

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

(Adopted 1994/2000; Revised 2005, 2011, 2016, 2022)

### **American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position**

School counselors recognize the impact a safe and caring environment has on student achievement, career and social/emotional development. To foster a positive school climate, school counseling programs promote the inclusion of anti-bullying/harassment and violence-prevention programs, schoolwide positive behavior interventions and support, and comprehensive conflict-resolution programs to foster a positive school climate.

### **The Rationale**

Promoting a positive school climate and developing positive relationships with caring adults is key to improving school success and reducing bullying, harassment, and excessive disciplinary problems (DeVoogd, Lane-Garon, & Kralowec, 2016). School stakeholders recognize the need to provide a safe school climate, which leads to increased student achievement and decreased discipline (Mapp & Bergman, 2019). Incidents threatening student and staff safety include bullying, harassment, violence, weapons or gang behavior (Ercek & Birel, 2021).

Prevention activities are integral to creating a safe school environment free of fear, bullying, harassment and violence. Delivered by school counselors, teachers, administrators, student support personnel and qualified community experts, prevention programs increase the opportunity for improved academic achievement, appropriate behavior, positive relationships, successful conflict resolution, safe school climate and increased attendance (London & Standeven, 2017). Participating in prevention activities empowers and encourages students to take responsibility for their behavior and for the climate of their school and community.

### **The School Counselor's Role**

School counselors collaborate with others in the school and community to promote safe schools and confront issues threatening school safety. School counselors encourage the development of local 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. School counselors also advocate for state and national policies supporting these efforts. Additionally, school counselors recognize differentiated interventions are needed for bullying and resolving conflicts.

Comprehensive anti-bullying/anti-harassment/violence-prevention and conflict-resolution programs require data-informed decision-making, coordination, instruction and program assessment. These programs are most effective when incorporated into the academic curriculum by all members of the school community (Irwin, et. al, 2021). The school counselor includes prevention programs as part of the school counseling program and ensures these programs include training in key areas for peacefully resolving issues such as:

- 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
- appropriate use of technology and social media
- community involvement
- parent/guardian and faculty/staff education
- assessment of program effectiveness
- building positive staff and student relationships
- mental health awareness training
- bystander training (e.g., QPR, SOS)

## Summary

School counselors understand the positive effects of a safe and caring school environment. Through participation in prevention programs and activities aimed at anti-bullying, anti-harassment and violence prevention, school counselors foster opportunities for students to learn communication, problem solving and conflict resolution skills that help them achieve their goals and establish successful relationships. School counselors collaborate with teachers, instructional support personnel, administrators, families and the community to deliver prevention programs encouraging student growth and achievement and ensuring a safe school climate.

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