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THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELOR AND THE DEVELOPMENTAL
APPROACH.

BY- MYRICK, ROBERT

FLORIDA UNIV., GAINESVILLE

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THE AUTHOR BELIEVES THAT THE DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS OFFER THE MOST PROMISE FOR OUR CHILDREN AND THE FUTURE OF OUR SOCIETY. THE DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH FOCUSES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL VARIABLES. TEACHERS, COUNSELORS, AND OTHER SCHOOL PERSONNEL MUST HELP THE CHILD TO BECOME SENSITIZED TO HIS TOTAL SELF. THE PROCESS OF SENSITIZATION IS DESCRIBED. THE TEACHER PROVIDES THE MOST IMPORTANT HELPING RELATIONSHIP. TEACHERS NEED HELP IN TRANSLATING LEARNING PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PRINCIPLES OF A HELPING RELATIONSHIP INTO PRACTICE. THIS IS THE COUNSELOR'S SPECIALTY AS AN ACTIVE AGENT OF CHANGE. THE MANY WAYS THE COUNSELOR CAN FUNCTION WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH ARE SUGGESTED. THE AUTHOR BELIEVES THAT THE PREPARATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS MUST BE MODIFIED. COUNSELORS SHOULD BE PREPARED TO HELP TRANSLATE LEARNING THEORY INTO PRACTICE, FACILITATE HELPING RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND THE COUNSELING OFFICE, UNDERSTAND HUMAN BEHAVIOR, AND VALUE ITS FULL DEVELOPMENT AND POTENTIAL. THE COUNSELOR'S ROLE AS A CONSULTANT MUST BE EXPLORED FURTHER. (IM)

**The Elementary School Counselor
and the
Developmental Approach**

By

**Robert Myrick
Assistant Professor
University of Florida**

Our American Society has been proclaimed as the most advanced way of living the world has ever known. Our ingenuity and ability to develop and harness machines are amazing. The machines produce a bewildering number of gadgets and products for use in everyday living by a large majority of our people. Machines have given us a most fantastic material world in which to live and the future promises even more. Today, we talk of the "Great Society."

Problems In A "Great Society"

We also know that there are people in this country who do not share in this abundance of products. Almost everyday the news media report on attempts that different governmental agencies are making to help disadvantaged people, in order that they might share in and become part of a Great Society. But, machines and products, by themselves, are not enough to make a Great Society. Nor is helping people to learn more employment and recreational skills enough to create a Great Society. Rather, it is in the area of experiencing and developing our humanness and our relationships with other people that a Great Society will eventually be realized.

Human relationships and human potential are currently paying a heavy price for this affluent society. While the number of products for our use has increased, the number of social problems has likewise increased. For example, the crime rate is increasing four times as fast as the general population growth and over two million serious crimes are committed each year. Approximately 275,000 illegitimate babies are being born every

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year and of those babies that are born in marriage, the chances are almost two out of four that the child will eventually have divorced parents. Billions of dollars are spent on tranquilizing drugs and alcoholic beverages to make living more bearable for a countless number of people in this country. While modern medicine is ridding us of the age old diseases such as TB and polio and while brilliant surgeons are replacing vital organs that have worn out, new stress diseases are developing. Psychosomatic illnesses constitute a large part of the general physician's practice today. One-half of the hospital beds in this country are occupied by the mentally ill. It appears that the 19th Century's Age of Progress has given way to the 20th Century's Age of Anxiety.

What seems to be the basis for such an increase in social problems? What is happening to the relationships between people? Why are we lagging behind in developing our capacity for living in this world of fascinating products?

The social phenomenon of loneliness and self-alienation have been described and discussed for several years. Eric Fromm (1) has described modern day relations between people as those of "alienated automatons, each basing his security on staying close to the herd, and not different in thought, feeling or action. While everybody tries to be as close as possible to the rest, everybody remains utterly alone..." He writes of the deep sense of insecurity, anxiety and guilt which result when human separateness cannot be overcome. Further, he suggests that our society offers many palliatives which help people to keep consciously unaware of this aloneness and unaware of self, unaware of relationships and unaware of nature. To him, modern man has become a commodity.

Eric Berne (2) has written a "best seller" entitled Games People Play. Its popularity and its theme accentuates clearly the many sterile relationships that exist between people.

Carl Rogers (3) speaks of the 'increasing loneliness of our modern culture' and he credits this general trait of our society to the mounting interest in encounter groups, or intensive group experiences. Such group experiences, where people attempt to disclose more of their personal feelings and learn more about themselves in relation to others, have become another social phenomenon. The growing and almost universal interest in these encounter groups by people from all walks of life and by people who do not seem to have any severe incapacitating problems testifies how much people in this society are deprived of the opportunity to experience and share their feelings--their emotional life--with others. It emphasizes how deprived most people are of intense human relationships. It dramatizes how little most people have experienced the warmth, empathy and understanding of other people. It points to how much of most people's lives are spent in feeling overly anxious, guilty and fearful of others--all at the expense of a fully-functioning person.

The idea of developing a fully-functioning person, rather than a lonely and self-alienated one, has helped give rise to some new approaches to guidance and counseling programs in our schools. As these new approaches are being explored and defined, it appears increasingly evident that the role of the counselor in our schools will meet with some important changes. The approach that a school system chooses to emphasize has special significance for the elementary school counselor.

Three Approaches to Guidance and Counseling

In the past, the counselor, regardless of his setting, was primarily viewed as a person who dealt mostly with people's problems. In schools where counseling has been acknowledged as a part of the total school program, this remedial approach has been, for the most part, the major emphasis. It has been the child who is in trouble who likely

receives the most attention from the counselor and other specialized personnel. The child who acts out in the classroom, or who is resistant to learning, who attends school irregularly, or who insults the teacher with his profanity--this is the child who has been referred to and seen by the counselor. This "repair business" or "fix him up" approach to counseling is important, but for the effort that is expended the results are minimal. A few talks with the counselor seldom bring significant results and the results, if any, are usually of a temporary nature.

Within recent years, a second concept of counseling and guidance has attracted attention. It is called the preventive approach and has its roots in the mental health movement that was particularly popular in the last decade. This approach implies an interest and concern with identifying problems and difficulties and then providing conditions which will prevent these difficulties from occurring. For example, when we want to avoid measles--a disease which we can readily identify and wish to avoid--we may take a vaccine in an attempt to prevent the occurrence of this disease in the future. Likewise then, if we wanted a child to avoid behaving a certain way when he become an adult, we would "vaccinate" or "indoctrinate" him with certain ideas and experiences that reduce the likelihood of this behavior to occur. The metaphore of "brainwashing" is not too inappropriate here, particularly when it is considered that some people would suggest that a child should be taught to think a certain way when he grows up. This approach has negative connotations and the underlying assumption is that we know the problems that should be avoided and have some answers as to what should be done in order to assure people of mental health in the future. In this rapidly changing world, we cannot be sure of any of our answers and certainly not the problems of the future.

A third concept of guidance and counseling, which is frequently used synonymously with the preventive term--unfortunatly, in the developmental approach. It is this

developmental approach to school programs that offers the most promise for our children and the future of this society. This approach is more than a study of child growth and development. It is more than student appraisal. It is more than a recognition of developmental stages and tasks. Developmental guidance and counseling stresses the optimum development of man's potential. It acknowledges that man is many things and can become many things. It recognizes that each individual because of his unique genetic heritage and interaction with his environment will develop differently from those around him and, thus, will inevitably be uniquely creative. This approach helps the individual to become aware of all of his humanness, which must include both his cognitive and affective being. It promotes the concept of total awareness of one's self, and it attempts to enable a person to be more open, more flexible and more adaptive to change. It affirms that they have known and can know at the moment of behaving. Such an approach is built upon the value of human relationships.

The developmental approach, when put into effect early enough, will serve as a preventive measure and will also lessen the need for correctional or remedial measures. But most important, it enables us to think beyond the solving of problems, beyond the identification and prevention of problems, to what man's potential might be.

What process is necessary, if the developmental approach is to be effective? And, how is this process so different from what we are doing today? What is the role and function of this approach to the elementary school counselor?

The Developmental Approach

Psychological variables. The answers to the questions raised above come in part from the work and research that counselors and therapists have been conducting over the years.

Carl Rogers (4), for example, has insisted that the therapeutic variables of congruence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard are not only necessary, but when present, are sufficient in a therapeutic relationship. Such words are now common terminology in the counselor's vocabulary. Moreover, the works of Fiedler (5), Combs and Soper (6), and Tyler (7) have all pointed to the conclusion that these same basic characteristics--empathy, congruence and positive regard, among other understanding behaviors--are the very same found in successful classroom teachers, counselors, therapists and other helping professions. The conclusion is that "apparently good helping relationships are not markedly different wherever they are found."

On the other hand, John Krumboltz (8) has stated that these variables are important and necessary, but they are not sufficient. More is needed. In many cases, systematic re-learning is necessary. For instance, at times it is necessary to systematically desensitize an individual to one way of feeling or behaving and sensitize him to another--one that is more appropriate, less maladaptive or troublesome to the individual.

Also, in a most interesting study which analyzed some successful work of Carl Rogers', Charles Truax (9) has led us to the conclusion that reinforcement in one form or another always takes place in a relationship. The most "non-directive" individual selectively reinforces behavior and feelings in others. In Rogers' case, the client was reinforced for talking about self and feelings.

Finally, counselors and therapists have learned that it is through human relationships that people can become well. People can only come to know who they are and sense what their potential might be through relating with other people. As others respond to us, we come to see ourselves. As we see ourselves, we behave.

If the observation of these psychological variables has any merit, then the implications for developmental school programs seems clear. Teachers, counselors, and all

other school personnel must work together in helping the child to become sensitized to his total self, his total potential. Such a sensitization process involves all aspects of humanness; not just the thinking and behaving child, but the feeling child. Such a sensitization process must be a part of the total school program and must be begun in the beginning school years.

The Process. The best way to sensitize a child to his self is to respond to him, and especially to his feelings. The child is sensitized to his positive self when we communicate that his feelings are a legitimate part of him and are accepted as part of who he is as both a unique person and as a human being. This kind of communication and acceptance will undoubtedly necessitate some "desensitization" on the part of many teachers and counselors who will have a difficult time in accepting the child for all that he is. That is, because of the way in which some teachers and counselors were responded to when they were growing to adulthood, they may have difficulty in accepting a child's feelings of hate, love, aggression, anger, envy and many other such strong expressions of emotion. They may have difficulty in accepting the emotional expression as part of what the child is and what he is feeling at the time he expresses himself. However, when such acceptance and helpful communication is possible on the part of the teacher or counselor then the child will eventually come to know himself better. He will also see himself more positively as a person. For, he does not have to feel guilty about who he is and he can fully explore the implications of his behavior in his environment. Because the environment is less hostile to him, he identifies positively with people. Because he identifies positively, he can learn then how to socially vent those feelings and behaviors that are less acceptable in our society; yet, he can still accept them as part of what he is. Because he is less anxious about himself as a person, he is free to learn more of the information and skills that receive so much attention

in school. Cognitive learnings without affect are limited. And, it is the affect, or emotional part of man, that is central to all his behavior and keeps him motivated to learn.

Providing A Helping Relationship. In the developmental approach there are many helpers. But, it is the teacher who is the key-helper and who provides the most important helping relationship. For, it is the teacher who comes into contact with the child more than any other adult, outside of the parents.

Once the child has begun school, the teacher-child relationship becomes the most significant relationship the child has. The elementary school teacher is in fact, the surrogate parent. Children generalize the relationships they have at home to their teachers. For example, it is not uncommon to hear an elementary school child verbally slip and call the teacher "mother". Teachers are, consequently, in an excellent position to substantially affect the way in which a child's relationships develop and the way in which a child comes to view himself as a person. This responsibility and opportunity is becoming even more important today as kindergarten and Headstart programs are becoming a regular part of school programs. Now, a new federally supported program has been introduced in the form of a pilot study which is moving the concept of Headstart down to children between the ages of three to six. These early programs emphasize the concept of readiness, but, as suggested here, readiness is more than a teacher helping the child learn to identify objects and match them with a name; it also consists of exploring the feelings that a child has when thinking about and interacting with an object and with the teacher.

How is this different from what is being done today? There is evidence to suggest that teachers are not being trained to implement such a developmental approach as outlined

here. The area of interpersonal relationships and the importance of a child's feelings is new to most teachers. Courses dealing with the helping relationship are not common practice in teacher preparation programs. Most teachers have never taken a class in group dynamics. And, this is clearly shown in the behavior of the typical classroom teacher.

For example, within this decade there has been an increasing number of studies which deal with the systematic observation of the interaction that takes place between student and teacher. Ned Flanders (10), of the University of Michigan, after years of studying teachers representative of many parts of this country, has arrived at a Rule of Two-Thirds. "About two-thirds of the time spent in the classroom someone is talking. The chances are two out of three that this person is the teacher. When the teacher talks, two-thirds of the time is spent by many expressions of teacher opinion and fact, giving some direction and occasionally criticizing the pupils." He also found that the better teachers do less talking than the inferior teachers. For the inferior teachers, the Rule of Two-Thirds become the Rule of Three-Fourths.

But, of particularly interest, is not that teachers talk too much at children, but the kind of talk that takes place. In a study of 100 social studies teachers in one state, for example, Flanders (11) found that the teachers used less than three percent praise and encouragement, or less than five percent of their talking time reacting to and using ideas that students initiate. And even more important, it is estimated that of teacher talk less than one-half of one percent of the responses made by teachers in the classroom are directed to a child's feelings--either negative or positive. The developmental approach cannot take place unless children's ideas and feelings are responded to by the teacher.

If self-worth, self-esteem, and self-expression have any relationship to being

sensitized to feelings and ideas, then self-alienation might be considered a product of many of today's schools. If man is a commodity, then the biggest machine of all is the vast and influential school system of this country. Perhaps there is the reason that encounter groups have become so popular. People have been deprived of the opportunity to share their feelings and ideas about themselves while they have been growing to adulthood. Once they have become adults, they have continued to follow the course of self-alienation and distance from one another, as suggested by Fromm. Apparently, many teachers who claim to have the 'democratic-acceptant' attitude, which has also been termed a helping characteristic (12), are not really democratic but are authoritarian. It is the authoritarian who primarily directs, advises, and sells his own opinion and facts. Feelings, self-worth, and self-dignity have little place in totalitarian societies. A democratic society, on the other hand, must be built on more than an election of class officers and the taking of an occasional class vote. Rather, a democratic society must be built on the recognition of the potential and worth of each individual. This means giving attention to feelings as well as ideas.

Furthermore, unfortunately, research is also showing that simply knowing about the nature of a helping relationship is not enough. Both "good" and "bad" teachers can pick out the important variables of good teaching when given a list. It is obvious that teachers need help in translating learning psychology and the principles of a helping relationship into practice. They need help in implementing the developmental approach.

The Elementary School Counselor. The elementary school counselor is an emerging figure on the school scene today. There have been elementary school counselors before, but they have been few in number. Their job has not been well defined and often they

have lacked the specialized skills that are a necessary part of the counselor's function.

With the advent of the developmental emphasis to counseling, which has been encouraged by professional organizations and supported by federal training programs, the elementary school counselor's role and function has been discussed and debated across the country. To the satisfaction of many, it has been defined. But, it still appears that much work remains to be done before the image is clear. There is today too much emphasis on the counselor's ability and willingness to do too many things. It should be emphasized that the counselor is not a jack-of-all-trades. He is not a substitute teacher, an attendance clerk, a social worker, an occupational information librarian, a test administrator and interpreter, a counselor to parents, teachers, etc. He is a specialist. His specialty is the helping relationship. His major responsibility is to know about human behavior and interpersonal relationships and how these are related to the child's becoming a more effective learner and the teacher becoming a more effective helper.

The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision and the American School Counselors' Association formed a joint committee to study the role of the elementary school counselor. After several reports, this committee has advocated three major functions for the guidance specialist, or counselor. These are: counseling, coordination, and consultation.

Counseling is a special service provided by the counselor. Counseling has the unique advantage of providing a non-evaluative, non-threatening environment where feelings and ideas can be expressed and explored more openly. For this reason, teachers are generally considered to be involved in guidance and not in counseling. In the light of the developmental approach, counseling can and should be more than just problem-solving. There will be, of course, attention given to helping students who are having adjustment

problems. There will also be times when the counselor's task will be to help a student clarify issues, alternatives and consequences so that he can increase the effectiveness of his decision-making process. But, in developmental counseling, the counselor can, and should, initiate meetings with students where the goal is not to solve problems or learn new adaptive behaviors but to help stimulate and mobilize the energies and personal resources of the child. For instance, the counselor may decide to meet with a group of children over a period of time where the purpose would be to discuss, analyze, and sensitize feelings toward a particular subject, a particular fear, or maybe some personal relationship.

Unfortunately, but perhaps realistically, the counselor will, in the developmental program, continue to be in the "repair business". The child who is troubled needs attention. And, when most teachers and principals today think of what an elementary school counselor can add to their school program--at this time--they often think of receiving help with the problem children. They want a counselor to answer the desperate questions of "What am I going to do with this child?" "Can you do something for him?" Many of the problems that are presented to the counselor are not of a serious nature and they usually involve a breakdown in the teacher-learner relationship in the classroom. Consequently, such problems can most effectively be remedied in the classroom, and often times before they become a crisis to both the child and the teacher. In most cases, teacher-counselor consultation will be the most promising approach to helping the child in trouble. However, there are those children who will need additional attention beyond the opportunities for change that might be reasonably expected in the classroom.

Counseling can take place in individual and/or group sessions. The elementary school counselor should work with children in individual sessions on a very limited basis. Individual sessions should probably take place only in those cases where group

work is not meeting special relationship needs. Our knowledge of group dynamics is expanding rapidly and valuable guidelines are becoming available which will increase the advantage of working with children in small groups. Peer influence is a powerful and underrated variable in the development of a child's personality and potential. Through intensive group work the child can give and receive feedback which contributes to an understanding of himself and of others. Moreover, small groups are not only desirable because of their therapeutic value, but because they allow the counselor to work with more children.

When it is apparent that a child's relationship and behavior are severely disorganized and disturbing, the counselor should refer the child to the school psychologist or some appropriate community agency. The elementary school counselor is currently limited by his training and experience. And, behavior pathology is not his speciality. Knowing when to refer is an important skill of the counselor and the referral is part of his coordinating function. Coordination of the testing program, or library resources which deal with mental health or vocational information, are not appropriate functions and should be avoided if the elementary school counselor is to make the most use of his time where he is needed in the developmental program.

Counseling and coordination are important. However, at this time, it appears that the most significant contribution that an effective elementary school counselor can make to children is through consultation. Until teacher preparation programs begin to change, consultation with teachers and other school personnel will be the most important of the three functions of the elementary school counselor. He will, on occasion, consult with parents, but it is the surrogate parent, the classroom teacher, who must receive more help and attention. The classroom provides the controlled environment that enables children to explore their feelings, attitudes, and relationships in a variety

of ways. It provides a relatively stable environment where the learning of adaptive behaviors can take place. It offers the routine environment where the counselor can have more opportunity to observe and cooperate in developing the child's potential.

From the research that has been briefly reported here, it is obvious that most teachers can use the help of a relationship specialist in developing new ways of responding and relating to children. Most teachers, if they are not hopelessly insecure or rigid, will welcome the cooperation of the counselor. The elementary school counselor is not a teacher critic! He collaborates with the teacher in developing old and new ways in which children learn subject matter and about who they are in relation to others. With the help of the counselor, the teacher can help the child feel self-esteem and self-worth while learning the facts and skills that are necessary for a citizen in this society.

Children need practice in verbalizing and clarifying their feelings and ideas. And, the best place is the classroom, not some small office with a person called a "counselor" who is seldom seen--except when they are in trouble. Children need practice in being able to recognize how feelings and attitudes play an important part in the way they approach the task of learning. They need more positive reinforcement for their efforts, and, beyond that--for being the unique human beings that they are. They need more encouragement and praise at a time when they can feel their personal worth and value and not just the worth in relation to a product they produced. They need praise at a time when they can see themselves other than a commodity to be produced by the school. It is time that students learn to prize their emotional world too, and that they need not block it out in order to succeed in the classroom. Rather, they need to become sensitized to it so that they can be aware of their full potential as a person. As a child learns to bring his whole self to the learning situation--that

is, both his cognitive and affective self--he will be a more effective learner. He will begin to help and share with others. He will not need to be fearful or suspicious of others, for he feels and senses his own value and potential.

Consultation between teacher and counselor is at this time, therefore, an essential feature of any program that believes in the developmental approach. In consultation the focus is largely on the child. Counseling and consulting have many of the same characteristics inherent in their processes, just as ideal teaching, counseling and therapy seem to have many of the same helping relationship characteristics. By way of illustration, here are some guidelines that will help differentiate counseling from consulting.

1. Consultation is a joint process between teacher and counselor, where the basic focus is largely on another individual or external unit.
2. The teacher perceives the counselor as a relationship specialist, one who knows learning theory affects children's behavior and attitudes.
3. The counselor perceives the teacher as an individual who is primarily interested in exploring the possibilities that will enable the child to become a more effective facilitator of learning.
4. At the beginning of consultation, the teacher will be helped bring to light her own feelings regarding the teacher-child relationship. These feelings will be explored to the extent that they help clarify the relationship and ways in which the teacher can become more facilitating of the child's learning.
5. After the teacher has clarified her own feelings, the learning situation would be analyzed in terms of child self-development. There is no need in consultation for an extensive exploration of the teacher's feelings or the reason for her feelings. This is not to say that teacher cannot benefit from self-exploration with a counselor or therapist or from a counseling program designed to meet the needs which arise from the stress and strain of working with children and adults all day; but, in consultation the focus is on the external unit, in this case the child.
6. Past methods and information would be examined. New information, when appropriate, would be added and further examined in terms of the possible

affect it has on the total development of the child and how it helps put theory into practice.

7. The teacher would arrive at some specific plan. Alternatives would be considered. The counselor would help the teacher focus on some immediate goal within the self-development frame of reference.
8. Finally, the counselor would follow up consultation with any support and encouragement that is needed and help in the evaluation of methods, relationships, and results.

Within the developmental approach, the elementary school counselor is not, then, a passive agent of change. He does not sit in an isolated office in some little known place in the school waiting for children to voluntarily drop in to see him or to be referred by a teacher. He does not wait for teachers to come to see him. He is an active agent of change. He must get out of his office and away from the playroom and meet with teachers and children where the business of learning is taking place--in the classroom, the playground and even the cafeteria. He cannot expect teachers and children to always initiate contact with him. If he is an effective counselor, he will be welcomed where he can help analyze and assess relationships and experiences.

In closing, it is apparent that the preparation of elementary school counselors must be different from what it is now. It cannot be the same as that of the secondary school counselor. Elementary school counselor programs of preparation cannot continue to focus only on helping children with problems. Instead, they must prepare people who can help translate learning theory into practice, people who can facilitate helping relationships beyond the counseling office, people who understand human behavior and value its full development and potential. Obviously, the counselor's role as a consultant must be further explored and developed.

But, one aspect is already clear. The elementary school counselor is a relationship specialist and he plays a vital role in helping the school attain its goal of

producing citizens that contribute to the making of a Great Society. The counselor is not a machine, he is a sensitive individual who wants children to become sensitive to their selves and others. His product, if there is one, is not a commodity, but one in which all mankind can enjoy and benefit--increased self-development, self-potential and effective human relationships. And, these are truly the products of any Great Society.

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