

OUTSIDE AND INSIDE THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR JOB SEARCH

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Outside: Before the Interview

A. Some Random Thoughts

1. For everything you do in your internships, practicum's and courses ask yourself- What effect will this have upon my job interviews and experience as a school counselor? How will this help me become a good school counselor? What can I do or learn in my internships that could distinguish me from other candidates?
 2. Formulate your internship experiences around activities that offer you the opportunity to learn about and have experience with (and therefore place on your resume):
 - being a strong student advocate
 - having great organizational skills
 - the various aspects of a developmental guidance program (learning to work, learning to learn, learning to live)
 - how to deal with a variety of counseling tasks in a fast-paced school day
 - student scheduling and graduation requirements, college and career counseling, the special education process, crisis intervention and academic improvement counseling.
 1. Your internship should offer you appropriate experiences so that you can help students in all aspects of counseling (learning to work, learning to live, learning to learn) and so that you can speak concretely and specifically about "how you have handled" various counseling situations.
 2. Working on special projects while an intern could make you a more appealing interview/job candidate. Think about (with your supervisor) what prospective guidance directors might look for (e.g. someone who has had experience doing a guidance or scholarship bulletin or has planned a career fair or college fair or has created a group guidance program for a special population).
- B. Your Resume**
1. A clearly written resume is one where the reader doesn't have to "guess" about who you are or what you've done.
 - education information should include years enrolled and the month and year you received the degree
 - your certification information should be prominently placed
 - work/internship experience should clearly indicate the place, the dates of service as well as highlighting the important areas of counseling in which you have developed some competence.

2. Place on the resume only items that you feel comfortable speaking about because you have had experience dealing with that particular aspect of guidance or counseling. Since you can be questioned about anything on your resume, it's important not to "pad it" with items you might find it difficult to speak about because you had limited experience in that area. On the other hand, don't be afraid to tell about all the wonderful things you have done and all the counseling situations with which you are familiar.
3. Note on your resume any special projects or special things you may have done apart from your internship (bilingual studies, computer familiarity, college tours, etc.).
4. Review the words listed on the next page for use on your resume. As you list the activities you accomplished, use the same verb tense (e.g. presented a workshop on anger management, created a college handbook, developed a system for tracking graduation requirements, etc.). Also instead of saying "Familiarity with the Expan College Selection System" saying "used the Expan as a resource in assisting students to select colleges" or "acquired proficiency in using Expan as a resource in assisting students to select colleges."

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5. The elements of a good resume for school counselors-to-be are:
 - A heading with your name, address, home phone & work phone
 - Objective
 - Education
 - Certification
 - Counseling experience (listed from most recent to earliest experience)
 - Related work experience
 - Professional memberships/affiliations
 - Special skills (computer, foreign language, etc.)
 - Honors and awards
 - Extracurricular interests
 - References (separate sheet)

Sample resume is attached as well as an article that describes a format for your cover letter.

INSIDE: The Job Interview

BEFORE

1. Prepare for the interview by reviewing your cover letter and resume anticipating questions that might be asked based upon these documents.
2. Usually one of the first questions asked is something like "Tell us something about yourself and your work as a counselor" or "We have read your resume. Give "life" to it and tell us about your activities." So, be prepared to highlight the areas of guidance with which you've become proficient.
3. Think about students you've worked with. Have their "stories" firmly planted in your head, ready to go as example of cases you've handled.
4. Bring multiple copies of your work with you. If possible, find out ahead of time how many people will be on the interviewing committee. Bring sufficient extra copies of your resume, your certification, letters of reference, projects that you created in your internship.
5. Use all of the computer technology at your disposal to present your work (e.g. guidance bulletin, or handbook you created or college/career fair program) making it look very professional and appealing.
6. If you are unable to make multiple copies of projects to distribute, at least bring one copy that you can leave with the interviewing committee.
7. You will most probably be asked before the actual interview (while you are waiting) to complete a school district job application and a writing sample (cf attached writing sample that we've used at O'Connell High School).

DURING

1. Beyond asking about items on your resume, I've used the following questions at various times in interviewing counselors-to-be:
 - Tell us about some recent individual counseling situations that you've had with students.

- Tell us about some recent group counseling situations.
- If I had observed you how would I know that you're the right person for us to hire?
- What do you wish were on your resume that's not already there?
- What is the most appealing aspect of counseling to you?
- What is the least appealing aspect of counseling to you?
- Tell us about any special projects that you've done.
- What have you done in the area of career counseling?
- What are your plans for increasing your familiarity with various colleges over the next three years?
- Of all the areas that are handled by a high school counselor which is the area that you feel strongest in?
- In which area do you think you need the greatest improvement? (e.g. College, career crisis intervention, special education services, financial aid, student scheduling. academic improvement).
- What is your plan for improvement in this area?
- Tell us in general how you would work with a student who is a junior or a senior and needs to make a tentative career choice.
- How would you work with a student who has been sent to you by his teacher who just told him that he should see you because he'll never pass the course and he should drop it?
- How would you deal with a student who is cutting classes excessively?
- Can you give us some examples of where you have displayed initiative as a counselor?
- What are your views on confidentiality? What sort of information do you consider confidential? To the student? To the faculty? To the parents? To prospective employers? To the college admissions office?

- How would you deal with student/teacher personality conflicts?
- What is your opinion of individual student interviews? How often do you feel they are necessary?
- What is your opinion of testing? Which tests do you consider necessary instruments in counseling? Which have you used? How were they helpful to you? Did you find any weaknesses in the tests?
- How would you handle serious personal problems revealed to you through counseling? i.e. drugs, alcohol, sexual identity.
- Have you used referrals? Which ones have you used? Were the referrals successful?
- What methods would you use to help a student make the decision regarding higher education, vocational training or joining the work force? How would you involve the parents in this decision?
- What extra curricular activities do you expect to follow or be involved in?
- Where do you place your loyalty? Student, teacher, administration.
- When, if at any time, should a counselor see a student during class time?
- What are you feeling about group counseling as compared to individual counseling?
- How do you see group work being fit into the day?
- How do you finish all your work within the day?
- What do you do with a student who stops you on the way to lunch or comes in without an appointment?
- How do you feel about being on time for work, appointments, etc.?
- How do you foster a good working relationship with students, staff, counselors and secretaries?
- What would you do if a student wished to have a particular teacher or change a teacher?
- What role would you play in modifying poor student behavior?

- What would you do if a teacher refused to accept a student back in class?
- How do you view standardized test scores?
- Which referral agencies are you familiar with?
- Do you have any computer training?
- In your opinion, how many times should a counselor see every student a year?
- How would you deal with a parent who comes in to see you without an appointment?
- If you can't make a parental contact during the day, what procedure would you follow?
- What kind of records do you keep of your counseling sessions?
- What training and/or experience do you have in Special Education?
- What function do you see the counselor to have in a Career Education Program?
- What resources are you familiar with in regard to a Career Education Program?
- What new programs have you initiated?
- What qualities do you possess that are important for this position?
- What theory of counseling do you think is most appropriate to the school setting? Why?
- How would you deal with an unmotivated student (to raise their expectations)?
- How would you resolve a conflict between a student and a teacher?
- What are your thoughts on group work or group counseling? What kinds of groups are you prepared to handle? How would you handle confidentiality?
- How would you work with a student whose parents come in and tells you the kid is having problems but don't tell him I told you?

- How would you go about identifying students who are at risk?
- What have you read recently in education or counseling?
- How do you feel about spending extra time with students before and after school?
- What are your thoughts on encouraging parental involvement in the counseling process?
- What steps would you take to help a student who is having problems attending school?
- What steps would you take to help a student who is experiencing academic difficulties?
- If you suspected child abuse towards one of your students, what would you do?
- Why do you want to be a counselor?
- What do you see yourself doing 5 years from now?
- What can you provide that someone else cannot?
- What are your strengths or weaknesses?
- Are you creative? Give an example.
- Are you ambitious? Give an example.
- How would you go about establishing a working relationship with counselors and
- faculty?
- How would you deal with an uncooperative staff member?
- What are your ideas on Suicide Prevention?
- Why are you leaving your present position?
- What are your present duties?
- What experience do you have in group counseling?

- What evidence could you provide of your commitment?
- What have you done to keep abreast of current practices in counseling & psychology?
- How do you know when to refer a student to another professional?
- What do you bring to this position that is unique?
- Describe some guidance activities you've used.
- What has been your most rewarding experience?
- Describe your previous experience. How will it help you in this position?

INTERVIEWING FOR A SCHOOL COUNSELOR POSITION

Questions we always ask:

Why did you choose counseling as a career?

Tell us what you know about Division Avenue High School?

What was the name of the student you had the greatest impact on during your internship?
Tell us a little about the situation.

During the school year there are some busy times and some slow times. What types of things would you do during the slow times?

What experience have you had with the college admissions process? If a student were planning on applying to "inappropriate" schools, what would you tell him?

What's the name of the most recent book you read? Tell us why you did, or did not, like it?

One of the best questions you can ask:

For this particular position, can you describe the type of person you are looking for? Listen to the answer and then explain how YOU fit the description!

Don'ts that some candidates did:

Don't bring a resume printed on blue paper with big white daisies.

Don't wear orange or hot pink outfits.

Don't pretend to know the district/school and describe it inaccurately.

Don't express any personal opinions.

Don't lose control of your emotions.

Don't ignore the instructions of the interviewer.

Don't bring religion into the interview, unless you're interviewing at a religious school.

Don't be perfect.

Don't go in with the attitude that this is the only job available and you must have it.

Don't behave as if you already have it.