Development of the ASCA School Counselor Preparation Program Standards

In 2017, the American School Counselor Association established a steering committee to develop a proposal for ASCA to be recognized as a Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) Specialized Professional Association (SPA). One of the first tasks of the steering committee was to develop a set of standards to guide PreK-12 school counselor education. The standards, known as the ASCA Standards for School Counselor Preparation Programs, are designed to guide university programs that prepare candidates seeking licensure as a school counselor.

The steering committee used the ASCA National Model, ASCA School Counselor Competencies, ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors, ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, ASCA Ethics Standards for School Counselor Education Faculty, and other evidence-based ASCA resources as the basis for the Standards, drawing on the extensive research that underpins ASCA’s existing guidelines for school counselor professional practice. The steering committee finalized the draft Standards after a number of discussions and revisions. After receiving public comment on the draft Standards, the steering committee revised the Standards and sought additional public comments. After further revision, the Standards were finalized and, ultimately, approved by the CAEP SPA Committee.

The ASCA SPA Standards include seven standards and 24 components that address the knowledge and skills that are essential for candidates seeking licensure as a school counselor. CAEP’s four principles of Learner and Learning, Content, Instructional Practice, and Professional Responsibility guided the organization of the Standards, which are based on the ASCA National Model, ASCA School Counselor Competencies, ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors, and ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors. The steering committee also used CAEP’s Accreditation Manual and Guidelines for Writing and Approval of SPA Standards to guide ASCA Standards development.

By limiting the Standards to essential knowledge and skills for a beginning practitioner, the committee ensured programs could assess each Standard and component with six to eight key assessments. To facilitate programs in the development of key assessments, ASCA has developed rubrics to guide programs seeking national recognition through the ASCA SPA and to guide program reviewers charged with assessing programs. Programs seeking the national recognition will be expected to provide evidence of assessments that show alignment with the ASCA Standards. Eight assessments are recommended. Programs will be expected to directly link assessments to the ASCA Standards and components.

The SPA Standards steering committee was chaired by Norm Gysbers, Ph.D., a highly respected leader in the field of school counseling. Now retired from the University of Missouri, Dr. Gysbers is recognized as one of the foremost scholars and pioneers in modern school counseling. His work influenced the development of the ASCA National Model, which is the foundation for the ASCA SPA Standards. Paul Barnes, PhD., of the University of Nebraska, Omaha, co-chaired the committee, which also included Monica Dominguez, Dr. Sue Shook Elementary (El Paso, Texas); Stephanie Eberts Ph.D., Louisiana State University; Cynthia Floyd, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction; Diana Gruman, Ph.D., Western Washington University; Julie Hartline, Ph.D., University of North Florida; Samantha Haviland, Ph.D., Denver Public Schools; Alexandra Huguelet, Cobb County School District (Marietta, Ga.); Brandie Oliver, Ph.D., Butler University;
Erin Mason, Ph.D., Georgia State University; Kim Reykdal, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington; and Terri Tchorzynski, Calhoun Area Career Center (Battle Creek, Mich.).