

COSC 611: Benchmark Assignment

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Component 1: Developmental Considerations in Counseling

In counseling students, it is very important that we note how the student develops as there are many factors in play for each student. The students age, culture and developmental traits are all things to consider when being prepared to best help a student. In the case of 14-year-old Larissa, we must note the culture she is from and what the family is wanting out of their daughter. It is important that the counselor informs themselves of the students' needs and how development at this age is occurring to successfully facilitate the session and further sessions (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). At this age, Larissa is experiencing a ton of change in her life, and she is going to be head strong in some decisions as she is finding out who she is to become. As the counselor it is important to note that she does not want to hurt her parents but has come to you for help. Larissa is beginning to look for more social engagement among her friends and this current issue is important in that she is likely using this as a turning point in that expansion of her engagement. She is wanting to spend more time with her friends which is going to leave less time for family interaction. Within her culture, it is important to spend time with family and be present at events so as the counselor you must also be aware of how the parents are viewing Larissa's view on this new idea of spending time away. I think that as the counselor it would be important to get the parents involved early with this process and work through this with them as they can look to understand that their daughter is in a transitional part of development, but she also does not want to disappoint them. The earlier I could relieve the tension between her and her parents, I believe the more successful we will be in a shorter amount of time. The main goal of my counseling with her would be for her to understand her wants are normal and that she could be causing some tension between her and her family but that we will be working together so that

her parents can understand to respect her and her decisions moving forward as well as Larissa having the same respect for them.

Early Childhood

Each stage of development can vary starting with early childhood. The largest factor at this age is the notion that these children are very much about themselves and that they feel the world goes around them. Most of the learning and development that goes on at this age is through play as children are mainly learning through various ways of play, whether this being with themselves or others (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). In the early stages of development, children are not as independent, and they look to others for reactions as well as response. This stage is based mainly upon learning how to interact with the world through play but also by understanding that these children are using emotions as well just in various ways. One of the biggest steps in this stage of development is learning self-control. Preschool aged children have trouble with self-control and learning to manage emotions in which as previously mentioned they can look to others for reactions but are mainly concerned with only how they feel at the moment of an event. In terms of physical development, this age group seems to always be growing and, on the go, they love to be moving and seem to never stop. This is important to note that they are changing constantly as they are growing but it is more than just emotionally and cognitively, it is also physically.

Middle Childhood

In middle childhood we see a transition from little self-control and high emotion to the grasping of a little more “sense of self”. Children within this age group also look to others for response but unlike the early childhood age, these children may be looking at others in comparison to themselves and wondering why they are not like them in certain ways. This is

where the child starts to gain a sense of who they are as opposed to others and develops a sense of person that can determine how they view themselves (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Low self-esteem can start during this stage if a child is in comparison of others and does not feel like they are what is viewed by them to be the “correctly” developed person they see. Physically these children much like the early childhood stage are still growing but their minds are beginning to be more set in the ideas they are creating. Friends start to play a larger role in the child’s life during this time as they can impact the view a child has on themselves if they identify to a certain friend group.

Early Adolescence and Mid Adolescence

In the early adolescent stage this is where a physical change comes to the forefront as puberty begins to happen for the child and physical changes become very evident (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). Children experiencing this stage will look even more into finding out who they are as they are changing and an increase in wanting to “fit in” with groups will arise. These children often push the parents away and begin to conflict with interest as they want to be self-independent and be more like their friends, this stage is crucial in the student’s self-esteem as they look to find meaning within all the life changes. These children will look to the social side of life more often as they try to fit in with trends among peers and do less of what they see within their homes. A child in mid adolescence starts to have more serious relationships with others and will begin facing decisions that determine their futures. These children will have made up their minds about who they are wanting to become and will look less at the society and its trends to determine who they are. The puberty changes are on the back end and this child has made decisions based upon what makes them happy and begins to believe in themselves about the future as they look to go into the world independently. Having control of your emotions is a large

indicator of this stage of development as these young adults are acting less impulsively through the decisions they are making (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019).

Resilience

Resilience in students is something that as development goes through the stages, can define how a student is successful. Each child growing up will face difficulties and resilience can play a role in how they adapt to those changes and difficulties they face. Students who face bullying or adversities in education will have to build a resilience in which they can breed positive outcomes through these difficulties (Wangchuk, 2021). Children that have these three qualities discussed by Wangchuk, openness to experience, low neuroticism, and agreeableness, shows that these qualities will build high resilience in these young individuals causing for a greater success rate through adversity. If a student is agreeable, then they are more likely to get along with peers and have more open ideas causing fewer negative emotions, same as a student that is open to experience new things is more likely to have a positive outlook even through adverse times (Wangchuk, 2021).

Component 2: Individual Counseling Process

In the case of 12-year-old Nancy, we see a student that has come from the foster care system and is facing some difficulty in getting along with her younger siblings. When starting counseling sessions with new students and clients the main beginning point is that the counselor develops a relationship with the student and the family (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). This relationship can go a long way in a successful counseling session as the trust and openness grow the more rapport that is built with the student. I would make sure to develop a relationship with Nancy in which she viewed me as approachable and someone that always has her best interest in mind.

One of the most important things that can be done for this student is observation, the more details the counselor can gather about the situation the better they will be able to assess what is going on between the children. If the counselor is able to comfortably watch these children play, they may be able to gather information that will help when working with Nancy to ease the tensions of playing with the younger siblings. This will also give an idea as to the environmental causes that could be at play by seeing how the environment around Nancy is hindering or helping her in this transition. As the counselor gains more information about this environment, I believe that the sessions with Nancy will become more direct in the things the counselor sees that will help Nancy in this new transition.

Through the community, the school social worker or a social worker from the community may play a beneficial role for Nancy in this transition to a new home. By having the family reach out to a social worker, this could take some of the stress of them by having someone there within their own environment to support them as well as Nancy. By having this support within the home, Nancy could gain confidence that her group around her is there to support her needs and give her a sense of confidence that she is in a good place.

Explaining the Role of Counseling

If a family is resistant to counseling, the best way I would explain it to them would be that a counselor is there to promote and facilitate the success of their child in all things of life. That counseling is there to be a safe place for their child to get through difficult situations and begin to become successful by working through adversity with a trusted individual. It is important that we explain counseling to the clients, and all involved in that we make sure we set clear expectations and define the appropriate relationship with our clients (American School Counseling Association, 2019).

Termination Issues

When coming to the end of counseling sessions, sometimes termination can be difficult for those that do not understand. After various meetings over time, it may be hard for a child to understand that the counseling is ending but as the counselor this is where it becomes important to know how to manage these thoughts and anxieties in the student. To ease some of the worry, I would make sure that the student understands that I am always there for them should they need me and that even though the sessions are ending, our relationship will remain strong should they ever need me again (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). This will help the student understand that they can come to the counselor and that they aren't completing losing someone who played a crucial part in their life for a time.

Component 3: Ethical and Theoretical Considerations

Many times, in counseling you will be facing things that can conflict with ethical decisions both on your part as well as the parts of others. It is important that we understand the guidelines given to counselors through ethical considerations and apply those to our decision making. We as counselors must understand that we are there to support our clients in all ways but sometimes the guidelines we have are in place for a reason in which to protect us professionally. Working within a school presents the opportunities for clients of all ages and one of the biggest considerations counselors will make is that of confidentiality. In this case, you are working with a 7-year-old boy and must understand that he has a right to privacy even at this young age. How far does this privacy go for this young client and when must this be broken to get the others in his life involved are all ethical considerations within this case.

If the counselor is faced with the notion that they see harm for this client or anyone else in the future, that is something as defined to break confidentiality and others will be notified that

legally have the right to know this information (American School Counseling Association, 2019). When dealing with such a young client, if they tell you, it's okay to release information then they have also given consent which qualifies as okay to release the information to the ones they allow. The student has been referred by the teacher but when assessing the student, it may be something that an agency beyond you will need to handle. If the student is reporting harm being done to them by the parents or others it is confidential information that must then be moved to the appropriate authority to get this individual the correct help. If they are experiencing conflict in the home, dependent upon the severity of conflict you would talk with the young client about getting the parents involved to help the tensions they are experiencing and let them know you are there to support them.

When it comes to theory, each counselor develops theories on how they believe situations have come about and the best ways in which they view to handle those situations. One of the largest discrepancies among counseling is spirituality and worldview. In the school system there is not much talk of spirituality and as a counselor you may understand the benefits of the expression of spirituality for your students. Knowing that you have a professional obligation, I believe that the counselor should be someone who a student can come to and express opinions and spirituality, but the counselor must understand the guidelines in which they can discuss it. Letting students explore their own spirituality and worldviews will overall facilitate a more successful and healthier student body (Kimbel, & Schellenberg, 2013).

In describing a method of therapy, I would use within the schools for students, I believe it depends on the age and needs of my students. For the younger children I would use play therapy, this is because most of their development is based around playing together and learning comes from this. The older students I would let them express their emotions through art therapy, the

high emotional changes that older students have can be expressed in a healthy way through art and this helps them learn how to get out emotions rationally.

Component 4: Multicultural Counseling and Transition Programming

Working within the school system, you will meet many faces from many different backgrounds. It is important to be educated as the counselor on the various backgrounds and cultures within your school. Different cultures view counseling in various ways and the more you understand about a culture the more you can possibly ease the tension or help them to understand how you are there to meet the specific needs they may have. A counselor within a school should promote diversity and should stand as an example for the students. The role of the counselor when it comes to various cultures is to be understanding, aware and knowledgeable. If the counselor stands as a leader in the school for fairness, then the students will look them as trustworthy, and it will be much easier for various cultures and backgrounds to see them as approachable.

So how does the counselor become culturally aware and mindful? This question I believe is answered through self-inspection first. The counselor must be aware of the things that they have done or the personal views that they must then be able to examine them and make the changes they may need to make for their benefit and the benefit of others. Once identified the counselor can begin to attend multicultural workshops or do research to gain a better understanding of how they can be helpful to various cultures (Vernon & Schimmel, 2019). After realizing the own biases that we may have, the counselor gains a better understanding of how to help those in need as well as how to adjust their lives to successfully fulfil their role to these students.

Transitioning Programs

Transition programs can be greatly beneficial for all involved. Instances such as new students to the school, new teachers, and staff, as well as overall school inclusion can be greatly improved with these programs. A teacher that is new to a school or area may not understand the specific needs of the students they will be helping. This transition program can give them insight on the specific needs and various ways to help this group of students. Same with new students, if they are being introduced to a new school this program can help with inclusion in activity as they will feel part of a group and included. Lastly, transition programs can promote overall health of community as they aim to get the community involved in the success of their students. The programs can breed more success in schools as well as the success of the students beyond the school doors. In my transition assignment I looked to explore more opportunities for students beyond the high school classroom which will in turn promote a more successful community. By getting the students, faculty and the parents involved, it brought together a sense of inclusion from all involved.

Component 5: Counseling At-Risk Children and Adolescents

When counseling children that are deemed “at risk” these situations can be tricky for counselors and must be handled appropriately. Vernon and Schimmel (2019), give us a 4-step framework on how to handle these situations through early assessment, prevention, intervention, and social advocacy. Early assessment is very important not only in this case but in all counseling. Without assessment the counselor wouldn’t know where to start with any of the clients and with these being “at risk” the earlier this assessment can be made the better long-term results can be found as early signs seen at young ages can define future issues both physically and psychologically (Klim-Klimaszewska, & Nazaruk, 2018). Assessments that are used should be based on the situation at hand and should be related to the risk being foreseen (Vernon &

Schimmel, 2019). The second step is that of prevention where measures should be taken to help in the prevention of the risk to this student from further issues related to the current situation.

Intervention follows prevention and is more of an effort together from those involved to prevent the future trauma. Lastly in the framework is the social advocacy which as the counselor you become a social advocate and leader that can empower the community around the at-risk student.

If this is correctly done, then you are breeding a better internal community for your student and leading for a better situation than the past trauma experienced.

Anxiety and Substance Abuse

Students that are at risk from these factors should have an intervention plan that was based upon the correct assessment. I feel as if these students should be focused on the strengths that they have and building resilience within their own situations. If they are at risk from these two situations, then resilience can be key in them being able to decide for themselves how they want to respond and to be able to focus on the things that they are doing for themselves.

Crises Planning and Management

A crisis team can be made up of counselors and social workers in the event of a traumatic experience for a student or school. The team is assembled to be there to support these students through this time of need and provide them with all the necessary outlets in which they can talk or grieve appropriately. These individuals are placed in this role in order to effectively support these students in times where need is higher than normal due to the “crises” at hand.

Suicide Prevention Programs

Suicide is a common factor in the death of young adults and is increasingly growing over the years per research and is the third leading cause of death in the US says Granello & Zyromski (2018). One main thing a counselor in a school and community should look to do is find ways of

prevention to help promote a better and safer community. One of the prevention programs found to be successful is that of a school wide suicide prevention education that is presented to staff and students. By bringing awareness this will limit the attempts as some of the at risk students may have more information about outlets and people they can go to for help (Granello, & Zyromski, 2018). Another suicide prevention program is enhancing protective factors such as parent education on suicide and listing the early signs for parents so that they can monitor their children outside of school. The more we can educate both the students as well as the community around them, the better we will be able to limit this suicide rate and get those at risk the correct help that they may need. If the students at risk are more educated, they may be more likely to seek the help of an individual than to make a decision without seeking help based upon just not knowing it was available to them.

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