The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position
School counselors design and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs that have an impact on student achievement. These programs are comprehensive in scope, preventive in design and developmental in nature. “The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs” (ASCA, 2012) outlines the components of a comprehensive school counseling program. The ASCA National Model brings school counselors together with one vision and one voice, which creates unity and focus toward improving student achievement and supporting student development.

The Rationale
A comprehensive school counseling program is an integral component of the school’s mission. Comprehensive school counseling programs, driven by student data and based on the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K–12 College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student. The ASCA National Model:

• ensures equitable access to a rigorous education for all students
• identifies the knowledge and skills all students will acquire as a result of the K–12 comprehensive school counseling program
• is delivered to all students in a systematic fashion
• is based on data-driven decision making
• is provided by a state-credentialed school counselor

Effective school counseling programs are a collaborative effort between the school counselor, families and other educators to create an environment that will produce results and have an impact on student achievement. Education professionals, including school counselors, value and respond to the diversity and individual differences in our societies and communities.

Comprehensive school counseling programs in both the brick and mortar and virtual settings ensure equitable access to opportunities and rigorous curriculum for all students to participate fully in the educational process.

One study found that schools designated as Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) schools had significantly higher statewide proficiency rates in English as compared with the control schools (Wood, Wilkerson, Perusse, & Hughes, 2013). This same study (Wood, et. al., 2013) also found four-year longitudinal results indicating a significant positive difference between RAMP-designated elementary schools and their control schools in math. “Findings provide support for the impact of comprehensive, data-driven, accountable school counseling programs at the elementary level…” (Wood, et. al, 2013).

According to Lapan (2012), “when highly trained, professional school counselors deliver ASCA National Model comprehensive school counseling program services, students receive measurable benefit.”

The School Counselor’s Role
School counselors focus their skills, time and energy on direct and indirect services to students. To achieve maximum program effectiveness, ASCA recommends a student-to-school-counselor ratio of 250:1 and that school counselors spend 80 percent or more of their time in direct and indirect services to students. These direct and indirect activities should come from the ASCA National Model. The 20 percent or less of the school counselor’s time should be focused on program and management planning including:

- Developing an annual plan
- Results reports and data projects
- School counseling program assessment
- Other activities as determined by the school counselor and administrator when developing the annual plan

Duties that fall outside of the school counselor framework as described in the ASCA National Model should be limited and performed by other school staff to support a school’s smooth operation and allow school counselors to continue to focus on students’ academic, career and social/emotional needs.

School counselors participate as members of the educational team and use the skills of leadership, advocacy and collaboration to promote systemic change as appropriate. The framework of a comprehensive school counseling program consists of the following four components: foundation, management, delivery and accountability. See “The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs” for more detailed information.

**FOUNDATION**

School counselors create comprehensive school counseling programs that focus on student outcomes, teach student competencies and are delivered with identified professional competencies.

- **Program Focus**: Developing personal beliefs, a vision statement and a mission statement with program goals measuring the vision and mission statements.
- **Student Standards**: Effective school counseling programs look at three developmental domains for students and state and district initiatives. Those three domains include
  - Academic
  - Career
  - Social/emotional
- **Professional Competencies**: The school counselor competencies outline the knowledge, attitudes and skills that ensure school counselors are equipped to meet the profession’s rigorous demands. See the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors for specific information to guide school counselors’ decision making and standardize professional practices.

**MANAGEMENT**

School counselors incorporate organizational assessments and tools that are concrete, clearly delineated and reflective of the school’s needs. See the ASCA National Model (2012) for more detailed information. Assessments and tools include:

- School counselor competency and school counseling program assessments
• Use of time assessments
• Annual agreements
• Advisory councils
• Use of data to measure the program as well as to promote systemic change
• Curriculum, small-group and closing-the-gap action plans
• Annual and weekly calendars

DELIVERY
School counselors provide services to students, families, school staff and the community. The ASCA National Model (2012) and the ASCA National Model Implementation Guide (2016) have specific details and examples about each of the following areas:

Direct Services with Students
Direct services are face-to-face or virtual interactions between school counselors and students and include the following:
• School counseling core curriculum
• Individual student planning
• Responsive services

Indirect Services for Students
Indirect services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselors’ interactions with others including:
• Referrals for additional assistance
• Consultation and collaboration with families, teachers, other educators and community organizations
• Other activities that fall in line with the appropriate duties of a school counselor as detailed in this statement and in the ASCA National Model (2012).

ACCOUNTABILITY
To demonstrate the effectiveness of the school counseling program in measurable terms, school counselors:
• Analyze school and school counseling program data to determine if students are different as a result of the school counseling program.
• Use data to show the impact of the school counseling program on student achievement, attendance and behavior
• Analyze school counseling program assessments to guide future action and improve future results for all students

The school counselor’s performance is evaluated on basic standards of practice expected of school counselors implementing a comprehensive school counseling program. There are three sections within this component, and each section has various tools for analysis. These sections and tools as listed in the ASCA National Model (2012) are:
• Data analysis: school data profile analysis and use-of-time analysis
• Program Results: curriculum results report, small-group results report, closing-the-gap results report
• Evaluation and improvement: four components
  o Self-analysis of the school counselor’s strengths
Trish Hatch, 2014, discussed intentional guidance as “a deliberate act by a school counselor to guide, lead, direct or provide purposeful interventions for students in need academically, personally or socially” (p. 37). Becoming proficient at using data will help school counselors efficiently serve their students and have intentional guidance or counseling services.

Summary
School counselors in both the brick and mortar and virtual/online environments develop and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs supporting and promoting student achievement and standardizing the measurement of program effectiveness. As outlined in the ASCA National Model (2012), these programs include a systematic and planned program delivery involving all students and enhancing the learning process. The comprehensive school counseling program is supported by appropriate resources and implemented by a credentialed school counselor. The ASCA National Model brings school counselors together with one vision and one voice, which creates unity and focus toward improving student achievement and supporting student development.

References


Lapan, R. (2012). Comprehensive school counseling programs: In some schools for some students but not in all schools for all students. Professional School Counseling, 16(2), 84-88.