



FROM SEEDS... TO FRUIT TREES. 10 YEARS & COUNTING.

Why a Counseling Conference in the Caribbean Region?

The Global Center for School Counseling Outcome Research, Evaluation and Development (GCSCORED), a non-profit organization has a mission *“to collaborate with educational systems in the Caribbean and other developing countries providing assistance in planning, organizing and implementing data-driven school counseling policies, programs, curricula and trainings.”* In the service of this mission, GCSCORED, in collaboration with the University of the Southern Caribbean (USC) has answered the clarion call to action. From “Big Island” to “Small Island” there is a unified and desperate cry reverberating from homes, schools, communities and governments, *“How can we help our children, youth and communities? The problems of today are so unlike anything we have ever experienced! We don’t feel equipped to help.”*

The idea for the GCSCORED/USC 2015, *“Thinking Globally, Counseling Locally”* conference was initially conceptualized as a research study which began in 2010 by the GCSCORED organization. The main goal of this study was and continues to be investigating education stakeholders’ perceptions and attitudes about school counseling in the English Speaking Caribbean. This study utilized a mixed methods research design which included forced choice items, open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews. Several stakeholder groups, such as teachers, school counselors, students, parents, administrators and Ministry of Education personnel were invited to participate.

Emerging from this study were themes that were common among stakeholder groups and islands. For example, when asked to identify social problems in schools/homes/communities that were challenging and troubling to deal with, respondents noted some of the following: drug use, gang violence, cutting, self-harming behaviors, incest, family violence, school drop-outs, sexual abuse and molestation. When asked about barriers to having successful school counseling programs, some of the responses were as follows: lack of professional school counselors; limited or no resources for school counselors to deliver their services and programs; school counselors feeling ill-equipped to adequately meet the needs of students and their families.

These preliminary findings drew attention to the needs of the study participants and their communities, and prompted the GCSCORED organization to share these initial results with USC. Consequently, both entities agreed that the most efficient and effective way to respond to the clarion call was the GCSCORED/USC, *“Thinking Globally, Counseling Locally” Conference, June 29th-July 1st, 2015*. At this conference a full study report will be presented. The appetency for knowledge, skills, training and support that is germane to this region was palpable during every encounter with stakeholder groups.

You may say *“No Way! Say it is not so?”* Unfortunately, it is so. Let’s just quote a few newspaper headlines from one island to get a sampling of why a school counseling conference is needed in this region. Here are some examples of newspaper headline stories, *“Where are our role models?” “Police on*

patrol kill two in shoot-out," "Teacher in court for assault," "Man gunned down- 200th murder victim for the year."

These headlines are not simply statistics or exaggerated, sensationalized news reports. Behind these headlines are the lived experiences of children, youth and communities languishing and dying in homes, schools and their neighborhoods due to an agglomeration of local, regional and global malfunctions.

John F. Kennedy, the 35th United States President in his Inaugural address January 20th, 1961 so poignantly said, *"Ask not what your country can do for you, but what can you do for your country."* The GCSCORED/USC collaboration have answered the clarion call of the regional citizenry to provide relevant knowledge, skills, training and support so that together with schools, parents, teachers, school counselors, administrators, researchers, university faculty, government and non-governmental organizations we can make this world a better and safer place.

In the twelve months leading up to the GCSCORED/USC June 29th, -July 1st, 2015 Conference, you will receive *"The GCSCORED Chronicle."* In this monthly information bulletin we will be sharing with you the state of school counseling in the Caribbean and other developing countries across the globe, updates on the upcoming conference and other information aligned with the mission and vision of The GCSCORED.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

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