

REPORT OF A COUNSELLING INTERNSHIP AT A
PRIMARY AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,
ST. JOHN'S NEWFOUNDLAND, INCLUDING A
RESEACH PROJECT: ASSESSING THE ROLE AND
EXPECTATIONS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELLORS
AS PERCEIVED BY PARENTS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**Report of a counselling internship at a primary and elementary school,
St. John's Newfoundland, including a research project: Assessing the
role and expectations of elementary school counsellors as perceived by
parents.**

By

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**An internship report submitted to the school of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Education.**

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Newfoundland

ABSTRACT

This is a report of an eleven-week Educational Psychology (School Counselling) internship undertaken at St. Matthew's Elementary School, St. John's between April 19, 1999 - June 25, 1999. The report consists of five sections: an overview, a research report, an analysis of the findings, summary and recommendations and personal reflections of the experience.

Chapter one presents a general overview and summary of the internship, its goals and objectives and the activities undertaken by the intern to meet the stated goals and objectives. Chapter two looks at the research component and provides a focused look at past research in a literature review. The methodology used, is presented in this section.

Chapter three takes a closer look at the research questions and the findings. Each of the six questions and respective responses are summarized. Chapter four give summary statements and recommendations gleaned from the internship and related activities.

Chapter five presents a personal reflection on the internship experience from an intern with twenty-one years teaching experience in special services.

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I owe a wealth of gratitude to several people who have helped me throughout my graduate studies, with the internship and report writing. Special thanks to Dr. William Kennedy, my advisor. His gentle, helpful and encouraging comments and approach I will always remember and try to emulate.

A sincere thank you to the staff of St. Matthew's Elementary school especially my field supervisor Mr. Robert Bradbury for accepting me and allowing me to learn from them. The cooperation I received made my stay at that school more enriching, profitable and increased my list of friends.

To the staff in the office of the associate Dean of Graduate Studies, thank you for your time and effort. Ms. Dorothy Joy and team were very helpful and went beyond the call of duty in numerous ways.

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CHAPTER ONE

RATIONALE

I choose an elementary school setting for my internship because this is an area in which I had little work experience but high interest. I was particularly interested in doing research in order to gain more knowledge of what the role of a school counsellor might be in such a setting.

I came through a system in which there were no school counsellor and worked in a system where, for the past five years, we had a one/fifth counselling position and most of the counsellor's time was focused on the high school population. This practice always posed a contradiction for me because, the literature on the other hand constantly alerts us to the fact that if counselling is to be effective in a broad sense it must begin as early as possible. I was, therefore, surprised and excited to find a placement in an elementary school with a full time guidance person. This placement afforded me the opportunity to see firsthand what a counsellor in an elementary school does and how that role is perceived by parents, teachers and service population.

As I learn best from practical involvement or hands on activity, I choose the route of an internship, and because I had completed the practicum section of the master's programme at an urban school, I felt this to be ideal setting to complete the internship component. Through my practicum placement

in this school much of the orientation and ground work had been completed. .

SETTING

This is an elementary school consisting of students from kindergarten to grade six. The student population is approximately five hundred with thirty teaching staff including one full time guidance person, and has a developmental unit with twelve students. Most grades have three classes while some have four. The school serves a neighbourhood consisting of students derived of divergent socioeconomic status.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

During the three months available to me to complete my internship at an elementary school I attained the following goals:

1. To become familiar with the duties and responsibilities of an elementary school counsellor.

I accomplished this by involving myself in the day to day activities of the on sight school counsellor. What the counsellor undertook, I also assisted with while ensuring confidentiality and respect for the individuals concerned. I was present at most meetings with parents, teachers and school board personnel for counselling related tasks. I attended regional counsellors' meetings and school in services.

2. To develop consultation skills and competencies through working with parents, teachers, professionals and outside agencies.

According to summary evaluation by the field supervisor, I accomplished this goal exceptionally well. I had ample opportunity to attend team meetings, transfer meetings, assessment review meetings and other individual student meetings. I gained experience through observation and practical experience at every opportunity possible. Interpreting and presenting test scores to parents, teachers and other professionals was a valuable experience. I had the opportunity to meet many outside professionals from various disciplines and to correspond with others via telephone and mail.

3. To enhance my knowledge of assessment tools used in a school setting and their purpose.

I achieved this goal by continuing my search for new tools and reviewing their purpose and developing my knowledge of the tools by administering them to respective students at the school. I used for the first time the Whesler Intelligence Achievement Test (WIAT), the Visual Motor Inventory (VMI), the Test of Auditory Perceptual Skills (TAPS), the BATTLE SELF-ESTEEM INVENTORY, and the CONNORS RATING SCALE and others. From the continuous feedback and structured reviews from the counsellor I improved my abilities to administer and interpret IQ tools and gained exposure and familiarity with other assessments used by a school

counsellor.

4. To develop proficiency in test analysis and report writing.

I achieved this goal by administering ability and achievement batteries to ten students. I did the initial scoring and had the counsellor review and discuss the findings and interpretation with me especially in areas where I needed to make improvements. I drafted the full reports and again reviewed it with the counsellor who made comments and additional suggestions when necessary. The reports were presented orally at team meetings consisting of parents, teachers and other professionals. Copies of the reports were filed for further reference.

5. To gain experience in individual counselling and a knowledge of the tools that are available to aid the progression of individual work with young children.

During the internship experience I saw four students for individual counselling. I met with the students weekly to deal with the respective issues. To help these students I used techniques such as play therapy, creative expression, listening, shared discussion and bibliotherapy. This was an opportunity for me to apply theory to practice and allowed me to design, apply and adjust my own counselling style. Some of the counselling sessions were videotaped and reviewed by my university supervisor, field supervisor and myself. While this was intimidating it was very helpful professionally. It presented an opportunity for me to see

myself perform in counselling sessions, the comments by the other professionals were beneficial and gave ideas to improve future sessions and areas to work on.

6. To work with groups for specific purposes.

As part of the requirement for the group counselling course I was completing at this time I choose this school setting as the place to do my group counselling activity. Based on the needs assessment conducted by the school, Self Esteem training was found to be a high priority. The numbers allowed me to have two groups with five members from grades four and five. Detailed reports were written for the course instructor and the field supervisor. Both of these individuals participated in two of the sessions. My primary source was the text by Kathleen O'Rourke Ed.D & John C. Worzbyt Ed.D. *Group work with young people*. (1992). The focus of the sessions and the activities of writing, drawing, sharing, reading and discussing and playing games was to bring the students to the awareness that they are unique, they are important and have power over their own lives. The groups were very open to the activities and had fun doing them, they were very honest and open with each another. I was impressed by the manner and degree of involvement by the participants in all the activities and would definitely do this in another setting should the opportunity arise. Parents and teachers report to have seen progress in some of the children.

7. To conduct research in an area of elementary school counselling.

To achieve this goal my university supervisor and I prepared a questionnaire (attached) (to ascertain what the parents of this elementary school saw the role of a school guidance counsellor to entail) to be forwarded to a group of parents who have children attending the school. A class of grade four, five and six was randomly chosen from the six available. Eighty-two questionnaires with cover letters(attached) were sent home to the parents by the students. The completion of these questionnaires was optional. As the questionnaire was not addressing any ethical issues, approval from the university ethics committee was not deemed necessary. To support and focus my thoughts, the material gathered from the questionnaires and the underlying direction of my research topic a literature review was completed. The literature review findings and the comments of the parents were used to prepare some recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH COMPONENT

The main objective of this research is to assess the role of elementary school counsellors as viewed by parents who have or who have not had contact with counsellors. I was especially interested in their perceptions of a counsellor's activities during a school day. Wilson (1986) pointed out that there were many differences of opinion about what elementary counsellors should or want to do. Counselors, teachers, principals, students, parents and district personnel have their opinions of what is the role of a school counselor. These roles sometimes vary depending on the setting: rural/urban, student population small/large, area needs and specific crisis situations which may arise from time to time. While the role may vary from the respective perspectives, counsellors continue to have a role to fulfill in our schools to assist students with everyday issues and crisis situations. Crabbs (1998) stated that change will be bewilderingly rapid as we enter the new century. The needs and influences facing young people are changing. The family and church structures have no longer as widespread a presence, the demands for student support services have greatly increased and the issues facing young people are more pervasive and demanding of attention.

Related literature review:

To enhance knowledge of the chosen area a literature review was conducted in the area of *Parental Perceptions of Elementary School Counsellors*. The limited amount of research available to elementary and primary schools concerning school guidance counselling was surprising. Rye and Sparks (1991) noted that the debate concerning the role of the school counsellor has continued for more than thirty years. This debate of the role of the elementary school counsellor is even more intense for present day elementary schools. Schwaber and Genetta (1987) see the greatest problems facing guidance professionals today being the undefined role of school guidance counsellors and the confusion in prioritizing their varied responsibilities. Counsellors in elementary schools are expected to perform a multitude of duties including scheduling for students, working on curriculum, crisis counselling, personal counselling, test administration, interpretation, report writing, job placement, consultation and other administrative duties. In addition they are expected to help students and staffs develop and maintain positive self-image, set realistic goals for themselves and motivate them to achieve to their maximum potential.

Hughes, Gysber and Starr (1993) reported that some parents whom they interviewed believe that school counselling undermines parental authority. The parents who responded to the study they conducted (1993) felt that by strengthening students' self confidence and self-esteem, these young people would come to believe that their opinions are as important and as

valid as teachers' and parents' views. These same parents also noted that when young people feel good about themselves, they are less likely to act obediently to the higher authority of parents or religion. This notion is contrary to counsellors' understanding of healthy self-esteem as contributing to student achievement.

Hughes, Gysber and Starr (1993) contend that value differences exist between some parents and school counsellors. Some parents may feel offended when counsellors automatically assume all parents share their views and values about counselling practise. Some of the parents interviewed reported taking offense when counsellors try to educate them with rational explanations about counselling goals and practises instead of accepting that many parent values are affective and not influenced by cogent arguments. The researchers see a more productive stance, to develop an understanding and acceptance of the various ways parents view counselling, and thus increase sensitivity to other viewpoints by parents and counsellors. Hughes, Gysber and Starr (1993) additionally claim that parents feel school counsellors do not allow them as parents to make informed decisions about their children's participation in school counselling activities especially those involving the discussion of personal issues. Parents wishing to be part of the problem solving process often report the feeling of being shut out from the process.

Counsellors quite often find themselves in a bind with ensuring students' confidentiality as well as respecting parents' rights to have relevant information about their children. Parents report feeling deeply offended when school counsellors act as if the confidences that students share with them are more important than the parents right to know about the concerns or issues that adversely affect their children. If children are upset for any reason, most parents want to know and to be part of the problem solving process. Kaplan (1996) put it succinctly: "Society is changing, parents have legitimate concerns about their children's future and they are challenging some aspects of the school counsellor's role in helping children. P(62)" Kaplan further stated that counsellors need information, deeper understanding and greater appreciation of parents views and concerns if they are to work as partners in helping children succeed in school.

A Missouri study (Samis, Kym, & Others 1993) evaluating parents' perception of guidance programs indicated a favourable response from the parents assessed. Eighty percent of the parents reported having talked with the school counsellor during the year. Academic concerns and future career plans were the most frequent reasons for parents talking with counsellors. The study found parents supportive of counsellors involvement and saw success with their children. They felt strongly that the students benefited from the work and programs of the guidance counsellor. They felt the guidance program and counsellors implementing the program were having a lasting impact on students. The parents offered

some suggestions which included hiring more counsellors, providing more clerical assistance for counsellors, increasing publicity and communication of roles, duties and successes of counselling.

Samis, Allan and Echols (1993) reported that telephone conversation is currently the elementary counsellor's most frequent form of contact with parents, but counsellors would prefer to consult with parents face to face. The preferred one on one pattern will require more time and adjustments on the part of all parties involved. Increasingly diverse student problems and the current economic situation have made the need for effective school counselling services even more critical than in the past and most often telephone contact is all that time can allow for. Counsellors provide unique services within the school that no other school personnel are trained to provide, and do much to support the education process. Parents need to know of the services and role of the counsellor in the school so that they may be used to the greatest benefit for the students.

Peaslee (1991) conducted a study to determine the importance of elementary school counsellors as perceived by administration, counsellors, teachers and parents. The results of this study indicate that administrators, counsellors, teachers and parents support the roles and functions of the elementary counsellor. Findings from this study show that schools which have a counselor rated student safety and career guidance higher than those without a counsellor. The parents participating in this study

presented conflicting opinions concerning the role of counsellors but had positive impressions. Some believed counsellors should be more involved with the personal problems of students, and others viewed this activity as inappropriate. Ramley (1988) and Miller (1989) reported parents strongly supported counsellor functions. They were uncertain about individualizing instruction, explaining research, promoting social development and guidance program planning activities. Peaslee (1991) maintained that differences exist between what the counsellor actually does and what the counsellor considers appropriate for many elementary school counsellors. Miller (1988), in a study of counsellors in excellent schools, reported that elementary counsellors rank ordered their top five roles as follows:

- (1) counselling and consulting
- (2) coordinating
- (3) professional development
- (4) career assistance
- (5) organization.

Bonebrake and Borgers (1984) found counselling and consultation ranked as one and two respectively, student assessment, parent consultation and evaluation of guidance completed the top five rankings.

From the above comments it can be seen that what parents see as the role and function of an elementary school counsellor encompasses what The American School Counsellor Association (1990) presented as the duties of a

counsellor for parents' perspective. In summary counsellors assist parents by helping them learn about their child's growth, development, abilities, limitations and progress in school. Bonebrake and Borgers (1984) claim parenting skills must be emphasized. Counsellors must support parents to provide an emotionally secure atmosphere at home and foster the development of enhanced parent/ student relationship.

The American School Counselling Association (1990) gave the following as a description of the counsellor: " The school counsellor is a certified professional educator who assists students, teachers, parents and administrators." Three generally recognized helping processes used by the counsellor are counselling, consulting and coordinating. The goals of school counsellors were designed to support a comprehensive developmental counselling program to help all students develop their educational, social, career and personal strengths and to become responsible and productive citizens. Counsellors assist students to understand themselves and others, develop communication skills which help establish and maintain healthier relationships, develop decision making, problem solving and coping skills which may facilitate optimal educational, social and personal benefit from school experience.

The research question is: What do parents of elementary school children see the role and duties of a guidance counsellor to be? The answers provided to this question in my research did not differ significantly from what was found in the literature review. The limited understanding of a counsellor's role in elementary school settings was evidenced in both the research and the literature review. This question is important as the answer will help the profession ascertain what the parents see the role to be and how well it is doing to meet the expectations of parents. The degree of approval from parents will be shown. Counsellors in elementary schools will have a small guide to use as they provide a valuable service to the students. New ideas and expectations will be offered and a new measuring stick of success or needs will be available.

METHODOLOGY

Sample:

The sample for this research was a group of parents from three classes: a grade four, five and six class from the six classes available at the school. This resulted in surveys being sent to eighty-two homes of children in the sample group. Parents/guardians were invited to complete the questionnaire with no specific directions as to who should complete it. The intention was for both parents to have input. Completion of this survey

was completely voluntary, and no reminders or specific requests were made. Twenty-nine were returned, and twenty-seven were completed and used for the data analysis.

Data Collection:

A survey with an accompanying cover letter (appendix 1) was sent to the parents/guardians of eighty-two students from the elementary division of the school. The survey (appendix 2) consisted of six questions posed to assess parents' perceptions of an elementary school counsellor. The questions were presented to the parents to gather information concerning their ideas on the role of an elementary school counsellor, and their feelings regarding the effectiveness of the position and how comfortable the parents would be in seeking the help of the counsellor should the need arise for their children. Twenty-nine of the eighty-two surveys were completed. Two were returned not completed which provided twenty-seven with data for analysis. The gathered data was collated, compared and interpreted in light of the current research in this area.

CHAPTER THREE
ANALYSIS

For the study six questions were presented to the participants on paper. These are cited below and contained in appendix 2. In this analysis a closer look at each question and its related responses will be made.

Question 1. How do you define the job of an elementary school counsellor?

#	SUSPECTED ROLE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELLOR
19	dealing directly with behavioural and academic issues
08	an extension of the parenting team
07	support to students in crisis and adjustment situations
06	no awareness of the respective role
05	assessment and placement assistance
03	modifying curriculum to accommodate special needs
02	an information source

Table 1:

From this table it can be noted that the most important role of the school counsellor as seen by these parents would be dealing with behavioural and academic issues.

Question 2. Do you feel they are presently carrying out this job effectively?

#	RESPONSES
18	yes doing an effective job
02	no, not doing an effective job
04	were not able to give an opinion as they did not know
03	left this question blank

Table 2:

Table 2 shows that 18 of the 27 respondents felt that counsellors in elementary schools were doing a good job. Seven choose not to respond with only 2 stating that counsellors were not doing a good job.

Question 3. If no, what could you suggest?

#	RESPONSES
01	behavior problems still exist so something different is needed
01	more immediate action as problems worsen while waiting attention
01	one school assignment per counsellor

Table 3:

Table 3 showed areas which needed attention as seen by these parents.

Behavioural problems continue to exist, more immediate action is needed and each school must have a guidance counsellor.

Question 4. Would you, if you needed help for your child, request the assistance of an elementary school counsellor?

#	RESPONSES
23	would not have problems seeking help if needed
01	had reservations over others knowing and would probably seek outside assistance
03	left this section blank

Table 4:

Table 4 showed 23 of the 27 respondents having no problem seeking the assistance of the school counsellor if the need arose. One individual had reservations concerning public knowledge and 3 choose to leave the section blank.

Question 5. If you have had the help of an elementary school counsellor were you satisfied with the service you received?

#	RESPONSES
09	reported satisfactory service
01	was disappointed as request had not been addressed
08	not applicable as they had not, had need this far
09	did not complete this section

Table 5:

Table 5 showed that 9 individuals had positive experiences, 8 had no

experience, 9 did not respond and 1 individual had a negative experience.

Question 6. If no, would you explain why?

#	REASONS PRESENTED
01	needing to make several requests before action was taken
01	request was not addressed
25	left this section blank

Table 6:

Two individuals choose to state reasons for dissatisfaction one being the need to make several requests before action and one felt request were not addressed. Twenty-five did not respond.

Summary:

From the above data it can be said that this group of parents saw the primary role of the elementary school counsellor to be one of involvement with behavioural and academic issues which affect home and school life and learning. It can be seen that a large percentage of the parents surveyed felt that counsellors are doing an effective job. Some choose to offer suggestions for improvement such as: more immediate action, one school per counsellor and something different to address behaviour issues as they continue to exist. A very high percentage reported not having any reservations in seeking the help of the school counsellor when and if the need arose. Several of the respondents reported very satisfactory service

from the school counsellor. Others reported not having the need and thus could not comment. A significant number did not report negative experiences. One can only conclude that this group of parents has had mostly positive experiences and would avail of this service if the need occurred.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This internship took place at a primary/elementary school in St. John's from April 21 to June 25, 1999, under the supervision of Mr. Robert Bradbury, school counsellor, and Dr. William Kennedy, University supervisor. The internship route was chosen to gain valuable practical experience in the area of elementary school counselling and to further enhance personal growth and development.

The internship provided many opportunities to engage in professional activities which concretized the theory and skill development of the university classroom from the first part of the program. Some of the helpful activities included: (a) conducting psycho educational assessments; (b) leading two groups in the area of Self Esteem; © individual counselling; (d) participating and presenting at case conferences; (e) sharing and interpreting assessment results with parents and other professionals; (f) participating in transition team meeting; (g) attending in services.

Parents who got to know my position in the school took the liberty of mentioning the survey and presented some of their ideas informally as to what they saw the role of an elementary school counsellor to be. There was no way of knowing if these parents returned a completed form. The ideas presented were helpful and are included in the recommendations. I also

had the opportunity to read some of their reflected thoughts as presented in the completed questionnaires. I gained some wonderful insights into how parents perceive counsellors and what was their expectation for this group of helping professions. The data did show a favourable response to the manner and esteem in which the counselling position at the school is held. Several positive personal experiences were shared. Eight claimed they had not had experience but would have no problem soliciting help and were confident the help would be acceptable to them and beneficial to their children.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Seventeen of twenty-seven respondents indicated lack of knowledge concerning the duties and responsibilities of a counselor. This information indicates the need for parent exposure and knowledge of the roles and responsibility of an elementary school counsellor. Suggestions to better inform parents and the general public of the duties and responsibilities of an elementary school counsellor might include:

1. the drafting of a flyer or communique at the beginning and throughout each year to explain the duties and role of counsellors.
2. counsellors should be given an opportunity to address parent gatherings with a view to sharing a little of their role and what they can offer to the school population.
3. counsellors could make themselves more available to staff and parents in informal settings to alleviate much of the mystery which

surrounds such professionals.

The current situation of having the counsellor responsible for several schools is counter productive as visibility, continuity and accessibility are difficult to maintain. A minimum of two schools per counsellor with a preference for one counsellor per school should be the aim. Counsellors are not and must not assume the duties of administrators, assistant administrators or secretaries. While they may have the flexibility in their schedules to assume such duties counsellors must be vigilant in not allowing this to happen and spend this time informally mingling with the student body.

CHAPTER FIVE

PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

This practicum and internship from January to June 1999 could never have come in a better time for me professionally and personally. I am a tactile person and learn best by doing. This was reaffirmed for me during the internship experience. I am an avid reader and a firm believer in the value of printed material but there isn't a text available which could equate with the learning that occurred in this internship. This opportunity to work in an urban setting, with a different school board, with the availability of university professors, library materials, school board personnel and resources, guidance counsellors and fellow interns proved to be a great source of support and assistance for me.

Being immersed in the school guidance programme allowed me to experience, first hand, the presence of several disorders and the particular characteristics of each. Being required and wanting to work with children in this situation forced me to do some research into the characteristics and intervention techniques for disorders such as Asperger's, Tourette's, Obsessive Compulsive Behaviour, Attention Deficit Disorder, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Severe Behaviour Conditions to name a few. I learned the characteristics of the disorders, designed educational programming strategies for children with these disorders. I gained an understanding of what home life maybe for families who have children with these disorders.

This experience also allowed me to update myself in areas that I work with such as academic challenges, physical challenges and non-categorical special education. The quantity and quality of research findings available in these areas are phenomenal. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to update myself in this area and feel better prepared to resume my duties as a special services teacher. While I had experience with the Pathways Approach to Special Services, I gained greater comfort and appreciation for the approach through in service, initial implementation and evaluation. Typical of most new approaches the initial extra paperwork and uniqueness of this approach may be intimidating and repulsive but I strongly believe our students will be better served if we as educators use this approach for the reason it was designed: to provide quality education to individuals needing and deserving special programming. As educators we will certainly be more accountable and see greater rewards from our efforts in this area of special education.

Assessment, report writing and presenting the findings and recommendations for programming to parents and other professionals would have to be the greatest benefit which I gained from this internship. My confidence and ability in this area have been greatly advanced. I was exposed to several new tools in addition to the Wechsler tools such as Test of Auditory Perception (TAPS), Visual Motor Inventory (VMI), Battle Self-Esteem Inventory(1991), Vinland Adaptive Scales, and several achievement tools such as Slosson, Bader and Alberta Test of Basic Skills. Intelligence

testing and reporting of the results to parents and teachers have come to be a major responsibility of school guidance counsellors. This must be done in a manner which considers the audience's understanding and expectation of such results. While the theory and implications of the scores are essential, the human component was shown to me to be equally operative.

Presenting the findings in a positive, understandable and a considerate manner takes great effort and talent.

During my practicum and on into the internship time frame I had the joy of leading a group in self-esteem. The need for such a group was established from a needs assessment conducted at the beginning of the school year.

The need for these individuals to have work in the area of self-esteem was indicated by the parents and supported by the classroom teachers. Parents and teachers felt these students were achieving below academic level and maybe having a difficult time with the social aspect of schooling because of their low self-esteem. The manner in which the individuals entered into the activities was inspiring and surprising to me. The activities involved writing, drawing, and talking about themselves in a positive manner. They were asked to name their gifts and strengths. They contributed to discussion about models and supports which they have in life. They were asked to use their imaginations and present the ideal self to the group.

There was a great deal of concerted positive speaking and writing about themselves, their families and situations. This at first was difficult and the

students were reluctant to say such glowing things about themselves but they quickly entered into it and did a super job. I had anticipated some reluctance on the part of some students but found all students participated with minimal enticing. I noticed it was easier for them to speak highly about other members of the group than it was to speak in the same manner about themselves. Several parents took the time to contact and comment on how well their children enjoyed the activities and shared about them at home. I had wonderful assistance from the Learning Resources Teacher with this task. We used several books which she went to great lengths to procure. We ended the experience with an outing and picnic which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. I would have no hesitation in offering such an experience to another group of students. It is a wonderful opportunity to build self esteem to enable students to see worth in themselves and others and most importantly to have the opportunity to name it. The above-mentioned activities were also different from the normal activities of a school day and were a welcome break for students struggling with the academic aspects. This would be a wonderful suggestion for a counsellor to take and offer. The topic could be chosen from an needs assessment or from personal observation.

The individual counselling, while of course, very confidential was a great experience. From this I feel I became a friend and a listening ear to some very needy and insecure children. I only hope that my interest and attention were and will remain a bright spot in their lives and schooling for

some time. My having the time to give that extra few minutes to parents and teachers was very appreciated and showed me that counselling should not be all doing but include being present to individuals in time of need or to listen to their successes. In some situations, the counsellor may be the only individual whom some people may have to share their burdens and successes with at the end of the day.

The experience at this school allowed me to form some wonderful friendship some of which I feel I have for life. I immersed myself totally in the school life and from this got to know the staff and patrons on a more personal level. I feel honoured to have met, worked with and learned from the person of Mr. Robert Bradbury. The itinerant teachers, speech pathologist, medical personnel, educational psychologist and administration were wonderful. They freely gave of their time and expertise when asked. Their words of encouragement were often a great help for an otherwise frightening activity. At the conclusion of the year with the transfers which must happen I had the opportunity to meet several other local counsellors and principals whom I found most welcoming and committed to the task of serving the students entrusted to their care.

In retrospect this was an experience which has marked me for life. It was a super experience personally and professionally. My career and personal life have been greatly enhanced by this experience, the learning and

personal encounters. I know my mind and heart will frequently travel back to St. Matthew's in the future. I hope I can share a little of what I have received, in some small way with the students I encounter as I continue my professional journey.

APPENDIX 1

Consent form



June 1999

Greetings Parents,

I am a graduate student in school counselling from Memorial University. I am presently doing a four-month internship program.

To fulfill the requirements of my internship I must complete a research project. I have chosen "Parent's Perceptions of Elementary School Counsellors." For this I am requesting your assistance and time in completing the attached questionnaire. The information you provide will be used to draft a research report to be submitted to Memorial University. Your responses will be completely anonymous and no names nor school will be cited.

I would like you to return the questionnaire to me at the school by your child on or before June 10, 1999.

I have approval for this from the school administration and from Mr. Bradbury the school counsellor.

Should you wish to discuss this further, please feel free to contact me at the school at 745 - 1513/2500 or at 368 - 4450.

I thank you in advance for your help with this part of my education. It has been a pleasure and a wonderful learning experience working with your children, this school and its staff. I wish each of you a safe and beautiful summer.

Yours truly,

Evelyn Lundrigan M.A.

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire to be completed

Graduate Student Survey

1. How would you define the job of the elementary school counsellor?

2. Do you feel they are presently carrying out this job effectively?

Yes _____ No _____

3. If no, what could you suggest they ought to do?

4. Would you, if needed help for your child, request the assistance of an elementary school counsellor?

Yes _____ No _____

5. If you have had the help of an elementary school counsellor were you satisfied with the service you received?

Yes _____ No _____

6. If no would you explain why?

Please return this completed form to the school on or June 10, 1999. I thank you.
Evelyn Lundrigan MA.

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