

The Professional School Counselor and Discipline

(Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 1999, 2001, 2007)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional school counselor works with school personnel and other stakeholders to establish and maintain policies that encourage appropriate behavior so schools can be a safe place where teaching and learning can be effectively accomplished. Such policies promote the use of the school counselor as a resource person with expertise in the area of discipline plans. The professional school counselor is not a disciplinarian.

The Rationale

Disruptive student behavior is one of the most serious, ongoing problems confronting school systems today. Research suggests that such behavior negatively affects the classroom and school climate (Elliot, 2004; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001; Hernández, 2004; Lapan, Gysbers & Sun, 1997). Contemporary discipline plans take a developmental approach and stress that students are responsible for controlling their own behavior. All professional staff members need to be actively committed and involved in the development, implementation and maintenance of an effective schoolwide discipline plan, which has as its primary goal making schools safe and developing a respectful learning environment.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor is increasingly being called upon to help students understand the consequences of their behavior and help students learn and use more appropriate ways to act or control behavior. Professional school counselors act as mediators in teacher-student conflicts, in student-student conflict situations and as a support and resource for parents during conflict situations. The professional school counselor serves as a model for effective classroom management skills while using these skills in delivering a comprehensive school counseling program in the classroom and with small and large groups.

The professional school counselor collaborates with other educators in the developmental aspects of discipline programs. It is not the role of the professional school counselor to mete out punishment but to help create effective behavior change focused on positive, healthy behaviors. The professional school counselor advocates for best practices for schoolwide discipline including examination of policies and procedures for bias or barriers to student success. The professional school counselor is a liaison, consultant and mediator to help create an effective learning environment, keeping in mind the diverse cultural, developmental, emotional and individual student needs.

Summary

The professional school counselor's role in the disciplinary referral process must be clearly delineated and describe the ability and limits of the professional school counselor's involvement in disciplinary action. The professional school counselor should be, by policy, perceived by all as a neutral and resourceful consultant and mediator of those involved in the conflict. It is not the professional school counselor's role to serve as an enforcement agent but rather a significant contributor to the development of the prevention and intervention plans through which problem behaviors are managed and positive behaviors are nurtured.

References

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