Key Competencies: How school guidance counsellors contribute to student learning

A resource for school guidance counsellors

Kathie Crocket, Elmarie Kotzé, Colin Hughes, Judith Graham, and Alison Burke

2014
This booklet accompanies a power point presentation, and includes

- an overview to introduce the resource to presenters
- a guide to presentation
- a link to the power point presentation - slides in handout format, and accompanying notes
- handouts for use in discussion during presentation

Contents

Contents ........................................................................................................................................... 2

A. Introductory overview .................................................................................................................. 3
  1. Purpose of the resource ............................................................................................................. 3
  2. The Key Competency research project ..................................................................................... 3
  3. Using this resource ................................................................................................................... 3
  4. Other material on the project .................................................................................................. 4

B. About the presentation .................................................................................................................. 5
  5. Vignettes ................................................................................................................................... 5
  6a. Key Competencies: Handout for small group discussion: Dissing .............................................. 6
  6a. Presenter background notes for Vignette 2 Discussion: Dissing .................................................. 8
  6b. Key Competencies: Handout for small group discussion: Shall I stay or shall I go? I’m stuck ..10
  6b. Presenter background notes for Vignette 3: Shall I go or shall I stay? ........................................ 12
  6c. Key Competencies: Handout for small group discussion: Tama and Dylan give up the booze...14
  6c. Presenter background notes for vignette 4 discussion: Tama and Dylan give up the booze ......16
  7. Handout versions of the slides .................................................................................................... 18
  8. Presenter notes to read ............................................................................................................. 21
  9. Finally: Possible questions and responses ............................................................................... 26

C. References ................................................................................................................................... 27

D. Contact details for further information ...................................................................................... 27
A. Introductory overview

1. Purpose of the resource

This resource has been designed for use by school counsellors to illustrate to colleagues some ways school guidance counsellors might work with Key Competencies in counselling conversations. It is intended to build understanding between school guidance counsellors and our school communities. The power point resource includes illustrative examples of counsellors contributing to student learning at the same time as they contribute to student wellbeing. The resource may be used in part or in whole in a variety of settings or with a variety of audiences. Board of Trustees, senior management, pastoral networks, or whole of staff are some possible groupings. In particular we think it is useful to illustrate to teachers the ways in which school guidance counsellors contribute to student learning through creating opportunities for students to use and learn Key Competencies in the course of counselling.

2. The Key Competency research project

This resource arose out of a study in which three school counsellors, each in different schools - Colin Hughes, Trident High School; Alison Burke, Tarawera High School; and Judith Graham Whakatane High School—researched their counselling work through the lens of Key Competencies, in collaboration with two University of Waikato researchers, Kathie Crocket and Elmarie Kotze. The two year research project was made possible by funding from the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) (see www.tlri.org.nz).

The research project has provided a range of material that shows how school counsellors contribute to student learning, and thus to the core mission of schools as outlined in the New Zealand Curriculum (2007). Indeed, it shows that counselling offers significant opportunities for the students to use and develop Key Competencies. These contributions are offered in ways that are particular to counselling as well as in ways that overlap with learning in classroom and other contexts.

The focus of counselling arises out of what student clients bring to counselling. The Key Competencies then emerge out of the client’s story and the responses of counsellors. By researching the counselling session through the lens of the Key Competencies, school counsellors are given a valuable additional focus in their awareness of counselling as a learning process for student clients. This perspective on learning also gives counsellors a shared language and purpose with teaching colleagues which this resource is intended to highlight.

3. Using this resource

The focus in this resource is to illustrate distinctive aspects of the craft of counselling and the contribution these distinctive aspects make to student learning. Striking a balance between school counsellors’ common cause with that of teachers in growing Key Competencies, and the distinctive specialist skills of counselling is a tension that we would advise presenters to hold in mind throughout any presentation they make using this resource material. If time is limited, please use only one vignette.

The illustrative vignettes used in this resource are drawn directly from the research project. Changes have been made to identifying characteristics of people and stories, but not to Key Competencies which emerged, as means and ends. The research vignettes give access to examples of counselling conversations which in day to day school guidance counselling are kept private because of confidentiality.
4. Other material on the project

School guidance counsellors are encouraged, before presenting, to read the following articles which give a fuller description of the project:


The TLRI site will also list any future publications: see [www.tlri.org.nz](http://www.tlri.org.nz)

Familiarity with the *New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) is needed before presenting this resource to others.
B. About the presentation

For the presentation you will need

- The power point presentation;
- The presenter notes for the power point (B, section 8) OR your text to use as a narrative for your presentation; and
- Handouts to use during small group discussion of practice vignettes.

5. Vignettes

The power point provides four vignettes of counselling practice that demonstrate the performance and development of Key Competencies.

The first vignette (Joann and Zarah) first has a brief audio-visual clip which shows counselling practice. A narrative then works through a transcript, highlighting the Key Competencies which are in use and in development in learning moments, as this counselling begins.

Three further vignettes are then each introduced. Depending on your audience, and the time you have available, you might like to pause the power point presentation at this point, and divide participants into small groups to each discuss the learning/Key Competencies in one vignette. Or you may prefer to use the handouts and work through one or more vignettes with the whole group.

A handout copy of each of these three vignettes follows in Section 6, a, b, and c. Immediately following each vignette is a commentary that is intended to give you some background for leading a discussion after the groups have discussed the vignettes. Please encourage participants in discussion and interpretation.
6a. Handout for Vignette 2 Discussion: Dissing

Key Competencies: Handout for small group discussion: Dissing

1. Please identify one critical moment that captures your attention. What skills do you identify the counsellor using?

2. What learning moments or steps become possible for the students? How are they asked to use the Key Competencies in these learning steps?

3. What might be new to you as a teacher through seeing the counselling room in this way?

Mere and Zoe arrive at the counsellor’s door without an appointment and in a highly agitated state. The counsellor is due to leave school soon to attend a Strengthening Families meeting, but noticing how upset the students are, invites them into the room.

Counsellor: Come in girls. I’m due somewhere else soon but I can be here for you for the next 20 minutes or we can make another appointment and make a start then. What do you think’s best?

Mere: We just want to tell you what a bitch Miss W is.

Zoe: Yeah Yeah … she’s a real bitch—sorry Sir, but she is—she’s useless and no one learns anything. I haven’t learnt a thing all year.

Mere: All she does is put stuff up on the board and it’s copy this, copy this, copy this and she yells at us all the time. We’re not learning and we don’t do anything fun.

Zoe: Yeah … and she’s always picking on me Sir, about everything. She complains if I don’t speak up and answer a question. If I do answer a question she complains that I’m too loud and I’m butting in; she complains that I’m standing up and I’m not sitting down; she complains when I give Mere a pen to write with; she complains when she’s asking me to explain something to her and I’m trying to explain and I get told off and kicked out for nothing….

Counsellor: What I’m hearing girls is you feel that you just can’t do anything right here.

Mere: No we can’t. She’s just a bitch.

Zoe: And yeah—she’s racist sir. She just picks on us Māoris.

Counsellor: Girls I can see you feel frustrated here and I’m glad you’ve come to see me because you’ve got a right to come to school and go to class without feeling put down and picked on all the time. So how about we make another time to really talk about this, because this deserves some time and some thinking. I want it to be more than just a bitch session because in the end that wouldn’t change anything and this situation deserves more than that. So when we meet next girls, how about we plan that we’ll come up with some ideas about what could make a difference here.

Mere: It’s pretty big.

Counsellor: It is pretty big and we may not be able to get a 100% solution here, but if we can work away on making some significant difference, would that be helpful? Does that sound like something that you’re prepared to work on?

Mere: I guess.
Counsellor: How about you, Zoe? Does that sound good to you?


Counsellor: Ok. Between now and then if you’ve got some ideas, other ideas about what could happen to make a difference here … you could think about them and bring them to our next session.

Mere: Yeah, ok, but we don’t want to go to there right now.

Zoe: Yeah, she’s still a bitch as far as I’m concerned.

Mere: There’s only half the period left anyway Sir.

Counsellor: All right girls I’ll tell you what I’ll do. How would it be if I let you sit in the spare room next to mine or go to the library—what would be best?

Mere: Can we go to the library.

Counsellor: I’ll give you a note now. So … this class is period three tomorrow isn’t it—shall we make our time then. I’m hopeful about this girls, because I think that there are some answers which we can work on together that will make a difference.

Zoe: Ok, thanks Sir.

Counsellor: Great. I’ll look forward to seeing you then.
6a. Presenter background notes for Vignette 2 Discussion: Dissing

Some notes about critical moments

- The counsellor recognises the students’ distress and invites them into his counselling room. This invitation signifies that he is meeting them as a counsellor, affirming that counselling is an appropriate place to come in this distressing situation. Counselling is a resource the school provides to enhance students’ participation in school life.

- Immediately he tells the students about the limits of his availability. He invites them to take responsibility for making a decision, given these limits. It is a refined skill to respond to distress at the same time as inviting students into the responsibility of making an instant decision whether to meet immediately for a brief time, or to delay for a longer meeting.

- When Zoe and Mere do not immediately respond with a decision but tell more of the complaint, the counsellor responds with understanding for and acknowledgement of their experience of being constantly in the wrong.

- He takes seriously their experience of having been affronted, and treated unfairly. He listens to the girls and affirms that it is their right to experience fairness at school. Perhaps behind the scenes he is thinking that learning to speak appropriately against unfairness is a capability we would want young people to develop.

- He puts clear boundaries around the way he speaks about the problem. He preserves the mana of both the girls and the teacher. He emphasises that this situation requires careful attention and consideration in order for something to be different. In doing so, he stays available to counsel the girls while not getting caught up in what might be seen as “dissing” the teacher.

- He offers again to make another time. He speaks of shared planning, of coming up with ideas, of making a difference. He thus implies that it may be possible for Mere and Zoe to take actions that address this problem. This implication is qualified by realism: significant difference might be the best solution that is possible.

- He then checks out with Mere and Zoe whether they now evaluate this situation as one to be worked on. He checks with each of them.

- He suggests that they might engage in some thinking about the problem between this time and the next counselling meeting.

- Hearing the distress that is still present, at the end of this brief meeting he gives the girls an alternative to returning to class. He may be thinking that the teacher, other students, and Zoe and Mere may all benefit if this difficult situation is not given new life in a return to class during this teaching period. Again, this move may preserve the mana of both the girls and the teacher.

- Again he invites the girls to decide in which of two places to spend the rest of the teaching period. He offers them options within clear limits, treating them with respect. Again they are invited to make a discernment and a decision.

- In ending he affirms his intention to work alongside them towards resolution. He offers optimism.

Some notes about learning moments or steps

- The immediate responsibility of decision-making requires the girls to discern the urgency of their request. This thinking step is not immediately available to them: they do not indicate a clear decision about how to proceed, but proceed nonetheless. They show their decision in their actions.
• Zoe’s apology for the language she uses—sorry Sir, but she is...—suggests some knowledge about the use of school counselling as a means of having a complaint heard, and achieving fair participation. She expresses a respectful relationship towards the counsellor at the same time as she strongly lays out the difficulty that has brought her to the counsellor’s office.

• When the counsellor sums up the frustration and difficulty, affirms their right to not feel picked on, and offers to meet with them again to make a difference, Mere’s speaking shifts from the teacher to the situation: it’s pretty big. In these few words she indicates that she now has a different perspective on the situation. She has gained this perspective in the following way. She listened to the counsellor’s empathic response, and she heard his suggestions of a way forward. She used his speaking as a reflecting surface to understand more of the situation in which she and Zoe have found themselves. This is a significant thinking/learning step for a young person who is experiencing themselves as mistreated, to understand the difficulty as located in a social situation rather than only in another person. The counsellor identifies this learning step, agreeing that indeed the problem is big.

• When the counsellor asks Zoe and Mere if they are each prepared to work on making a difference, each gives a perhaps somewhat equivocal response. These responses convey something of their engaging with the counselling relationship and consequent work that has been offered to them. And they convey also some ambivalence, some acknowledgement of the pain of their experiences in the classroom. These are important reciprocal skills: to offer, and to hear, understand and respect, such equivocation.

• Mere and Zoe offer knowledge about the inappropriateness of a return to the classroom. This may be interpreted as inappropriately missing class. Alternatively it may also be a sensible option, to manage impulsivity, or to not further confront a difficult situation, for the girls, the teacher, and other students. It may open up a learning moment for the girls to consider the situation on the now available terms of a problem that is pretty big, one that the counsellor takes seriously enough to offer time and process to find a way forward.

Some comments on learning and Key Competencies

• This vignette illustrates learning that is situated, accomplished in a social situation. The counsellor became a resource through whom the girls experienced both being understood and being offered opportunities to work towards possible different understandings.

• The girls actively listened to the counsellor, and Zoe apologised for swearing, demonstrating skills in relating to others, to which the counsellor further responded.

• Key Competency literature suggests that teachers and students are together responsible for learning. The counsellor did not individualise the girls or the teacher as the problem, and he explicitly offered to work together with the girls to respond to the problem. Learning happens in relationship, in the spaces between people.

• The counsellor twice offered the girls alternative options about which he invited them to make decisions. He thus illustrated the value of having more than one possibility available for action, and the responsibility of evaluating and selecting options. He thus invoked a responsibility for reflective thinking.

• Underlying the counsellor’s responses is an appreciation of the conditions needed for learning, and for effective participation in a school community. Key Competency literature tells us that nurturing students’ aspirations and participation is part of the learning entitlement of all students.

Key Competencies in action: thinking, relating to others, managing self.
6b. Handout for Vignette 3 Discussion: Shall I go or shall I stay?

Key Competencies: Handout for small group discussion: Shall I stay or shall I go? I’m stuck.

1. Please identify one critical moment that captures your attention. What skills do you identify the counsellor using?

2. What learning moments or steps become possible for the students? How are they asked to use the Key Competencies in these learning steps?

3. What might be new to you as a teacher through seeing the counselling room in this way?

Wiremu is a 16 year old who moved away from living with his parents to enter into a same gender relationship with a young man who is several years older than him. This relationship faced challenges and grew into one where violence and control had the upper hand. Wiremu self-referred to counselling when he himself acted violently: he was unhappy with his behaviour but found that he couldn’t turn it around. At the start of the school day he arrives at the counsellor’s room, not having an appointment, but hoping to see the counsellor immediately as he is in great distress.

Wiremu. I did it again Miss. I gave him a hiding; real bad this time. He was so in my face. Everything was sweet, we were cruising, having a great night. But then he started at me.

Counsellor. So it’s the same as last time? [The counsellor calls on history to verify if the actions previously talked about are repeated, and is assessing the severity.]

Wiremu. Yeah, the same stuff but worse. He got stuck in—what was I doing: who was I talking to. Then he grabbed my phone off me. Wouldn’t give it back, wouldn’t leave me alone. Just went on and on and on. I really gave him a hiding this time. Once I started I couldn’t stop…

[Wiremu pauses, going back in his mind to the events of the previous evening—the ensuing silence gives him space to think and process what he wants to say.]

So later I packed my bags and phoned uncle to come and get me. When he came we talked for a long time, he calmed me down and so I left it. Told uncle I’m not ready to leave.

Counsellor. What if you go back tonight and your partner’s still there? In the past you’ve talked about ending it and then gone back.

Wiremu. Yeah Miss. I have. Either way, if I stay or if I go, he won’t be happy. That’s where my head’s stuck.

Counsellor. How about we look at drawing where your head’s stuck—the going or staying—on the whiteboard.

[Wiremu grabs a pen and draws an enlarged “Y” on the whiteboard. He writes “Leave” on the left hand fork and “Stay” on the right hand fork. He then adds himself standing at the apex, right at the crossroads emphasising his stuckness.]

Counsellor. So what if you stay, what would that look like?

Wiremu. Mmmm. More arguments; not being able to do what I want…. No trust!!

[Wiremu adds a couple of exclamation marks here. Again there is a silent pause while he thinks through this process then gradually he adds….] no
privacy … anger … violence … sadness and tears … unhappy
[underlining unhappy.]

[Wiremu steps back and both he and the Counsellor look at what he has
written, absorbing in silence the implication of staying in the relationship
in silence. Some time passes.]

Counsellor. What about if you leave? What would that look like?

Wiremu. That’s easy Miss. [A smile appears on his face.] No arguments, I’d be
able to do what I want, no one don’t trust me, privacy, no anger, no
violence. [Pauses here.] Still be sadness and tears but Free. I’d be free.
[He puts exclamation marks again after this and then finally adds the
words …] finding Wiremu.

Counsellor. Finding Wiremu

Wiremu. YEAH, finding Wiremu.

[Wiremu’s face relaxes and he repeats, smiling.]

Yeah, finding Wiremu again.

[Silence ensues as he again contemplates what is on the board before
him.]

Wiremu. But … but I want to see if I can make him happy.

Counsellor. What if there’s a third road?

[Wiremu’s face lights up as he grasps an understanding of the possibility
that the question opens up. In a different colour he adds to the drawing
on the board a third pathway rising from the centre pillar and between
the two forks of the “Y”. He writes –.]

A break. Reconsider.

[He also draws in a pathway along the top of the two forks of the “Y”,
one linking back to “staying” and the other linking forward to leaving
the relationship. He adds a question mark to each side where the new
pathway joins the existing ones, indicating he is keeping his options open.
Once again Wiremu steps back from the board and observes his work.]

Wiremu. Yeah, that’s what we need. Yeah. A break for a while, I can go and stay
with my aunty in Auckland. Clear my head, sort myself out again.
6b. Presenter background notes for Vignette 3: Shall I go or shall I stay?

**Some notes about critical moments**

- The counsellor responds to Wiremu’s distress by offering to meet with him. She calls on what he has previously told her to ask Wiremu questions that require him to assess the seriousness of what has happened.

- She then asks a question about the immediate future as she continues to provide Wiremu with questions that assess the relationship. She refers to past efforts to make decisions about the relationship.

- She changes the medium with her invitation to use the whiteboard for visual representation of the dilemma. By initiating a change of process to visual mode the counsellor widened the resources available to Wiremu to make sense of the situation.

- As she asks questions about the whiteboard image, her language is speculative and tentative: *what would?*, *what if?* Rather than focusing on immediate action, these questions offer genuine inquiry and consideration of possible action. The speculative questions offer Wiremu support to critically evaluate possible actions and values.

- The counsellor sits with silence, giving Wiremu time to pause, reflect and evaluate.

- At the moment when Wiremu again is caught by having only two options available—highlighted by the ‘Y’—the counsellor introduces the possibility of a third road. Again she uses speculative language: *what if?*

**Some notes about learning moments or steps**

- Wiremu begins by saying, “I did it again….” He takes responsibility for the actions he has taken, and he also puts responsibility on his partner.

- In recounting events in more detail, in response to the counsellor inviting him to assess, he also reflects on his own actions.

- In exploring he draws on the value of not engaging in violence. He reports have sought help from his uncle to calm the situation. But he did not leave and the situation is unresolved.

- He fully engages with the opportunity to represent the problem visually. Wiremu’s move to draw on the whiteboard was both physical and symbolic. In the action of drawing he enacted knowing about his situation, representing himself in relation with the problem.

- In response to the counsellor’s speculative questions, he listens. He then pauses and reflects. Responding to these questions, from his position looking at the visual representation, he becomes an on-looker to the dilemma. He takes up different points of view from which to engage in knowledge-building for action.

- With the counsellor’s inquiry about a possible third road, he takes the opportunity to consider things from another position, showing himself open to new learning. He comes up with a new possible action, for which he begins to make a plan. In making this plan, he re-connects with and re-asserts the value of non-violence.
Some comments on learning and Key Competencies: Shall I go...

- This vignette illustrates learning that occurs in the to and fro of inquiry-based conversation: neither Wiremu nor the counsellor foresee the solution that Wiremu came to. The plan for future action is co-constructed in response to this particular very serious situation.

- By initiating a change of process to visual mode the counsellor widens the resources available to Wiremu to make sense of the situation. In the action of drawing, Wiremu enacts knowing about his situation. The symbolic representation provides a visual focus for the counsellor to ask step-by-step scaffolded questions that invite Wiremu to draw incrementally on knowledge from his own life. These are moments of interactive creativity.

- As Wiremu speaks and listens and speaks again he makes meaning of the relationship, the violence, his actions, and his options. He uses these meanings to guide his future actions.

- The session begins with Wiremu’s initiative to see the counsellor. As the counselling continues, Wiremu takes initiative to add words and symbols to the visual representation. He is active in taking responsibility for addressing the problem.

Key Competencies in action: thinking, relating to others, managing self, using symbols and texts.
6c. Handout for Vignette 4 Discussion: Tama and Dylan give up the booze

Key Competencies: Handout for small group discussion: Tama and Dylan give up the booze

1. Please identify one critical moment that captures your attention. What skills do you identify the counsellor using?
2. What learning moments or steps become possible for the students? How are they asked to use the Key Competencies in these learning steps?
3. What might be new to you as a teacher through seeing the counselling room in this way?

Tama has made an appointment to meet with Jeff, the school counsellor. When he arrives, Dylan is with him. Jeff invites them both into his office.

Jeff: How come the two of you have come together?
Tama: Because we’re bros.
Jeff: What does it mean to be a bro?
Tama: We look out for each other.
Jeff: So how are you going to look out for each other in counselling?
Dylan: We want to chuck the booze, sir. You know the ad, sir, where the guy says, “Bloody idiot”. We’re not idiots.
Jeff: So how come you two decided to come together?
Tama: It’s what bros do.
Jeff: Do you know many bros who would do this kind of thing?
Tama: Dunno.
Dylan: Yeah, man, you told me about your uncle, you know, the one who was the league player.
Tama: Oh yeah, yeah, he gave it up.
Jeff: Your uncle—who looked out for him?
Tama: The bros in the team—that was mean, man.
Jeff: What happened?
Tama: They just looked out for him, like bros do. They probably told him he was an idiot, too.
Jeff: How did that help?
Dylan: It’s like us, sir. We want to be in the first XV.
Jeff: Both of you?
Tama: Yeah, but he drinks more than me.
Jeff: You both want to be in the first XV?
Dylan: We’ve been in the same team for ever.
Tama: Since Pukeiti School, sir.
Jeff: Wow—that’s a while.
Dylan: We told you, sir, we’re bros, bros from way back when.

Jeff: So how does being bros help you with dropping the booze? You said you would look out for each other, and your uncle’s mates looked out for him?

Tama: Nah, his bros.

Jeff: Oh ok—his bros. There’s the looking out for each other? How do you do this, look out for each other in dropping the booze?
6c. Presenter background notes for vignette 4 discussion: Tama and Dylan give up the booze

Some notes about critical moments

- The counsellor asks the boys about the significance of their coming together. His intention is to surface tacit knowledge, by making explicit any implicit intentions in their joint action.
- The counsellor’s language is close to the language the boys use. By using their language he invites them to explore the meanings implicit in the language.
  - They speak of being “bros”—he asks them what is implied by being bros, by this particular description/understanding of relationship.
  - They speak of “looking out for each other”—he asks them what looking after each other will mean for counselling.
  - They speak of “what bros do”—he asks them if they know of many bros who would do what they are doing.
  - The counsellor’s questions stay focused on the change the boys want to make, and the relationship context of that change. The questions follow the boys while staying focused on the topic of change. In this way he contributes to enriching and extending their thinking about what is involved in change: these are small steps towards metacognition.

Some notes about learning moments or steps

- The boys arrive with a shared goal. However, they speak first about their relationship, which the counsellor recognises as a potential vehicle for the counselling.
- They bring the resource offered by a community health education programme, using its language to make their request. They contrast themselves to the image on the billboard, using this contrast as motivation for taking initiative to change.
- Further benefit of the presence of two students at counselling is seen when Dylan interrupts with a story about Tama’s uncle, that had not been immediately available to Tama. This knowledge becomes available to be used in the moment, in the counselling, as an innovative resource for change. Recalling this earlier story of change gives mana to Tama’s uncle’s achievement, with the support of his sports mates, and so to Tama and Dylan’s intention.
- When the counsellor speaks of Tama’s uncle’s “mates”, Tama corrects him: “Nah, his bros”. Tama offers a respectful invitation into cultural understanding. If this invitation is intended as a test of the counsellor’s willingness to engage, it is successful: the counsellor apologises, uses their term, and then continues with inquiry about the knowledge Tama and Dylan already have about looking out for each other.

Some comments on learning and Key Competencies

- The counsellor gives attention to Tama and Dylan coming together and to their relationship. As the boys respond to his question, together they begin to build a story of change as being the responsibility of community, not only individuals. Learning that is embedded in participation in community becomes shared and sustainable. It draws on kaitiakitanga.
• The counsellor then draws on the possibilities of kaitiakitanga in asking the boys about an experience in their own family/community context that provides a resource on which they can draw for their plans for change.

• The boys use humour skilfully for multiple purposes. As a strategy to manage this request for help to make change, the humour: disguises discomfort, shrinks the problem, enacts their relationship, and reaches out to the counsellor. The counsellor reads the humour two ways. He accepts it, but, for example, when Tama says, “But he drinks more than me,” he does not allow it to divert him from the serious intent the boys have also expressed.

Key Competencies in action: thinking, relating to others, managing self, participating and contributing, using language.
7. Handout versions of the slides

Key Competencies:
How school guidance counsellors contribute to student learning

- Counselling and wellbeing
- Counselling as a site of learning
- Key competency use and development

Learning opportunities in counselling
- A student’s concerns and needs determine the content
- Freedom to explore concerns and mistakes
- Clients as well as students

Learning opportunities in counselling
- Voluntary participation
- Evaluation – specific and personal

Key Competencies:
- Thinking
- Using language, symbols, and texts
- Managing self
- Relating to others
- Participating and contributing
Joann and Zarah

Joann: I told her she should go talk to you, but she doesn’t want to come. [Zarah is looking down and chewing the ends of her hair.]
Joann: Her boyfriend is aggro [psycho] and when he gets aggro she gets it, miss. [Zarah looks down further, her foot kicking the chair leg.]

Beth: Joann, somehow you got Zarah to come even though she doesn’t want to come. Are you worried about your friend?
Joann: Yes, miss, she’s gonna get really hurt.
Zarah: Nah.
Joann: Show her your arm then.

Beth: How long have you two known each other?
Joann: Miss, when I started here Zarah was the first one to be my friend.
Beth: Zarah looked out for you when you first got here? [To Zarah] Do you remember that you did that for her?
Zarah: ‘Course.
Beth: It sounds like it was a big thing for Joann.
Joann: It was, miss, yeah.

• Beth: Zarah, is it Ok for Joann to worry about you?
• Zarah: ‘S’pose.
• Beth: Is he hurting you?
• Zarah: Only sometimes.
• Beth: Sometimes he hurts you?
• Zarah: Yeah. (Zarah looks up.)
Key Competencies: How school guidance counsellors contribute to student learning:
A resource for school guidance counsellors

Vignettes
1. What’s your position on dissing?
2. Wiremu: Shall I stay or shall I go?
3. Tama and Dylan give up the booze

Discussion
• What have you noticed?
• Comments and questions
8. Presenter notes to read

**Notes for slide 1**

Welcome to the participants.

*This resource has been provided by the TLRI Project, “Key Competencies: How school guidance counsellors contribute to student learning”. It is for the use of school guidance counsellors wishing to further inform their school communities about counselling.

The following notes may be read to an audience, or amended to suit the group to whom you are presenting.*

**Notes for slide 2**

The school community generally doesn’t see what goes on in the counselling room. It’s private and confidential. Sometimes the counselling office might be thought of as focusing only on student wellbeing—or as somewhere that messy situations get cleaned up. This presentation today also shows the counselling room as somewhere where students participate in learning.

This presentation was developed by a research group that included school guidance counsellors. It opens up the walls of the counselling room to give a view of counselling as a site of learning, and in particular of key competency use and development.

**Notes for slide 3**

The research was undertaken by three school counsellors—Colin Hughes, Trident High School; Alison Burke, Tarawera High School; and Judith Graham Whakatane High School—in collaboration with two Waikato University researchers (Kathie Crocket and Elmarie Kotzé). The research group had a two-year research grant to investigate school guidance counselling practice as a site of student learning, through the lens of Key Competency use and development.

The New Zealand Curriculum document states that Key Competencies are both means and ends. Let’s pause at this idea of means and ends in order to offer an example or two from the counselling room.

1. Key competencies as ends: for example, when a school counsellor meets with a Year 13 student who is struggling with the competing demands of school leadership and sporting and community commitments, alongside his/her academic programme, which might not be looking so flash, the purpose—or end—of the counselling may be to identify ways of participating and contributing in community that make life more satisfying, or even more possible, for the student. (Participating and contributing is one of the five key competencies.)

2. Key competencies as means: if a counsellor gives a copy of John Kirwan’s book “All Blacks don’t cry” to a student who is weighed down by depression, and suggests that counsellor and student read a particular section and discuss it together, the use of language, symbols and texts (another of the key competencies) is a vehicle for the counselling—a means.

The research team investigated many such examples of how the counselling room is a site of key competency use and development, and the counsellor a facilitator of learning.

**Notes for slide 4**

There are particular learning opportunities available in counselling.

1. A student’s needs and concerns form the subject matter at the heart of the learning. It is the counsellor’s responsibility to recognise and respond to the potential learning moments and
steps in what a young person brings. In this way the client can be said to be the curriculum, to embody the subject matter, the key competencies, and the values.

2. Because our focus as School Guidance Counsellors is not discipline—or achievement standards—there is freedom to fully explore concerns students bring and mistakes they have made.

3. Counsellors are bound to the Code of Ethics of their professional association, as well as to school policies and practices. One effect of this is that students come to the counselling room not just as students but also with the status and rights of clients. One of these rights is privacy and confidentiality.

**Notes for slide 5**

4. There are times, too, when voluntary attendance at counselling may mean a student client is more likely to engage in a learning process. At the same time, when a student is required to see the counsellor, the counsellor has a professional responsibility to engage the student in the learning opportunities counselling offers. This responsibility may require careful negotiation between school policies and professional ethics.

5. Evaluation of what has been achieved in counselling, is co-constructed with each client in terms that are both specific and personal. The final evaluation perspective is the student’s.

**Notes for slide 6**

As you know the *New Zealand Curriculum* identifies these five key competencies by which we all live, learn, work and contribute as active members of our communities.

In describing the key competencies the curriculum document says:

More complex than skills, the competencies draw also on knowledge, attitudes, and values in ways that lead to action. They are not separate or stand-alone. They are the key to learning in every learning area. (Ministry of Education, p. 12)

It goes on, “Successful learners make use of the competencies in combination with all the other resources available to them…”

The research study has shown how counselling is one of the resources that the school makes available that students might call on in using and further developing key competencies.

**Notes for slide 7**

Rose Hipkins of NZCER has been one of the leading proponents of Key Competencies as part of the roll out of the 2007 Curriculum. She wrote that, “Assessment of key competencies requires a demonstration of an actual performance in a real context” (Hipkins, 2006, p. 6). This statement is relevant to both teaching and counselling. Counselling may serve as a real context in which students perform key competencies.

The remainder of this presentation opens up the counselling room and makes what goes on there visible through particular vignettes. These vignettes demonstrate the actual performance of key competencies in a real context, when young people and counsellors together explore concerns in the students’ lives. They show how conversations about wellbeing are likely to also involve key competency use and development, and therefore to involve learning. The focus of this presentation is on learning interactions, and not the wider counselling context or its ethics.
**Notes for slide 8**

One particular finding from this research study was the value in two students attending counselling together. At times it might seem to teaching staff that only one person needs to go to counselling, and the other student would be better off in the classroom. The DVD that follows in the next slide shows a little of the learning that becomes possible when more than one student attends counselling. Joann has made an appointment with Beth Morris, the school counsellor. When Joann arrives she has Zarah with her. The girls are both in Year 11. First there is a DVD role play of the counselling, and then subsequent slides look more closely at the dialogue.

PLAY DVD

**Notes for slide 9**

Here is the beginning of the conversation.

By going step by step, it’s possible to see Joann performing a number of key competencies: thinking, relating to others, participating and contributing.

1. Before coming to counselling, she has already done some significant thinking. The *New Zealand Curriculum* identifies the following as aspects of thinking: Joann has made sense of information that has been given to her over time in the context of the girls’ friendship, and she gone on to identify a strategy. That strategy has been to take action and make a counselling appointment.

2. Relating to others: Joann has listened to Zarah; negotiated with her to attend counselling; and now she has taken a risk by acting as conduit to the counsellor.

3. Joann also contributes to and participates in the school community through her care for her friend, in taking action against violence.

To use Hipkins’ phrase here is “… a demonstration of an actual performance of a [key competency] in a real context.” And as the *New Zealand Curriculum* document says, the competencies are not “separate or stand-alone” (Hipkins, 2006, p. 12): the thinking, relating and contributing all work together.

The counsellor’s response is critical here. Joann’s initiative in bringing Zarah to counselling enacts key competencies. But at the same time these competencies depend upon the counsellor recognising Joann’s actions as, for example, contributing to and participating in her community through her care for her friend. Through the counsellor’s recognition further learning becomes possible.

**Notes for slide 10**

Beth (the counsellor) recognises Joann’s actions as contributing and participating. Her response validates Joann’s care, and the strategy Joann employed in bringing Zarah to counselling. As this slide begins, her question foregrounds the friendship and care that made action possible.

1. First it highlights the action itself: you got your friend to come.

2. Second, it highlights what the action might mean, to both girls, in the context of their friendship (are you worried about your friend?).

3. Third, it enters the territory of thinking; it invites them to create knowledge about Joann’s action and its meanings, about the friendship, and about the context of violence.

Continuing this step-by-step analysis: Joann continues to make efforts towards exposing the violence (*show her your arm then*). The exposure challenges potential assumptions and perceptions about the privacy of violence. Challenging ideas about privacy, or shame, in relation with violence produces opportunities for Zarah to begin to *think* differently about the violence to which she has been subject.
Notes for slide 11

Let’s keep looking closely at the dialogue and thinking about the key competencies that are being foregrounded in these next careful steps in the counselling conversation as Beth invites Zarah’s participation.

Beth’s first move is to turn her attention away from the discomfort of the focus on Zarah by asking about the girls’ friendship. Her question about the length of the friendship leads to the information that, at an earlier time, Joann benefited from Zarah’s care. The key competency is relating to others, and the learning is about the actions, skills, and values that go into relating to others.

This brief interchange includes Zarah as a person who has engaged in care for a friend and who therefore has knowledge about relating to others.

Beth’s comment that this care was significant leads to Joann validating the care that Zarah had offered her, and thus giving evidence of Zarah having enacted the key competency of relating to others.

Notes for slide 12

A quick summary

Beth’s first question on this slide again focuses on the girls’ knowledge about relating: is it OK for friends to hold concern about each other? Zarah’s agreement that it is OK opens the way for Beth to then broach the violence, in the hope that Zarah will begin to relate to her and participate in counselling.

Beth’s responses are carefully paced. Here, at the end of this sequence, Zarah looks up and she agrees that sometimes she is hurt. She begins to engage in the counselling.

Notes for slide 13

Sometimes teachers question why two students might need to come to counselling together. There may well be times when they don’t both need to be there. But here we see Key Competencies in action, as the two students and the counsellor attend to Zarah’s wellbeing.

The counsellor recognises Joann’s actions as contributing and participating, which then provides opportunities for both girls to use and develop other competencies, particularly in respect of relating to others. We see here actual performances of Key Competencies in a real context. Zarah and Joann are both in the midst of experiences of relating to others - and as Beth works with them in counselling they are both invited to think further about relating, and to take appropriate actions.

Notes for slide 14

We now look at three different situations, brief vignettes of counselling conversations. We’ll use these to think about learning and about how the key competencies are being used and developed in counselling.

First there is a brief introduction to each of these vignettes, and then I will ask you to form small discussion groups.

Notes for slide 15

Many of the problems young people bring to school counsellors involve some kind of relationship concern. In this vignette, the relationship difficulty is expressed through “dissing”, speaking disrespectfully about another person, here a teacher.
**Notes for slide 16**

The second option involves Wiremu. Wiremu self-refers to counselling when he himself has acted violently: he is unhappy with his behaviour but has found that he can’t turn it around. He is in great distress.

**Notes for slide 17**

We’re back to two students in counselling for this option. When he arrives at counselling, Dylan brings his friend Tama. As the counsellor invites him into the counselling room, Dylan says, “Tama is here for the same thing, sir.” The counsellor invites Tama to come in too. The boys want to “chuck the booze”.

**Notes for slide 18**

1. Ask the group to form pairs or small groups to consider the vignette they have chosen from the three above. Give a time limit—approximately 10 minutes
2. Use Handout Sheets—one for each example.
3. Keep this slide up as a reference for your audience when they break into groups to analyse the vignettes.

**Notes for slide 19**

Full group discussion

*Invite each group to read some dialogue, two or three interactions, and tell us about*

- critical moments in counselling/counsellor skills;
- learning moments or steps for the students, and key competencies;
- what is new to see counselling in this way.

**Closing comment for each vignette (if needed)**

1. Dissing—this vignette foregrounds thinking and managing self. The counsellor acknowledges the students’ sense of outrage, AND shapes his responses to require the girls to think.
2. Wiremu’s counselling session foregrounds use of language symbols and texts as a means towards making a decision, based on the values that are important for Wiremu.
3. The Tama and Dylan counselling foregrounds relating to others, and uses participating and contributing.

Invite any questions.

**Notes for slide 20**

As these vignettes show, students present in counselling with a wide variety of concerns, and difficulties. Counsellors respond to whatever students bring. In the spontaneity of counselling, opportunities arise for learning, that is to use and to develop key competencies. Competencies are both ends or goals, and they are the means by which ends are achieved. In the skill and the intentionality of counselling key competencies are used, grown and developed. In this way, counselling is a site and process of learning, as well as of wellbeing.
Key competencies are integral to students’ success in every area of their lives. In that cause, counsellors and teachers are united in inviting students into places of growth. The counsellor’s contribution is a privileged one as we work intensively with a student at a very personal level and in practical ways. The skills and contexts in which we do this work have similarities to and differences from the way teachers work in their classrooms. These differences add to what schools offer young people, their education, and their lives.

9. Finally: Possible questions and responses

*Isn’t this just what teachers do anyway?*

Yes … and…

In everyday life students are performing Key Competencies from the time they get out of bed until they go to bed. So … when they sign in late and follow correct school procedure—they’re managing themselves; when they joke with the teacher they’re relating to others; when they find their way to the counselling room they’re participating and contributing. What we emphasise here is the ‘added’ value that the skills of counselling give to grow and develop these Key Competencies in the students who come to see us. The counselling role IS different from the teaching role, and the technologies/methodologies of counselling invite consideration of lived experience that open many many spaces for life-long learning and development.

*Yeah I can see how Key Competencies are involved in counselling, but what is it that you do that makes a difference?*

By creating a safe place for the student to reflect and focus on aspects of their life, counselling provides an opportunity to intentionally extend and enrich the competencies.

*I thought counselling was meant to be about Mental Health, aren’t you deviating from that focus?*

In the words of the *New Zealand Curriculum* document, “people use the Key Competencies to live, learn, work and contribute as active members of their communities” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 12). Developing these skills and capacities is part of learning and growing which keeps us mentally healthy.

*So counselling is just like teaching except you’ve only got a class of one?*

In the counselling room the subject of learning is the student, growing out of the student’s identified needs at the time.

*I’m sure we’ll be able to get an Achievement Standard to apply to some of your work.*

One of the key differences between learning in the classroom and learning in the counselling room, is the power of evaluation. The volitional and non-judgemental nature of counselling, shifts power towards the student. They decide how helpful the counselling work is. To place a counsellor in the position of judging and evaluating a student’s performance for an external audience would tear at the heart of the counselling relationship.
C. References


D. Contact details for further information

*Associate Professor Kathie Crocket*

Director of Counsellor Education,
Faculty of Education
The University of Waikato.
Email: kcrocket@waikato.ac.nz

*Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research*

Faculty of Education
The University of Waikato.
Email: wmier@waikato.ac.nz
Website: http://www.waikato.ac.nz/wmier/