

The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

Learning To Use Your School Counselor

from the American Counseling Association

As the new school year gets underway, your school age children will be facing a whole new set of opportunities and challenges. While it is common for parents to focus on the school's classroom teachers, there's an important resource that too many parents simply overlook -- the school counselor.

School counselors are the professionals educated and trained to work with students in terms of human development, relationship issues and the many choices that students have to face, especially in the high school years when career and higher education decisions need to be made.

While most of us are aware that school counselors can offer help in looking at career options, or in identifying the best college and university choices, parents, especially of younger students, often aren't aware that school counselors are trained and experienced in helping students of all ages to deal with many of the "problems in living" and relationship issues that growing youngsters have to face.

School counselors are probably among the best educated and trained professionals in your child's school. Every state requires school counselors to be certified by the State Department of Education. Most states require school counselors to have an undergraduate degree in elementary or secondary education and to meet the requirements to be certified as a teacher. Several states even require a number of years of classroom experience. Many school counselors are not only experienced classroom teachers, but hold a Masters degree in counseling or a related field.

Having well-trained professionals as school counselors helps them understand both the educational process and the developmental stages that children go through. They understand the significant self-concept developmental issues that occur around the age of puberty and early adolescence, and know how to help students facing difficulties at such times.

Many parents fail to realize that their school counselor is there to not only help the students, but can also provide assistance to parents facing problems with their child. When you're dealing with your child's unhappiness with school, the school counselor is the resource you need.

An excellent investment for you as a parent is to make an appointment, early in the school year, to meet your child's school counselor and to understand the services he or she can provide. You'll probably find your school counselor's expertise can be a valuable asset in trying to raise a healthy, happy, well-adjusted child.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

###

words: 395