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Improving School Climate by Changing Counselor Duties

Parents can advocate for changes that impact their child.

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While watching the news and glancing at a newspaper today, I saw stories discussing gun violence in schools, youth [suicide](#), and epidemics of youth harming themselves. [Parents](#) wonder what is going on and how they may ever have peace of mind. As a former [school](#) counselor, I want to share one way parents can make a difference. Let me explain how you can help those on the front lines, the school counselors to improve the school climate for your child.

School counselors' primary role is supposedly to improve your child's academic success, [career](#)

development, and personal/social [health](#) (ASCA, 2016). As part of this, they should be helping children overcome a variety of issues that affect school achievement and overall wellness. This means school counselors have the innate job of building [relationships](#) and rapport with all of the children in the school. Children, therefore, should have a trusted counselor to talk to, thus, placing an adult in a position to stop violent and harmful behaviors and intervene in many areas.

The effectiveness of allowing school counselors time to build rapport and work with students is illustrated through a recent news story. The story discusses an incident where a student brought a gun to school and planned to shoot school faculty. After his first class, the student decided he should talk to his school counselor, who, after 45 minutes of [counseling](#), persuaded him to avoid the violent behavior (Smith, 2016). What if the school counselor had been unavailable because she was coordinating a state test or worse, substitute teaching in a class?

Unfortunately, many of today's school counselors are not available to children because of the vast array of non-counseling related duties they are given. This means they are not working with or building relationships with students. Sadly, these persons with training to assist in improving the school climate are tasked with completing state reports, paperwork for administering assessments, substitute teaching in classes, and numerous other clerical duties. While there is nothing wrong with these tasks, they remove school counselors from those they should be helping, children.

What can parents do? First, ask how your school counselor is spending his/her time and advocate that they are allowed to spend their time working with children. Call your school's administrators and school board members and request that administrative duties be performed by non-counseling staff. Suggest changes in the law that require school counselors to implement what the American School Counseling Association calls a

counselors will thank you for your advocacy and so will the children who are helped or safe as a result.

References

ASCA (2016). The ASCA National Model implementation guide: Foundation, management, and accountability. American School Counseling Association.

Smith, C. (2016, Sept. 29). Student with gun planned to shoot teachers, counselor talked him down. The Tennessean.

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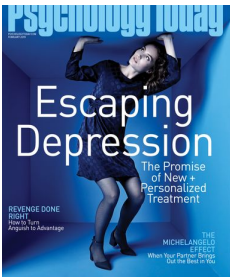
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