The National Standards for School Counseling Programs: A Partnership in Preparing Students for the New Millennium

By Carol A. Dahir

Aligning your school counseling program with national standards requires a rethinking of priorities, time, resources, and outcomes. This requires involving the entire school community to integrate the academic, career, and personal/social development of students into the mission of the school. How can principals and school counselors become partners on behalf of student success?

As schools drive curriculum change, improve instruction and learning, ensure that each student has an equitable opportunity for a quality education, and address accountability issues, it is essential they do not overlook a group of professionals who can have a positive impact on student success—a group of professionals who are neither teachers nor administrators, who can have a significant impact on the teaching and learning environment and help to create a school community that is positive and productive; a group of professionals—school counselors—who are trained to deliver a program that is part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Twenty years ago it was stated that school district administrators determine the role that school counselors play in helping students achieve the maximum benefit from the school experience (Costar 1978). More than 10 years ago, Boyer (1988) stated in his description of the school counselor:

Today, in most high schools, counselors are not only asked to police for drugs, keep records of dropouts, reduce

teenage pregnancy, check traffic in the halls, smooth out the tempers of irate parents, and give aid and comfort to battered and neglected children. School counselors are expected to do what our communities, our homes, and our churches have not been able to accomplish, and if they cannot, we condemn them for failing to fulfill our high-minded expectations (p. 3).

Have perceptions altered or do these scenarios continue to dominate the contemporary view of school counseling?

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) concur that the success of a school counseling program requires capitalizing on the training, expertise, and skill of school counselors to deliver a program that contributes significantly to the mission of the school and supports the expectations of the new standards and assessments. A new paradigm cannot take hold, however, without an understanding of the elements of a school counseling program and how school counseling programs promote student success.

Helping Students Reach Higher Expectations

The purpose of the school counseling program is to impart skills and facilitate learning opportunities in an active and preventive manner that ensures all students can achieve school success through academic, career, and personal/social development experiences. As specialists in child and adolescent development, school counselors coordinate the objectives, strategies, and activities of a comprehensive and developmental school counseling program to meet the personal, social, educational, and career development needs of all students. School counselors advocate for all students as they strive to meet the challenges and demands of the school system and prepare for transition to options after high school. School counselors call attention to situations in schools that are defeating or frustrating students and thereby hindering their success. School counseling programs empower students to overcome obstacles to school achievement and ensure access to appropriate services for students with varying individual needs (Wurtz 1995).

The development of national standards across the academic disciplines continues to direct educational practice: curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The principal orchestrates the process to ensure all students achieve at the standard of expectation. The successful implementation of programs in violence prevention, safe and drug-free schools, academic and

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National Standards for School Counseling

Programs

The national standards are statements of what students should know and be able to do as a result of participating in a school counseling program. The standards represent what a school counseling program should contain and include an organizational tool to identify and set priorities among the elements of an effective and accountable school counseling program. They serve as a framework of counseling and guidance, school counseling programs, and individual schools in planning, implementing, and evaluating school counseling programs. The national standards are:

- Establish the school counseling program as an integral component of the mission of your school.
- Ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all students provided by a credentialed school counselor.
- Identify the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that all students should acquire as a result of the K-12 school counseling program.
- Ensure that the school counseling program is developmentally appropriate for all students.
- Ensure that all school counselors are prepared and ready to learn the skills necessary for success in school and to develop into competent members of our society.

School counselors

School counselors are professionals who work with students as they strive to meet the challenges of the school system and the demands of the society. They use their knowledge and skills to help students develop the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that will enable them to succeed in school and in life.

For transition to post-secondary education, school counselors are crucial in helping students prepare for college, career, and life. They provide academic, career, and personal/social development guidance to help students make informed decisions about their future.

For transition to the workforce, school counselors work to ensure that students have the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their chosen field. They provide career planning and exploration services, as well as job placement assistance.

For transition to adulthood, school counselors help students develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their personal lives. They provide life skills training, as well as support for students as they navigate the transitions of young adulthood.

National Counseling Standards

As part of the National School Counseling Association (NSCA) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the role of a school counselor is defined as the professional practice of helping students achieve academic success in today's schools by focusing on academic, personal/social, and career development.

The role of a school counselor includes:

- Providing academic support to students to improve academic performance and success.
- Helping students develop personal and social skills to enhance their ability to succeed in school and in life.
- Assisting students in making informed decisions about their future, including post-secondary education and career planning.
- Supporting students in the transitions of young adulthood, including college admission, job placement, and career development.

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Supporting Student Achievement

Each school and learning environment develop specific strategies to help students meet the mission of the school. These strategies include:

- Creating a positive school climate
- Building strong, positive relationships
- Providing opportunities for students to be successful
- Encouraging a love of learning
- Setting high expectations
- Providing support

The National Education Goals are:

- A Nation of Learners
- A World Class Education
- 21st Century Skills
- 21st Century Literacy
- 21st Century Technology
- 21st Century Work

The national standards are the framework for developing and implementing a standard for achievement in school. The standards are aligned with the national standards to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn.

Standard A: Students will understand the skills and content of their education.

Standard B: Students will employ strategies to achieve academic success and contribute to the school community.

Standard C: Students will engage the skills to investigate the world of work.

Standard D: Students will participate in community service.

The standards for academic development provide a framework for schools to develop programs that support students in meeting the goals of the National Education Goals.
The goal of education is to produce a community of learners, teachers, and workers who can successfully and equitably contribute to society.

National Concerning Standards

Acceptability is the key to determining the effectiveness of a program.

School Counseling Program

In order to increase student performance, the school counseling program must be comprehensive. The counseling program must focus on meeting the needs of all students, not just those who are already successful. The program must provide opportunities for all students to develop and grow in a variety of areas, including academic, social, and emotional skills.

Accountability

The program must be accountable to the community and to the students it serves. This includes regular evaluation of the program's effectiveness, as well as regular feedback from students, parents, and staff. The program must also ensure that all students have access to the resources they need to succeed, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Vision for Students = Commitment to School

Prompt results improve on standards.

Vision and demographic factors, a positive self-concept, the presence of support networks, and the availability of resources are important factors in increasing school success. These factors can be promoted through a variety of programs and interventions. The school counseling program must focus on developing these factors in all students.

Society

The goal of education is to contribute to the success of the society.

They contribute to...
School-Based Management: How Effective Is It?

By Bruce Robert Brown and G. Robb Cooper

Educators and policymakers are faced with the daunting task of providing quality education services to children being raised in the most rapidly changing society in human history. The task before the schools is to find methods by which they can improve their effectiveness, while better serving their stakeholders. Is school-based management perceived to be an effective approach?

A question that is sometimes asked is: Will school-based management (SBM) lead to increased school effectiveness? School reformers believe SBM is an approach that increases school effectiveness and creates a more highly involved staff and community (Tyack and Cuban, 1989; Suhm, 1990). How is this model being perceived by the people most closely associated with the reform: parents, teachers, and administrators?

References


