

The School Counselor and School Counseling Preparation Programs

(Adopted 2008, Revised 2014)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors are best prepared through master's- and doctoral-level programs that align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model, the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies, The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors. These programs emphasize training in the implementation of a school counseling program promoting leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change to enhance student achievement and success.

The Rationale

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. School counselors significantly contribute to outcomes used to measure the success of students and schools; therefore students in school counselor preparation programs need direct training and supervision in leadership and the implementation of a school counseling program (House & Sears, 2002).

The ASCA National Model, the ASCA Ethical Standards, the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies, and the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors have significantly influenced school counselor preparation and practice. These initiatives have placed significant attention on the preparation of school counselors, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to design, implement and assess a school counseling program that is proactive, accountable, and aligned with the mission of the school.

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 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 instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling training ensuring equitable access to resources promoting academic achievement, social/emotional growth and career development for all students
- Collaborating and consulting with stakeholders (e.g., families/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
- Using advocacy and data-informed school counseling practices to close the achievement/ opportunity gap
- Understanding of current models of school counseling programs and how they relate to the educational program
- Understanding of outcome research data and best practices as identified in the school counseling research literature
- Understanding the importance of serving on school leadership teams and acting as educational leaders

Field-based experiences are essential to the preparation of school counselors. These experiences should provide training that aligns with the school counselor preparation program and further develops the student's knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to implement a comprehensive school counseling program. Field-based experiences are ideally supervised by a certified 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 knowledge of school counseling models and school counselor standards and competencies, organization and administration of PK-12 schools, counseling children and adolescents, and current issues and trends in school counseling. Counselor educators should hold 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 school counseling programs. These programs align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model, the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies, the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors creating a program empowering every student to succeed and achieve in his/her PK-12 experiences. School 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.

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