School Counseling Professional Identity Essay

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School Counseling Personal Mission Statement

As a soon-to-be school counselor, I will do my best to ensure that every student is equipped with the psychosocial, emotional, and academic skills to be successful after graduation. Students and their issues will be treated with respect and dignity to create a safe and respectful school environment.

Professional Identity Statement

Growing up, I always knew that I was going to end up working in the educational field, despite how much I tried to deny it as a rebellious teen. I come from a long line of educators; my great-grandfather was the principal of a one-room schoolhouse in the 1900s, my grandfather was the principal of a K-12 school in the Appalachian Mountains, my grandmother taught high school English, and my mother teaches criminology and criminal justice at the university level. I ended up being an English teacher for two years before moving to Cleveland.

I taught high school English at a small, rural school just southeast of Indianapolis. Because the school was so small (less than 200 students, 6-12), most of the teachers in the school served in many different capacities and had responsibilities that were sometimes not under the general purview of teacher. Officially, I was an English teacher to three different grade levels, along with two elective classes (one to seventh graders). Unofficially, I was a club sponsor, an assistant volleyball coach, a mentor for about 15 girls, a play director, an after-school biology tutor, and a counselor. As I continued to be more and more involved in my students’ lives, I realized that while I loved teaching English, the impact I made in helping students work through their problems was far more satisfying. Our combined middle/high school had only one counselor; many times, students would come to teachers for advice on scheduling and class
selection. I really enjoyed helping students figure out what they wanted to do or where their interests lay, and then advising the courses they should take to pursue those interests. When my husband and I made the decision to move to Cleveland and I had to quit my job teaching, I knew immediately that I wanted to obtain my master’s degree in school counseling.

After being in the school counseling program for two semesters, I am happy to say that I haven’t regretted this choice once. I’m just as excited about being a school counselor as I was when I made the decision to apply. To me, a school counselor is a person who is an educator, a collaborator, a leader, a mentor, an advocate, and a safe haven without judgment. Adolescence can be one of the most difficult parts of many peoples’ lives and having someone to provide safety, honesty, and respect can make adolescence just a little bit easier for some. Having someone to talk to without fear of gossip, judgment, or persecution can be the difference between life and death for some, and if I can make a teen’s life just that much easier, I want to do what I can to help.

I was drawn to school counseling specifically because the school counselor is the person in the school whose sole job is to be concerned for the present and future well-being of students’ academic, physical, and psychosocial development. When I was teaching, I often found that students were facing so many other issues outside the classroom (i.e. they had trouble moving up Maslow’s hierarchy of needs because the basics weren’t being met.) that it was almost impossible for them to learn about Whitman or Fitzgerald. As a school counselor, I would have the means to help students deal with some of those problems and learn to more effectively problem solve for the future.
As a school counselor, I believe that I have many of the qualities necessary to be effective in the school setting. I do my best to be empathetic and understanding while trying to consider all sides of a story before passing judgment. I have a good working knowledge of the educational environment and am able to understand what difficulties others in various roles throughout the school face. I am also highly organized and creative; I enjoy adapting ideas to various situations if the traditional methods aren’t effective. I also enjoy problem solving with regards to helping students make decisions about their futures, based on the experience I had with helping my 11th grade students.

In the American School Counselors Association Code of Ethics, it is outlined that school counselors have an ethical obligation to stay up to date on techniques and issues in schools. Professional organizations can help with this. Joining ASCA and attending the annual All Ohio Counseling Conference are two steps that I’ve already taken to engage in professional organizations and I plan to continue these. It is important to be able to converse with colleagues to collaborate on issues and ideas, as well as finding out best practices and effective techniques. Staying engaged in professional organizations provides that forum for collaboration, both with local counselors and on a national level.

Because a school counselor does play such a large role in the school environment and wears so many different hats, it is important for me, as the counselor, to have a solid understanding of the background and theory that goes into counseling adolescents. In order to be a leader in the school, I have to understand where students need to go and be confident in my abilities to get them to where they should be. As an advocate, both for students and for the school, I need to be able to understand all sides of an issue and approach the issue in a manner that is helpful to all parties involved, not just the one with which I personally agree. It is
important that, as a collaborator and consultant, that I be able to approach issues and problems with a firm understanding of problem solving, the educational system as a whole, and the developmental levels of all persons involved. Finally, as a counselor, it is important for me to abide by the Code of Ethics as well as the law to help my students make positive choices that will enable them to be successful in the long term, whether it is in a higher education institution or in the workforce.