

LETTER TO THE EDITOR — A REPLY FROM ONTARIO

Editor's note

Inaccurate reporting of the Ontario scene in the recent article "Status of Elementary-School Counselling in Six Canadian Provinces," by Ilkka Okasen and William Van Hoose, has precipitated a request that we publish a report, Elementary Guidance in Ontario, by the Ontario School Counsellors' Association. We are pleased to do so and to clarify what our Ontario colleagues are doing.

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ELEMENTARY GUIDANCE IN ONTARIO: A SURVEY

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*Furnished to Canadian Counsellor/
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What is the status of elementary school guidance in the province of Ontario? This is a question that has been asked by many people in the field of guidance across the province for the past five or six years. Where are elementary school counsellors working, what grade levels are offered the elementary guidance service, what are the qualifications of the counsellors in the schools were other questions that guidance people, depending their position, location within the province, and their own experience were asking and attempting to answer in their own terms of reference.

A number of factors contributed to these questions being raised across the province. About the mid-1960's counsellor education programmes offered by the Ontario Department of Education and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education began to make provision in course content and practicum experiences for the elementary school counsellor. It was recognized that elementary school teachers applying for training needed specific elementary guidance theory and practice. As these changes were implemented, a larger percentage of candidates in these training programmes came from elementary school boards. As these people began and completed their training they were available to fill the emerging positions in elementary schools as counsellors and guidance workers. During the same time-period elementary school counsellors attending guidance conferences and workshops about the province created the demand for more key-note speakers and

workshop sessions specific to elementary school guidance. As elementary counsellors gained experience many were called on to teach on training programmes, present papers at workshops, and became members of executive bodies of the various professional associations in the province. Boards of Education began hiring elementary counsellors as consultants, supervisors, and co-ordinators to assist in the implementation of new and expansion of existing elementary guidance services.

With these factors in mind the Ontario School Counsellors' Association (OSCA) recognized that there were many people involved in elementary guidance programmes and wanted to attempt answers to the questions raised and communicate these to its membership and other interested people in the province. As a result of the survey, it is hoped that a clearer picture of the status of elementary school guidance in the province is presented.

PROCEDURE

The format of the survey sheet and accompanying letter of intent sent to each Director of Education and Superintendent of Separate Schools were prepared in the spring of 1970. These were sent to the 124 public and separate school boards in September 1970 and returns were made during the balance of the 1970-71 school year to the present May 1971. The survey form requested information pertaining to:

1. the schools and grade levels for which the guidance service was provided in each system
2. the name of the counsellor(s) in each school
3. whether the counsellor was full-time, itinerant, or part-time in one school (number of periods)
4. whether the service included counselling and group work or group work only
5. the qualifications of the counsellor providing the service
6. whether the service provided was a charge to the system or part of the pupil-teacher ratio in the individual school.

By November 5th, 1970, the time of the annual OSCA Conference at Niagara Falls, Ontario, 67 of the 124 school boards had returned their completed survey. Late in January a second letter of request and additional survey forms were again sent to the Directors and Superintendents. At the time of writing of this report, 111 of the 124 Boards had responded. This represents an 89.4 percent return on the survey.

In our consideration of elementary schools three broad classifications of K-6, K-8 and 7-8 were used. On completed surveys variations on these grade groupings were arbitrarily placed in one of the three. For example, all middle schools, junior high schools, or services provided in only grades 7 and 8 in K-8 schools were placed in the 7-8 classifications. Therefore the numbers in the results show guidance services provided at these levels and it does not follow then that the 364 schools under the grade 7-8 classification means 364 senior schools.

In the letter to the Board directors and superintendents we asked them to report only on

those individuals whose major function is guidance and counselling in the elementary schools and are generally referred to as school counsellors or guidance specialists. Please do not include persons whose major duties fall in the category of attendance, social work, psychological services, etc.

The section asking if the elementary guidance service was a charge to the system or part of the pupil-teacher ratio of the individual school was not responded to in most returns. This is possibly due to a lack of clarification of what was intended on the survey form.

RESULTS

A summarized table presentation of the results of the survey with comments follows.

TABLE 1

Grade levels in the schools for which services are provided

Grade levels.....	K-6	K-8	7-8	Total No. of Schools
Number of Schools...	86	257	401	744

TABLE 2

Counsellors: (Full-time, itinerant, part-time)

	Full-time one school	Full-time itinerant	More $\frac{1}{2}$ time	In one school		Group work only	Total No. of Csirs
				less than $\frac{1}{2}$ time 20-10 per	less than $\frac{1}{2}$ time 10-1 per		
Number of Counsellors...	166	57	93	83	271	217	887

The total in Tables 1, 2, and 3 are not directly comparable and do not balance for several reasons. The difference between the number of counsellors reported in Table 2 and the number of schools where services are provided is due to the fact that in many schools more than one counsellor is involved in the guidance services. Also some reports indicate personnel but a count of the schools served was impossible. In the initial tabulation of the first returns some of the counsellors designated as doing "group work only" were also counted in the time allotment of from 1 to 10 periods of guidance time.

The qualifications of counsellors reported in Table 4 do not agree with the number of counsellors in Tables 2 and 3 because some returned surveys did not complete the column requesting the qualifications of the counsellors providing the service.

TABLE 3

Service provided as:	Counselling and Group Work	Group Work Only	Total
	670	217	887

TABLE 4

Qualifications of counsellors and guidance workers

Dept. of Educ. Certification				Post-Graduate		No Guidance Certif.	TOTAL
Spec. Certif.	Part III	Part II	Part I	M. Ed	Partial M. Ed		
163	79	111	169	24	14	302	862

TABLE 5

Nil report.....	33 Boards
No report returned.....	13 Boards

Table 5 indicates that 13 Boards of Education did not return a completed survey after two requests. Thirty-three Boards returned a "nil report," indicating that no services were provided or that guidance services were provided by principals, vice-principals, or other staff members on an incidental basis. Many of these 33 reports had notes indicating a hope for a change in their situation in the near future. Some of the Department of Education Programme Consultants who stopped by to look in on the generation of this report indicated that there were some teachers in these "nil report" boards who were carrying out some guidance functions. Because a "nil report" was received this is not necessarily an indication that no guidance service is being provided. It may be that in terms of the information requested on the survey form they could not complete most of it and therefore did not include teachers doing one or two periods of guidance per week.

GENERAL COMMENTS

1. 131 of the 213 full-time counsellors in one school or full-time itinerent counsellors are employed in Metropolitan Toronto.
2. A majority of counsellors involved in "group work only" activities of 10-1 periods per week are unqualified in terms of guidance certification. However, we must recognize that many of our present full-time counsellors began involvement in guidance services in this way.
3. 60 percent of those involved in elementary guidance services have some guidance training. If we consider full-time or more than half time people, this figure would increase to somewhere in the 90 percent range of counsellors with certification.
4. 48 Boards report the existence of a co-ordinator, and/or consultant(s) and/or supervisors of guidance services. These personnel coincide with the boards who have well established or prominently emerging elementary guidance services.
5. The elementary guidance services seem most prominent at the 7-8 grade levels. The time allotments for counselling and guidance services in schools designated as K-8 are in small time portions indicating that the major emphasis of the service is likely in the 7-8 grade levels in those K-8 schools. Also many boards have several schools that are only K-6 or junior schools but there are services in only 86 of these schools. 46 of those K-6 schools are in Metropolitan Toronto.
6. Full-time counsellors are employed by only 33 Boards of Education.
7. Guidance Services are reported as provided in 62 percent of the Boards of Education in the province in the terms of the survey.

DISCUSSION

Although the status of elementary school guidance has increased considerably in the past five years, the number of elementary schools in the province with elementary guidance services remains relatively small. This is a first attempt at establishing a picture of the number of counsellors and kinds of services provided. Many questions remain unanswered at this time. What effect will the budget ceilings applied by the Minister of Education have on existing elementary guidance services and the expansion or future implementation of services? What changes will occur in the next school year in the "nil report" boards? What are the functions of those counsellors designated as full-time or part-time and how do those functions vary from school to school and board to board? How do smaller school sizes in the county and district Board of Education affect the implementation of elementary guidance services? What are the alternatives to full-time counsellors in one school?

It is important to have current information on growth trends in elementary guidance. This study is only an initial step. Many feel that this effort should be replicated possibly as soon as next year and other procedures should be undertaken to get answers to many other questions.