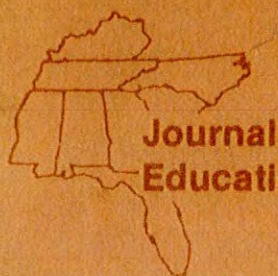


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Educational Opportunity Program Personnel





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SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF  
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM PERSONNEL**

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From the Editor .....	2
Improving Basic Skills Through History Susan Donohue .....	3
Toward an Effective Program of Remediation Services Wilma Powers, Joy Haralick .....	8
The Utilization of Social Services and Community Agencies as External Support Services Lance Lancaster, Daniel Becton .....	16
Integrating Motivational Activities Into Instruction: A Developmental Model Michael P. Brawer .....	32
National Study of Talent Search Projects As To the Degree of Performance of Guidance Activities Ernest W. Brewer, Frank Nagy .....	39

# National Study of Talent Search Projects As To the Degree of Performance of Guidance Activities

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*Program evaluation, formative, summative, and/or comparative, has been almost non-existent in the Special Programs for Disadvantaged Students. Furthermore, the non-existence of experimental, historical, and/or descriptive research is apparent as one reviews the effectiveness and efficiency of these programs.*

*One force in our society, with implications for education funding patterns, is the developing conviction that educational programs such as Talent Search, Upward Bound, Special Services for Disadvantaged Services, and Educational Opportunity Centers, should demonstrate both effectiveness and efficiency to avoid the "federal administration's axe." Counseling and guidance services are provided by Talent Search are one aspect of the educational system that needs to be examined and evaluated in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. At times, the student may be rendered the same services by the Talent Search staff, the agency counselor (i.e. school counselor), and the teacher, and at other times may inadvertently be overlooked; thus, those youth and adults who we serve might possibly become the victims of ineffectiveness and inefficiency (Brewer, 1977; and Brewer and Cameron, 1981).*

## INTRODUCTION

Gelatt (1971) speculated that guidance and counseling activities are in "danger of becoming like Charlie Brown's baseball team: 'They don't win many games, but they have a lot of interesting discussions.' The umpire [the federal government] is now asking us to keep score" (p. 3). Criticism of guidance programs and personnel such as this, dates back to the 1960s. Additionally, the value and success of guidance personnel within the educational system has been questioned (National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, [1972]; Eckerson [1971]; American Personnel and Guidance Association [1972]; Brewer [1977]; and Brewer and Cameron [1981]). Because of this criticism, coupled with the current emphasis on increased federal cuts, Talents Search projects, along with other identities under the Special Programs that are administered by the Division of Student Services in the Department of Education, may be asked to present their score in the game of accountability.

The American Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (Schubert and Jung, 1981) is currently conducting an evaluability assessment of the Special Programs for Disadvantaged Students. Their evaluation will deal with programmatic objectives and

activities, casual assumptions underlying the links between activities and attainment of objectives, identification of indicators of performance that are acceptable to those responsible for their respective program and a definition for the intended uses of performance information. This information will be very helpful to project directors, program directors, and policymakers in the Department of Education for agreeing upon program objectives, activities, and anticipated outcomes. In addition, possible measures of program performance could be established to evaluate the projects in the formative, summative and comparative mode.

Along with Talent Search staff providing counseling and guidance services, some secondary school teachers are involved with the guidance of their students, in addition to the students' respective counselor. Cote (1967) stated that "the role which can and should be played by the teacher in guidance activities is a major one; greater than that of the (school guidance) counselor's" (p. 12). Educational programs provide many opportunities and lend themselves to teachers' contributions to the students' vocational development. For instance, vocational education consists of instructional programs, services, and activities for preparation for employment utilizing the knowledge and skills of the various service areas (Ehman, 1973).

According to a recent study by Brewer and Cameron (1981) concerning the degree to which teachers and counselors performed guidance tasks, teachers performed guidance tasks to a significantly higher degree than guidance counselors. Based on an analysis of data by major tasks categories, teachers performed tasks within the categories of appraisal, consulting, counseling, educational information, occupational information and placement to a significantly higher degree than did guidance counselors. However, with respect to performance, neither group scored a high level of performance on any category.

Also, those students who are enrolled in vocational programs, for whom the Talent Search staff provides services, often experience the need for guidance in understanding themselves. They must make decisions regarding the selection of a career or occupation, preparing for it, adjusting to it, or progressing in the chosen occupation (Super, 1975). Talent Search counselors, teachers, and agency counselors can provide guidance and counseling services to their clients by cooperatively contributing to the vocational development of the total student.

## BACKGROUND ON THE PROBLEM

Intensive career exploration, various types of counseling for individual students, assistance in postsecondary admissions, securing financial assistance, readmission to secondary and postsecondary programs (in the case of school dropouts) and other guidance services are often limited. Furthermore, services are duplicated by Talent Search counselors, secondary and postsecondary teachers, and agency counselors due to an unawareness of the tasks which each is performing and due to the fact that specific guidance and counseling tasks are not assigned to either. In addition, the large number of students for which the agency counselor is responsible and the heavy demands made on his/her time by administrators, teachers, and parents, allow little or no time for assisting students individually.

Overall, the Talent Search staff's contribution to the agency's guidance program is inadvertently overlooked and undefined. The extent of research dealing with Talent Search projects' participation in guidance activities and tasks is very limited.

*An Executive Summary Planning/Evaluation Study* (1976) conducted by the Office of Education/Office of Planning, Budgeting and Evaluation found that project directors of Talent Search expressed the importance of providing educational opportunities for low-income, educationally disadvantaged persons. The directors added that their objectives focused on improving the students' educational and vocational status and

self-perception, and increasing school and community awareness of their needs. All projects generally encouraged the completion of high school and attainment of a postsecondary education and they provided information on educational opportunities and financial assistance. Additionally, they assisted in the mechanics of applying for admission and financial aid. The findings of this study also concluded that projects provided follow-up aid. The findings of this study also concluded that projects provided follow-up activities and assistance to insure that clients actually enrolled in postsecondary institutions, reached the campus, began their studies, and became adjusted and oriented to the campus to a greater extent.

According to the *National Center for Educational Brokering Bulletin* (1979), services provided by Talent Search projects generally included provision of information on colleges, training opportunities, financial assistance, counseling for career choices, assistance with admissions and financial aid procedures, GED preparation, and personal and academic support services. Obviously, these services are needed and are being provided, but to what degree? Noel (1978) notes that about forty percent (40%) of entering freshmen in baccalaureate granting institutions never achieve a degree, about forty percent (40%) will graduate in the "normal" four years, and the remaining twenty percent (20%) will delay their baccalaureate (p. 3). He goes on to say that fewer than half of all entering first year students in community colleges are likely to return to college for a second year. Perhaps if we knew to what extent the student had received appropriate guidance services, the degree to which the guidance task was provided, and by whom, we could determine whether these postsecondary dropout percentages are this high. Are we providing tasks that we should not be providing and vice versa?

## PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The specific purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which Talent Search staff provided guidance tasks to the clients they served. Additionally, the study was designed to examine the degree to which the respondents felt that the agency staff was performing the guidance task and if they felt the task was needed by the client. The researchers were able to determine if there was any significant difference between the degree to which they were performing the task and the degree to which the agency staff was performing the respective guidance task.

## METHODOLOGY

A survey questionnaire was mailed to each project with a cover letter describing this study. It also gave specific instructions for making additional copies for their respective staff members and where to return the survey. Out of 158 Talent Search projects that were mailed the survey questionnaire, 104 (66%) projects returned 212 surveys. The survey, *Vocational Guidance Tasks Checklist* (Brewer, 1977), consisted of 62 guidance tasks which were classified into eight (8) categories (appraisal, consulting, counseling, educational information, financial aid information, occupational information, placement, and follow-up). Respondents were asked to complete the instrument by responding to each stated task with one of the following descriptions as to the degree to which they were performing each task and the degree to which staff was performing this task: 1) never, 2) seldom, 3) occasionally, 4) frequently, and 5) always. The respondents were also asked if they felt that each respective task should be provided to the client. A Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was computed for the test-retest reliability check on the *Vocational Guidance Tasks Checklist*. It yielded a reliability coefficient of .98 on the total instrument. The correlation coefficient of the eight (8) categories in the instrument ranged from .88 to .97 while the coefficients of the 62 individual items ranged from .66 to .95. In addition to the Pearson's product-moment correlation, the Cronblach Alpha yielded a .97 internal consistency reliability.

## RESULTS

Comparisons of the data collected from the participants were made by using the central tendency on the interval level of measurement. Means (X) scores were visually compared to see if any inductive statistical treatment (*t* test between two means) needed to be applied to the descriptive statistics. It was concluded by the researchers that no significant differences existed at the .05 level in the responses within this study. Specifically, comparisons were made between the degree to which the respondent performed the task and the degree to which he/she felt that the agency staff was currently providing the respective guidance task. The researchers also sought to find out if the Talent Search staff members felt that each respective guidance task should be performed for the client. In reporting the results, they will be presented as "overall performance," and "sub-categorical performance."

### OVERALL PERFORMANCE

When the overall degree of performances on the total list of 62 tasks were compared, the results showed that no significant differences existed between the X scores (see Table I). The highest possible degree of performance yielded a X score of five (5). The

TABLE I

Overall Comparison of Guidance Tasks Performed By Talent Search & Agency Staff			
TALENT SEARCH STAFF	AGENCY STAFF	NEEDS TO BE PROVIDED	
		YES	NO
X 3.30	X 3.34	79%	21%

N=212

average score for Talent Search staff was 3.30, while the agency staff average score was 3.34, slightly higher in the overall performance of guidance tasks. Of the 212 Talent Search staff respondents, seventy-nine percent (79%) felt that each client needed the guidance task provided to him/her, while the other twenty-one percent (21%) believed that the tasks should be performed for the client.

### PERFORMANCE BY GUIDANCE CATEGORY

When comparisons were made on each of the eight categories of guidance tasks, no significance between the Talent Search and agency staffs' degree to which they performed the categorical tasks. Five of the eight categories (*appraisal, counseling, educational information, placement, and follow-up*) were performed slightly higher by the agency staff and one category (*financial aid information*) was performed slightly higher by Talent Search staff with the remaining two categories (*consulting and occupational information*) being performed to the same degree by Talent Search and agencies (see Table II).

The category titled "*appraisal*" consisted of four (4) tasks which were concerned with the collection and use of data on student interests, needs, and aptitudes. The highest possible level of performance on these tasks yielded a X score of five (5). The average score for Talent Search staff was 3.67, while the agency staff scored an average of 3.78, not significantly different, but slightly higher. Table II shows that 83% of the 212 respondents indicated that each client needed this task to be provided to him/her.

The "*consulting*" category consisted of seven (7) guidance tasks which were concerned with providing various consulting services and activities to students on careers and career requirements. The average score for the 212 Talent Search respondents was 3.19, the same as the degree to which they believed the agency staff

TABLE II

## DEGREE OF PERFORMANCE OF CATEGORIES OF VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE TASKS BY TALENT SEARCH AND AGENCY STAFF

Category	Talent Search Staff	Agency Staff	Needs To Be Provided	
			YES	NO
Appraisal Guidance Tasks	X 3.67	X 3.78	83%	17%
Consulting Guidance Tasks	X 3.19	X 3.19	78%	22%
Counseling Tasks	X 3.62	X 3.72	85%	15%
Educational Information Tasks	X 3.44	X 3.50	83%	17%
Financial Aid Information Tasks	X 4.23	X 4.17	91%	9%
Occupational Information Tasks	X 2.88	X 2.88	74%	26%
Placement Tasks	X 2.61	X 2.69	71%	29%
Follow-up Tasks	X 2.75	X 2.76	68%	32%

was providing consulting tasks to the clients they were serving. In respect to each client needing consultant tasks provided to him or her, 78% of those Talent Search staff members that returned the survey indicated "yes," with 22% indicating "no."

"Counseling," the next category on the *Vocational Guidance Tasks Checklist*, consisted of eleven (11) tasks which were concerned with ways of providing individual and group counseling to the targeted clientele. The participants of this study indicated that they provided the task on an average score of 3.62 of a five (5) point Likert-Scale compared to the agency staff who performed counseling tasks slightly higher, with a X score of 3.72. As to each client needing tasks provided to him or her, 85% of the 212 returned surveys felt that counseling tasks had to be provided to each client opposed to 15% that believed they need not be provided.

The fourth category of guidance tasks was "educational information." This category consisted of eight (8) guidance tasks which were concerned with maintaining and providing educational information on secondary and postsecondary opportunities to clients. Out of the highest yielded average score of five (5), the participants of the study indicated that they performed educational information tasks to a slightly lesser degree than the agency staff, their average scores being 3.44 and 3.50, respectively. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the 212 Talent Search staff members that responded to the research endeavor indicated their belief that each client needed educational information guidance tasks provided to them.

The only category that yielded a higher average score for Talent Search staff degree of performance compared to the agency staff degree of performance was the "financial aid information" category. This category consisted of twelve (12) guidance tasks that were concerned with dissemination and securing financial aid information for the clients. The 4.23 and 4.17 average mean scores were tabulated from the respondent surveys with Talent Search staff performing this categorical task section slightly higher than the agency staff. Of the eight (8) categories, this category received the highest mean average score by the Talent Search staff and agency staff as to the degrees of performance. Ninety-one percent (91%) of 212 Talent Search staff replies indicated their belief that each client needed this task provided to him/her.

The category entitled "occupational information" consisted of eleven (11) tasks which were concerned with maintaining and providing specific career information for clients. According to Table II, the average mean score for the Talent Search staff and agency staff was the same, 2.88 out of a yielded average mean score of a five (5) point system. Of those 212 Talent Search staff members that returned the *Vocational Guidance Tasks Checklist*, 74% indicated that they believed that each client needed to be provided occupational information tasks.

The next and lowest degree of performance category tasks is "placement." This category consisted of four (4) guidance tasks which were concerned with the placing of

clients and graduates in jobs. The average mean score for Talent Search staff as to the degree to which they performed placement guidance tasks was 2.61 compared to 2.69 average mean score of agency staff members. Only seventy-one percent (71%) of the 212 believed that this task should be provided to each client.

The last category on the *Vocational Guidance Tasks Checklist* was "follow-up." This category consisted of five (5) tasks which were concerned with collecting and using follow-up data on their clients and graduates. Talent Search staff members indicated that the degree to which they performed follow-up was slightly less than the degree to which they performed these tasks by their average mean scores of 2.75 and 2.76, respectively. Consistent with the low average mean scores, only sixty-eight percent (68%) of the 212 Talent Search respondents believed that the clients they served needed follow-up tasks provided to them.

## RANKING OF GUIDANCE TASKS BY CATEGORY

The ranking of the guidance tasks by category as to the average mean scores shows the highest and lowest categories as to the degree to which Talent Search staff performs guidance tasks. The *financial aid information* category and *appraisal* category are ranked the highest (rank 1 and 2) opposed to *follow-up* and *placement* task categories (rank 7 and 8). The Talent Search staff indicated that the agency staff's degree of performance is highest in the *financial aid information* category and the *appraisal* category with the *follow-up* and *placement* task categories being the lowest. The rankings of the percentage in favor of each client being provided the respective guidance tasks is pretty much in harmony with the ranking as to the performance of guidance tasks in that particular category (see Table III).

TABLE III

Category	Ranking	X Score	Ranking	X Score	Tasks Needs To Be Provided	
	Talent Search		Agency		Ranking	%Yes
Appraisal Guidance Tasks	2	3.67	2	3.78	3	83%
Consulting Guidance Tasks	5	3.19	5	3.19	5	78%
Counseling Tasks	3	3.62	3	3.72	2	85%
Educational Information Tasks	4	3.44	4	3.50	3	83%
Financial Aid Information Tasks	1	4.23	1	4.17	1	91%
Occupational Information Tasks	6	2.88	6	2.88	6	74%
Placement Tasks	8	2.61	8	2.69	7	71%
Follow-up Tasks	7	2.75	7	2.76	8	68%

## SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the information collected in this study, a summary of the conclusions is as follows:

1. Presently in the Talent Search Projects, the staff and agency staff members provide guidance tasks to almost the same degree.
2. *Financial aid information, counseling, appraisal, and educational information* guidance tasks are performed to a greater extent by both Talent Search and agency staff members.
3. *Placement, follow-up, occupational information, and consulting guidance* tasks are performed to a lesser degree by both Talent Search and agency staff members.
4. Talent Search staff members only performed tasks concerned with *financial aid information* to a higher degree than agency staff members.
5. Talent Search staff and agency staff members are performing the majority of the



same tasks to the same degree, while some tasks are not being performed to a high degree by either.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In harmony with the conclusions of this research study, it is recommended that information from this study be used as a basis to determine cooperative efforts which can be undertaken by Talent Search staff and agency staff members in providing guidance tasks and activities to and for clients. Pre-service school counseling planning sessions could be held which would involve Talent Search counselors. Certain guidance tasks could be identified and specifically assigned to each group member. Some tasks may be more effectively performed by agency staff members while other tasks could be more effectively performed by Talent Search staff members. In addition, some tasks could be assigned to both Talent Search and agency staff members as joint responsibilities.

Talent Search project directors must also re-examine project goals and objectives to adhere to federal regulations that govern their operation. Projects of this nature are funded to provide intensive career exploration, various types of counseling for individual students, assistance in postsecondary admission, securing financial assistance, and, in the case of school dropouts, readmission to secondary or postsecondary programs. All of these services should be made available to financial and/or cultural need clients within their target area(s). In the recent *Federal Register* (December 14, 1981, 61060), the Secretary address proposed regulations for the evaluation of past performance of applicants applying for new awards under the Special Programs for Students. Pursuant to accountability purposes, the *Vocational Guidance Tasks Checklist* could assist projects in the documentation of services to clients by providing a task-oriented format.

It is also recommended that an additional study be made to further validate the results to this study. A study should be undertaken to ascertain in the degree to which clients feel that they are receiving guidance services from agency staff members and Talent Search members.

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