

IMPROVED ATTITUDE AND ACHIEVEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT INTERVENTION

School counselors are often called upon to develop and implement academic interventions. In this case study of one urban elementary school, a school counselor conducted a small group academic advisement intervention. The results suggest that integrating the activities into the elementary school counseling program can be an effective Response to Intervention (RTI) component that advances academic achievement and improves attendance and discipline issues. This article presents the impact of the intervention on student and parent attitudes toward school and future success and shares implications for school counselors.

One component of the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Response to Intervention (RTI), is a reform effort that has greatly impacted the educational landscape across the United States. Schools continue to transform learning environments by providing high-quality instruction and necessary interventions to meet the needs of all students as part of a multi-tiered approach necessary within an RTI framework. RTI provides a system to identify and support students with learning and behavior needs (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2016).

As school staffs work to meet RTI requirements, they often encounter multiple barriers including insufficient faculty resources and limited time within the school day to provide intervention support beyond the regular classroom (Forman, Olin, Hoagwood, Crowe, & Saka, 2009). Often, schools struggle to overcome the challenge of doing more with less and call upon school support personnel, including school counselors, to develop and implement interventions. As Ockerman, Mason, and Hollenbeck (2012) stated, "Every educator, specialist, school counselor, and school psychologist must accept responsibility for helping all students succeed" (p. 15). As schools undertake efforts to ensure the success of all students, they repeatedly enlist school counselors as faculty members who can provide both behavioral and academic interventions.

Barry Kamrath, Ed.D., is assistant professor of school leadership at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Email: barry-kamrath@utc.edu **Teresa Brooker** is a graduate student at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and was an elementary school counselor during the time of this study.

doi: [10.5330/1096-2409-21.1.60](https://doi.org/10.5330/1096-2409-21.1.60)

Because the elementary school in this study had been perennially low performing and unable to make significant achievement gains, the principal enlisted the help of the school counselor to develop and implement an intervention that augmented the subject-specific interventions already in use. Teachers identified students in need of Tier 2 academic-focused interventions through the use of a universal screener. They also monitored student progress continually to determine the impact of the teacher-led interventions on student learning. Teachers noticed other student issues including poor attendance, disruptive classroom behavior, and students' lackluster attitude toward school and their education. Teachers also routinely contended with problems related to student organization, motivation, listening, and attention. The school counselor, in consultation with the classroom teachers, planned an intervention to address several of the executive function deficits consistently exhibited by some students. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the intervention by analyzing and summarizing the academic progress of the student participants, and to gather perceptions from students and parents about the intervention and its impact on student and parent attitudes toward school.

ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT IN SCHOOL COUNSELING

As part of school support teams, elementary school counselors work with students in the areas of academic and social/emotional skills development, and college and career readiness through a comprehensive, developmental school counseling program. One of the vital roles of the school counselor is to help teachers identify students who potentially need support beyond the regular classroom.

School counselors are important stakeholders in a school's RTI process

(Cook, 2016). In collaboration with other educators, school counselors can assist in early identification of students in need of a Tier 2 intervention (Young & Kaffenberger, 2011). Tier 2 is defined by the National Center for RTI as "small-group instruction that relies on evidence-based interventions that specify the instructional procedures, duration, and frequency of instruction" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 1). Tier 2 interventions are often developed and implemented by the school counselor as part of the school counseling program.

THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE CLASSROOM TEACHERS, PLANNED AN INTERVENTION TO ADDRESS SEVERAL OF THE EXECUTIVE FUNCTION DEFICITS CONSISTENTLY EXHIBITED BY SOME STUDENTS.

Some contributing factors to students needing interventions include: (a) poor attendance and chronic tardiness, (b) focus and attention issues, (c) difficulty completing tasks, and (d) chronic behavioral issues (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2007). Furthermore, according to Wright (2012), "student academic success requires more than content knowledge or mastery of a collection of cognitive strategies. Academic accomplishment depends also on a set of ancillary skills" (p. 2). Skills often considered most critical to student success include: (a) self-regulation skills including learning to focus, reducing distractions, engaging in activities to improve memory, and managing emotions; (b) social skills including communicating appropriately with school staff and peers and resolving conflict with peers, both individually and as a team; (c) self-management skills such as impulse control, stress management, self-motivation, organization, and time management; and (d) responsible decision-making skills including problem solving and goal setting (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004).

Tier 2 interventions implemented by school counselors vary from school to school, but often include small groups that focus on specific strategies and skills to address both environmental concerns and critical competences for success in today's schools. Included within the ASCA National Model, small group counseling has proven to be an effective service model offered by school counselors (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012, 2014a; Brigman & Goodman, 2008; Shi & Steen, 2012; Steen, Bauman, & Smith, 2007).

The ASCA National Model also includes individual student planning as a component of direct student services, including both appraisal and advisement as strategies within the component (ASCA, 2012). Appraisal includes the use of academic and other data as a basis for helping students develop immediate and long-range plans (ASCA, 2012), while advisement entails counselors helping students "make decisions for future plans based on academic, career, and social/emotional data" (ASCA 2012, p. 32). Both appraisal and advisement are critical components of a school counselor's role in Tier 2 of the RTI process (Cook, 2016).

For this study, the counselor sought to conduct an intervention that included both small group counseling and individual appraisal and advisement. For the purposes of this study, academic advisement is defined as a counselor-led Tier 2 intervention that contains detailed small group lessons supported by individual planning, including appraisal and advisement, designed to improve student academic success. Academic advisement can be implemented from a published handbook or curriculum (e.g., King's

“Academic Advisement Program for Grades 4 – 6” [King, 2006] or Brigman and Webb’s “Student Success Skills” [Brigman & Webb, 2007a]), adapted from existing resources, or developed individually based on the needs of the students involved.

AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SITE SELECTED FOR THIS STUDY, THE MAJORITY OF STUDENT AND PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL DEMONSTRATED A CYCLE OF NEGATIVITY REGARDING EDUCATION.

Previous research suggests that counselor-led interventions, including academic advisement groups, can have a positive impact on academic achievement (Brigman & Webb, 2007b; Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Brigman & Goodman, 2008; Steen & Kaffenberger, 2007). Social and emotional learning programs and academic advisement groups offered both during and after school have been found to be very successful in promoting positive behaviors and attitudes toward school; promoting positive mental health; and preparing students to become responsible, mature adults (Greenberg et al., 2003).

Attitude Toward School

One component of this study was to determine whether or not the academic advisement intervention could positively influence student (and parent) outlook and overall attitude toward school. At the elementary school site selected for this study, the majority of student and parent attitudes toward school demonstrated a cycle of negativity regarding education. Located in a large urban school district in a southern state, the school perennially failed to demonstrate adequate yearly progress. School leaders had targeted the school as one of the lowest performing schools within the district.

The school counselor, also a graduate student of the primary researcher, was asked to implement an academic advisement intervention and set out

to design a program to impact student success and attitude. Realizing that the project had potential to contribute to research on counselor-led interventions, the primary researcher worked closely with the school counselor to design a study to meaningfully analyze the effec-

tiveness of the intervention on several academic indicators, including both student and parent attitudes toward school and education. To address the study’s purpose, the following three questions guided the research: (a) To what extent does the counselor-led academic advisement intervention impact student achievement? (b) To what extent does the academic advisement intervention impact elementary students’ perceptions of their schoolwork? (c) To what extent does the academic advisement intervention impact elementary students’ attitudes toward school and their own potential for future success?

METHOD

As a prominent design in research regarding issues in education (Gulsecen & Kubat, 2006), case study research allows for the exploration and understanding of complex issues. Case study research is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2014, p. 5). The authors of the present study used a single case study approach to understand and interpret the phenomenon of the counselor-led academic advisement intervention within the context of one struggling elementary school in a southern state. This case study collected quantitative data from multiple sources including student achievement scores, attendance records, course grades, and office discipline referrals.

The researchers used an online survey to gather information from students and parents regarding their experiences with and attitudes toward the intervention and school in general.

This study used the action research method because the secondary researcher was employed in the capacity of school counselor and charged with implementing and monitoring an academic intervention in the case study school. Action research has become a widely accepted tool for educators to assess and reflect on their teaching strategies to enhance the quality of education for their students (Fleming, 2000; Harkavy, Puckett, & Romer, 2000; McNiff, 2013). The practitioner, within the context of his or her environment, conducts action research, typically with a focus on self-reflection and program improvement (McNiff, 2013).

Site and Participant Selection

The school in this case study was identified as one of the lowest performing elementary schools in the district. Approximately 500 students attended the Title I school; 96% of the students were African American, 2% White, 1% Hispanic, and 1% Asian/other. More than 98% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch through the National School Lunch Program.

This study involved two groups of eight student participants from fourth and fifth grades who were identified as in need of an intervention based on universal screener data. Each participant group included four students from fourth grade and four from fifth grade. The participant group for this study was selected from the pool of students who were identified as needing a Tier 2 intervention. Student participants were referred by their classroom teachers based on a set of referral selection criteria. The student selection criteria included (a) students with grades of D or lower in either math or literacy during the previous quarter; (b) students who missed at least 10% of the school days during the previous academic quarter; (c) students who exhibited behaviors consistent with weak executive

TABLE 1

OUTLINE OF SESSIONS

Session	Activities <i>Each session began with an icebreaker activity (selected by the school counselor) and a review of the group norms</i>
Orientation	1. Develop group norms (3-4) 2. Discuss purpose of the group 3. Overview future sessions 4. Establish attendance procedures
Session 1 Topic: Multiple Intelligences	1. Collect consent forms 2. Take online questionnaire of Garner's Multiple Intelligences (http://www.playbuzz.com/zariaq10/multiple-intelligences-what-smart-are-you) 3. Discuss questionnaire results utilizing <i>It's not how smart you are, it's how you are smart</i> (http://www.tnstate.edu/servicelearning/documents/Multiple%20Intelligences.doc) 4. Develop one simple goal for next session
Individual Session 1	1. Discuss "What does education mean to you/your family?" 2. Discuss "Why would you want to do better in school?" 3. Review results of Multiple Intelligences activity and discuss the importance of knowing one's intelligence strengths 4. Review goal from last session 5. Develop one new goal and three simple steps for the upcoming week
Session 2 Topic: Motivation	1. Discuss intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation 2. Activity <i>What motivates you?</i> Lesson plan: http://www.scholastic.com/browse/lessonplan.jsp?id=1475 3. Complete "What motivates you?" table (https://ttospon.wikispaces.com/file/view/DisneyYES_612_What_Motivates_You.pdf) from <i>The Motivation Breakthrough: 6 Secrets to Turning on the Tuned-Out Child</i> by Richard Lavoie
Session 3 Topic: Goal Setting	1. Discuss differences between initial goals and a SMART goal 2. Activity <i>Setting goals for success</i> , from <i>Smart Guidance</i> materials, available from http://www.youthlight.com 3. Activity <i>Goal setting ladder</i> , from <i>What do you really want? How to set a goal and go for it! A guide for teens</i> by Beverly Bachel
Session 4 Topic: Procrastination	1. Read <i>Causes of procrastination and how to handle them</i> (http://www.time-management-success.com/causes-of-procrastination.html) 2. Discuss causes of procrastination in students' lives 3. Read <i>The secret to overcoming procrastination</i> (http://www.time-management-success.com/overcoming-procrastination.html) 4. Discuss overcoming procrastination 5. Students write a list of four strategies to address their specific procrastination concerns
Session 5 Topic: Managing Emotions	1. Activity <i>Be the boss: A lesson plan on managing feelings</i> (http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson-plan-managing-feelings.shtml) 2. Activity <i>Responsible action sheet</i> (http://www.educationworld.com/sites/default/files/Responsible-Action-handout.pdf)
Session 6 Topic: Organization and Homework	1. Read <i>Annie's Plan: Taking charge of schoolwork and homework</i> by Jeanne R. Kraus 2. Distribute student planners (a present to each student from the school, purchased in bulk)
Individual Session 2	1. Follow up to <i>Annie's Plan</i> addressing all 10 steps from the book, and how that would look in the student's home

Note. All materials listed are either available for purchase or do not have copyright restrictions for group counseling use.

function skills including focus, attention, listening, organization, and time management; and/or (d) students who, in the opinion of the classroom teacher, demonstrated a discrepancy between

their potential and their achievement (students who underachieve). Classroom teachers provided the names of 16 students who met at least one of the criteria for inclusion in the interven-

tion during the academic quarter of the study, and all 16 students (as permitted by at least one parent or guardian) agreed to participate. For each student, one parent or guardian was invited to

complete an online survey regarding the intervention.

Intervention

Students participated in a 6-week intervention that included one 45-minute group session per week and two individual sessions over the 6-week period. The first individual session took place after the second week, and the second individual session took place after the final small group session. Each group session was held during student lunch periods and included a student-led quick review of the group norms, a brief icebreaker activity related to the session topic, and 30 minutes of discussion and activities focused on the topic. Over the period of the intervention, the topics included learning styles, motivation, goal setting, procrastination and time management, stress management, emotion management, study skills, and organization. The first individual session focused on academic, attendance, and discipline data and setting specific short-term goals in the areas of study time and homework, attendance, and discipline. The second individual session was primarily focused on assessing progress toward short-term goals and developing long-term goals for success for the remainder of the school year and start of the next.

sions, referencing material utilized or adapted, is shown in Table 1.

The structure of each group meeting was clearly explained to the students in advance and continued participation was contingent on students following the format of the meeting and the group norms. Weekly progress reports updated parents on the topics of the intervention and how to support their children at home. Likewise, the counselor communicated regularly with classroom teachers regarding the topics being covered in the intervention, and classroom teachers provided the counselor biweekly updates regarding the academic progress of the student participants.

Procedures

Following approval by the authors' university institutional review board, informational letters were distributed to the school principal, the students, and parents or guardians. The researchers informed classroom teachers about the intervention before its onset and involved them in the identification of student participants. The school counselor attained consent from the school principal, students, and parents prior to implementing the intervention. Students and parents consented to: (a) participating in the intervention; (b) allowing the collection and

the counselor or other students or staff members. Parents were encouraged to respond to the survey by letters sent through the mail, emails sent electronically, and reminders sent home with their children. Computers with Internet access were made available to parents during school hours, after school, and during parent/teacher conferences. The researchers also procured data on student attendance (measured by number of days absent per quarter) and discipline referrals (measured by number of referrals to the office for discipline reasons per quarter) through the school's data management system.

Instruments

Students and parents or guardians were asked to complete an anonymous online survey at the conclusion of the intervention. Survey respondents viewed statements regarding their experiences and perceptions of the intervention (11 total statements) and were asked to respond to each statement using a five-point rating scale ranging from strong disagreement to strong agreement. Students and parents responded to the same interview protocol, substituting "My child" for "I" in the parent survey. Statements were centered on completion of work, quality of work, student attitude, and student confidence for future success. For example, survey respondents were asked to rate the level of agreement to a series of questions focused on completion and quality of both schoolwork and homework (e.g., "After completing the program, I completed and turned in more homework").

Before and after implementing the intervention, the researchers collected participants' grades and achievement scores in math and literacy. They also acquired student attendance rates and office discipline referral data prior to the intervention and compared this to attendance rates and discipline referral data after the intervention.

Data Analysis

This study addressed both the effectiveness of the academic advisement intervention and the impact on the attitudes of students and parents;

THE SCHOOL IN THIS CASE STUDY WAS IDENTIFIED AS ONE OF THE LOWEST PERFORMING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT.

The components of the advisement groups were adapted from multiple resources, based on the needs of the student participants. Although several research-based programs were available, such as Campbell & Brigman's *Student Success Skills* (2007a), the school counselor collaborated with the classroom teachers to determine what topics and skills most closely aligned with the needs of the students. The school counselor then adopted or adapted elements from multiple sources. An outline of the group ses-

analysis of academic, attendance, and discipline data; and (c) responding anonymously to an online survey. The survey was formatted for online distribution using Google Forms. Upon linking to the survey instrument, students and parents responded to a series of statements regarding the academic advisement intervention. Students completed the survey immediately after their final intervention session by clicking on a link provided on a computer located in a separate conference room, not observable by

TABLE 2 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA

Student Data (N = 16)	Average Grades ^a		Average Test Scores ^b	
	Before	After	Before	After
Math	D	C	Basic	Basic
Literacy	D	C	Basic	Proficient

Student Data (N = 16)	Average Days Absent		Average Number of Discipline Referrals	
	Before	After	Before	After
	5.44	1.44	2.06	.31

Note. ^aThe following conversion was used to calculate grades: F = 0, D- = .75, D = 1, D+ = 1.25, C- = 1.75, C = 2, C+ = 2.25, B- = 2.75, B = 3, B+ = 3.25, A- = 3.75, A = 4.

^bThe following conversion was used to calculate proficiency levels: Below Basic = 1, Basic = 2, Proficient = 3, Advanced = 4.

therefore, data analysis focused first on academic achievement, discipline, and attendance, and concluded with perception data. The researchers collected and compared academic achievement data before and after the intervention; this data included student grades and test scores in math and literacy. Grade averages were calculated by assigning numeric values to each letter grade; similarly, test score averages were calculated by assigning numeric values to proficiency levels. The research team also analyzed discipline and attendance data. Student discipline data consisted of the number of office discipline referrals during the quarter preceding the intervention plus the number of referrals during the quarter of the intervention. These data are reported as an average of data collected for all 16 students. For student attendance analysis, the researchers compared data from the quarter that included the intervention to attendance data from the preceding quarter. Data analysis concluded with examining student and parent responses to the online survey.

RESULTS

Analysis of the data provided encouraging findings in both the areas of achievement and perception. Results of the study are presented as group

averages in table format, and key findings are discussed below in greater detail for both achievement and perception data.

Achievement

Achievement averages, including grades, test scores, attendance, and discipline, before and after the intervention, are shown in Table 2. Overall, students improved their math and literacy grades by roughly one letter grade. Students showed an average increase of one letter grade (from a D to a C) in math, and the average grade in literacy increased from a D to a C-. Thirteen students (81%) improved their math grades after the intervention, some by two full letter grades. In literacy, 10 students (63%) improved their course grades after the intervention, and one third of the students increased two letter grades.

Analysis of student test scores showed that, overall, students remained consistent in their math scores from one quarter to the next, with both averages falling in the basic range. The average,

however, does not tell the whole story regarding the math test scores. Further analysis of math scores showed that nine of the students (56%) increased one proficiency level, and two of the students (13%) scored in the advanced range in both the quarter preceding the intervention and the quarter after the intervention. These students, by nature of their initial advanced rating, were unable to increase their proficiency rating as demonstrated by the math assessment. No students experienced a decrease in math proficiency scores after the intervention.

Literacy scores showed an average increase of one proficiency level overall. Seven students (44%) realized an increase of one proficiency level, while the remainder of the students sustained their previous rating. No students, in either math or literacy, experienced a drop in proficiency level after the intervention, and nine students (56%) saw an increase in their proficiency level in either (or both) math or literacy from one quarter to the next.

Students showed a considerable improvement in attendance from one quarter to the next. All 16 of the students missed less school during the quarter of the intervention than they did during the previous quarter. On average, students attended four more days during the 9-week period. Overall, the 16 students attended school 64 more days during the intervention quarter, an increase of nearly 75% more instructional days. Similarly, students improved their behavior during the quarter that included the academic advisement activities. All students who had received discipline referrals during the previous quarter received fewer referrals during the quarter of the intervention. Overall, the 16 participants were referred for disciplinary reasons 28 fewer times during the quarter of

STUDENTS ATTENDED SCHOOL FAR MORE OFTEN THAN DURING THE PRECEDING QUARTER, AND THEY ALSO SPENT FAR LESS TIME OUT OF THE CLASSROOM FOR DISCIPLINARY REASONS.

the intervention than they were during the preceding quarter. Two of the students were suspended from school during the quarter preceding the intervention; no student participants were suspended during the intervention.

Perception

All 16 students and 11 of their parents responded to the survey. The researchers collected survey responses and calculated average scores for each participant group (see Table 3) to determine the level of agreement each participant group had with each statement.

Overwhelmingly, students expressed positive perceptions of the intervention. For example, all 16 students responded that the intervention helped prepare them for the next grade level. Likewise, all students seemed to enjoy the program and its activities, and all of them indicated that they would recommend the program to other students. Thirteen students (81%) shared that they improved their attitude toward school as a result of the intervention, and the same number of the students felt they had increased their confidence toward future success in school. Perceptions of work completed outside of the classroom were very positive: 15 students (94%) felt they had completed and turned in more homework, and 12 students (75%) felt their homework quality had improved because of the intervention. Regarding work done in the classroom, 11 students (69%) responded that they agreed or strongly agreed that they improved the quality of their classroom work.

BEFORE THE INTERVENTION, ONLY FOUR OF THE STUDENTS (25%) SCORED PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED IN LITERACY; AFTER THE INTERVENTION, 10 STUDENTS (63%) SCORED AT THE PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED LEVEL.

Overall, parents expressed that they felt involved in the program and that the program helped prepare their child for the next grade level. Nine of the parents (82%) felt that their child had

TABLE 3 SURVEY RESULTS

Please rate the following statements using the rating scale below.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

After completing the School Success Group (SSG), I/my child...	Student Average (n = 16)	Parent Average (n = 11)
• completed more work in class.	4.17	3.64
• completed and turned in more homework.	4.08	4.45
• improved the quality of work done in class.	3.92	3.36
• improved the quality of homework turned in.	4.00	3.45
• increased time on task in classroom.	3.42	3.27
• improved my (child's) attitude toward school.	4.00	4.18
I/my child have/has increased confidence for success in school.	4.08	4.45
I/my child enjoyed the SSG experience.	4.75	4.73
My parents were/I was sufficiently involved in the SSG program.	3.92	4.27
The SSG helped prepare me/my child for the next grade level.	4.92	4.36
I would recommend SSG program to other students/parents.	4.50	4.45

improved his or her attitude toward school, and all parents felt their child was exhibiting increased confidence toward success at school after the program. Perceptions of work done outside the classroom were very positive: 100% of parents indicated that the intervention increased the amount of homework their child completed

and turned in more work in class, while only three parents (27%) indicated that their child had increased the amount of time on task in the classroom.

To address the question of effects of the program on attitudes toward school, students and parents responded on the same scale to a statement of whether their (or their child's) attitude toward school has improved after the intervention. Fifteen students (94%) responded with a 3 or higher ($M = 4$). All parents responded with a 3 or higher ($M = 4.18$). In total, 23 out of 27 student and parent respondents (85%) perceived an improved attitude of the student toward school by assigning the statement a 4 or 5.

Two survey statements measured the impact of the program on student attitudes toward academic success. First, students and parents were asked to respond to a statement regarding an increase in confidence for success in

school. Thirteen students (81%) and all parents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (student $M = 4.08$, parent $M = 4.45$). The second statement was aimed at the immediately foreseeable future, namely the next grade level. No students disagreed or were even neutral regarding the statement, and 15 students (94%) strongly agreed with the statement; likewise, all parents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (student $M = 4.92$, parent $M = 4.36$). The data analysis for this statement led to a noticeable finding that all students felt they were prepared for the next grade level after the intervention.

DISCUSSION

Achievement data suggested that the small group intervention was effective. Perhaps the most interesting finding is the marked improvement in attendance and discipline of the students during the quarter of the intervention. Students attended school far more often than during the preceding quarter, and they also spent far less time out of the classroom for disciplinary reasons. More time in the classroom, coupled with the development of other skills through the program activities and discussions, likely contributed to most of the students improving their test scores and/or grades in math and literacy.

On average, student grades went up one full letter grade, and their test scores rose in both math and literacy. Because schools are often rated based on the percentage of students proficient or advanced on standardized tests, an average increase in literacy from basic to proficient is worth pointing out. Before the intervention, only four of the students (25%) scored proficient or advanced in literacy; after the intervention, 10 students (63%) scored at the proficient or advanced level. A similar improvement was seen in proficient or advanced math scores, jumping from seven students (64%) to 13 students (81%). Examining the data from the school-wide perspective, six more

students scored proficient or advanced in both literacy and math, which is an increase of just over 1% for the school. In a school that perennially scores low on standardized tests, a 1% increase in the number of students proficient or advanced is notable.

The improvement in attitude for children and parents indicates an increased potential likelihood of positive change in the school culture and climate. When even a relatively small number of students attend school more often, receive fewer disciplinary referrals, experience academic success, and improve their attitude towards school, the overall climate of the school can be impacted. Even in large schools, principals can spend much of their time on disciplinary issues with a relatively small number of children. When some of these children are no longer being removed from class, the principal can attend to other issues. Further, when these students are not interrupting classes, other students and the teacher are not distracted and their overall experience can be less stressful and more productive. Teachers can spend less time contacting parents regarding discipline or missed

AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE ATTITUDES OF BOTH CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS CAN HELP SCHOOL LEADERS SUPPORT CHANGE THAT IS OFTEN NEEDED, ESPECIALLY IN STRUGGLING SCHOOLS.

work and more time on instructional activities that can make a difference in the classroom. Also, as demonstrated by parent perception data, this intervention affected the parents of these students by improving their attitudes toward school and the help that their child was receiving. This could potentially impact parents' involvement in the academic lives of their children and their involvement as stakeholders at the school. An improvement in the attitudes of both children and their parents can help school leaders support change that is often needed, especially in struggling schools.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

This study generated three main implications. The first regards a counselor-related improvement in school achievement scores. In today's educational climate, schools (and their staffs) are often judged based on their ability to increase student test scores and close achievement gaps. Struggling schools, like the one in this study, find themselves being placed on "needs improvement" lists. Data from this intervention showed that more than half of the students improved their math achievement scores and nearly half improved their literacy achievement scores. This was accomplished with two groups of eight students from two grade levels over a six-week period. If this intervention was replicated with different groups of students throughout the year (e.g., 16 different students each quarter) the impact could expand school-wide.

The second implication of this study for practicing school counselors is the effect of academic advisement programs on improving student attendance and decreasing discipline referrals. Students having a significant number of absences and discipline referrals are spending less time in the classroom, and consequently losing out on valuable instruction. By implementing academic advisement activities, a school counselor helps improve attendance and decrease the number of discipline referrals. As statistics often reported on school report cards, attendance and discipline issues reflect the overall

rating of the school. Improvements in these two areas, coupled with improved test scores, could assist in positively affecting a school's overall report card rating.

A final implication relates to the overall culture of the school. Participating students and their parents reported an improved attitude toward school and future success. When students change attitudes and gain confidence, great things can happen. School counselors directly impact the school culture when they assist students in improving their attitudes. A school is a better place to learn when students want to be there. One additional benefit experienced by the school counselor in this study was the attitude of the student participants toward their counselor. Student participants would often stop by the counseling office to check in with the counselor, where they made statements like, "Can we meet today?" or "Can we do this again next quarter?" Furthermore, as a likely result of this academic advisement intervention, students from the study also shared with their counselor other issues they were having, opening the door to additional assistance for students who often struggle with school.

CONCLUSION

Implementing academic advisement programs in elementary schools as one component of the small group counseling program can be very effective for students in need of a Tier 2 intervention. These interventions can not only impact students' attitude about school, but also provide students an opportunity to experience rapid academic success and better prepare them for continued growth and success in the future.

As school counselors continue to work with teachers to identify students in need of interventions, they may also want to ensure that teachers, parents, and administrators are aware of the counselor-led interventions and their impact. Counselors can and should be a critical component in the school's

overall instructional program. By continuing to work with and educate teachers and administrators, school counselors can foster support for their programs. ■

REFERENCES

- American School Counselor Association. (2012). *ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.
- American School Counselor Association. (2014a). *The school counselor and group counseling*. Alexandria, VA: Author. Retrieved from https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PS_Group-Counseling.pdf
- American School Counselor Association. (2014b). *Mindsets and behaviors for student success: K-12 college- and career-readiness standards for every student*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Brigman, G., & Campbell, C. (2003). Helping students improve academic achievement and school success behavior. *Professional School Counseling, 7*, 91-98.
- Brigman, G., & Goodman, B. E. (2008). *Group counseling for school counselors: A practical guide*. (3rd ed.). Portland, ME: Walch Publishing.
- Brigman, G., & Webb, L. (2007a). Student success skills. Retrieved from <http://www.studentsuccessskills.com>
- Brigman, G., & Webb, L. (2007b). Student success skills: Impacting achievement through large and small group work. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice, 11*(4), 283-292. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2699.11.4.283>
- Brown, D., & Trusty, J. (2005). School counselors, comprehensive school counseling programs, and academic achievement: Are school counselors promising more than they can deliver? *Professional School Counseling, 9*, 1-8.
- Burlingame, G. M., MacKenzie, K. R., & Strauß, B. (2004). Evidence-based small group treatments. *Handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Campbell, C., & Brigman, G. (2005). Closing the achievement gap: A structured approach to group counseling. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 30*, 67-82.
- Cook, J. B. (2016). *What is the role of the school counselor in RTI?* Retrieved from http://www.rtinetwork.org/index2.php?option=com_content&task=emailform&id=288&Itemid=40
- Cook, J. B., & Kaffenberger, C. J. (2003). Solution shop: A solution-focused counseling and study skills program for middle school. *Professional School Counseling, 7*, 116-123.
- Fleming, D. (2000). *The AEL guide to action research*. Charleston, WV: Appalachia Educational Lab.
- Forman, S. G., Olin, S. S., Hoagwood, K. E., Crowe, M., & Saka, N. (2009). Evidence-based interventions in schools: Developers' views of implementation barriers and facilitators. *School Mental Health, 1*, 26-36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-008-9002-5>.
- Greenberg, M. T., Weissberg, R. P., O'Brien, M. U., Zins, J. E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H., & Elias, M. J. (2003). Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning. *American Psychologist, 58*(6/7), 466-474. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.58.6-7.466>
- Gulsecen, S., and Kubat, A., (2006). Teaching ICT to teacher candidates using PBL: A qualitative and quantitative evaluation. *Educational Technology & Society, 9*(2), 96-106.
- Harkavy, I., Puckett, J., & Romer, D. (2000). Action research: Bridging service and research. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* (special issue), 113-118.
- King, L. (2006). *Academic advisement program for grades 4 – 6: Lesson, activities, games, and reproducible forms and handouts to help students become more successful in school*. Chapin, SC: Youthlight.
- McNiff, J. (2013). *Action research: Principles and practice*. London, UK: Routledge.
- McWhirter, J. J., McWhirter, B. T., McWhirter, E. H., & McWhirter, R. J. (2007). *At risk youth: A comprehensive response for counselors, teachers, psychologists and human service professionals* (4th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.
- National Center for Learning Disabilities. (2016). What is RTI? Retrieved from: <http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whatisrti>
- Ockerman, M. S., Mason, E., & Hollenbeck, A. F. (2012). Integrating RTI with school counseling programs: Being a proactive professional school counselor. *Journal of School Counseling, 10*(15). Retrieved from <http://jsc.montana.edu/articles/v10n15.pdf>

- Shi, Q., & Steen, S. (2012). Using the Achieving Success Everyday (ASE) group model to promote self-esteem and academic achievement for English as a second language (ESL) students. *Professional School Counseling, 16*, 63-70. <https://doi.org/10.5330/PSC.n.2012-16.63>
- Steen, S., Bauman, S., & Smith, J. (2007). Professional school counselors and the practice of group work. *Professional School Counseling, 11*, 72-80.
- Steen, S., & Kaffenberger, C. J. (2007). Integrating academic interventions into small group counseling in elementary school. *Professional School Counseling, 10*, 516-519.
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Response to Intervention. (2010). *Essential components of RTI: A closer look at response to intervention*. Retrieved from http://www.rti4success.org/sites/default/files/rtiessentialcomponents_042710.pdf
- Whiston, S. C., & Quimby, R. F. (2009). Review of school counseling outcome research. *Psychology in the Schools, 46*(3), 267-272. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20372>
- Wright, J. (2012, March 15). *The academic enabling skills: Interventions for middle and high school students*. Paper presented at the Technical Assistance Meeting for Committee on Special Education Chairpersons. Lake Placid, NY.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Young, A., & Kaffenberger, C. (2011). The beliefs and practices of school counselors who use data to implement comprehensive school counseling programs. *Professional School Counseling, 14*, 67-76.
- Zins, J., Weissberg, R., Wang, M., & Walberg, H. (Eds.). (2004). *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

