

The School Counselor

Myth Buster Course

Understanding the Role of Your School Counselor



MYTH

The school counselor has magical powers to "fix" the problem behaviors of students.



FACT

Remember that New Year's Resolution you made? Change is HARD and takes TIME. School counselors help students identify 1) readiness for change, 2) reasons for change, 3) steps to change, and 4) support for change.

MYTH

School counselors handle all 504 and Special Education accommodations.

FACT

AMS Counselors are currently campus 504 Coordinators with over 100 students this year. However, we are NOT Special Education Coordinators. At this time, we can assist you the 504 accommodations/plans but we do NOT get you the SPED accommodations or handle SPED in any way.



MYTH

The school counselor's role is to "discipline" students with behavior problems.



FACT

The school counselor helps students reflect on their behavior and identify opportunities for change. We are not here to "punish" students. Administration handles "discipline" issues.

Just because we are in Student Services with AP's does not mean we are AP's or do the same thing they do.

Myth

School counselors are too "easy" on students and enable bad behaviors.

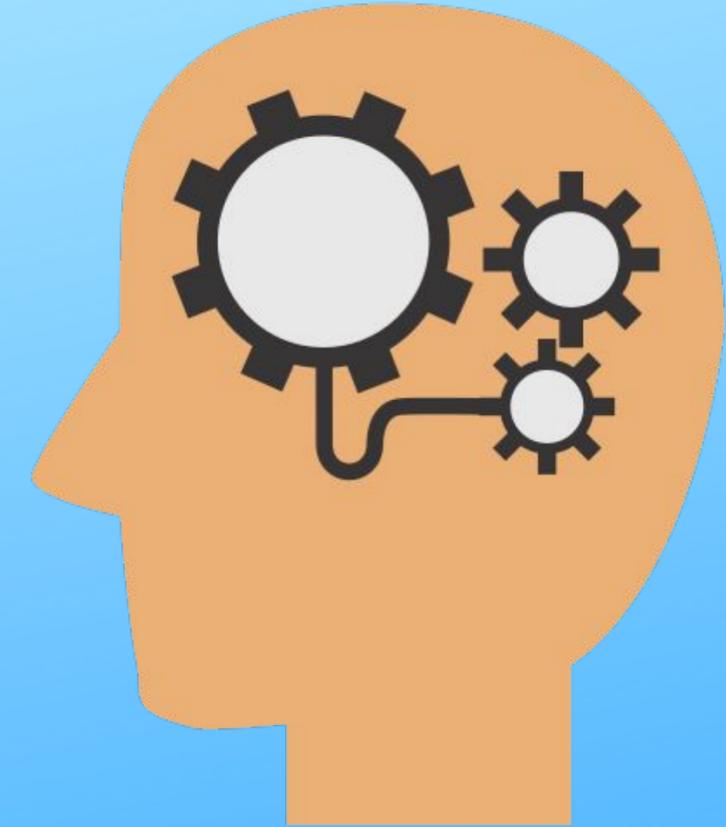
FACT

Counselors are aware that children's behaviors have been shaped by a variety of factors, including past experiences and environmental situations. Children may display behaviors that are maladaptive in the classroom, but may have served a purpose at some point in their lives. Counselors often use the concept of positive reinforcement and we promote solution focused brief counseling!



MYTH

Students who "act out" are always seeking attention.



FACT

Behavior is complex. The 4 Functions of Behavior below help us think about what drives student behavior.

- Sensory - "feels good" or "feels calming" to the student
- Escape - to avoid situations or activities the student does not like
- Tangible - to gain access to a desirable activity or item, such as a toy
- Attention - to get positive or negative attention from teachers, peers, or others

MYTH

The focus of school should be academics, not student's emotional and social needs.

FACT

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs teaches us that students' PHYSICAL and SAFETY needs must be met BEFORE they are able to focus on learning. Children must feel safe, healthy, and have their basic needs - food, shelter, etc - met.



MYTH

I have the RIGHT to complain.



FACT

Both positivity and negativity are contagious. Which do you want to be known for? If you are unhappy about a situation, talk with a trusted colleague privately about your concerns.

MYTH

The counselor will only work with students during lunch or non-academic times.

FACT

School counselors typically serve anywhere from 300 to 800 students! Here at AMS, we each serve about 370. Wow!

School counselors respect the important work of teachers. Sometimes we may have to see a student during their academic time due to: 1) safety issues, 2) urgent emotional/mental health needs, or 3) other time-sensitive concerns. Thanks for your understanding as we work together in the best interests of our students!



MYTH

School counselors are super heroes who can do anything and everything!



FACT

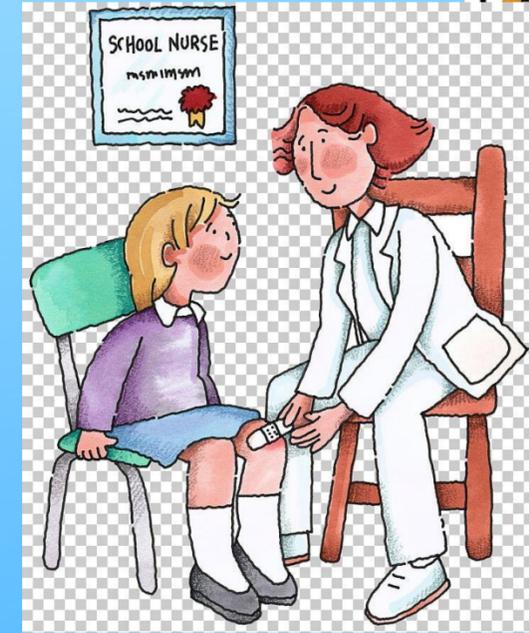
School counselors sometimes get tired, anxious, frustrated, and discouraged - just like anyone else. Counselors are involved in many stressful, and sometimes sad, situations. We love helping others, but we can't forget to take care of ourselves!

MYTH

School counselors provide long-term and deep therapy to students!

FACT

School counselors sometimes see students many times but never long-term and never to do deep therapy. Counselors are much like school nurses in that we help students temporarily “fix” what is wrong so that they can go back to class and refer out for more complex issues!



MYTH

The school counselor's schedule doesn't look busy. What does the school counselor do all day?

FACT

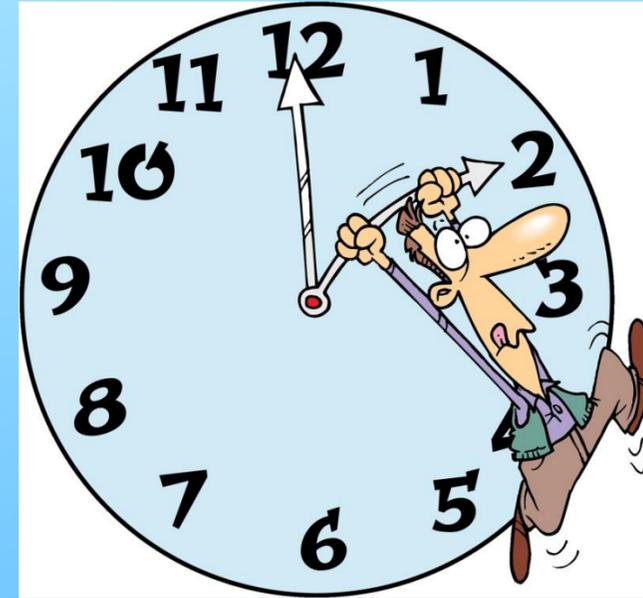
The school counselor's schedule can look different every day!

We often have "unexpected" situations or tasks to manage throughout the day. Some activities, such as crisis response, can require hours of our time. Many school counselors, such as AMS, have caseloads above the American School Counselor Association recommended ratio of 250 students to every 1 school counselor in addition to being 504 Coordinators and other expected tasks, but student care is our #1 priority.



MYTH:

When we have a situation that we don't know what to do with or don't have time for, the counselor can handle it...they don't do anything.



FACT

School counselors stay busy most every minute of every day with something either planned or “unexpected”. We may or may not be able to help you. We certainly want to but our focus must be on our students. In fact, the State of Texas mandated in SB 179 that 80% of a school counselor's time should be on COUNSELING duties and only 20% on non-counseling tasks.

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We hope that "busting these myths" helps you better understand the role of school counselors and how we can help YOU and YOUR STUDENTS! Please reach out to us with any additional questions or concerns.