

## **WHO IS THE COUNSELOR?**

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THE counseling function is strategic to the success of the educational enterprise. Whoever counsels touches the delicate web of individual decision-making, personal adjustment and self-image. Those who counsel may beckon, consult or direct.

"Who am I?" continues to be a hard question to answer. The easy answers of name, place and vocation no longer suffice; identity becomes numerical, mobility has minimized location, and vocational tasks become transitory or obsolete. With such insecure status and terrain, the search for self is more difficult, more important.

Counseling as a designated role represents the crystallization of the counseling responsibility. The more specialized and "academic" the teacher becomes the more necessary counseling as a specialty becomes. However named or however assigned, the responsibilities grow more significant: to assist learners, to minimize educational impediments, to aid in understanding of problems, to interpret test scores and classroom issues, to analyze talent and aspirations preliminary to career and school planning, to translate broad systems or community policies into satisfactory individual behaviors.

The curriculum worker, the administrator, the teacher, the supervisor—all have a stake in decisions regarding the counseling function. Shall counseling be confined to the counselor? Shall counselors be responsible only to their building principals, to the psychologically oriented special education hierarchy, or to those in charge of the curriculum? Shall they be clinicians working only with individuals or shall they assume more diverse functions in which working with groups is also necessary? Shall they relate to data gathering, test selection and interpretation, educational and vocational advisement, or shall they also work with teachers, social and placement agencies? Shall they help pupils to consolidate gains and mitigate the separateness and fragmentation of the school and society; shall they also work with curriculum regarding its relevance, its timeliness, its relationship to teaching and learning styles? These questions seek inclusive, not singular answers.

Counselors are strategic persons, since their attitudes contribute to career choice, success or failure of curricular possibilities, and to the evaluation of learners and program. The counseling function is one to be studied by the supervisor and the curriculum worker—it is central to the important and personal commitments of education.

—LESLEE J. BISHOP, *Executive Secretary, ASCD.*

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