

beginnings of elementary school guidance & counseling

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I have been asked by your editor, Ed Gerler, to write about the origins of this journal, *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, and some of the challenges of the early days in elementary school counseling. The experience has brought back fond memories of early leaders in the profession.

Although elementary school counseling seems to be relatively well recognized around the country, this has not always been the case. In 1965 at a meeting of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA), now renamed the American Association for Counseling and Development (AACD), I held an open meeting for those who would be interested in communicating about what was developing in elementary school guidance and counseling throughout the nation. Counselor educators, state directors of guidance, local directors of guidance, and counselors attended the meeting. I indicated that I would be willing to serve as a "coordinating point" if people were willing to share news, information, and brief articles.

The cost of the original *Elementary School Guidance News and Views* was \$1.00. The response to this initial attempt to share information was enthusiastic. I received book reviews, news notes, personal glimpses, and notices of meetings that were being held throughout the country. The first elementary guidance newsletter had 392 subscribers. The purpose of the original newsletter was to stimulate thinking about elementary school guidance and counseling and to provide some direction for many programs that were emerging at that time. By the winter of 1965, we had 575 subscribers who represented 46 states. In the early days *News and Views* was a forum for counselors and counselor educators as well as a stimulant for developing programs.

A meeting relative to *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, as the publication is now called, was scheduled at APGA in Washington, D.C., on Monday, April 4, 1966, at 9:40 p.m. The time of the meeting provides some insight into the relative importance of elementary counseling at that time. The focus of the meeting was on discussing the purposes of the publication, methods of financing and support for the publication, and ideas regarding columns and issues in elementary guidance.

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School Guidance News and Views sponsored by the Interprofessional Research Committee on Pupil Personnel Services located at the University of Maryland. As an outgrowth of the meeting at the APGA Convention, the new publication titled *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling* was to be published three times a year. It was sponsored by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), a division of (APGA). The subscription price was set at \$3.00 for three issues. Those interested in subscribing made their checks payable to APGA.

At that point ASCA appointed me the first editor of *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*. This marked a major, positive forward step for the profession of elementary school guidance and counseling. Originally ASCA had doubts about the validity of a separate publication and also had some concerns that the sponsorship of a separate publication might be a divisive direction. Fortunately, the journal served to bring into ASCA a large cadre of counselors that was working primarily in the elementary school. Until that time, they had not found an identification in ASCA because there was a heavy emphasis on high school counseling. Now they had a journal that focused on their theory, consulting, counseling of young children, and work with parents and teachers.

The challenges that confronted elementary school guidance in 1968, in certain ways, were not totally different from some of the challenges that still exist. The difference probably is that professionals are now seeing more commonalities than differences. The field originally had a lot of articles and professional conventions devoted to theories. There was considerable discussion about whether there should be an emphasis on preventing difficulties through elementary school guidance or an emphasis on therapeutic approaches for children with problems. Many argued for a developmental guidance program executed primarily through the classroom teacher. Others believed in a comprehensive consultation role that dealt with the administration, teachers, and total staff. The early days of elementary school guidance profession featured the "Great Debates" on these issues. There were also many conferences held that focused on contrasting behavioral counseling with Adlerian counseling in the elementary schools. In addition, there was always considerable concern about ways to elicit financial support for elementary school guidance. This was always a major problem in the initiating of programs in any school district.

The elementary school guidance and counseling movement benefited most dramatically from the institutes that were conducted throughout the country as a result of the National Defense Education Act. Some of these institutes were conducted in intensive 6- to 8-week summer schools. Others were year-long institutes. The institutes provided a unique opportunity for persons interested in training in elementary school counseling. Counselors were financed to attend school and they were, in most instances, given an opportunity to be in contact on an intensive basis with people who had specialized in working with young children and in elementary school guidance.

I had the privilege to be a part of several of these institutes. I remember

vividly the institute conducted at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu. Counselors had come from 14 different states, and, of course, from the various Hawaiian islands. It was a unique, never-to-be-forgotten experience in sharing ideas. Some counselors had worked in the inner city of Detroit and other counselors had worked in fancy suburban areas in New York and Boston. They learned from each other.

One of the major early problems for elementary school guidance was the development of educational and training programs that were unique, distinct, and created to serve counselors who had worked in the elementary school. At that time there was a lack of materials and also a lack of counselor educators who had specialized interests and skills in elementary school guidance and counseling. It took time to develop a transition from the typical counselor educator who was trained to focus on issues such as college admissions, careers, and the counseling of adolescents to suddenly be equipped to deal with elementary school teachers, behavior problems, play therapy, and affective education in the primary grades. Considerable time passed before this transition occurred.

Having been in on the origins of *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling* and having been the developer of materials that were widely used by elementary school counselors, *Developing Understanding of Self and Others (DUSO)* (Dinkmeyer, 1970, 1973; Dinkmeyer & Dinkmeyer, 1982) and *Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)* (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1983), I find it interesting and rewarding to see that elementary school guidance has passed through the baby and toddler years and is well into the elementary school years. It will be interesting to see the reports on elementary guidance in the year 2010.

What is a productive direction for elementary school guidance and counseling in the future? I think the field will grow most when the following statements are true:

1. An elementary school that is accredited is required to have an elementary school counselor.
2. Counselor education programs train counselors who are skilled in consulting with parents, teachers and administration.
3. Counselors use their skills to work directly with children in affective education.
4. Counselors recognize that by working effectively with parents and in parent education they can not only help parents and children but also build a power base for elementary school guidance.

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