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The School Counselor and Equity for All Students

(Adopted 2006, revised 2012, 2018, 2024)

ASCA Position

School counselors acknowledge and value individual and group differences that exist among students. School counselors are advocates for the equitable treatment of all students and strive to establish inclusive and welcoming learning environments in which all students can thrive and reach their full potential.

The Rationale

Students who are members of marginalized populations within the United States have historically encountered barriers to equitable education. These marginalized populations encompass a range of students, including, but not limited to, students of color, girls, students with disabilities (Education and Human Resources Development, 2017) and LGBTQ+ students (Leung et al., 2022).

The inequitable treatment of students of color is well-documented. There are significant achievement gaps in graduation rates for Black and Hispanic students of color compared with their Asian and white counterparts. In addition, male students of color graduate at lower rates than female students of color, further illustrating that intersecting cultural identities can create additional inequalities for students (Reeves & Kalkat, 2023). Similarly, recent statistics also indicate that graduation rates for Black, Hispanic and Indigenous students are below the U.S. average and lower than those of white students (NCES, 2023b).

In 2014, the number of students of color in U.S. public schools surpassed that of white students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). In 2023, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that white students comprised only 45% of the public school population (NCES, 2023a).

Multiple inequities exist throughout the education system between white students and students of color. More often, Black students are identified as having a learning disability (12% of black children to 8.5% of white children). Conversely, 60% of students identified as gifted and talented are white, compared with only 9% of Black students identified as gifted. Similar

41 discrepancies exist within school discipline with Black students experiencing
42 harsher punishments than white students (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022).

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44 Furthermore, The College Board reported achievement gaps between racial
45 groups, with white students consistently scoring higher than their black and
46 Hispanic peers (Ewing & Wyatt, 2023). Access to rigorous coursework is also
47 affected by racial and ethnic disparities as evidenced by reduced enrollment
48 and lower completion rates for AP and IB programs (NCES, 2023). Thus, it is
49 evident that systemic racism and bias have affected students' ability to
50 thrive and achieve in school (Kendi, 2022).

51
52 Building relationships with caregivers and the community breaks down
53 barriers that historically excluded and oppressed groups feel within a school
54 system. (Emde, 2015). All students have the right to a school counselor
55 who acts as a social justice advocate, seeks to identify and address
56 inequities, supports students from all cultural backgrounds and consults with
57 others when the school counselor's competence level requires additional
58 support.

59

60 **The School Counselor's Role**

61 School counselors develop and implement a comprehensive school
62 counseling program promoting equity and access for all students. School
63 counselors understand the importance of collaborating with school and
64 community partners to help all students succeed and work to close
65 achievement, opportunity, attainment and funding gaps in their schools,
66 districts and communities. School counselors demonstrate cultural
67 competence by possessing the skills and knowledge necessary to serve
68 students in a culturally responsive manner (American Psychological
69 Association, 2023).

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71 School counselors promote equitable treatment of all students by:

- 72 ● Providing equitable access to school counseling programs for all
73 students
- 74 ● Advocating for the academic, career and social/emotional development
75 of students from marginalized groups.
- 76 ● Using data to identify gaps in achievement and opportunity and
77 developing a plan to address such disparities
- 78 ● Advocating for access to rigorous courses and postsecondary
79 opportunities for underrepresented groups
- 80 ● Maintaining professional knowledge of the ever-changing and complex
81 world of students' culture
- 82 ● Maintaining knowledge and skills for working in a diverse and
83 multicultural work setting

- 84 • Sharing up-to-date culturally competent best practices with their
85 administration, faculty and staff
- 86 • Promoting the review and development of school policies leading to
87 equitable treatment of all students and opposing school policies
88 hindering equitable treatment of any student
- 89 • Creating a plan to address any programmatic disparities or inequities
90 that affect access and enrollment within educational programs, such as
91 English-language learners, special education, gifted and talented
92 education, honors, Advanced Placement, dual enrollment and
93 International Baccalaureate
- 94 • Collaborating with families to provide access to resources to meet
95 student needs
- 96 • Acting as a liaison between home and school to foster two-way
97 communication and assist students and families with promoting
98 positive academic, career and social/emotional development

100 **Summary**

101 School counselors recognize and distinguish individual and group differences
102 and strive to value all students and groups. Incorporating student and family
103 voices, school counselors promote the equitable treatment of all students in
104 school and the community.

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