

Suffield Middle School Developmental Guidance Program

The basis of the Suffield Middle School guidance program is modeled after the developmental guidance philosophy and the five functions of a school counselor. SMS school counselors provide these services during an academic school year. **They are as follows: Personal Counseling, Educational and Career Counseling, Appraisal, Referral, and Consultation.** Developmental guidance is an approach that facilitates effective change and fosters the total development of each individual student. It is the philosophy of Suffield Middle School to provide the services of personal counseling, educational and career counseling, appraisal, referral and consultation for all students. Helping students to develop their ability to make personal, social, career and educational decisions that foster effective positive change is vital for their success, growth and maturity.

Personal counseling is the basis from which the developmental guidance model derives and therefore is the main focus of the Suffield Middle School Guidance Department. Establishing trust and developing the individual relationship is essential for a successful program. Establishing the confidentiality of communication must be emphasized with each student/counselee. Being an advocate and maintaining a strong personal relationship with each student is key. True growth can occur when a student feels secure and trust has been established. Once the personal relationship has been established, respect and unity of thought coupled with a positive future direction will result. Being an empathic counselor who can foster healthy relationships with the counselees will ultimately be able to help with the development of positive self-image and decision-making skills. Students should always feel that the counselor is approachable in formal and informal ways and settings. The ability to assist with academic, social and general questions is a role a counselor needs to be able to offer. Promoting positive relationships between students, parents and teachers while maintaining an equitable approach needs to be understood and applied. Being fair while assisting all those directly involved will lead to effective and positive change. A successful counselor must be able to be reactive in a crisis situation and also be able to intercede in a preventative capacity as well. Being aware of current stresses and anxieties which impact today's young people is also a manner in which a counselor can be proactive and help students make informative decisions.

Educational and career counseling assists in the development of student awareness and identifying the potential for the fulfillment of established life goals and objectives. This area helps students identify their own skills, competencies, values and preferences. Acquiring knowledge and information in educational opportunities is essential for successfully presenting a career counseling model and structuring it to the individual's needs for future educational and career possibilities. Providing all students with information about opportunities and possible academic/career directions must be a priority. Establishing career goals and looking at all possibilities and alternatives needs to be stressed and pursued with all students.

The appraisal process within the developmental guidance role of a school system refers to the everyday function of a counselor. The assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each student both from an academic and social standpoint will enable the counselor to develop the potential of the counselee. Helping students realistically examine their true potential and ability in a positive manner is very important. An appraisal of student aptitude, interests and achievement can present an objective result in a clear and concise manner. This is achieved in part through formal observations, specifically in the areas of standardized tests and Pre-SAT exams. Also, inventories in the form of the COIN Career Targets inventory (Career Exploration and Educational Planning Guide), Harrington O'Shea, CAPS and Myers Briggs Type Inventory help assess and create a career model geared toward individual interests and abilities. These findings help establish student strengths and help a counselor to paint an accurate picture of an appropriate education or career direction. Helping students understand and establish a career development program through the use of standardized testing, career inventories, Holland's personality type theory, and Super's career life developmental model will help individual students pursue a direction based upon defined interests. The qualities identified can be derived from performance in school, grades, health, personal goals, extra-curricular activities and job experience.

The referral function of a developmental counselor revolves around assisting students to obtain an appropriate level of help and assistance for an immediate or anticipated issue whether it is in or out of school.

Counselors have many options to provide to students in need. The various issues that may arise in a school environment require a framework of options from which to appropriately address each individual need. Counselors must be aware of the referral process and the consulting agencies within and out of the school. On-site social workers, school psychologist, local DARE officers, and adjustment counselors are a vital asset for effective and productive assistance to students with particular needs. Referral services need to provide students

with community and school access not normally found in a classroom setting or even within offered school services. Available community resources must be available and a counselor needs to be cognizant of any and all services available for the students and their families. A school network of referral services and resources needs to be developed and made aware to the community in the event the services need to be accessed. Communication and clarity of purpose must be established in these cases. Building the relationship and level of trust between school and home is vital for optimal success and eventual closure. The referral process is an essential part of a developmental counselor's role. Maintaining an open line of communication is important and follow-ups are crucial during the referral process.

Consultation within a developmental guidance model refers to meeting with other colleagues, administrators, teachers, professionals and parents/legal guardians to provide information relevant to assisting student needs. Formalized team meetings and professional/parent conferences must frequently occur and are vital toward maximizing student potential. Also, informal meetings and dialog whether it be over the phone, Email, through family contact or in person with other colleagues is essential for creating an atmosphere conducive toward optimal student success. Suffield Middle School has a team approach where individual student needs are addressed and solutions are sought to help assist each person. We implement a team philosophy where communication and relationship building is established.

The Suffield Middle School Guidance Department implements the essential components of the developmental guidance counseling model. We emphasize an open-door policy for all students and parents in order to ensure the establishment of relationship building, communication and trust in a confidential setting. The SMS Guidance Department encourages all parents and students to call, email or stop by if you have any questions, comments or concerns. Appointments can be arranged by stopping by or calling the guidance office at any time.

Tracy Scatolini
School Counselor
Suffield Middle School
860-668-3823
Tscatolini@Suffield.org

Thomas Kadamus
School Counselor
Suffield Middle School
860-668-3823
Tkadamus@Suffield.org