
Introduction

Clark-Shaw Magnet School, located in Mobile, Alabama, is part of the Mobile County Public School System and serves over 750 students in grades 6-8. The school is open to all Mobile County students, regardless of school zone, an area that encompasses 1,644 square miles. Students must complete an application process prior to admission and placement is based on random selection via a computer lottery. Clark-Shaw stresses higher order thinking skills in a specialized advanced curriculum. As a school of choice, Clark-Shaw's magnet program is designed for students who are interested in pursuing a curriculum emphasizing math, science and technology.

Clark-Shaw's Comprehensive Counseling and Guidance Program is an integral part of the total educational process. Program services are delivered by two certified school counselors. Guidance services are available to all students and their parents. Counseling services are available on an individual and group basis both upon request and according to need. The guidance program at Clark-Shaw consists of activities that address the various educational, developmental, and psycho-educational needs of the students in grades 6-8. Approximately 1/3 of the counselors' time is spent presenting the school guidance curriculum through small and large groups, 45% of the time is involved in responsive services; and the remaining 22% is directed towards individual student planning and system support. Programs are developed based on analyzing student needs surveys, desired achievement goals, faculty and administrative input, and related student data.

Counseling and guidance programs are conducted in the classroom in collaboration with the teaching staff. Students are presented an array of topics depending on the students social, educational, and career plans/needs that are infused into the regular education curriculum. The counselors collaborate with the school personnel to assist students in making a smooth transition to middle school. The counselors plan and conduct summer registration and related transition activities. Camp Clark was created to allay the fears associated with the transition to middle school and to give new students a positive experience. In addition to camp, the counselors provide orientation activities for all incoming students and their parents, and also guides eighth graders in the development of their high school four-year plan. Students and parents are informed of test results on tests such as Explore and their implications for educational and career planning. Groups and individuals are assisted in formulating educational and career plans, and personal and social issues are addressed as needed. Testing and test result interpretations are appropriately shared with students, parents and staff.

The counselors conduct structured individual and group counseling sessions to meet the needs of students as they may arise during the school year. All students are eligible for counseling services and students are encouraged to take advantage of this service.

The counselors participate in staff and team meetings; plan and conduct staff development programs and activities and facilitates conferences with students, teachers, and parents. The counselors also assist families with school related issues and problems.

The counselors assist and are a resource in the creation of school newsletters and other school information for publication or dissemination via email or internet.

The Clark-Shaw guidance counselors work with community agencies throughout the year in making student and family referrals on a need based status. The City of Mobile offers a wide array of specialists, programs, and agencies to help students who possess a variety of issues. The MCPSS offers specialists who collaborate with school counselors to find solutions or explore strategies to offer students and parents. The counselor is an integral team member in the student referral effort at Clark-Shaw.

At Clark-Shaw, the counselors are a major resource and active contributors to the effective daily operation of the school. They sit in on department/grade level meetings and offer expertise on issues relative to enhancing successful operation. The counselor is also consulted as a resource when appropriate placement is an issue during GEP or IEP meetings. The counselors serve as a liaison to community agencies and special programs and activities such as Red Ribbon Week. One of the counselors is the test coordinator for the school and both counselors are a major source of input to the school's assessment program.

Clark-Shaw's Advisory Committee meets each semester to evaluate and offer suggestions or ideas for successful operation and improvement of the Guidance Program. Through counseling inventories and student needs assessments, activities and program plans are revised to make sure the overall guidance program is effective and addresses issues pertinent to the students and faculty at Clark-Shaw.