

The Professional School Counselor and Students with Special Needs

(Adopted 1999; revised 2004, 2010)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors encourage and support all students' academic, personal/social, and career development through comprehensive school counseling programs. Professional school counselors are committed to helping all students realize their potential, and make adequate yearly progress regardless of challenges resulting from disabilities and other special needs.

Rationale

State and federal laws require schools to provide an equitable education for all students. However, research suggests that "students with disabilities have not always received adequate educational services and supports" (Rock & Leff, 2007, p. 314). Students of color, English Language Learners, and students from families with low-income levels are disproportionately overrepresented among students receiving special education services (Santos de Barona & Barona, 2006). Furthermore, research indicates that inequity exists even when controlling for the effects of poverty, and bias and discrimination in our schools are additional factors that contribute to this inequitable situation (Meyer, Bevan-Brown, Harry, & Sapon-Shevin, 2005).

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors work with students and staff in special education class settings, and in the regular classroom. Professional school counselor responsibilities may include but are not limited to:

- providing classroom guidance, individual and/or group counseling to students with special needs within the scope of the comprehensive school counseling program
- consulting and collaborating with staff and parents to understand the special needs of a student
- advocating for students with special needs in the school and in the community
- contributing to the school's multidisciplinary team, which identifies students who may need to be assessed to determine special education eligibility within the scope and practice of the comprehensive school counseling program
- collaborating with related student support professionals (e.g., physical therapists, occupational therapists, special education, speech and language pathologists) in the delivery of services
- providing assistance with developing academic and transition plans for students in the Individual Educational Program (IEP) as appropriate

Inappropriate administrative or supervisory responsibilities for the professional school counselor include, but are not limited to:

- making singular decisions regarding placement or retention
- serving in any supervisory capacity related to the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- serving as the school district representative for the team writing the IEP
- coordinating, writing, or supervising a specific plan under Section 504 of Public Law 93-112
- coordinating, writing, or supervising the implementation of the IEP.

Summary

The professional school counselor takes an active role in student achievement by providing a comprehensive school counseling program for all students. As a part of this program, professional school counselors advocate for students with special needs, collaborate with other educational professionals to promote academic achievement for all.

References

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