

## **The Professional School Counselor and School Counseling Preparation Programs**

(Adopted 2008)

### **The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position**

Professional school counselors are best prepared through master's- and doctoral-level programs that align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model (2003, 2005), the ASCA School Counselor Competencies (2008), and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2004). These programs emphasize training in the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program promoting leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change to enhance student achievement and success.

### **The Rationale**

Professional school counselors are assuming an increasingly important leadership role in education, and school counseling preparation programs are vital to the appropriate development of that role. Professional school counselors significantly contribute to outcomes used to measure the success of students and schools, and students in school counselor preparation programs need direct training and supervision in leadership and the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program.

The National Standards for School Counseling Programs (1997), the ASCA Ethical Standards (2004), the ASCA National Model (2003, 2005) and the Education Trust's Transforming School Counseling Initiative (1997) have significantly influenced school counselor preparation and practice. These initiatives regarding the comprehensive school counseling program and school counselor practice have placed significant attention on the preparation of school counselors, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to design, implement and evaluate a comprehensive school counseling program that is proactive and accountable.

### **The Role of Counselor Preparation Programs**

Effective school counseling preparation programs provide coursework and training to help school counseling students learn to design and implement a comprehensive school counseling program. These programs help school counseling students develop knowledge, skills and attitudes including:

- Understanding of the organizational structure and governance of the educational system, as well as cultural, political and social influences on current educational practices.
- Addressing legal, ethical and professional issues in PK–12 schools.
- Understanding of developmental theory, counseling theory, career counseling theory, social justice theory and multiculturalism.
- Understanding of the continuum of mental health services, including prevention and intervention strategies for addressing academic personal/social and career development to enhance student success for all students.
- Facilitating individual counseling, group counseling and classroom guidance programs ensuring equitable access to resources promoting academic achievement, personal/social growth and career development for all students.
- Collaborating and consulting with stakeholders (e.g., parents/guardians, teachers, administration, community stakeholders) to create learning environments promoting student educational equity and success for all students.
- Identifying impediments to student learning, developing strategies to enhance learning and collaborating with stakeholders to improve student achievement throughout the PK-12 experience.
- Using advocacy and data-driven school counseling practices to close the achievement/opportunity gap.

Field-based experiences are essential to the preparation of professional school counselors and are most appropriately integrated throughout the preparation program beginning with the first year of coursework. These experiences provide training aligning with the school counselor preparation program and further develop the student's knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to implement a comprehensive school counseling program. Field-based experiences require the supervision of a licensed school counselor in the PK-12 setting and a university supervisor with the appropriate school counselor educator qualifications.

School counseling preparation programs are facilitated by counselor educators who have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to prepare school counselors to promote the academic, career and personal/social development of all school counseling students. Counselor educators have appropriate preparation including school counseling experience and an earned doctoral degree in counselor education, counseling psychology, educational leadership or closely related field.

Adjunct faculty/instructors will minimally have an earned master's degree in school counseling and have school counseling experience.

**Summary**

School counselor preparation programs emphasize development of the attitudes, knowledge and skills essential for the implementation of effective comprehensive school counseling programs. These programs align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model, the ASCA School Counseling Standards: School Counseling Competencies and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, creating a program empowering every student to succeed and achieve in his/her PK-12 experiences. Counselor educators have the appropriate background, experience and commitment to prepare school counselors who are able to respond to the changing expectations and dynamics of students, families, schools and communities.