

The Professional School Counselor and Cultural Diversity

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1999, 2004, 2009)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors promote academic, career, and personal/social success for all students. Professional school counselors collaborate with stakeholders to create a school and community climate that embraces cultural diversity and helps to remove barriers that impede student success.

The Rationale

Culture is a powerful and pervasive influence on students, stakeholders, and professional school counselors' attitudes and behaviors. It has been noted that "educational opportunity and academic achievement are directly tied to the social divisions associated with race, ethnicity, gender, first language, and social class" (Gordon, 2006, p. 25).

Although research indicates that children may begin to limit career aspirations based on their race, ethnicity, gender, and social class as early as first grade (Jackson & Grant, 2004), it also indicates these cultural identities may be a source of empowerment and self-esteem for students (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Harrison-Hale, McLoyd, & Smedley, 2004). Effective and ethical school counselors need to possess cultural competence (Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner, & Trimble, 2002), including self-awareness, knowledge of others' worldviews, and use of culturally sensitive skills (Sue, Arredondo, & Davis, 1992; Sue & Sue, 2006).

Professional school counselors are expected to "specifically address the needs of every student, particularly students of culturally diverse, low social-economic status, and other underserved or underperforming populations" (ASCA, 2005, p. 77). The professional school counselor provides culturally competent counseling, consultation, and other services to promote student success. The school counselor also collaborates with stakeholders to create a school climate that welcomes and appreciates the strengths and gifts of culturally diverse students. Professional school counselors act as advocates for those who are marginalized by working with systems to address inequities in schools (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007).

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors assist in creating a school climate where cultural diversity is celebrated; curriculum, textbooks, pedagogy, and classroom management methods are inclusive; and cultural relations within the school are encouraged and embraced. Professional school counselors are actively involved in the community through advocacy, networking and utilization of resources, and ensure a welcoming school environment. School counselors also seek to enhance their own cultural competence, and facilitate the cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills of all school personnel.

Summary

Professional school counselors foster increased awareness, understanding, and appreciation of cultural diversity in the school and community. School counselors collaborate with students and stakeholders to promote the success of all students.

References

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