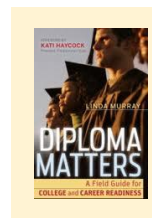


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Protocol for Counselor Focus Group Work

Each counselor focus group should involve 5 to 10 counselors. It is recommended that a counselor focus group for each comprehensive high school be completed in order to probe counselor attitudes about the quality of the counseling program as well as the role the counselor plays in student’s academic choices.

The facilitator introduces him/herself, explains the purpose of the focus group and the facilitator’s neutral role. The district’s vision of college and work readiness for all students is given to help frame the conversation. Counselors are assured of their anonymity but told that the session is being recorded so that all comments are accurately captured and that their input will be used to help determine the future direction of the high schools in the district.

Interviewer: Hello, my name is _____, and I work with the Education Trust – West in Oakland. We are working with the district to determine current levels of high school preparation and to identify the changes necessary to implement a college and career ready curriculum for all students. This group interview will provide us insight to your perceptions of counselor’s roles in providing all students with this opportunity.

I would like to tape record this group interview to avoid missing anything you say during our conversation. The contents of this interview are for educational purposes only and you will remain anonymous. Are there any questions before we begin?

As a warm up, the facilitator starts with the following:

1. Going around the room, give your name, how long you have been a counselor and then tell something really great about your high school.
2. Okay, now in reverse order describe something that needs to be improved at your high school.

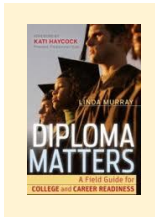
The facilitator proceeds to explore counselor attitudes and expectations, indicating that anyone can jump in and offer opinions on the following:

1. What do you spend most of your time doing? Scheduling, supervision...? What do you wish you had more time to do?
2. What is the structure of your counseling office? How are kids assigned? How do counselors support ELL and special ed students? Is there just one counselor for each of these groups or are these students spread out amongst all counselors? How effective as a counselor are you in this structure? What changes do you suggest?
3. Describe the role of counselors in helping students in your high schools. Are there policies and procedures in place to assist you with this, if so what are they?



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4. What is the process for placing students on specified tracks (pathways)? Who is involved in this process, and who makes the final decision? How do students get into AP and Honors courses? Are there prerequisites for these classes? How do you encourage students to take more challenging courses?
5. What policy or procedure does your counseling program have to prevent students from dropping out? Please describe. How effective is it?
6. How do counselors use student achievement data, if at all, to inform your counseling program?
7. What kind of interactions do you have with teachers around student achievement? Are you involved with student placement in courses? What is your role?
8. What is the registration process for student schedules for the upcoming year?
9. What role do counselors have in building the master schedule?
10. Do you do four year plans? Are they useful? How much do you incorporate/use these plans with your students?
11. Should all students have access to college prep courses?
12. Should all students be required to take the UC a-g college prep course sequence in order to graduate? What could counselors do to assist students who will struggle with these courses?
13. Are your students capable of taking more challenging courses to prepare them for any post-secondary option? Are your students being prepared for college?
14. What CTE courses are available at your school? Do these CTE courses have a pathway? What are the outcomes for students who take CTE courses? How do counselors get information about the CTE courses offered? How is that communicated to students? How do students enroll in CTE courses?
15. Are you able to talk with your students about college? If so what kinds of conversations take place? How, as a counselor, are you updated with current information on colleges, financial aid...?
16. What role do parents play? Are you able to discuss college information with parents?
17. What types of things could be done to better support you in your endeavor to support all of your students to graduate ready for college and career?
18. What kinds of professional development do you attend?
19. What are the outcomes expected of counselors at your schools?

The facilitator asks if anyone has other comments about their high school they would like to share. After final comments, the facilitator thanks the teachers for their participation.

