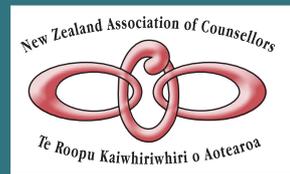


Do They Make A Difference?

YES



School Guidance Counsellors actively improve both student wellbeing and education outcomes.¹

A school counsellor is a specialised education professional. They assist students to deal with personal, social or behavioural issues that put their wellbeing, learning and school achievement at risk. In some instances, they may also assist staff colleagues or school families/whānau.

3/4 of NZ school counsellors have a Post Graduate or Masters counselling qualification. Most are registered teachers. The majority are NZAC members.²

NZ and International research shows that “the enhancement of student wellbeing is emerging as an important approach to the development of a student’s social, emotional and academic competence and a significant contribution to the ongoing battle to prevent youth depression, suicide, self harm, anti-social behaviour (including bullying and violence) and substance abuse.”³

Research also shows that the five key competencies of the NZ curriculum (thinking, using language symbols and texts, managing self, relating to others and participating and contributing) are closely woven into a student’s counselling experience as solutions are co-constructed. In fact, the counselling room serves as much as the classroom as a contributor to student learning.⁴

1 Counsellor: 400 Students is the ratio of counsellor to students recommended by the New Zealand Association of Counsellors

- 1.(a) Education Review Office (2013) [Improving Guidance and Counselling for Students in Secondary Schools](#)
(b) Welsh Government Social Research (2011) [Evaluation of Welsh School-based Counselling Strategy](#)
2. New Zealand Association of Counsellors (2011) [Member Survey](#)
3. Noble, T. & Wyatt, T. (2008) Scoping study into approaches to student wellbeing Canberra. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
4. NZ Journal of Counselling, (2013) Volume 33 Number 1: School Counsellors and the key competencies: The difference that makes the difference.
5. Education Review Office (2013) [Improving Guidance and Counselling for Students in Secondary Schools pg 13](#)
6. Education Review Office (2013) [Improving Guidance and Counselling for Students in Secondary Schools pg 4](#)

NZ's top youth problems identified⁵

Found in all NZ deciles and school locations:

poor mental health
relationships issues
significant family difficulties
bullying
drugs and alcohol
household poverty

Youth Issues are increasingly complex.⁶

“Crucially, our school counsellors enable a full assessment and a picture of the factors impacting on student wellbeing and assist our management of risk in the school environment.”

Tom Parsons, Principal
Queen Charlotte College, Picton
(Past President SPANZ)

*He aha te mea
nui o te ao?
He tangata! He tangata!
He tangata!*

*What is the most important
thing in the world?
It is people! It is people!
It is people!*

Boards of Trustees and Principals are required to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students

The National Administration Guideline 5 [NAG5] Health and Safety¹ requires this to maximise the opportunity for a young person to be a successful, engaged learner.

What does a School Counsellor do?

We help to manage risk around complex issues as a point of 'first screening' students can readily access, with no barrier to them.

We use skills, knowledge and therapeutic approaches to assist students to:

- be listened to, in privacy and with confidentiality
- safely get through moments of crisis and manage ongoing risk
- externalise their issues and explore their impact
- find solution-focused strategies to use
- identify their strengths
- learn key emotional competencies
- strengthen their sense of self, and self esteem
- build resilience
- source key information, other services and resources relevant to their situation
- be advocated for, as needed
- be encouraged, motivated and empowered.

We often assist families/ whānau to communicate well with their teen and to identify ways to support them.

We also regularly play a key role in planning and implementing programmes and services to enhance student wellbeing.

“If only my school knew...”

Students come from diverse backgrounds. Many cope with life situations that are invisible to the eye, but which negatively affect their capacity to engage, learn and achieve in their school life.

More students are regularly exposed to adverse experiences than most realise.

Some will come to school preoccupied by the impact of current distress, trauma or fear which can “often sabotage their ability to hear and understand a teacher’s positive messages, to perform well academically, and to behave appropriately.”²

The Youth 2012 Survey,³ involving 8500 NZ secondary school students, tell us:

- 6 - 7 % bullied at school at least weekly
- 1 in six girls (16.2 %) and 1 in 12 boys (8.6 %) show significant depressive symptoms
- 29.1 % of girls harm themselves (up from 26 % 2007) and 17.9 % of boys (up from 15.5 % 2007)
- 6.2 % of girls and 2.4 % of boys had attempted suicide
- 29 % live in more than one home
- 69 % worried parents did not have enough money for food
- 25% of girls touched in a sexual way or made to do unwanted sexual things
- 23% of boys and 22.2% of girls binge-drink
- 50% of all students use alcohol
- 14% use cannabis

“ I felt rubbish. Most days I thought about ending my life. I sometimes thought...if only they knew. My marks took a dive. I didn't care. My teachers said I wasn't trying. Every day was a nightmare. One day I just saw the counsellor's door and walked in. It was a relief to tell. He helped me through depression, which I didn't know I had. And also with some stuff that was happening at home. It was good he was there that day.

James

1. Ministry of Education (2013) [The National Administration Guideline 5 \[NAG 5\] Health and Safety](#)

2. Massachusetts Advocates for Children: Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, in collaboration with Harvard Law School and The Task Force on Children Affected by Domestic Violence (2005) [The Impact of Trauma on Learning, pg 17.](#)

3. University of Auckland (2013) [2012 Youth Survey Overview](#)

Benefits of Guidance Counselling include:

UP

1. Increased student engagement across ethnicities
2. Improved attendance and retention
3. Improved student achievement and progress
4. Increased self and peer referral

DOWN

1. Reduction in stand downs/ suspensions
2. Reduced significant incidents

ERO identified that schools/ wharekura with very well supported students use the skills of Guidance Counsellors²

These schools share the following key features:

1. Strong leadership
2. Strategic resourcing of people, time and space
3. People with the professional capacity to help students manage their problems or refer them to expert help
4. Clear expectations around guidance and counselling practice
5. Good relationships and communication both internal and external to the school/ wharekura.

Is student wellbeing indicated in your school?³

1. A Culture of Wellbeing:

Seen in your school's values and daily practices

2. Ako:

Learning, teaching and curriculum that integrates student wellbeing

3. Systems, People and Initiatives:

Supports effective responsiveness to student distress

“It was the strong ethos of care and shared understanding about the approach to guidance and counselling that underpinned provision.”⁴



Counselling is now a non-negotiable feature of our kura. It plays a pivotal role in supporting the wellbeing of our students, whānau and staff. The provision of quality services at kura to eliminate access barriers and the knowledge that support is available both contribute to a positive transformation which correlates strongly with student presence, engagement and achievement.

Melanie Riwai Couch, Principal, Te Kura Kaupapa o Whanau Tahī, Christchurch



1. Education Review Office (2013) [Improving Guidance and Counselling for Students in Secondary Schools pg 21](#)
2. (a) Education Review Office (2013) [Improving Guidance and Counselling for Students in Secondary Schools pp 3-4](#)
(b) Education Review Office (2015) [Wellbeing for Young People's Success at Secondary School pg 28](#)
3. Education Review Office (2013) [Wellbeing for Success: Draft evaluation indicators for student wellbeing pg 7](#)
4. Education Review Office (2013) [Improving Guidance and Counselling for Students in Secondary Schools pg 3](#)

How can you support your School Counsellor's effectiveness?

- Are they a member of NZAC, or a related professional association, and bound to a professional code of ethics?
- Have you provided them with a clear job description, with a realistic scope, and is this reviewed annually?
- Are clear roles and boundaries well understood between counsellor/s, other pastoral care staff, deans, senior school leaders and staff generally?
- Are there well communicated guidelines established for sharing student information with staff, parents and whanau, and external agencies, when appropriate?
- Do you keep your counsellor's workload to a realistic level? One counsellor to each 400 students is the recommended ratio. (NZAC)
- Do you ensure their counselling environment facilitates privacy, confidentiality, safety and accessibility?
- Do you fund regular professional supervision from an external supervisor for your counsellor?
- Are there regular collegial meetings between staff, the guidance team and school leadership that include the counsellor/s?
- Is your counsellor involved in helping to develop policy relating to student wellbeing, including bullying, suicide prevention and sexual harassment?
- Do you enable and fund regular professional development for them, to keep up with youth trends, developments in relevant research and therapies, and with best practice?
- Do you use an annual appraisal system to evaluate their work, provided by an external assessor?
- How do you regularly acknowledge the value of school counsellors within the school to students, staff, senior leadership, the BOT and school families/whānau?

Helpful Resources

- [The School Guidance Counsellor Appointment Kit](#) For Principals, Boards of Trustees, Teachers and Guidance Counsellors, covering issues relating to the role and recruitment of counsellors (NZAC)
- [Wellbeing for Young People's Success at Secondary School](#) Education Review Office (2015)
- [Wellbeing for Success: Draft evaluation indicators for student wellbeing](#) Education Review Office (draft) 2013
- [Improving Guidance and Counselling for Students in Secondary Schools](#) Education Review Office (2013)
- www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz This website provides schools with two toolkits to use for self review
- or contact [The New Zealand Association of Counsellors:](#)
www.nzac.org.nz (04) 471 0307 admin@nzac.org.nz