

Whole School Guidance Using a Continuum of Support Model James P. Sampson, Jr.

Introduction

The [NCGE Whole School Guidance Framework](#) was developed to meet the guidance needs of all students by using a continuum of support model where the level of student need for guidance is congruent with the level of service provided: *guidance for all*, *guidance for some*, and *guidance for few* (National Centre for Guidance in Education, 2017). The differentiated service delivery model from the cognitive information processing (CIP) approach developed at Florida State University (Sampson et al., 2004; Sampson, 2008) uses an assessment of readiness for decision making to better match needs with levels of service delivery. Career services are differentiated on the basis of readiness for decision making, with high readiness individuals receiving self-help services, moderate readiness individuals receiving brief staff-assisted services, and low readiness individuals receiving individual case-managed services. The following case study applies the CIP differentiated service delivery model in the delivery of whole school guidance services for junior cycle students.

One resource for assessing decision-making readiness in the CIP differentiated service delivery model is the Career State Inventory (CSI; Leierer, Peterson, Reardon, & Osborn, 2017). The CSI is being adapted for use with Junior Cycle students in Ireland (the CSI-SC) by focusing on school subject choices and will be available shortly. The CSI-SC can be administered to all incoming 1st year students. In addition, the CSI can be administered to 2nd year students to check-in with their satisfaction with their subject choices, and 3rd year Junior Cycle students making the transition to 5th year. The CSI total score, along with individual scores for certainty, satisfaction, and clarity, can be used to identify students who need services beyond *guidance for all*.

The common element in all levels of the continuum of support model is the provision of periodic classroom guidance interventions. Under this model all first, second, and third year Junior Cycle students will participate in guidance learning experiences through units of learning such as *developing myself*, *developing my learning* and *developing my career path* – see NCGE Framework <https://www.ncge.ie/resource/ncge-whole-school-guidance-framework> facilitated by the guidance counsellor in association with the SPHE (social, personal, and health education) teacher and other members of the teaching staff as appropriate.

The effectiveness of the continuum of support model and the CIP differentiated service delivery model is dependent on (a) an accurate initial assessment of student decision-making readiness and referral to an appropriate level of service, and (b) the ability to move to a higher or lower level of service delivery if determined by the outcome of the initial assessment.

The guidance counsellor, the year head, class tutors, SPHE teacher, and the chaplain (where there is an allocation) can use CSI-SC scores, along with other information available on students (such as academic performance, observed behavior, and parent feedback), to identify an appropriate entry level for support under the continuum of support model. Students judged to have *high* readiness for decision making will receive the classroom guidance available to all students, as well as having access to self-help guidance resources in the school library and on the school website. These services comprise *guidance for all* in the continuum of support model.

Students judged to have *moderate* readiness for decision making will participate in guidance learning experiences and information resources will be available to all students to access, as well as receiving one or more of the following brief staff-assisted services: (a) drop-in services provided by the guidance counsellor and/or member of the Student Support Team (SPHE teacher, class tutor, year-head, other or chaplain) in the guidance office/library, (b) guidance learning experiences through timetabled classes, and (c) short-term group guidance counselling.

These services comprise *guidance for some* in the continuum of support model. Students judged to have *low* readiness for decision making will receive the classroom guidance learning experiences and information resources will be available to all students to access, as well as receiving one or more of the following one-to-one services provided by the guidance counsellor or other appropriately qualified member of staff: (a) individual guidance counselling, and (b) group guidance counselling and (c) referral to external agencies. These services comprise *guidance for a few* in the continuum of support model.

The model includes the following levels of support:

Self-Help Intervention (Guidance for All)

A student with high readiness for decision-making learns through a classroom guidance-learning experience that the school website includes information on how decisions in Junior Cycle can impact later educational choices. The student accesses the resource guide on [school subject choices](#) provides information on how specific Junior Cycle school subject selections impact later secondary school and higher education choices. A similar high readiness student has the same concerns, but accesses a printed resource guide on school subject choices available in the school library. Obtaining this information results in the first student talking with his/her parents about subject choices and the second student talking with her guidance counsellor to clarify a specific school subject choice. A moderate readiness student makes use of the same website link, becomes overwhelmed with the information and follows the recommendation on the site to seek assistance from the guidance counsellor if he or she experiences difficulty in using the information.

Brief Staff-Assisted Intervention (Guidance for Some)

A student with moderate readiness for decision-making, based on his/her moderate total score on the CSI-SC and the judgment of the guidance counsellor, is referred for drop-in services in the school guidance office during his/her free time in the school timetable. His/her anxiety about succeeding in school, based on academic problems experienced previously in primary school, causes him/her to be easily overwhelmed with information. (S)he needs assistance in selecting, locating, sequencing, and using career resources. The guidance counsellor uses a career learning plan (appendix I) to help the student obtain and use the information (s)he needs to make school subject choices. With this level of moderate support the student gains confidence and begins to independently access resources on the school website (thus moving to self-help services). (S)he subsequently has questions answered from his/her counsellor during classroom guidance learning experiences. A similar moderate readiness student, on the basis of CSI-SC scores and guidance counsellor judgment, also accesses drop-in services and uses a Career Learning Plan to obtain and use information. Even with this moderate level of support the student has difficulty in obtaining and using the information. The guidance counsellor learns that the student's lack of engagement is related to family difficulties and the student is referred to individual case-managed services for scheduled individual appointments with the guidance counsellor.

Individual Case-Managed Intervention (Guidance for a Few)

A student with low readiness for decision-making, based on her low total score on the CSI-SC, his/her past academic and behavioural problems in primary school as noted in his/her school record, and the judgment of the guidance counsellor, is referred for individual guidance counselling supplemented with group guidance counselling focusing on problem solving. Individual guidance counselling with the student integrates career, educational and personal concerns, utilising a team approach with members of the Student Support Team. With progress in individual guidance counselling, the student is referred to drop-in services as her readiness for decision making improves and (s)he makes better use of career resources.

Assumptions Guiding the Use of Differentiated Service Delivery

- Student Readiness for career decision making can improve over time.
- Students can move between levels of the continuum of support model (self-help, brief staff-assisted, and individual case-managed). As readiness improves, students can move to less staff-intensive services, such as individual case-managed services to brief staff-assisted services, or from brief staff-assisted services to self-help services. Or, if students have difficulty in using career resources and need more help, they can move to more staff-intensive services, such as from self-help services to brief staff-assisted services or from brief staff-assisted services to individual case-managed services.
- The guidance counsellor greets all students as they enter the guidance office or library to check that they are receiving an appropriate level of support for their needs. If problems occur with the use of self-help resources, the guidance counsellor is available to reassess needs and make further recommendations about the use of career resources and an appropriate level of service delivery.
- Periodic/intermittent classroom guidance interventions provide the foundation for the guidance programme.
- Resource guides are available to help students select, locate, sequence, and use career resources for all levels of support. Career Learning Plans (CLPs) are developed and agreed with students who need a higher level of assistance in selecting, locating, sequencing, and using career resources in brief staff-assisted services and one-to-one meetings with the guidance counsellor. Print and web-based information handouts are used to deliver information.
- No matter what the level of delivery provided (including self-help), staff members periodically check with students to determine if their needs are being met.
- Career resources are available on both the school website and the guidance office or library.
- Space is available in the guidance office or library to accommodate drop-in services that address student needs in a timely fashion. Students have time in their daily or weekly class schedule to access drop-in services as agreed and implemented at school level.

References

- Leierer, S. J., Peterson, G. P., Reardon, R. C., & Osborn, D. S. (2017). The Career State Inventory (CSI) as a Measure of Readiness for Career Decision Making: A Manual for Assessment, Administration, and Intervention 7.0* (Technical Report No. 57). Tallahassee, FL: Center for the Study of Technology in Counseling and Career Development. Florida State University.
- National Centre for Guidance in Education (2017). NCGE: A whole school guidance framework. Author: Dublin, Ireland. <https://www.ncge.ie/resource/ncge-whole-school-guidance-framework>
- Sampson, J. P., Reardon, R. C., Peterson, G. W., & Lenz, J. G. (2004). *Career counseling and services: A cognitive information processing approach*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Sampson, J. P. (2008). *Designing and implementing career programs: A handbook for effective practice*. Broken Arrow, OK: National Career Development Association. Retrieved from https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/product/24/_PARENT/layout_products/false