

The School Counselor and School Counseling Preparation Programs

(Adopted 2008, Revised 2014, 2020)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors are best prepared through master’s-level and doctoral-level programs that align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model (2019a), the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (2019b), the ASCA Standards for School Counseling Program Preparation (2019c), the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success (2014) and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016). These programs emphasize training in the implementation of a school counseling program that enhances student achievement and success.

The Rationale

School counselors are assuming an increasingly important 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 (Cinotti, 2014).

The ASCA National Model (2019a), the ASCA Ethical Standards (2016), the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (2019b) and the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (2014) have significantly influenced school counselor preparation and practice. These initiatives have placed significant attention on the preparation of school counselors, ensuring graduates are well-prepared to design, implement and assess a school counseling program that is proactive, accountable and aligned with the school’s mission.

The Role of School Counselor Preparation Programs

Effective school counseling preparation programs provide coursework and training that teaches school counseling students to design and implement a school counseling program. These programs help school counseling students develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to:

- Understand the organizational structure and governance of the educational system, as well as cultural, political and social influences on current educational practices
- Address legal, ethical and professional issues in pre-K–12 schools
- Understand developmental theory, counseling theory, career counseling theory, social justice theory and multiculturalism
- Understand mental health and the continuum of services, including prevention and intervention strategies for addressing academic, career and social/emotional development to enhance student success for all students
- Deliver effective instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling
- Develop interventions aligned to the multitiered system of supports as described in the corresponding position statement, *The School Counselor and Multitiered System of Supports*
- Collaborate and consult with stakeholders (e.g., families/guardians, teachers, administration, community stakeholders) to create learning environments promoting student educational equity and success for all students
- Identify impediments to student learning, developing strategies to enhance learning and collaborating with stakeholders to improve student achievement
- Ensure equitable access to resources promoting academic achievement, social/emotional growth and career development for all students
- Use advocacy and data-informed school counseling practices to close achievement and opportunity gaps
- Understand how the school counseling programs relate to the educational program
- Understand outcome research data and best practices as identified in the school counseling research literature
- Understand 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, attitudes and skills necessary to implement a school counseling program. Field-based experiences are supervised by a licensed or certified school counselor in the pre-K–12 setting and a university supervisor with the appropriate school counselor educator qualifications.

School counseling preparation programs are facilitated by school counselor educators who have the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to prepare school counselors to promote the academic, career and social/emotional development of all students. School counselor educators have appropriate preparation, including knowledge of the ASCA National Model, the ASCA School Counseling Professional Standards & Competencies, organization and administration of pre-K–12 schools, counseling children and adolescents, and current issues and trends in school counseling. School 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. All university instructors should have experience as an employed school counselor in the field.

Summary

School counselor preparation programs emphasize development of the knowledge, attitudes and skills essential for the implementation of effective school counseling programs. These programs align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model (2019a), the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (2019b), the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (2014) and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2017), creating a program empowering all students to succeed and achieve in their pre-K–12 experiences. School counselor educators have the appropriate education, training, experience and commitment to prepare school counselors able to respond to the changing expectations and dynamics of students, families, schools and communities.

References

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