



ASCA Position Statements

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The Professional School Counselor and Academic and College/Career Planning

(Adopted 1994, Revised 2000, 2006, 2012)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors recognize that each student possesses unique interests, abilities and goals that will lead to many future opportunities. Collaborating with students, families, educational staff and the community, the professional school counselor works to ensure all students develop an academic and career plan reflecting their interests, abilities and goals and including rigorous, relevant coursework and experiences appropriate for the student.

Rationale

Academic and college/career planning provides all students with the opportunity to identify strengths, areas in need of improvement and areas of interest early on so students and their families can set post-secondary goals and make informed choices to support students in reaching the desired outcome. The focus of academic and career planning is threefold: to help students acquire the skills to achieve academic success, to make connections between school and life experiences and to acquire knowledge and skills to be college- and career-ready upon high school graduation.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors understand national, state and local requirements and programs that may affect future opportunities for college and career readiness and therefore play a critical role in academic and career planning. The professional school counselor takes a proactive role in assisting students, families and staff as they assess student strengths and interests and encourage the selection of a rigorous and relevant educational program supporting all students' college and career goals. Professional school counselors provide all students the opportunity to:

- Demonstrate skills needed for school success
- Demonstrate the connection between coursework and life experiences
- Make course selections that allow them the opportunity to choose from a wide range of post-secondary options
- Explore interests and abilities in relation to knowledge of self and the world of work
- Identify and apply strategies to achieve future academic and career success
- Demonstrate the skills for successful goal setting and attainment.
- Develop an electronic portfolio to highlight strengths and interests

Summary

Professional school counselors collaborate with administrators, teachers, staff, families and the community to ensure all students have the opportunity to design a rigorous and relevant academic and career program. Professional school counselors design and implement a comprehensive school counseling program that includes educational and career planning activities for all students designed to assist students in reaching academic, career and personal/social goals.

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The Professional School Counselor and Annual Performance Evaluation

(Adopted 1978; reaffirmed 1984; revised 1986, 1993, 2003, 2009; reviewed 1999)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The annual performance evaluation of professional school counselors should accurately reflect the unique professional training and practices of school counselors working within a comprehensive school counseling program. These written evaluations should use forms and tools specifically designed for professional school counselors, based on documents such as, the School Counselor Performance Standards from the ASCA National Model and the ASCA School Counselor Competencies.

The Rationale

The primary purpose of the annual performance evaluation is to ensure the professional school counselor's quality, high-level performance, and continued professional growth. Professional school counselors should be evaluated based on the implementation of the district's written comprehensive school counseling program (Isaacs, 2003), the school counselor's job description, and the principles expressed in the ASCA National Model School Counselor Performance Standards and the ASCA School Counselor Competencies. The annual performance evaluation should be a dynamic document, modified annually to reflect changing needs of students and schools, as well as the professional school counselor's current skills. Additionally, Gysbers and Henderson (2006) recommend three components of school counselor evaluation: self-evaluation, administrative evaluation, and assessment of school counseling program attainment.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

The key purpose of the professional school counselor performance evaluation is to enhance the positive affect that the school counselor and the school counseling program have on students and school stakeholders. The professional school counselor:

- initiates the annual development of a management agreement with administrators
- consults with administrators regarding approved standards and competencies for professional school counselors and school counseling programs
- endorses the use of the School Counselor Performance Standards of the ASCA National Model and the ASCA School Counselor Competencies
- collaborates with administrators to develop appropriate tools to use in the evaluation of the school counselor and the school counseling program (see examples at www.schoolcounselor.org/resources).

Summary

The annual performance evaluation of the professional school counselor should use criteria reflecting the current standards and competencies of the school counseling profession.

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The Professional School Counselor and Character Education

(Adopted 1998, revised 2005, 2011)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors endorse and actively support character education programs and include them in the comprehensive school counseling program. The professional school counselor also promotes the infusion of character education in the school curriculum by encouraging the participation of the entire school community.

The Rationale

Character education involves “how schools, related social institutions and parents/guardians can support the positive character development of children and adults” (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, p.1). The professional school counselor understands that teaching students concepts and skills that help people live and work together promotes healthy student development and academic achievement through reduced problem behavior, lower discipline rates and improvement in student self-concept (Parker, Nelson, & Burns, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2008; Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006; Watson 2006).

The Professional School Counselor’s Role

Professional school counselors, along with teachers, administrators, family and the community share the responsibility of teaching character education values. Professional school counselors encourage character education activities by means of:

- developing a school philosophy and mission statement that supports positive character development
- implementing guidance activities that promote positive character development while helping all students develop clear academic, career and personal/social goals
- advocating for discipline policies that reinforce character education and nurture the development of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- encouraging student participation in extracurricular activities that include the involvement of students, school staff, parents/guardians and community members
- teaching skills in decision-making, conflict resolution, leadership and problem solving
- involving students in the development of school rules
- integrating cultural competence and diversity appreciation into curriculum and activities
- developing student recognition programs focused on character traits
- involving families and communities in the character education program

Professional school counselors work with teachers, administrators, families and the community to teach and model behaviors that enhance each student’s academic, career and personal/social skills essential to making appropriate, healthy decisions.

Summary

Character education helps students achieve academic, career and personal/social development goals to become positive contributors to society. Effective character education programs require the entire community’s participation and must be integrated throughout the entire school curriculum and culture through curriculum development, consensus building, community engagement and professional development (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). The professional school counselor provides leadership and collaborates with teachers, administrators and the school community to promote character education for all students as an integral part of school curriculum and activities.

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The Professional School Counselor and Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention

(Adopted 1981; revised 1985, 1993, 1999, 2003)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

It is the professional school counselor's legal, ethical and moral responsibility to report suspected cases of child abuse/neglect to the proper authorities. Recognizing that the abuse of children is not limited to the home and that corporal punishment by school authorities might well be considered child abuse, ASCA supports any legislation that specifically bans the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary tool within the schools.

The Rationale

The incidence of reported child abuse and child neglect has increased significantly during the past several years. Although there are societal beliefs and values that parents have the right to discipline their children as they choose, it becomes a public issue of child protection when that discipline becomes abusive. Research shows that a large percentage of abusive parents were abused children, perpetuating the cycle of abuse. The consequences of abuse and neglect may range from immediate physical and/or emotional harm, the inability to build healthy relationships, increased likelihood of being abused by another perpetrator or becoming an abuser and lowered self-worth.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Generally, state laws require people in the helping professions who have reasonable cause to believe a child is suffering physical or emotional injury to report this situation as directed by state law to the appropriate authorities. Professional school counselors are mandated reporters and need policies, referral procedures and essential knowledge. It is a legal, moral and ethical responsibility to report child abuse. Some states additionally require the reporting of domestic violence.

ASCA recognizes it is the absolute responsibility of professional school counselors to report suspected cases of child abuse/neglect to the proper authorities. Responsible action by the professional counselor can be achieved through the recognition and understanding of the problem, knowing the reporting procedures and participating in available child abuse information programs. Professional school counselors are instrumental in early detection of abuse. The association also recognizes that the abuse of children is not limited to the home and that corporal punishment by school authorities can be considered child abuse.

Professional school counselors commit themselves to providing strategies to help break the cycle of child abuse. Professional school counselors can help children and adults cope with abusive behavior, facilitate behavioral changes and develop positive interpersonal relationships, which may reinforce appropriate parenting skills. Professional school counselors coordinate team efforts on behalf of the child, provide support to staff and other school personnel, work to re-establish trust and provide follow-up counseling or to refer to ongoing counseling services outside of the school community, provide developmental workshops and/or support groups enhancing parenting skills, and coordinate or provide programs and in-services designed to help prevent child abuse.

Summary

Professional school counselors are a key link in the child abuse prevention network. It is their responsibility to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. The professional school counselor must be able to guide and help abused and neglected students by providing appropriate services during crisis situations. By providing up-to-date information and intervention, the professional school counselor can sometimes facilitate a turning point in the life and behavior of an abusive family.

The Professional School Counselor and Children Experiencing Homelessness

(Adopted, 2010)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors recognize the effects homelessness/displacement has on children's mental and physical health, and academic functioning. Professional school counselors collaborate with community stakeholders, advocate to remove barriers to academic success, and implement educational and prevention programs to promote successful performance and interactions within the school environment.

The Rationale

Families with children make up 34% of the homeless population; more than 1.35 million children are identified as homeless annually (The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2007). Students experiencing homelessness are more likely to miss school and repeat a grade than other students from families with low-income (Buckner, 2008). They have a significantly higher prevalence of developmental delays in communication, receptive vocabulary, and visual motor skills as well as performing below grade level performance in reading or mathematics (Gewirtz, Hart-Shegos, & Medhanie, 2008). In addition, students who are homeless have an increased incidence of mental and physical health concerns, with two times the rate of depression as the general population, and as much as four times the prevalence of disruptive behavior disorders as housed students from lower income families (Gewirtz et al., 2008).

Institutional barriers within schools, such as transportation, immunization and physical examination requirements, residency and birth certificate requirements, and lack of school records, impede homeless families' ability to enroll their children in schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). The McKinney-Vento Act of 1987 outlined the rights of homeless students, and created directives for schools to ensure students are able to enroll and succeed in school (Hernandez, Jozefowicz-Simbeni, & Israel, 2006).

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors:

- advocate for students and collaborate with their parents/guardians to reduce barriers related to school enrollment and academic success
- establish educational and preventive programs for homeless parents and children
- collaborate with school and community personnel, and coordinate appropriate support services
- increase stakeholder awareness and understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act, and the rights of homeless students.
- advocate for appropriate educational placement

Summary

Professional school counselors promote awareness and understanding of the issues students face when experiencing homelessness. School counselors collaborate with students, parents/guardians, and community stakeholders to overcome the barriers to academic, career, and personal/social success associated with homelessness.

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The Professional School Counselor and Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1997, 2005, 2012)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors design and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs that promote student achievement. These programs are comprehensive in scope, preventative in design and developmental in nature. “The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs” (ASCA, 2012) outlines the components of a comprehensive school counseling program. The ASCA National Model brings professional school counselors together with one vision and one voice, which creates unity and focus toward improving student achievement and supporting student development.

The Rationale

A comprehensive school counseling program is an integral component of the school’s academic mission. Comprehensive school counseling programs, driven by student data and based on standards in academic, career and personal/social development, promote and enhance the learning process for all students. The ASCA National Model:

- ensures equitable access to a rigorous education for all students
- identifies the knowledge and skills all students will acquire as a result of the K-12 comprehensive school counseling program
- is delivered to all students in a systematic fashion
- is based on data-driven decision making
- is provided by a state-credentialed professional school counselor

Effective school counseling programs are a collaborative effort between the professional school counselor, families and other educators to create an environment promoting student achievement. Education professionals, including professional school counselors, value and respond to the diversity and individual differences in our societies and communities. Comprehensive school counseling programs ensure equitable access to opportunities and rigorous curriculum for all students to participate fully in the educational process.

The Professional School Counselor’s Role

Professional school counselors focus their skills, time and energy on direct and indirect services to students. To achieve maximum program effectiveness, the American School Counselor Association recommends a professional school-counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250 and that professional school counselors spend 80 percent or more of their time in direct and indirect services to students. Professional school counselors participate as members of the educational team and use the skills of leadership, advocacy and collaboration to promote systemic change as appropriate. The framework of a comprehensive school counseling program consists of the following four components: foundation, management, delivery and accountability.

FOUNDATION

Professional school counselors create comprehensive school counseling programs that focus on student outcomes, teach student competencies and are delivered with identified professional competencies.

Program Focus: To establish program focus, professional school counselors identify personal beliefs addressing how all students benefit from the school counseling program. Building on these beliefs, professional school counselors create a vision statement defining what the future will look like in terms of student outcomes. In addition, professional school counselors create a mission statement aligned with their school’s mission and develop program goals defining how the vision and mission will be measured.

Student Standards: Enhancing the learning process for all students, the ASCA Student Standards guide the development of effective school counseling programs around three domains: academic, career and personal/social development. Professional school counselors also consider how other student standards important to state and district initiatives complement and inform their school counseling program.

Professional Standards: The ASCA School Counselor Competencies outline the knowledge, attitudes and skills that ensure school counselors are equipped to meet the rigorous demands of the profession. The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors specify the principles of ethical behavior necessary to maintain the highest standard of integrity, leadership and professionalism. They guide professional school counselors' decision-making and help to standardize professional practice to protect both students and school counselors.

MANAGEMENT

Professional school counselors incorporate organizational assessments and tools that are concrete, clearly delineated and reflective of the school's needs. Assessments and tools include:

- school counselor competency and school counseling program assessments to self-evaluate areas of strength and improvement for individual skills and program activities
- agreements developed with and approved by administrators at the beginning of the school year addressing how the school counseling program is organized and what goals will be accomplished
- advisory councils made up of students, families, teachers, counselors, administrators and community members to review and make recommendations about school counseling program activities and results
- use of student data to measure the results of the program as well as to promote systemic change within the school system so every student graduates college and career ready
- action plans including prevention and intervention activities and services that define the desired student competencies and measure the impact on achievement, behavior and attendance.
- allotment of 80 percent of the professional school counselor's time to direct and indirect services with students
- use of annual and weekly calendars to keep students, families, teachers and administrators informed and to encourage active participation in the school counseling program

DELIVERY

Professional school counselors provide services to students, families, school staff and the community in the following areas:

Direct Services with Students

Direct services are in-person interactions between school counselors and students and include the following:

- **School Counseling Core Curriculum:** This curriculum consists of structured lessons designed to help students attain the desired competencies and to provide all students with the knowledge, attitudes and skills appropriate for their developmental level. The school counseling core curriculum is delivered throughout the school's overall curriculum and is systematically presented by professional school counselors in collaboration with other professional educators in K-12 classroom and group activities.
- **Individual Student Planning:** Professional school counselors coordinate ongoing systemic activities designed to assist students in establishing personal goals and developing future plans.
- **Responsive Services:** Responsive services are activities designed to meet students' immediate needs and concerns. Responsive services may include counseling in individual or small-group settings or crisis response.

Indirect Services for Students

Indirect services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselors' interactions with others including referrals for additional assistance, consultation and collaboration with families, teachers, other educators and community organizations.

ACCOUNTABILITY

To demonstrate the effectiveness of the school counseling program in measurable terms, professional school counselors analyze school and school counseling program data to determine how students are different as a result of the school counseling program. Professional school counselors use data to show the impact of the

school counseling program on student achievement, attendance and behavior and analyze school counseling program assessments to guide future action and improve future results for all students. The performance of the professional school counselor is evaluated on basic standards of practice expected of professional school counselors implementing a comprehensive school counseling program.

Summary

Professional school counselors develop and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs supporting and promoting student achievement. As outlined in the ASCA National Model, these programs include a systematic and planned program delivery involving all students and enhancing the learning process. The comprehensive school counseling program is supported by appropriate resources and implemented by a credentialed professional school counselor. The ASCA National Model brings professional school counselors together with one vision and one voice, which creates unity and focus toward improving student achievement and supporting student development.

The Professional School Counselor and Confidentiality

(Adopted 1974; reviewed and reaffirmed 1980; revised 1986, 1993, 1999, 2002, 2008)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors recognize their primary obligation for confidentiality is to the student but balance that obligation with an understanding of the legal and inherent rights of parents or guardians to be the guiding voice in their children's lives.

The Rationale

Confidentiality is an ethical term denoting a counseling practice relevant to privacy. A student who has a counseling relationship with a professional school counselor has the right to privacy and confidentiality. ASCA recognizes that counseling relationships require an atmosphere of trust and confidence between students and counselors. Exceptions to confidentiality exist, and students should be informed that situations exist in which school counselors must inform others of information learned in counseling relationships in order to protect students themselves or others.

ASCA members affirm their belief in the individual's worth and dignity. It is the professional responsibility of school counselors to fully respect the right to privacy of those with whom they enter counseling relationships.

Privileged communication is a legal term that means a federal or state statute is in place granting privilege to a counseling relationship between a professional school counselor and a student. If privilege exists, a professional school counselor cannot be forced to disclose information revealed in a counseling relationship in a court of law unless specific exceptions to privilege exist. In some states, statutes grant privilege to counseling relationships between professional school counselors and students.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Counselors have a responsibility to protect private information received through confidential relationships with students and private information they receive about students from parents or guardians, professionals outside of schools and other school staff members. Professional school counselors inform students of the limits of confidentiality such as the possible necessity for consulting with other professionals, privileged communication, and legal or authoritative restraints.

Additional exceptions to keeping private information gained in counseling relationships with students include disclosing information to parents, guardians or others when school counselors determine that students may be at risk for harming self or others. The meaning and limits of confidentiality are defined in developmentally appropriate terms to students. Professional school counselors consult with appropriate professionals when in doubt as to the validity of an exception and for the benefit of the students they counsel.

Professional school counselors keep records of their counseling relationships separate from academic records and do not disclose the contents of their counseling records except when privacy exceptions exist. When professional school counselors receive court orders they believe might lead to the disclosure of private information they gained in counseling relationships with students, they should request legal advice from their supervisors and should follow the legal advice provided to them.

When professional school counselors are asked in legal proceedings to disclose information they consider private when no exceptions to privacy appear to exist, they should assert their belief that information is confidential and should not be revealed without the student's consent. School counselors follow judge's orders when in court; even if they believe they are being ordered to disclose confidential information.

Summary

Counseling relationships require an atmosphere of trust and confidence between students and their professional school counselors. A student has the right to privacy and confidentiality. Students should be informed that exceptions to confidentiality exist in which counselors must inform others of information they learned in counseling relationships in order to protect students themselves or others.

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The Professional School Counselor and Corporal Punishment

(Adopted 1995, Revised 2000, 2006, 2012)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position:

Professional school counselors oppose the use of corporal punishment.

The Rationale

Professional school counselors recognize the use of corporal punishment can teach children that violence is an acceptable way to resolve differences. Research shows physical punishment to be ineffective in teaching new behaviors, and it is detrimental in teaching problem-solving skills. Corporal punishment can have negative effects for students including:

- Increased antisocial behavior such as lying, stealing, cheating, bullying, assaulting a sibling or peers and lack of remorse for wrongdoing
- Increased risk of child abuse
- Erosion of trust between an adult and child
- Adverse effects on cognitive development
- Increased likelihood of suffering from depression and other negative social and mental health outcomes.¹

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors have a responsibility to protect students and to promote healthy student development. The professional school counselor serves as a resource to school personnel and families for the use of effective intervention and discipline strategies that will promote positive individual development. Professional school counselors encourage public awareness of the consequences of corporal punishment, provide strategies on alternatives to corporal punishment and encourage legislation prohibiting the continued use of corporal punishment.

Professional school counselors collaborate with families and school staff to build positive relationships between students and adults with effective alternatives to corporal punishment including but not limited to:

- using behavioral contracts
- setting realistic expectations
- enforcing rules consistently
- creating appropriate and logical consequences for inappropriate behavior
- conferencing with students and/or families with school personnel for planning and reinforcing acceptable behavior
- emphasizing positive behaviors of students
- teaching pro-social, mediation and resolution skills as methods of problem solving
- providing information on parenting programs

Summary

Research shows that corporal punishment increases anti-social behavior of students, adversely affects cognitive development and erodes the trust between children and adults. It is ineffective in teaching new and positive behaviors and is detrimental in teaching appropriate problem-solving methods. Professional school counselors oppose the use of corporal punishment and advocate for its elimination.

References

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The Professional School Counselor and Credentialing and Licensure

(Adopted 1990; revised 1993, 1999, 2003, 2009)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

ASCA strongly supports a professional school counselor credentialing or licensing law in each state which includes: A definition of the profession, minimum qualifications for entry into the profession, and requirements for continuing professional development. ASCA encourages all state education certification or licensure agencies to adopt the School Counselor Performance Standards from the ASCA National Model and the ASCA School Counselor Competencies for professional school counselor credentialing or licensing.

The Rationale

Regulations for professional school counselor credentialing or licensure ensure students and stakeholders are served by highly qualified and trained professionals. Such legislation should include:

- standards for entry into the profession that minimally require a master's degree in school counseling
- a description of the role of the professional school counselor as defined in the ASCA National Model
- requirements for continuing education to further develop skills as a professional school counselor

In establishing legislation for professional school counselor certification or licensure, ASCA supports the nationwide use of the School Counselor Performance Standards from the ASCA National Model, and the ASCA School Counselor Competencies, a description of professional roles for school counselors, and setting state standards for school counselor preparation programs.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors need to be skilled in meeting the changing needs of students, families, schools, and communities. Therefore, professional school counselors should endorse counselor preparation programs and credentialing or licensing requirements that require practitioners to:

- be culturally competent (Holcomb-McCoy, 2003; Lee, 2001)
- have skills in evidence-based educational and school counseling practices (Carey & Dimmitt, 2008)
- focus on students' academic, career and personal/social needs
- possess leadership and advocacy skills (Stone & Clark, 2001)
- have consultation skills and the ability to work collaboratively with educational professionals and stakeholders in the school and community (House, Martin, & Ward, 2002)
- be able to develop, implement, and evaluate professional school counseling programs (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006)

Finally, professional school counselors should work with district personnel and local or state associations to provide ongoing professional development for the acquisition and updating of necessary skills.

Summary

ASCA strongly supports the use of the ASCA National Model School Counselor Performance Standards and the ASCA School Counselor Competencies in establishing state certification or licensure guidelines for professional school counselors.

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The Professional School Counselor and Crisis/Critical Incident Response in the Schools (Adopted 2000; revised 2007)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional school counselor is a leader in the successful development and implementation of a response plan with respect to the needs of both students and staff during any school- or student-related incident and serves primarily as an advocate for students' safety and well-being. The professional school counselor is a pivotal member of a school's/school district's crisis/critical incident response team collaborating with other school staff members to implement a comprehensive response to any such incident.

The Rationale

ASCA promotes and supports a safe, violence-free learning environment in the schools. Traumatic events may have many negative emotional, social, cognitive and physical effects on students, which may lead to profound short-term and long-term effects (Carr, 2004; Stallard & Salter, 2003). Professional school counselors are critical to the following emergency prevention/preparedness response activities:

- direct student counseling services
- student suicide prevention and intervention
- crisis response
- drug and alcohol interventions
- student safety advocacy
- parent, faculty and staff education programs
- response team planning and drill practices

It is imperative for school districts to develop district-level and building-level emergency preparedness and response plans (i.e., Incident Command System) for on-scene response. Accurate and immediate implementation of a crisis/critical incident response plan can significantly protect and ensure students' safety during a critical event and mitigate the long-term effects following the event. Professional school counselors may screen students for inappropriate, unhealthy or unsafe coping responses to current or past tragedies and make appropriate referrals. Professional school counselors should be trained in a variety of crisis intervention models to help with the mitigation of stressors in students. Such training may include, but is not limited to, training held by the American Red Cross, the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation or the Crisis Management Institute.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors support and actively engage themselves in critical incident response situations in schools. Literature on crisis/critical incident response suggests several important practices (Carr, 2004; Heath & Sheen, 2005; Stallard & Salter, 2003). The professional school counselor is a leader and an integral part of the prevention, intervention and post-incident support of school crisis/critical incident responses in both planning and implementation. As a member of the district and school critical incident response team, the professional school counselor is familiar with the school community, including students, parents and school staff, and community members. The professional school counselor is knowledgeable about the roles of first responders such as law enforcement officials or emergency medical responders and community counseling service providers.

The professional school counselor's primary role is to facilitate planning, coordinate response to and advocate for the emotional needs of all persons affected by the crisis/critical incident by providing direct counseling service during and after the incident. The professional school counselor recognizes and facilitates a continuum of support for students, school staff and victims involved in the incident. The professional school counselor is skilled in networking with community resources including first responders and is able to provide effective planning and referral for victims of a critical incident.

Summary

The professional school counselor is a leader and a crucial member of a district and school crisis/critical incident response team. The development and implementation of a coordinated district and school crisis/critical incident response plan should include input from the professional school counselor. Professional school counselors are student advocates and facilitators of communication with students, staff, parents and community members and assist in securing outside services when needed. The school counselor's expertise should not be replaced by less-qualified personnel in crisis/critical incident response planning and implementation. The professional school counselor should help coordinate crisis/critical incident stress debriefing after the incident for students, staff, members of the school counseling department and self care for the school counselor and other mental health professionals directly involved in the incident response.

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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.

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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.

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The Professional School Counselor and Dropout Prevention/Students-At-Risk

(Adopted 1989-90; revised 1993, 1999)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors at all levels make a significant, vital and indispensable contribution toward the mental wellness of “at-risk” students. School counselors work as a member of a team with other student service professionals including social workers, psychologists and nurses, in liaison with staff and parents, to provide comprehensive developmental counseling programs for all students including those identified as being potential dropouts or at-risk.

The Rationale

There are probably as many definitions of the “at-risk” student as there are school districts. Any student may at any time be at risk with respect to dropping out of school, becoming truant, performing below academic potential, contemplating suicide or using drugs. The underlying reasons for these behaviors often deal with personal and social concerns such as poor self-esteem, family problems, unresolved grief, neglect or abuse. Students experiencing these concerns can be helped by professional school counselors. The decision to drop out of school can carry with it devastating lifelong implications. The school counselor, in conjunction with other school staff members, identifies potential dropouts and other students considered at risk and works closely with them to help them stay in school or find alternative means of completing their education.

The Professional School Counselor’s Role

The professional school counselor provides consultation in defining and identifying at-risk students. The goal is to identify and intervene before they move through a continuum of self-destructive behavior. The school counselor provides responsive programs, including short-term individual, group, family and crisis counseling; provides programs for individual planning to meet academic, educational and career counseling needs; provides curriculum programs to strengthen personal/interpersonal skills (choice, self-acceptance, feelings, beliefs and behaviors, problem-solving, decision-making); identifies suicidal students, counsels them and refers them to appropriate outside agencies; provides in-service support presentations to staff; provides referrals for additional specialized support services within the district and from other community resources; and provides consultation with and support for parents/guardians of at-risk students. The school counselor works as a member of a team with other student service professionals.

Summary

Professional school counselors work with other educators and community resources to provide early identification and intervention for potential dropouts and other students who may be considered at-risk through a comprehensive, developmental, K-12 counseling program.

The Professional School Counselor and Equity for All Students

(Adopted 2006, revised 2012)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors recognize and distinguish individual and group differences and strive to value all students and groups equally. Professional school counselors advocate for the equitable treatment of all students in school and in the community.

The Rationale

Students from any background can face development issues affecting student success. Some students in schools report there is no adult in the school with whom they feel they can discuss these issues, and many of these students come from underrepresented social or cultural groups.

Historically, underrepresented populations have faced barriers to participating in a rigorous curriculum and higher-level classes. Professional school counselors, teachers, administrators and other school staff are involuntary gatekeepers of access to these classrooms. When students feel like they are being treated in a biased or negative manner, they often exhibit self-destructive behaviors such as truancy, withdrawal, acting out and nonparticipation in class activities. Conversely, when students believe they are treated fairly, they are more likely to be engaged in school, talk about pressing issues and participate in class activities.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors develop and implement a comprehensive school counseling program promoting equity and access for all students. Professional school counselors are mindful of school and community perceptions of the treatment of underrepresented groups and understand the importance of collaborating with school and community groups to help all students succeed. Professional school counselors demonstrate cultural competence.

Professional school counselors promote equitable treatment of all students by:

- Maintaining professional knowledge of the ever-changing and complex world of students' culture
- Maintaining knowledge and skills for working in a diverse and multicultural work setting
- Informing school staff of changes regarding different groups within the community
- Promoting the development of school policies leading to equitable treatment of all students and opposing school policies hindering equitable treatment of any student
- Promoting access to rigorous standards-based curriculum, academic courses and learning paths for college and career for all students
- Developing plans to address over- or underrepresentation of specific groups in programs such as special education, honors, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate
- Creating an environment that encourages any student or group to feel comfortable to come forward with problems.

Summary

Professional school counselors recognize and distinguish individual and group differences and strive to value all students and groups equally. Professional school counselors promote the equitable treatment of all students in school and the community.

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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.

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The Professional School Counselor and Gifted and Talented Student Programs

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1999, 2001, 2007)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional school counselor is an integral part of the educational team that delivers a comprehensive school counseling program to meet the needs of all students. Because gifted and talented students have some unique and diverse needs professional school counselors collaborate with other educators within the context of the comprehensive school counseling program to assist in meeting these needs.

The Rationale

The professional school counselor conducts developmentally appropriate activities based on the needs of students in the academic, career and personal/social domains (ASCA, 2005).

Within the school counseling program professional school counselors create an environment in which the academic development of all students, including gifted students, is fostered (Colangelo & Davis, 2003).

The Professional School Counselor's Role

The role of the professional school counselor in gifted and talented programs includes:

1. Assisting in the identification of gifted and talented students through the use of a multiple-criterion system utilized in the school district. Although it is most appropriate for professional school counselors to be involved in the analysis of data obtained from the multi-criterion, it is inappropriate for professional school counselors to be responsible for the coordination, collection and/or administration of the multi-criterion or any assessment used in the selection process. These criterion may include:
 - Intellectual ability
 - Academic performance
 - Visual and performing arts ability
 - Practical arts ability
 - Creative-thinking ability
 - Leadership potential
 - Parent, teacher peer nomination
 - Expert evaluation
2. Advocating for the inclusion of and the participation in activities effectively addressing the personal/social, career development and academic needs of identified gifted and talented students.
3. Assisting in promoting understanding and awareness of the special issues that may affect gifted and talented students including:
 - Underachievement
 - Perfectionism
 - Depression
 - Stress management
 - Dropping out
 - Delinquency
 - Difficulty in peer relationships
 - Career development
 - Meeting expectations
 - Goal setting
4. Providing individual and group counseling for gifted and talented students as needed.

5. Recommending material and resources for gifted and talented students in meeting their personal/social needs.
6. Engaging in professional development activities through which knowledge and skills in the area of programming for the needs of the gifted and talented are regularly upgraded.
7. Collaborating with other school personnel to maximize opportunities for these students.

Summary

Gifted and talented students come from diverse backgrounds, and their special abilities cover a wide spectrum of human potential. Specifically planned educational experiences can greatly enhance the continued development of gifted and talented persons. Professional school counselors work in collaboration with other school personnel to maximize opportunities for students. The professional school counselor is an integral part of the educational team and delivers a comprehensive school counseling program to meet the needs of all students.

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The Professional School Counselor and Group Counseling

(Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 2002, 2008; reviewed 1999, 2008)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Group counseling is vital in the delivery of the ASCA National Model to students and should be supported by school districts as part of an effective comprehensive school counseling program.

The Rationale

Group counseling, which involves a number of students working on shared tasks and developing supportive relationships in a group setting, is an efficient, effective and positive way of dealing with students' academic, career and personal/social/emotional developmental issues and situational concerns. By allowing individuals to develop insights into themselves and others, group counseling makes it possible for more students to achieve healthier personal adjustment, cope with the stress of a rapidly changing and complex environment and learn to communicate and cooperate with others. Research on group counseling suggests that this intervention is rather robust for a variety of academic, career and personal/social/emotional concerns (Gerrity & DeLucia-Waack, 2007; McGannon, Carey, & Dimmitt, 2005; Paisley & Milsom, 2007; Whiston & Sexton, 1998).

The Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor's training in group facilitation is unique to the school setting. School counselors provide group services to students and parents and may utilize their specialized training to facilitate school staff and administration on relevant professional issues or topics. Group services offered to students and parents are based on school and community needs, which are assessed through survey data. School counselors prioritize group offerings based on analysis of survey data. Group counseling should be offered to all students in a PK-12 setting.

Summary

Group counseling is an efficient and effective way to meet students' developmental and situational needs. Group counseling makes it possible for students to achieve healthier academic and personal adjustment in a rapidly changing culture. Groups are an integral part of a comprehensive school counseling program and should be included and supported by every educational institution. The professional school counselor's training in group facilitation benefits students, parents, school staff and administration. Group counseling has a positive effect on academic achievement and personal adjustment.

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The Professional School Counselor and High-Stakes Testing

(Adopted 2002, Revised 2007)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors recognize that standardized test results are one of many measures that can be used to assess student performance and learning. Professional school counselors advocate for the use of multiple criteria when educational decisions are made about student performance and oppose the use of a single test to make important educational decisions affecting students and their schools.

The Rationale

High-stakes testing refers to the use of test scores to determine levels of student achievement. Test results are often used as a method to determine: academic placement, promotion and retention, graduation and intervention services. Other decisions made using standardized test results for schools and districts include:

- increased or reduced funding at the state or local level
- revision of curriculum
- revision of teacher certification standards
- appropriate accommodations for students with exceptional learning needs and English language learners
- evaluation of instructional personnel

When results from standardized tests are the only factors used to make educational decisions, these decisions may not be fully informed as other factors can provide additional information related to student achievement.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors recognize that standardized test results provide valuable information related to student achievement. However, these results only provide a partial picture of student learning. When important educational decisions are being made, professional school counselors advocate for the use of multiple criteria in the decision-making process. These criteria may include:

- standardized tests results
- portfolios
- projects
- work samples
- classroom performance

Professional school counselors, in collaboration with other educators, also advocate for:

- appropriate testing conditions and administration of standardized tests
- opportunities to retake a test when a student is unsuccessful in one administration
- opportunities to take comparable tests when a student is unsuccessful in one administration
- the use of standardized tests norm referenced with all student populations
- discontinuation of standardized tests that show socioeconomic or cultural bias

Professional school counselors recognize that standardized tests may create anxiety for students that may be developmentally inappropriate. Through the comprehensive school counseling program, professional school counselors may work with students and staff on issues such as test-taking skills, time-management skills and stress management when appropriate.

Summary

Professional school counselors recognize the use of standardized test results as one of many measures of student achievement and success. Professional school counselors reject the use of high-stakes tests or the use of any other single measurement instrument as the only indicator of student success. The professional school counselor encourages multiple measures when life-influencing decisions are being made.

The Professional School Counselor and HIV/AIDS/STD Prevention

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2012)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional school counselor supports educational efforts related to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and collaborates with students, families, staff and the community to prevent infection and the spread of these diseases.

The Rationale

As children and adolescents explore multiple facets of their identities they may engage in behaviors that put their health at risk. Professional school counselors have the opportunity and responsibility to provide students with developmentally appropriate, accurate and current health information regarding sexually transmitted diseases and to help them develop healthy attitudes and habits. It is important for all individuals to understand the causes and potential consequences of sexual behaviors and experimentation and learn multiple ways to prevent acquiring and/or spreading sexually transmitted diseases. Professional school counselors are poised within the schools to provide this education and prevention information to students and their families. Students and families affected by HIV/AIDS/STDs have a right to confidentiality and equitable treatment in schools.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors communicate health information as part of the comprehensive school counseling program. Professional school counselors collaborate with school health personnel to provide counseling, support and educational programs for students, staff and families. The professional school counselor addresses sexually transmitted diseases not as a moral issue but through prevention and nonbiased prevention efforts. The professional school counselor strives through professional development to maintain a current understanding of the recommendations and resources regarding the nature of HIV/AIDS/STDs and appropriate means of prevention.

The professional school counselor is familiar with and complies with school policy and federal, state and local laws as well as the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors regarding HIV/AIDS/STDs. The professional school counselor understands and upholds HIPAA and FERPA laws protecting confidentiality of students and families who are affected by HIV/AIDS/STDs. The professional school counselor is alert to any form of discrimination on the basis of a student's HIV/AIDS/STDs status. The professional school counselor advocates on behalf of students and families affected by HIV/AIDS/STDs for equity and access to educational opportunities and is familiar with available resources to assist them.

The professional school counselor may advocate for the implementation of an HIV/AIDS/STD education curriculum as a part of the comprehensive school counseling program and in conjunction with the school's health curriculum. The HIV/AIDS/STD education curriculum includes instruction for students, families and staff promoting healthy living and responsibility to self, family and society.

Specific elements may include general information about HIV/AIDS/STDs, including knowledge of:

- behaviors that put people at risk
- methods of transmission
- related nondiscrimination policies
- prevention efforts and
- accurate information dispelling myths and stereotypes

Summary

The professional school counselor promotes educational efforts related to HIV/AIDS/STDs while providing support and counseling to students and families affected by these diseases. The professional school counselor's approach to HIV/AIDS/STD-related issues is through education and prevention efforts, keeping abreast of current recommendations and resources.

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Internet Resources

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH)
http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/about/hivstd_prevention.htm

Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA) <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/reg/ferpa/index.html>

Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule
<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/administrative/privacyrule/index.html>

National Association of State Boards of Education State School Healthy Policy Database: Counseling & Mental Health Services http://nasbe.org/healthy_schools/hs/bytopics.php?topicid=4120&catExpand=acdnbtm_catD

National Coalition of STD Directors Promoting Sex Healthy through STD Prevention Adolescent Sexual Health
<http://www.ncsddc.org/what-we-do/adolescent-health>

Sexually Transmitted Diseases – Prevention http://www.childrencolorado.org-pdf-std_prevention.pdf.url

The Professional School Counselor and the Identification, Prevention, and Intervention of Behaviors That Are Harmful and Place Students At-Risk

(Adopted 1989-90; revised 1993, 1999, 2004, 2011)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors work in a leadership role with student service professionals, administrators, faculty, school staff, community members, and parents/guardians to provide comprehensive school counseling programs. Such comprehensive programs identify and prevent behaviors that place students at risk of not completing school and/or harming self or others by promoting student resilience and success.

The Rationale

All schools and communities have students who could potentially drop out of school and/or engage in destructive behaviors such as absenteeism, performing below their potential academically, substance abuse, threats and intimidation, or physical violence. Some schools and communities may have environmental, resource, or policy issues that inadvertently contribute to student failure and harmful behaviors (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). These behaviors can have devastating lifelong implications and often stem from personal and social concerns including: low self-esteem, family and relationship problems, unresolved grief, trauma, neglect, abuse, and/or substance use.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor provides proactive leadership in identifying, preventing, and intervening with student at-risk behaviors. Using data to develop and evaluate preventive and responsive services to address these risks is an integral part of a comprehensive school counseling program. The professional school counselor collaborates with staff, school-wide teams, parents/guardians, and the community to identify students who are participating in behaviors and intervenes with these students to limit or eliminate the risk of harm or negative consequences. White and Kelly (2010) delineated many evidence-based practices professional school counselors can use to address protective and risk factors. Professional school counselors take a leadership role in enhancing students' strengths and reducing their risk factors by:

- enhancing social support through a peer mentoring or buddy system
- assigning adults as monitors or mentors for students
- providing classroom guidance lessons to increase student knowledge and awareness of the dangers of harmful behaviors as well as promoting resiliency and success skills
- providing responsive services, including short-term individual, group counseling
- referring students and families to appropriate support services and community agencies
- collaborating with school staff to identify and assist students in crisis
- conducting staff development for school and district staff
- providing information, consultation, and support to parents/guardians to increase familial involvement
- advocating for changes in the school and community to promote resilience, success, and equitable access to needed resources

Summary

By implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, professional school counselors collaborate with other educators and stakeholders to provide prevention, early identification, and intervention for all students in order to minimize or eliminate harmful behaviors that place students at risk.

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The Professional School Counselor and LGBTQ Youth

(Adopted 1995, Revised 2000, 2005, 2007)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors promote equal opportunity and respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation/gender identity. Professional school counselors work to eliminate barriers that impede student development and achievement and are committed to academic, personal/social and career development of all students.

The Rationale

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning (LGBTQ) youth often begin to experience self-identification during their pre-adolescent or adolescent years, as do heterosexual youth (Ryan, 1997). These developmental processes are essential cognitive, emotional and social activities, and although they may have an impact on student development and achievement, they are not a sign of illness, mental disorder or emotional problems nor do they necessarily signify sexual activity.

Some students face obstacles in school and society that inhibit them from understanding and accepting their sexual/gender identity or the identity of others (Savin-Williams, 1994). Students may face bullying, harassment and name-calling based on real or perceived sexual orientation/gender identity (GLSEN, 2004, 2005).

Professional school counselors realize these issues may infringe upon healthy student development and limit their opportunities in school and the community (GLSEN, 2005; Savin-Williams, 1994).

The Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor works with all students through the stages of identity development and understands this development may be more difficult for LGBTQ youth. It is not the role of the professional school counselor to attempt to change a student's sexual orientation/gender identity but instead to provide support to LGBTQ students to promote student achievement and personal well-being.

Professional school counselors:

- are aware of their own beliefs about sexual orientation and gender identity
- are knowledgeable of the negative effects that result from stereotyping individuals into rigid gender roles
- are committed to the affirmation of youth of all sexual orientations and identities

Identity development is an important developmental process for all students, and to assist in this development, professional school counselors:

- assist all students as they clarify feelings about their own sexual orientation/gender identity and the identity of others in a nonjudgmental manner
- advocate for equitable educational opportunities for all students
- address inappropriate language from students and adults
- promote sensitivity and acceptance of diversity among all students and staff
- provide LGBTQ-inclusive and age-appropriate information on issues such as family structures, dating and relationships and maintaining physical health
- model language that is inclusive of sexual orientation/gender identity
- encourage policies that address discrimination against any student
- promote violence-prevention activities to create a safe school environment that is free of fear, bullying and hostility

Recognizing that sexual orientation is not an illness and does not require treatment, professional school counselors may provide individual student planning or responsive services to LGBTQ students to:

- promote self-acceptance
- deal with social acceptance

- understand issues related to “coming out,” including issues that families may face when a student goes through this process
- identify appropriate community resources

Summary

Professional school counselors promote affirmation, respect and equal opportunity for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Professional school counselors also promote awareness of issues related to sexual orientation/gender identity among students, teachers, administrators, parents and the community. Professional school counselors work to eliminate barriers that impede student development and achievement and are committed to the academic, career and personal/social development of all students.

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The Professional School Counselor and Peer Helping

(Adopted 1978; Revised 1984, revised 1993, 1999, 2002, 2008)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

ASCA believes that peer-helping programs are one means of helping students reach a higher level of maturity and accepting responsibility. Peer-helping programs are implemented to enhance the effectiveness of school counseling programs by increasing outreach and the expansion of available services.

The Rationale

Peer helping includes a variety of interpersonal helping behaviors assumed by nonprofessionals who seek to assist others through such activities as one-to-one helping relationships, group leadership, discussion leadership, tutoring and other activities of an interpersonal helping nature. A peer helper is a person who assists persons of approximately the same age who share related values, experiences and lifestyles.

Students often communicate their problems to their peers rather than to parents, administrators or school counselors. Peers can be selected and trained by professional school counselors in the areas of communication and helping skills through a carefully planned peer helping program. Peer-helping programs seek to enhance the effectiveness of the school counseling program by increasing outreach and raising student awareness of services. Through proper selection, training and supervision, peer helping can be a positive influence within the school and community. Additionally, peer counselors increase their own personal growth and gain exposure to possible future occupations in the helping professions. Research on peer-helping programs generally indicates that such programs are moderately helpful when focused on assisting students with social, academic or personal problems (McGannon, Carey, & Dimmitt, 2005; Whiston & Sexton, 1998). Additionally, peer facilitators also derive positive benefits from peer-helping programs (McGannon et al., 2005).

The Peer Helper's Role

Properly trained peer helpers provide a variety of useful and helpful services for schools:

- One-to-one assistance: Talking with students about personal or school problems, referring to community resources or providing information about the school's counseling program.
- Group settings: Serving as group leaders, group counseling assistants, teachers of helping skills to other students, communication skills trainers or peer helper trainers.
- Educational functions: Tutoring in academic areas, serving as readers for nonreaders or assisting special education consultants in working with learning and behaviorally disabled students.
- Hospitality: Welcoming and guiding new students and their parents around the school.
- Outreach: Helping increase the services of the school counseling programs, serving as listeners or as a resource for populations that may feel uncomfortable talking with the professional school counselor or reducing crisis situations by alerting professional school counselors to problems of a serious nature.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional counselor accepts responsibility for determining the needs of the school population and for implementing a peer helping program designed to meet those needs. Professional school counselors devise a selection plan for peer helpers compatible with the population to be served; coordinate an appropriate training program; schedule adequate time to work with peer helpers on an ongoing basis for continued training, supervision, sharing and personal growth; construct a support system through positive, honest public relations; and continually monitor, evaluate and adjust the program and training to meet the assessed needs of the population it serves. The professional school counselor accepts responsibility for the design, completion and evaluation of the peer-helping program. Results should be reported to the population served and other school stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, administrators, parents, community).

Summary

Well-trained peer helpers can have a positive, supportive effect upon students that no one else can provide. Students can relate to and accept suggestions for alternative patterns of behavior from peers who are struggling with similar feelings and problems. Peer helpers increase the services of the school counseling program in an outreach function and are an invaluable part of a comprehensive school counseling program.

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The Professional School Counselor and Post-Secondary Student Recruitment

(Adopted 2004; revised 2009)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors encourage and promote positive and equitable reception of career and post-secondary educational institution recruiters into the school setting. These recruiters may include individuals from organizations such as:

- apprenticeship programs
- athletic programs
- branches of the military
- career and technical education institutions
- colleges and universities.

The Rationale

Comprehensive and accurate information is essential for students as they explore post-secondary career and educational options (National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, 2001). While federal law requires the distribution of student directory information, the professional school counselor also recognizes the importance of student and family choices in the recruitment process and assists them as they make informed post-secondary choices (Stone & Dahir, 2006).

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors are advocates for students in the recruitment process, and ensure that students and their families are informed of their rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and in accordance with ASCA's Ethical Standards for School Counselors. The professional school counselor addresses good decision-making skills and provides opportunities to practice these skills through the school's comprehensive school counseling program. The professional school counselor collaborates with students, their families, and recruiters to provide information about post-secondary options and assists students as they make choices about their future. Collaborating with school administrators, professional school counselors develop written information and/or hold informational meetings to inform all concerned parties about the policies and procedures for obtaining student information as well as the student and parent/guardian's right to withhold their information.

Summary

The professional school counselor assists students and their families as they make informed decisions about post-secondary options. The professional school counselor collaborates with individuals involved in the student recruitment process to ensure the delivery of comprehensive and accurate information while protecting student rights as specified by state/federal law, school district policies and procedures, and ASCA's Ethical Standards for School Counselors.

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The Professional School Counselor and the Promotion of Safe Schools through Conflict Resolution and Bullying/Harassment Prevention

(Adopted 1994/2000, Revised 2005, 2011)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors recognize the need for all students to attend school in a safe, orderly and caring environment. To promote this type of environment, comprehensive school counseling programs include anti-bullying/harassment and violence-prevention programs along with comprehensive conflict-resolution programs to foster a positive school climate.

The Rationale

A safe school environment is essential for effective learning. Incidents involving bullying, harassment, violence, weapons or gang behavior threaten student and staff safety (Van Velsor, 2009). Students, parents/guardians, staff and policy makers recognize the need to provide a safe school environment. Students who experience positive relationships with school personnel and can identify at least one trusted adult at school feel safe and validated (Davis, 2005).

Prevention activities are integral to creating a safe school environment that is free of fear, bullying, harassment and violence. Delivered by professional school counselors, teachers, administrators and qualified community experts, prevention programs increase the opportunity for improved academic achievement, appropriate behavior, positive relationships, successful resolution of conflicts, safe school climate and increased attendance. Participating in prevention activities empowers and encourages students to take responsibility for their behavior and for the climate of their school and community.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors collaborate with others in the school and community to promote safe schools and confront issues threatening school safety. Professional school counselors encourage the development of policies supporting a safe school environment, and they provide leadership to the school by assisting in the design and implementation of schoolwide prevention activities and programs. Additionally professional school counselors recognize differentiated interventions are needed for bullying and resolving a conflict. Comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment/violence-prevention and conflict-resolution programs require data-driven decision making, coordination, instruction and program evaluation. These programs are most effective when incorporated into the academic curriculum by all members of the school community (Young, Hardy, Hamilton, Biernesser, Sun, & Niebergall, 2009). The professional school counselor includes prevention programs as a part of the comprehensive school counseling program and ensures these programs include training in:

- communication skills
- conflict-resolution skills
- decision-making skills
- development of cultural competence
- acceptance of differences
- intervention strategies for bullying/harassment
- recognition of early warning signs of violence
- prevention/intervention services
- crisis response
- appropriate use of technology and social media
- community involvement
- parent/guardian and faculty/staff education
- evaluation of program effectiveness
- building positive staff and student relationships

Summary

Professional school counselors understand the need for all students to attend safe, orderly and caring schools. Through participation in prevention programs and activities aimed at bullying, harassment and violence prevention, students learn communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills that help them achieve their goals and also establish successful relationships. Professional school counselors collaborate with teachers, administrators, parents/guardians and the community to deliver prevention programs that encourage student growth and achievement and ensure a safe school climate.

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The Professional School Counselor and Response to Intervention (Adopted 2008)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors are stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. Professional school counselors align with the RTI process through the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program designed to improve student achievement and behavior.

The Rationale

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tiered approach to help struggling learners. (RTI Action Network, 2008). Guided by student outcome data, RTI can be used to make decisions about general, compensatory and special education, assisting in the creation of a well-integrated and seamless system of instruction and intervention (Ehren, B, et. al., 2006). Professional school counselors implement a data-driven comprehensive school counseling program that meets the needs of all students and includes the identification of students who are at-risk for not meeting academic and behavioral expectations. Professional school counselors design and implement plans to address the needs of struggling students and collect results data based on the effectiveness of the interventions.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors assist in the academic and behavioral development of students through the implementation of a comprehensive developmental school counseling program based on the ASCA National Model by:

- Providing all students with a standards-based guidance curriculum to address universal academic, career and personal/social development
- Analyzing academic and behavioral data to identify struggling students
- Identifying and collaborating on research-based intervention strategies that are implemented by school staff
- Evaluating academic and behavioral progress after interventions
- Revising interventions as appropriate
- Referring to school and community services as appropriate
- Collaborating with administrators about RTI design and implementation
- Advocating for equitable education for all students and working to remove systemic barriers

The following chart shows how a comprehensive school counseling program aligns with the RTI process.

RTI Process	Role of the Professional School Counselor
Tier 1: Universal Core Instructional Interventions: All Students, Preventative and Proactive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standards and Competencies (Foundation) 2. Guidance Curriculum (Delivery System) 3. Individual Student Planning (Delivery) 4. Curriculum Action Plan (Management) 5. Curriculum Results Report (Accountability)
Tier 2: Supplemental/Strategic Interventions: Students at Some Risk	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standards and Competencies (Foundation) 2. Individual Student Planning (Delivery) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Small-group appraisal and b. Small-group advisement 3. Responsive Services (Delivery) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consultation and b. Individual counseling and c. Small group counseling 4. Closing the Gap Action Plan (Management) 5. Closing the Gap Results Report (Accountability)
Tier 3: Intensive, Individual Interventions: Students at High Risk	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standards and Competencies (Foundation) 2. Responsive Services (Delivery) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consultation and b. Individual counseling and c. Small group counseling and d. Referral to school or community services 3. Closing the Gap Action Plan (Management) 4. Closing the Gap Results Report (Accountability)

Summary

Professional school counselors implement a comprehensive school counseling program that addresses the needs of all students. Through the review of data, professional school counselors identify struggling students and collaborate with other educators to provide appropriate interventions through the RTI process. Professional school counselors work collaboratively with other educators to remove systemic barriers for all students and implement intervention programs that assist in student success.

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The Professional School Counselor and Retention, Social Promotion and Age-Appropriate Placement

(Adopted 2006, revised 2012)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors recognize that decisions on student retention, promotion and placement are best made when the student's needs are at the forefront of the decision and after multiple factors have been considered.

Professional school counselors oppose laws or policies requiring social promotion or retention without considering the individual student's needs.

The Rationale

Research has demonstrated that student educational success is hindered through the use of multiple retentions and social promotions. However, some states and school districts have instituted laws or policies requiring mandatory retention or promotion of students who do not achieve academic standards. Retentions can happen multiple times if the student continues to fail to meet the standards.

Research shows negative effects from retention as the student grows older. If a student is retained multiple times, he or she is likely to experience increased feelings of shame and stress as well as negative feelings toward self and school. These negative feelings toward school are often expressed as acts of aggression or despair and may lead to the student dropping out of school. These students tend to continue to have negative life issues. Math and reading scores that initially rise after retention, decline over time with retained students demonstrating lower achievement scores compared with their grade-level peers. Research indicates students most often retained fall into one or more of these groups:

- racial or ethnic minorities
- black or Hispanic males
- late birthday
- delayed development
- attention difficulties
- limited English proficiency
- children of poverty
- single parent households
- frequent school changes
- chronic absenteeism
- low parental educational attainment
- low parental educational involvement
- social-emotional issues

Students benefit from differentiated instruction to reach their potential as student performance has been linked to effective instruction, economics, parental involvement and health. Neither retention nor social promotions have proven to be effective in remediation of learning difficulties or in maintaining academic gains. Improved teaching strategies and curriculum enhancements have been demonstrated to be effective for student success and are less costly.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors have a professional and ethical obligation to protect students from practices hindering academic, career and personal/social development. Professional school counselors are aware of the detrimental effects multiple retentions and social promotions cause students, schools and the community and advocate for the repeal of laws or policies promoting mandatory retentions or social promotion. Professional school counselors share educational and social research with students, families, the community and decision makers so the decisions related to promotion and retention are made in the students' best interest.

Professional school counselors promote alternatives to retention, social promotion and age-appropriate placement by supporting and advocating for:

- Research-based educational reforms that deliver best teaching and counseling practice
- Comprehensive school counseling programs in all schools to address academic, social-emotional competence and behavioral obstacles to learning
- Early identification using available data to identify strengths and deficits to provide appropriate interventions
- A team approach that includes professional school counselors, teachers, administrators, student support workers and families to determine appropriate educational interventions
- Career and technical education opportunities for middle and high school students
- Literacy strategies to improve reading for all students
- Funding for pre-kindergarten programs taught by credentialed teachers
- Extending the school year for remediation and curriculum enhancement for struggling learners and under-challenged learners
- Reducing class size
- Increasing parent engagement and volunteer involvement in schools.
- Teaching families research-based reading strategies to assist their children in developing reading skills

Summary

Research shows the negative impact retention and social promotion can have on student success. Professional school counselors collaborate with students, families and educational leaders to consider the individual student's needs when making decisions on retention and social promotion and advocate to change laws or policies promoting mandatory retentions or social promotion.

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Internet Resources

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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.

The Professional School Counselor and School-Family-Community Partnerships

(Adopted 2010)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors have an essential and unique role in promoting, facilitating, and advocating for successful collaboration with parents/guardians and community stakeholders. These collaborations are an important aspect of implementing equitable, data-driven, comprehensive school counseling programs that promote the academic success of all students.

The Rationale

School counseling and educational reform literature call for school counselor involvement in enhancing school-family-community collaboration (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Bosworth & Walz, 2005; Bryan, 2005; Ratts, et al., 2007). Family involvement benefits both the student and the school as it increases student achievement and attendance, promotes career development, enhances school climate, and fosters student resilience (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). School-family-community partnerships can support the effective and efficient delivery of school counseling program services to promote student success (Taylor & Adelman, 2000).

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors are called to work with students, their families, and community members as a part of their comprehensive school counseling programs, and address the following:

- become knowledgeable about community resources and actively pursue collaboration with family members and community stakeholders
- remove barriers to the successful implementation of school-family-community partnerships (e.g., mistrust and miscommunication between parties, resistance to the concept and practice, transportation and childcare issues, accessible meeting times)
- serve as an advocate, leader, facilitator, initiator, evaluator, and collaborator to create, enrich, and evaluate the effect of these partnerships on student success.

Summary

School-family-community partnerships have increased the academic success of students. Professional school counselors are called to create, lead, facilitate, and evaluate these partnerships and work to remove barriers to these helpful collaborative relationships.

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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.

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The Professional School Counselor and Student Mental Health

(Adopted 2009)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Students' unmet mental health needs can be a significant barrier to student academic, personal-social and career development; and even compromise school safety. Professional school counselors do not provide long-term therapy in schools to address psychological disorders; however, they must be prepared to recognize and respond to student mental health crises and needs, and to address these barriers to student success by offering education, prevention, and crisis and short-term intervention until the student is connected with available community resources.

The Rationale

Schools are often one of the first places where mental health crises and needs of students are recognized and initially addressed (Froeschle & Meyers, 2004). Research indicates that 20% of students are in need of mental health services, yet only one out of five of these students receive the necessary services (Kaffenberger & Seligman, 2007). Furthermore, students of color and those from families with low income are at greater risk for mental health needs, but are even less likely to receive the appropriate services (Panigua, 2005; Vera, Buhin, & Shin, 2006). Students with untreated mental health issues can develop significant barriers to learning, with nearly half of these students eventually dropping out of school (Erford, Newsome, & Rock, 2007). Although professional school counselors are knowledgeable and skilled in counseling, school counselors have a responsibility to ensure the academic, career and personal/social development of all students and to provide a comprehensive school counseling program to meet the developmental needs of all students in the school. Therefore, professional school counselors must focus their efforts on designing and implementing programs that promote educational success for all students, while acknowledging they may be the only counseling professional available to students and their families to help identify and address students' mental health issues. Professional school counselors must also recognize and respond to students' mental health while working within the ASCA's *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* and state and national legislation such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which affords parents' or legal guardians' privacy rights for their children.

The School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors are knowledgeable and skilled in working with students who are struggling with developmental or mental health issues, and must provide a comprehensive school counseling program in an effort to promote academic, career and personal/social development and success for all students. Consistent with the ASCA National Model (2005), professional school counselors develop and deliver a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes positive development which includes offering education, prevention and short-term intervention services designed to promote positive mental health and to remove any barriers to student success.

Comprehensive school counseling programs span the continuum of care provided to students and their families, and are consistent with professional school counselors' commitment to student success. Professional school counselors should:

- Provide responsive services including internal and external referral procedures, short-term counseling or crisis intervention focused on mental health or situational (e.g. grief, difficult transitions) concerns with the intent of helping the student return to the classroom and removing barriers to learning;
- Deliver the guidance curriculum which enhances awareness of mental health; promotes positive, healthy behaviors; and seeks to remove the stigma associated with mental health issues.
- Provide individual planning with students that addresses their academic, career and personal-social (including mental health) needs;
- Educate teachers, administrators, parents/guardians, and community stakeholders about the mental health concerns of students, including recognition of the role environmental factors have in causing or exacerbating mental health issues;
- Advocate and collaborate with school and community stakeholders to ensure that students and their families have access to mental health services.

Professional school counselors should regularly participate in professional development to increase their ability to recognize and respond to student mental health crises and concerns.

Summary

Students' unmet mental health needs pose barriers to learning and development. Because of professional school counselors' training and position, they are uniquely qualified to provide education, prevention, intervention and referral services to students and their families. Although professional school counselors do not provide long-term therapy in schools, they provide a comprehensive school counseling program designed to meet the developmental needs of all students. As a component of this program, professional school counselors collaborate with other educational professionals and community service providers to assist with the mediation of student mental health issues and to promote healthy lifestyle choices

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The Professional School Counselor and Student Safety and the Use of Technology

(Adopted 2000, revised 2006, 2012)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors encourage students to take advantage of the wealth of opportunities, information and resources available through the use of technology. However, because students are vulnerable to the risks that technology poses, professional school counselors, in collaboration with families, educators and law enforcement officials, alert students to these risks and encourage them to use technology responsibly.

The Rationale

Professional school counselors recognize technology underpins the fastest-growing industries and high-wage jobs, provides the tools needed to compete in every business and drives growth in every industrialized nation. The ability to harness the power and promise of leading-edge technology often determines national prosperity, security and global influence as well as the standard of living and quality of life for all.¹

To be successful in school and prepared for post-secondary opportunities, students need to be proficient in the use of technology. However, when students access web-based and mobile technology, they leave a digital footprint that makes them vulnerable to invasion of privacy. They are also exposed to negative content and significant risks that compromise their safety. Technology exposes students to behavioral, safety and privacy risks such as:

- online addictions
- invasion of privacy and disclosure of personal information
- inappropriate online communications
- easy access to inappropriate media
- cheating and copyright infringement
- cyberbullying/harassment
- sexual predators

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors have a responsibility to protect students from potential dangers and to promote healthy student development. Professional school counselors collaborate with families and school personnel to advance the responsible and appropriate use of technology to facilitate academic, career and personal/social achievement. Professional school counselors may take the following actions to promote the safe, responsible use of technology²:

- help develop school policies
- respond to online incidents affecting conditions for learning
- assist the community in detecting at-risk behavior
- address digital citizenship: technology literacy, privacy, reputation and social awareness

Professional school counselors engage in professional development to improve and maintain digital literacy, which, coupled with expertise in human development, allows them to provide educators and families with guidelines for the appropriate use of technology by students.

Summary

Technology provides global opportunities for student learning, exploration, communication, networking and collaboration. Professional school counselors promote the responsible use of technology in collaboration with families and educators to increase student safety.

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The Professional School Counselor and Test Preparation Programs

(Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2012)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors assist students in preparing for standardized tests by promoting opportunities designed to increase knowledge and improve test-taking skills. Professional school counselors help students and their families become knowledgeable about test preparation programs and assist them as they decide which programs best meet their needs.

The Rationale

Students are often apprehensive about standardized tests and sometimes view tests as intimidating or threatening. Compounding these feelings is the fact that since 2001, average college acceptance rates have dropped 8 percent while number of students applying to college has increased by the same amount (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2011). Because of these issues, professional school counselors are often asked for advice on test preparation programs to increase scores and opportunities. Research has demonstrated that the best predictor of college success is the “quality and intensity of a student’s high school courses” (Adelman, 1999). Research on test-taking and test-wise strategies such as time-use and guessing strategies revealed that such preparation can improve scores. These gains are even larger when a student participates in a longer test preparation program that allows the student to practice and develop more broad cognitive skills (Crocker, 2005).

Many students benefit from becoming familiar with the test format and test-taking strategies before taking a standardized test. Content area review and repeated test-based practice have shown to be beneficial for students as they prepare for exams.

The Professional School Counselor’s Role

Professional school counselors provide test-taking strategies as a part of a comprehensive school counseling program as a way of “leveling the playing field with respect to access” (Crocker, 2006, p. 118) to test preparation, promoting academic, career and personal/social development for all students. Test-taking skills and strategies include:

- Time-use and stress management
- Error-avoidance and guessing
- Memory and recall techniques
- Deductive reasoning
- Test-wiseness (including scoring rubrics, test format and item formats)

Professional school counselors collaborate with school staff to coordinate and provide information on integrating test-taking strategies, content and practice tests into regular classroom instruction. Professional school counselors provide students and families with research and information on a variety of test preparation options to enable them to make informed decisions about commercial test preparation programs, free programs as well as those that have a fee. The professional school counselor collaborates with staff to encourage integration of test-taking strategies and content into the curriculum.

Summary

Research shows test preparation can help students improve test scores. Professional school counselors collaborate with school staff to assist students as they prepare for tests by providing instruction on test-taking skills and providing research and information about test preparation programs to students and their families.

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The Professional School Counselor and the Use of Non-School-Counseling Credentialed Personnel in Implementing Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

(Adopted 1994, Revised 2000, 2006, 2012)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors and the comprehensive school counseling programs they design and implement serve a vital role in maximizing student success¹. Professional school counselors are uniquely qualified and solely eligible to meet the requirements of designing and implementing these programs. Professional school counselors recognize that personnel who do not hold a master's degree in school counseling are not qualified to deliver a comprehensive school counseling program that supports academic, career and personal/social development and positively affects achievement for all students.

The Rationale

Research shows students who attend a school with a fully implemented comprehensive school counseling program earn higher grades and are better prepared for life after high school.² Professional school counselors recognize students face many issues that may place them at risk for school failure. Communities and school districts across the country are seeking solutions to these complex issues and may establish a variety of positions to address student needs. School districts work diligently to employ the most highly trained personnel for dealing with these issues and may employ non-school-counseling credentialed staff for specific functions. Although non-school-counseling credentialed staff members provide valuable services to students, they do not have the training or skills to design nor implement a comprehensive school counseling program nor are they qualified to be placed in the role of professional school counselor. Non-school-counseling credentialed staff may include:

- paraprofessionals
- peer helpers
- volunteers
- clerical support staff
- student assistance team members
- social workers
- psychologists
- nurses
- mentors
- mental health counselors including marriage and family counselors
- graduation coaches

The services non-school-counseling credentialed personnel provide must be clearly defined based on the individual's training and skills. Without appropriate training and skills, individuals with the best of intentions may provide inappropriate responses or interventions to students that could jeopardize their development and well-being.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors recognize that student needs can best be met through the collaborative efforts of all school personnel. In situations in which non-school-counseling credentialed personnel are performing intervention or prevention activities, professional school counselors advocate that these activities be limited to the scope of the individual's training and capabilities. The professional school counselor collaborates with administrators, teachers and staff to establish appropriate guidelines, responsibilities and supervision for non-school-counseling credentialed staff as well as the activities provided.

When referring students to non-school-counseling credential staff, professional school counselors inform students and families of these staff members' role within the school. The professional school counselor may also provide information related to the individual's education level and scope of practice.

Summary

Professional school counselors play an important role in the academic, career and personal/social development of all students. Non-school-counseling credentialed individuals do not have the training or skills to design or implement a comprehensive school counseling program nor are they qualified to be placed in the role of the professional school counselor. Professional school counselors collaborate with administrators, teachers and staff to establish appropriate guidelines and supervision of services provided by non-school-counseling credentialed personnel and make referrals to these individuals as appropriate for the student.

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The Professional Counselor and Use of Support Staff in School Counseling Programs

(Adopted 1974; reviewed and reaffirmed 1980; revised 1986, 1993, 1999, 2001, 2008)

American Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Counseling program support staff provides a means to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the school counseling program. Counseling program support staff members allow time for the professional school counselor to coordinate services and deliver programs that require specialized skills and training.

The Rationale

The utilization of counselor support staff provides a means of developing greater effectiveness within the guidance and within the counseling program. Counselor support staff members allow time for the professional school counselor to provide more of the services and deliver the programs that requires specialized skills and training.

The Role of Paraprofessionals in Counseling Programs

Given appropriate education and training school counseling program support staff members assist in the following areas:

- Collecting and maintaining current student files
- Reproducing materials needed for the professional school counselor in group or individual conferences
- Assisting with student record keeping
- Assisting students in the completion of various forms and applications
- Assisting with scheduling the professional school counselor's meetings and programs
- Assisting the professional school counselor with correspondence associated with the school counseling program
- Assisting in the dissemination of information to stakeholders
- Coordinating resources and counseling materials
- Keeping records
- Entering and collecting data

Some school counseling program support staff duties may require specialized training. The school counseling program support staff member should be sensitive to students' problems and needs and be knowledgeable of the role of the professional school counselor and the total school counseling program. School counseling program support staff members should maintain the highest level of confidentiality of student records and personal information. They should not involve themselves in situations that are more appropriately handled by the professional school counselor.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor may assist in the selection of counseling program support staff and provide appropriate, ongoing supervision of counseling program support staff members. The professional school counselor should ensure counseling program support staff have initial training and the opportunity for ongoing professional development including clerical training, operation and use of multimedia material, use and operation of technology, practical investigations or research techniques, human relations and multicultural competence, ethics, community resources and training in confidentiality with regard to student records.

Summary

Professional school counselors are aware of the value added to a school counseling program from counseling program support staff members. Counseling support staff members provide a means to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the school counseling program. Counseling program support staff members allow time for the professional school counselor to coordinate services and deliver programs requiring specialized skills and training. Professional school counselors may be involved with the selection, supervision and professional development of counseling support staff.