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Article 98

School Counselor Trainees Implement the ASCA National Model®

Paper based on a program presented at the 2011 Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Conference, October 26-30, Nashville, TN.

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Introduction

Since the inception of the school counseling profession, school counselors have engaged in many tasks unrelated to their formal training, which has led to misconceptions about the role of this professional. However, educational reform initiatives such as *Goals 2000*, *Educate America Act*, created an opportunity for the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) to take a more active role in defining essential school counselor contributions for improving academic and skill standards.

In 1997, the American School Counselor Association created the *ASCA National Standards for Students* (Campbell & Dahir, 1997), and four years later the ASCA National Model® was developed as a prototype for counselors to use in establishing their own comprehensive, developmental school counseling (CDSC) program. This model encompasses four components: Foundation, Delivery System, Management System, and Accountability; and the themes of advocacy, systemic change, collaboration, and leadership (ASCA, 2005). According to the ASCA, the “purpose of the school counseling program is to impart specific skills and learning opportunities in a proactive, preventive manner, ensuring all students can achieve school success through academic, career, and personal/social development experiences” (ASCA, 2003, p. 14). Despite ASCA’s active campaign to promote an awareness of CDSC programs, many professional school counselors have not yet instituted this type of program in their schools and are still operating under a traditional, reactive approach to school counseling.

The discrepancy between practitioners who work in traditional school counseling programs and academics who promote CDSC training as espoused by ASCA, can lead to incoherent training. When trainees are supervised by professional school counselors who

work in a program that reflects a traditional model, but receive training in a CDSC perspective from their school counselor education program, there is role confusion leading to a lack of professional identity. Although research has been conducted regarding the ASCA National Model, the four main components, and the implementation by professional school counselors (Foster, Young, & Hermann, 2005; Oberman & Studer, 2008; Sink, 2005), there is a lack of significant research investigating the role of the school counselor trainee's exposure to the activities related to implementing the ASCA National Model during their clinical experiences. These clinical experiences of practicum and internship are perhaps the most essential part of learning how to apply classroom constructs to authentic opportunities. Both faculty and site supervisors invest significant time and expertise in bridging this learning gap. In return, trainees bring new perspectives into the supervisory school site that supplement site supervisors' knowledge of the most recent trends in the profession. For instance, trainees can assist their site supervisor in the development of a CDSC program, enhance an already existing CDSC program, or teach supervisors about the ASCA National Model and how it contributes to student growth.

The purpose of this manuscript is to introduce school counseling supervisors and trainees to the supervisory tasks that are essential to understanding the role and function of the school counselor within a CDSC program. Examples are provided for each component and theme of the Model for the purposes of a) aiding the school counselor trainee in understanding a leadership role within the ASCA National Model; b) assisting the supervisor who is struggling to implement a CDSC program, and; c) validating that some school counselors who work in a traditional program are already engaging in these activities even though they have not yet made the transition to a CDSC program. A worksheet that students can complete to track time and activities is included as Appendix A.

ASCA National Model Components

Foundation

The Foundation Component within a CDSC school counseling program lays the groundwork for a successful program that meets the needs of all students. This component includes the beliefs and philosophy, mission statement, and student content standards in the academic, career, and personal/social domains. The mission statement explains the purpose and function of the school counseling program (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012) and identifies how the school counseling program is an integral component of the academic mission of the school. Unfortunately, many school counseling programs have not adopted a mission statement. In a study by Studer, Diambra, Breckner, and Heidel (2011), counselors at all levels reported that they developed a mission statement "less than [an] average" amount of time. Therefore, the faculty supervisor may assign school counselor trainees the task of writing a mission statement for a site school counseling program during their clinical training experiences. This assignment will provide students with an opportunity to investigate the academic mission of the school site to which he/she is assigned, and to discuss the site supervisor's values, beliefs, and vision for the school counseling program. At the same time, the school counselor trainee will have an opportunity to consider how school counselors are

an integral component to the school philosophy, while contemplating their own personal values and beliefs. Developing a mission statement will benefit the school counselor trainee and the supervisor in thinking about the overall direction school counseling program and how it promotes the goals established by the school.

Delivery System

The Delivery System Component focuses on the “how” (ASCA, 2005, p. 39) of the CDSC program, and explains all of the activities in which the professional school counselor engages in to order to make his/her program available to all students (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). The delivery system consists of the school guidance curriculum (classroom guidance lessons); individual student planning (advisement or appraisal); responsive services (individual/group counseling and consultation); and system support (professional development and program management; ASCA, 2005). Each of these areas is important and integral to the successful implementation of a CDSC program. Therefore, it makes sense that this component should also be strongly emphasized for the school counselor trainee. Many researchers (Foster, Young, & Hermann, 2005; Oberman & Studer, 2008; Studer & Oberman, 2006) have reported that the practicing school counselor and trainee alike most frequently engage in this component compared to other parts of the ASCA Model. However, in a study by Studer, et al., (2011), primary/elementary school counselors were more likely to be engaged in activities inherent within the delivery component than were middle and high school counselors. In addition, primary/elementary school counselors were significantly more involved ($p = .002$) in this component than were high school counselors. While the school counselor trainee does not seem to have a problem being an active participant within the delivery system, it is important for the trainee to be assertive and able to proactively discuss the types of activities she or he would like to conduct, and include these activities in their training contract. In addition, developing, implementing, and evaluating needs assessments for students, parents, faculty, and administrators may provide a fresh perspective on school and student needs. School counselors working from a traditional model may be conducting the same groups and classroom guidance lessons year after year. As a result of the needs assessment, the school counselor trainee could develop new and innovative classroom guidance lessons on contemporary issues such as cyberbullying.

Management System

The Management System Component is the organizational structure for the CDSC program, and includes tasks such as meeting with an advisory council, developing calendars and action plans, monitoring student progress, using data to improve the overall program, and recognizing the difference between counseling and non-counseling related activities (ASCA, 2005). Although these tasks may seem mundane to some professional school counselors, it is an area that has room for improvement (Studer & Oberman, 2006) and is essential to the everyday success of a CDSC program.

The school counselor trainee could help create an advisory council under the tutelage of their school counseling supervisor. The advisory council is an important body of people that the school counselor can utilize to help develop goals for the counseling program, share successes throughout the school year, and seek input and support on an

on-going basis. After the trainee has had an opportunity to observe the school counseling program, he or she could identify key stakeholders who have essential skills to facilitate the program. From here, the trainee may draft a letter inviting potential advisory board members (teachers, parents, counselors, administrators, and community members) to serve on the committee under the direction of their site supervisor. This council is also a place where the trainee can learn about advocacy by joining as an advisory council member and sharing his/her knowledge base about the ASCA Model. In addition, the faculty supervisor could attend meetings, help to generate new program ideas, and serve as a sounding board for the practicing school counselor as he or she begins to construct a CDSC program.

Accountability System

The accountability system (analyzing data) is closely linked with the management system (collecting data). Similar to many professions, school counselors have an obligation to demonstrate their effectiveness as a team member within the school system. Likewise, researchers have urged school counselors to be involved in data collection that discloses how school counselors play an essential role in “academic development at the program, school, classroom/teacher, and student levels” (Sink, 2005, p. 3).

Results reports, school counselor performance standards, and the program audit are the three elements that compose the accountability system (ASCA, 2005). Each of these areas requires regular data collection and analysis to demonstrate effectiveness and the integral role the school counselor plays in student growth. Unfortunately, in this day of accountability in which documentation of effectiveness is crucial for job retention and possible merit pay, school counselors are still not taking the opportunity to reveal how well their programs are making a difference in the lives of students. In a recent study (Studer et al., 2011) school counselors across all grades were only collecting data “slightly better than average.” Furthermore, a research study by Ekstrom, Elmore, Schafer, Trotter, and Webster (2004) reinforced the need for school counselor practitioners to obtain professional development in assessment and evaluation. This gap between the data that is to be collected and analyzed is an area where the university supervisor and the trainee can help. The school counselor trainee, in collaboration with the university supervisor, can help to educate the practicing school counselor about the process of collecting/analyzing data and its importance to maintaining a quality CDSC program. The university supervisor and trainee may also educate his/her supervisor about free internet tools such as EZAnalyze (<http://www.ezanalyze.com/>) that are designed for educators. In order to further develop this connection between data and program effectiveness, the trainee can assist the site supervisor by developing assessments for their on-going group or guidance lessons, or creating assessments to reveal student growth as a result of school counselor interactions. Not only will the school counselor trainee have begun the process of collecting meaningful data that can be shared with the program’s stakeholders, an authentic opportunity exists to apply abstract concepts in a school counseling setting.

ASCA National Model Themes

The themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change are interwoven throughout the ASCA National Model to emphasize the essential work school counselors perform in promoting equity and achievement for all students (ASCA, 2005). The university supervisor in conjunction with the school counselor trainee can review the school report card, disaggregate data, and design interventions to assist the practicing school counselor in closing the achievement gap and facilitating change.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both the university supervisor and the practicing school counselor can help the school counselor trainee understand the role of the professional school counselor in a CDSC program, even if the school counselor is working in traditional school counseling program. Each of the four components and themes is important to integrating a CDSC program into the clinical experiences, and school counselors perform activities within each of these areas even if they do not label their program as one that reflects the ASCA National Model. When counselor educators collaborate with the site supervisor to ensure the trainee is receiving adequate experiences, school counseling trainees are likely to develop a greater appreciation for the role and function of the professional school counselor and a foundation for success as they enter the profession of school counseling.

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Appendix A

School Counselor Trainee Expectations Agreement

Outline your proposed field experience using the ASCA National Model® Framework (Foundation, Management, Delivery System, Accountability, and Themes). List the activities you plan to complete during the experience, as well as the expected percentage of time in each component. To give you an indication of the ASCA recommended percentage of time, refer to the chart below.

Desired Program Balance Percentage of Time

	Elementary	Middle	High School
Guidance Curriculum	35-40	35-40	15-25
Individual Planning	5-10	15-25	25-35
Responsive Services	30-40	30-40	25-35
System Support	10-15	10-15	15-20
Non-guidance	0	0	0

Note: From Gysbers, N C., & Henderson P. (2012). *Developing & Managing Your School Guidance Program* (3rd Ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

<u>Component</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Percentage of Time</u>
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Foundation—

Delivery System—

Management—

Accountability—

Themes-

Counselor Trainee: _____ Date: _____

Site Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

University Supervisor: _____ Date: _____