

The School Counselor and Academic Development

(Adopted 2017)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors deliver programs that have an impact on student growth in three domain areas: academic development, career development and social/emotional development (ASCA, 2019). School counselors recognize students should demonstrate growth in these domains equally to be successful. School counselors understand these domains are not considered separate but are intertwined, each affecting the other (Schenck, Anctil, & Smith, 2010, p. 16). Although this statement focuses on academic development, it is understood career development and social/emotional development need to be considered with equal diligence.

The Rationale

Recent educational initiatives (e.g., No Child Left Behind [NCLB]; Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA]) have stressed academic achievement as a measure of school success. As a result, school counseling programs align their annual student outcome goals with that of the institution, emphasizing academic achievement. School counselors contribute to the educational and academic outcomes of the school by enhancing student engagement and performance (Carey & Harrington, 2010a; Carey & Harrington, 2010b) through designing, implementing and assessing school counseling programs (ASCA, 2019).

School counseling programs use data to understand student needs, provide school counseling classroom, group and closing-the-gap interventions and remove systemic barriers to ensure all students as early as preschool and kindergarten have opportunity to develop academic goals at all grade levels reflecting their abilities and academic interests and can access appropriate rigorous, relevant coursework and experiences. Because of their unique position within a school and their unique training, school counselors can work with students facing mental health issues, family and social problems as well as career exploration and course planning to make school relevant (Howe, 2009).

School counselors play a critical role in ensuring schools provide a safe, caring environment and that students have the necessary mindsets and behaviors to advance academic achievement outcomes. School counselors work collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure equity, access and academic success of all students (ASCA, 2019).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors support students' academic success by:

- Leading development of a safe and caring school culture
- Delivering a school counseling program based on data identifying student needs
- Delivering information to students and teachers within the school counseling curriculum on best practices in mindsets and behaviors (i.e., learning strategies, self-management skills, social skills) and metacognition skills (McGuire, 2015) critical in academic success
- Providing relevance to academic effort and educational pursuits by assisting in students' career planning and future career-related goals
- Working with administration, teachers and other school staff to create a school environment encouraging academic success and striving to one's potential (Stone & Clark, 2001)
- Working to remove barriers to access and provide students with the opportunity for academic challenge in the most rigorous coursework possible
- Establishing data analysis methods to identify and target systemic barriers deterring equitable access
- Providing opportunities for students to:
 - Enhance their self-efficacy beliefs and competence
 - Develop attributional beliefs
 - See value in tasks related to achievement
 - Develop mastery/learning goals
 - Develop autonomy
 - Relate to others (Rowell & Hong, 2013)

- Working to establish student opportunities for academic remediation as needed
- Emphasizing family-community-school relationships in addressing academic needs (Brown, 1999)

Summary

Educational institutions are evaluated on student outcomes, especially academic achievement. School counselors working in this educational environment play a critical role in ensuring students have the academic development (in addition to the social/emotional and career development) knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to be successful. School counselors can assist schools in providing an environment conducive to and supportive of academic success.

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