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Wake Forest University: CNS 786 Consultation

Assignment 5.1: Article Response: Application of Consultation

Applications of Consultation: Transgender & Gender-Nonconforming Students

For this assignment, I am going to assume that I have been brought in as an external consultant by the administration to help the school become more welcoming and accepting of the LGBT community, specifically transgender and gender-nonconforming students. One of the first things I will want to do as a consultant to assess the current culture and environment regarding transgender and gender-nonconformity at this school. How progressive is the culture here? Is religion a factor? How accepting of the LGBT community is this school and the surrounding community? Some parts of the country are more progressive than others and it is important to take into consideration the surrounding culture when deciding how to move forward in a way that will be most helpful for all involved. The more I know about the specific challenges facing the students I am here to serve, the better I can help them.

After assessing the current environment, I will then want to determine how familiar the staff, administration, faculty, parents, and other students are with this topic. One of the first things I would want to consider suggesting is implementing education for all involved. The terminology alone can be overwhelming and confusing. This may be done via an in-service for faculty, staff and administration, or through an online training course. In this way, the professionals in the school can be sure to use the proper language and vocabulary (for example gender expression versus gender identity). I would also recommend to the administration that this education be expanded to include the students, perhaps as an addendum to existing diversity curriculum and training. Another training I would recommend is offered by The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educators Network (GLSEN) called *Ally 101 Workshop* (GLSEN, 2017).

It is during the school years that children and adolescents explore their identity and it is important that they are supported in this exploration as much as possible. In terms of gender

identity and expression, Title IX of the Education Amendment Acts of 1972 clearly prohibit discrimination based on sex, and students have a right to their first amendment rights (Stone, 2015), which includes wearing preferred clothing and being called by their preferred names. I would want to ensure that the administration was aware of the recent court cases such as *Doe v. Yunits* (2000; as cited by Stone, 2015) and what the law currently allows or prohibits as we examine their current policies regarding this subject. Helping the school move into or remain in compliance of the laws is important, and depending on the culture of the school, may present some challenges. This may also include helping the school determine the best way to explain this policy to parents who may be less than accepting of rules allowing students to use whichever bathroom matches their gender expression. It is important that parents, along with everyone else, understand that policies such as these do not apply to just any student deciding on a whim one day that they would rather use the opposite gender locker room or bathroom and that students seeking to take advantage of these policies will be dealt with appropriately.

Another goal would be to work with the school counselor on ways for him or her to work with the parents of transgender or gender-nonconforming students. Some parents are supportive, while others are not. Courts have ruled that students have the right to express their gender identity openly at school (Stone, 2015) however, some students may not want to reveal this information to their parents. Ideally, the counselor would be able to help parents learn to accept their child's gender identity, but that will not always be feasible and in those cases, it would be best if the counselor has a strategy already in place. The school counselor may benefit from becoming familiar with resources such as the film *The Family Journey: Raising Gender Nonconforming Children* (The Youth & Gender Project, n.d.)

One resource I would encourage the school to make use of is GLSEN, which publishes guides for educators on how to best support students, “regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression (GLSEN, 2017). GLSEN has created toolkits, such as *Ready, Set, Respect!* that help guide elementary school administrators and educators “deliver inclusive, diversity-focused lessons” (GLSEN, 2016), that may be adapted for use at this school. There is no need for us to re-invent the wheel when determining the best strategies to implement in order to expand the school culture to be more inclusive. Budget and time restraints would likely restrict the efforts at creating such a program or curriculum from scratch and GLSEN has already established themselves as a leader in this area in terms of research and designing evidence-based solutions for k-12 education.

References

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