

VITALNews

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Counselors Use Tech for Guidance

During the break at a recent workshop, a high school guidance counselor stopped me and asked that I think about their unique role as I talk about technology integration. I assured her I would during the second half, but time got short, and I never did manage to address her question: how can guidance counselors use technology to enhance their practice? So, to make it up to that guidance counselor, I am devoting the whole issue to school guidance counselors.

The World Wide Web is a bonanza for guidance counselors for both communication and research.

As part of providing effective communication with the school community, the guidance office should have its own webpage that includes a calendar of upcoming guidance events

such as testing dates and college recruiting fairs. In addition, the counselor might use a blog to provide additional news as well as links to resources. Finally, for students with email accounts, the counselor might setup an email reminder service so those students who wish to take a particular test are notified when that test is scheduled.

On the research side, the Web provides access to extensive resources including college websites, tutorials on everything from preparing for the SAT to writing the application essay to interviewing for a job. Later in this newsletter, we feature an annotated list created with counselors in mind.

We recommend starting at The Virginia Department of Education's [portal for guidance counselors](#) with its information about colleges, scholarships, career information and Virginia requirements. Be sure to add it to your Favorites list!

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Web Simplifies College Search

Information about colleges and universities is only a mouse click away. As students consider which school is right for them, they can find out about everything from admission requirements to course offerings to campus clubs. Some schools even allow students to apply online.

In addition, many schools provide a page specifically for guidance counselors. Here's a sampling for several Virginia schools. [Virginia Tech](#) welcomes counselors with a page that provides links as well as downloadable forms. [Virginia Wesleyan](#) has a similar webpage that is maintained by the Admissions department. Finally, the [University of Virginia](#) publishes a newsletter just for counselors and provides copies online along with additional admissions information.

Must Reads for Counselors

Several websites provide valuable information concerning social issues that guidance counselors should read.

The Office of Civil Rights, part of the US Department of Education, has published a pamphlet online entitled [The Guidance Counselor's Role in Ensuring Equal Educational Opportunity](#) that outlines the role of the counselor in fighting discrimination and helping all students succeed and specifically deals with requirements related to the Civil Rights Act, Title IX, and Section 504.

The College Board has published [a list of 20 questions](#) that students should ask their guidance counselors. You can read the list ahead of time and then use it yourself to help students decide on careers, plan academic schedules, and prepare for testing.

Finally, the [National Center for Research in Vocational Education](#) published a report in 1996 that featured exemplary career guidance programs.

Virtual Tours Available

The [Campus Tours website](#) offers free virtual tours of hundreds of colleges and universities. I took a tour of the University of Montana at Missoula and found some great 360 degree views of the campus and surrounding environment.

Five Sites for Counselors

[Character Education:](#)

A website that focuses on character education, often the responsibility of the guidance counselor. It includes a variety of free teaching guides and other online resources related to character building and ethics.

[Guidance Resources:](#)

Published by a retired guidance counselor, this page provides links to web resources organized by category.

Organizations:

The [Virginia Counselors Association](#) (VCA) represents counselors in all fields. The group sponsors an annual conference. This year, it will be held in Roanoke, November 2-5, 2004, just a few months away. Visit the [conference website](#) for more information.

A subsidiary of VCA is the [Virginia School Counselor Association](#), which focuses on specifically on school counselors. The group also hosts an annual conference. The next one is scheduled for April 14-15, 2005, in Portsmouth. Visit [the conference website](#) for more information.