The School Counselor and Social/Emotional Development

(Adopted 2017)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors implementing comprehensive programs strive to have an impact on student growth in three domain areas: academic, career and social/emotional development (ASCA, 2012). School counselors recognize students should demonstrate growth in these domains equally to be successful. School counselors understand these domains are not considered separate but are intertwined, each affecting the other (Schenck, Anctil, & Smith, 2010). Although this statement focuses on social/emotional development it is understood academic and career development need to be considered with equal diligence.

The Rationale

School counselors serve as a first line of defense in identifying and addressing student social/emotional needs within the school setting. School counselors have unique training in helping students with social/emotional issues that may become barriers to academic success. Within the context of a comprehensive school counseling program school counselors develop school counseling core curriculum, deliver small-group counseling and provide individual student planning directed at improving students' social/emotional well being.

The social/emotional domain is composed of standards to help students manage emotions and learn and apply interpersonal skills as early as preschool and kindergarten (ASCA, 2014). School counselors promote mindsets and behaviors in all grade levels that enhance the learning process and create a culture of college and career readiness for all students in the area of social/emotional development.

According to a meta-analysis by Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger (2011), students who participated in social/emotional learning programs demonstrated significantly improved social/emotional skills, attitudes, behavior and academic performance that reflected an 11-percentile-point gain in academic achievement when compared with control groups. The American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution (2015) concluded that social/emotional competencies are critically important for the long-term success of all students in today's economy.

The school counselor is key to identifying students' social/emotional needs (VanVelsor, 2009). Educational systems as a whole, including school counselors, should graduate students who are not only proficient in core academic subjects but demonstrate an ability to socially and emotionally practice healthy behaviors and behave respectfully when working with others from diverse backgrounds (ASCD, 2007).

School counselors play a role in creating an environment that produces engagement vital to students' social/emotional development. When students enter high school there is a 40 percent–60 percent chance they will disengage from school (Blum & Libbey, 2004; Klem & Connell, 2004). School performance can be negatively affected when students demonstrate high-risk behaviors such as substance abuse, sex, violence, depression and attempted suicide (Eaton et al., 2008). School counselors address the potential of disengagement by addressing students' social/emotional development.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors play a critical role in supporting social/emotional development as they:
- Collaborate with classroom teachers to provide the school counseling core curriculum to all students through direct instruction, team-teaching or providing lesson plans for learning activities or units in classrooms aimed at social/emotional development (ASCA, 2012)
- Understand the nature and range of human characteristics specific to child and adolescent development
- Identify and employ appropriate appraisal methods for individual and group interventions that support K–12 students' social/emotional development
- Know and utilize counseling theories to inform both direct and indirect services providing support to K–12 students' social/emotional development

- Use evaluation in the context of appropriate statistics and research methodology, follow-up evaluation and measurement methods to implement appropriate program planning for social/emotional development
- Select and implement technology in a comprehensive school counseling program to facilitate K–12 students' social/emotional development
- Serve as a referral source for students when social/emotional issues become too great to be dealt with solely by the school counselor, including crisis interventions

Summary

School counselors are committed to supporting students' social/emotional needs. As advocates for students, school counselors promote a positive environment that enhances students' ability to properly manage the social/emotional demands of their lives. School counselors use appropriate appraisal methods to promote a school environment designed to propel students toward positive mindsets and behaviors supporting social/emotional development through direct (e.g., classroom curriculum, group counseling and individual counseling) and indirect (e.g., collaborating or consulting with staff, families or communities) services.

References

American School Counselor Association. (2012). *ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

American School Counselor Association. (2014). *Mindsets & behaviors for student success: K-12 college- and career-readiness standards for every student*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (2007). The learning compact redefined: A call to action – A report of the Commission on the Whole Child. Alexandria, VA: Author. Last retrieved January 21, 2017 from http://www.ascd.org/learningcompact

Blum, R. W., & Libbey, H. P. (2004). School connectedness—Strengthening health and education outcomes for teenagers. *Journal of School Health, 74,* 229–299.

Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnickie, A.B., Taylor R.D., & Schellinger, K.B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development, 82*(1), 405-432. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x

Eaton, D. K., Kann, L., Kinchen, S., Shanklin, S., Ross, J., Hawkins, J., et al. (2008). Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 2007. *MMWR Surveillance Summaries, 57*(SS04), 1–131. Retrieved January 21, 2017, from http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss57 04a1.htm?s_cid=ss5704a1_e

Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health, 74,* 262–273.

Schenck, P., Anctil, T., & Smith, C. K. (2010). Career counseling identity of professional school counselors. *Career Development, 26,* 16-17.

VanVelsor, P. (2009). School counselors as social-emotional learning consultants: Where do we begin? *Professional School Counseling, 13*, 50-58.