ROLE PLAY #1: Assignment instructions: Now that you have completed your readings and assignments of the four stages of consultation, select one of the textbook examples from chapters 3, 4, 5, or 6. Role play the situation with a friend. You are to play the role of a consultant and your friend pretends to have the problem in your selected example from our text. Write a two-page reflection of your experience. Consider each of the four stages of consultation in your reflections. Where did you feel most comfortable? What did you find most difficulty? What would you do differently?

Student Sample with professor embedded comments:

I chose the example of plan formulation on page 100 of chapter 5. I was the counselor and Angie was the school principal. At the entry stage of this role play, I was careful not to disregard the power of the school principal and make her think I was an expert on school administration. (Good.) I think this attitude would have alienated her from the start. (You are correct.) In our activity, we knew each other, but were conscious of the assigned roles we played and I tried from the start to respect the position she held. (In order to deal with past relationships within the context of new roles, it is important to talk openly about what consultation/collaboration is. This means that consultee rights should be explained (confidentiality, informed consent, etc. Also, expectations of the consultee should be discussed.) I was already in the system both physically and psychologically. We both agreed that the punitive approach was not our first inclination. (Effective open-ended questions about punitive approach would be good here. What does this approach look like to the principal? How has/or would this approach be used? What makes it less appealing? What limitations does it have? What advantages does it have? Etc.) We agreed to look deeper into the other 2 approaches, but not ruling out the punitive approach.

In the diagnosis stage, I asked the principal to what degree we needed this plan. How many cases of unruly students are there per day, week or month and when do they become in need of in school suspension. (Outstanding! This will give you baseline data to monitor effectiveness.) She stated there were 10 cases of behavior problems a day at our school. She stated she wanted to set up a way to deal with
them. I asked her what dealing with them meant and she said to call attention to their unacceptable behavior and attempt to change it. (Excellent! This helps you clarify how she has, or could, address the issue.) So I asked if the goal was then to see the number of behavioral problems drop to less than 10 a day or to lessen in severity. She set the goal of seeing in school suspension drop to less than 10 a day. (Great! This sets a target goal.) My goal was to make counseling available to them, however many there were. We came to an agreement to include both objectives into the goal. We talked about exactly who would do the counseling. (good clarification) We settled on the most qualified people to do this are those who are professionally trained in counseling. I would set time aside to do this at first, but then get someone else later. (This might be an approach to make appropriate referrals.)

Because of my qualifications as a school counselor, the principal was very accommodating to my plan for the implementation stage. I realize real life is not like role-playing and it could be much harder. I wanted to present a behavioral modification presentation on power point for the students in the program to watch and make it like a classroom setting, complete with a quiz at the end. She like the idea and would announce it in the morning announcements at the beginning of the school day until word got around. (Good detailed plan.)

For the disengagement stage, we reviewed records from the suspension program and found that the students had gone from 10 to 7 each day in the program. They were no longer just in time out where they could lay their head on their desk, but they were required to learn. I agreed I would conduct the program 4 days a week for the first month, then 2 days for the next month and then allow other counselors to conduct their programs on a rotating basis. I would continue to be available to the principal whenever she needed me to make changes in the program as it evolved.
Where did I feel most comfortable? I felt better during the implementation stage, because as we played the situation out, I was recognized as being knowledgeable in this area and the principal was cooperative and allowed me to work the program to my vision.

What did I find most difficulty? The diagnosis stage seemed a bit sticky to me. In our role-play, the principal wanted a suspension program, but was unable to narrow down much of the information. She painted what she wanted in very broad strokes, and then I had to recognize her authority, but then probe her to get specific.

What would I do differently? I would probably take the role of getting specific with the issues and asking what this program meant to her more forcefully. I would still be diplomatic, but I also would recognize she called me for help and in order to help, I need to know what she wants.

XXXXXX,

This is a good beginning. Sounds like you had already assumed Entry Stage because of your prior relationship with the consultee and proceeded to work through the Diagnosis Stage, the Implementation Stage, and the Disengagement Stage. It seems you were able to use open-ended questions well in some stages better than others. The tricky part in collaborating with a person who is one’s administrator is not to become too directive. It seems you were aware of that, but that you were hesitant to examine alternatives. It might have been effective to examine the nature of the discipline problems during the Diagnosis Stage with more open-ended questions to the principal. “What type of behavior problems were they?” “Who was making the referrals?” “Were the problems what we call ‘teacher irritants’, i.e., incomplete work, talking out in class, classroom disruptions?” “Or were the problems what we call ‘student conflicts’, i.e., fighting, bullying, etc.?”. More time spent in understanding the problem will pay big dividends later.

Another area of this collaboration case is what is the responsibility of the principal for the plan? What role does she play in reducing discipline referrals? Does the discipline code need to be changes? Or does it need to be explained to students, teachers, and/or parents? Should there be intervention steps within the discipline process?

I like the role of the counselor in this intervention. He was not expected to do discipline or punishment. Rather, he was to provide counseling to students on alternative approaches to get what they want that will not get them into trouble.

Good stuff. I look forward to hearing you in ‘action’ in your next role play.

ROLE PLAY #2: Assignment instructions: The focus of this role play is on the Implementation Stage.} A school has decided to offer an after school tutoring program for elementary children. The goal of the program is to provide academic tutoring for children in grades one through five. The focus will be on success and positive experiences for the children. Role play the situation so that the following are accomplished: 1) possible interventions in the following three areas are brainstormed: personnel (who might serve as tutors or supervisors), logistics (time, place, transportation, cost, etc.), criteria for
acceptance into program (how will children be assigned slots, etc.); and, 2) the alternatives are weighted and one recommended intervention and one contingency intervention is each category are developed. In this assignment students are to be the consultant or collaborator. Record the session on a cassette tape and mail to me at XXXXXXXXXX. It should be postmarked to me by June 17.

Student Sample: “In this role play, we brainstorm concerning a tutoring program in school. I think maintaining a degree of professionalism is one of the key things that was on my mind in this recording. There were some issues I was a little torn on, mainly concerning the time of the program. I thought it may be a hardship to leave campus and come back later. It would also eliminate the need for a van driver and getting the kids back to school. Then again, leaving then coming back would give the children time to leave campus and get something to eat, even though it may be harder on the parents. I also thought about the school personnel it would take to administer this program and just how qualified they would have to be. I also was thinking in broader strokes concerning the subjects being helped, like math and science, but Holly zeroed in on reading and I made the concession. As we went on, I think I shifted into the mode of just getting it started and monitoring it for modifications afterward.”

Professor response: XXXX, I enjoyed listening to your role play. It seems that you and Holly have established an effective consultative relationship through the Entry & the Diagnostic Stages and into the Implementation Stage. Your tone, demeanor and listening skills (i.e., reflecting, summarizing, and clarifying) showed your consultee that you valued her ideas. This invited her to generate solutions, weight pros & cons of each, and develop her backup plans. Sometimes we might need to go with ideas of our consultee to make plans happen, but we can strengthen them with open examination. Her idea for snacks addressed the need for kids to have a break before tutoring. I did not hear an evaluation component to your plan or process, but I’m sure you and Holly would get to that later. The open-ended question toward the end was outstanding! “Do you see anything else we need to consider?” The consultee must feel involved with the planning and decision making so she will develop ownership for making the plan successful. You demonstrated confidence in her ability to implement her plan. Many times new consultants think they must impress their consultees with their expertise, knowledge, and ideas. This will make it more their plan than that of the consultee. Your style gave Holly the sense that you knew what to do but needed her ideas to make it better. Great job!