

# Vocational Guidance



Jeff D. Stahl

## Table of Contents

<a href="#">Introduction to Vocational Guidance</a>	3
<a href="#">History of Guidance</a>	4
<a href="#">Guidance Today</a>	5
<a href="#">The Future of Vocational Guidance</a>	7
<a href="#">How Are We Guiding: The Goals of Guidance</a>	9
<a href="#">Guidance as a Department: Counselor Job Requirements</a>	12
<a href="#">Misunderstanding Vocational Education</a>	14
<a href="#">Teacher-Oriented Guidance</a>	16
<a href="#">Parental Guidance</a>	18
<a href="#">Closing</a>	20
<a href="#">Resources</a>	21

## Introduction to Vocational Guidance

The definition of guidance is: "The application of mental health, psychological or human development principles, through cognitive, affective, behavioral or systemic intervention strategies, that address wellness, personal growth, or career development, as well as pathology<sup>1</sup>." Counseling is a practice, profession, and educational service. Guidance allows students to accomplish all types of educational or career goals they have set upon themselves.

Guidance is an extremely important part of the educational world. In every high school in America, there is a guidance department that is used towards the betterment of the student body, to help unleash the full potential of American students today. However, with more and more technological advances, the new workplace is an ever-changing entity. More and more students are graduating from high school and secondary schools without proper skills to be a contributing member of this new workplace. Thus was the birthplace of vocational guidance, the main goals of which were to help students develop into functioning members of the future workplace, making them more employable and shooting them towards success.

For these reasons high school guidance is one of the most challenging positions within school walls, which is why the guidance department has grown and adapted to today's educational demands.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nbcc.org/admin/definition.htm>

## History of Guidance

Prior to having a dedicated staff member talk to students on the basis of their goals, and mental development, students would have been guided into a career mainly by their families. If a child came from a family where his father was a steel mill worker, the child too would end up working in the steel mills. If a man were a doctor and had a male child, he would most likely end up growing into the medical field. However, through the changes in society's demands and through population growth, a position had to be created to take on the duties of student self-education, or guidance.

Many schools eventually hired someone who would specifically deal with the issues of the students. Originally, there could only be one counselor per school who would act as more of a psychologist to troubled students. However, as more and more problems arose among the students, more and more responsibility was placed on the guidance counselor as an individual.

The responsibilities of the school guidance counselors were grouped together to establish a "Guidance Department" with multiple staff members, but with only one focus, the students. There are now guidance personnel at almost every school in America, elementary and secondary.

School counselors at all levels help students understand and deal with social, behavioral, and personal problems. These counselors concentrate on preventive and developmental counseling to provide students with the life skills needed to deal with problems before they occur and to enhance personal, social, and academic growth. Counselors provide special services, including alcohol and drug prevention programs and classes that teach students to handle conflicts without resorting to violence. Counselors also try to identify cases involving domestic abuse and other family problems that can affect a student's development. Counselors work with students individually, with small groups, or with entire classes. They consult and work with parents, teachers, school administrators, school psychologists, school nurses, and social workers.

## Guidance Today

The purpose and practices of the guidance department is continuing to change even today. Now there is more of a focus on vocational guidance. There are even specific counselors that deal with providing career preparation guidance. Vocational counselors, or employment counselors, help students and non students make career decisions. They explore and evaluate the situation at hand, bringing into play the person's education, training, work history, interests, skills, and personal traits. They work with these individuals to develop a plan to develop these certain skills that will help them in the future. Vocational guidance helps students to:

- Identify their own talents, strengths and weaknesses, family expectations and national requirements to sort out the personal relevance of the educational and vocational options available;
- Understand the available education and training options and the requirements for admission and success, and select an appropriate field of study;
- Understand the work options that are available, the qualifications required, the means of gaining entry, the life of the worker and the rewards of the jobs;
- Translate information about self, educational opportunities and the world of work into short-range and long-range career goals;
- Learn effective job-search procedures;
- Develop career adaptability to be able to take advantage of opportunities as they occur;
- Overcome self-defeating behaviors, gain self-confidence and learn life skills;
- Cope with the reactions to job loss of anger, depression, frustration and apathy, and learn to take continuing positive action to become employed again;
- Identify alternative occupations when current employment is in jeopardy.<sup>2</sup>

Today, school guidance is more than just providing students with information. It is a hybrid of self-development and of the edification and molding of one into a functioning member of society, providing educational and job placement information. The development of self-confidence is often a prerequisite for taking action for one's career. The goals of guidance may be achieved through one-on-one counseling, self-preparation, skill development courses, computer-assisted guidance and Internet-based guidance systems.

---

<sup>2</sup> "Strategies for Vocational Guidance in the Twenty-First Century." 2001. Chippenham, IAEVG.

With all the various resources at everybody's fingertips, there is a definite wealth of information and self-services that individuals can tap into. This opportunity has given the students the ability to choose for themselves. Given the right amount of information, some students can identify within themselves what they would like to do with their future and use the counseling service as more of a facilitator to connect them to all the right resources. There are many different places that students can obtain this information.

- The Internet
- Periodicals
- Peer helping groups
- Life-skills training
- Simulations
- Work visits (on-site observations)
- Guidance resources
- Career and Technological Education School
- Business/Marketing Education teachers

The internet is the most popular resource that students are currently using to put themselves on the right path because of its ease of use, availability, and privacy. Many students are very self-conscious when it comes to talking about their education/career paths. This is why it is so important that counselors—whoever they may be—maintain professional and empowering to the students. Such behavior could only have a positive outcome. Counselors are required to constantly continue their education by taking courses that keep them up to date with current technology and current trends in student guidance. This is a good reason why more and more business teachers are getting involved in the guidance field. They provide a “hands-on” application to students who want to participate in the vocational education system. These BE teachers also stand as positive role models to the students. This trend keeps growing and expanding as well.

## The Future of Vocational Guidance

Due to the consistency of the growing and changing of vocational guidance, the main focus on the future is "support." Many educational institutions are looking for further fiscal and operational support from the government, based on the nature of the mission of the vocational guidance strategy. Government support is important because:

- Economic development is becoming one of the largest concerns of most governments.
- The growth of the current economy has been put on the shoulders of the availability of skilled workers.
- Technical and vocational education and training are very important ways towards the development of a skilled labor force.
- Vocational guidance helps individuals develop their full potential, identify the most appropriate training, and become enabled to succeed in their education and placement in today's job market.
- Guidance supports values of increasing the educational and labor market accomplishments of girls and women, of people of all cultures and regions, and of persons with disabilities, and thereby promotes the use of the full talents of all students, not only those who are most able.

It is recommended that governments implement the following steps:

1. Establish an office with responsibility to:
  - provide funding for vocational guidance programs and services;
  - develop and provide methods and materials for guidance;
  - prepare the career guidance curriculum;
  - provide training and continuing education for guidance counselors and teachers;
  - conduct research and development to create new, more comprehensive and better ways of conducting educational and vocational guidance;
  - design promotional campaigns to interest learners, including girls and women, in science and technology;
  - develop programs to increase the retention of learners by schools and thus reduce the numbers of drop-outs;
  - design campaigns to develop a career development culture that encourages all people to participate in lifelong learning; and,
  - promote the infusion of career development concepts into academic subjects to help learners understand how the course work fits together and forms a body of knowledge and skills related to performance in work and other aspects of life

2. Enact legislation that defines the goals of guidance describes the range of services to be provided and stipulates the level of available resources. The legislation should apply to the services to be provided to learners in educational institutions and to adults in the labor market.
3. Provide employment counseling and placement services for learners completing their studies and for all people in the labor force.
- 4 Adopt policies on guidance that include the following requirements:
  - all learners receive curriculum-based guidance;
  - learners who require individual counseling for satisfactory achievement shall receive it;
  - individual counseling is a specialized function which must be performed by staff members who possess the required competencies;
  - the responsibilities of school principals, teachers and counselors in respect of the guidance program development and delivery are specified;
  - Qualifications that teachers and counselors in guidance should have; and, provision of guidance services to unemployed workers.
5. Enact legislation to authorize the collection, classification and publishing of labor market information that is useful to economic development efforts, technical and vocational training programs, and educational and vocational guidance.<sup>3</sup>

It has been strongly recommended that a more universal focus of vocational education take place. Significantly, there has been a push to pay particular attention to girls and women. There has been a virtual explosion of female involvement in the field of career and technological education for older females, and many vocational schools are now encouraging more high school females to go beyond the stereotypes of vocational students and sign up for classes for vocational training in high school.

---

<sup>3</sup> “Strategies for Vocational Guidance in the Twenty-First Century.” 2001. Chippenham, IAEVG.

## How Are We Guiding: The Goals of Guidance

The current guidance practices that allow the program to remain successful depend on strategies that make up what seems to be the mission of vocational guidance:

1. To have the students know and appreciate themselves
  - a. Identify their strengths, interests, values, aptitudes, and current accomplishments;
  - b. Use all types of experiences, activities, and interests to learn more about their potential;
  - c. Develop skills for dealing with the physical and emotional changes that will probably occur as they develop from adolescence to adulthood;
  - d. Identify, describe, and accept their feelings towards themselves and others;
  - e. Describe their hopes, expectations and fears.
2. To relate effectively with others
  - a. Demonstrate and practice the skills needed for effective communication;
  - b. Describe the qualities they seek in their relationships with others;
  - c. Describe and practice appropriate ways of handling their emotions;
  - d. Identify the different ways in which people behave in groups and evaluate the effects of these behaviors;
  - e. Understanding the importance of being sensitive to the feelings and needs of others in a group;
  - f. Demonstrate and practice the skills needed to work productively in groups;
  - g. Identify the contributions made to their community by people of different cultures, races, religious groups, abilities, ages and lifestyles;
  - h. Interact with people of different cultures, races, religious groups, abilities and ages;
  - i. Understand how a community relies on the interdependence of its people;
3. To develop appropriate education plans
  - a. Become familiar with the educational alternatives available to them at each stage of their schooling;
  - b. Use a wide range of educational resources such as school calendars, computerized information systems, and diagnostic tests;
  - c. Tour various educational institutions and listen to speakers who are familiar with different educational alternatives;
  - d. Understand how education relates to occupational choices;

- e. Choose courses based on the knowledge of their personal strengths, interests, values, and accomplishments;
  - f. Revise their educational plans at regular intervals on the basis of new information about themselves
  - g. Select courses that will allow them a range of occupational choices;
  - h. Use personal work experiences such as part-time jobs, cooperative education, and volunteer work to help them formulate educational plans;
  - i. Acquire the knowledge and attitudes needed to make successful transitions from one stage of their education to the next;
  - j. Understand the significance of motivation in successful learning;
  - k. Know which remedial and tutorial resources are available and how to use them;
  - l. Develop study skills that are appropriate to their level of education;
  - m. Develop effective time management skills
4. To explore career alternatives
- a. Understand the meaning and importance of career-related terms such as career, occupation, work and job;
  - b. Understand the importance of planning for each of the stages in their lives: education, work and retirement;
  - c. Know how their experiences and decisions have influenced their lives to date and may affect their future career;
  - d. Become aware of the possible influence of social and economic conditions and predictions of future trends on career planning;
  - e. Know how to use various decision-making processes;
  - f. Demonstrate effective decision-making skills in career planning;
  - g. Identify the information needed to make realistic occupational choices;
  - h. Identify and utilize the available resources for exploring occupational choices;
  - i. Use their knowledge of themselves, of their relationships with others, and of their skills, as well as their educational plans, to develop tentative career plans that include immediate and long term goals;
  - j. Identify and use various sources of information about employment opportunities;
  - k. Write letters, complete applications, prepare resumes, and develop strategies for job search purposes;
  - l. Experience simulated job interviews;
  - m. Become familiar with the general expectations that employers have of their employees;

- n. Become familiar with their legal rights and responsibilities as employees;
- o. Learn about the opportunities for and the advantages and disadvantages of self-employment.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Conger, D. Stuart. Policies and Guidelines for Educational and Vocational Guidance. 1992. Paris, UNESCO.

## Guidance as a Department: Counselor Job Requirements

Most vocational counselors work the traditional nine-month school year, but are usually employed on full-year contracts. The hours they work mirror that of the teachers. However, college and career planning counselors often work more irregular hours to make better advantage of students' free time and student recruiting periods.

Guidance counselors must possess high physical and emotional energy to handle the array of problems that they encounter throughout a normal work day. They must also be prepared for the unexpected. Dealing with these types of problems on a daily basis is a predictor for higher levels of stress.

Because privacy and professionalism are two extremely important characteristics of counselors, they are usually given their own private offices. It is here where they will conduct most of their private discussions with students and/or parents.

In the year 2000, counselors made up about 465,000 jobs. Educational, vocational, and school counselors made up 205,000 of those jobs. Most of these counselors work in elementary, secondary, and college level facilities.

There is a breadth of knowledge that is required for counselors. Masters degrees are very prominent among counselors because most of them have multiple degrees. The fields of study include college student affairs, elementary or secondary school counseling, education, gerontological counseling, marriage and family counseling, substance abuse counseling, rehabilitation counseling, agency or community counseling, clinical mental health counseling, counseling psychology, career counseling, and many other related fields. When guidance is provided through individual counseling, it is expected that the counselor has adequate information about:

- counseling techniques
- career, education and the labor market
- assessment techniques to measure skills
- abilities, aptitudes, interests, values, and personality
- needs assessment techniques
- computer and internet systems of guidance
- organizing career development programs
- teaching job search techniques
- establishing linkages with community-based organizations
- public relations techniques to promote career development activities and services

Many of the newer training techniques for counselors are becoming available through the internet.

By the year 2001, 46 states and the District of Columbia had some form of counselor credentialing, licensure, certification, or registry legislation governing practice outside schools. Requirements and prerequisites vary from state to state; some states require credentialing, and some do not. Counselors must be aware of educational and training requirements that are often very detailed and that vary by area and counseling specialty. Many counselors work towards a more universal certification through the National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. (NBCC). Through this, they can become a "National Certified Counselor."

Overall employment of counselors is expected to grow faster than the national average for all jobs through 2010. There are expected to be many job openings in education due to increasing student enrollment. There has also been a very strong push from the government to hire additional school counselors to help students deal with issues ranging from drug and alcohol abuse to death and suicide.

The average earnings for educational counselors in 2000 were \$42,110. However, school counselors can make additional income by working during summers.

## Misunderstanding Vocational Education

Due to the way in which the vocational education participation was started, VE has had a negative appearance to the student who feels the need to concentrate on more “academic” classes. Traditional vocational education invokes visions of plumbers, carpenters, electricians and cosmetologists. Most students are aware of these traditional trade occupations taught at area Career and Technology Centers (CTCs), formerly known as area vocational-technical schools.

More and more people are discovering the benefits of vocational-technical education. These programs help students and adults develop skills that can lead directly to satisfying job or can assist in preparing for college. CTCs and Area Vocational-Technical Schools (AVTSS) train students for jobs in marketing, health services, construction trades, industrial technologies, business, and many other fields. What many of the other high school students don't know is that they will most likely aim for one of these concentrations of study in college, and that taking courses towards their continuing major of study while they are in high school could put them on the inside track in future years. However, these schools are essential for those who do not want to go to college, or don't feel they have the necessary skills to go to college. Community colleges and other postsecondary training institutions now include programs in their curriculum that prepare students for immediate employment. These students should be aimed towards some of these programs.

*Apprenticeship programs* provide hands-on experience through certain employers or technical training institutions. One of the greatest benefits of this program is that you are usually paid while you learn. Some examples of this include the areas of welding, masonry, and many other construction trades.

*On-the-job training programs* allow the student to be compensated while they learn. These programs differ from apprenticeship programs by being available to all professionals throughout their careers. These types of jobs start out by observing and helping someone in a trade or profession, and eventually lead to greater positions as experience increases.

*Certificate programs* are available from a very wide range of training providers. They provide certain information that is necessary, and usually complete, for someone to enter a certain trade. These certificates are able to complement other educations or certifications.

*Associate degree programs* are usually offered at community colleges and technical training institutes. They are usually used as a first step towards a four-year degree. Many of these associate degrees are complete enough that the individual does not need much education or certification following the degree.

This question must be addressed: Are students being educated enough about vocational training before they are given the opportunity to participate? This

education should begin in junior high or middle schools for all students so that when they get to the high school level they are better educated to the programs and offerings of the opportunity. It also could be a good idea to require students to take at least one vocational education class prior to graduation. This expectation would allow students to get past the negative image of vocational education.

## Teacher-Oriented Guidance

With the job market requirements constantly changing, and the student enrollment climbing, many high school guidance counselors have been challenged by an extremely large work load. Fortunately, other staff members in the building are able to help students reach their full potential in career development. More recently, teachers have been picking up the slack in the guidance arena by incorporating career awareness programs into their course curriculum. These programs do not take significant time or attention away from other course work, and they have proven to provide a very valuable and often neglected service to the students. Students are able to receive this information easily from teachers because they are accustomed to learning from them. They respect this information as needed, and see teachers as a positive role models.

Teachers are able to help students make self-assessments to make it easier to choose possible career paths. The most important goal here is to help students help themselves. This goal is also addressed in the Business and Marketing Education department. Utilizing these teachers can be seen as an advantage from many angles:

- Career prep and placement is already part of the Business Education curriculum. Many of the BE teachers are showing students how to correctly compose resumes and participate in mock job interviews.
- The teachers are more familiar with the students; they see them every day, and usually have a mutual respect between each other.
- Students in the BE or ME program have usually already begun the school-to-work process, and being able to have the same advisor through this entire process proves to be very beneficial.

There are certain things that the teacher must have in preparation for student counseling. They must have access to the necessary student personnel files so that they may adequately advise based on their interests, activities, and background. A private office is necessary so that students can have security with their information. It would also be beneficial for the office to be comfortable so that the student will be able to relax more and feel as though he can really open up.

Necessary information must be gathered to find out the skills of the student. Not necessarily skills such as writing or speaking, but skills such as:

- Self-management skills
- Transferable skills
- Specific job skills

One of the most important things to look into when advising a student is to pay attention to his value system. This system can give you a great deal of information that will eventually help in forming solutions and making educated decisions.

Taking the role of school counselor, the teacher must help students solve their personal, school, and occupationally related problems through the use of the problem-solving decision-making model. Through counseling sessions, the student's problem is defined, and alternative solutions are gathered; the consequences are discussed; the solutions are prioritized until one can be chosen. The more input from the student, the better off the session is. The goal is to make the student more independent with a problem-solving process. The teacher must make sure to be sensitive to the student, but not to solve the student's problems. The teacher should remain as more of a guide to the student and should be able to use the teacher's experiences as a stepping stone towards the best outcome.

The transition from the "authoritarian" role of the classroom teacher to the "nonjudgmental" role of the counselor requires the mental set of the teacher to undergo a sometimes instant metamorphosis. The mind set must change from one of "being in control" and "knowing what's right" to one in which a highly positive regard for the individual, a desire for accurate empathy, and a sincere genuineness are foremost.<sup>5</sup>

There are many resources available for the teacher to be a success in the role as a counselor. You can find much information from sources such as:

- Newspapers and magazines
- Cable TV
- Local adult schools and community colleges
- High school and public libraries
- Site visits
- Handouts and resources from the professional school counselors

The Business Education teacher must be able to see his limitations as an untrained counselor and should refer the tougher questions to a professional counselor before possibly giving the student bad information. By accepting the large role of the counselor, however, the Business Education teacher can be an integral part of the student's success.

---

<sup>5</sup> Jacobs, Brian C. "Help! Counseling Needed!" 51 – 54.

## Parental Guidance

The most important influence in a student's life should be reflected through the parental influences. However, many parents don't have all the information needed to make educated decisions about a child's future career plans. However, all parents should be involved in their child's future planning, not just financially. The parents know just as much, if not more about their children than the child does.

Some helpful suggestions to parents include:

- Discuss the information in available career guides that are available in almost every guidance office at the schools. Look at all programs that are available at local Career and Technical Centers, even if the child was not necessarily planning to look for courses there.
- Talk to your children about what you, as a parent, value most in your career.
- Encourage your child to branch out and look for career possibilities in multiple areas. Make sure that your child knows that it is acceptable, and very normal, to change your mind over the course of the maturing and edification process.
- Discuss with your child their likes and dislikes throughout their lifetime. Parents may find out that their child has/had interests that have not been cultivated even yet.
- Look through the classified ads with your child. Discuss all types of jobs, the advantages, and the disadvantages of them.
- Make a running list of your child's likes and dislikes, current skills, interests, values, and personality traits that will eventually apply to employment possibilities..
- Make an appointment to meet with the child's counselor. Together, the child may feel more comfortable talking when someone is there that they already are comfortable with.
- Encourage your child to get involved in extra-curricular activities

Research shows one school that specifically involves parents in the student advisory and achievement process. Here, Lenape Area Vocational-Technical School describes their "Partnership with Parents" program:

"Lenape Technical School's successful practice involves teacher partnerships with parents. Parental involvement is crucial to student achievement; parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at Lenape. The Teachers Advisor Program (TAP) pairs a teacher with a small group of no more than ten students to advise students on a monthly basis. Teachers send parents student information every nine weeks regarding their progress towards meeting graduation requirements, grades, and progress made toward their career goals. In the summer, the new junior

students and their parents are invited to Lenape for an orientation. Parents are given information about the school, and an opportunity to receive their password for Parent Connect. On a daily basis, Lenape uses Parent Connect, a software program that enables any parent with Internet access and a confidential password the ability to review their child's progress at Lenape. Student grades, homework assignments, test scores, discipline data, and attendance records are posted on the school's Website, and are available to any parent on a daily basis. Parents are encouraged to call or e-mail the teachers at anytime on the school's Website. Parents have the ability to e-mail teachers via this site, if they have any questions. In addition, at the mid-point of every 9-week marking period, parents are contacted by student services coordinators to discuss the progress of their child. At the end of the period, a postcard is sent to parents informing them of report card pick-up at Lenape during the day or evening to promote their contact with teachers in an effort to inform and involve parents. If parents cannot participate in this event the report card is sent to them by mail."<sup>6</sup>

I think this process is extremely important to combat the distance that seems to have come between parent and student over the years, especially through important decision-making processes such as this.

---

<sup>6</sup> Csonka, Bill. "Innovative Practices: Lenape Area Vocational-Technical School – Partnerships With Parents." [http://www.pde.state.pa.us/career\\_edu/cwp/view.asp?A=124&Q=97471](http://www.pde.state.pa.us/career_edu/cwp/view.asp?A=124&Q=97471).

## Closing

Guidance is a term associated with an act, a department, and a goal. Guidance can and should be given to students through multiple avenues for it to be successful. In certain periods of your life, certain decisions are almost impossible to make without outside influences. During a child's edification process at the high school level, it is essential that he have adequate resources and support from his parents, school, community, but most importantly, himself.

Guidance helps students in planning their education and developing their skills so that they may be more employable in the future. They are made more aware of their current talents, so that they may be able to appreciate them and relate them effectively to others. This ability, in turn, would allow them to explore career alternatives, develop appropriate educational training possibilities, and brainstorm strategies that would allow them to implement these plans into an effective career plan that they can be happy with, while being a functional member of the community. Guidance and education go hand in hand because they allow students to utilize all the learning opportunities available. To a greater degree, guidance can be responsible for increasing the skills of the labor force and increasing the overall potential of the country.

## References

- Conger, D. Stuart. Policies and Guidelines for Educational and Vocational Guidance. 1992. Paris, UNESCO.
- Csonka, Bill. "Innovative Practices: Lenape Area Vocational-Technical School – Partnerships With Parents."  
[http://www.pde.state.pa.us/career\\_edu/cwp/view.asp?A=124&Q=97471](http://www.pde.state.pa.us/career_edu/cwp/view.asp?A=124&Q=97471).  
<http://stats.bls.gov/oco/ocos067.htm>
- Jacobs, Brian C. "Help! Counseling Needed!" 51 – 54.
- Revised Recommendations for Vocational and Technical Education, 1974. Paris, UNESCO.
- Schocket, Sandra. "The Classroom Teacher as Counselor." 47 – 50.
- "Strategies for Vocational Guidance in the Twenty-First Century." 2001. Chippenham, IAEVG.
- United States. PA Dept. of Education. 2003. Pennsylvania Career Guide: 13<sup>th</sup> Edition. Harrisburgh: GPO, 2003.