

Progressive Case Study, Phase 4: David

Eva Ziss-Patton

Rossier School of Education, USC

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Dr. Gregoire Francois

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Background

David is a 15-year-old sophomore at West High School. The school is in a low-poverty, middle-class socioeconomic area, with higher Asian and White populations. According to USNews.com, 42% of students are Asian, 23% are White, 20% are Hispanic, 10% are two or more races, four percent are Black, and less than one percent identify as other. Additionally, 23% of students are considered economically disadvantaged; this data is based on how many students qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch programs. The school has a 98% graduation rate, high above the national average, according to the same website.

David dresses like a typical high school student, in jeans and t-shirts. He has short hair, often wears a baseball cap, and he is average height and weight. He is heterosexual. He is of Latino descent.

David lives with his mother and his sister, who is a year older and attends the same school. His parents are not married, and father is absent from David's life. His mother speaks Spanish and knows very little English. Although they go to a "good" school in a "good" district, in the past, there has been mail returned to the school and it has been rumored that they have been homeless intermittently. He and his family do not attend church or any religious institution.

David and his sister walk to school and are both chronically late. While she participates in honors and AP courses and still maintains a high GPA, David has C's and below for all of his classes. He does not turn in homework assignments or study for exams. Like his friends, David routinely cuts class. He and his friends are known by the administration as "troubled kids." They are all on lists for Saturday school and lunch detentions due to frequent trancies and tardiness,

and they also have low GPAs. Although his friends never show up to serve detention, David does serve at lunch. Like David, his friends' parents are also largely absent. Recently, David has come into the office with a note from another student's parent to excuse an absence. He said that he is now staying with their family due to an argument he had with his own mother. The friend he is staying with is in this group of at-risk friends.

Evaluation of David's Well-Being

Looking at Table 1.1 Basic Needs and Values for Personal, Organizational, and Community Well-Being, we can see that many needs are not met, and values are lacking on a personal, organizational, and community level (I. Prilleltensky and O. Prilleltensky, 2007, p.13). These are all sites of well-being and are separate but are definitely dependent on and built on one another (I. Prilleltensky and O. Prilleltensky, 2007, p.12).

On a personal level, while David has all the freedom in the world, he is lacking real goals, and thus, is not pursuing personal growth. Furthermore, many adults in his life have written him off, including teachers, members of administration within the school and his own mother, so there is a lack of caring and compassion in his life. Additionally, needs are not being met on this personal level, such as skills, growth and spirituality.

On an organizational level, we see a lack of productiveness, evidenced by his grades, and lack of participation as evidenced by his attendance in school. He does have a small sense of accountability that his friends lack, as he does serve his detentions, but overall needs to strengthen this value as well, as he is not working toward a common good and ultimately thinking about his contribution to society after high school ends. He does seem to have a strong

respect for diversity, as his group of friends is made up of kids of different races, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

At the community level, David is lacking in many areas. While it seems that he has clothing and access to nutrition, it appears he is lacking economic security, and possibly even shelter. He does not have formal support within the household but has perhaps created his own support and sense of community within his group of friends, although they do not seem to be the best role models. Because he is in a good school district, he does have access to support and resources, although he is not utilizing them; he may not know that resources are available to him and his family.

The School Counselor Facilitating Well-Being

The school counselor has a good opportunity here to work with David and help him improve his well-being in all domains. The school counselor could look at David's well-being in terms of the six primary domains: I COPPE, the acronym for Interpersonal, Community, Occupational, Psychological, Physical, and Economic (Duff, Rubenstein, and Prilleltensky, p. 128). The school counselor can begin by giving the I COPPE Scale assessment to David to find out how he feels about his life right now. This could give the school counselor insight into where to start with David, and which domains he feels are weakest, in order to make appropriate recommendations and provide adequate services and resources.

David appears to be lacking structure and adult role models in his life that can teach him important values, as well as fulfill basic needs. The school counselor can act as a site of well-being for David: "Relational well-being is reflected in the presence of supportive relationships, which derive from successful experiences of nurturance and attachment, and is promoted by

empathy and opportunities to give and receive caring and compassion” (Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 56). Because earlier I assessed that there is a lack of caring and compassion in David’s life, which is a basic need, the counselor, by simply fulfilling those needs, can already start to improve David’s well-being on a personal-relational level.

Risk and Protective Factors

The school counselor should look at risk and protective factors in David’s life in order to minimize stress, thus promoting his well-being (Green, 2020). Risk factors are “characteristics of the person or environment that increase chances of negative outcomes for the person or the system or environment they work in, and protective factors are attributes of the person or environment that increase the likelihood of positive outcomes” (Green, 2020). Here we can see that although David may find some protective factors within his group of friends, such as friendship itself, they also act as a risk factor as they are encouraging him to miss school. Another risk factor may be an unstable shelter and no sense of security.

Well-Being, Justice, and Fairness

Fairness and social justice are also very important factors in well-being. While David is in a good school district with many resources, there are many unknowns in terms of his home-life. There is a language barrier with his mother, so her involvement in his life is unclear. David and his family may already be at a huge disadvantage (Smith and Geroski, p. 108). He may not know what resources are available to him, nor may he understand how to access those resources. Additionally, he may not have a parent available as a reference to help him navigate through all of this.

The school counselor can both help mitigate stress by increasing protective factors and decreasing risk factors, as well as promoting social justice and equity, by leveraging social capital to “bridge the gap between families, schools, and community” (Brown, 2020). The school counselor should be bridging capital already and have a network of resources available for underprivileged students to utilize. In this case, making these resources available, and in Spanish, is crucial to David’s well-being. This could be in many forms. Perhaps the school counselor can offer programs for David’s mother to further her education or learn English, which would help her in the long-term socioeconomically. The school counselor may know of direct monetary aid or subsidies for food or housing or could recommend a community resource that would have this type of information. The school counselor may know of a community center or clubs that David could become involved with to introduce him to new friends and keep him out of trouble. There may also be free tutoring at the school that the school counselor can offer David.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a wonderful option for the school counselor in the case of David, with regard to his chronic absenteeism, tardiness, and grades. The impacts of traditional forms of discipline can be devastating to students and can cause more damage to them, according to Mallett (2016):

This has resulted in millions of primary and secondary age students who have experienced suspension, arrests, and for some, expulsion. Within the student population a small number are most at risk for being captured within what has been ubiquitously called the “school-to-prison pipeline,” sometimes targeted by authority figures, and prone

to recidivism. These school punishments are significant risks, if not direct referrals, for juvenile court involvement. (p. 296)

According to the article, students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to be arrested. Additionally, these traditional forms of discipline disproportionately affect marginalized populations, according to Mansfield, Fowler and Rainbolt (2018). Mansfield, Fowler and Rainbolt assert that there is not one way to practice restorative practices, or RJ, but rather, RJs “bring educators and students together in the school setting for the purpose of goal-setting and mutual resolution” and RJs are much more effective than traditional punitive forms of discipline (p. 306). The school counselor would want to encourage David to explore his actions and come up with solutions and goals, rather than simply punishing him. His instructors, friends, and family could be involved to help guide David during a restorative justice circle.

Impact of Trauma, Resilience and Trauma-Informed Practice

Trauma has significant and long-lasting consequences, which can be damaging to both psychological and physical health (Harris, 2014). The school counselor can recognize trauma in terms of David’s adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs. David has an unstable home-life and it seems that he is in a single-parent home. There could be more traumatic events in his life that we are completely unaware of, such as abuse, neglect, substance abuse, mental illness, or incarceration—all of these would impact his ACE score and put him at greater risk. A good first step would be to recommend an evaluation.

Additionally, the school counselor should be creating a culture within the school that is trauma-sensitive, according to Green (2020). This means educating the instructors and administration, identifying and treating trauma, with careful regard not to re-traumatize students.

Students cannot be engaged learners when they are dealing with trauma, according to Berardi and Morton (2017):

Before instruction can begin, overly stressed children need to be reassured that they are understood, valued, and are now safe in order to return to a state of calm. When such responses are characteristic of the broader school system, children begin to associate school as a secure base, allowing growth and development to resume and thrive. (p. 14)

Students dealing with trauma, possibly including David, have difficulty learning. It is essential that the school counselor ensure that the educators are using trauma-informed practices, including providing a safe space for students with secure relationships, staying informed about and showing acceptance and compassion towards students, and minimizing harm to students.

In order to ensure that educators are implementing trauma-informed practices, the school counselor could provide professional development to all instructors on trauma-informed practices. This should include any red flags to look for with students and advocating for a safe space for students. Additionally, the school counselor should keep instructors informed about special circumstances regarding students—potentially David—while maintaining confidentiality.

In addition, the school counselor could help David develop resiliency. Resiliency has been shown to mitigate the effects of trauma (Cook, Spinazzola., Ford, Lanktree, Blaustein, Cloitre, DeRosa, Hubbard, Kagan, Liautaud, Mallah, Olafson, Van der Kolk, p.396). Positive attachment with parents and trusted adults within the community, self-regulation, positive self-concept, and motivation are all factors that contribute to resiliency. The school counselor can act as a trusted adult in the community and form that attachment with David; the school counselor can also try to promote this attachment between David and his mother or recommend family

counseling for this purpose. The school counselor can also provide David with techniques for self-regulation and work with David on goalsetting, which would help with the motivation piece as well. Finally, the school counselor can help promote positive self-concept. An effective way to do this may be during the restorative justice circle; the school counselor can, during this RJ practice, have friends, family, and educators share with David some positive feedback and attributes, to help foster attachment and positive self-concept.

College Readiness

College readiness is an opportunity for the school counselor to promote well-being with David, as well as all students (Green, 2020). According to Green, academic performance and the type of coursework fall under the category of academic preparation, which differs from college readiness. College readiness “encompasses non-cognitive skills such as time management, self-efficacy, study skills, and self-management” and has four keys, including key cognitive strategies (including problem formulation, research, interpretation, communication, precision and accuracy), content knowledge (structure of knowledge, challenge level, value, attribution, and effort), transition knowledge (postsecondary awareness, postsecondary costs, matriculation, career awareness, role and identity, and self-advocacy), and learning skills and techniques (ownership of learning techniques). Green discusses eight components of college readiness counseling: aspirations, academic planning, enrichment and extracurricular engagement, college exploration and career exploration selection processes, college and career assessments, affordability planning, admission processes, and transfer from high school graduation to college enrollment. Much of this should be built into the school counselor’s curriculum.

The school counselor should create an atmosphere that fosters college aspirations—meaning that anyone who wants to attend college believes they can attain this—by having supports put in place, such as: tutoring resources, community-based programs, and a system of rewards for students who are high-achieving or who show great effort and/or improvement. The school counselor should also have high expectations and should check in with David (and other struggling students), to see what he thinks may be helpful.

The school counselor may have informational presentations and workshops on study skills and techniques, and on college and career planning. This can include information on exploration and selection process, requirements for colleges and universities, and college affordability planning. These types of workshops may mitigate some of the common challenges to college completion, which Kouyoumdjian, Guzman, Garcia, and Talavera-Bustillos (2017) have identified as work and financial problems, implications of budget cuts (including impacts to financial aid, overcrowding in/lack of classes, and lack of support staff), lack of educational intuitional knowledge and academic skills, caretaking responsibilities, time, distractions, and health (p. 67-68). The school counselor should also have individual or group meetings or drop-in hours for students like David who need to discuss this information or have specific questions or concerns.

For David specifically, it may be beneficial for the school counselor to find an extracurricular activity to promote reengagement in school and enrich his life in general. This would be beneficial for David in the present—fostering interests or talents, which promotes well-being immediately—and long-term, helping build his leadership skills and build his college resume.

The idea of getting David involved in extracurricular activities could help David twofold: in addition to helping him on a personal level, it could also encourage positive interpersonal relationships and introduce him to positive peers, which, according to Welton and Martinez (2014) could be very beneficial:

In high school contexts, positive peers, mentors who motivate and share information about college, high school counselors who provide effective college information, and external community organizations and college outreach programs are vital social networks that assist students along the pipeline to college (p. 199)

As mentioned above, positive peers can have a positive influence on David, whose friends now are also struggling in school. In addition, mentors and community organizations and college outreach programs can help David. The school counselor could invite these types of organizations and programs on campus and introduce David to them. For example, the school counselor could have The SHAPE Project, or similar organization, whose mission is to “increase the access of underrepresented students in higher education through student empowerment, holistic development, and the raising of Afrikan consciousness,” on campus and invite David to their meetings. Here, he could perhaps find a mentor, while taking advantage of everything they offer students, such as tutoring, workshops, leadership development, counseling, and retreats (Students Heightening Academic Performance through Education, 2020).

Career Readiness

College may or may not be in David’s future, but his school counselor should still encourage David to be prepared for “decent work” which “involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for

families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize, and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men” (Pouyaud, 2016, p. 2).

Occupation an essential part of the individual, according to Green (2020):

an individual defines who they are by what they do, oftentimes. It is not the only way to define one’s self, but it is a very important element. And in order to promote well-being one must help students understand that their social construction, or their construction of self, is dependent upon their ability to identify with career aspirations.

We can see here how important career becomes in terms of well-being. Not only does our career directly impact our income and security, but it is an essential part of identity for many people. Helping David understand what he wants out of his future, as well as how to achieve this, is a crucial responsibility of his school counselor. This may require career assessments and individual conversations and planning with David.

Critical Hope

The school counselor can enhance David’s well-being by facilitating critical hope, through transformative education—transformation of both individuals and systems—which promotes wellness and fairness (Prilleltensky, 2014, p. 17) Prilleltensky focuses on competence (self-efficacy, mastery, and a sense of control) and engagement (active participation, ownership, relevance, and meaning-making), and advocates for the SPEC model: strength-based, preventive, empowering, and community-based approaches.

We can refer back to Prilleltensky's I COPPE scale, discussed earlier in this paper (2014, p. 4), which is so instrumental to well-being and can be used as a guide for the school counselor in every aspect of David's life:

Research demonstrates the synergistic effects of promoting well-being across the I COPPE domains (Buettner, 2010). Healthy and fair relationships provide psychological meaning in life, as does a meaningful occupation. Physical health and wellness, bolstered by adequate nutrition and exercise, improve mood and overall functioning. Helping individuals and communities alike contribute to a sense of purpose in life, which is essential for psychological thriving. Stable finances reduce stress and afford people opportunities to explore interests and communal pursuits. (2014, p. 19)

All domains of wellness culminate to create a purposeful and fruitful life, and, Prilleltensky asserts, "individual and system well-being are related and interdependent" (p.19) so, while the school counselor should focus on David and other students as individuals, they should also be promoting and contributing to the wellness of the system—that is, West High School, the school in this case. The wellness of the school can be measured by three dimensions, according to Prilleltensky, which include how effective (clear roles, quality teachers, high performance, desirable outcomes, and effective communication), supportive (strength-based), and reflective (mindful teaching and peer-learning) the school is (p. 19).

Socioeconomic status impacts educational outcomes for a number of reasons. Prilleltensky asserts that competence is compromised by the narrow curriculum of public schools, which is designed to create "docile workers" rather than offering rich and comprehensive curriculum, like other countries or private schools (p. 23-24). Engagement, for both students and teachers, involves having choice and connection to as well as deriving

meaning and satisfaction from curriculum and life. Prillentsky asserts that education, then, should be about “finding your strengths, connecting the material to your life, and making sure you are an active participant in the course of your life. Education should be about nurturing passion for your pursuits” (p.24). The school counselor can help David, and all students, in several ways: 1. by using the SPEC approach, the school counselor can map and evaluate the school and make necessary changes to the culture and curriculum and 2. by helping students uncover or focus on strengths and nurture interests. In order to promote wellness and fairness—to make education transformative—the school counselor can use the SPEC approach to engage students, teachers, and families (p.31). Promoting fairness and wellness will facilitate critical hope for David and other students and promote overall well-being.

Asset Mapping

The school counselor can encourage David’s engagement by the use of asset mapping. This will work on multiple levels: 1. This can help empower David on an individual level (Borrero & Sanchez, 2017, p. 282), and build confidence by examining his strengths (Ruglis & Vallee, 2016, p.); 2. This can help us understand why David has been disengaged in school and lead us to creating an appropriate plan that addresses the root of the problem and facilitate fairness, which is required for engagement (Ruglish & Vallee, 2016, p.191), and; 3. If this is a common practice for the school counselor, they can get a better sense of their school climate and identify common themes and aspects of students’ lives (Borrero & Sanchez, 2017, p.290 and Ruglis & Vallee, 2016, p 199).

According to Borrero & Sanchez, asset mapping helps identify cultural assets and empower students, as well as helping us identify challenges and threats to well-being:

Empirical exploration of internal (commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity) and external (support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time) assets in different contexts provides conceptualizations of a strength-based approach to community development. Exploring the contextual factors that promote or deter assets can begin to help us foster students' strengths in attempt to address challenges to equity and access across and between communities. We see the overlap of these theoretical approaches providing the starting point for a focus on communities, their strengths, and possibilities for youth empowerment (p. 282).

The school counselor, in this way, empowers David by taking a strength-based approach, and can help address the challenges in his life.

According to Ruglis & Vallee (2016), disengagement is typically not limited to school, but “rather, multiple factors, proximal and distal, impact their dis/engagement to school, and these factors fall along dimensions of fairness/justice over time and in multiple places and spaces of development” (p. 210). As the school counselor, by asset mapping, we can potentially uncover the reason for disengagement to address the issues and act accordingly.

On an institutional level, Borrero & Sanchez (2017) found many benefits to asset mapping, including students learning about themselves, learning about others, and building community (p. 284). One interesting idea to highlight here is that students were able to find similarities with their classmates through the use of asset mapping:

This not only led to students and teachers learning things they did not know about one another (languages spoken at home, details about family members, etc.), but also to

realizing and appreciating the similarities they collectively shared, and the aspects of their lives that make them unique” (p.290)

If the school counselor uses asset mapping as a common practice within the school, and learns about students, the school counselor can use this information to identify patterns, common themes, and common challenges that students face, and build curriculum and resources surrounding these common needs that they may have been otherwise unaware of. This could help David and many other students within the school.

Conclusion

The school counselor can help assess David’s well-being on an interpersonal, organizational, and collective level. The school counselor can help facilitate well-being, can impact the presence of risk and protective factors associated with well-being, as well as promote justice and equity among students. In addition, the school counselor can employ restorative justice practices and trauma-informed practices to enhance David’s well-being. The school counselor can enhance David’s well-being through college and career readiness. Additionally, the school counselor can facilitate critical hope through transformative education. Finally, the school counselor can help David, and all students, by mapping well-being within the school, taking a SPEC approach, and utilizing asset mapping. These are all ways in which the school counselor can promote well-being within schools.

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