



# WHO ARE SCHOOL COUNSELORS?

School counselors are certified/licensed educators who improve student success for ALL students by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program.

## EMPLOYED AT ALL LEVELS



Also employed in district supervisory positions; and school counselor education positions



## SCHOOL COUNSELOR QUALIFICATIONS

- ▶ **Hold, at minimum, a master's degree in school counseling**
- ▶ **Meet the state certification/licensure standards**
- ▶ **Fulfill continuing education requirements**
- ▶ **Uphold ASCA ethical and professional standards**



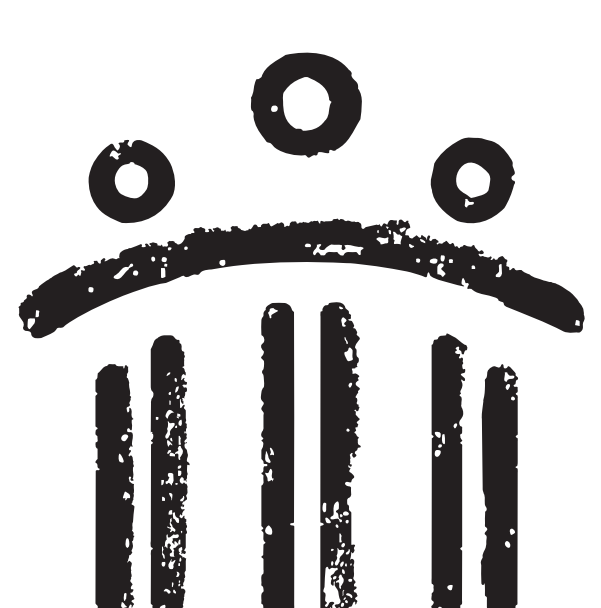
## SCHOOL COUNSELOR'S ROLE

School counselors are vital members of the education team and maximize student success

- ▶ **Help all students:**
    - apply academic achievement strategies
    - manage emotions and apply interpersonal skills
    - plan for postsecondary options (higher education, military, work force)
- 
- ▶ **Appropriate duties include providing:**
    - individual student academic planning and goal setting
    - school counseling classroom lessons based on student success standards
    - short-term counseling to students
    - referrals for long-term support
    - collaboration with families/teachers/administrators/community for student success
    - advocacy for students at individual education plan meetings and other student-focused meetings
    - data analysis to identify student issues, needs and challenges

## IDEAL CASELOAD

250 students per school counselor



AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

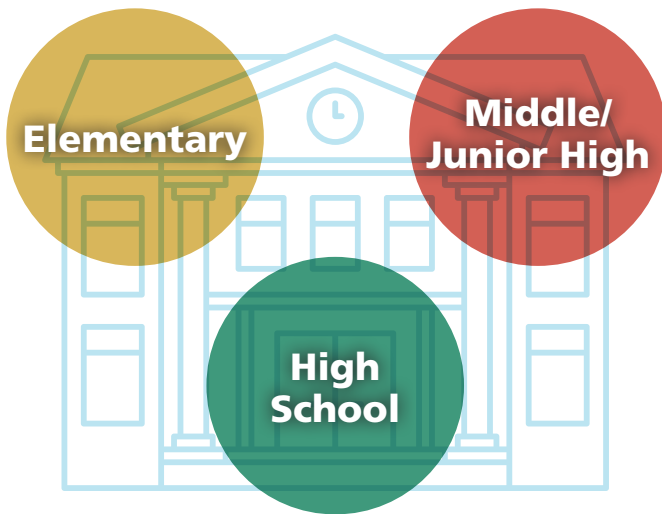
For more information, resources please visit [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org)



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### LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBERS

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# The School Counselor's Role

School counselors design and deliver school counseling programs that improve student outcomes. They uphold the ethical and professional standards of ASCA and promote the development of the school counseling program based on the following areas of the ASCA National Model: define, deliver, manage and assess.

## DEFINE

School counselors create school counseling programs based on three sets of standards that define the profession. These standards help school counselors develop, implement and assess their school counseling program to improve student outcomes.

### Student Standards –

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K–12 College- and Career-Readiness for Every Student

### Professional Standards –

- ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors
- ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies

## MANAGE

To be delivered effectively, the school counseling program must be efficiently and effectively managed. School counselors use program focus and planning tools to guide the design and implementation of a school counseling program that gets results.

### Program Focus

- Beliefs
- Vision Statement
- Mission Statement

### Program Planning

- School Data Summary
- Annual Student Outcome Goals
- Action Plans
  - Classroom and Group
  - Closing the Gap

- Lesson Plans
- Annual Administrative Conference
- Use of Time
- Calendars
  - Annual
  - Weekly
- Advisory Council

## DELIVER

School counselors deliver developmentally appropriate activities and services directly to students or indirectly for students as a result of the school counselor's interaction with others.

These activities and services help students develop the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success and improve their achievement, attendance and discipline.

### Direct Services with Students

Direct services are in-person interactions between school counselors and students and include the following:

- Instruction
- Appraisal and Advisement
- Counseling

### Indirect Services for Students

Indirect services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselors' interactions with others including:

- Consultation
- Collaboration
- Referrals

## ASSESS

To achieve the best results for students, school counselors regularly assess their program to:

- determine its effectiveness
- inform improvements to their school counseling program design and delivery
- show how students are different as a result of the school counseling program

School counselors also self-assess their own mindsets and behaviors to inform their professional development and annually participate in a school counselor performance appraisal with a qualified administrator. The ASCA National Model provides the following tools to guide assessment and appraisal.

### Program Assessment

- School Counseling Program Assessment
- Annual Results Reports

### School Counselor Assessment and Appraisal

- ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies Assessment
- School Counselor Performance Appraisal Template

## SUMMARY

School counselors are certified/licensed educators with the minimum of a master's degree in school counseling and are uniquely qualified to address the developmental needs of all students through a school counseling program addressing the academic, career and social/emotional development of all students.



**R**esearch shows school counseling programs, as outlined by “The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs,” have a positive impact on student achievement. The development and implementation of these programs requires leadership from well-trained, highly competent middle school counselors and collaboration with school administrators, classroom teachers, school staff and community stakeholders.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS’ DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

Middle school is an exciting yet challenging time for students, their parents and teachers. During this passage from childhood to adolescence, middle school students are characterized by a need to explore a variety of interests, connecting their learning in the

classroom to its practical application in life and work; high levels of activity coupled with frequent fatigue due to rapid growth; a search for their own unique identity as they begin turning more frequently to peers rather than parents for ideas and affirmation; extreme sensitivity to the comments from others; and heavy reliance on friends

to provide comfort, understanding and approval.

Identifying students’ academic and social/emotional needs, as well as providing any necessary interventions, is essential in removing barriers to learning and helping students develop skills and behaviors critical for academic achievement. The knowledge, attitudes and skills students acquire during these years build the foundation for future success.

## MEETING THE NEED

Middle school counselors are educators uniquely trained in child and adolescent development, learning strategies, self-management and social skills. They implement a school counseling program to support students through this important developmental period. The school counseling program provides education, prevention and intervention activities, which are integrated into all aspects of students’ lives. The program teaches students the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for academic, career and social/emotional development.

Middle school counselors do not work in isolation; rather they are integral to the total educational program. They provide a proactive program that engages students and includes leadership, advocacy and collaboration with school staff, administration and community/family members in the delivery of programs and activities to help students achieve success. Middle school counselors also collaborate with teachers and parents on early identification and intervention of children’s academic and social/emotional needs, which is essential in removing barriers to learning and developing skills and behaviors critical for academic achievement.

The work of middle school counselors aligns with the school’s mission to support all students’ academic achievement as they

prepare for the ever-changing world of the 21st century. This alignment is accomplished through the design, development, implementation and evaluation of a school counseling program. The tools guiding this work are the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, which address students' academic, career and social/emotional development, and the ASCA National Model, with its data-informed, results-based focus. Research demonstrating the effectiveness of school counseling programs continues to grow, and there is evidence of the positive impact these programs have on students' academic and social/emotional development.

### **IMPLEMENTING A SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM**

Middle school counselors define and focus the school counseling program based on the school's academic, attendance and discipline data. Identifying student needs through this data and consulting with administrators guides program development. Middle school counselors balance their program by addressing students' academic, career and social/emotional development in addition to balancing delivery methods, recognizing that students learn in multiple ways. The end result of this work is reflected in improvement in academic, attendance and discipline outcomes related

to academic development, college and career readiness and social/emotional development.

The ASCA National Model provides a flexible framework middle school counselors use to develop a school counseling program designed to meet students' unique needs. The delivery of these services includes:

#### *Direct student services including:*

- instruction – teaching the school counseling curriculum to students focused through the lens of selected student standards from the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success.
- appraisal and advisement – assessing student abilities, interests and achievement to help them make decisions about their future.
- counseling – providing professional assistance and support provided to a student or small group of students during times of transition, heightened stress, critical change or other situations impeding student success. School counselors do not provide therapy or long-term counseling in schools; however, school counselors are prepared to recognize and respond to student mental health needs and to assist students and families seeking resources.

#### *Indirect student services including:*

- consultation – share strategies supporting student achievement with parents, teachers, other educators and community organizations
- collaboration – work with other educators, parents and the community to support student achievement
- referrals – support for students and families to school or community resources for additional assistance and information

### **RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL COUNSELING**

Numerous studies demonstrate the value of school counseling for students in the domains of academic development, college and career readiness and social/emotional development. Results of research about the effectiveness of school counseling can be found at [schoolcounselor.org/effectiveness](http://schoolcounselor.org/effectiveness).

### **THE ASCA NATIONAL MODEL: A FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL COUNSELING**

For more information about school counseling programs based on the ASCA National Model, go to [schoolcounselor.org/ascanationalmodel](http://schoolcounselor.org/ascanationalmodel).

(Revised, 2019)

## **Why Middle School Counselors?**

Middle school students are characterized by rapid physical growth, curiosity about their world and an emerging self-identity. Middle school counselors have an impact on these years by implementing a school counseling program and collaborating with school staff, parents and the community to create a safe, respectful learning environment whereby young adolescents can maximize personal and academic achievement.

Middle school counselors enhance the learning process and promote academic, career and social/emotional development. School counseling programs are essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set informed career goals and realize full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community.

Middle school counselors hold a master's degree and required state certification in school counseling. Maintaining certification includes ongoing professional development to stay current with education reform and challenges facing today's students. Professional association membership enhances the school counselor's knowledge and effectiveness.



# Guidance Counselor vs. School Counselor

**H**istorically, the term “guidance counselor” was used to refer to counselors working in the schools. This term has evolved to “school counselor” as the scope of duties has changed and evolved. Although some schools still used the outdated “guidance counselor” term, the American School Counselor Association encourages the use of “school counselor” to more accurately reflect the role.

## GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

- Reactive
- Services to some
- Impact measured via feelings and perceptions
- Ancillary role to school improvement process
- Work in isolation

## SCHOOL COUNSELOR

- Proactive/data-driven
- Program for all
- Impact measured via achievement, attendance and behavior data
- Essential role in the school improvement process
- School counselors as school leaders
- Develop, manage and evaluate a comprehensive school counseling program

Excerpt from “*School Counseling Principles: Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future: A History of School Counseling*,” by Norman C. Gysbers, Ph.D.

“The terminology issue is still with us today. Is it guidance, counseling, guidance and counseling, or

counseling and guidance? The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has come down firmly on the side of the term school counseling program although the literature still reflects the usage of various combinations of terms. The terminology issue also is reflected in personnel titles. Again, ASCA has come down firmly on the title school counselor, although the public still uses the title guidance counselor, and some school districts use the title guidance dean, going back to a title used earlier.

The terminology issue is interesting from a historical perspective too. Remember the first term was vocational guidance, and then many modifiers were placed in front of the word guidance. In the 1930s guidance became a service within pupil personnel services with five services: information, assessment, counseling, placement and follow-up. Then the counseling service assumed prominence, so the common labels used were guidance and counseling. Information and assessment continued to be a part of guidance and counseling, but placement and follow-up became less important and have now almost disappeared as active parts of school counseling. Following ASCA’s lead, counseling became the label of choice as in school counseling programs. Guidance is still present but is used to label one of the delivery components of the program, namely, the guidance curriculum.”

## REFERENCES

- American School Counselor Association (2012). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs*, Third Edition. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Gysbers, N. (2010). *Remembering the past, shaping the future: A history of school counseling*. Alexandria, VA: American School Counselor Association.
- Lambie, G. W., & Williamson, L. L. (2004). The challenge to change from guidance counseling to professional school counseling: A historical proposition. *Professional School Counseling*, 8(2), 124-131.