

The Professional School Counselor and Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1997, 2005)

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, 2005) 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.

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, parents and other educators to create an environment that promotes student achievement. Staff and professional school counselors value and respond to the diversity and individual differences in our societies and communities. Comprehensive school counseling programs ensure equitable access 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 service to students and families. 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 of their time in direct service 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, delivery system, management system and accountability.

PROGRAM FOUNDATION

Professional school counselors identify personal beliefs and philosophies to address how all students will benefit from the school counseling program. These beliefs and philosophies guide the development, implementation and evaluation of the comprehensive school counseling program. Professional school counselors create a mission statement aligned with their school’s mission and collaborate with others to promote academic, career and personal/social development of all students.

DELIVERY OF SERVICES

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

School Guidance Curriculum – This curriculum consists of structured lessons designed to assist students in achieving the desired competencies and to provide all students with the knowledge and skills appropriate for their developmental level. The school guidance 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 preventative and/or interventive activities that meet students’ immediate and future needs. These needs can be necessitated by events and conditions in the students’ lives and may require any of the following:

- individual or group counseling
- consultation with parents, teachers and other educators
- referrals to other school support services or community resources
- peer helping
- information

Professional school counselors develop confidential relationships with students to help them resolve or cope with problems and developmental concerns.

System Support – System support consists of management activities that establish, maintain and enhance the total school counseling program and include professional development, consultation, collaboration, program management and operations. Professional school counselors are committed to continual personal and professional development and are proactively involved in professional organizations that promote school counseling at the local, state and national levels.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Professional school counselors incorporate organizational processes and tools that are concrete, clearly delineated and reflective of the school’s needs. Tools and processes include:

- 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, parents, teachers, counselors, administrators and community members to review school counseling program results and to make recommendations
- use of student data to measure the results of the program as well as effect systemic change within the school system so every student receives the benefit of the school counseling program
- action plans for prevention and intervention programs and services that define the desired student competencies and measure achievement result.
- allotment of 80 percent of the professional school counselor’s time to direct service with students
- use of master and weekly calendars to keep students, parents, teachers and administrators informed and to encourage active participation in the school counseling program

ACCOUNTABILITY

To demonstrate the effectiveness of the school counseling program in measurable terms, professional school counselors report on immediate, intermediate and long-range results showing 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 school improvement and student achievement. Professional school counselors conduct school counseling program audits that 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 school counseling program.

Summary

Professional school counselors develop and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs that support and promote 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 towards improving student achievement.