

The Professional School Counselor and Gender Equity

(Adopted 1983; revised 1993, 1999, 2002, 2008)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors are committed to the use of inclusive language and positive modeling of gender equity, facilitating and promoting the development of each individual by reducing barriers of and providing equal opportunity and equal status for all students.

The Rationale

Many internal and external obstacles exist in school and society inhibiting students from developing their full potential (e.g., gender-role stereotyping and socialization, tracking systems). To expand the range of options available to students, it is important that school counselors become acutely aware of ways in which language, organizational structures, leader selection, expectations of individuals and activity implementation affect opportunities based on gender. Many federal and state laws have been passed protecting individuals from gender discrimination in education and work (e.g., the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Vocational Amendments of 1976, the Women's Educational Equity Act of 1974, Affirmative Action and Executive Orders, and Title IX, Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967). These important legal mandates ensure equal treatment under the law but do not necessarily change ingrained attitudes and behaviors.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor uses inclusive language and has equitable expectations of all students, is sensitive to those aspects of interpersonal communication and organization that provide working models of gender equity and equality and promotes gender equity through large- and small-group presentations. Professional school counselors must become vigilant to the negative effects of stereotypical gender-role expectations. As an example, research indicates that young children (ages 3 to 5) demonstrate basic knowledge about occupations and occupational status and have attitudes, often stereotyped, about appropriate occupations (career awareness) (Hartung, 2005). Also, professional school counselors are aware that as children develop their self-concept they begin to rule out occupations considered incompatible and usually never reconsider them unless they are encouraged to pursue them (Gottfredson, 1996) and (Gottfredson & Lapan, 1997). Professional school counselors proactively seek to counter negative or limiting messages. The professional school counselor emphasizes a person's competence. The professional school counselor becomes sensitive to ways in which interpersonal attitudes and behaviors can have negative effects on others and provides constructive feedback on negative and positive use of inclusive language and organizational structure.

Summary

Professional school counselors are committed to equity and support consciousness-raising within their profession including modeling of inclusive language and equal opportunity for all to break through stereotypical gender-based behaviors and expectations. Professional school counselors actively promote policies, procedures and attitudes that embrace equity in opportunities and access to resources for all students and colleagues.

References

Hartung, P. J. (2005). Internationalizing career counseling: Emptying our cups and learning from each other. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 54, 12-16.

Gottfredson, L. S. (1996). Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise. In D. Brown, & L. Brooks, (Eds.), *Career choice and development* (3rd ed.), pp. 179-232. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gottfredson, L. S., & Lapan, R. T. (1997). Assessing gender-based circumscription of occupational aspirations. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 5(4), 419-441.