionalism matrix. Commitment and competence are each aligned on separate continua. High competence is at one end of the continuum and low competence on the other end. Likewise, on a separate continuum, high commitment is at one end and low commitment at the other. Combining the continua of these two factors of professionalism creates a matrix of four professionalism categories: Star Workers, Unfocused Workers, Disengaged Workers, and Impaired Workers (Henderson, in press; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998). (See Figure 2.) School counselors' levels of professionalism are identified as the place on the matrix where their level of competency intersects with their level of commitment. A
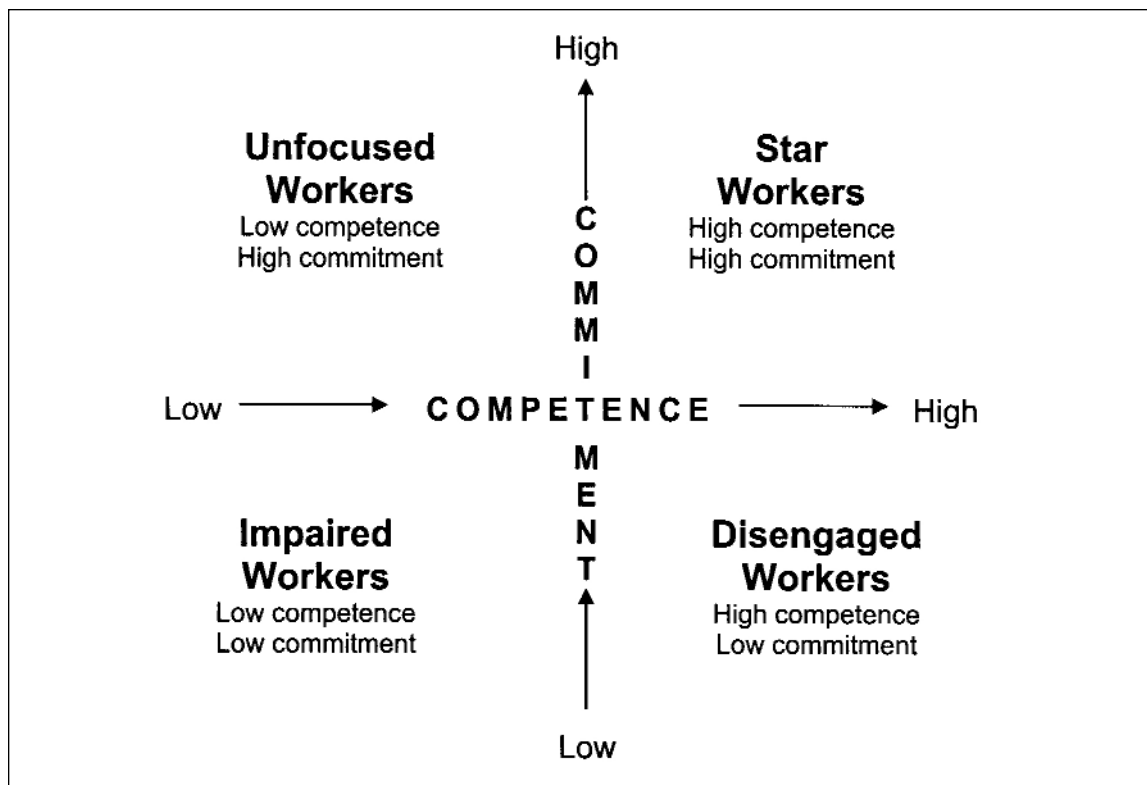
Results of state and national surveys reveal that only 23% to 30% of school counselors reported receiving clinical supervision, even though the majority of school counselors indicated a desire for it.

Figure 2. Categories of professionalism matrix. (Note: Adapted from Henerson & Gysbers, 1998.)

school counselor's professionalism level can be assessed based on overall performance (summative evaluation) or a specific counseling event (supervision).

Star Workers are those school counselors who demonstrate both high levels of competence and high levels of commitment. School counselors in this category are highly developed professionals who demonstrate high levels of skill, are realistic about their expertise, advocate for clients and the profession, and welcome feedback and evaluation. They are highly self-motivated and their commitment to their students and the counseling profession is exhibited by a continuous striving to learn more and improve their own performance.

School counselors with low levels of competence and high levels of commitment are characterized as Unfocused Workers. These are workers who care about and want to do good work for their students, but are often lost or confused about how to best serve them. While these school counselors are highly motivated to be effective, they often lack the necessary skills to do so and need assistance and support in increasing their levels of competence. New counselors just beginning to develop their professional identity are most often associated with the Unfocused quadrant of the matrix. However, any counselor who attempts to learn about a new counseling skill, issue, or population also could be unfocused.

Contrary to Unfocused Workers, Disengaged Workers are low in commitment and high in com-

petence. They may work effectively with their students but demonstrate little interest in doing more than what is required. They may show up to work, but they avoid becoming involved with their professional community and resist attempts to encourage and engage them. Workers who are generally committed counselors may occasionally slip into temporary disengagement due to minor illnesses, family concerns, or other distracting events.

Impaired Workers demonstrate both low commitment and low competence that may be paired with low personal and professional self-concepts. They have lost or failed to build an interest in their work matched with a failure to acquire or build a knowledge and skill base needed to work effectively as professional school counselors. They may be experiencing burnout, have a major illness, or be ill-suited for the counseling profession. This low level of self-motivation and demonstrated skills negatively impacts services to students and the integrity of a school's counseling and guidance program.

School counselors fluctuate in their positions on these continua and quadrants from moment to moment and from task to task, although patterns of professional behavior emerge over time. As a colleague once expressed, "We all visit all the quadrants at various times, but we must ask, 'Which one do we live in?'" (L. Malloy, personal communication, March 1999).

Intentional Supervisor Responses

Accurate assessment of supervisees' needs and strengths supports the provision of meaningful clinical and administrative supervision. Effective supervisors most often utilize this information to support school counselors' decision-making and planning about ongoing personal and professional development, and in a few cases to improve unsatisfactory performance or consider other career options for which school counselors may be better suited. Assessing school counselors' levels of professionalism provides supervisors with information for planning and implementing deliberate and appropriate supervisory responses. Supervisors "must be flexible and intentional" (Borders & Brown, 2005, p. 11) in providing interventions that range from directive to nondirective. In general, counselors with low commitment and/or competence levels require more directive approaches than those with higher levels of commitment and/or competence, who benefit from more collaborative or collegial approaches (Henderson, in press; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998).

Supervisor responses are more helpful, meaningful, and manageable when directed toward school counselors' attainment of specific professional standards. For example, if the supervision is not linked to specific standards, Unfocused Workers may be tempted to invite more feedback than they can process or utilize, while Impaired Workers may prefer to move the supervisory conversation from areas of needed or targeted growth to those that reflect areas of strength and safety. So that optimum benefit comes from supervision, the focus should be centered around two or three targeted standards that provide a combination of support and challenge, and that are selected by the supervisee, supervisor, or both, depending on individual needs (Borders & Brown, 2005; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998).

Star Workers' high levels of professionalism suggest that they benefit from interventions that allow them to select their own standards for continual growth, with added emphasis on leadership development. Supervisors support school counselors in this category by responding as caring, collegial consultants and mentors, and by listening, reflecting, and providing encouragement as supervisees work to realize their own professional goals. Supervisory strategies provide opportunities for recognition of strengths, for the sharing of expertise, and to flex supervisees' developing leadership capabilities in their own campus program and the counseling profession.

Unfocused Workers need assistance in targeting standards that address the development of added competence. Supervisors assist them by providing caring and collaborative learning opportunities through a teaching and coaching relationship, as school counselors in this category need help staying focused on and acquiring knowledge and skills. Supervisory behaviors include the presentation of ideas and information and assistance with problem solving. Strategies include opportunities for clinical supervision from other highly competent peers and participation in team assignments that structure prospects for learning and success. Participation in targeted staff development programs assists with extending knowledge and skills.

Supervision for Disengaged Workers addresses commitment needs. The high levels of competence displayed by these school counselors provide supervisors with a vehicle for using coaching and the collaborative nature of consultation to boost their commitment. Supervisors present information about expectations and direct the process of mutually selecting standards that address commitment. Disengaged Workers benefit from (a) receiving clinical supervision, (b) leading department activities that require teamwork, and (c) assuming leadership and responsibility for administrative aspects of the campus guidance and counseling program.

Finally, the Impaired Workers' low commitment and competence require that supervisors select the targeted standards for supervision. Beneficial to Impaired Workers are supervisory responses that are caring, direct, and prescriptive. Helpful responses offer teaching and counseling regarding their work and reinforcing direct expectations of performance. Sometimes, referral to other sources for personal or professional concerns is needed. Increasing autonomy for choices about performance goals is earned as their performance improves. Appropriate strategies provide opportunities to build competence and commitment through demonstrated improvement of identified strengths under terms developed through administrative and clinical supervision.

CASE STUDIES

To illustrate the professionalism assessment and response process, we are providing the following case studies. Four cases are presented, one from each of the professionalism categories: Star, Unfocused, Disengaged, and Impaired. Information presented for each case includes (a) a brief description of the worker's circumstances and behaviors, (b) the category of professionalism based on the assessment of competence and commitment, (c) the response style used by the supervisors based on the professionalism assessment, and (d) administrative and clinical supervisory interventions that supported and challenged supervisees' performance based on displayed competence and commitment. A supervisor's worksheet (see Figure 3) facilitates the summarization of data and provides a tool for planning supervisory interventions, as well as serving as documentation of

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1. Assessment	4. Interventions	
Competence	**Clinical**	**Administrative**
High: *[Specific behavioral examples]*	Support:	Support:
Low: *[Specific behavioral examples]*	Challenge:	Challenge:
Commitment	**Clinical**	**Administrative**
High: *[Specific behavioral examples]*	Support:	Support:
Low: *[Specific behavioral examples]*	Challenge:	Challenge:
2. Professionalism Category:		
3. Response Style:		

Figure 3. Supervisor's worksheet.

supervision efforts. These case studies are snapshots of actual cases we experienced while serving as supervisors. Names and other identifying information have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the supervisees.

Star Worker

Stella was an elementary school counselor who had strong working relationships with other counselors, her campus principal, the faculty, parents, and students. Somewhat reserved in nature, her verbal contributions to counseling staff meetings were infrequent. However, when she did choose to comment about the discussion topic, other counselors often deferred to her thoughtful and discerning insights.

Stella requested that the clinical supervisor observe six sessions of a fifth-grade group called Tools for Success. She carefully screened her group members and had extensive knowledge about each student's background. Her interactions demonstrat-

ed sensitivity to each student's unique, individual needs. A student of particular concern for her was a boy with selective mutism. Her goal for this student was that he would verbally share with the other students. Stella structured her activities in a way that allowed him to participate.

Professionalism assessment. Stella demonstrated a high level of competence and a high level of commitment that placed her in the Star category. Indicative of her commitment to continued professional growth, she requested clinical supervision from a central office–based clinical supervisor who specialized in group counseling. She often attended professional growth opportunities and then applied new information to her practice. She wanted to enhance her already extensive group skill repertoire by incorporating the use of props in counseling (Jacobs, 1992).

Stella demonstrated commitment to her growth process by providing regularly scheduled opportuni-

ties for the clinical supervisor to observe the group. The clinical supervisor always arrived on campus confident that the group sessions would occur as scheduled. This commitment also provided consistency for Stella's group members. Her demeanor was poised and self-confident throughout the sessions. She was well prepared and never seemed to be trying too hard to make something happen. Her clear boundaries and accepting manner helped the students feel secure and safe in her presence.

Supervisory interventions. Because Stella already possessed a strong desire to continue growing professionally, she benefited from supervisory responses that recognized her abilities while still facilitating greater insight.

Clinical supervision. Providing supervision for such an accomplished counselor can be intimidating. A supervisor may understandably ask, "What do I have to offer this counselor?" However, Star Workers are sometimes not given recognition and encouragement because the assumption is that they are already doing fine and do not need additional growth opportunities. Stella was very clear about a specific skill set that she wanted to develop. She asked her clinical supervisor to focus on how effectively she structured her sessions. She wanted detailed feedback about the appropriateness of her interventions and wanted to maintain a balance between activities and process within the group. She expressed a concern about her groups being too driven by activities.

Therefore, the clinical supervisor's approach was more collegial in nature and focused on encouraging and supporting Stella as she tried something new. Having a colleague witness and share in her success with this particular group reinforced her level of professionalism. The clinical supervisor was able to explore with Stella her effectiveness with all the students in the group, not just the student she targeted. Even though the group activities flowed seamlessly, the supervisor challenged her to allow the group members to explore their insights in greater depth. To accomplish this goal without feeling rushed to include all the group content, she extended the number of scheduled group sessions from six to eight.

Administrative supervision. Stella had already developed an informal leadership role. Many counselors admired her and wanted to emulate her. The director of guidance provided administrative supervision, acknowledging her talent and campus-level contributions. However, this administrative supervisor also recognized her potential to expand her demonstration of competence and commitment to another level. He challenged her to formalize and increase her leadership responsibilities through involvement in professional organizations. Stella had

consistently attended professional growth conferences, but she had not presented at these conferences until her supervisor encouraged her. She was offered and accepted the role of cluster leader for a group of elementary school counselors within the district. As a cluster leader, she was recruited to be trained in the NISD professionalism assessment and response process, providing her the competence to guide other school counselors as they developed their professional expertise.

Unfocused Worker

Ursula was a first-year elementary school counselor who came to the job with an excellent reputation as a teacher. She was enthusiastic, organized, and well liked. Despite her strengths, she felt herself struggling with the many demands of an elementary counselor. She verbalized that she was having difficulty meeting everyone's needs in a timely and efficient manner. Despite very long work hours, she was not able to manage her workload as well as she had as a classroom teacher.

Ursula's cluster leader provided clinical supervision, observing a group counseling session with five kindergarten boys. In the pre-observation conference, Ursula identified the competencies she wanted the supervisor to look for as those related to implementing sessions well, particularly keeping counselees on task, providing opportunities for the establishment of appropriate rules, and providing opportunities for student interaction (NISD, 1997). She stated that she had a very difficult time keeping all five boys on task.

During the group observation she calmly quieted the boys when they arrived, then immediately began a series of very structured activities. While each activity was well designed and educational, she had to move along at a fast pace in order to fit all three activities into the half-hour session. There was very little opportunity for interaction among the boys. When a child arrived 15 minutes late, she did a commendable job of settling him down and including him into the current activity, but his late arrival was a disturbance to the group. Following the session, she said she was glad the fifth child had been absent, as he was even more active than the other boys.

Professionalism assessment. Common to many new counselors, Ursula seemed to fall into the Unfocused Worker category. Her high commitment was evidenced by her willingness to accept supervision, and her request that the supervisor observe a counseling group she was struggling with. A less risky option would have been observation of a classroom guidance lesson, a role that is more familiar to an experienced teacher. Her high commitment also was obvious in her selection of appropriate target competencies during the pre-observation conference, as

well as her willingness to work long hours in an effort to meet the needs of her school community.

Ursula displayed competence in her well-planned activities incorporating a variety of modalities and targeting important social skills, and in her behavior management skills. Her low competence was evident in her overdependence on activities, her poor group member selection with five active boys, and her overmanagement of behavior for a group counseling setting.

Supervisory interventions. The professionalism assessment of Unfocused Worker indicated a supervisory style of caring, collaborative coaching: reinforcing good intentions while presenting ideas and information for enhancing knowledge and skills.

Clinical supervision. The cluster leader provided positive feedback for the well-planned activities, organized presentation, and skilled management of behavior. Suggestions for improvement included reducing the number of activities, and slowing down the progression in order to allow more time for student-to-student interaction and true group process. Ursula was reminded of the difference between teaching and counseling, a lesson that many new counselors struggle with. Counselors allow groups to re-create real life interactions, both positive and negative, allowing immediate learning opportunities.

The supervisor also complimented Ursula's management of the group when the late child arrived. She demonstrated high commitment to the group by not allowing the late child to detract from its ongoing activity. On the other hand, she was challenged to consider ways that she might have better structured the activities, knowing the child would arrive late, so that he could receive maximum benefit from the session. For instance, she could have started with the drawing activity and saved the story until after the late child arrived.

Administrative supervision. Administrative supervision was provided throughout the year in group meetings and individual consultations. Ursula was commended for her dedication and enthusiasm, as well as her commitment to the comprehensive guidance and counseling program. Targeted objectives for improvement included scheduling and prioritizing, group member selection, and better management of the guidance and counseling program.

Ursula was assisted with the daunting tasks of prioritizing and scheduling, allowing her to reduce her long work hours. Consultations also helped her understand the benefits of more heterogeneous group composition. For example, the kindergarten group described earlier could have included members who were not so overly active, allowing opportunities for positive role modeling and reinforcement of appropriate behaviors.

Another aspect of group composition was addressed by the supervisor when she suggested that the absent child might not be appropriate for a group setting if his behavior was overly disruptive. Ursula stated that the teacher expressly wanted that child in the group. She was struggling with another common new counselor lesson: The counselor's primary job is to meet the needs of the students, even if contrary to the desires of teachers. Perhaps that child's needs could be better met by individual counseling or referral to a behavior specialist. Another challenge for Ursula was to educate teachers about the counseling program and understanding that counseling time should not be used as reward or punishment, but instead viewed as an important learning experience that should not be missed in order to complete class work.

Disengaged Worker

Danny was a middle school counselor with 15 years experience. He had been at his assigned campus for many years and, as a result, knew his students, their families, and the community quite well. Students regarded him with trust, and his office was often busy with students coming in seeking or responding to invitations for time with him. Likewise, teachers and other staff members sought his consultation services regarding particular concerns about students, the campus guidance and counseling program, or other related campus issues. When called upon to complete program-related paperwork, he was the first among the campus counseling team to complete such tasks.

Despite this, Danny's waning passion for the work he did so well was evident. He would isolate himself daily in his office to begin his chores, working in a manner that often seemed routine, and without enthusiasm. He often ate his meals alone, and at the end of the day he was the first to exit the door. He seldom volunteered for program or campus activities, but he responded positively when assigned, although expressing some sentiments of dismay. Whereas the other team members looked forward to opportunities for professional development through local organizations or state conferences, he preferred to remain on campus. His disengagement was difficult to witness, given his many skills.

Danny's detachment was at times seen in his work with students. During an observation of a group of adolescent teen fathers, he demonstrated effective skills as the boys fully engaged in a discussion of their concerns, their fears, and even the joys of prospective fatherhood. During this discussion, he became impatient, disapproved of remarks made, and responded with comments that were caustic and judgmental regarding the students' condition. The quietness in the group communicated that the words had stung. Recognizing the effects of his

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words, he explained to the students that his comments were born from his concern about the impact of their situations on their lives. In correcting his faulty response, he attempted to provide a transition to a discussion of how fatherhood might affect their lives. However, the openness and energy among the boys could not fully be restored.

Professionalism assessment. Assessment indicated that Danny was a Disengaged Worker. High competence was demonstrated in the trust and positive rapport built with students, parents, and staff. Students sought his counseling services and participated in his groups, and teachers, administrators, and parents utilized his expertise through consultation. He effectively completed assigned department tasks on time. And despite the observed faux pas, he did possess the skills to organize and facilitate counseling groups.

Low commitment also could be seen in Danny's work. The blunder observed in the group exemplified the professional burnout that was seeping into his relationships. He spent much time by himself rather than with counseling colleagues, seldom volunteering for counseling department or campus activities, and lacked enthusiasm for professional development and involvement. Despite this, he did articulate and demonstrate a commitment to the district's comprehensive guidance and counseling program model.

Supervisory interventions. Danny received direct supervisory interventions that clarified job responsibilities, utilized performance evaluation, and included consultation and coaching to elucidate norms of acceptable professional behavior while providing some autonomy in realizing those expectations.

Clinical supervision. The head counselor provided Danny with clinical supervision and observed him performing several job functions, including classroom guidance presentations and the group previously described. From these, the supervisor provided him with supportive feedback, such as his ability to build student trust and rapport, to communicate a genuine caring for his students, and to plan and organize counseling and guidance sessions.

In the midst of all these strengths, the head counselor also addressed commitment issues, indicating that an area of growth included attention to his interpersonal skills in working with students. Danny asked for clarification, and the supervisor shared specific examples of insensitive interactions from classroom and group observations. The head counselor described incidences in which communication of enthusiasm, acceptance, warmth, and connectedness might have enhanced a well-prepared session. Danny owned feelings of increasing apathy for his job. From this, a discussion ensued between supervisor and supervisee that led to collaborative agree-

ments about strategies for increasing Danny's connectedness to his students, his job, and his profession. Suggestions were to co-lead student groups with a young counselor who demonstrated excitement about her job, and to increase his participation in local counseling organization activities.

Administrative supervision. The head counselor also provided administrative supervision, and from this perspective, he supported and recognized Danny's ability to complete assigned tasks effectively, with attention to detail, quality, and timeliness. Recognition also was given for his commitment to the district's comprehensive guidance and counseling program and the priority given to delivering direct services to students. An area for identified growth was increasing competence in human relations skills when working on tasks with others through increased awareness and attention to attitudes and behaviors that might communicate distance or sarcasm.

Conversation also was directed to Danny's lack of volunteerism and connection to professional development and involvement. An exploration of activities that could support his increased commitment resulted in a mutual agreement between supervisor and supervisee. Areas of competence were supported as he committed to assisting a neophyte counselor in the department develop organizational and planning skills, and, during department meetings, to leading the vertical planning of classroom guidance sessions from sixth to eighth grade. The head counselor supported his reconnection with the profession by inviting him to attend the yearly workshop of the local counseling association.

Impaired Worker

Irma moved from a small, rural elementary school to a large school in our large district. She was selected for a position based on positive recommendations from her previous job, her apparent caring for children, and her enthusiasm in the interview. She was also a volunteer committee chair for the local counseling association chapter. Once hired, she expressed being happy to be in a large district with counselor colleagues.

She did not adjust well to the expectations of her new setting. Instead of working with children during the school days, she focused on developing her own system for handling what she seemed to perceive as an overwhelming job. She spent much of her time at the computer, developing forms (e.g., student self-referral forms, teacher referral forms, forms for tracking the special education referral process). She was not responsive to actual requests for counseling by children or from teachers or parents. Her co-counselor complained that she was doing no counseling. Teachers complained that she

was not providing guidance lessons.

Irma resisted the clinical supervision provided to new counselors targeting small group counseling. When the supervisor arrived for her first scheduled attempt to conduct an observation, Irma claimed to have forgotten and had no children scheduled. A second appointment was set, and subsequently cancelled. When the supervisor arrived on campus for the third scheduled time, Irma was absent.

The school principal reported that Irma's attendance was erratic. She was late to school on most days, and her absences were increasing. By late fall, she had already used the annually allotted 10 days. When challenged about her tardiness and absenteeism, Irma explained that she previously had a bout with brain cancer. When asked to bring in a doctor's note and recommendations for legitimate expectations and necessary accommodations given her condition, she brought a doctor's office note stating she had an appointment on a specific date. When the incompleteness of the note was addressed, she pulled her wig off—displaying her baldness—and threw it on the floor of the main office. She stormed out of the building and off campus.

Professionalism assessment. Over the course of the first semester, Irma was assessed as being low in competence and low in commitment. Her low level of competence was evidenced by her lack of understanding of the school district's comprehensive guidance program (NISD, 1994), her seeming inability to learn administrative procedures, her failure to provide guidance and counseling services, and her resistance to supervision. Because of the latter, specific data about her actual levels of competence were difficult to observe.

Her low level of commitment was evidenced by her lack of responsiveness to children and the significant adults in their lives (e.g., the teachers) and her reluctance to take advantage of the professional development opportunities offered through clinical supervision. She also did not seem to be committed to the program or to her job. It was possible that her health concerns interfered with her work; however, her expressed health concerns were not validated by a physician.

Supervisory interventions. In order to help Irma advance her professionalism, directive and prescriptive supervisory interventions were called for.

Clinical supervision. A central office–based clinical supervisor supported Irma's transition to her new job placement. The same supervisor explained the expectations for providing services to students (i.e., individual and small group counseling, a regular pattern of weekly guidance lessons), and for new counselors' participation in clinical supervision of guidance and counseling skills. The supervisor attempted to schedule these with Irma. As indicated, she met

with repeated resistance. As the clinical supervisor became increasingly directive and prescriptive, Irma became more resistant.

In order to counterbalance the perceived-but-necessary (for the good of the children) directive approach by the central office supervisor, her cluster leader was asked to provide peer clinical supervision. She, in turn, developed a relationship with Irma and attempted to be a "friendly helper." The peer supervisor consulted frequently with her, encouraging her to get unstuck by making small improvements, one step at a time.

Administrative supervision. A central office–based administrative supervisor, the director of guidance, provided monthly "new counselor training" to help ease the transition of the cohort of new counselors. Administrative supervision also was provided through one-on-one meetings with Irma, responding to her questions and concerns and supporting her development of forms and processes for managing the job. When it was clear that Irma was not moving forward on her own, the administrative supervisor supported the increasing directiveness of the first clinical supervisor and arranged for the peer supervisor to fulfill the more supportive role.

The administrative supervisor also confronted Irma's lack of adherence to the school district's attendance policies and regulations by providing a review of the guidelines regarding tardiness and absences. The supervisor called for the medical verification of Irma's illness and requested a consultation for developing appropriate accommodations that would allow Irma's students to receive needed services and at the same time be sensitive to Irma's health needs. When Irma's resistance stiffened and she indicated seriously impaired professionalism, a formative evaluation was developed and presented to her. It also indicated that, unless she significantly changed her behavior, she would not be rehired for the subsequent year.

CONCLUSION

School counselors acknowledge a need for supervision as they strive to meet the increasingly complex concerns of their students and communities. Through the supervision facet of the NISD performance improvement system, school counselors in our district are assisted in improving the quality of their performance. They continue to receive performance-based information that enhances their work with students. The relationship between professional performance and services to students is addressed in the ethical codes of the American Counseling Association (2005) and ASCA (2004), and in the ASCA National Model® (2005). Thus, school counselors have a professional responsibility

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to continually improve their performance so that "students can achieve school success through academic, career, and personal/social development experiences" (ASCA, 2005, p. 14).

Examples of benefits and services to students are readily seen in our case examples of counselor performance assessed among the four professionalism quadrants. Collegial supervisory relationships encouraged many Star Workers in the school district to continue their personal and professional growth beyond expectations they had for themselves. Assumption of professional leadership positions increased among this group in local, state, and national organizations. Others developed expertise in areas such as ethics and multiculturalism, and they shared their knowledge and skills through presentations and mentorships. Unfocused Workers reported increased participation in district, university, and professional association growth opportunities for skill development, resulting in improved performance evaluations. Disengaged Workers were assisted in reconnecting with professional interests, exemplified by one who eventually became a campus and district leader. Impaired Workers were slowly encouraged and assisted in addressing personal and professional issues that impeded development, thus improving their performance. Those who were unable to improve their performance were supported in their decisions to leave the profession.

As with other aspects of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program, the inclusion of a performance improvement system in any school district that supports appropriate, professional school counselor supervision, such as the one described in this article, requires the commitment of human and material resources. Investment of school district assets that affords the ongoing professional development of school counselors can benefit the school counseling and guidance program and its stakeholders. Continuous structured experiences facilitated by trained professionals provide school counselors with performance-based feedback that supports motivational goal setting, skill development, increased effectiveness, and strengthened professional identity (Henderson, Cook, Libby, & Zambrano, 2006). Results of a commitment to performance improvement focus school counselors' skills on delivering quality services to students in alignment with the mission and goals of the counseling program and the school system. ▮

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