

The School Counselor and Character Education

(Adopted 1998, revised 2005, 2011, 2016)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors endorse and actively support character education programs and include them in the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program. The school counselor also promotes the infusion of character education in the school curriculum by encouraging the participation of the entire school community.

The Rationale

Character education involves “how schools, related social institutions and parents/guardians can support the positive character development of children and adults” (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, p.1). The school counselor understands that teaching students concepts and skills that help people live and work together promotes healthy student development and academic achievement through reduced problem behavior, lower discipline rates and improvement in student self-concept (Parker, Nelson, & Burns, 2010; Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2008; Watson, 2006).

The School Counselor’s Role

School counselors, along with teachers, administrators, family and the community, share the responsibility of teaching character education values. School counselors encourage character education activities by means of:

- developing a school philosophy and mission statement supporting positive character development
- establishing positive family-school-community partnerships
- implementing school counseling core curriculum activities that promote positive character development while helping all students develop clear academic, career and social/emotional goals
- advocating for discipline policies that nurture the development of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes
- utilizing proactive counseling methods that reinforce character education and lead to an increase in positive school climate
- encouraging student participation in extracurricular activities that include the involvement of students, school staff, parents/guardians and community members
- teaching skills in decision-making, conflict resolution, leadership and problem solving
- teaching communication etiquette in the technological world
- involving students in the development of school rules
- integrating multicultural competence and diversity appreciation into curriculum and activities
- developing student recognition programs focused on character traits
- involving families and communities in the character education program

School counselors work with teachers, administrators, families and the community to teach and model behaviors that enhance each student’s academic, career and social/emotional development essential to making appropriate, healthy decisions.

Summary

Character education helps students achieve academic, career and social/emotional development goals to become positive contributors to society. Effective character education programs require the entire community’s participation and must be integrated throughout the entire school curriculum and culture through curriculum development, consensus building, community engagement, technology and professional development (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). The school counselor provides leadership and collaborates with teachers, administrators and the school community to promote character education for all students as an integral part of school curriculum and activities.

References

Parker, D. C., Nelson, J. S., & Burns, M. K. (2010). Comparison of correlates of classroom behavior problems in schools with and without a school-wide character education program. *Psychology in Schools, 47*(8), 817-827.

Skaggs, G. & Bodenorm, N. (2006). Relationships between implementing character education, student behavior, and student achievement. *Journal of Advanced Academics, 18*, 82-114.

U. S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Character Education and Civic Engagement Technical Assistance Center. (2008). *Partnerships in character education state pilot projects, 1995-2001, Lessons Learned*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

Watson, M. (2006). Long-term effects of moral/character education in elementary school. *Journal of research in character education, 4*(1&2), 1-18.