

ROLE OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELOR  
IN STUDENT REGISTRATION

by 1264

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

The role of the counselor in the secondary school has been the subject for many papers. Much of this writing appears to be on an ideal level and does not deal directly with many of the problems faced by secondary counselors. A study by Stewart summarized some of these problems.<sup>1</sup> The majority of these complaints causing the gap between theory and practice were clerical and administrative in nature. Counselors, for example, were responsible for determining and meting out discipline, handling absentees and truancy, recording test grades and scores on school records, and serving as a substitute teacher and general errand runner.

Other duties faced by secondary counselors are discussed only sparingly or not at all in the literature. One duty not discussed is that of secondary counselors being responsible for student registration. In discussions with Kansas secondary counselors, it was apparent that counselors do have, in varying degrees, responsibility for this task. But it was equally apparent that there was no consensus of opinion on the question of counselors doing student registration.

The scarcity of articles on the question of student scheduling and registration and the counselor's role therein, combined with an apparent lack of consensus of opinion among counselors, raised numerous questions. The first question would be one of semantics. It was probable and likely that each counselor would have a different definition for the words scheduling and registration. Each counselor's definition would likely

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<sup>1</sup> C. C. Stewart, "A Bill of Rights for School Counselors", Personnel and Guidance Journal, Vol. 37 No. 7:500-503, March, 1959.

be related to his particular school situation. The first task would be to clarify the meaning of these two words.

A second item would be to attempt to determine the counselor's role in these areas. Namely, are counselors doing registration and if the answer is yes, to what extent are they involved? If counselors are doing registration, are they encroaching on an administrative and/or clerical task that correspondingly reduces their time for counseling? And if counselors are doing registration, do they feel that this is their duty?

Statement of Problem. The purpose of this investigation was to determine the role of the secondary counselor in student scheduling and registration. Specifically the objectives of this investigation were:

1. To determine if counselors help students plan their school programs and if counselors feel this is their duty.
2. To determine if counselors register their students in these programs and if counselors feel this is their duty.
3. To determine how much time counselors estimate they spend in planning student programs and/or student registration.
4. To determine if counselors prepare the master schedule and if counselors feel this is their duty.

Research Design. This investigation was a combination library report and research project. The library at Kansas State University was used for supplementary information. A questionnaire was constructed and mailed to selected school counselors in schools with an enrollment of 500 or more in northeast and north-central Kansas. Enrollments were based on the 1968-1969 edition of the Kansas School Directory. There was no attempt to determine if each counselor was fully qualified according to the policies of the State Department of Education. There was also no attempt to

determine if each counselor was working full-time or part-time.

The locations of the schools surveyed were a matter of geography and population. The major population centers and largest schools are generally found in northeast and north-central Kansas. The one notable exception is the Wichita area which was not included.

All schools with an enrollment of a thousand or more in the described area were contacted. There were numerous schools with enrollments between five hundred and six hundred. About one-half of these schools in the described area were contacted. The schools were selected at random. All schools with enrollments of seven hundred to a thousand were contacted.

The figure of five hundred enrollment as a dividing point was selected for several reasons. First, it would be expected that schools with an enrollment of five hundred or more would have a more varied curriculum. This in turn implies that students would have more of a choice of classes and in larger schools a choice between academic or general-vocational programs of study. This would then imply that more counseling would be needed to help the student select those classes or programs that best fit his needs.

A second reason was that with larger enrollments and more classes and programs available, more time could be expected to be spent in scheduling and registration.

The schools in the sample were divided into three categories: group A schools with an enrollment of 500-999, group B schools with an enrollment of 1000-1499, and group C schools with an enrollment of 1500 and over. The reason for this breakdown was to see if there were differences between the groups in the counselor's definition of his role in theory and practice in scheduling and registration.

The final sample consisted of thirty-two schools; eleven schools in group A, eleven schools in group B, and ten schools in group C. Enrollments at the first of the year were used and if a school was at the dividing point, it was assigned to the next group. Answers were tabulated as "yes" or "no" and percentages for each answer were computed. There was no statistical weighting of questions and no special statistical devices were employed.

Limitations. One limitation was in defining the words scheduling and registration. Once the words were defined, they would have to be adapted to each school situation and reconciled so that comparisons could be made.

A major limitation was obtaining a large enough sample. Although as many schools as possible were contacted, it should be kept in mind that the sample is small and it is probably not possible to draw any major conclusions from the survey.

Definition of Terms. The words used in this investigation are defined so that the reader will understand what is meant when they are used.

1. Curriculum - The classes offered by a particular school.
2. Master schedule - A list that shows what classes are to be taught, at what hour, and by which teachers.
3. Enrollment - The process of placing students in classes according to the master schedule.
4. Registration - Synonymous with enrollment.
5. Scheduling - The work of helping students plan their high school programs and selecting the appropriate classes.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The subject of the counselor's role in student registration is covered sparingly in the literature. Textbooks surveyed by this writer do not discuss the question. Most texts seem to be in agreement that one of the counselor's primary concerns is helping students formulate educational and vocational plans which implies that the counselor would assist the student in selecting classes. This statement would fit the definition of scheduling as used in this investigation.

Articles in the professional literature that did deal with the counselor's role were located. A number of these articles discussed administrative and clerical duties assumed by the counselor which were in opposition to a counselor's defined role.

As already noted in Chapter I, Stewart conducted a nationwide survey which indicated that many counselors were accepting administrative and clerical duties. A study discussing the counselor's role in terms of time spent was done by Tennyson.<sup>2</sup> This study had some indirect references regarding scheduling. The study investigated how counselors spent their time versus how they believed it should be spent. The four major services and the estimate of time spent in each were: assistance to students, 60.6 per cent; assistance to teachers, 13.6 per cent; assistance to administration, 21.6 per cent; and research assistance, 4.0 per cent. Counselors reported that they should spend more time in all areas except administration which should be reduced to 12.1 per cent which is almost one-half.

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<sup>2</sup> Willard Tennyson, "Time: The Counselor's Dilemma", Personnel and Guidance Journal, Vol. 37, No. 2:129-135, October, 1958.

This indicates that many counselors felt they were accepting too many administrative duties.

The assistance to students was divided into several areas. One of the areas was counseling which accounted for almost one-half of the time. Of this counseling, about one-third was spent in academic advising which consisted of helping students determine educational needs and planning appropriate courses of study. Some counselors in the study indicated that they would spend less time in this area.

An older study done by Hitchcock supported to some extent Tennyson's results.<sup>3</sup> He did a study which revealed that forty per cent of the respondents felt that academic advising was not their role. Conversely, sixty per cent, did feel that academic advising was their role. In this study, counselors indicated so much that was not their role that one would question these counselors as to the understanding of their role.

These two studies indicated that counselors were involved in scheduling which was defined as academic advising. These studies also indicated that some of these counselors felt this was not their role. Why these counselors felt that academic advising, or scheduling, was not their role was not explained. One possible explanation is that in scheduling a counselor might be required to review graduation requirements and credits for each student to see if there are any deficiencies. This is a task that could routinely be performed by a clerk or secretary. Hitchcock's study offered no definition of academic advising and it is possible that the term means different things in each study and that it would not be

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<sup>3</sup> William Hitchcock, "Counselors Feel They Should", Personnel and Guidance Journal, Vol. 32, No. 2:72-74, October, 1953.



possible to equate the two.

More recent studies, especially in the counselors professional literature, defined even more narrowly the role of the counselor. These studies show a trend toward the thinking that certain areas of registration are not a counselor's duty and that certain areas are. The trend in the literature was toward the position that a counselor should assist students in formulating educational and vocational plans. As part of this, the counselor would help the student select the appropriate classes. The counselor should not assign the hours, room numbers, teachers, or perform other clerical duties that involve placing the student in the classes that he has selected.

Berlyn, for example, stated that, "Programming is an administrative function. The counselor assists by counseling each pupil...A clerk can do the actual signing up of a pupil for a specific course of study."<sup>4</sup>

Dunlop in a more recent article elaborated this position.<sup>5</sup> Dunlop's article was concerned with the counselor being used as a clerk and not as a professional. It was noted that it was appropriate that students consult with a counselor when programs of study are worked out. But the counselor is then poorly used when he is asked to work out a period by period development of a student's schedule. A clerk could adequately perform these tasks.

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<sup>4</sup> Sumner Berlyn, "Counselor or Clerk", School Counselor, Vol. 7, No. 4:84-86, May, 1960.

<sup>5</sup> Richard S. Dunlop, "Counselors; Specialized Professional or Super Clerks", The Journal of the Professional Counselors Association, Vol. 1, No. 3:7-8, May-June, 1969.

That this position is not always idealized was reported by Gold.<sup>6</sup> Gold was dissatisfied with other counselors' estimates of how their time was spent. He considered these estimates inaccurate as they were based on memory and recall. He analyzed the amount of time he himself spent in various tasks. The results were that he spent forty-six per cent of his time in clerical activities. At the head of these clerical activities was making out student programs. At the head of non-clerical activities were pupil visits for programming. Gold did not define programming further in the article. One may assume that making out student programs would involve assigning students to classes. The students' visits for programming may have been for the purpose of helping students select classes.

Even though this article was an analysis of one counselor's time and may not be valid, it does show a common line of thinking regarding a counselor's duties.

The duty of a counselor helping students plan programs and select classes appears to be one of the student's main understandings of what a counselor does. Williams conducted an investigation into this topic.<sup>7</sup> Students completed an open-ended statement as to what they thought a counselor's duty was. The responses were analyzed and tallied. Helping with problems was first choice for both boys and girls. The second choice by both boys and girls was choosing subjects best suited for a student. The third choice again by both boys and girls was planning a student's

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<sup>6</sup> Frank Gold, "A Counselor's Time Study," School Counselor, Vol. 7, No. 4:84-86, May, 1960.

<sup>7</sup> Jack Williams, "High School Students Understanding of the Duties of their Counselor", School Counselor, Vol. 7, No. 3:56-59, March, 1960.

program. Both choices were selected by about one-third of the students in the sample.

The articles that discussed student scheduling and registration seemed to be in agreement on certain basic factors. These factors were that counselors should be spending more time counseling students and less time in activities that would take a counselor away from counseling students. Some of this counseling would be spent in helping students to formulate educational and vocational plans and to select classes to meet those plans. The counselor would not be required to perform the paper work that would insure that the student was placed in the classes that he had selected.

Although no articles were located that discussed the counselor's role in constructing a master schedule, generalizations may be drawn based on the studies reviewed.

It would first be agreed that making a master schedule is primarily a paper and pencil task that could be defined as clerical work. The articles discussed were of the consensus that counselors should be accepting less clerical duties. Also constructing a master schedule would involve handling personnel, such as assignment of teachers, assignment of hours and rooms, and making best usage of existing facilities all within the school's budget. Nowhere in the literature reviewed was it even suggested that counselors should be handling any of these duties.

An argument can be made that counselors should act as consultants in constructing the master schedule which would appear to be a reasonable approach. This is because, hopefully, a counselor would be in an ideal position to know what classes should or should not be offered to meet students' needs or how existing classes could be modified to meet students' needs.

Based on these thoughts, it is assumed that counselors should not have the duty of constructing the master schedule; constructing the master schedule should primarily be an administrative function.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Thirty-two questionnaires were mailed and twenty-seven were returned. The twenty-seven returned questionnaires were tabulated and broken down into their respective groups.

In group A schools with an enrollment of 500-999 students, eleven questionnaires were mailed and ten were returned. In group B schools with an enrollment of 1000-1499 students, eleven questionnaires were mailed and nine were returned. In group C schools with an enrollment of 1500 students and over, ten questionnaires were mailed and eight were returned. The final figure for returned questionnaires was 84.3 per cent; the percentage of returned questionnaires for each group was: Group A, 90.9; Group B, 81.8; and Group C, 80.0.

Item one asked each respondent to write in the number of counselors in their respective schools. The results are presented in Table I. An examination of the data shows a wide range in enrollments in each of the three groups. The data also indicated the most favorable counselor-student ratios were found in the smallest schools in the first two groups. The data also shows that the number of counselors increased by one in each group. The average number of counselors in group A was 2.1; the average number of counselors in group B was 3.2; and the average number of counselors in group C was 4.7. But in spite of this increase in number of counselors, the counselor-student ratio becomes larger rather than smaller.

For each group of schools, means in enrollment, number of counselors and counselor-student ratios were figured. The reader should keep in mind that these figures were influenced by the extremes on each end of the range in enrollments.

TABLE I  
 RESPONSE TO ITEM ONE:  
 NUMBER OF COUNSELORS AND COUNSELOR-STUDENT  
 RATIO IN THE SCHOOLS

Schools	Number	Enrollment	Number of Counselors	Counselor-Student Ratio
Group A 500-999	1	501	2	1:250
	2	543	2	1:271
	3	554	2	1:277
	4	556	1.5	1:370
	5	609	2	1:305
	6	661	3	1:220
	7	731	2	1:365
	8	842	2	1:421
	9	909	2	1:454
	10	925	3	1:308
	Average	683	2.1	1:341.5
Group B 1000-1499	1	1025	3	1:342
	2	1054	3	1:351
	3	1083	3	1:361
	4	1083	3	1:361
	5	1112	2	1:556
	6	1259	3	1:419
	7	1297	3	1:432
	8	1380	3	1:460
	9	1439	6	1:240
	Average	1323	3.2	1:412.8
Group C Over 1500	1	1583	4	1:375
	2	1777	4	1:444
	3	1804	4	1:451
	4	2062	5	1:412
	5	2100	5	1:420
	6	2300	5	1:460
	7	2342	6	1:297
	8	2476	5	1:495
	Average	2055	4.7	1:437.2

It should be noted that the median figures for enrollment and counselor-student ratios are somewhat lower than the mean in the first two groups of schools, A and B. The mean and median figures for group C schools are approximately the same.

Item two was designed to determine if one counselor had sole responsibility for student registration. The results are presented in Table II. The data showed a difference among the three groups. The difference was that the smallest group of schools, group A, had the highest percentage of counselors assuming sole responsibility for student registration. The other two groups did not have this high a percentage.

In the five schools where one counselor had sole responsibility for student registration, the average enrollment was 634. In the five schools where one counselor did not have sole responsibility for student registration, the average enrollment was 732. The trend was that the smaller the school the more probable that one counselor would assume sole responsibility for the student registration.

TABLE II  
RESPONSE TO ITEM TWO:  
DOES ONE COUNSELOR HAVE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY  
FOR STUDENT REGISTRATION?

Schools	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Group A	5	50.0%	5	50.0%
Group B	1	11.1%	8	88.9%
Group C	1	12.5%	7	87.5%

Item three dealing with the problem of counselors constructing the master schedule is presented in Table III. The results indicated, that in general, most counselors are not preparing the master schedule. In groups A and B schools, the results indicated that about one out of three counselors was preparing the master schedule while in group C schools, only one counselor in eight was preparing the master schedule. In group A schools, two of the counselors answering yes came from schools with enrollments of 543 and 546. The third counselor who answered yes came from a school with an enrollment of 925. In group B schools the three yes answers by counselors were from schools with enrollments of 1083, 1259, and 1439. The data indicated there was no trend for the counselor in the schools with the smallest enrollments to assume the duty of constructing the master schedule.

TABLE III

RESPONSE TO ITEM THREE:  
DO COUNSELORS PREPARE THE MASTER SCHEDULE?

Schools	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Group A	3	30.0%	7	70.0%
Group B	3	33.3%	6	66.7%
Group C	1	12.5%	7	87.5%

Item four was a follow-up to item three and asked if constructing the master schedule was a counselor's duty. The results are presented in Table IV. The results in this survey indicated that counselors do not believe that constructing the master schedule is a counselor's duty. Of



TABLE IV  
 RESPONSE TO ITEM FOUR:  
 DO YOU FEEL THAT PREPARING THE MASTER SCHEDULE  
 SHOULD BE YOUR DUTY?

Schools	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Group A	1	10.0%	9	90.0%
Group B	2	22.2%	7	77.8%
Group C	0	-----	8	100.0%

the seven counselors constructing master schedules in question three, only three believed this was their duty. No counselor not now constructing the master schedule checked that this was a counselor's duty.

In items three and four, all counselors, regardless of school enrollment, answered the same way. There were no major differences among the three groups.

Item five asked if counselors helped students plan their high school programs. The results are shown in Table V. The results were unanimous as all twenty-seven counselors answered yes.

TABLE V  
 RESPONSE TO ITEM FIVE:  
 DO COUNSELORS HELP STUDENTS PLAN THEIR  
 HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS?

Schools	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Group A	10	100.0%	--	-----
Group B	9	100.0%	--	-----
Group C	8	100.0%	--	-----

Item six was a follow-up to question five. The question asked if helping students plan their programs was a counselor's duty. The results can be found in Table VI. After the unanimous response in question five, unanimity might also have been expected in this question. However, two counselors answered no. One of the counselors who answered no wrote in the margin of the question, "helping not planning". The other counselor offered no explanation for his answer.

TABLE VI  
RESPONSE TO ITEM SIX:  
DO YOU FEEL THAT PLANNING STUDENT PROGRAMS  
SHOULD BE YOUR DUTY?

Schools	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Group A	8	80.0%	2	20.0%
Group B	9	100.0%	--	-----
Group C	8	100.0%	--	-----

Items five and six were the two questions that produced the most agreement. There was no difference among the three groups in answering these questions. This would indicate that the counselors in this sample would agree with one of the most traditional roles of a high school counselor; namely helping students plan programs of study.

Item seven asked if counselors handled student registration. The results are shown in Table VII. The results show that, in this survey, counselors are doing student registration. The smallest schools, group A, had the highest percentage of counselors doing registration although in the other schools, groups B and C, at least two out of three counselors

were doing student registration.

TABLE VII  
RESPONSE TO ITEM SEVEN:  
DO COUNSELORS HANDLE STUDENT REGISTRATION?

Schools	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Group A	9	90.0%	1	10.0%
Group B	6	66.7%	3	33.3%
Group C	5	62.5%	3	37.5%

Item eight was a follow-up to question seven and asked if registration was a counselor's duty. The results in Table VIII showed that the counselors were almost evenly divided in their answers. There did not appear to be any clear trend in the response to this question.

TABLE VIII  
RESPONSE TO ITEM EIGHT:  
DO YOU FEEL THAT STUDENT REGISTRATION  
SHOULD BE YOUR DUTY?

Schools	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Group A	6	60.0%	4	40.0%
Group B	4	44.4%	5	55.6%
Group C	4	50.0%	4	50.0%

One method of examining these results is to combine items seven and eight. In item seven, nine counselors in group A schools stated they were doing registration. In item eight, six of these counselors stated that

this was their duty. Stated more simply, 67 per cent of the counselors doing registration felt it was their duty. In group B schools, four of six counselors doing registration, 67 per cent, felt that it was their duty. In group C schools, four of five counselors doing registration, 80 per cent, felt that it was their duty.

The results showed that the sample was divided in its opinions. A total of 74.1 per cent of the counselors in the sample were doing registration. Of those counselors doing registration 71.0 per cent reported that registration was their duty. The data indicated that most counselors doing registration felt that it was their duty while counselors not doing registration felt that it was not their duty. It should be noted that there were no major differences among counselors based on school enrollment.

Item nine asked counselors to check how registration was done if not done by counselors. The results are presented in Table IX.

TABLE IX  
 RESPONSE TO ITEM NINE:  
 IF YOU DO NOT HANDLE STUDENT REGISTRATION  
 PLEASE CHECK WHICH IS APPLICABLE IN YOUR SCHOOL.

Schools	Computers	School Clerks	Other School Personnel
Group A	---	1	2
Group B	1	1	1
Group C	5	2	1

Referring to item seven, only one counselor in group A schools checked that he was not doing registration. One other counselor who had stated in item seven that he was doing registration indicated that school clerks and other school personnel helped.

The group B counselor's answers were consistent with item seven. In item seven, three counselors checked that they were not doing registration; in question nine each checked a separate category.

The group C counselor's answers requires some explanations in order to fit the results in item seven. In item seven, three counselors checked that they were not doing registration. These three counselors then checked item nine as follows: one counselor checked computers and school clerks, the second counselor checked computers and assistant principal, and the third counselor checked computers only.

In addition, two other counselors who stated that they were doing registration then checked item nine as follows: one counselor checked computers and school clerks and the second checked computers only.

Finally, one counselor in Group C that stated he was doing registration commented that their school had two full-time secretaries and their counselors were not concerned about accepting certain administrative duties. This counselor did not check any answers in item nine and his comments were not added to the total by the writer. The results of this item showed a rather clear trend was present. This trend was that the biggest schools had the most help in registration and there tended to be a combination of methods used. In group C schools, approximately two out of three schools were providing some assistance to counselors in registration. The survey also indicated that in group C schools, data processing methods were used by a majority.

Item ten asked counselors to estimate the time spent in scheduling and registration. The results are presented in Table X.

TABLE X

RESPONSE TO ITEM TEN:  
PLEASE ESTIMATE THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF TIME  
COUNSELORS SPEND IN REGISTRATION AND/OR  
PLANNING OF STUDENT PROGRAMS.

Schools	Less than 10%		10%-25%		25%-50%		Over 50%	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Group A	3	30.0%	5	50.0%	1	10.0%	1	10.0%
Group B	1	11.1%	3	33.3%	4	44.4%	1	11.1%
Group C	---	-----	6	75.5%	2	25.0%	---	-----

The most common time estimate was 10-25 per cent and in fact slightly over one-half of the sample checked this answer. It should be noted, though, that about one-third of the counselors estimated spending more than 25 per cent of their time in scheduling and registration. The counselor's estimates were more on the high side than on the low side.

The counselors in schools in item nine that reported assistance in student registration did not report lower time estimates and in fact several of these schools checked higher time estimates.

## CHAPTER IV

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the role of the secondary counselor in student scheduling and registration.

The investigation was a combination library report and research project. Questionnaires were constructed and mailed to school counselors in northeast and north-central Kansas. All schools with an enrollment of eight hundred or over were contacted. Schools with an enrollment of five hundred to seven hundred were selected at random from the described area.

The schools were divided into three categories: group A schools with enrollments of 500-999, group B schools with enrollments of 1000-1499, and group C schools with enrollments of 1500 or over. The reason for the categories was to determine if there were any differences between the groups in the counselor's definition of his role in theory and practice in scheduling and registration. The final sample consisted of thirty-two schools: eleven schools in group A, eleven schools in group B, and ten schools in group C.

The question of the counselor's role in scheduling and registration was discussed sparingly in the literature. The studies located showed a trend toward a common line of thinking. This trend was that counselors would assist the student in formulating educational and vocational goals of which helping the student select the appropriate classes would be a part. Registration, which would mean placing the student in the classes he has selected, would be done primarily by secretaries, with the assistance of data processing methods if available, with the counselor assuming a supervisory role.

Thirty-two questionnaires were mailed and twenty-seven questionnaires were returned.

The first item dealt with the number of counselors and the counselor-student ratios in the individual schools. The data indicated that the most favorable counselor-student ratios were found in the smallest schools.

The data then revealed that one-third of the counselors were constructing the master schedule but only a small percentage of these counselors reported this was their duty.

All counselors in the study were helping students plan programs of study and a majority of the counselors accepted this as their duty.

The data further indicated that 75 per cent of the counselors were doing student registration. The counselors doing registration generally reported they felt this was their duty. The counselors not doing registration replied that registration was not a counselor's duty.

All counselors were actively involved in scheduling and registration. The most common estimate of time spent in these two areas was from one-fourth to one-third. The schools with the larger enrollments generally provided the most assistance to counselors. This assistance commonly was in the form of secretaries and in the largest schools data processing methods were also used.

Conclusions. The reader should keep in mind that the sample covered only twenty-seven schools and the conclusions may or may not apply to other schools.

The purposes of the investigation will be considered in light of the results.

The first objective was to determine if counselors helped students plan school programs and if counselors felt this was their duty. The results