

2009

The Counseling Needs of Middle School Students

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Running head: MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELING NEEDS

The Counseling Needs of Middle School Students
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Abstract

The needs of students and the role of school personnel (i.e. counselors, teachers and administration) in meeting these needs and providing appropriate services has become a significant topic of discussion and research. This project investigated the academic, personal-social, and career needs of 56 middle school students in grades 6-8 in a rural Western New York school. A survey was used to collect the data measuring the amount of help needed on specific items. Results showed that although the top needs were predominately personal, social and emotional in nature, the top need with each grade level was academic and suggestions are made regarding the counselors role in meeting these needs.

The Counseling Needs of Middle School Students

The needs of human beings in society have received a considerable amount of media and scholarly literature attention. The history of psychology (and other subjects as well) influences the way that the needs of humans is viewed. There was an important development in this regard when Abraham Maslow (1943), outlined the basic needs for every human being. He listed these needs in order from the very basic physiological needs (thirst and hunger), and subsequently safety needs, love needs (sense of belonging and social needs), esteem needs and finally, self-actualization. He delineates these needs as the basis for all human motivation and explains that self-actualization cannot be reached if the very basic physiological needs are not met. This is important, as Maslow would become one of the founders of Humanistic Psychology. This theory shifts the psychological focus to the individual human beings potential, motivations and needs behind these motivations (DeCarvalho, 1991).

As the evolution of psychology influences the way the needs of human beings are viewed, so does the evolution of the education system in the United States influence the way needs of students are viewed. The education system reform in the United States has required an evolution of its own kind in assessing the needs of students, specifically within the school system. With the threat of school failures in the United States (Rushton & Juola-Rushton, 2008), it has becoming increasingly important to help students succeed. This has increased the pressure of schools to become progressively more accountable for the successes and failures of their students, predominately academically, with the advent of high stakes testing. As a result, the needs of students and the role of school personnel (i.e. counselors, teachers and administration) in meeting these needs and providing appropriate services has become a significant topic of discussion and research.

The questions at the heart of this issue for the adolescent population consist of what kinds of issues are prevalent during the adolescent (or middle school) years, and how it is best to identify and meet these needs within a school system.

Review of the Literature

School is the area in which adolescents spend the majority of their time. This is where, according to DeSocio and Hootman (2004), students will learn how to socialize with their peers and where they “achieve developmental milestones”. Furthermore, students, during their time at school, can experience “heightened psychosocial stress”, and if not properly managed can lead to more severe mental health problems in adolescence and adulthood (p. 192). Changes, such as puberty, family relations, the importance of peers, and the educational changes that face middle school students can also have an extensive impact on an adolescents’ life. This includes areas such as academic motivation and achievement as well as the adolescent’s self-concept (Wigfield, Lutz, & Wagner, 2005). Furthermore, if these difficulties and stresses are addressed in a preventative manner this can improve, not only the student’s ability to perform in school, but also their interpersonal relationships with peers, parents and teachers, and can also positively impact their sense of self worth and self-efficacy (Akos, 2005; Hiebert et al., 1998; Kesici, 2007).

There has also been discussion in the literature regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the middle school model versus the junior high school model (e.g. Alexander, 1995; Clark & Clark, 1993; Manning, 2000; McEwin, 2005; Polite, 1995). Although there are studies regarding school counseling needs of students in both domains, this paper will look to assess predominately the literature regarding middle school students.

In the early 1900s, the nation adopted the idea of a junior high school in order to better the transition between elementary school to high school that covered grades seven to nine. The major focus of these junior high schools was extensively academic and vocational in nature. It was not until the 1950s that there was speculation regarding the ability of junior high schools to meet the needs of the adolescent population. The middle school model was developed during this time in order to more

effectively meet “the unique social, personal, and academic needs of young adolescents” (Manning, 2000, p. 192).

The distinction, although it seems minimal, is an important consideration when assessing what may be possible student counseling needs. Akos (2005) explained that, “in contrast to junior highs, middle schools are characterized as striving to be more student centered, focus on creative exploration, allow for flexible scheduling, organize teachers into interdisciplinary teams, and emphasize affective and cognitive development of students” (p. 95).

In the same way, Bradley (1998) agreed that the movement towards middle schools, instead of a junior high school, has aimed to create a more nurturing environment for students between elementary and high school. Unfortunately, she argued, this has created a system of scrutiny for the social and emotional focus of middle schools and ultimately those students’ ability to perform academically. Many teachers of these criticized school districts, however, have argued that these concepts are not mutually exclusive; students who achieve academically have higher self-esteem.

The National Middle School Association (NMSA) (2003) asserted that in order to have a successful middle school the students must be successful. In order to achieve this, middle schools must be based on and supportive of “developmental readiness, needs, and interests of young adolescents” (p. 1). According to Şahin Kesici, “a student whose personal guidance and counseling need is satisfied can; establish harmonious relationship [sic] with friends and parents, knows his/her self, improve problem-solving and communication skills. Besides, s/he can improve social skills, cope with test anxiety... [and] make effective decisions” (Kesici, 2007, p. 1327).

On the other hand, when the needs are not met, and a student’s functioning in school suffers for an extended period, the student may break away from school completely (DeSocio & Hootman, 2004). In fact, youth in the 21st century are facing numerous issues that may impede their ability to function properly in school. It is the complexity of these issues, such as interactions with peers and

teachers, academic performance, behavior, and actions within the community, that have fallen on the shoulders of the education system and essentially on those of the school counselor as well (Menantaeu-Horta, 1986).

Not only are these needs looked at the individual level, but on a school wide level as well. It is the culture of the school, as well as cultural differences of the students, may make all the difference regarding the needs of students (Lee, 2001). The author also acknowledges that it is important to have high expectations for students and that all students have a need and want to learn more academically and personally.

As school counselors, Keys, Bemak and Lockhart (1998) emphasized that the “important question for school counseling is what models of school counseling are most likely to be effective given specific student needs, educational priorities [and] availability of resources” (p. 383). The answer to this question begins with deciding the needs (and possible needs) of a specific student population.

The needs of middle school students in school have been widely discussed in various forms of literature and in the subsequent pages is a review of the literature concerning this issue. It will be addressed in the following ways: adolescent developmental considerations, personal, social and emotional needs, academic needs and career needs. In addition to these topics, the literature on the use of the needs assessment to measure student needs will also be addressed.

Developmental Changes of Adolescence

According to Moore-Thomas and Lent (2007), “young adolescents’ developmental needs mandate uniquely designed comprehensive, developmental, and systemic school counseling programs and services”. They continue to say that “school counseling for middle school... must enable students to optimize academic potential and personal growth, acquire prosocial skills and values, and set career goals within an appropriate developmental framework” (p. 410). It would be inappropriate to ignore the

monumental changes that occur during adolescence and the subsequent impacts of these changes have on middle school students counseling needs.

A full review of adolescent development, however, is beyond the scope of this paper; nevertheless, it is an important consideration when comprehensively meeting the needs of middle school students (Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Wigfield et al., 2005; Dinkmeyer & Caldwell, 1970). In order to more fully understand this, three major developmental events, cognitive changes, puberty and self identity development will be addressed to illustrate the unique framework within which to meet the counseling needs of adolescent middle school students.

Cognitive changes

It is during adolescence that dramatic cognitive changes take place. Adolescents increasingly consider the real as well as the hypothetical, move away from concrete to more abstract thinking, develop more concrete decision-making skills, reflect on themselves in addition to more complicated problems that arise and take on more elaborate information-processing techniques (Keating, 2004). As early as the age of 10 or 11 young adolescents can recognize the concepts of conformity or hypocrisy in self and others and can compare two concrete concepts to one another. By the time they reach the age of 14 or 15, adolescents can coordinate two or more abstract concepts and can differentiate between intent and responsibility (Fischer, Hand, & Russell, 1984).

From a counseling needs perspective, these are important implications when assessing student needs because, generally speaking, middle school students are entering a stage of high-level thinking that can also be future oriented. Therefore, it will be important to assess the future and its possibilities and to help foster the development of decision-making during this period. Cognitions are connected to behaviors and it is during adolescence that students start to consider the benefits and consequences, and become involved in more risky behaviors (Wigfield et al., 2005).

Puberty

Puberty is a fundamental consideration when discussing middle school and adolescence. For this study, it is primarily important to consider that puberty is different for both girls and boys. Girls begin and end puberty around two years before their male counterparts (Tobin-Richards, Boxer, & Petersen, 1983). The self-image that exists during childhood may change dramatically when students enter adolescence because of the extreme bodily changes that happen during adolescence (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). According to Block (1983), at one time the argument was that, because of these changes, boys had more of social advantage over girls during puberty, and essentially puberty was socially easier for boys than girls. The emphasis that during puberty girls' bodies change and become more sexualized while boys' body changes were more conducive to an athletic appearance. Consequently, females struggled socially while males were more accepted supported this argument.

Often problem behaviors were connected to body changes and were thereby linked to hormones and this is not the case (Nottelmann, Inoff-Germain, Susman, & Chrousos, 1990). Currently there is less focus on the physical changes during puberty and those implications, but the actual timing of puberty. Girls or boys that develop significantly before or after their peers can experience a range or negative impacts on self-image and self-esteem based on the comparison to their peers (Weichold, Silbereisen, & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2004).

Identity development, self-concept and self-esteem

Adolescence is a time when the individual starts to identify who he or she is (Bruce, 1958; Erikson, 1994; Nurmi, 2004; Tobin-Richards, et al., 1983). Although they are linked and both must be considered when discussing adolescence, the idea of identity development is different from the idea of self-concept. Identity formation happens when an individual comes to develop a set of ideas about the person they are going to become in the future (Tobin-Richards et al., 1983). Self-concept is what happens when the individual try to make sense of their identity in comparison to others. This idea of

integrating self-concept with identity is important during the adolescent years and the adolescent may have trouble maintaining a stable sense of self-concept and identity during this time and may focus intensely on this (Nurmi, 2004). According to Erikson (1994), known for his work on identity development and identity crisis, adolescents are, “sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are” (p. 128). The constant evaluation and re-evaluation of a changing identity and self-concept is therefore linked to adolescents’ self-image and self-esteem.

The individuality in identity, self-concept and self-esteem can be attributed to a number of factors in an adolescents’ environment (e.g. family and school), their social experiences and their coping abilities (McGuire, Manke, Saudino, Reiss, Heatherington, & Plomin, 1999). Speed of maturation, romantic relationships and shifting demands can make it difficult for adolescents to maintain healthy self-esteem. Studies have found, however, that although self-esteem is lower in childhood, when there is no major transition, the stability of this self-esteem increases through adolescence (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2003). Nonetheless, self-concept and self-esteem may be a delicate balance and if there is a major transition during a period of dramatic development, this can be problematic (Nottelmann, 1987).

Just as there is a gender difference for adolescents during puberty, there are also differences to consider when discussing the possible problems that can result from a negative self-image and lowered self-esteem (Simmons & Blyths, 1987). Although lowered self-esteem is connected with depression for both genders (Frojd, Nissinen, Pelkonen, Marttunen, Koivisto, & Kaltiala-Heino, 2008; Orth, Robins, & Roberts, 2008), girls and boys may manifest this depression differently. Girls tend to exhibit more internalizing tendencies than their male counterparts that may result in problems with eating behaviors and anxiety, while boys may exhibit their symptoms of depression in more outward behavioral problems

such as conduct disorder (Courtney, Gamboz, & Johnson, 2008; Peterson, Compas, Brooks-Gunn, Stemmler, Ey, & Grant, 1993).

Lowered self-esteem and depression can also negatively affect the student's academic achievement (Fullerton, 1973; Owens, 1994). In a study exploring the relationship between self-esteem and academic and behavioral problems Owens (1994) found that there was, in fact, a reciprocal relationship. As self-esteem went up grades went up, and as grades went up self-esteem and positive regard went up as well. As a result, students behaved better and achieved more fully academically. When a student achieved higher self-esteem and an ideal picture of their identity, their anxiety levels lowered and that this resolution had an impact in other functioning in their life as well (Bruce, 1958; Hanley & Durlak, 1998).

Personal, Social and Emotional Needs

Academic success personal, social and emotional needs and developmental context are intricately linked together. For example, DeSocio and Hootman (2004) asserted that, "depressed children and adolescents attract less notice from teachers and school officials than do their disruptive classmates, but their academic performance can be severely compromised by symptoms of poor concentration, distractibility, insomnia and daytime sleepiness, irritability and low self-esteem" (p. 192). It is also important to consider topics previously discussed such as identity development and self-concept and self-esteem fall within the fold of personal, social and emotional needs as well.

In his study, Kesici (2007) found that over 50% of the students from grades six, seven, and eight reported that they would like additional help with social skills. Much like adolescent development, many of the topics regarding personal, social and emotional needs could warrant a full review of the literature but the scope of this paper limits this. As a result, a succinct discussion will cover the following topics of bullying and peer victimization, peer relationships, family influences and sadness.

Bullying and peer victimization

As outlined above, school is a place that fosters the immense cognitive, social and emotional development that occurs for adolescents during this time in their lives. According to a study done by Woods, Done and Kalsi (2008), the interaction with their peers affords the young adolescent with an essential outlet for this development. If adolescents struggle with their peers this could have an impact on them for the rest of their life. They continue to explain that social (or relational) aggression is more detrimental to a student's self-esteem than physical aggression (Woods, Done, & Kalsi, 2008).

Recent surveys and literature evidence that bullying exists in schools. Literature shows that Almost 30% of youth in the United States are estimated to be involved in bullying as either a bully, a target of bullying, or both (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simmons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). Those students that are involved in bullying, as either the perpetrator or victim, create negative impacts of their experiences while at school. Bullies may encounter an increase in conduct problems as well as an increase in their own dislike of school (Nansel, et al., 2001).

Bullied students can experience a more negative affect and this may result in more negative thoughts about themselves (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Woods, Done, & Kalsi, 2008). Bullying also increases truancy, dropping out of school, lower grades and academic achievement, an increase in difficulty with other relationships, lower self-esteem, increased anxiety, depression, isolation and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in its victims. (Bond, Carlon, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001; Flannery, Wester, & Singer, 2004; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Martin & Huebner, 2007; Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008; Nansel, et al., 2001; Woods, Done, & Kalsi, 2008).

In fact, the entire climate of the school can be impacted by bullying. If there are unsafe feelings at school that are a result of the threat of bullying of individual students or that the school is generally unsafe will also hinder their ability to achieve academically (Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003). According to Flannery, Wester and Singer (2004, p. 570), "students [that are being bullied] may become

withdrawn, isolated, or inattentive in class. These effects will negatively impact their motivation and ability to learn as well as their socialization with peers and the quality of their relationships with adults at their school". This is further supported by a study done by Kochenderfer and Ladd (1996) of 200 five and six year olds. The students that were perceived as being bullied became more avoidant of school. Surprisingly this study also showed the longer lasting impacts of victimization. The students that displayed these avoidant behaviors did not do so until later in the year.

Additionally, when students lack appropriate social support and they are bullied they experience a greater risk for mental health problems (Rigby, 2000). Newman, Holden, & Delville (2005) found that bullying with an increased social support system actually decreased the amount of stress symptoms detected in a particular student. Rigby (2000) found that more girls than boys are impacted by the experience or lack of support. Bond, Carlon, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton (2001) also explained that it is clearest for girls that when bullying reduces there is also symptom reduction.

Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008) contest that "bullying often results from pursuit of power, status or popularity" (p. 342). They explained that this is important because a bully often gains power and the other members of the peer group are then forced to engage in the same kinds of behaviors or values or risk becoming bullied themselves. Peer victimization and peer relationships are, in this manner, tangled with one another.

Peer relationships

The choices that adolescents make about achievement, motivation and behaviors does not happen in a vacuum, all choices they make are made within the context of the school and within the context of their social group (Ryan, 2000). As a result, peer relationships increase in importance for the adolescent student. By the time a student reaches high school, peer relationships take up around twice as much time as the time spent with parents (Ryan, 2000). A study of seventh grade students found that when students compared the importance of parent approval and the importance of peer approval, peer

approval was more important to adolescents than parental approval (Beal, Ausiello, & Parrin, 2001).

Wentzel (1999) asserted that adolescents, to avoid rejection from their peers, have an intense need to conform to pressures from their peers.

Bearing this in mind, research done on peers is predominately about the negative impact they have on adolescent individuals the resulting problem behavior from this negative impact (Beal, et al., 2001; Hoffman, Monge, Chou, & Valente, 2007; Hogue & Steinberg, 1995; Meyer & Gast, 2008; Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Tragesser, Aloise-Young, & Swaim, 2006; Vitaro, Larocque, Janosz, & Tremblay, 2001). Hogue and Steinberg (1995) showed that adolescents tend to pick a peer group with a similar amount of internal or external distress as their own. Although this seeking behavior is true for both genders, males, over time, tend to become more like the members of their peer group than females.

This is an important consideration because studies have also found that individuals with friends who have lower mental health tend to exhibit more signs of depression and anger and may overall be less able to adapt to difficult life experiences (Cook, Deng, & Morgano, 2007). Acceptance by friends is also an integral part to adolescent life within school. Vitaro et al. (2001), found in a study of adolescents, that peer rejection during middle school and high school could predict the possibility of an individual dropping out of high school in later years.

Peers can have an influence on an individual's risky behaviors specifically. Literature shows that when a peer group engages in a risky behavior such as smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol, the members of their peer group are more likely to engage in these behaviors as well (Hoffman et al., 2007; Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Tragesser et al., 2006). However, after surveying perceptions from both youth and adults in Cleveland Ohio, Taralowitz and Singer (1982) found that, "youths perceived the use of these substances [drugs and alcohol] as detrimental to their welfare" (p. 55). Nonetheless, Tragesser et al. (2006) found that when friends smoke, adolescents are more likely to have a more positive image of smokers and are, as a result, more likely to smoke themselves.

On the other hand, peers can also play a beneficial role on the individual student. As discussed previously, adolescents are constantly comparing themselves to their peers to sort out a sense of identity. For that reason, peers can also influence prosocial behavior such as empathy – the ability to understand the perspective of others. In this case, the peer group can provide support and foster these beneficial behaviors (Wentzel, 1998). Peer groups can be beneficial for academic achievement as well; Ryan (2000) found that correlated to the pressure from peers are the beliefs and motivation regarding academic achievement. Peer groups that are a cohesive group can create a set of norms or values that can promote academic achievement or motivation to succeed (Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997; Wentzel, 1998) and positive friends can be associated with an improvement in academic functioning and a decrease in disruptive behaviors.

Family

Although students are in school for the majority of the day, they spend the rest of their time in some family context outside of school. Each family is different for each student for example, grandparents are important across cultures and, as a result, counselors should ask adolescents what they consider their family to be (Anyan & Pryor, 2002).

According to Gilby (1982), children's concepts of the family are developmental in nature. Early on children associate the idea of family as those individuals that share the same residence as them (Fu, 2001). There is little differentiation of blood or legal relationships. When children are older and move into adolescence, this concept of a blood or legal relationship becomes more prevalent and important to their definition of a family, now indicated as family members or part of the family group, are individuals that are related, but live outside of their residence (Fu, Goodwin, Sporkowki, & Hinkle, 2001; Gilby & Pederson, 1982). The literature also shows that children and adolescents from divorced or intact homes had the same perceptions of what a family is. The only difference was that intact families had a higher emphasis on children being around the home (Horn-Wingerd & Groves, 1992). As students get older,

they start to identify the more subtle characteristics of a family. A child may define their family as those individuals that play with them or take care of them. By the time a student reaches adolescence, he or she may identify their relationship with his or her parents on grounds of parenting style, discipline or conflict resolution (Fu, Goodwin, Sporakowki, & Hinkle, 2001).

The child and adolescents development and understanding of the way a family is constructed, the roles of the parent and the relationships created in a family is important because this understanding can influence how an adolescent may react in the event of a divorce (Watson & Amgott-Kwan, 1984). Those adolescents immersed in an environment of conflict or divorce are more vulnerable to depression. In fact, Nilzon and Plamerus (1997, p. 941) argued, that any family life event can be “powerful predictors of adult and child stress” and that there are different responses to this stress based on the individual’s coping mechanisms. Gerson (1995) and Plunkett, Henry, and Knaub (1999), also explained that when divorce occurs in a family, some adolescents may be forced to grow up more quickly and take on more responsibilities within the family and in turn, this may cause some stress from some adolescents.

On the other hand, a study found that those adolescents that reported they took on more familial responsibility also reported to have a “more intimate relationship” with their parents and reported less symptoms of anxiety and depression (Taylor, 1997 p. 983). This is not an easy time for families and their adolescent. As previously discussed, adolescents are encountering all kinds of changes combined with an increased need for independence (Gerson, 1995). Plunkett et al. (1999) argued, however that those students that said they could easily speak with their families about stress used their families as a resource to help them appropriately cope with this stress. Spruijt and de Goede (1997) found that students that indicated a change in family might encounter more of an impact on their well-being, however, they asserted that it is important not to assume that these changes have a negative impact on well-being. They found that the children understood to encounter the most transition in their

family where those in stepfamilies. Those students did not indicate the lowest general well-being. Those children in single-family homes reported the highest level of negative impact on their well-being. The literature argues that it is important not only to consider the implications of the various family structures and concepts, but that it is also important to consider the individual's perception on his or her family as well as the impact of family stressors such as divorce.

Sadness

There are many precipitants of sadness in the life of an adolescent. Divorce and other disruptive events in the life of an adolescent can have an impact on a student's ability to excel in a school setting. According to Desocio and Hootman (2004, p. 192), "other adverse events that have been associated with increased risk for mental health problems in children include... losing a friend or experiencing the death of a friend or family member". In recent years, adolescents have become increasingly exposed to death in the United States (Noppe & Noppe, 2004). At school students can display a range of reactions to the experience of grief (Heath, Leavy, Hansen, Ryan, Lawrence, & Gerritsen Sonntag, 2008; McGlaulin, 1998). Students who are having difficulty coping with this experience may exhibit "behaviors such as lack of concentration, inability to complete tasks, fatigue, excessive displays of emotion, withdrawal, and aggressiveness" (McGlaulin, 1998, p. 46). According to a study run by Morin and Welsh (1996) perceptions of grief were influenced by culture and socio-economic status. This manifested in the different types of responses they received from suburban and urban students.

Additionally males and females may grieve differently. Lenhardt and McCourt (2000) found that female adolescents that experienced the loss of a mother tended to show more outward symptoms of their grief than adolescent boys. The level of grief was the same, however, the symptoms they displayed in regards to their level of grief differed significantly and implied that the level of grief males felt was less than that of females.

Death is not the only indicator of the possibility of sadness in adolescents and all losses that children face should be treated as a potential source for grief (McGlaufflin, 1998). As previously discussed, divorce is one event to take into consideration, however, there is also an impact if adolescents experience a lot of change in general, a change in peer associations, or the loss of a romantic relationship. Peer relationships are important to the adolescent (Ryan, 2000) and as such, the change or loss of this relationship can have significant impact on a student's identity development and ultimately school functioning. According to Kaczmarek and Backlund (1991) adolescents that experience a loss of a romantic relationship in particular are experiencing a major life change. Adolescents are invested in peer relationships and the loss of these can create an intense emotional experiences resulting in reduced academic performance.

Academic Needs

Even within the context of adolescent development and personal, social and emotional consideration, it is apparent based on the legislature from No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) that academic functioning of students is the number one priority for student success within a school. The NCLB statement of purpose explains, "the purpose of this title [No Child Left Behind Act] is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach... proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (H.R. Doc. No. 107-334. 107th Cong., 2001, p. 17).

The middle school level specifically shows this. Roeser and Eccles (1998) asserted that it is the very nature of middle school culture that "emphasizes certain goals or achievement" (p. 129). They argue that it is the very existence of recognitions such as high honor roll or class rank in a school that perpetuate the strong academic orientation of schools. Even so, the literature shows that there are a number of factors that can influence the highly regarded academic achievement of students (Brenner, Weist, Adelman, Taylor, & Vernon-Smiley, 2007; Paisley & Hayes, 2003; Bowen, Rose, Powers, &

Glennie, 2008). Because of the above-mentioned pressures on the educational system and the students, the school personnel are responsible for creating and implementing interventions to help students succeed. (Paisley & Hayes, 2003)

The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) stated that the role of the school counselor is in supporting the student academically. The ASCA National Model (2005) emphasizes the counselor's role, as an expert on issues regarding child and adolescent development, to become leaders for change in the educational system. It continues to contend that, as an essential part of the educational system, it is the responsibility of the school counseling program to "support the school's academic mission by promoting and enhancing the learning process for all students" (2005, p. 15).

Influences on student academic achievement

A number of studies assess the factors that influence, impede or support student academic success. According to Masten and Coatsworth (1998), problems with academic achievement connect to other issues such as low attention and anti-social behavior. On the other hand, successful students exhibited positive attitudes towards their learning and ability to learn. Their resources for success include their cognitive ability, and ability to find motivation and self-efficacy. Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994) explained that it is a combination of metacognitive processes – the students "ability to plan monitor, and, if necessary, re-plan" (p. 75), social and behavioral attributes, and cognitive abilities that strongly influence a student's learning. They also discuss the importance of motivation and affect as they both determine the perseverance of a student to do well.

A study written by Wang, et al. (1997), set out to compile the literature on the influences on student learning. Of the twenty-eight compiled categories of influence that affected student learning, eight of the top eleven involved social-emotional influences. Those topics include affective attributes, peer groups, school culture and classroom climate. Finally, a study found that students, who set goals, manage stress, and organize their work, "make responsible decisions about studying and completing

homework and use problem-solving and relationship skills overcome obstacles and achieve more (Greenberg, et al., 2003, p. 470). Social-emotional learning (SEL) and the Student Success Skills Program (SSS) have developed from the basis of these studies (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Greenberg, et al., 2003). The following section will discuss the strategies and objectives of the SSS program and the subsequent studies of its success rate.

Student Success Skills (SSS)

Built from the preceding research, the Student Success Skills Program (SSS) was designed to teach academic, social, and self-management skills using both classroom and group counseling components (Miranda, Webb, Brigman, & Peluso, 2007). At its cores, SSS teaches the following strategies: goal setting, progress monitoring, success sharing, cognitive memory skills (such as mnemonic devices), how to manage test anxiety, and building healthy optimism (p. 492).

Studies found these skills, such as study skills, to be effective techniques that help students to overcome test anxiety and increase self-motivation and further support the use of this program (Kesici, 2007). Hattie, Biggs, and Purdie (1996), warned that it is important to remember, however, that not all strategies accommodate all students and that to remain effective, some skills will need adjustment to fit individual needs. Additionally, they argued that for cognitive strategies, students must understand how it works in order for them to be the most beneficial.

Even with these recommendations, overall researchers have found these strategies to be necessary and helpful in students' academic achievement as measured by high stakes testing (Webb, Brigman, & Campbell, 2005; Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Carey, Carey, Hatch, Lapan, & Whiston, 2008). Three major studies provide data regarding the impact of the Student Success Skills intervention on students' academic achievement. Webb and colleagues (2005), found that the SSS program has been linked to significant improvement in achievement and behavior and that it aligns with criteria to be qualified as an effective intervention. Specifically, they found that 85% "of students who participated in

the SSS program improved their math Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test scores.” (p. 112). In addition, Carey et al. (2008) also found that students showed significant improvement on their statewide exam after completing the SSS program. It is important to comprehend the success of programs such as SSS in order to appreciate what the possible academic needs of students may be.

Career Needs

Identifying career as a necessity in schools comes from the very beginning of the development of school counseling. When school guidance was initiated, the focus was on “character development... socially appropriate behaviors, and... vocational planning” (Paisley & Borders, 1995, p. 150). The focus and development of school counseling has changed over time but career is still an integral concept to understand within the context of adolescence. Evidenced in a study of 344 students in Calgary, three of the top five needs pertained to career concerns, predominately regarding information about professions and career decision-making (Kesici, 2007). Even more specifically, Blackhurst and Auger (2008) found that all of the students that participated in their study indicated that they wanted to go to college in the future. Middle school students consider career even in its most basic form, however, each grade level considers careers in different ways.

Sixth grade predominately consists of career awareness, while in seventh and eighth grade, students may begin to make connections and start career exploration according to their interests and abilities (Benz, 1996; Dahir, 2001). Between the ages of 9 to 13, according to Gottfredson’s (1981) theory, when adolescents begins to observe differences in social behaviors and class status and that this shapes the way they look at themselves and also their possible career opportunities. Benz (1996) specified that, for eighth graders, not only does understanding how high school coursework relates to a career help them, but also helps them to relate classes and classwork to other aspects of their life.

Students are given information regarding their possible careers as early as Kindergarden in their schooling and historically, this information provided careers in the traditional gender roles, girls and

boys may receive information that tells them they are capable or incapable of certain careers based on their gender (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005; Rivera & Pellitteri, 2007). At the middle school level it becomes increasingly important to inform students accurately of the possibilities that suit them vocationally. This can start as early as sixth grade, sometimes even as early as fifth, when students start to increase in maturity regarding careers. This interest may give students a better sense of confidence and more connectedness to their personal and academic worlds (Hartung et. al, 2005).

The literature tends to emphasize that, at this age, students generally seek out their peers in order to gain information about career options (Kosine & Steger, 2008; Legum & Hoare, 2004; Mau, 1995; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000). More importantly, peers do not often have accurate information to share with each other and that they are less likely to seek out adult or professional help with the topic (Mau, 1995). As a result of this, Wahl and Blackhurst (2000) suggested that it is important that we support students by giving them the most accurate, realistic idea of the kind of options they have after high school. Empowering students with this information, especially in eighth grade, can have an immense impact on students' self-esteem and identity development regarding the area of career (Legum & Hoare, 2004).

Middle school students thoughts about career do not only happen within a school. The influence of family and parents are an important consideration. To understand how much of an influence that parental behaviors and attitudes had on adolescents opinions regarding career, Keller and Whiston (2008) ran a study with 285 middle school students. They found that in fact, parental behaviors and attitudes about career development were important to their children. Young adolescents valued their parents opinions and perceptions regarding career. Because of this, part of an effective intervention to meet the career development needs of these students would be to incorporate the students' parents and family as much as possible and to keep everyone engaged in career exploration together (Trusty & Hutchinson, 2004).

When family and parental involvement are taken into consideration, the culture of the family and what kind of beliefs may impact the student must also be taken into consideration (Trusty, Niles, & Carney, 2005). According to Trusty, Niles and Carney (2005) it is imperative for any school counseling program to consider the individual needs of students based on their culture or socio-economic status in order to effectively meet these needs.

Measuring the Needs of Students

Pressure is increasing for school personnel to exhibit accountability within a school system. The ASCA National Model provides a framework for creating a comprehensive school counseling program that works to create a developmentally appropriate, inclusive, school-wide data driven program in order to achieve a system of accountability and evaluation to be the most successful with students (American School Counselor Association, 2005).

Authorities in developmental school counseling (e.g., Baker, 1999; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Myrick, 1997; Schmidt, 1999; Wittmer, 2000) advocate that the needs of the school population, and in particular the students, should be determined early in the program development process so that an effective developmental school counseling program can be built to be responsive to them..

If implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, it is important to determine directly from the adolescent students their perception of what they need from school counselors, and school personnel in general (Thompson, Loesch, & Seraphine, 2003). Additionally, according to Hiebert, Collins and Robinson (2001) it is not enough to acquire input from students regarding their possible needs, but also allow student input regarding possible interventions and activities to accommodate these needs.

Needs assessment are a simple way to assess, plan, implement and evaluate the impact of a comprehensive school counseling program, it also helps to gain a focus to a program that addresses the most salient aspects of student's lives (Drefs, 2002; Herr, 2001; Hiebert, Collins, & Robinson, 2001). In a

study of 378 youth ages 15-16, Millar, Gallagher and Ellis (2003) found that “it is crucial to develop questionnaires which thoroughly reflect the range of areas included in social and life skills or personal and social education curricula if adolescents’ needs are to be systematically ascertained” (p. 50). For the purposes of this study, this was achieved using the ASCA National Model as a framework to make sure each possible aspect of student needs was included.

Conclusions

Taking into consideration the expanse of literature, adolescents are encountering a great deal of stress during their middle school years and may require help managing the number of changes and challenges they face on a daily basis. They encounter many of these challenges within the context of a school and, as supportive staff, counselors have a responsibility to help students succeed academically.

Method

Since adolescence is a time when students require a lot of support to aid them in their success as students, and they spend the majority of their time in a school during the week, often within the school setting these needs become visible. Therefore, in order to understand the needs of all middle school students, a sample of middle school students must be utilized.

Setting and Participants

This study took place at a rural school located in Western New York. This school district (K-12) has students that are predominately Caucasian (97%) and 22% of students in the district are eligible for free or reduced lunch (NYStart: New York State testing and accountability reporting tool, 2007).

Research, however, was specifically aimed to assess the possible needs of middle school students in grades six through eight. Therefore, the population for this research includes all students currently enrolled in this school district in grade six (approximately 80 students), grade seven (approximately 80 students) and grade eight (approximately 80 students) totaling approximately 240 students. Of these 240 students in the population, 58% are male, 42% are female, and 4% are students with special needs.

Participants included 56 students currently enrolled in sixth ($n = 24$), seventh ($n = 11$) and eighth ($n = 21$) grade. Twenty-four of these students were male and 31 were female (one participant did not indicate gender). In order to promote student completion of the survey, students were offered an incentive of candy upon return of the completed packet and the opportunity to have their names drawn for a larger prize at a later date. There was no academic punishment or reward for completion of the survey. Overall, the response rate is approximately 23% of the population, 6% above the average return rate of 17% for the school district.

Instrument

Students were asked to complete a survey entitled “Middle School Student Survey” (actual full title includes school district’s name) adapted from another local districts “Middle School Counseling Office Student Survey” (Lally, Sabido, Hunt, Moredock, Traver, Reiner, Barrell, Corteville, Knab, Sakofsky & Tobin 2008). The survey consisted of 25 questions grouped together based on academic, personal/social and emotional or career orientation. Questions 1 – 7 and 18-25 represented the personal/social and emotional domain, 8-13 represented academic and 14-17 represented career (see Appendix A for the survey in its entirety). Each survey had the respondent indicate gender and also respond to the amount of help needed on each of the 25 topics based on a modified Likert-type scale (a lot of help needed, some help needed, very little help needed, and no help needed). A modified Likert-type scale was chosen, rather than an open-ended or interview style survey, in order to get the most consistent, applicable answers from each student.

A written survey was preferential over a survey that would be administered online in order to eliminate steps in the process of getting informed consent and to insure that informed consent was given from both adult and minor student before the completion of the survey. This also minimized the amount of class time taken away from the students’ Physical Education class that is more formally described below.

Research Design and Approach

In order to assess the needs of middle school students, it was imperative that this study reach the entire population of students. To accomplish this, research was conducted over a four-day span and all of the research was conducted during students' Physical Education classes (each middle school student in New York is required to take a Physical Education class). Scheduling, however, only allowed half of the students to be reached each day. As a result, the first two days were spent as an introduction to the survey.

At this initial meeting, students were informed of the purpose of this study and were given a packet containing the parental/guardian informed consent, student consent and survey (See Appendix A, B and C respectively). At this time, students were also given instruction regarding the various components that needed to be completed in order to be a part of the study. Both informed consent forms were explained as well as their right to skip any questions they felt uncomfortable answering and their right to stop taking the survey completely if they choose to.

The packet was collected in the subsequent Physical Education class. When the participants returned the completed packet, the main researcher checked to see if both informed consent forms were completed. The participant then removed the consent forms from the survey and placed the signed consent forms in one marked box and the survey in another marked box appropriately. If the subject did not return both informed consent forms with the completed survey, they were instructed to place their entire packet into another marked box and the survey was not utilized as part of this study. Additionally, the only identifying information provided by the student on the survey was grade level (each survey was color-coded) and gender, therefore anonymity was maintained for each student participating in this study.

Results

The findings are presented within the following themes that emerged based on the construction of survey distributed to participants as well the research design and method implemented to accomplish this research: grade level, gender encompassing all grade levels and gender grade level.

Grade Level

The frequencies of responses varied by grade level and are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Frequency of Responses All Grade Levels*

Survey Items	6 th Grade				7 th Grade				8 th Grade			
	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
1. Feeling better about myself	1	4	8	11	0	0	3	8	0	2	6	13
2. Getting along with others	1	2	6	15	0	0	1	10	0	1	7	13
3. Improving my communication skills	2	1	9	12	0	0	2	9	0	2	7	12
4. Learning how to cope with peer pressure	2	1	9	12	0	0	1	10	0	2	4	15
5. Knowing when and how to get help from an adult	1	3	5	15	0	0	2	9	0	0	7	14
6. Solving my problems	1	2	7	14	0	0	3	8	0	1	9	11
7. Managing stress	3	3	4	14	0	1	3	7	0	2	8	11
8. Improving my studying and test taking skills to improve my grades	4	5	9	6	0	2	3	6	4	4	5	8
9. Getting extra help with school work	3	4	3	14	0	0	3	8	0	3	3	15
10. Understanding how effort affects my grades	2	0	7	15	0	0	0	11	0	1	3	17
11. Problems that get in the way of my success in school	1	5	5	13	0	0	2	9	0	2	5	14
12. Setting academic goals for myself	1	2	10	11	0	0	1	10	0	1	6	14
13. Learning how to work better in classroom groups	0	6	7	11	0	0	1	10	0	2	4	15
14. Understanding how my interests and abilities can help me to reach my goals	1	3	6	14	0	0	0	11	0	1	6	14
15. Developing hobbies and interests	0	3	3	18	0	0	1	10	0	1	1	19
16. Finding after school clubs or activities that interest me	1	3	6	14	0	0	0	11	1	2	2	16
17. Seeing how school relates to work	0	4	8	12	0	0	2	9	0	2	6	13
18. Motivation	3	1	8	12	0	1	3	7	0	3	6	12
19. Understanding me	1	2	4	17	0	0	0	11	0	2	4	15
20. Understanding my family	1	2	5	16	0	0	1	10	0	0	5	16
21. Making friends	1	0	4	19	0	0	0	11	0	1	4	16
22. Sadness; (death, divorce, change)	2	3	8	11	0	2	3	6	1	3	7	10
23. Anger and frustration	2	3	11	8	0	1	1	9	0	2	8	11
24. Mean people	3	4	4	13	0	0	3	8	2	3	6	9
25. Understanding drug and alcohol use	1	2	20	23	0	0	0	11	3	0	2	16

Sixth grade had the most participants indicate “a lot of help needed” on a range of items on the survey, while eighth had only a small amount of participants indicate “a lot of help needed” and seventh had no participants indicate they needed a lot of help with any of the items on the survey (also see Figure 1). The variability in the frequency of responses for each item across grade levels made it difficult to assess the needs of students accurately. In order to get a better representation of these needs the mean of each response was calculated from a four-point scale. When data was input, each response was given a corresponding number: A lot of help needed (4), Some help needed (3), Very little help needed (2), No help needed (1). The means scores show that overall the primary concerns across grade levels surrounded those items in the personal, social and emotional grouping. As shown in Table 1.1 and Figure 1 the most prominent mean scores from this grouping included items 7 (managing stress), 18 (motivation), 22 (sadness), 23 (anger/frustration) and 24 (mean people).

Figure 1: Mean Scores of Responses from All Grade Levels

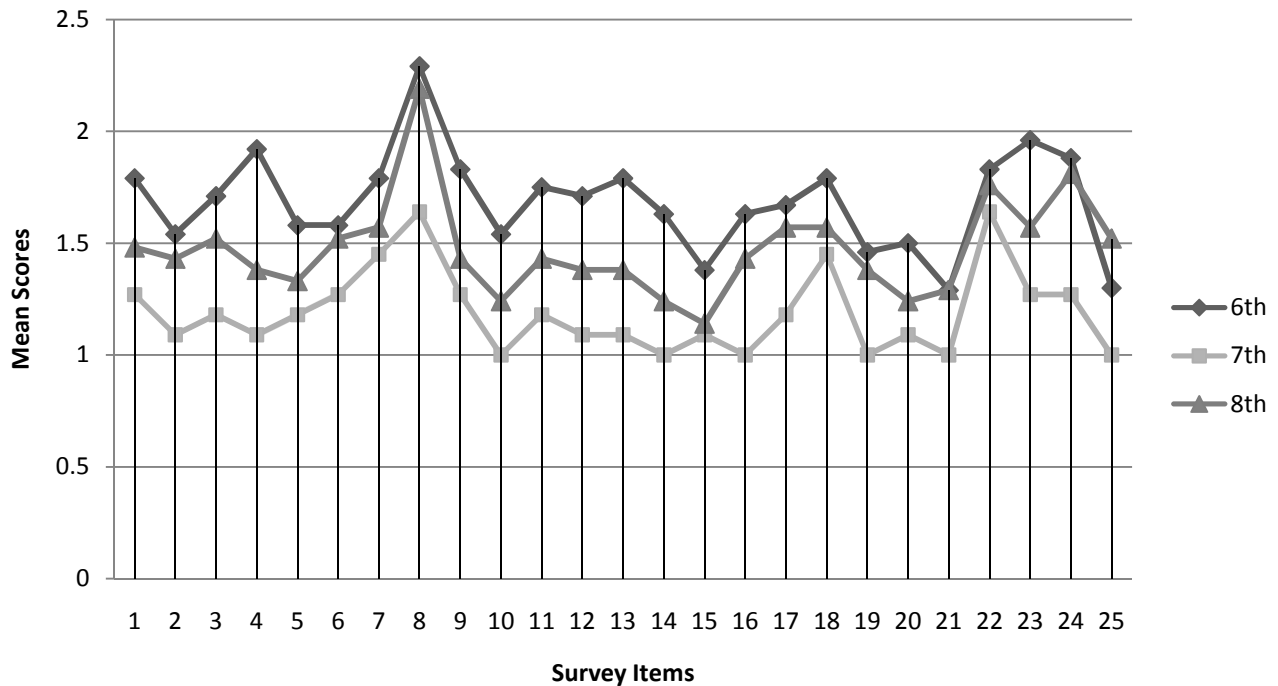


Table 1.1: Mean Scores of Responses from All Grade Levels

Survey Items	Mean Scores			
	6 th	7 th	8 th	All
1. Feeling better about myself	1.79	1.27	1.48	1.57
2. Getting along with others	1.54	1.09	1.43	1.41
3. Improving my communication skills	1.71	1.18	1.52	1.54
4. Learning how to cope with peer pressure	1.92	1.09	1.38	1.55
5. Knowing when and how to get help from an adult	1.58	1.18	1.33	1.41
6. Solving my problems	1.58	1.27	1.52	1.50
7. Managing stress	1.79	1.45	1.57	1.64
8. Improving my studying and test taking skills to improve my grades	2.29	1.64	2.19	2.13
9. Getting extra help with school work	1.83	1.27	1.43	1.57
10. Understanding how effort affects my grades	1.54	1.00	1.24	1.32
11. Problems that get in the way of my success in school	1.75	1.18	1.43	1.52
12. Setting academic goals for myself	1.71	1.09	1.38	1.46
13. Learning how to work better in classroom groups	1.79	1.09	1.38	1.50
14. Understanding how my interests and abilities can help me to reach my goals	1.63	1.00	1.24	1.36
15. Developing hobbies and interests	1.38	1.09	1.14	1.23
16. Finding after school clubs or activities that interest me	1.63	1.00	1.43	1.43
17. Seeing how school relates to work	1.67	1.18	1.57	1.54
18. Motivation	1.79	1.45	1.57	1.64
19. Understanding me	1.46	1.00	1.38	1.34
20. Understanding my family	1.50	1.09	1.24	1.32
21. Making friends	1.29	1.00	1.29	1.23
22. Sadness; (death, divorce, change)	1.83	1.64	1.76	1.77
23. Anger and frustration	1.96	1.27	1.57	1.68
24. Mean people	1.88	1.27	1.81	1.73
25. Understanding drug and alcohol use	1.30	1.00	1.52	1.32

Note. Values are the means of reported responses on a 4-point scale (4 = A lot of help needed, 3 = Some help needed, 2 = Very little help needed, 1 = No help needed).

In contrast, the highest mean score for each grade level was academic in nature. All three grade levels indicated that the most help was needed for item 8 (improving my studying and test taking skills to improve my grades). Although there were some pronounced figures regarding the career grouped items, most pronounced with item 27 seeing (how school relates to work) in the eighth grade, taken as a whole these figures were the least remarkable across grade levels.

The closest mean score for each grade level was item 22 (sadness). For this item, the scores were within .15 of each other, which point towards the same level of need for each grade level regarding this item. Although the trends in responses are similar, as described above, in general, sixth and eighth grade more frequently shared a similar level of need while seventh grade remained lower on the spectrum.

Gender

Of the 55 respondents that indicated gender (one participant did not), 46% of returned surveys were from male students and 55% were female. Only in the sixth grade were there more male (56%) respondents than female (43%). The mean scores for each grade level categorized by gender are shown in Table 2 (on next page). Although the difference in mean scores of males and females for each item did not show to be statistically significant there are a number of intriguing results within the mean scores.

When looking at the difference in mean score responses for all grade levels as shown in Table 2.1 (on page 33) and Figure 2 (below), male respondents generally scored each question with a higher level of need than their female counterparts and the general trends are similar between male and female respondents as well. Additionally, shown in Figure 2, the most pronounced differences were with item 21 (making friends) and item 10 (understanding how effort affects my grades). For these items males indicated that they needed markedly more help for these areas than females.

Figure 2: Male and Female Mean Scores for All Grade Levels

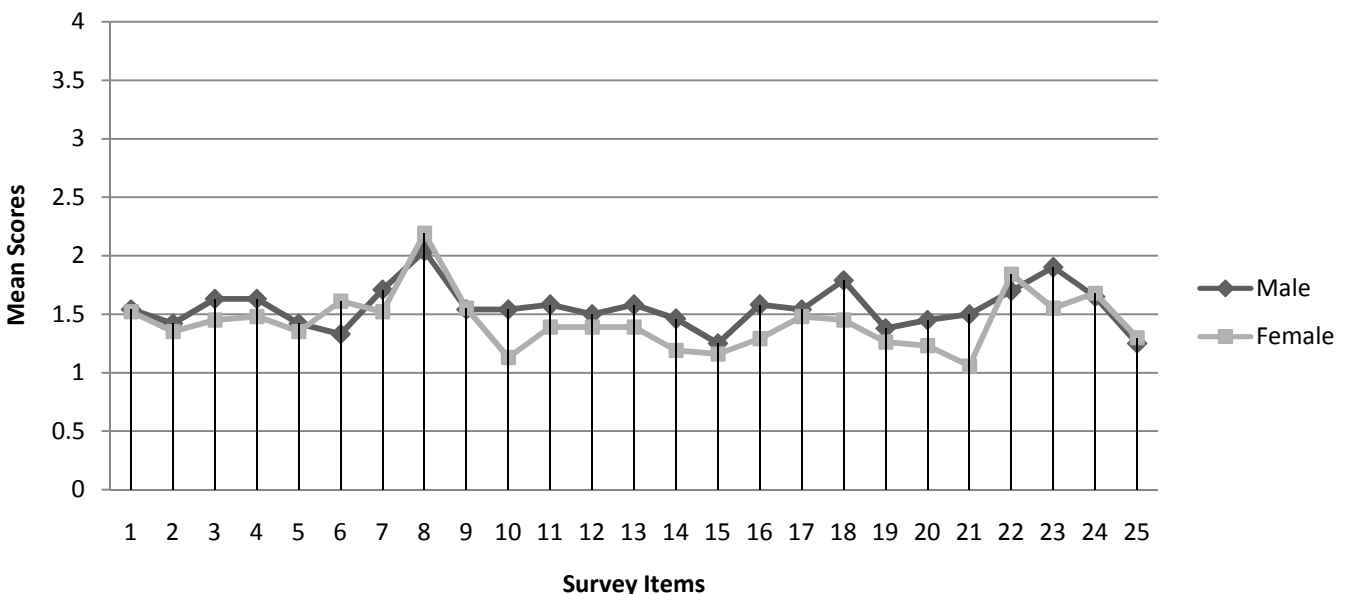


Table 2: *Male and Female Mean Scores by Grade Level*

Survey Items	6 th Grade \bar{x}		7 th Grade \bar{x}		8 th Grade \bar{x}	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Feeling better about myself	1.69	1.70	1.33	1.25	1.38	1.54
2. Getting along with others	1.46	1.50	1.33	1.00	1.38	1.46
3. Improving my communication skills	1.69	1.70	1.00	1.25	1.75	1.38
4. Learning how to cope with peer pressure	2.00	1.80	1.00	1.13	1.25	1.46
5. Knowing when and how to get help from an adult	1.54	1.50	1.00	1.25	1.38	1.31
6. Solving my problems	1.31	1.90	1.33	1.25	1.38	1.62
7. Managing stress	1.77	1.60	1.67	1.38	1.63	1.54
8. Improving my studying and test taking skills to improve my grades	2.31	2.30	1.00	1.88	2.00	2.31
9. Getting extra help with school work	1.85	1.70	1.00	1.38	1.25	1.54
10. Understanding how effort affects my grades	1.69	1.30	1.00	1.00	1.50	1.08
11. Problems that get in the way of my success in school	1.62	1.70	1.33	1.13	1.63	1.31
12. Setting academic goals for myself	1.69	1.60	1.33	1.00	1.25	1.46
13. Learning how to work better in classroom groups	1.69	1.80	1.33	1.00	1.50	1.31
14. Understanding how my interests and abilities can help me to reach my goals	1.62	1.40	1.00	1.00	1.38	1.15
15. Developing hobbies and interests	1.23	1.40	1.33	1.00	1.25	1.08
16. Finding after school clubs or activities that interest me	1.85	1.30	1.00	1.00	1.38	1.46
17. Seeing how school relates to work	1.46	1.80	1.33	1.13	1.75	1.46
18. Motivation	1.85	1.50	1.33	1.50	1.88	1.38
19. Understanding me	1.46	1.30	1.00	1.00	1.38	1.38
20. Understanding my family	1.54	1.40	1.33	1.00	1.25	1.23
21. Making friends	1.54	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.50	1.15
22. Sadness; (death, divorce, change)	1.85	1.80	1.67	1.63	1.38	2.00
23. Anger and frustration	2.15	1.70	1.67	1.13	1.38	1.69
24. Mean people	1.69	1.90	1.33	1.25	1.88	1.77
25. Understanding drug and alcohol use	1.31	1.33	1.00	1.00	1.63	1.50

Note. Values are the means of reported responses on a 4-point scale (4 = A lot of help needed, 3 = Some help needed, 2 = Very little help needed, 1 = No help needed).

Table 2.1: *Difference in Male and Female Mean Scores for All Grade Levels*

Survey Items	Male \bar{x}	Female \bar{x}	Difference
1. Feeling better about myself	1.54	1.52	0.03
2. Getting along with others	1.42	1.35	0.06
3. Improving my communication skills	1.63	1.45	0.17
4. Learning how to cope with peer pressure	1.63	1.48	0.14
5. Knowing when and how to get help from an adult	1.42	1.35	0.06
6. Solving my problems	1.33	1.61	-0.28
7. Managing stress	1.71	1.52	0.19
8. Improving my studying and test taking skills to improve my grades	2.04	2.19	-0.15
9. Getting extra help with school work	1.54	1.55	-0.01
10. Understanding how effort affects my grades	1.54	1.13	0.41
11. Problems that get in the way of my success in school	1.58	1.39	0.20
12. Setting academic goals for myself	1.50	1.39	0.11
13. Learning how to work better in classroom groups	1.58	1.39	0.20
14. Understanding how my interests and abilities can help me to reach my goals	1.46	1.19	0.26
15. Developing hobbies and interests	1.25	1.16	0.09
16. Finding after school clubs or activities that interest me	1.58	1.29	0.29
17. Seeing how school relates to work	1.54	1.48	0.06
18. Motivation	1.79	1.45	0.34
19. Understanding me	1.38	1.26	0.12
20. Understanding my family	1.45	1.23	0.22
21. Making friends	1.50	1.06	0.44
22. Sadness; (death, divorce, change)	1.70	1.84	-0.14
23. Anger and frustration	1.90	1.55	0.35
24. Mean people	1.65	1.68	-0.03
25. Understanding drug and alcohol use	1.25	1.30	-0.05

Note. Values are the means of reported responses on a 4-point scale (4 = *A lot of help needed*, 3 = *Some help needed*, 2 = *Very little help needed*, 1 = *No help needed*).

Sixth grade

Differences for sixth grade males and females appeared for survey items 6 (solving my problems), 16 (finding after school clubs or activities that interest me), and 21 (making friends).

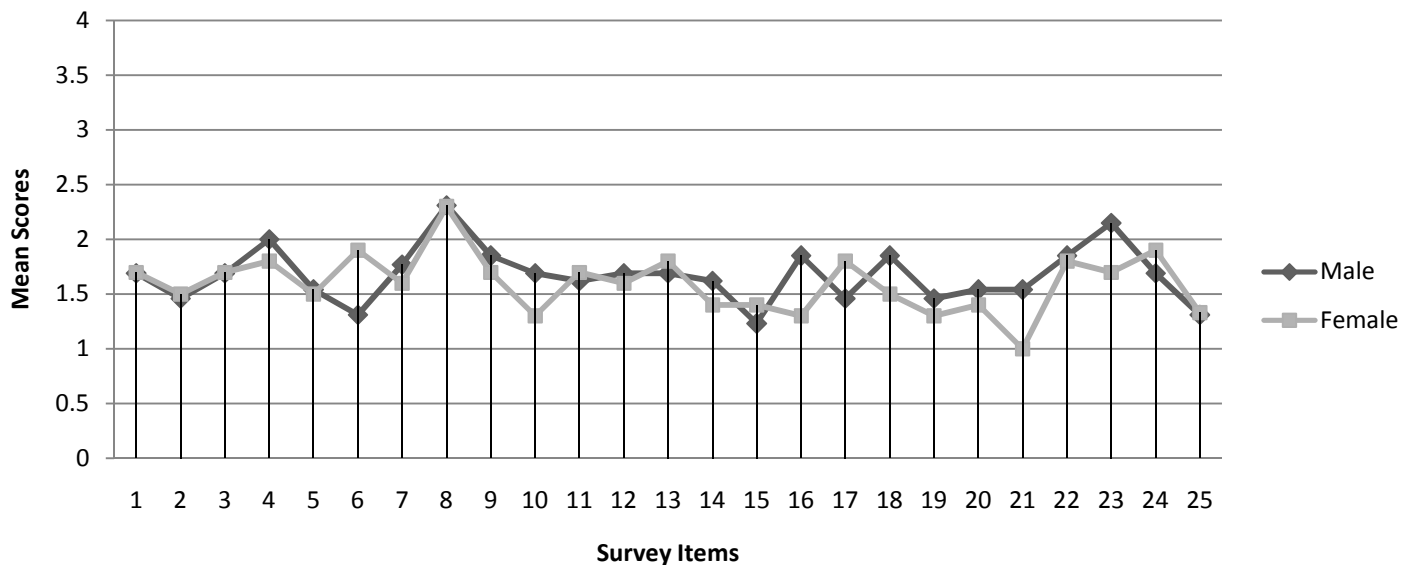
Regarding the academic spectrum of solving problems, females specified a higher level of help needed for this area. In contrast, for social items regarding finding after school activities and making friends, males specified a higher level of help needed over their female counterparts (see Table 2.2 and Figure 2.1).

Table 2.2: Male and Female Mean Scores for 6th Grade

Survey Items	Male \bar{x}	Female \bar{x}	Difference
1. Feeling better about myself	1.69	1.70	-0.01
2. Getting along with others	1.46	1.50	-0.04
3. Improving my communication skills	1.69	1.70	-0.01
4. Learning how to cope with peer pressure	2.00	1.80	0.20
5. Knowing when and how to get help from an adult	1.54	1.50	0.04
6. Solving my problems	1.31	1.90	-0.59
7. Managing stress	1.77	1.60	0.17
8. Improving my studying and test taking skills to improve my grades	2.31	2.30	0.01
9. Getting extra help with school work	1.85	1.70	0.15
10. Understanding how effort affects my grades	1.69	1.30	0.39
11. Problems that get in the way of my success in school	1.62	1.70	-0.08
12. Setting academic goals for myself	1.69	1.60	0.09
13. Learning how to work better in classroom groups	1.69	1.80	-0.11
14. Understanding how my interests and abilities can help me to reach my goals	1.62	1.40	0.22
15. Developing hobbies and interests	1.23	1.40	-0.17
16. Finding after school clubs or activities that interest me	1.85	1.30	0.55
17. Seeing how school relates to work	1.46	1.80	-0.34
18. Motivation	1.85	1.50	0.35
19. Understanding me	1.46	1.30	0.16
20. Understanding my family	1.54	1.40	0.14
21. Making friends	1.54	1.00	0.54
22. Sadness; (death, divorce, change)	1.85	1.80	0.05
23. Anger and frustration	2.15	1.70	0.45
24. Mean people	1.69	1.90	-0.21
25. Understanding drug and alcohol use	1.31	1.33	-0.03

Note. Values are the means of reported responses on a 4-point scale (4 = A lot of help needed, 3 = Some help needed, 2 = Very little help needed, 1 = No help needed).

Figure 2.1: Male and Female Mean Scores for 6th Grade



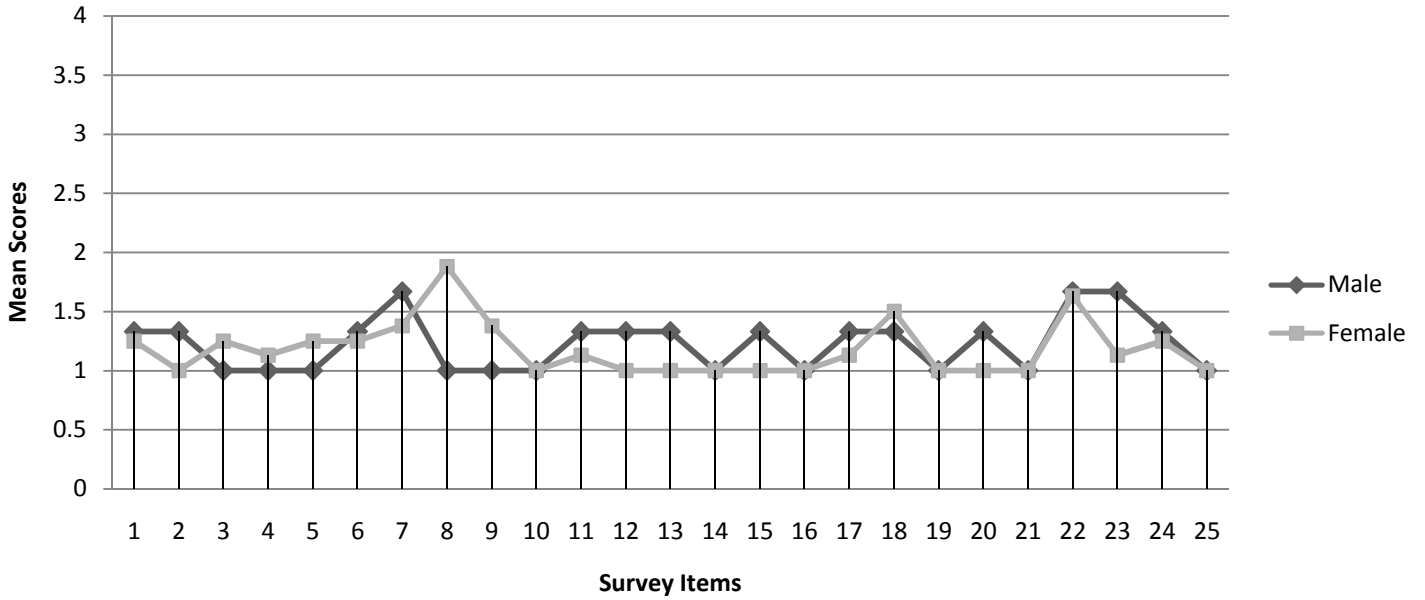
Seventh grade

As shown in Table 2.3 and figure 2.2, the most pronounced gender difference for the seventh grade is item 8 (improving my studying and test taking skills to improve my grades). There was a significantly higher amount of help needed for females than males regarding this item. This was also the item that respondents overwhelmingly indicated they needed the most help with across all grade levels. Other prominent differences appeared with item 9 (getting extra help with school work) where females indicated a higher level of help needed, and item 23 (anger and frustration) where males indicated a higher level of help needed.

Table 2.3: *Male and Female Mean Scores for 7th Grade*

Survey Items	Male \bar{x}	Female \bar{x}	Difference
1. Feeling better about myself	1.33	1.25	0.08
2. Getting along with others	1.33	1.00	0.33
3. Improving my communication skills	1.00	1.25	-0.25
4. Learning how to cope with peer pressure	1.00	1.13	-0.13
5. Knowing when and how to get help from an adult	1.00	1.25	-0.25
6. Solving my problems	1.33	1.25	0.08
7. Managing stress	1.67	1.38	0.29
8. Improving my studying and test taking skills to improve my grades	1.00	1.88	-0.88
9. Getting extra help with school work	1.00	1.38	-0.38
10. Understanding how effort affects my grades	1.00	1.00	0.00
11. Problems that get in the way of my success in school	1.33	1.13	0.21
12. Setting academic goals for myself	1.33	1.00	0.33
13. Learning how to work better in classroom groups	1.33	1.00	0.33
14. Understanding how my interests and abilities can help me to reach my goals	1.00	1.00	0.00
15. Developing hobbies and interests	1.33	1.00	0.33
16. Finding after school clubs or activities that interest me	1.00	1.00	0.00
17. Seeing how school relates to work	1.33	1.13	0.21
18. Motivation	1.33	1.50	-0.17
19. Understanding me	1.00	1.00	0.00
20. Understanding my family	1.33	1.00	0.33
21. Making friends	1.00	1.00	0.00
22. Sadness; (death, divorce, change)	1.67	1.63	0.04
23. Anger and frustration	1.67	1.13	0.54
24. Mean people	1.33	1.25	0.08
25. Understanding drug and alcohol use	1.00	1.00	0.00

Figure 2.2: Male and Female Mean Scores for 7th Grade



Eighth grade

In eighth grade, the differences between male and female mean responses spanned a larger number of items with less of a difference than grades six and seven. The most pronounced difference was observed with item 22 (sadness). Other, less distinct, differences were observed with items 10 (understanding how effort affects my grades), 18 (motivation). For all of these items, males indicated a high level of need than females. Again, with eighth grade, differences found where females indicated a higher level of need tended to be those items regarding academic issues (see Table 2.4 and Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: Male and Female Mean Scores for 8th Grade

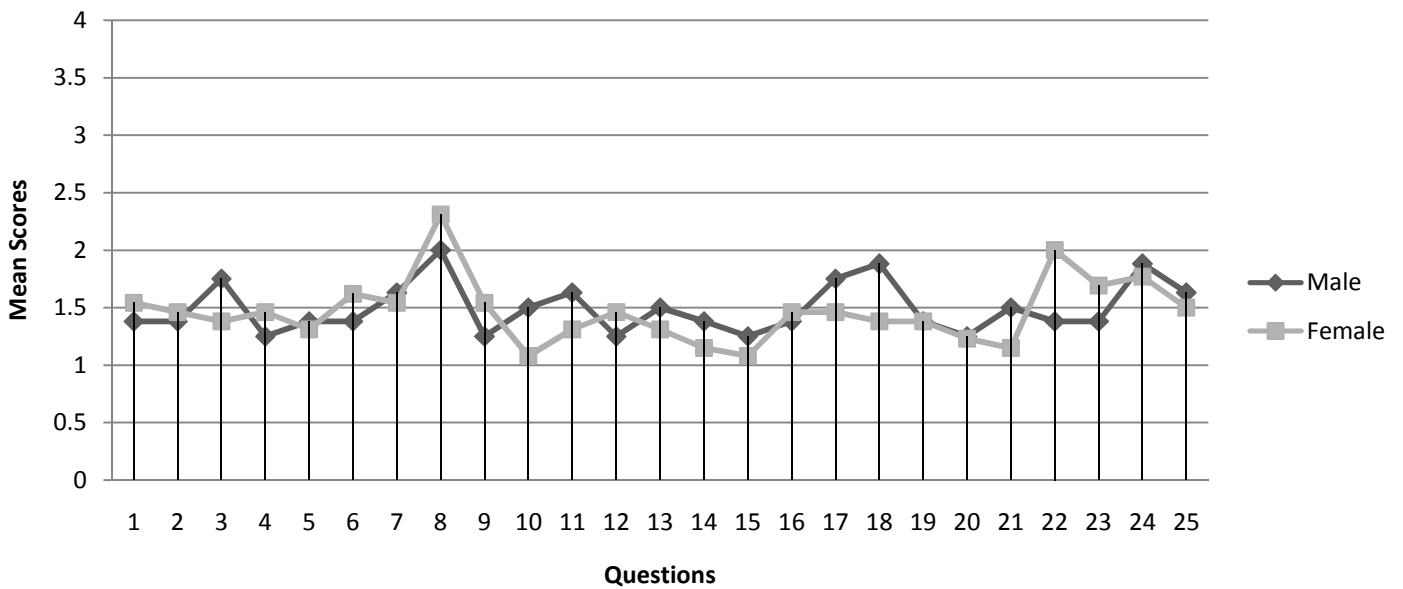


Table 2.4: *Male and Female Mean Scores for 8th Grade*

Survey Items	Male \bar{x}	Female \bar{x}	Difference
1. Feeling better about myself	1.38	1.54	-0.16
2. Getting along with others	1.38	1.46	-0.09
3. Improving my communication skills	1.75	1.38	0.37
4. Learning how to cope with peer pressure	1.25	1.46	-0.21
5. Knowing when and how to get help from an adult	1.38	1.31	0.07
6. Solving my problems	1.38	1.62	-0.24
7. Managing stress	1.63	1.54	0.09
8. Improving my studying and test taking skills to improve my grades	2.00	2.31	-0.31
9. Getting extra help with school work	1.25	1.54	-0.29
10. Understanding how effort affects my grades	1.50	1.08	0.42
11. Problems that get in the way of my success in school	1.63	1.31	0.32
12. Setting academic goals for myself	1.25	1.46	-0.21
13. Learning how to work better in classroom groups	1.50	1.31	0.19
14. Understanding how my interests and abilities can help me to reach my goals	1.38	1.15	0.22
15. Developing hobbies and interests	1.25	1.08	0.17
16. Finding after school clubs or activities that interest me	1.38	1.46	-0.09
17. Seeing how school relates to work	1.75	1.46	0.29
18. Motivation	1.88	1.38	0.49
19. Understanding me	1.38	1.38	-0.01
20. Understanding my family	1.25	1.23	0.02
21. Making friends	1.50	1.15	0.35
22. Sadness; (death, divorce, change)	1.38	2.00	-0.63
23. Anger and frustration	1.38	1.69	-0.32
24. Mean people	1.88	1.77	0.11
25. Understanding drug and alcohol use	1.63	1.50	0.13

Note. Values are the means of reported responses on a 4-point scale (4 = *A lot of help needed*, 3 = *Some help needed*, 2 = *Very little help needed*, 1 = *No help needed*).

Correlations

Although calculating mean scores provided interesting and useful results, it is also important to understand which items were related to each other for the students participating in the study. Pearson two-tailed correlation statistics were run on all of the items, as well as gender, to analyze the data and can be viewed in its entirety in Appendix D. The correlations to take under the most consideration are those items which ranked highly overall in the mean scores of students across the grade levels.

Significant correlations were found between personal, social and emotional items on the survey. Even so, academic and career items also yielded important correlations to other items on the survey.

Those students that indicated they needed help with feeling better about themselves, also commonly indicated they needed a lot of help with the items including getting along with others, learning how to cope with peer pressure, knowing when and how to get help from an adult, solving my problems and managing stress (Table 3). There was no correlation found between indicating a higher level of help needed with feeling better about oneself and improving studying and test taking skills to improve grades.

Table 3: *Correlation Feeling Better About Myself*

		Getting along with others	Learning how to cope with peer pressure	Knowing when and how to get help from an adult	Solving my problems	Managing stress
Feeling better about myself	Pearson Correlation	.627**	.436**	.346**	.522**	.500**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.009	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

If managing stress was a high need for students, they were more likely to indicate they needed help with items including feeling better about myself, getting along with others, learning how to cope with peer pressure, and solving my problems (Table 3.1). Additional correlations included getting help with school work, problems that get in the way of my success in school, setting academic goals and learning how to work better in classroom groups (see Appendix D).

Table 3.1: *Correlation Managing Stress*

		Feeling better about myself	Getting along with others	Learning how to cope with peer pressure	Solving my problems
Managing stress	Pearson Correlation	.500**	.490**	.370**	.479**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.005	.000
	N	56	56	56	56

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Common items that were also likely indicated with a high level of help for those students that noted additional help was needed with motivation included items such as understanding me, understanding my family, making friends, anger and frustration and mean people (Table 3.2). Also correlated were academic areas such as getting extra help with school work, understanding how effort affects my grades, problems that get in the way of my success in school, setting academic goals, learning how to work better in classroom groups, understanding how my interests and abilities can help me reach my goals (See Appendix D).

Table 3.2: *Correlation Motivation*

		Understanding me	Understanding my family	Making friends	Anger and frustration	Mean people
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.570**	.446**	.319*	.275*	.386**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.017	.040	.003
	N	56	56	56	56	56

Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

In contrast, those that indicated that they needed the most help with improving their studying and test taking skills to improve grades did not generally indicate a high need for the items mentioned above (and that tend to overlap with each other) in the personal, social and emotional area (Table 3.3). They were, however, more likely to indicate they needed more help with the majority of other

Table 3.3: *Correlation Improving my Studying and Test Taking Skills to Improve my Grades (1)*

		Feeling better about myself	Getting along with others	Learning how to cope with peer pressure	Knowing when and how to get help from an adult	Solving my problems	Managing stress
Improving my studying and test taking skills to improve my grades	Pearson Correlation	.225	.154	.286*	.329*	.261	.203
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.095	.258	.032	.013	.052	.133
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56

Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

academic items such as getting extra help with school work, understanding how effort affects my grades, problems that get in the way of success in school, setting academic goals and learning how to work better in classroom groups (Table 3.4).

Table 3 4: *Correlation Improving my Studying and Test Taking Skills to Improve my Grades (2)*

		Getting extra help with school work	Understanding how effort affects my grades	Problems that get in the way of my success in school	Setting academic goals for myself	Learning how to work better in classroom groups
Improving my studying and test taking skills to improve my grades	Pearson Correlation	.638**	.415**	.465**	.293*	.313*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.029	.019
	N	56	56	56	56	56

Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Discussion

Accountability is increasing within the schools. This has created an added stress on schools to ensure that their students succeed. In order for a school to succeed, the students that attend that school must succeed. There is an increased responsibility of counselors, teachers, administrator and all school staff to accommodate students in order to achieve this success. As a result, school personnel must understand what is impeding students from being successful in school and what they may need in order to achieve.

The purpose of this study was to assess the particular needs of middle school students. The results confirmed the significant role that a school counselor can play in the academic life of an adolescent student. Working within a framework, this survey was intended to measure the possible needs that students have regarding personal, social and emotional, academic and career aspects of their lives. The discussion of the results will cover the major findings of this research and the following topics, grade level findings, gender findings, limitations and recommendations for future counselors.

Grade Level Findings

Results showed that some of these aspects are more important to students and furthermore, the aspect of career did not get much consideration at all by these middle school students. This is contrary to the literature (Gottfredson, 1981) that emphasized the importance of career at an early age in order to for students to be actively engaged in planning their future. Studies (Kosine & Steger, 2008; Legum & Hoare, 2004; Mau, 1995; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000) found, however, that students at this age are much more likely to go to their peers for career information and therefore may not perceive a high level of help needed on this topic.

Major cognitive development happens during this time. That developmental change may not allow particular students, especially sixth grade students, to think in a future oriented way. This would make it difficult for students to imagine themselves in a future career, or understand how their current and future achievement and work in school may affect their lives. Based on the nature of the survey and the results, it is difficult to obtain why career is not a concern for these students. The limited nature of the questions did not allow students to respond in a way that would permit those conclusions to be drawn.

The results show students did not require a lot of help with career development. What they indicated they needed a lot of help with were more in the personal, social and emotional items. Nansel, et al. (2001) found that bullying was prevalent in schools, 30% of students are involved in bullying as either a bully, a target of bullying, or both. The findings confirm that this is a prevalent issue within this school. Mean people (bullying) were a top concern for students. This school has a bullying policy; however, the results of this study show that the students may not feel confident in this policy. Furthermore, school atmosphere is an important influence on the way that students perform in school. If students are feeling unsafe, they are less likely to want to attend school and may find it difficult to pay attention and achieve to their potential.

Less clear are the results that showed students needed more help with the item of sadness. This item on the survey encompassed death, divorce and change. Spruijt and de Goede (1997) showed that stress from a divorce can elicit all kinds of emotion from adolescents and that most reported it had some impact on their well-being. This could attribute for the need for help with sadness as could

What is important to them, what they felt they needed the most help on, is slightly contrary to what research has suggested so far. Personal, social and emotional items are the focus of a good deal of the literature regarding adolescence. The results of this study show that these items ranked highly, however, there were academic concerns that ranked significantly higher when looking at mean scores. The current culture of this particular school is oriented towards high stakes testing. Students are required to complete a number of state assessments that are reported and made public in order to hold schools accountable for student's progress in areas such as English Language Arts and Math.

The results of this study suggested that the pressure of these exams is transferred to the students as well. The only student concern to reach above a mean of two (out of a possible four) was item 8 where students responded they needed the most help with improving studying and test taking skills in order to improve grades. These findings supported the prior findings of models that emphasized teaching students effective skills that will help them take standardized, high stakes testing (Miranda et al., 2007). The Student Success Skills program emphasizes the application of strategies such as goal setting, progress monitoring, success sharing, cognitive memory skills (such as mnemonic devices), which aid in managing test anxiety, and building healthy optimism toward school and taking tests (p. 492).

Gender Findings

The results found that boys tended to indicate a higher level of need for personal, social and emotional aspects and females tended to indicate a higher level of need for academic issues. In fact, the biggest difference was within seventh grade with item 8, the item that ranked highest overall. Female

seventh graders indicated a much higher level of help needed in this area than their male counterparts did (see Table 2.3 and Figure 2.2).

These results seem to be contradictory to the literature that asserted that females tend to seek out counseling more than males (Gillon, 2007). Nonetheless, the findings may be explained by the developmental context of students during this time. Girls begin and end puberty around two years before their male counterparts (Tobin-Richards, Boxer, & Petersen, 1983). This could allow female students to have a longer period of adjustment to their new bodies and new experiences that puberty bring. For some, the focus may then shift to the more rigorous academic issues that they encounter in middle school and less on the personal, social and emotional aspects. The self-image and identity that exists during childhood may change dramatically when students enter into middle school because developmental changes that happen during adolescence are immense (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). This is true for both genders, however, because of the timing, boys may be farther behind in this adjustment and therefore may require more help adjusting to new changes in their lives along with those academic in nature.

Limitations

Although this study yielded a high response rate for the school district, it was a limited sample when compared to the bigger population of all middle school students. As a result, these findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. Middle school students are also very distinct in their characteristics and needs, which are dependent on many aspects that may be a part of their lives. This also makes it difficult to take a small set of data and apply it to the larger population of middle school students.

When the survey itself is looked at, there some limitations that may need to be modified in the future to get a more detailed accurate picture of specific needs. This setting did not allow for students will special needs to be properly represented. Furthermore, there was no differentiation for these

students on the survey itself. The lack of differentiation it impossible to draw conclusions regarding this particular population, and thereby measure what may be similar or different needs than their peers.

Students also indicated a higher level of need for the item of sadness, which was described as “death, divorce and change” (see Appendix C). It would be difficult to use this question to develop appropriate interventions to support student and provide help toward the issue of sadness. It is unclear which of (or if any) of the listed factors are the root cause for the feelings of sadness. If this issue warranted more investigation, or the survey was to be distributed again, the researcher must created a modified question and assess all students on the possible causes of sadness. This would focus the intervention and provide the most useful help to students.

As discussed previously, students indicated a high level of need in the area of study skills and test taking, which may have been influenced by the proximity of completing a state assessment to completing the survey. It is important to take into consideration the timing of such a survey. If this survey had been completed at the beginning of the year the results could have looked very differently. It is a testament to the idea that students’ needs are fluid on, what is sometimes, a day-by-day basis (Akos, 2005).

Finally, the individual student’s perceptions of his or her needs are essential to providing appropriate and effective interventions, in order to get a complete picture of student’s possible needs, and how to most accurately account for family and school contexts, it would be useful for parents and teachers to be surveyed along with the students (Gysbers & Hughey, 1993). This was not included as part of this study, however, conclusions may be drawn from parent and teacher expectations and student needs in future investigations.

Recommendations

As described in the literature it is important for counselors to understand that each adolescent has his or her own timing when it comes to any aspect of development (Dinkmeyer & Caldwell, 1970).

The kinds of needs and the resulting kind of interventions must be considered carefully in order to have the most impact with students at this age level (Hattie et al. 1996).

The results of the correlations imply that it will be important for school counselors consider that the items chosen for this survey, particularly the personal, social and emotional items, are not mutually exclusive. Counselors must not only consider the highest ranked needs on the survey. Take for example, this issue of managing stress. The results showed that those that indicated a high level of help with managing stress, also need help with feeling better about myself, getting along with others, learning how to cope with pee pressure and solving problems (see Table 3.1). The findings suggest that when working with students, if counselors address any one of these issues, it may lower the level of help needed with some similar and related issues as well.

It will also be important for counselors to understand the impact of timing on the running of a needs assessment. For this study, students had just completed a state-required math assessment. It was also much later into the year than originally anticipated. This may give students more time to acclimate to their new culture if they are a sixth grader coming from a significant transition, or manifest a different set of needs for seventh and eighth grade as well. Using a needs assessment is not a static document, these results show that each grade level has a different set of needs. This corroborates Lapan's (2001) position that a comprehensive school counseling program must be evaluated and reevaluated in order to be as effective as possible.

Conclusions

Middle school students are unique beings that have a unique set of challenges during their time in school. The literature points to a number of academic, personal, social and, and career needs that may need to be addressed in order for students to find success in schools. The research also emphasizes the more negative outcomes that may develop if these needs are not addressed. This study has found that the needs of students are not always obvious to the personnel that may be providing the

intervention. In order to provide effective support, remove obstacles, and have students be successful in the school the students must be asked about their perceptions of what they need. A needs assessment is a simple, data driven method to establish accountability and assess student needs. The survey must be created carefully and logically, covering each possible aspect of the middle school student's life. Furthermore, the results of the survey must be considered within the context of each student's life and as a result, interventions will be more appropriate and meaningful to the student. This will foster success for the student and ultimately the school.

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Appendix A: Parental/Guardian Consent

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

This form describes a research study being conducted with students about their needs in the middle school (grades 6-8). The purpose of this research is to understand the possible needs of these students during their middle school years and possibly develop counseling services to accommodate their specific needs.

The person conducting the research is Megan Barrell, a Master's level student at The College at Brockport in the Counselor Education Department. If you agree to have your child participate in this study, she/he will be handed the survey in his/her Physical Education class and will be asked to complete the survey that is included with this letter at home. The survey, which measures possible academic, personal/social and career needs, parental informed consent and the student agreement to participate should be returned at the next Physical Education class completed.


The possible benefit from being in this study could be that the information gathered would allow counselors [REDACTED] Middle School to better assist students during their middle school years. Each student's input is important. In order to promote the prompt return of the completed survey, each student that completes this packet in its entirety will be entered into a drawing during the **next** Physical Education class only.

Your student's participation in this study is completely voluntary. Being in it or refusing to be in it, will **not** affect your child's grades, class standing or school activities in any positive or negative way. She/he is free to change her/his mind or stop being in the study at any time. I understand that:

1. My student's participation is voluntary and she/he has the right to refuse to answer any questions. She/he will have a chance to discuss any questions she/he has about the study with the researcher before and after completing the survey.
2. My student's anonymity is guaranteed. Her/his name will not be written on the survey. There will be no way to connect my child to the written survey. If any publication results from this research, she/he would not be identified by name. Results will be given anonymously and in group form (by grade level) only, so that the participants cannot be identified. Participation will have no effect on grades or class status.
3. There will be a small risk including, the amount of time it will take to complete the survey as well as minimal risk that some questions may make the student uncomfortable. He/she is free to refuse to answer any questions that do so. There are no benefits from participation in this project.
4. My student's participation involves taking home, reading and completing a written survey of 25 questions and answering those questions in writing. It is estimated that it will take 10-15 minutes to complete the survey.
5. Approximately 300 students will take part in this study. Megan Barrell, a counseling intern, will use the results for the completion of a Master's thesis.
6. Data and consent forms will be kept separately in a locked filing cabinet by the investigator and will be destroyed by shredding when the research has been completed.

You are being asked whether or not you will permit your child to participate in this study. If you wish to give permission to participate, and you agree with the statement below, please sign in the space provided. Remember, you may change your mind at any point and withdraw from the study. Your child can refuse to participate even if you have given permission for her/him to participate.

If you have any questions you may contact:

<u>Primary Researcher</u>	<u>Faculty Advisor</u>
Megan Barrell	Dr. Thomas Hernández
	Counselor Education Department Phone #: 585-395-2258
Mbarrell@cal-mum.org	Thernandez@brockport.edu

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to allow my child to participate as a participant in this project. I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction.

Signature of Parent

Date

Student's name _____

Appendix B: Student Consent

STUDENT AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF [REDACTED] STUDENTS IN GRADES 6-8?

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Below you will find answers to some of the questions that you may have.

WHAT IS IT FOR?

- This survey is being done as part of a research project for Ms. Barrell an intern in the counseling office who is a Graduate student in the Counselor Education Department at The College at Brockport. The results of these surveys will help the counseling office have a better understanding of the needs of you and your classmates in middle school grades 6-8.

WHY ME?

- You are being asked to help with this survey because you are currently a student in 6th, 7th, or 8th grade at [REDACTED] Middle School.

WHAT WILL I HAVE TO DO?

- You and your fellow classmates will be asked to fill out a 25-question survey that will take around 10-15 minutes to complete. You will be handed this survey during your Physical Education class. You will complete the survey at home and return the **entire** packet to Ms. Barrell during your **next** Physical Education Class. Because your input is important, if you return the completed packet at the **next** Physical Education class, your name will be entered into a drawing to win a prize. There will be a small risk in answering these questions including the amount of time it will take to answer these questions, and some questions may make you feel uncomfortable. If at any time you feel this way you may refuse to answer that question or stop taking the survey completely.

DID MY PARENT/GUARDIAN SAY IT WAS OKAY?

- Before you complete the survey your parent or guardian should read the survey and sign the attached consent form giving you permission to take this survey. The permission slip will be put in a locked cabinet separate from your survey and both the survey and the permission slip will be destroyed (documents will be shredded) when the research is finished.

WHAT IF I WANT TO STOP? WILL I GET IN TROUBLE?

- Your participation in the survey is completely voluntary. If you choose to stop you will not get in any kind of trouble. Taking this survey will also have **no** positive or negative impact on any grades or activities at the school, and you will not put your name on the survey. The surveys will only be looked at as a group by grade level, not individually. You can also have any questions regarding the survey answered before or after completing it by seeing Ms. Barrell in the counseling office (Room 104).

By signing below, I am saying that I have read this form and have asked any questions that I may have. All of my questions have been answered so that I understand what I am being asked to do. By signing, I am saying that I am willing and would like to participate in this study. **Remember** – you may change your mind at any time and can choose not to participate even though your parent/guardian has given permission for you to participate.

Signature of Student

Date

❖ If you have any additional questions you may come see Ms. Barrell in Room 104 or you may also contact: Dr. Thomas Hernández in The College at Brockport Counselor Education Department at (585) 395-2258, or thernandez@brockport.edu.

Appendix C: Survey

[REDACTED] MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT SURVEY

I would like help with...	 A lot of help needed	 Some help needed	 Very little help needed	 No help needed
1. Feeling better about myself	1. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Getting along with others	2. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Improving my communication skills	3. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Learning how to cope with peer pressure	4. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Knowing when and how to get help from an adult	5. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Solving my problems	6. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Managing stress	7. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Improving my studying and test taking skills to improve my grades	8. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Getting extra help with school work	9. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Understanding how effort affects my grades	10. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Problems that get in the way of my success in school	11. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Setting academic goals for myself	12. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Learning how to work better in classroom groups	13. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Understanding how my interests and abilities can help me to reach my goals	14. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Developing hobbies and interests	15. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Finding after school clubs or activities that interest me	16. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. Seeing how school relates to work	17. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Motivation	18. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. Understanding Me	19. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Understanding my family	20. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. Making Friends	21. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. Sadness; (Death, Divorce, Change)	22. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. Anger and Frustration	23. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. Mean people	24. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. Understanding Drug and Alcohol use	25. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix D: Correlations