

Preface

School Counseling From an Integrative Model of Change

It may be said that school counselors, by nature of necessity, are pragmatic practitioners. It is not unusual to find school counselors employing a variety of strategies and approaches to their work with children, less concerned about theoretical purity and more interested in efficacy and positive outcomes. However, an eclectic approach to counseling is not without support or precedent. Eclecticism has been associated with a pragmatic selection of a combination of theoretical application, and integration of any number of therapy techniques in hope of more comprehensive and functional outcomes.

Often, counselors engaging in such an eclectic approach to school counseling have done so by simply gathering numerous approaches and techniques without any subscription to a theory to bind such strategies into a coherent model. Such “technical eclecticism” often appears as a random cookbook approach to counseling our students. The current text describes one model to facilitate the theoretical integration of an eclectic approach to school counseling, and avoid the cookbook approach most often associated with eclecticism. This approach, while allowing for multiple intervention strategies and techniques, integrates this mixture by way of a cohesive model or theoretical framework. It is assumed that such an integrated approach to eclectic practice will result in more functional results. The model presented within this book is the transtheoretical model of change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 2002).

The transtheoretical model of change (TTM) is not a theory of counseling, but rather it represents an empirically derived, sequential model of general change in multiple stages. TTM provides an integrative structure to counseling practice that will serve as an effective orienting framework for school counselors’ employment of multiple, varied approaches to

engaging their students. TTM provides an empirically based alternative to a single theoretical approach to school counseling.

While having a better understanding of such an integrative model is valuable, understanding “theory” is insufficient. It is in the translation of this model into practice that a school counselor accrues the real benefits. The practicing school counselor must translate theory into specific, action-oriented steps to help them discern relevant student information, and then formulate and implement effective intervention strategies.

Thinking and Acting Like an Eclectic School Counselor addresses this need to help counselors translate theory into practice by learning to first think like the experts, and then *act* accordingly. The unique value of *Thinking and Acting Like an Eclectic School Counselor* is that it goes beyond the presentation of a theory and assists the reader to step into that theory, embrace it as an organizational framework and then, and most importantly, employ it to guide procedural thinking when confronted with student information.

TEXT FORMAT AND CHAPTER STRUCTURE

The book will be organized around the following parts. In Part I, the reader is introduced to a reflective practitioner model of school counseling (Chapter 1) and the fundamentals of a transtheoretical model of change (Chapter 2). With these as foundations, Part II expands on both the constructs and strategies found within the transtheoretical model of change. As will be discussed in the chapters to follow, TTM provides the framework for technical eclecticism by describing the demonstrated stages people go through in their journey of change (Chapter 3), along with specific processes that have been empirically demonstrated for use by those engaged in change, both in and outside of counseling (Chapter 4). Perhaps the most unique and useful value of TTM is that it provides the counselor with a framework for integrating stage and processes into a framework for knowing the right things to do (processes) at the right times to do them (stages). Chapter 5 offers a look at the ways school counselors can integrate these stages and processes into their counseling as they move their students to the desired outcome.

The final section of the book, Part III, invites the reader to “observe” the thinking of school counselors employing a transtheoretical model of change (Chapter 6) as it guides decisions both in session (reflection “in” practice) and between session (reflection “on” practice). The final chapter (Chapter 7) moves the reader from passively observing this reflective process to actually stepping into the case material and employing a cognitive

framework to guide his or her own reflection on the case material being presented.

Research suggests that procedural knowledge—that is, the process of knowing what to do when the client does this or that—is acquired as the result of practice accompanied by feedback. Practice and feedback will be central to this text. Case illustrations (case presentations with analyses of counselor actions and the decision-making processes underlying them) along with guided practice activities will be employed as “teaching tools” throughout the text.

As with all texts of this nature, this book is but a beginning. For school counselors embracing the value and efficacy of a cognitive framework to guide their reflections “on” and “in” their practice, additional training, supervision, and professional development is a must. Hopefully, *Thinking and Acting Like an Eclectic School Counselor* provides a good springboard to that end.

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