

The Professional School Counselor and Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1997, 2005, 2012)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors design and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs that promote student achievement. These programs are comprehensive in scope, preventative in design and developmental in nature. “The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs” (ASCA, 2012) outlines the components of a comprehensive school counseling program. The ASCA National Model brings professional school counselors together with one vision and one voice, which creates unity and focus toward improving student achievement and supporting student development.

The Rationale

A comprehensive school counseling program is an integral component of the school’s academic mission. Comprehensive school counseling programs, driven by student data and based on standards in academic, career and personal/social development, promote and enhance the learning process for all students. The ASCA National Model:

- ensures equitable access to a rigorous education for all students
- identifies the knowledge and skills all students will acquire as a result of the K-12 comprehensive school counseling program
- is delivered to all students in a systematic fashion
- is based on data-driven decision making
- is provided by a state-credentialed professional school counselor

Effective school counseling programs are a collaborative effort between the professional school counselor, families and other educators to create an environment promoting student achievement. Education professionals, including professional school counselors, value and respond to the diversity and individual differences in our societies and communities. Comprehensive school counseling programs ensure equitable access to opportunities and rigorous curriculum for all students to participate fully in the educational process.

The Professional School Counselor’s Role

Professional school counselors focus their skills, time and energy on direct and indirect services to students. To achieve maximum program effectiveness, the American School Counselor Association recommends a professional school-counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250 and that professional school counselors spend 80 percent or more of their time in direct and indirect services to students. Professional school counselors participate as members of the educational team and use the skills of leadership, advocacy and collaboration to promote systemic change as appropriate. The framework of a comprehensive school counseling program consists of the following four components: foundation, management, delivery and accountability.

FOUNDATION

Professional school counselors create comprehensive school counseling programs that focus on student outcomes, teach student competencies and are delivered with identified professional competencies.

Program Focus: To establish program focus, professional school counselors identify personal beliefs addressing how all students benefit from the school counseling program. Building on these beliefs, professional school counselors create a vision statement defining what the future will look like in terms of student outcomes. In addition, professional school counselors create a mission statement aligned with their school’s mission and develop program goals defining how the vision and mission will be measured.

Student Standards: Enhancing the learning process for all students, the ASCA Student Standards guide the development of effective school counseling programs around three domains: academic, career and personal/social development. Professional school counselors also consider how other student standards important to state and district initiatives complement and inform their school counseling program.

Professional Standards: The ASCA School Counselor Competencies outline the knowledge, attitudes and skills that ensure school counselors are equipped to meet the rigorous demands of the profession. The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors specify the principles of ethical behavior necessary to maintain the highest standard of integrity, leadership and professionalism. They guide professional school counselors' decision-making and help to standardize professional practice to protect both students and school counselors.

MANAGEMENT

Professional school counselors incorporate organizational assessments and tools that are concrete, clearly delineated and reflective of the school's needs. Assessments and tools include:

- school counselor competency and school counseling program assessments to self-evaluate areas of strength and improvement for individual skills and program activities
- agreements developed with and approved by administrators at the beginning of the school year addressing how the school counseling program is organized and what goals will be accomplished
- advisory councils made up of students, families, teachers, counselors, administrators and community members to review and make recommendations about school counseling program activities and results
- use of student data to measure the results of the program as well as to promote systemic change within the school system so every student graduates college and career ready
- action plans including prevention and intervention activities and services that define the desired student competencies and measure the impact on achievement, behavior and attendance.
- allotment of 80 percent of the professional school counselor's time to direct and indirect services with students
- use of annual and weekly calendars to keep students, families, teachers and administrators informed and to encourage active participation in the school counseling program

DELIVERY

Professional school counselors provide services to students, families, school staff and the community in the following areas:

Direct Services with Students

Direct services are in-person interactions between school counselors and students and include the following:

- **School Counseling Core Curriculum:** This curriculum consists of structured lessons designed to help students attain the desired competencies and to provide all students with the knowledge, attitudes and skills appropriate for their developmental level. The school counseling core curriculum is delivered throughout the school's overall curriculum and is systematically presented by professional school counselors in collaboration with other professional educators in K-12 classroom and group activities.
- **Individual Student Planning:** Professional school counselors coordinate ongoing systemic activities designed to assist students in establishing personal goals and developing future plans.
- **Responsive Services:** Responsive services are activities designed to meet students' immediate needs and concerns. Responsive services may include counseling in individual or small-group settings or crisis response.

Indirect Services for Students

Indirect services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselors' interactions with others including referrals for additional assistance, consultation and collaboration with families, teachers, other educators and community organizations.

ACCOUNTABILITY

To demonstrate the effectiveness of the school counseling program in measurable terms, professional school counselors analyze school and school counseling program data to determine how students are different as a result of the school counseling program. Professional school counselors use data to show the impact of the

school counseling program on student achievement, attendance and behavior and analyze school counseling program assessments to guide future action and improve future results for all students. The performance of the professional school counselor is evaluated on basic standards of practice expected of professional school counselors implementing a comprehensive school counseling program.

Summary

Professional school counselors develop and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs supporting and promoting student achievement. As outlined in the ASCA National Model, these programs include a systematic and planned program delivery involving all students and enhancing the learning process. The comprehensive school counseling program is supported by appropriate resources and implemented by a credentialed professional school counselor. The ASCA National Model brings professional school counselors together with one vision and one voice, which creates unity and focus toward improving student achievement and supporting student development.