Middle School Counselor Advisory Board Meeting

October 15, 2014 from 7:00-8:00 p.m. at Smith Middle School

People in attendance: Bob Bevier, Teri Brune, Kim Bryson, Kelly Chlebek, Lauren Field, Tim Fulcher, Jennifer Hartenburg, Tracy Heikka, Diane Kocenda, Jo Kwasny, Audra Melton, Ann O’Neill, Suzy Powell, Melissa Rehbine, Carol Rexer, Karl Schmidt, Kitty Schmidt, Gwen Simon, Sanja Thelen

Minutes:

Advisory development

* Met in August in order to determine needs
* Include all stakeholders
* Obtain some feedback from stakeholders, administration, parents
* Servicing the students and families is our goal

Agenda

* Generate discussion about counseling and what we do as counselors
* Want to learn ways we can improve the counseling curriculum and receive feedback

Counseling Vision

* Believe that all students have dignity and worth
* Students should have access to our program at any time
* The Troy schools are very diverse as shown by assessment results
* Ensure that each student is seen by a school counselor
* All counselors should have a Master’s degree
* Striving for the ASCA model recommendation of 250:1 ratio of student to counselor ratio as the current caseloads per school are approximately 500:1
* Troy’s middle school counselor to student ratio is almost double that of surrounding districts such as Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Rochester and Farmington Hills.

Counseling Program/Plan Should:

* Be planned and coordinated by school counselors and include all members in implementation of the plan
* Use data in order to meet students’ needs
* Monitor the results and ensure that those needs are being met
* Follow the American School Counselors Association model adopted by Michigan Department of Education as school counseling curriculum

Needs Assessment

* Surveyed all 6th graders for Fall 2014 in order to meet needs of students and parents
* Top concerns for 6th graders: Conflict with other students, feeling stressed, amount of homework, low self esteem, feeling sad/depressed
* Students also would like more information on suicidal thoughts, self-injury, drug and alcohol use in the home

Visible Thinking Routine Activity

* Read the article
* First sticky note – write a sentence you found meaningful or that helped you gain a deeper understanding of the role of the school counselor
* Second sticky note – write a phrase that moved, engaged, provoked you or was meaningful to you
* Third post it note record a word that captured your attention or struck you has powerful
* Share with a partner from a different school
  + Common themes taken away from article
    - Counseling dept should be viewed positively
    - Role of the school counselor has expanded/changed – are counselors able to focus on the academic part due to high case loads, call it ‘triage’
    - How do you consistently maintain relationships with students due to high caseloads, how do you maintain relationships when counselors are split between schools
    - Counselors are “managers”

ASCA Model Handout

* Talks about how to best build your school counseling program
* Building a foundation within your counseling department
* Management System – agreements with administration regarding counselor’s role, creating an advisory council
* Delivery System – getting into the classrooms, guidance curriculum
* Accountability – using data to prove ourselves, to prove that our plan/program is working
* Ultimate goal is for every student to have access to their counselor and have their needs met

Role of Counselor:

* Support the total child, for example:
  + Running study skills group
  + Helping the teachers with students’ needs
  + Sitting with students making sure their homework is done
  + Support the academics and support teachers
* Involve parents in students’ needs
* The counselor is the person to get the whole team (teachers, parents, students) together in order to solve the issue
* Focus on the students’ personal and social needs
* Career/College Readiness – Help students understand that we are building the foundation, making it to class on time, working in groups, being a team member
  + Discuss with students about how to get ready for college
  + Discuss with parents if their child will be prepared

Participant Discussion/Concerns:

* Students and parents do not know what counselors provide or can assist with, what do the counselors do?
* Students, parents, staff members, and community each have a specific need from the counselors, big responsibility for only 6 people between 4 schools
* Suggestion: provide students with inspirational words, phrases through classrooms, announcements, walls for struggling students with support and inspiration, who may not see a counselor
* There is a need to help parents and how to deal with their children who may be culturally diverse, who may not understand the system, feel lost because they are not acculturated
* Thinking about starting counselor “coffee talks” in order to provide parents with information regarding counseling department
* Questions regarding administrative decisions on hiring more counselors in order to meet students’ needs
* Misconception – there is a belief that reducing counseling services does not affect the classroom and it does
* Participant expectations are to provide counselors with ideas, suggestions, questions in order to better meet the needs of our students’ and parents. Also be the counselors’ voice in the community.

**NEXT MEETING APRIL 16 AT 7PM AT BOULAN PARK MIDDLE SCHOOL**