School Counselors Support Student Spirituality Through Developmental Assets, Character Education, and ASCA Competency Indicators.

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This article identifies the Search Institute’s Developmental Assets, character education, and the ASCA National Model’s Competency Indicators as education-based programs in which spirituality is accessed for children to enhance resiliency. The author presents school counselor interventions based on these three programs that mutually support spiritual with other developmental domains. He also identifies responsibilities of school counselors, professional organizations, district stakeholders, and counselor educators to address ethical and legal concerns.

Researchers have advocated for school counselors to assist young people in discovering their spirituality (Allen & Coy, 2004; Finn Maples, 2001; Ingersoll & Bauer, 2004; Lambie, Davis, & Miller, 2008; Rayburn, 2004; Sink, 2004). However, legal, political, and ethical obstacles deter school counselors from recognizing student spirituality (Lambie et al., 2008; MacDonald, 2004; Wolf, 2004). The Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets (SIDA; 2008), character education programs (CE), and the American School Counselor Association’s (ASCA) National Standards Competency Indicators (NSCI; 2005) represent three attempts to empower students to be successful in a complex world (Benson, 2004; Kessler & Fink, 2008; Walsh, Barrett, & DePaul, 2007). Spirituality, a core dimension of human life, both supports and is supported by the goals of these three programs (Crawford, O’Dougherty Wright, & Masten 2006; Galassi & Akos, 2007; Kessler & Fink, 2008; Thompson, 2000). Implementation of the SIDA, CE, and the NSCI often fosters spiritual development in children, and the outcomes of these programs can be strengthened by accessing spiritual resources in youths (Benson, 2004; Karcher, Holcomb, & Zembrano, 2008; Kessler & Fink, 2008).

Mental health and health problems, violence, family breakup, poverty, materialism, and social alienation have placed many children at risk for academic and personal failure (Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, & Lichty, 2009; Office of Applied Studies [OAS], 2008; Walsh et al., 2007; Williams, Rivera, Neighbours, & Reznik, 2007; Windham, Hooper, & Hudson, 2005). OAS (2008) reported that, among youths aged 12 through 17 years, 3.3 million (13.3%) received services in a clinical setting for an emotional problem in the previous year and 10% received mental health services in a school setting. Among youths, 33% reported being involved in a physical fight in the preceding 12 months and 17% carried a weapon in the preceding 30 days (Williams et al., 2007). As many as 80% of adolescents in the United States experience bullying in schools prior to graduating (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2009). In the face of these risks, the role of the school counselor has been changing to meet the developmental, performance, and safety needs of children (Galassi & Akos, 2004; Walsh et al., 2007).

The ASCA National Standards (2005) were written as guidelines for school counselors in the face of demands to prevent failure by developing a range of academic, career, personal, and social competencies (e.g., Galassi & Akos, 2007; Walsh et al., 2007). Many school counselors work in settings that use the SIDA, CE, and/or the NSCI. Affinity of spirituality with the values practiced in these three programs makes them a potential vehicle for school counselors to assist students who are searching for spirituality (Crawford et al., 2006; Sink, 2004). The purpose of this study is to help school counselors recognize the compatibility of spirituality with the SIDA, CE, and the NSCI. Among the benefits of each of these education-based programs is their capacity to tap spiritual resources within the child that strengthen the respective program’s impact on the child’s growth and well-being. The manifestation of spiritual and other values in these programs allows school counselor interventions to engage the child physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially, morally, and spiritually (MacDonald, 2004).

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Spirituality in Schools

Spirituality is the “animating life force, innate and unique to all persons…, moving the individual toward knowledge, love and meaning” (Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling [ASERVIC], 2005, p. 1). Whereas religion involves assent to a set of public beliefs shared by a group, spirituality is the individual’s search for meaning and one’s core values (ASERVIC, 2005).

Pargament (2007) views spirituality as the inevitable emergence of that which one discovers to be of ultimate worth. Finn-Maples (2001) reported that middle school children identified spirituality with having a positive attitude, connectedness, and a higher power. Discovery of one’s spirituality through identification of beliefs and core values is a part of holistic development (Benson, 2004; Crawford et al., 2006; Revell, 2008; Sink, 2004).

In spirituality, we find ways to understand and work through our fundamental human limitations to deal with those things that may be beyond our control, such as accidents, abuse, environmental disaster, and death (Pargament and Mahoney, 2005). Emmons, Cheung, and Tehrani (1998) discovered that spiritual strivings are more highly correlated with well-being than any other type of motivation. In the end, the desire to be strong and well comes from a place beyond reason—in the heart, or in the soul (Kessler and Fink, 2008). The values of spirituality and those of the SIDA, CE, and the NSCI are mutually inclusive of each other, with the life-generating energy of spirituality facilitating development of adaptive, coping, and resiliency skills (Crawford et al., 2006; Galassi & Akos, 2007; Kessler & Fink, 2008; Sink, 2004).

The American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2005) addresses the importance of counselors assisting terminally ill clients to meet their spiritual needs (A.9.a.) and the need for counselors to explore their own spiritual beliefs (Section C: Professional Responsibility). The ASCA Ethical Standards state, “Each person has the right to be respected, be treated with dignity and have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that advocates for and affirms all students from diverse populations including… religious/spiritual identity” (ASCA, 2010, Preamble, para. 3). Furthermore, school counselors should be trained in religious/spiritual identity as a form of diversity (E.2.c). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) 2009 Standards recommend studies that teach culturally supported behaviors promoting wellness and growth of the human spirit (Section II, G.2.e.). ASERVIC (2009) identifies 14 competencies for addressing spiritual and/or religious issues in counseling. The role of spirituality in school counseling is clarified by these counseling organizations and has been explored in its connections with the SIDA, CE, and the NSCI.

ORIGINS OF SEARCH INSTITUTE DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS (SIDA)

Developmental assets refer to internal and external resources available to youths that assist them in coping with threats that undermine their accomplishing developmental tasks. These assets play a major role in the child’s resilience in the face of risk (Masten & Reed, 2005). They were recognized in early-1970s empirical studies of children of schizophrenics who had a positive outcome despite having a parent who was mentally ill (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Key models of developmental assets have emerged in the past 20 years (Galassi & Akos, 2007; Henderson and Millstein, 1996). The Search Institute, a national nonsectarian organization whose mission is to “provide leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote healthy children” (The Search Institute, 2010, para. 2), expanded their model to 20 external and 20 internal developmental assets in 1997 (The Search Institute, 2008). Several versions of the SIDA exist that represent the differing needs of early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence.

SIDA and Spirituality

Researchers have attempted to construct crosswalks between developmental assets and spirituality. Four aspects of spirituality that promote resilience in children are: attachments with family, peers, mentors, and the divine; a sense of belonging through rituals, companionship, and prayer; moral teachings that facilitate development of integrity, compassion, and forgiveness; and personal growth that contributes to greater self-awareness, self-mastery, and capacity to refract trauma (Crawford et al., 2006). Protective factors identified in the Strengths-Based School Counseling Model are faith, hope, spirituality, and the belief that life has meaning (Galassi & Akos, 2007).

A number of the SIDA are equivalent to or mutually supportive with various spiritual constructs (Karcher, Holcomb, and Zembrano, 2008), as illustrated in Table 1’s comparison of SIDA with spiritual values discussed in the ASERVIC white paper. Table 1 provides examples, and is not an exhaustive list, of complementary relationships between spirituality and SIDA, CE, and NSCI. For example, integrity (Search Institute, 2008) is “firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values” (Merriam-Webster Online, 2010, para. 1). Integrity and fidelity to a value system are identified as aspects of spirituality in the ASERVIC white paper (2005). Striving for a positive view of one’s future (Search
Institute, 2008) reflects hope, which is a further dimension of spirituality (ASERVIC, 2005). Another SIDA, service to others (Search Institute, 2008), reflects the value of providing support to one’s community (ASERVIC, 2005). In educating students about these SIDA, school counselors utilize students’ innate cognitive, social, moral, and spiritual resources.

**ORIGINS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION (CE)**

CE has its roots in ancient Greece (Arthur, 2008). The capacity for moral reasoning was emphasized during the enlightenment period, adopted by Protestantism in America, and secularized in the public school system in the late 19th century (Arthur, 2008). In the 1980s, the public demanded that schools assume their traditional role of moral education (Pearson & Nicholson, 2000). The purpose of CE is to instill in children a sense of responsibility through the development of attitudes to foster personal and community wellness (Pearson & Nicholson, 2000). A number of CE models have been developed in the past 25 years (e.g., Lickona, 1996; Park & Peterson, 2008). One of the best known is the Josephson Institute’s (2010) Six Pillars of Character: caring, respect, responsibility, honesty, trustworthiness, and citizenship.

**CE and Spirituality**

Researchers have recognized the affinity of spirituality with CE. Thompson (2000) stated that ethics, addressing such qualities as honesty, beneficence, justice, and respect, is a matter of the spirit. Connecting deeply to oneself and to others fosters respect and empathy, giving rise to compassion, communion, and strength of character (Kessler & Fink, 2008). Spirituality as the pursuit of meaning, purpose, connectedness, and self-transcendence is among the most decisive human activities, resulting in character traits such as altruism, forgiveness, civic engagement, temperament, and social justice (Benson, 2004). Revell (2008) discovered that public school teachers felt that, in a materialistic society, children needed spiritual values such as inner strength, self-esteem, and integrity. Individual identity development, often a manifestation of spiritual development in adolescence, frequently results in civic commitment (Lerner, Bretano, Dowling, & Anderson, 2002).

Qualities sought through CE programs often reflect values identified as spiritual in nature. For example, the capacity to be caring (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2010) is similar to compassion (see Table 1). Furthermore, Josephson recommended that students be trained in responsibility. The spiritual value of wholeness (ASERVIC, 2005) is “having all the proper parts or components in place” (Merriam-Webster Online, 2010, para. 2); individuals are able to fulfill their responsibilities when they are connected to their own needs and to the needs of others. Trustworthiness, another of Josephson’s traits, is conducting oneself consistently in ethical ways. Spirituality involves the courage to look within, to trust the self and others, and to thereby earn their trust (ASERVIC, 2005).

**ORIGINS OF NATIONAL STANDARDS COMPETENCY INDICATORS (NSCI)**

The onset of education reform represented by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Public Law 107–110) and the lofty challenges for students to be successful in school brought about the need for school counseling to adapt its practice (The Education Trust, 2009; Sandhu, 2001; Sink, 2004; Walsh et al., 2007). ASCA developed a comprehensive blueprint of how school counseling services should be organized to effectively meet the emerging needs of students. The 2005 ASCA National Model states that school counselors “help all students in the areas of academic achievement, personal/social development, and career planning, ensuring that today’s students become the productive, well-adjusted adults of tomorrow” (ASCA, 2008, para. 1). School counselors prepare students for life’s challenges through interventions that are aimed at addressing the nine National Standards, which are further broken out to Competencies and NSCI (ASCA, 2005; 2004).

**NSCI and Spirituality**

Sink (2004) suggested that the systemic-ecological and developmental psychology underpinnings of the ASCA Comprehensive School Counseling Program model necessitated realization of spirituality as an area needing attention. Windham et al. (2005) recommended that school counseling programs responsible for working with children drawn to violence should conduct comprehensive assessments of what is missing in the child’s life, such as hope or purpose. Several of the 122 NSCI (ASCA, 2005) reflect spiritual values. Identifying one’s values, attitudes, and beliefs (PS:A1.2) matches the creation of a value system articulated in the white paper (ASERVIC, 2005; see Table 1). Students’ learning of techniques for managing stress and conflict (PS:C1.10) is comparable to wellness (ASERVIC). Learning how to make and keep friends (PS:A2.8) mirrors the connectedness with others discussed by ASERVIC. Other NSCI that seem to entail spiritual qualities (but are not included in Table 1) are seeking support from faculty, family, and peers (A:B1.4), which compares whereas religion involves assent to a set of public beliefs shared by a group, spirituality is the individual’s search for meaning and one’s core values.
Table 1. Shared Values among the SIDA, CE, the NSCI, and the ASERVIC Spirituality White Paper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Assets</th>
<th>Six Pillars of Character</th>
<th>Competency Indicators</th>
<th>White Paper on Spirituality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Acceptance (PS:A2.3)</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Identify values (PS:A1.2)</td>
<td>Value system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive view of future</td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify goals (PS:B1.9)</td>
<td>Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance skills</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Manage stress (PS:C1.10)</td>
<td>Wellness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship skills</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Make friends (PS:A2.8)</td>
<td>Connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural competence</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Diversity (PS:A2.4)</td>
<td>Value of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of purpose</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Work (C:C1.7)</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to others</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Community (A:C1.5)</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility (PS:A2.1)</td>
<td>Wholeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>Values, attitudes, beliefs (PS: A1.2)</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

with connectedness (ASERVIC); developing coping skills for managing life events (PS:C1.11), which relates to wellness (ASERVIC); and striking a balance between work and leisure time (C:A1.10) and viewing work as a satisfying means of personal expression (C:C1.7), which align with creative force and search for meaning distinguished in the ASERVIC white paper.

ETHICAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

School counselors may be receptive to using spiritual values in their work, but are often hesitant (Lambie et al., 2008) due to the ethical responsibility to not impose one's values on students (ACA, 2005, A.4.b; ASCA, 2010, E.2.a.). Counselors may perceive that not addressing spirituality at all is safer than taking a risk of breaking these professional codes (Lambie et al.). In a related matter, the need to maintain the separation of church and state as required by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution makes practitioners tentative about using spiritual values in the school setting (MacDonald, 2004; Wolf, 2004). On the other hand, spirituality as a dimension of diversity that counselors support is addressed in both the ACA Code of Ethics (ACA, A.9.a and E.8.) and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, Preamble para. 3, E.2.c.). These official policy statements make it normative that school counselors recognize client spirituality as an area potentially needing attention. Additionally, recognition of the differences between spirituality and religion (Allen & Coy, 2004; ASERVIC 2005, 2009; Morrison et al., 2009) have encouraged the perception among counselors that spirituality is a highly personal aspect of human life that the counselor should respect. The SIDA, CE, and the NSCI are programs adopted in the education field, wherein children are able to benefit from spiritual along with moral, social, and cognitive growth. The non-coercive invitation for youths to choose among values in these programs supports ethical practice and the First Amendment's separation of church and state.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Interventions intended to help children grow in any one of the life domains will be affected by recognition of developmental levels (Sink, 2004). Children develop spiritually in ways that reflect their cognitive, social, and moral development (Benson, 2004). Piaget (1952) suggested four cognitive stages of development in childhood: sensorimotor (0-2 years), in which the child begins to remember familiar objects and to have a sense of agency; the preoperational stage (3-6 years) of egocentric tendencies accompanied by the ability to focus on only one situation at a time; the concrete operational stage (6-12 years) characterized by recognition of connections between parts of the physical world and expansion of the literal sense of language; and the final stage of formal operations (12 years and older), wherein the capacity for abstract thinking allows the child to evaluate a situation from multiple perspectives.

A psychosocial theory in which psychological and social aspects of development can be viewed as occurring concurrently with cognitive growth was conceptualized by Erikson (1968). Five of the eight
stages take place between birth and 18 years, during which each succeeding stage emerges following resolution of the conflict of the previous stage. The child learns to trust (0-1 year), to move toward autonomy (1-2 years), and to take initiative interacting with the environment (2-6 years). As the child matures, he or she becomes capable of being industrious in task completion (9-12 years) and takes on an individual identity (13-18 years). Gilligan (1993), building upon Kohlberg's theory, offered a model of moral development that took into account differences in child rearing practices with girls and boys. The first stage is self-centered interest, the second a conventional morality wherein one conforms to social norms of always placing the other's needs first, and the third a post-conventional stage that recognizes the needs of both the self and the other in relationship.

Researchers have proposed several models of spiritual development. Murgatroyd (2003) proposed a link between Erikson’s developmental tasks and Buddhist spiritual needs. In infancy, when one is learning to trust, the child needs connectedness with others; in elementary and middle school years, he or she needs to experience a sense of belonging and acceptance; and in high school, the teen searches for personal truth. A model of faith development was proposed by James Fowler (1991), in which children ages 3 through 7 have an absolute sense of good and evil, and reward and punishment are based on following the rules of the organization, e.g., a church. From age 7 through puberty, the child internalizes mythical stories that are taken literally. A cosmic ruler is viewed as ruling fairly and demanding moral behavior. During adolescence, the youth begins to see spirituality as relational but tends to adhere to the spiritual organization’s rules so as to obtain the blessings of parents and leaders. In Fowler’s model, adults embark on a search for meaning and may discover their own value system and achieve universal compassion. Thus, in considering how the SIDA, CA, and NSCI will facilitate spiritual as well as moral, cognitive, and social development, acknowledgement of the need for interventions that accommodate different developmental levels is important.

BUILDING DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS, CHARACTER, COMPETENCIES, AND SPIRITUALITY IN SCHOOLS

School counselors working in settings that use the SIDA, CE, and/or NSCI are likely to encounter spiritual values in their students and in themselves due to spirituality’s interface with rational and moral principles infused in these programs (Sink, 2004; Thompson, 2000). The following examples of school counselor program activities and implementation strategies are based on the illustrative relationships of spiritual values with those of the SIDA, Six Pillars, and NSCI (see Table 1).

Caring, Acceptance, and Compassion

As change agents, school counselors can assist schools to build learning communities characterized by caring (Search Institute, 2008; Josephson Institute, 2010), acceptance (ASCA, 2005), and compassion (ASERVIC, 2005). Schools can be places where relationship bonds for students are built upon belief in a shared vision of acceptance (Sandhu, Arora, & Sandhu, 2001). A plan for developing leadership in youths (“A recipe,” 2009) starts with building confidence through age appropriate activities such as cooperative play in elementary grades, continues with role plays in middle school years, and culminates with high school students teaching younger students and peer counseling. Rayburn (2004) recommends the use of vignettes, which can be adapted to children of different ages, to teach skills in sensitivity and acceptance. The vignette can be read to younger children with a subsequent opportunity for related art work or singing. Middle school children can take turns reading and miming the vignette, ending with discussion about the hurt that the characters experienced. High school students, who are usually capable of abstract thinking, can discuss the meaning of the vignette in a group and offer suggestions on how one could reach out to comfort the injured individual. Kessler and Fink (2008) use a model of relationship building in which teens listen without responding to a peer “bear witness” about a difficult event. Silence ensues between stories, allowing participants to take in what they have heard. The model includes a rite of passage for teens, recognizing their emerging capacity to care about and “be with” the other in his or her loss. In the concrete and early formal operational stages of the middle school grades, students watching a movie about someone who experiences a tragedy write an essay about what the victim felt, how they would feel if they were in the victim’s situation, and what they would want to offer a friend who experienced such a tragedy. Helping the youth to think about the experience of another person challenges them to move toward Gilligan’s second stage of moral development, focus on the other person. Thinking about what to offer a friend and sharing one’s essay with peers is consistent with the need for confidence to complete a challenging task and the search for self-identity realized in Erikson's psychosocial theory. In the preoperational stage of cognitive development (2-6 years) when the child is beginning to take initiative in tasks, children could read a story or listen to a song about a child who experienced a loss. The
counselor or teacher working with the children helps them to identify feelings such as sadness and to think of ways to help the victim feel better.

Integrity, Fairness, and Developing a Value System

Integrity, one of the 40 SIDA (Search Institute, 2008), is defined as “firm adherence to a code of moral values” (Merriam-Webster Online, 2010, para. 1). Fairness, one of the Six Pillars of CE (Josephson Institute, 2010), requires justice (Merriam-Webster Online, para. 1) and integrity in one’s dealings. The NSCI (ASCA, 2005) include identification of values, and assuming ownership of a value system is offered as an aspect of spirituality in the ASERVIC white paper (2005). The school setting can provide assistance to children and youths in the development of a value system. Pearson and Nicholson (2000) propose that middle school youths read stories and participate in classroom discussion of heroic persons whose self-discipline and perseverance yield integrity of character. Stone and Dyal (1997) advocate that entrepreneurs and artists whose accomplishments came through diligence be honored as role models (e.g., through living museums for middle school children). School counselors can assist educators, students, families, and communities to build a shared school vision in which fairness, integrity, and other values are pursued in unison. The Rite of Passage Experience (ROPE) is a program that focuses on transition from elementary to middle school through play characterized by emerging individuation, transformation and transcendence, and culminating in commitment to one’s values through community service in high school (Blumenkrantz & Hong, 2008). Children in the elementary years can pretend to be a hero figure known for fairness, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and middle school youths can use a journal to explore their feelings about someone who was treated unfairly and how justice could be created. Kneezel and Emmons (2006) emphasize the importance of developing the capacity for gratitude in the formation of a mature value system. Thankfulness ceremonies can be created at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Positive View of the Future, Identifying Goals, and Hope

The energy, motivation, and inspiration that derive from having a future orientation enhance wellness and allay the harmful effects of stress and despair. Identification of goals (ASCA, 2005) cultivates a positive view of the future (SIDA, 2008). The hope (ASERVIC, 2005) engendered by anticipation of the future motivates one to be responsible for following through on commitments to one’s goals. Hope empowers students to find the means to achieve a personal, academic, or career goal (Snyder, Feldman, Shorey, and Rand, 2002). Crawford et al. (2006) view perseverance in accomplishing one’s goals as enhancing hope, leading to greater physical and mental health. For many students, hope includes an expectation of life after death (Kneezel & Emmons, 2006). Students experiencing grief may wish to draw strength from their belief in immortality following the death of a loved one. Young children might be provided the opportunity to draw pictures of happy times that the child shared with the loved one. In the middle grades, children can be aided in researching the Internet about belief in an afterlife by different spiritual groups. Older adolescents may wish to participate in a grief group with a school counselor. Hope therapy involves the school counselor aiding youths to make the often difficult choices about school, social, college, and career goals faced throughout childhood and adolescence (Galassi & Akos, 2007).

Resistance Skills, Respect, Managing Stress, and Wellness

Resistance skills (Search Institute, 2008), respect (Josephson Institute, 2010), managing stress (ASCA, 2005), and wellness (ASERVIC, 2005) each address the need for children to achieve mental and physical health by avoiding self-damaging actions, learning to cope with difficult life events, and respecting oneself by being assertive in the face of danger (Windham et al., 2005). Young children can be offered a daily rest time listening to soothing music with their class for 10 minutes. Quiet time and sacred space should be created in middle and high schools as havens that allow children to calm themselves, manage stress, meditate, or pray (Crawford et al., 2006; Hudd, 2005). Middle school youths can role play assertiveness skills in both victim and perpetrator roles. Some children may wish to participate in purification rites to manage stress and create healing following a trauma (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). The capacity of young people to provide leadership in resisting violence has been used in the Peacemakers K-12 program (Galassi & Akos, 2007). High school students should have an opportunity to make presentations to younger students about constructive ways to disagree. The inherent strengths and successes of children can be celebrated in the classroom and in school assemblies in developmentally appropriate ways. Strengths-Based School Counseling (Galassi & Akos, 2007) is constructed on theories of wellness, hope therapy, and positive psychology. Use of this model has the potential to empower youths to achieve wellness.
Friendship Skills, Respect, and Connectedness
Fostering respect (Josephson Institute, 2010) for other individuals and groups allows the child to become capable of developing and maintaining friendships (Search Institute, 2008; ASCA, 2005). Connectedness (ASERVIC, 2005) with others and a sense of belonging are essential to feeling safe and whole in the world. Individuals have the potential to become connected within themselves, with their fellow humans, with nature, and with their higher power. Kessler & Fink (2008) see play, including sports, as an opportunity for children to develop friendships and to do team building. Learning activities in school often provide opportunities to connect with a friend (Sink & Richmond, 2004). According to Sink and Rubel (2001), youths are capable of participating in the transformation of, and are in need of belonging to, school communities permeated with connectedness. School counselors are in a strategic position to assess families in need of stronger connections with each other and to intervene to strengthen parenting and family skills (Kumpfer, Alvarado, & Whiteside, 2003). Adult mentors can connect with young children and peer tutors with other middle school students to create a sense of belonging (Masten & Reed, 2005; Taylor & Karcher, 2009). Coloring and music for special seasons and adults telling stories create a feeling of belonging for young children. Quiet places in school, nature videos, and camp experiences are occasions for middle school children to connect with themselves, each other, and the universe (Emmett, 2008). Festivals, such as Fourth of July celebrations, and rituals, such as the pledge of allegiance, strengthen a common identity for children of all ages. Crawford et al. (2006) discovered that spirituality draws youths to personal goals that transcend the mundane, inspiring forgiveness in friendships and other relationships that have been ruptured. School counselors can provide training for teens about emotional hurt and forgiveness in health classes or small groups. Jennings (2008) suggests that teaching teens to meditate and contemplate creates awareness of thoughts and feelings, thereby laying the groundwork to connect within the self and with others.

Cultural Competence, Respect, Diversity, and Value of Others
Among the SIDA (2008), cultural competence is the capacity to respect (Josephson Institute, 2010) the beliefs and practices of those from diverse (ASCA, 2005) racial and ethnic backgrounds, genders, and sexual orientations. It is the inherent value of each person (ASERVIC, 2005) that draws us to one another in relationship and inclines us to transcend (ASERVIC, 2005) our own world views. MacDonald (2004) sees spirituality as a resource to school counselors for helping students to respect their own and the other’s diversity insofar as each person’s spirituality is a unique expression of the interaction of one’s culture and individuality. In consultation with teachers, families, and elementary students, school counselors can support cultural events that provide an opportunity for students to learn about each other’s heritages. Masten and Reed (2005) recommend that schools support cultural adaptive rituals, such as ethnic dance, as a means to enhance resilience in young people in the middle grades. Spiritual values of connectedness among all human beings, discovery of that which is sacred in each individual and group, and learning about different spiritual traditions can be fostered by teens participating in culturally-based community events.

Purpose, Work, Meaning, and Citizenship
Seeking one’s sense of purpose (Search Institute, 2008) can be pursued in various ways in the school setting. Small group dialogue about discovering one’s purpose in life, career exploration, reading a poem, listening to a song, or connecting with a friend (Sink & Richmond, 2004) are avenues for teens to discover meaning (ASERVIC, 2005). Students seek to make an impact on the world through work (ASCA, 2005), as the world helps them to discover their purpose and talents as citizens (Josephson Institute, 2010). For high school students, Kessler and Fink (2008) recommend anonymous writing of personal questions about loss, including a search for answers about the purpose of suffering and the existence of God. The questions can lead to deep discussion with peers on these topics. Age appropriate music, art, dance, body movement, meditation, prayer, and community service are activities that school counselors can use as avenues for young people to discover meaning (Kessler & Fink; Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). Pargament and Mahoney suggest that middle school children write in a journal about experiences and objects that have a sacred meaning for them, such as nature, family, love, and friendship. Elementary students can be invited to bring objects from home that are special to them, such as a picture of a family pet or a CD with a favorite song.

Service to Others, Citizenship, and Community
Among the four SIDA external assets (Search Institute, 2008) that address teen empowerment is service to others. One of the Six Pillars of CE, citizenship, is sharing one’s talents with school, community, and country (Josephson Institute, 2010). Among the NSCI (ASCA, 2005), school success is reflected in the transition of student to community member. The ASERVIC white paper (2005) refers to the ramifications of pursuing spirituality as one is
Quiet time and sacred space should be created in middle and high schools as havens that allow children to calm themselves, manage stress, meditate, or pray.

Drawn to share one’s talents in their natural communities, developmental models of community service view it as the capstone of efforts to prepare children for adulthood (Blumentkrantz & Hong, 2008; “A recipe,” 2009). Young children can be invited to participate in keeping the school environment clean by not littering and can do chores at home. Middle school youths are able to participate in supervised clean-up activities and to organize simulated political elections. Emmett (2008) recognizes a four-step movement in adolescent spiritual development from noticing (breathing, posture, and silence), to inquiring (meditation and reflection), to interpretation (making sense), to community action (involvement, contribution). Kessler and Fink (2008), in their PassageWays model, see the child moving from adoption of foundational values of respect, safety, and honesty through play and cooperative activities (elementary years), to feeling management and team building (middle school years), to a rite of passage where the teen assumes responsibility through integrity and service to others. Adolescents are able to make school presentations on topics of morality, interest, or safety, or plan a community service project (“A recipe,” 2009). Other teens may need help exploring how to join the Peace Corps or discovering the needs of their local community or church (Hudd, 2005; Kerestes & Youngiss, 2003). Teens may be interested in tutoring children in elementary grades or serving as a big sister or big brother (Masten & Reed, 2005). High school students who are disposed toward political involvement might participate in volunteer work for political parties (Donnelly, Matsuba, Hart, & Atkin, 2006).

A decade ago, researchers learned that 25% of high school seniors participate in regular community service and an additional 43% in occasional service. Many of these youths had spiritual motivations for their work (Youngiss, McLeLlan, & Yates, 1999). It behooves school counselors and other caring adults to support young people in these positive tendencies toward self-discovery and betterment of their world through community service.

Responsibility and Wholeness

The writer groups of SIDA, the Six Pillars, and NSCI each proposed that children need to learn responsibility. The ASERVIC writers offered that spiritual development is achieving wholeness. One is able to assume responsibility proportionate to having integrated a broad spectrum of one’s own needs with those of others. The Rite of Passage Experience (ROPE) program views children as having an expanding sense of their world, including how they can be helpful (Blumenkrantz & Hong, 2008). Young children are trained to be responsible to eat in socially appropriate ways and to get along with peers. Following the housekeeping rules of their classroom, adhering to the rules on the school bus, and practicing good hygiene allow them to grow physically, mentally, and socially, thereby preparing them for greater responsibilities. Middle school children are capable of participating in creation of the rules for their classroom. They can participate in community clean-up projects, utilizing their emerging physical, cognitive, and social skills to accomplish the task. The expanding moral and spiritual awareness of teens makes community service responsibilities a good fit.

Honesty, Trustworthiness, Beliefs, and Trust

A child’s budding ability to be honest (Search Institute, 2008) about his or her actions enhances others’ perceiving the child as trustworthy (Josephson Institute, 2010). Development of a belief system (ASCA, 2005) can proceed from honesty. An emerging trust (ASERVIC, 2005) directed toward self, those who have cared deeply for the child, and life is supported by the individual’s movement toward honesty, fairness, respect, and other values. Teachers, aides, and parents sharing special time with young children telling stories or sharing their experiences serve as role models of genuineness (Masten & Reed, 2005) and elicit trust. Children in the middle grades can read novels and write reports about heroic figures who have risked themselves for their beliefs. Youths in high school might be invited to participate in psychoeducational groups about relationships and trust.

Conclusion

School counseling researchers (e.g., Sink, 2004; Lambie et al., 2008), ethical codes (ACA, 2005; ASCA, 2010), and professional standards (CACREP, 2009) recommend the importance of school counselors using spirituality as a resource for young people. Many school counselors remain hesitant to acknowledge or use student spirituality. The common identification of spirituality with religion (ASERVIC, 2005) makes it important that school boards, administrators, parents, community representatives, and teachers join school counselors in discussion of the nature of spirituality, its distinctiveness from religion, and its potential to empower children for health and well-being (Lambie et al., 2008; Lugg & Robinson, 2009). Integrating spiritual goals in school and district mission statements empowers the school community to focus on the spiritual domain in child development. Stakeholders of school districts that use the SIDA, character education, or the NSCI should be trained to understand the mutual support that exists between the values of these respective education programs and spiritual values.
School counselors can serve as consultants to stakeholders and, in turn, look for their support in the implementation of the spiritual domain. The ACA (2005) and ASCA (2010) ethical codes and the CACREP (2009) Standards clearly address the need for school counselors to understand, be on the lookout for, and facilitate the use of spirituality for students seeking spiritual expression. Professional training in the use of spirituality through counselor education programs (Briggs & Rayle, 2005; Young et al., 2002) empowers school counselors to discover their own spirituality as it applies to their work with students. Recognizing the role of spirituality in their own lives, its place in holistic development, and the purposes and practices of the SIDA, CE, and the NSCI that integrate well with spirituality, school counselors are in a special position to assist young people to make their own choices about what form of spirituality to seek.

Limitations

The author did not conduct an exhaustive search of education programs that may manifest spiritual values. It is possible, and even likely, that school counselors may discover other established counseling or education interventions that support or are supported by spirituality. The sensitivity of counseling ethical codes prohibiting imposition of values on students and the separation of church and state clause applies to their work with students. Recognizing the role of spirituality in their own lives, its place in holistic development, and the purposes and practices of the SIDA, CE, and the NSCI that integrate well with spirituality, school counselors are in a special position to assist young people to make their own choices about what form of spirituality to seek.

Future Research

Research on school counselors’ perceptions of spirituality, perceived barriers to implementation, and recommendations for ways to include spirituality in their work would create insight into new ways to integrate spirituality in school settings. Outcome research exploring the impact of SIDA, CE, and/or NSCI interventions on cognitive, social, moral, and spiritual growth would assess the integration of these domains. Dialogue among experts in the SIDA, CE, and the NSCI with those in the field of spirituality can mutually support the effectiveness of each of these rich education resources.

REFERENCES


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