THE KENYA SECONDARY SCHOOLS HEADS ASSOCIATION

IMPROVED GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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CARING FOR THE EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Geoffrey Wango

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Abstract

Schools must be learner friendly and the child’s needs must take centre stage. Notwithstanding some differences among schools, the school system should take cognisance of the requirements of the child. The learner-centred model encompasses guidance and counselling, teaching, coaching and mentoring. This includes the manner in which teachers interact with children, improved learning experiences, sensitivity and responsiveness. This involves changing the overall culture of the classroom and school to include caring for the emotional needs of children as members of the school community.

Identifying the emotional needs of the child

It is easy for schools to identify the physical needs of the child: teacher, book, pen, desk, classroom, playing ground, nutritious food, sanitation and school uniform. However, a child's emotional needs, including the mental needs are not as obvious. Yet the emotional needs allow psychological well being also aligned to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs including physiological and psychological requirements. It is also the emotional well being that will enable the child to effectively develop and learn in school. Identifying and assisting children early in their emotional and mental health as well as designing various interventions designed to meet the unique needs of children is a growing concern (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Baker, 2006; Birch & Ladd, 1998: Nastasi, Moore & Varjas, 2004; Wilson & Ryan, 2005). Schools must be learner friendly and the child’s needs (physical, emotional, social, physiological, and cognitive) must take centre stage. This paper takes cognisance that there are certain differences among schools. Nonetheless, the school system should take cognisance of the needs of the child. The learner-centred friendly school model encompasses guidance and counselling, teaching, coaching and mentoring. This includes the manner in which teachers interact with children, improved learning experiences, sensitivity and responsiveness. This involves changing the overall culture of the classroom and school to include caring for the emotional needs of members of the child.
An emotion is a state of feeling. It results in physical and psychological effects that influence our behaviour and actions. This is because emotions are closely linked to arousal of the nervous system to experience and express feelings such as happiness, anger, sadness, boredom, frustration or disappointment. Each human being has a different personality and character. The link between emotions and mood is very complicated and there are unsurpassable differences because our emotions affect our temperament and mood. In everyday language, there is no clear distinction between emotion and mood though in psychology they are distinctive terms. This is because an emotion is normally quite short-lived, though often intense. In addition, emotions are likely to have a definite and identifiable cause. This is why it is possible to identify the reason why someone is happy or sad, frustrated or disappointed. In addition, our reactions and several decisions are often based on our emotions, that is, happy, angry or sad, frustrated or bored. Mood, on the other hand, is usually much milder than an emotion, but longer-lasting. Arguably, it is sometimes difficult to identify the specific cause of a mood. Also, some people are over-zealous and hence their emotions overwhelm them tilting the scales of what may be regarded as reasonable. Children and young people in particular can plunge whole heartedly into their emotions majorly because they have not learned how to cope with them.

Emotional needs refer to the psychological requirement. Emotional needs occur in all of us but are highly pronounced in children since they are developing and require to stabilize as they have not yet acquired pre-requisite skills to deal with emotions or life challenges. These emotional needs include such basic feelings as love and security, fear and anger, sorrow and anxiety, frustration and disappointment. Emotions can be tumultuous and this is often the evidence of their intensity. Emotions that take longer to go away or settle are usually highly intensive and are likely to be maintained in the brain in a state of stimulation and intensity. This can leave about intermittent periods of relief and anxiety as the person fluctuates between settling down and memories of the emotions.

Emotional needs are normal in everyone and in ordinary living. But they usually increase in intensity during periods of excessive stress. Stress includes disturbing moments such as transition from one level to another (home to school, primary to secondary, secondary to
higher education (college / university)). This is because the physical and mental strain such as a new environment, being away from home, loss and grief (loss of a parent, sibling, relative friend / classmate), illness such as HIV / AIDS, divorce and separation and other circumstances affect a child’s life. Emotional needs cannot be ignored or sidelined since they linger in the background even when the person appears calm and settled. Consequently, failure to meet the emotional needs of the child leads to pain and depreciation and the child feels belittled, unfairly treated and less valued and unworthy. This eventually direct to cynicism, poor health and a seemingly hostile educational environment. Also, even emotions that had been resolved may relapse and start being manifested again in various ways, for example, in one extreme there may intense anger or nervousness or at the other end lack of feelings and emotional cut off. It is possible that the child and adolescent remains in a vulnerable emotional state until such a time when they are able to deal with emotions amicably in a more logical and reasonable mannerism. This is the main reason why dealing with emotions among children and adolescents appears largely one-sided as you are the adult and thus expected to provide the necessary assistance.

Teachers should be aware of the needs of the child. Children in particular have a strong need for love that begins at birth. The child must be made comfortable and valued, experience safety and security. In addition, the teacher should be able to communicate with the child in a way that will support the child’s positive growth. Teacher counsellors, educational psychologist and other professionals trained in psychological services must be able to provide additional help to children who need further assistance. Overall, the loving care offered to the child helps build trust in self and other people, to love self and feel safe in the world.

The essence of emotionality is reflected in the experience of both horizontal and vertical transcendence as well as connection and mutuality. This implies that emotions influence our
thought and behavioural processes in our present and future lives. Additionally, emotions have an effect on other aspects of the child functioning, including the facets of spirituality, academic performance, career development, social interaction and psychological wellbeing. Nonetheless, emotionality is not a physical entity. And so to try to measure, weigh, or calibrate emotions can be difficult to comprehend hence, there is need to strive to put self in the frame of mind of the person experiencing emotions. The thoughts and feelings described convey depths of truth that often transcend the detailing of events.

Children who are emotionally deprived tend to be disturbed, withdrawn and isolated. They may also suffer from emotional cut off as they feel socially unaccepted. This can precipitate psychopathological conditions such as aggressiveness, mood disorders, depression and self injurious behaviours including suicidal tendencies or mental disorder. Subsequently, appropriate measures must be taken to create a learner friendly teaching and learning environment. The teacher, including the teacher counsellor must anticipate and satisfy the emotional needs of children. This includes teachers’ tender care and concern, empathetic listening as well as the encouragement to verbalize feelings. In addition, classroom and school activities must provide a positive and constructive outlet that promotes healthy living.

The conceptual basis for Education: Understanding child developmental and cognitive processes

Guidance and counselling is a term that encompasses two related but overlapping concepts; that of advice and information giving (guidance) and personal (psychological) help in a formal setting (counselling). A greater understanding of the terms guidance and counselling is necessary if the teacher counsellor and other teachers are to function effectively in the school setting. This is because there seems to be a continuum of helping strategies available in the school that range from information giving, directing, advising, consultation, mentoring, coaching, career guidance and support.

When teachers use the term counselling, they are referring to some or all of these approaches and they tend to use more helping strategies at the directing and advising end of the continuum rather than at the supporting and counselling end (Lane, 1996). The two fields of guidance and
counselling maintain links with each other especially in the school (and in a more traditional setting) where to a large extent the two are complementary and counselling a critical part of the guidance process and provision of guidance services (Lane, 1996; Watts & Kidd, 2000).

Our reflection as teachers is to try to grasp the essential meaning of various aspects of life such as emotions and guide and counsel the pupils and students. We must also be sensitive – sensitive to the subtle undertones of emotions.

For the sake of clarity, the term guidance refer to information giving of more factual nature given on educational, career and social decisions, evident for example in talks to students in groups, while counselling will be confined to the more personal and psychological issues, the helping relationship and the process (Egan, 2002; McGuiness, 1989, 1998; Williams, 1973). The term guidance and counselling will refer to the entire guidance and counselling programme in the school. In all cases, the term teacher counsellor, guidance and counselling teacher or counsellor will be used to refer to the teacher responsible for guidance and counselling in school. I use the term client, student or counsellee to refer to the person seeking and receiving help in counselling. The phrase situational difficulty, need or issues of concern are used in place of problem. This is because words like ‘patient’ to refer to the client and ‘problem’ to refer to the issue of concern tend to have a negative connotation, for example, patient is more inclined to sickness, while problem is associated with an anticipated solution (rather than resolving an issue that is more favourable in the context of counselling). Areas of difficulty for the student might be in career choices, academic performance or personal life.

The concept of school guidance and counselling is founded on psychology, particularly on human growth and development with emphasis on child and adolescent psychology. Educational psychologists have argued that education should enable a child to gain optimal
development. This is to facilitate growth and development as well as effective learning. Subsequently, education, teaching and learning and pedagogical processes have been informed by foundational knowledge in psychology particularly on human growth and development. Within this framework, several psychologists such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and several others have contributed immensely to education in the social, physiological and psychological processes. The knowledge of psychology has uniquely positioned education to advance the wellbeing of the child. The school counselling programme should therefore be both personal based helping as well development to include personal, social, academic and career counselling. In essence, this should include individual and group guidance and counselling with activities that consist of individual counselling, class-based interventions especially in times of crisis, direct services to pupils and students and support for children with special needs.

However, the school guidance and counselling programme must include guidance as well as crisis intervention. This includes child support, subject and career choices, mentoring and coaching as well as transitions at various stages (early childhood into school, primary to secondary, secondary to university).

**Guidance and Counselling: Incorporating Emotional Development Domains**

Pupils and students are growing up and thus adjusting to life. Thus, regardless of their social and academic abilities, they encounter various challenges from time to time. These include aspects of emotional, behavioural, personal and social developmental. The school guidance and counselling programme should come up with programmes that address the major domains such as: study skills; life skills; and personal and social development programmes. In the end,
guidance and counselling programme is not an isolated entity, but should become fully integrated into the school’s operations. It is laudable that programmes in Kenya have responded to crisis such as the 1998 terrorist attack on the American embassy in Nairobi as well as the 2007 ethnic violence.

Teachers are central to the provision of guidance and counselling services in schools. Teachers and teacher counsellors provide guidance and counselling for their pupils and students. Developing countries such as Kenya encounter a myriad of challenges in education and difficulties (Harber & Davies, 1997; Wango, 2006c) will spill over into the guidance and counselling programme. This includes limited policy guidelines, minimal (adequate) training in the provision of counselling psychological services, limited or no training in the requisite skills and the lack of materials or resources to support guidance and counselling services. Also, guidance and counselling is an added responsibility to the teaching role. Ideally, pupils and students would be supported through these challenges by specialists, such as counsellors, psychologists or educational psychologists. These professionals have the requisite professional training and skills. However, at the frontline of identifying and supporting children with emotional difficulties and others at-risk pupils and students are the teachers. Thus, teachers are essential and well placed to identifying issues of concern to pupils and students’, these issues include personal, social, career, and academic experiences. Thus guidance and counselling is a significant component of education and the school.

**Guidance and Counselling Service Delivery**

This paper examines the guidance and counselling evaluation format that is meant to enable teacher counsellors and schools organise an effective and purposeful guidance and counselling programme. The format has nine components as follows: the school guidance and counselling department; counselling team or committee; counselling training; guidance and counselling programme; peer counsellors; policy guidelines; confidentiality; referral services; and, counselling supervision. It is simple to use since it requires that the school ensure essential aspect of the programme are institutionalised in line with the school guidance and counselling programme (checklist, also Appendix 1 and II). The programme needs to relate to the general education curriculum as well as the needs of individual pupils and students.
This checklist is concerned with aspects of the school guidance and counselling programme and how it is implemented in the school. It is meant to enable the school evaluate the programme and thus assist the teacher counsellor and the guidance and counselling team to improve the programme.

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<tr>
<th>Guidance and counselling department</th>
<th>There is a guidance and counselling department in the school</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Students have free access to counsellor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Counselling is allocated a room</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Counselling room ensures confidentiality</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room is located in a place that is easily accessible to all students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There are counselling records for students in the school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Section has a budget and items or activities are well identified</td>
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<tr>
<th>Guidance and counselling team or committee</th>
<th>There is a guidance and counselling team or committee</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guidance and counselling committee holds meetings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There is a counselling member of staff on duty in school each day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There is a school chaplain or similar person available in the school</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guest speaker invited to the school for counselling purposes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guest speaker available for consultation by students after the talk</td>
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<tr>
<th>Counselling training</th>
<th>Teacher counsellor trained in counselling</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School based counselling training organized for all members of staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guidance and counselling members trained in counselling</td>
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<tr>
<th>Guidance and counselling programme</th>
<th>There is a guidance and counselling programme for the school</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Programme involves all teachers</td>
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<td>Programme involves all students</td>
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<td>Programme serves all students</td>
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<td>Programme is implemented</td>
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<td>There is a specific time or day set aside for counselling</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Specific time or day is strictly adhered to in the school</td>
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<th>Peer counsellors</th>
<th>There are peer counsellors in the school</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Peer counsellors have roles and responsibilities</td>
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<td>Peer counsellors are trained</td>
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<tr>
<th>Guidance and counselling policy or guidelines</th>
<th>School has rules and regulations on student conduct</th>
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<td></td>
<td>School rules and regulations on student conduct are clearly written</td>
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<td></td>
<td>School has a guidance and counselling policy or guidelines</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guidance and counselling policy or guidelines are clear</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There is code(s) of professional conduct or ethics for teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is code(s) of professional conduct or ethics for counsellors</td>
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<th>Confidentiality</th>
<th>Counselling cases are kept in confidence</th>
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<td></td>
<td>There are rules concerning confidentiality in counselling</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Confidentiality rules are strictly adhered to in the school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There is a code of professional conduct for teachers and counsellors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copy of code of conduct for teachers and counsellors available in the staff room</td>
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<tr>
<th>Referral services</th>
<th>There is a procedure for referring students for specialized counselling</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Follow up is done to assist such students</td>
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<tr>
<th>Counselling supervision</th>
<th>Teacher goes for counselling supervision</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Other members of counselling team go for counselling supervision</td>
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The guidance and counselling school programme must target the pupil or student taking into account the context of the school and thus adopts the four P’s: the programme must be Purposeful, Practical, Preventive and Programmed (Wango, 2006a; Wango & Mungai, 2007). This will allow the establishment of the programme in the school and within the broader educational goals. This will enable schools and teacher counsellors to both design and evaluate the school guidance and counselling programme that includes interventions on behaviour. The programme will have defined aims and objectives and thus clearly designed to enable effective implementation.

**Way Forward**

Many children are at risk for social, emotional and education problems throughout life and schools and education provide an intervention strategy (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Henson, 2003; Owens et al., 2005). A person’s personality and character and the way they express their emotions can be a panacea for certain disorders of a dysfunctional nature such as attention disorders and drug addiction. In addition, there are psychological and social challenges that afflict school-age children in sub-Saharan Africa (Harber & Davies, 1997; UNESCO, 2005; Wango, 2006b, 2006c; World Bank, 2002). Various scholars (Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, 2002; Williams, 1973) have highlighted the need to provide prevention and early health intervention services, including guidance and counselling (Green & Keys, 2001; Hui, 2002; Myrick, 1997; Wango & Mungai, 2007; Watkins, 1994) and other psychological services to young children such as improved teacher-child relationships (Gable, 2002). This would enable address emotional and behavioural problems, as well as increased personal and academic engagement.

Despite several efforts at the establishing and expanding guidance and counselling services in schools, the programme remains largely fragmented, under-resourced and uncoordinated. Even where school / guidance counsellors exist, they are often burdened with multiple tasks, such as subject teacher, teacher counsellor and assigned ordinary duties along with other teachers. Overall, there is need to provide a comprehensive guidance and counselling programme and services in schools that includes providing for the emotional needs of the child. This must be
conducted through a whole-school approach. All teachers should be equipped to support children’s academic, career, social, personal and emotional development. This includes basic training for teachers in basic prevention and intervention skills to use in the classroom, and thus assist ameliorate problems related to emotional, academic and personal issues by attending to the immediate needs of pupils and students. This will lead to improved teachers’ ability to provide support, understanding and stimulate learning.

I have noted that you raised several issues that you would like to be investigated and included in future forums on education and guidance and counselling in schools.

They include the following:

- Issues that can be addressed directly through guidance and counselling such as career choices, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, school dropout, truancy, discipline, loss and grief and bereavement.
- The over emphasis of examinations and grades in the Kenyan system.
- Counselling training including head teachers, teachers and teacher counsellors.
- The dual relationship in the school where the teacher is also a counsellor and thus the need for a professional counsellor in the school for a more harmonious relationship.
- The role of the Ministry of Education, for example, a code of conduct for counsellors and to identify training institutions and referral services.
- The role of others in counselling including parents, religion and spiritualism (the role of the school chaplain), school sponsor and nongovernmental organisations.

This paper aims to develop understanding of the broad range of emotions and how they affect a child. It uniquely describes an everyday experience that contributes to overall child wellbeing. Schools should adopt various programmes, including personal, academic and co-curricular activities that systematically assist the learners in personal space as well as in their interactions with other members of the school community.

School should have a written guidance and counselling programme plan that is reviewed and updated annually by the school counsellor(s) in consultation with the principal and school
administration team that is, teachers, students, parents, Parent Association (PA) and the Board of Management (BOM). In the end, adults must be able to assist children and young people to cope with their emotions. This must be done in certain ways, that is, creatively, expressively, and reflectively.

Acknowledgements

(1) I am sincerely grateful to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission for the PhD scholarship. Additionally, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission provided the air tickets to conduct the research on policy and practice in guidance and counselling in secondary schools in Kenya.

(2) Cross Reference was made of the following in developing the proposed guidance and counselling policy guidelines (Appendices I and II):

(a) Chesterfield County Public Schools (CCPS) (1996)
(b) Elk Island Public Schools Board of Trustees (2006)
(c) Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia (Revised 2004)
(d) Government of Alberta (Updated 2003)]

References


APPENDIX I: The School Guidance and Counselling School Programme

1.0. Preamble

The school recognizes that guidance and counselling is an important part of the total programme of instruction and should be provided in accordance with the following: state laws and regulations; Ministry of Education policies and regulations; and, available staff and programme support. The general goal of the counselling programme is to assist students achieve the greatest personal value from their educational opportunities. The school affirms that parents are the student's first teachers and that the school serves to strengthen family and parental support.

1.1. Procedure

- The school guidance and counselling programme is comprehensive in scope, developmental in nature based on the national standards for school counselling programmes. It is delivered by counsellors, both individually and in groups.
- For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:
  a) Educational and academic guidance and counselling: This will assist students and their parents to acquire knowledge of the curriculum including subject choices available to students, to plan a programme of studies, to arrange and interpret academic issues, and to seek post-secondary academic opportunities;
  b) Career guidance and counselling: This will help students to acquire information and plan action about work, jobs, apprenticeships, and post-secondary educational and career opportunities;
  c) Personal and social guidance and counselling: This will assist a student to develop an understanding of themselves, the rights and needs of others, how to resolve conflict and to define individual goals, reflecting their interests, abilities and aptitudes.

Such guidance and counselling may be provided either (i) in groups in which generic issues of social development are addressed, or (ii) through structured individual or small group multi-session counselling which focuses on the specific concerns of the student (client).

- Information and records of personal counselling shall be kept confidential and separate from educational records and cannot be disclosed to third parties without prior student consent or as otherwise in accordance with professional ethics and the law.

1.2. Guidelines

- The School guidance and counselling programme will:
  - Provide staff with meaningful information which can be utilized to improve the educational services offered to individual students;
  - Provide students with planned opportunities to develop future career and educational plans;
  - Refer students with special needs to appropriate specialists and agencies;
  - Aid students in identifying options and making choices about their educational programme;
- Assist teachers and the school administration in identifying the academic, social and emotional needs of students;
- Provide for a follow-up of students who further their education and/or move into the world of work; and,
- Solicit feedback from students, staff and parents for purposes of programme improvement.

☐ All staff shall encourage students to explore and develop their individual interests in career and vocational technical programmes and employment opportunities without regard to gender including reasonable efforts encouraging students to consider and explore ‘non-traditional’ occupations for men and women.

☐ The school counsellor will work with the staff, community and appropriate agencies to develop, implement and regularly evaluate this programme.

☐ The school counsellor is authorized to develop and implement the necessary regulations for the administration of this policy.

☐ Parental permission is not required for short duration personal/social counselling which is needed to maintain order, discipline or a productive learning environment in the school.

☐ At least annually, parents shall be notified in writing about the academic and career guidance programmes, and the personal/social counselling, programmes which are available to students

☐ Information and records of personal/social counselling shall be kept confidential and separate and not disclosed to third parties without student prior consent and further parental consultation as necessary in accordance with professional ethics and as provided by law.

☐ Parents will be advised concerning the purpose, general description of the programmes, how parents may review materials to be used in the programmes, and procedures by which parents may limit the students' participation in the programme.

☐ Parents may be required to seek further consultation on counselling needs that are beyond the scope of the professional certification or training of the counsellors.

☐ School officials may permit on-going, structured personal/social counselling for children whom they believe would benefit from such counselling but whose parents fail to respond affirmatively or negatively to reasonable requests for consent.

☐ It shall be the policy of School Board with respect to personal/social counselling that parents will notify the school division in writing if the student is not to participate in the personal/social counselling programme of a generic nature (Opt - Out).

1.3. Conclusion

The school is committed to making guidance and counselling services available to all students as a part of school programmes and services. The school principal assisted by the teacher counsellor shall be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the guidance and counselling services in the school, in accordance with these procedures.
APPENDIX II: Proposed Guidance and Counselling Policy Guidelines

(1) All pupils and students from Early Childhood Education (ECD) through primary and secondary school shall have access to guidance and counselling services as required in the context of the resources available to the school.

(2) Guidance and counselling services shall meet identified needs in three key areas:
   2.1. Educational development;
   2.2. Personal and Social development; and,
   2.3. Career development.

   Counselling services may be developmental, preventive or crisis-oriented.

(3) School counsellors shall respect the confidentiality of information in accordance with professional ethics and the law.

(4) Principals shall ensure that guidance and counselling services are available to all pupils and students.

(5) Schools through the Teachers Service Commission shall engage professionally trained counsellors who have had successful certified teaching experience.

(6) Counsellors should be qualified professionally, and where this is not currently the case, the principal shall recruit the services of counsellors so qualified, as the opportunity arises or provide training to a suitable candidate on staff.

(7) The roles and responsibilities of counsellors shall include the following:
   7.1. Group and individual counselling of pupils and students of an educational, career, and personal/social issues and difficulties.
   7.2. Facilitating the transition from one school or grade to another by acting as a liaison with feeder schools and post secondary institutions.
   7.3. Acting as a resource person to teachers in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of special needs programmes by sharing expertise with staff, parents, and community agencies.
   7.4. Consulting with parents, administrators, teachers and community agencies.
   7.5. Coordination of community services with school programmes.
   7.6. Provision of, or referral to services, which assist pupils and students in coping more effectively with behaviour adversely affecting their school progress and personal relationships.
   7.7. Assistance in relating pupil/students’ educational and career plans to their abilities, interests, and aptitudes.
   7.8. Other duties and responsibilities on psychological assistance and helping within the particular school.

(8) Each school shall have a written guidance and counselling programme plan that is reviewed and updated annually by the school counsellor(s) with consultation with the principal and school administrative team, teachers, pupils/students and the board, as appropriate.

(9) Principals shall be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the guidance and counselling services in the school, in accordance with these procedures.