CollegeBoard

Enhancing The Principal–School Counselor Relationship: A Toolkit

COLLABORATING FOR EQUITY AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

Contents

Welcome Message and Orientation to the Toolkit

To all Principals and School Counselors,

The world of education is more challenging than ever, and the success of a school depends on the educators leading the school. In addition to teachers, principals and school counselors provide energy to guide student learning and growth. When principals and school counselors work together for positive change in a school, amazing things happen.

This principal–school counselor toolkit represents a collaborative resource that acknowledges and celebrates the influence of the collaboration of principals and school counselors in school communities. This resource elevates promising practices refreshed from the previous edition and adds findings from stakeholder surveys, interviews, and focus groups, and the rich contributions of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

We continue to learn what principals and school counselors describe as important in their relationships and how they view the current status of these relationships. Informed by these data points and reflections, this toolkit includes reflective exercises, templates, strategies, and protocols for navigating unique challenges and opportunities within the principal–school counselor relationship.

Throughout this toolkit, you'll find resources to help guide discussions, self-appraisals, reflections, and implementation of strategy. This toolkit will also help you plan for the arrival of a new leader and/or a new counselor, the start of a new academic year or term, creating a school-based leadership team, and more. Wherever appropriate, make adjustments to these resources to ensure they are suited to your needs and the context relevant for your school community.

We know that schools aren't one-size-fits-all, and the people who lead schools sometimes hold different titles and fill various roles. Throughout the toolkit, we use the title "principal" to refer to the leader of the school. In some cases this person is an executive director, head of school, site leader, or CEO. For the purpose of this toolkit, we refer to the school leader as principal, knowing that some won't share this title, but will share the ultimate responsibility for managing the leadership of a school.

Likewise, not all who counsel students are school counselors. Some have responsibilities as career counselors, others are college counselors, while still others are academic counselors. No matter your title, we hope you'll see some of your roles and responsibilities represented in this toolkit and use it in a way that improves your work in schools.

Thank you for all you do in support of students.

Lorraine Hastings

Lorraine Hastings
Vice President, Counselor Community Engagement
College Board

Using the Toolkit

Principals and school counselors are encouraged to use this resource as a tool for continuous engagement and relationship development. To begin, we acknowledge the importance of vision and mission in any organization, providing a guiding light for all work within the school community. The **Articulating Purpose, Vision, and Mission** section defines the shared purpose in principal–school counselor relationships and how this shared purpose aligns with the vision and mission for the school as a whole, and the school counseling program in particular.

In the next section, **Effective Communication**, you'll find tools and exercises to help define your communication style and preference, communicate during transitions, and address conflict among individuals and teams.

In the **Ensuring Equity** section, principals and school counselors are guided through practices and discussion questions that will help assess equitable practices and areas for growth within the school community. This section includes a discussion of essential data points, how to disaggregate data for the various communities represented within the school, and explains how data should inform interventions and decisions.

The **Cultivating Trust and Respect** section identifies key practices to ensure alignment, understanding, and agreement among principals and school counselors. It includes a number of exercises and protocols to guide discussions, inform practices, and support necessary interventions as needed.

Leadership is separated into two distinct content areas, with the first focusing on **Collaborating and Sharing Decision Making**. Principals and school counselors are encouraged to reflect on their structures and practices and how they approach leadership together. Leadership is further examined in **Advancing Student Achievement**. As an extension of the equity dialogue, this section offers practices to engage school counselors in leadership for the academic experience for students. Advancing a culture of inquiry to best understand instruction and advance student achievement is enhanced through the lens of equity.

This toolkit closes with resources and discussions of **Supporting a New Principal or New School Counselor** and **Continuing Improvement and Advanced Practices**. As individuals and in pairs, you can use these resources to help ensure success in unique situations, as well as while onboarding new principals and counselors into the community.

Toolkit Sequencing Options

This toolkit is an adaptive resource that you can revisit as you face new opportunities and challenges in your work. Although not prescriptive, you may want to choose one of the following sequences depending on your school community needs:

If your school has a new principal/new school counselor:

Supporting the New Leader/the New Counselor → Equity as Bedrock → Articulating Purpose, Vision, and Mission → Ensuring Equity
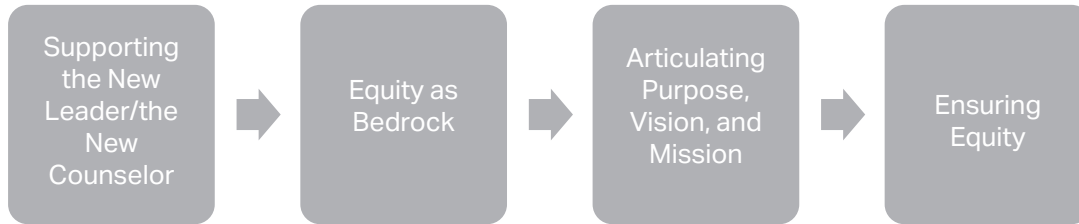
If you are concerned with opening/closing the academic year (annual data focus):

Equity as Bedrock → Ensuring Equity → Leadership II: Advancing Student Achievement → Leadership I: Collaborating and Sharing Decision Making
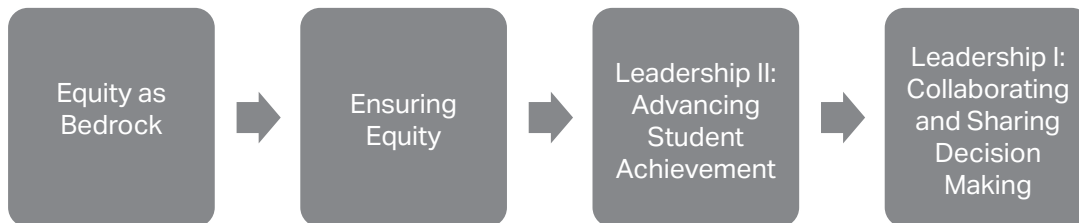
If your focus is opening/closing the academic year (annual relationship focus):

Equity as Bedrock → Articulating Purpose, Vision, and Mission → Effective Communciation → Cultivating Trust and Respect
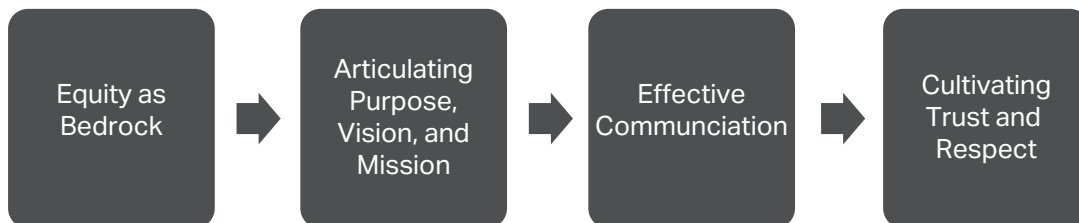
If you are working together as veteran school counselors and veteran leaders:

Ensuring Equity → Leadership II: Advancing Student Achievement → Leadership I: Collaborating and Sharing Decision Making → Continuous Improvement and Advanced Practices
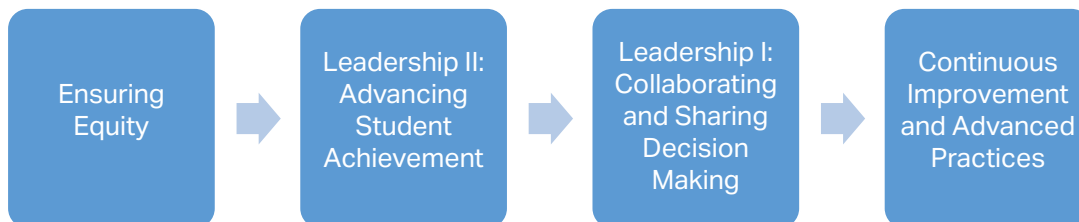
If you're interested in promoting counselors as leaders:

Supporting the New Leader/New Counselor → Articulating Purpose, Vision, and Mission → Ensuring Equity → Leadership II: Advancing Student Achievement
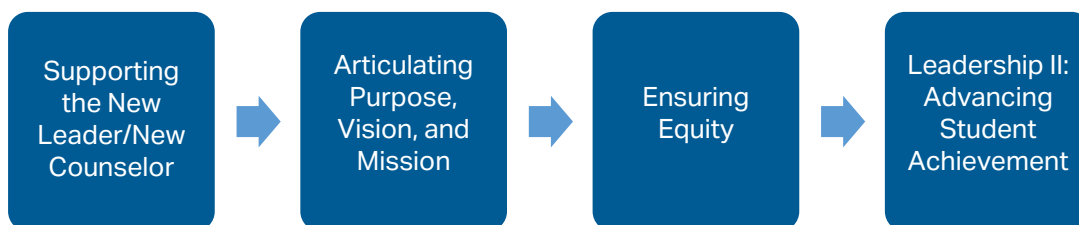
A Unifying Purpose: Equity as Bedrock

It is through a shared and fundamental commitment to equity that all other facets of the principals and school counselors' work can be established and built.

As you engage with this toolkit, consider the words of Vincena Allen, Chief Growth Officer of The SEED Foundation: "All that we are doing—how we lead, how we operate, how we inspire—is in service to equity for all of our students and their families, and their dreams."

A Primer in Equity

Equity as bedrock requires principals and school counselors to begin by defining and distinguishing your perspectives on equity and equality. In the space below, reflect on the similarities and differences between *equity* and *equality*, and how these concepts are defined in your community. Consider the things you do within your practice that elevate equality and the barriers and obstacles you remove to ensure equity.

Reflection: *What is your definition of equity?*	Reflection: *What is your definition of equality?*
Reflection: *What needs to be removed to ensure equity?*	Reflection: *What is elevated to ensure equality?*

The Center for Public Education suggests that "equality in education is achieved when students are all treated the same and have access to similar resources" (Barth 2016, 1). The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) concept of an equitable educational environment begins with ensuring equality. The school community is one which "supports and develops each student, regardless of his or her race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socioeconomic standing" by providing equal "access to strong learning opportunities and high expectations." NASSP also stresses the importance of providing the adults in a school community "an environment that values them as people and treats them fairly, regardless of their background," in part through "a commitment to social justice, civil rights, and human connectedness" (2018, 68).

Further, as an integral part of the school community, school counselors develop and implement school counseling programs that promote equity and access for students, helping to close achievement, opportunity, attainment and funding gaps in their schools, districts, and communities, according to the American School Counselor Association (2018).

In its *Building Ranks* framework of school leadership, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) reminds us that "school leaders guarantee that each person is known, valued, and treated justly and receives the individualized, high quality education that is necessary to succeed in a global society" (NASSP 2018, 68). In defining equity, NASSP suggests that equity is "the behaviors, systems, processes, resources, and environments that ensure that each member of the school community is provided fair, just, and individualized learning and growth opportunities" (2018, 68).

ASCA's Ethical Standards state that all students from all backgrounds have the right to be respected and treated with dignity, and to have access to a school counseling program that advocates for and affirms them. As social justice advocates, school counselors support students from all backgrounds and circumstances.

Likewise, College Board is committed to and inspires educators to ensure equity when it comes to access to challenging, college-level coursework in high school. College Board strongly encourages educators to make equitable access a guiding principle by giving all willing and academically prepared students the opportunity to participate in challenging coursework. We encourage the elimination of barriers that restrict access to challenging coursework for students from ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups that have been traditionally underrepresented. Schools should make every effort to ensure that their most challenging classes reflect the diversity of their student population. It's only through a commitment to equitable preparation and access that true equity and excellence can be achieved.

The Achievement Network (2018) offers a definition of equity that the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) emphasizes within the ASCA National Model: "Educational equity occurs when educators provide all students with the high-quality instruction and support they need to reach and exceed a common standard." The Achievement Network, Ltd. provides further context for defining equity:

"Equity focuses on outcomes for students. Equity in education demands that we hold the same high expectations for all students, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. It requires leadership, practices, and school culture that guarantee educators help all students meet those expectations. The work of educators is not to lower the bar; it's to provide all students with the support they need to reach and exceed the bar so they're prepared for college, career, or life" (Achievement Network 2018).

Within *Building Ranks*, NASSP offers four strategies that school leaders can implement to advance equity throughout the school community:

1. Ensuring that each student is known and valued;

2. Diagnosing inequitable practices or structures;

3. Inspiring staff members, students, and parents to understand and resolve issues of equity;

4. Leading members of your learning community in identifying and implementing strategies that promote equity, including culturally responsive teaching and learning (NASSP 2018, 69).

Lastly, *Building Ranks* underscores three imperatives for a commitment to equity in our schools:

1. Foundations of equity should be found within vision and mission statements;

2. Evidence of equity should be present in the school's approach to learning— student-centered and ethical practices;

3. Foundations of equity should be evident in the expectations informing instructional practices and desired student achievement outcomes (NASSP 2018).

ASCA National Model addresses this commitment to equity as well.

1. Equity, access, and success for every student is a key component of the mission of a school counseling program. School counselors promote equity through the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program,

2. School counselors use data to demonstrate a need for systemic change in areas such as course enrollment patterns; equity and access; and achievement, opportunity, and/or information gaps.

3. School counselors provide direct students services to help all students become college and career ready, and provide indirect student services of collaboration, consultation, and referrals, school counselors enhance student achievement and promote equity and access for all students.

4. School counselors create systemic change through the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program.

5. School counselors partner with others to advocate for student achievement and educational equity and opportunities.

6. School counselors promote equity and access for all students through the use of community resources.

Professional Competencies and Commitments to Equity

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), in its *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders*, defines expectations for effective leadership in the area of equity and cultural responsiveness. Within Standard 3, "effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being" (NPBEA 2015, 11). This standard also details the following for effective leaders:

a.   Ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student's culture and context.

b.   Recognize, respect, and employ each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning.

c.   Ensure that each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success.

d.   Develop student policies and address student misconduct in a positive, fair, and unbiased manner.

e.   Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.

f.   Promote the preparation of students to live productively in and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.

g.   Act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice.

h.   Address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership.

(NPBEA 2015, 11)

For the complete description of the *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders*, visit: **npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Professional-Standards-for-Educational-Leaders_2015.pdf**.

The ASCA National Model defines professional standards and competencies in both mindsets ("beliefs school counselors hold about student achievement and success") and behaviors ("essential behaviors school counselors demonstrate through the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program") (ASCA 2019a, 6).

The *ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies* articulates the following mindsets to be held by school counselors:

M 1.   Every student can learn, and every student can succeed.

M 2.   Every student should have access to and opportunity for a high-quality education.

M 3.   Every student should graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary opportunities.

M 4.   Every student should have access to a comprehensive school counseling program.

M 5.   Effective school counseling is a collaborative process involving school counselors, students, families, teachers, administrators, other school staff, and education stakeholders.

M 6.   School counselors are leaders in the school, district, state, and nation.

M 7.   Comprehensive school counseling programs promote and enhance student academic, career, and social/emotional outcomes.

(ASCA 2019a, 6)

A focus on equity can also be found in various behaviors defined within *the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies*:

B-PF 6.	Demonstrate understanding of the impact of cultural, social, and environmental influences on student success and opportunities.
B-PF 8.	Demonstrate advocacy in a comprehensive school counseling program.
B-PF 9.	Create systemic change through the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program.
B-SS 4.	Make referrals to appropriate school and community resources.
B-SS 5.	Consult to support student achievement and success.
B-SS 6.	Collaborate with families, teachers, administrators, other school staff, and education stakeholders for student achievement and success.
B-PE 2.	Identify gaps in achievement, attendance, discipline, opportunity, and resources.
B-PE 3.	Develop annual student outcome goals based on student data.
B-PE 4.	Develop and implement action plans aligned with program goals and student data.

(ASCA 2019a, 7)

These behaviors highlight essential considerations and actions for ensuring equity within our schools. For the complete description of the *ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies*, visit **schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/ a8d59c2c-51de-4ec3-a565-a3235f3b93c3/SC-Competencies.pdf**.

Equity in Action: Reflection Questions

The theme of Equity as Bedrock relies on reflection, critical dialogue, and discussion regarding practice and leadership. Use the following prompts for self-reflection and discussion within your school counseling department and/or your school leadership team (SLT).

Reflection Questions	Self-Reflection
What questions should we be asking ourselves as we work to ensure equity in our school community and equitable outcomes for our students?	
How might we assess equity in our work and our intentions?	
How are we assessing our own biases and assumptions? a. What are the biases and assumptions that I may hold regarding students and/or student groups? b. How might these biases and assumptions inhibit, deter, and/or prevent me from providing equitable resources, supports, and/or treatments to students? c. What will I need to do differently to ensure that these biases and assumptions don't impact my work, especially how I serve students and their families?	
If we were to focus on ensuring the success of students with the greatest need, and/or those who experience the greatest marginalization within our school communities, how might our efforts or policies change? How might we learn from providing equitable experiences for the students with the greatest need to inform our practices throughout our community?	
How might equity be embedded within one's professional identity?	
How might equity be articulated as a professional expectation?	

Articulating Purpose, Vision, and Mission

Simon Sinek et al. (2017) discusses the importance of exploring your "why?" and how your purpose is defined, informed, and experienced by others. The exploration of "why?" launches deep into assessing your understanding of your own purpose, power, and the driving force behind your work. This same question of "What's your why?" is essential to describe your personal purpose and its connection to the purpose, vision, and mission of your school community.

This section of the toolkit encourages you to reflect on your personal purpose and how that informs your work. Then, you will assess and describe the alignment of your purpose and how it can foster even greater collaboration and leadership within the principal–school counselor relationship.

The commitment to equity is a shared priority and is best stated clearly in your school's mission and vision, and your school counseling vision and mission. Tools in this section can help you articulate your commitment to equity and offer opportunities for frequent review and reflection.

Sharing Purpose

Consider the following reflection questions as the foundation for developing a personal purpose statement in service of student learning and growth. This purpose statement will encapsulate your personal and professional aims and help clarify cooperative opportunities in the principal–school counselor relationship.

Reflection Questions	Self-Reflection
Who am I? What do I wish to be remembered for? What's my desired legacy?	
How do I wish for others to describe me? How do I wish for others to describe my work? What will occur as a result of my professional contributions?	
Who am I as a professional? What is most important to me as I do this work?	
What do I need most to be successful in this role? What do I need most to be successful in this role, this year?	

Draft a personal statement of purpose. Describe who you are, how you wish to be remembered, what you need to be successful, and how you will know your purpose has been achieved.

From your purpose statement, create a headline or mantra by selecting three to five words that represent the essence of your purpose and professional impact.

Purpose Statement:	
Headline/Mantra (3–5 words)	

Share your purpose statement and headline/mantra with your principal or school counselor partner. In the space below, record their purpose statement and headline/mantra.

Purpose Statement:	
Headline/Mantra (3–5 words)	

Identify the common themes or shared ideas.

Themes from Principal	Themes from School Counselor

Draft a **Shared Purpose Statement**. This statement should represent shared perspectives that capture the ideas and agreements in your personal purpose statements. From this shared statement, define a headline or mantra. You are encouraged to use both your shared purpose statement and mantra as touchpoints in later sections of the toolkit.

Principal–School Counselor Shared Purpose Statement	
Principal–School Counselor Shared Mantra (3–5 words)	

Aligning Vision and Advancing Mission

To create a school environment that prioritizes student achievement, as school professionals you must align the following areas:

- What we believe (purpose)

- What we want the results to look like (vision)

- How we are going to get there (mission)

With your shared purpose statement and mantra to guide you, you can better envision the results you want for your students, and how the school community can organize to get there.

In *Building Ranks* (2018, 132). NASSP identifies creating a shared vision and mission—"clear and ambitious expectations for what will benefit students and what they will be able to do as a result of attending the school"—as an essential element of school leadership. A shared understanding of vision and mission "enables the entire community to have a shared commitment to achieving those goals and helps leaders set priorities and make decisions aligned with its goals."

Similarly, the ASCA National Model includes a process of examining and reflecting on personal, school, and district beliefs about all students, analyzing the school's vision and mission, and aligning the school counseling program vision and mission with the school vision and mission.

The vision describes what school counselors hope to see for students 5–15 years in the future. The mission aligns with the school's mission statement and emphasizes equity, access, and success for every student.

What is the vision of our school community?	
What is the mission of our school community?	
How does the work of the principal advance the vision and mission of the school?	
How does the work of the school counselor advance the vision and mission of the school?	
How does the mission ensure equity, access, success, and long-term results for all students? If there are needed revisions to these statements to ensure equity, what do you feel is missing?	

Exploring Opportunities for Alignment and Collaboration

In the Equity as Bedrock section, the **professional competencies for principals** and **school counselors** were highlighted to show alignment to equity.

Use the following questions to reflect on possibilities for alignment, collaborative leadership, engagement, and support for the success of the principal–school counselor relationship. As you focus on your school community, consider the opportunities for leadership and growth that can emerge from empowering staff to be stewards of the school's vision and mission.

Where are there collaborative opportunities among principals and school counselors in terms of our professional competencies and expectations?	
Where are there differentiation in roles and expectations?	
Where are there opportunities for shared leadership? Where can we help each other achieve our goals?	
What are the opportunities for delegation (distributed leadership)? How can we help each other execute the work?	
From these professional expectations, where should we spend time building systems and/or structures to ensure the success of our efforts?	
From these professional expectations, where should we spend time clarifying and ensuring shared understanding in our work?	
What isn't captured in these competencies that is worth drawing attention to, especially items specific to our school community?	

Reflecting on Personal Development and Goals

Now that you have assessed your personal and shared statements of purpose and how they align to the school community, take a deeper look at how these statements inform your vision for yourself and your growth. Complete the following self-assessment to articulate career goals, areas of growth and strength, and desired areas of impact. This self-assessment can be helpful in annual conversations among principals and school counselors [See **Annual Administrative Conference Template**, ASCA].

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Career Goals	
Short term: What are my 3–5 year career goals?	
Long term: What are my career goals beyond the next 5 years?	
What supports will help me achieve my short-term career goals?	
What supports will help me achieve my long-term career goals?	

Professional Competencies	
In terms of professional standards and competencies for my role, where do I have the most experience? Where am I the strongest?	
How might I use or leverage my strongest competencies across the school or among my immediate colleagues? What professional development experience(s) might I lead?	
In terms of professional standards and competencies for my role, where do I have the least experience? Where do I have the greatest room for improvement?	
How might I obtain these skills from others within my school community? What professional development experiences (internal or external) might benefit me?	
How will I prioritize my areas for growth? What would I like to tackle first?	
Cultivating Leadership	
What are some of the activities or efforts I might pursue to advance or enhance my leadership skills?	
If I had the opportunity, what would I like to reimagine for my school community to ensure equity, student achievement, and success?	
What support is needed to ensure my leadership development?	

Effective Communication

The quality and frequency of communication are often described as the greatest concerns in school communities. Effective communication, in moments of change, growth, crisis, and conflict, requires practice and strategy. In this section, you will explore and reflect on the essentials of effective communication, including an assessment of your preferred communication style and channels, how others experience your communication approach, as well as resources for meetings, conflict management, and crisis management.

You can also use these tools for successful communication across the school community, including external stakeholders and others with whom you maintain a relationship.

Building Ranks (NASSP 2018, 95) describes communication as a critical tool for building shared understandings, inspiring commitment to common values and goals, and motivating the collective action necessary to achieve goals. It offers nine considerations for the promotion of norms and skills necessary to enable effective communication:

1. Foster structures that promote healthy communication and networks among and between you, faculty and staff members, students, families, and people in the larger community;

2. Model appropriate student-to-student, student-to-adult, and adult-to-adult communication;

3. Ensure that you are physically available and approachable to students, families, staff members, and community members;

4. Create opportunities for all stakeholders—including students—to share their perspectives. Incorporate their feedback into your decision making process;

5. Establish routines and protocols for difficult conversations;

6. Model open, candid, and empathetic communication with stakeholders—particularly students, families, and community members—to help set expectations for tone, cultural sensitivity, and empathy among all members of the learning community;

7. Set norms and expectations for communication, including technology use … [Ensure] those expectations are accessible to all members of the learning community;

8. Model and encourage appropriate use of social media to communicate with families and community members;

9. Provide opportunities for students to learn effective communication skills for interpersonal relationships, job interviews, and overall college and career readiness.

These considerations, as defined for school leaders, are absolutely applicable to the principal–school counselor relationship, informing how effective communication is experienced throughout the school community.

The ASCA Student Standards (ASCA, 2021) describe important social skills for students that are also appropriate to the principal–school counselor relationship, including:

- Positive, respectful, and supportive relationships with those who are similar to and different from them;

- Empathy, ethical decision making, and social responsibility;

- Effective collaboration and cooperation skills;

- Leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse groups;

- Cultural awareness, sensitivity, and responsiveness;

- Decision making informed by gathering evidence, getting others' perspectives, and recognizing personal bias.

Self-Assessment: Effective Communication

This tool—to be completed individually by school counselors and principals—is designed to allow each professional to consider their communication and whether any modifications are needed. Sharing your responses to this exercise will help foster an open and honest discussion.

ASPECTS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

	Always 5	Usually 4	Sometimes 3	Seldom 2	Never 1
Formulating a Consensus I am able to merge diverse perspectives to come up with a common goal.					
Sharing Diverse Perspectives I can appreciate divergent thinking to reach goals.					
Flexibility in Communication Styles I am aware of informal/formal communication in the context and situation for best outcomes.					
Active Listening I am willing and able to hear, gather core themes, and appreciate diverse and similar perspectives.					
Empathetic Listening I am able to create space for someone to share their thoughts, offering empathy, compassion, and insight (only when appropriate).					
Professional Engagement I am willing to participate in shared communication.					
Establishing Commonality I can create alignment in the vision/mission of the school and school counseling program.					
Managing Crisis Communication I am able to offer leadership and navigate crises with solid communication protocols and a calm disposition.					
Addressing Conflicts I am able to approach, assess, and resolve conflicts, whether among peers, colleagues, or stakeholders.					

Aspects of Effective Communication

In order to adequately engage in effective communication, you and the principal/school counselor should establish and agree upon a goal for your conversations. The exchange should remain collaborative and respectful in order to be most effective. This exercise serves as a starting point for uncovering the most effective communication approach for the relationship.

Review your responses to the self-assessment and then share them with your principal or school counselor colleague. Note that you may see your style of communication differently from the way it is experienced by your colleague. Make note of those differences and where you might make adjustments to ensure effective communication. Complete the individual reflection questions below to foster discussion and collaboration in the area of effective communication.

ASPECTS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

Individual Reflection Questions for Principal and School Counselor	Responses
What aspects of my communication enhance or hinder the establishment and maintenance of a strong principal–school counselor relationship?	
As I reflect on my approach to communication, what would I do the same next time?	
As I reflect on my approach to communication, what would I do differently? Why?	
How does my approach to communication reflect my leadership style? Could I further my leadership development in this area?	
Given the self-assessment, which of the approaches to communication remain areas of growth for me? Where do I have the most room for improvement?	
What support(s) do I need to increase my competency in areas where I have a desire or need for growth?	

Now that you have completed the self-assessment and individual reflection questions, explore these collaborative reflection questions together.

ASPECTS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: COLLABORATIVE REFLECTIONS

Principal–School Counselor Relationship Collaborative Reflection Questions	Responses
How do we experience each other's communication approaches? What has been our experience with each other's communication?	
Do we (as principal and school counselor) see the various aspects of our communication approaches the same way? Where do we differ?	
How could we establish a stronger and more engaging principal–school counselor relationship through our approach to communication?	
What structures are needed or welcomed to ensure an effective approach to communication? Do we need more or less communication? Would we benefit from more focused conversations/meetings?	
How might we establish a rhythm to our communication to ensure the success of our efforts, our commitment to equity, and the consistency in leadership and impact across the school community?	

In addition to the questions above, Watkins (2013) discusses *style conversations* as a part of *The Five Conversations* framework, which is helpful here. In your reflections, consider these additional questions:

What is our preferred mode for communication? Which mode of communication works best for specific issues or concerns?	
How are our communication styles alike and where do they differ? What are the implications for the ways in which we interact?	

(Watkins 2013, 94–95)

Use your shared answers and reference them frequently as you work to effectively communicate with your principal/school counselor throughout the school year.

Effective Communication: The Art of Connecting

John C. Maxwell (2010) provides rich insights into the essence of great communication—*connecting.* He writes, "I am convinced more than ever that good communication and leadership are all about connecting … Connecting is the ability to identify with people and relate to them in a way that increases your influence with them. Why is this important? Because the ability to communicate and connect with others is a major determining factor in reaching your potential" (Maxwell 2010, 3).

The following reflective exercise is informed by Maxwell's principles for connecting, as well as practical skills essential for all leaders. Use the following tools for reflection and for strategic approaches to effective communication throughout your school community.

Connection Principle	Key Considerations and Strategies	Reflections: Implications for My Practice and Leadership
Focusing on others	Three questions constituents ask about you 1. Do you care for me? 2. Can you help me? 3. Can I trust you?	
Expanding your connecting vocabulary beyond just words	1. What people see—Connecting visually 2. What people understand—Connecting intellectually 3. What people feel—Connecting emotionally 4. What people hear—Connecting verbally	
Marshalling your energy for connecting	1. Connecting requires initiative … Go first 2. Connecting requires clarity … Prepare 3. Connecting requires practice … Slow down 4. Connecting requires selflessness … Give 5. Connecting requires stamina … Recharge	
Gaining insight in how great connectors connect	1. Relationships—Who you know 2. Insight—What you know 3. Success—What you have done 4. Ability—What you can do 5. Sacrifice—How you have lived	

(Maxwell 2010, 22–104)

Your thoughtful consideration of how best to connect with your colleague will enhance your relationship, enabling more effective communication and progress toward shared goals.

Communication Structures: Sample Recurring Meeting Templates

As we consider strategies for effective communication, the next two resources offer templates for regular check-in meetings or updates. These resources allow for reflection, calendar updates, items in need of urgent support and/or attention, and defined approaches to accountability and follow-up. Prior to establishing a recurring meeting structure, the ASCA National Model includes specific strategies for framing conversations between the principal and the school counselor. One such tool is the **Annual Administrative Conference Template**. Another template—School Counselor-led Quad Approach—underscores accomplishments, opportunities, challenges, and fires. The second approach is structured to emphasize strategy and/or tenets of school improvement plans.

**COMMUNICATION STRUCTURES: SAMPLE MEETING TEMPLATE #1
SCHOOL COUNSELOR-LED QUAD APPROACH—ACCOMPLISHMENTS,
OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND FIRES**

Opening	▪ Check-in (demonstration of empathy, compassion, collegiality, human-centered leadership) ▪ Review of agenda for meeting
Revisiting Norms (Content should be embedded within the agenda)	▪ Shared purpose statement ▪ Shared mantra ▪ Shared commitments for relationship
Quad Approach: Accomplishments Since our last meeting, what are some specific achievements that point to progress on goals?	**Quad Approach: Opportunities** What specific items reflect plans for future efforts?
Quad Approach: Challenges What is on the horizon that presents some difficulties or challenges?	**Quad Approach: Fires** Where is the greatest concern or need for immediate action, and how might the principal direct support and/or intervene to address these items?
Proposed Solutions/Chance for Feedback For every challenge or immediate action item presented in the meeting, be prepared to offer a solution or two for discussion with the principal.	▪ Reintroduce challenge with essential contextual details/data ▪ Offer 1 or more possible solutions for each issue ▪ Reiterate specific asks of principal
Programmatic Updates	▪ Share upcoming events on the calendar ▪ Highlight what the principal can do to demonstrate support and specific ways to support program execution ▪ Share what success would look like for this event and data that will be collected
Requests/Supports to Advance Principal Leadership	▪ Ask the principal where the role of school counselor might be instrumental in addressing items/issues facing the principal ▪ Agree on next steps, including desired follow-up communication, interventions, and measures of success (documentation and/or data)
Closing	▪ Describe and/or define the next point of connection with the principal (email, phone call, meeting, etc.) ▪ Document any expected agenda items and/or refresh the Quad Chart to reflect the discussion and send it to the principal for their records/checklist for items that require their support/intervention

COMMUNICATION STRUCTURES: SAMPLE MEETING TEMPLATE #2
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND/OR STRATEGIC PLAN-DRIVEN
MEETING ORIENTATION

Opening	▪ Check-in (demonstration of empathy, compassion, collegiality, human-centered leadership) ▪ Review of school improvement/strategic plan overview document/statement ▪ Review of key measures
Key Measure #1: **Brief Description of Measure #1**	▪ **Discussion of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** What are we measuring and why? ▪ **Progress Measures for KPIs:** What data and/or evidence can we share regarding our progress? ▪ **Adaptations and Innovations:** Where might we need to make midcourse corrections and/or adjustments to ensure success? ▪ **Resources:** What is needed to ensure equity and achievement?
Key Measure #2: **Brief Description of Measure #2**	▪ **Discussion of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** What are we measuring and why? ▪ **Progress Measures for KPIs:** What data and/or evidence can we share regarding our progress? ▪ **Adaptations and Innovations:** Where might we need to make midcourse corrections and/or adjustments to ensure success? ▪ **Resources:** What is needed to ensure equity and achievement?
Key Measure #3: **Brief Description of Measure #3**	▪ **Discussion of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** What are we measuring and why? ▪ **Progress Measures for KPIs:** What data and/or evidence can we share regarding our progress? ▪ **Adaptations and Innovations:** Where might we need to make midcourse corrections and/or adjustments to ensure success? ▪ **Resources:** What is needed to ensure equity and achievement?
New Business	▪ Share any new initiatives, programs, and/or opportunities that might advance other dimensions of the school improvement or strategic plan measures ▪ Highlight ways in which the principal can demonstrate support for these efforts and if there is a way for the principal to be involved in the execution of the initiative/program ▪ Share potential outcomes to the KPIs described above
Closing	▪ Ask the principal where the role of school counselor might be instrumental in addressing items/issues facing the principal ▪ Agree on next steps, including desired follow-up communication, interventions, and measures of success needed (documentation and/or data)

Using a meeting template offers consistency and efficiency when you meet with your principal/school counselor. This helps ensure that time and energies are focused on the issues of the school so that progress can be made.

Fostering Agreement

Schools are dynamic communities that require rich collaboration, negotiation, and agreement on the design and implementation of strategy to advance equity and student achievement. The following framework is helpful to clarify, commit, and define supports necessary for action and collaboration (Andersen 2006).

Taking time to establish agreement between school counselors and principals sets a foundation for ongoing communication and collaboration. The Annual Administrative Conference template is a tool that can ensure school counselors and principals set clear expectations for one another, working to meet a shared mission and vision.

Stages	Promising Practices	Define Specific Actions
Clarify **Create a Mental Picture** **Establish Context and Rationale** **Check for Obstacles**	Ensure clarity of the goals and objectives, as well as the work needed to be executed Define steps, stages, resources, and expectations Provide an opportunity for others to articulate their understanding of the proposed agreement(s) Highlight the impact of the work and its importance to the whole	
Commit **Summarize** **Set Benchmarks and Timelines**	Articulate shared understandings and explicitly state who will lead what areas of the work Define measures of progress and success Confirm deadlines and other time-bound expectations	
Support **Honor Commitments** **Offer Feedback** **Act as a Coach**	Demonstrate commitment to the work by checking in, reviewing commitments, and offering feedback Check in and offer direct support and initial review of the work Inquire if help is needed	

(Adapted from Andersen 2006)

When you have fostered agreement with your principal and school counselor, you are more likely to bring other stakeholders on board with new ideas. This is the scaffold needed to continue to implement change that ensures equity for all students.

Strategies for Communicating Change

Communicating and managing change are among the most difficult tasks for leaders across all industries. The following template offers 11 steps to communicating change within your school community.

Recommended Step	Content of Message	Messenger(s)	Distribution Channel
1. Specify the nature of change.			
2. Explain why.			
3. Explain the scope of the change.			
4. Develop a graphic representation of the change initiative.			
5. Predict negative aspects of implementation.			
6. Explain the criteria for success and how it will be measured.			
7. Explain how people will be rewarded for success.			
8. Repeat, repeat, and repeat the purpose of change and actions planned.			
9. Use a diverse set of communication styles that are appropriate for employees (stakeholders).			
10. Make communication a two-way proposition.			
11. Be a model for the change initiative.			

(Adapted from Saunders 1999)

In order to advance equity in your school, principals and school counselors must effectively communicate about the changes needed. Each of the steps you've outlined above will contribute to successful implementation of new strategies and programs.

Commitment to a Culture of Inquiry

A culture of inquiry encourages all stakeholders to ask questions and learn from your experiences and the experiences of others. The questions below, sorted in Bolman & Deal's (2008) four-frame model, can guide reflection and discussion as you and your colleague assess the strategy, impact, and unintended consequences of your messages to internal and external stakeholders. Be sure to highlight the impact and needs resulting from shifts within structural, human resources, political, and symbolic frames within the school community, and how these shifts are discussed among the internal and external stakeholders.

Continue to ask yourself:

- Where might we need to pivot and improve? What midcourse corrections are necessary?

- How might we adjust to ensure a positive and productive principal–school counselor relationship?

Frame	Reflection and Discussion Questions
Structural (Impact of roles, rules, goals, and external environment)	• How have roles, rules, or goals shifted in the recent past? What are the impacts of these shifts, both long term and short term? • How have these changes impacted the principal–school counselor relationship? • What impact have these shifts had on equity and achievement? • What impact have these shifts had on the work of the principal, and on the work of the school counselor? Where do we have opportunities to strengthen the working relationship between principal and school counselor?
Human Resources (Impact of individuals and their needs, relationships, and (dis)empowerment)	• How has the professional staff shifted in the recent past? What are the immediate and long-term impacts experienced because of these shifts? • What are specific needs of each professional community within the school (faculty, staff, and administrators)? • What impact do these needs have on equity and achievement? • Where do we have opportunities to increase engagement with and to empower the principal–school counselor working relationship?
Political (Impact of conflict, advocacy, budget, and power)	• In what ways have conflict, advocacy, budget, and/or power shifted within and around the school in the recent past? • What impact do these shifts have on equity and student achievement? • What are some of the long-term outcomes of these shifts? • How have these shifts impacted the work of principals and/or school counselors?
Symbolic (Impact of norms, traditions, symbols, and widely held beliefs)	• What are some of the norms and traditions that define the school community? • How have these norms and traditions shifted in the recent past? • What impact have these shifts had on equity and student achievement? • What impact have these shifts had on climate and culture? • Where do we have opportunities to redefine these beliefs? • How does the culture—norms, traditions, and widely held beliefs and practices—advance the working relationship of the principal and school counselor?

(Adapted from Bolman & Deal 2008)

Effective communication requires reflection and strategy, and that leaders remain nimble, informed, consistent, and willing to engage key players to craft solid communication for the school: "… leaders need passionate, unwavering commitment to principle, combined with flexibility in understanding and responding to events" (Bolman & Deal 2008, 20). Building equity in your school requires effective communication.

Providing Feedback

Communication is most effective when it includes opportunities for giving and receiving feedback. Feedback also remains a critical component of a collaborative approach to leadership, in general, and more specifically to the principal–school counselor relationship.

Consider the following approaches to providing corrective and positive feedback.

Steps in Providing Corrective Feedback	Considerations and Sample Language
Introduction: Begin by introducing the topic for feedback in a nonthreatening way.	
Perspective: Seek to understand the other person's point of view on the topic.	
Feedback: Connect feedback to the perspective shared, ensuring the feedback is specific and timely, and underscores the impact.	
Action: Agree on next steps to rectify the action or effort for which feedback was given.	

(Adapted from Andersen 2006)

It is not easy to deliver corrective feedback in a constructive way, but doing so will not only lead to improved outcomes, but also result in more trust and better communication down the line**.**

The table below captures an approach to positive feedback:

Steps in Providing Positive Feedback	Considerations/Sample Language
Awareness: Consider the person and how they may wish to receive feedback	
Specificity: Be specific about what is being acknowledged and celebrated	
Channel: Decide on the most appropriate and impactful channel to deliver the feedback	
Timely: Be sure to acknowledge the positive work in a timely manner to ensure greatest impact	

(Adapted from Andersen 2006)

Opening communication channels for feedback will clear the way for important conversations about the pressing matters of your school, including equity for all students.

Effective Communication for Conflict

While all relationships have the potential for miscommunication, disagreement, and challenge, it is what we do in those situations that determines our success and the growth of our professional relationships.

Below is a self-reflective tool for managing conflict. Use it prior to engaging in difficult conversations or managing conflict within groups and teams, or with another individual.

Strategy for Communication in Conflict	Self-Reflection: Questions to Consider
Be Reflective	What has triggered your frustration? Are there experiences from your past that inform how you interpret this situation?
Be Present	What must I do to be fully present? Are there items that I must address or set aside in order to be present?
Be Aware of Position	If the conflict has emerged via text, phone, or email, can you schedule time to meet in person? How might you address/control your nonverbal communication?
Be Protective of Relationship	How might you communicate care, concern, and safety for the other person? In what ways might you demonstrate that you have each other's back?

(Tatkin 2016)

"There is no relationship without conflict. In fact, if you are a conflict avoider you will appear threatening … A relationship cannot survive a loss of safety and security."

(STAN TATKIN 2016)

Strategies for Facilitating Difficult Conversations

Managing conflict and challenging conversations are tasks for any leader, especially as educators face both internal and external stakeholders. Bolman & Deal (2008) offer three questions for leaders and managers to consider, especially in moments of conflict and/or tension in the execution of work:

1. What is really happening in this relationship?

2. What motives are behind other peoples' behavior?

3. What can I do about it? (Bolman & Deal 2008, 168).

The following strategies for conflict management can be instrumental in a successful principal–school counselor relationship.

Strategies for Conflict Management	Personal Reflection: How does this inform my behavior? What does this look like in practice?
Facilitate a Self-Check Determine goals for the conversation and develop a script; anticipate negative reactions	
Depersonalize the Conflict Remain focused on the issue and not the individual	
Find Common Ground Seek agreement on shared beliefs and interests; use agreements to define solutions	
Create Space to Hear and Be Heard Offer another chance to hear the perspective of the individual; clarify your thoughts	

Strategies for Conflict Management	Personal Reflection: How does this inform my behavior? What does this look like in practice?
Show Respect and Collegiality Listen intently without judgment and offer appreciation for their perspective; avoid blaming	
Practice Reflective Listening Paraphrase what was heard, separating facts from opinion; seek agreement on content shared	
Clarify Issue and Objections Seek agreement on root issue(s) and objection(s); limit negotiations or continued debate	
Recognize Limitations Offer time for personal reflection; engage a neutral third party to provide resolution	
Envision the Future Recognize the conflict as a point in time by focusing on the work and future achievements	

(Bolman & Deal 2008; Dowling 2009; Korn Ferry 2015)

Strategies for Addressing Team Conflict

Quick (1992, 67–68) offers six considerations that inform successful approaches to address conflicts within teams: (1) Conflict is considered natural; (2) Conflict is resolved through openness; (3) Conflict occurs over issues, not over personalities; (4) Conflict involves a search for alternatives; (5) Conflict resolution is present-oriented; and (6) Conflict is a group issue. The following template is informed by Quick's approach to managing group conflict.

Strategy	Description	How does this inform my practice?
Relax	Prepare and position myself to receive information by maintaining awareness of my body language and energy	
Listen	Practice active and reflective listening, control my body language and allow the other party to share without interruption	
Accept	Receive what has been shared without value or judgment, ask for clarity if needed; avoid defensive tone/remarks	
Make it a group Issue	Seek opportunities to receive feedback from all group/team members as this feedback may foster consensus or edits	
Answer	Discuss outstanding items or issues that need feedback to ensure closure among the entire group, not just critics	

(Quick 1992, 67–71)

Implementing strategies that ensure equitable educational experiences for all will likely involve conflict among stakeholders. Anticipating and preparing for conflict with these six considerations can make the conflict productive and improve outcomes.

Strategies for Effective Communication in Moments of Crisis

Principals and school counselors are essential staff members in crisis situations. While these events may not be predictable or preventable, several procedures and structures can ensure consistent implementation of crisis communication efforts. For the purposes of the principal–school counselor relationship toolkit, crisis preparation highlights opportunities for collaborative leadership and support for the school community.

Crisis response preparation should be established in collaboration among principals and school counselors prior to the start of each school year. Integrate the crisis response plan and its various scenarios and structures into professional development and training sessions regularly.

CRISIS RESPONSE PREPARATION CHECKLIST

☐ **Form a Crisis Response Team** that includes school counselors and leaders, as well as other key staff members.

☐ **Train the Crisis Response Team**—use current best practices from national organizations (The **National School Public Relations Association** (NSPRA) provides guidance on the critical crisis management) and defined policies from your school system or school board**.**

☐ **Create a Crisis Response Implementation Plan**—include procedures to implement on the day of an event for the following groups:

　☐ crisis response team

　☐ school building staff

　☐ external stakeholder groups: _____

☐ **Draft Sample Communication Templates**—create templates for the same stakeholder groups:

　☐ Develop boilerplate messages that reiterate core values of the school community, commitment to safety and well-being of students, faculty, and staff.

　☐ Be absolute in your communications regarding protecting the identity of students and their families—ensure school building staff are all well-versed in policies pertaining to the release of student-level data and details pertaining to school building staff.

　☐ Define the process for external stakeholders, including how you will receive and address their questions or concerns.

　☐ Identify communication channels and the necessary codes for school building operations and access conditions. Be sure to specify how visitors to the school building, contractors, and substitute teachers will be informed of these communication channels and expectations.

☐ **Maintain Crisis Response Kits**—equip your Crisis Response Team with turnkey kits that are updated and maintain the following resources:

  ☐ current school information

  ☐ a map of the building

  ☐ staff rosters and room numbers

  ☐ paper and pen to take notes as they work to respond to the event and to be referenced at a later date

  ☐ tissues

  ☐ fidget items and other age appropriate resources to support students' needs

The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) publishes a comprehensive crisis communication and management resource that provides exhaustive templates and strategies for school leaders and staff as they address crisis events. For more information, visit **nspra.org**.

Learn more about the school counselor's role in crisis response at **schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Safe-Schools-and-Crisis-R**

Ensuring Equity: Assessing Context and Capacity

The theme **Equity as Bedrock** provides a great foundation for the principal–school counselor relationship. Researchers offer the following five key considerations informing an equity-minded leader:

1. Examine disparities by identity.

2. Recognize unequal outcomes.

3. Respect aspirations and adversity.

4. Ensure fairness in resource allocations.

5. Investigate bias and discrimination in self and institutions (Lawrence et al. 2004).

These five considerations highlight the importance of both an inquiry and action orientation for equity. The use of self-reflection to investigate your own biases, evaluation of student achievement and community demographic data, as well as a review of institutional policies and resource allocations are all critical facets that inform how to assess and ensure equity and student achievement. This section provides a number of resources and reflection questions to support the assessment of equity in your school.

Understanding Our School Context: Awareness, Reflections, and Actions

The investigation of personal and institutional biases provides an important moment of reflection for principals and school counselors. The following questions are designed to move us away from biases and assumptions and to expand our use of data to ensure equity and student achievement.

UNDERSTANDING OUR SCHOOL CONTEXT: STUDENT ASPIRATIONS

What do we know about the community in which our school is located?

What do we know about the communities served by our school?

What are examples of student aspirations within our school community?

How can we elevate and support these aspirations? What needs to change within our school community to ensure these outcomes?

What are examples of adversities experienced by students within our school community?

UNDERSTANDING OUR SCHOOL CONTEXT: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

A comprehensive understanding and analysis of school community demographic data is essential for your team collaboration to ensure equity and student achievement. The following data points are recommended for the construction of a school community demographic data table:

Identity and Household Characteristics	Key Data Points
Sex and gender identity	
Race and ethnicity	
Student demographic groups (disaggregation)	
SES as measured by eligibility for free or reduced cost meals	
English Language Learners	
Enrollment Characteristics	
Grade level enrollment	
Average daily attendance	
Students accessing special education services	
Discipline data points	
Academic Characteristics and Outcomes	
Graduation rate	
College acceptance rate	
College enrollment rate	
Percentage of highly qualified teachers	
Teacher retention rate	
Advanced Placement course offerings	
Enrollment in Advanced Placement in comparison to school-level enrollment and student demographic characteristics	
Standardized test scores (SAT Suite of Assessments)	

Equity: Our Work in Our Schools

This section is largely guided by the essential questions offered by the **Center for Public Education** (Barth 2016, 7–8). The following are designed to assist leadership of school systems and individual schools as you assess your school's data and efforts for ensuring equity:

- What is our performance by school and by student group?

- Do all schools have adequate funding? Do funds flow to schools according to need?

- Do we provide high-level curriculum in all of our schools?

    - Do our high schools offer rigorous course sequences for high-level math (e.g., from Algebra l to calculus), and high-level science (e.g., from biology to physics)?

    - Do we offer Advanced Placement® courses and is access open to all?

    - Do we provide extra supports to struggling students and have policies in place to make sure they get the benefit of these supports?

    - Do we have systems in place to ensure that traditionally marginalized students are encouraged to take on the most challenging coursework?

- What are the qualifications of our teaching staff?

    - Is teacher quality distributed equitably among schools as well as within the school building?

    - Do all student groups have fair access to the best teachers?

    - Are teachers well supported?

    - Do we reward teachers who serve the neediest students?

- How do our overall discipline rates compare to other districts?

    - Do we suspend students more often than others? Are discipline rates similar for all student groups?

- Do we have enough school counselors and trained mentors to support students and work in partnership with families?

- Do we monitor our progress?

    - Do we make adjustments when needed?

    - Are all of our students learning, engaged, and on track to graduate college- and career-ready from high school?

- Additionally, it is important for school leaders to assess workforce diversity and the training necessary to be in support of students. Adding these additional questions will ensure a holistic approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion for your students and school community: What is the composition of our workforce in comparison to our student diversity? What is the diversity of our instructional staff, administrative staff, and other leaders within our school?

- How do we ensure our faculty, staff, and administrators are well equipped to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within our school community?

- What is the frequency of ongoing professional development sessions pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion? How do we assess these competencies among our workforce?

These reflection questions underscore the importance of the principal–school counselor relationship and their collaborative work to ensure equity.

EQUITY IN SCHOOLS

At a recent school board meeting, a group of parents along with an educational advocate shared their impressions on equitable access and outcomes in their learning community. In their presentation to board members, they detailed a number of occurrences within the school pertaining to equitable access to rigorous coursework, the qualifications of instructors, as well as the expectations communicated for marginalized student communities. Although the school board has not asked for a response during the open comment section of the meeting, they have mandated a full equity report.

The principal and school counselor have agreed to tackle this accusation of inequities across the school community together. If this were your school, where would you begin?

School Counselor:

- What are your immediate concerns regarding equity? What does your data show?

- Where might your school need to address equity issues?

- Are there occurrences aligned with these inequities that you have tried to address in your school?

- What happened as a result of your efforts?

- How do you begin to address the concerns with your principal?

Principal:

- How can you engage and/or empower your school counselor(s) in addressing the potential issues highlighted during this meeting? How can you elevate their voice among their instructional peers?

- How might you support their efforts across the school community?

- What do you share to your school community regarding the issues presented during this board meeting, and when?

- How do you hold the entire community accountable for ensuring equity and student achievement?

Assessing Data and Exploring Inequities

The scenario above requires the immediate attention of principals and school counselors. The purpose here is to implement continuous, internal, and iterative review experiences that ensure equity.

As you consider and assess each essential question below, define what data sources would be instrumental in answering each prompt. Also, be sure to note whether gaps in the data exist and whether your school community collects and shares those data points, whether it is accessible to you and your team, whether it is disaggregated to best understand student achievement, and where equity efforts are required.

Focus Area	Essential Question	Supporting Data
Academic Achievement	What are the indicators for academic achievement for the school?	Example: PSAT/NMSQT® scores, SAT® Scores
	What are the indicators for academic achievement described by student group?	
	What high-level courses are offered in the school? What is the participation in those courses by student group?	
	What does achievement look like for students in the most rigorous courses like AP®? What supports are offered to struggling students?	
	What interventions and supports are in place to support struggling students? What policies/structures are in place to ensure access to these supports?	
	What percentage of students have IEPs and defined supports? What do we know about the services and hours permitted for our students receiving Special Education services?	

Focus Area	Essential Question	Supporting Data
Instruction	What supports are in place to ensure instructional excellence for all teachers?	
	How are we ensuring that teacher quality is distributed equitably among the school and in the delivery of the academic program?	
Funding	What is the budget for the academic year? What is allocated for student support divisions/departments?	
	In order to ensure student success, what are the areas of greatest need not met by the budget? How do we know these needs exist?	
Discipline	How do our discipline rates compare to other schools? What is our suspension rate? What impact does this rate have on achievement?	
	What does the discipline rate look like for student groups? Are the rates similar? Are there trends in the data?	
	What does the attendance data look like for student groups? Are the rates similar? Are there trends in the data?	

Focus Area	Essential Question	Supporting Data
Student Support	What is our student-to-school counselor ratio? How does caseload impact access and engagement among students and families and their school counselor?	
	What is the capacity for students/families to meet one-on-one with school counselors? Where is the greatest need to ensure equity?	
	What are the greatest student needs/referrals? What interventions require the most time and attention to ensure student success?	
	How do we define "at risk"? What percentage of our students are "at risk"? How many of our students are likely to be retained at grade level?	
	What is our attendance data for the school? How does this data differ by grade-level and by student group? What are trends?	
	What percentage of our students have had prior exposure to trauma? What needs are being addressed within the school community? What resources are needed externally?	

Focus Area	Essential Question	Supporting Data
Student Success	What are our student outcome measures for college readiness? What data confirms and ensures students are college ready?	
	What are our student outcome measures for career readiness? What data confirms and ensures students are career ready?	
	How do college-ready and career-ready indicators/outcome measures compare across student groups?	
	Where is there need for intervention, greater programmatic investment, or evidence of promising practices?	

Now that you have assessed your data sources and gaps, use the following table to record your findings and conclusions as well as the questions that have emerged as a result of your analysis.

Focus Area	Essential Question	Findings/Conclusions from Data	Questions for Further Analysis
Academic Achievement	What are the indicators for academic achievement for the school?		
	What are the indicators for academic achievement described by student group?		
	What high-level courses are offered in our school? What is the participation in those courses by student group?		
	What does achievement look like for students in the most rigorous courses? What supports are offered to struggling students?		
	What interventions and supports are in place to support struggling students? What policies/structures are in place to ensure access to these supports?		
	What percentage of our students have IEPs and defined supports? What do we know about the services and hours permitted for our students receiving Special Education services?		
Instruction	What supports are in place to ensure instructional excellence for all teachers?		
	How are we ensuring that teacher quality is distributed equitably among the school and in the delivery of the academic program?		

Focus Area	Essential Question	Findings/Conclusions from Data	Questions for Further Analysis
Funding	What is the budget for the academic year? What is allocated for student support divisions/departments?		
	In order to ensure student success, what are the areas of greatest need not met by the budget? How do we know these needs exist?		
Discipline	How do our discipline rates compare to other schools, and within the school over time? What is our suspension rate? What implications does this rate have on achievement?		
	What does the discipline rate look like for student groups? Are the rates similar? Are there trends in the data?		
	What does the attendance data look like for student groups? Are the rates similar? Are there trends in the data?		
Student Support	What is our student-to-school counselor ratio? How does the caseload count impact access and engagement among students and families and their school counselor?		

Focus Area	Essential Question	Findings/Conclusions from Data	Questions for Further Analysis
Student Support	What is the capacity for direct services for students/families by school counselors? Where is there the greatest need to ensure equity?		
	What are the greatest student needs/referrals? What interventions require the most time and attention to ensure student success?		
	How do we define "at risk"? What percentage of our students are at risk? How many of our students are likely to be retained at grade level?		
	What is our attendance data for the school? How does this data differ by grade level and by student group? What are trends?		
	What percentage of our students have had prior exposure to trauma? What needs are being addressed within the school community? What resources are needed externally?		
Student Success	What are our student outcome measures for college readiness? What data confirms and ensures students are college ready?		
	What are our student outcome measures for career readiness? What data confirms and ensures students are career ready?		
	How do college-ready and career-ready indicators/outcome measures compare across student groups?		
	Where is there need for intervention, greater programmatic investment, or evidence of promising practices?		

Engaging Your Community

The engagement of the school community—internal and external stakeholders—allows for a comprehensive view of needs that are impacted by the work of the principal and school counselor.

The following tool is designed to identify and consider specific data you might collect in order to engage stakeholders across the community in ensuring equity. Use it to guide you as you identify contributors and stakeholders, define interventions, and assess needs.

SAMPLE NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND 360° FEEDBACK ANALYSIS CHART

Area of Interest/Concern: Completion of College Applications

Author: School Counselor

Stakeholder Groups (Broad)	Stakeholder Groups (Specific)	Current Data or Information	Current Obstacles or Challenges	Critical Questions
12th Grade Students	First-Generation College-Bound Students	70% of all seniors have completed at least one college application. Of the 30% without completed applications, 75% are first-generation college-bound students.	100% of students need to complete one application as a graduation requirement. Students' beliefs and/or perceptions of college affordability.	What supports are needed to ensure all students complete an application? What remains an obstacle for students? What other options are students considering that might keep them from applying to college? How might we address fears and myths?
Faculty and Staff	Faculty and Staff Serving 12th Grade Students	Are there particular classes or moments in time where the majority of students without completed applications are together? Is there flexibility in the schedule to support comprehensive supports for students?	Block scheduling; Competing priorities for instructional time; Differing beliefs on college access and readiness.	How might faculty and staff have conversations regarding college and support the college application process? What do they see as the challenge to application completion? What resources might they need to support application completion?

Stakeholder Groups (Broad)	Stakeholder Groups (Specific)	Current Data or Information	Current Obstacles or Challenges	Critical Questions
Families	12th Grade Students and Their Parents	What correspondence goes out to families that communicates graduation requirements?	Participation in traditional family night programs; scheduling for events to support parents' work and other commitments	How might the faculty and staff support families through the college admissions process? What are the most common questions of families as they support their students? What supports are desired and/or needed to ensure that students complete applications? What barriers still exists despite programming and current efforts?
College/University Partners		Which of our local colleges and universities might be helpful in organizing an application completion? How might our admissions colleagues help debunk myths regarding college applications?	Scheduling and Admissions Office staff capacity and interest	What supports are desired and/or needed to ensure that students complete applications?

Area of Interest/Concern: Completion of College Applications

Application: Consider Your School Community

Stakeholder Groups (Broad)	Stakeholder Groups (Specific)	Current Data or Information	Current Obstacles or Challenges	Critical Questions

Reflection Questions	
How might I work with the principal/school counselor to ensure that the needs of students and families are met?	
How might the faculty and staff be engaged to advance these efforts?	
How might we ensure student voices are heard?	
Which specific internal and external stakeholders will be instrumental in creating and executing solutions? How might we engage these individuals?	
How might our efforts impact the least advantaged students and families? What might we do to plan for and support those who are experiencing the greatest access and equity challenges?	
What will success look like if we are able to ensure equity for all of our students and their families?	

Assessing the Strengths and Needs of At-Risk Students

As you review data, it will be important to think about those students who are outside of the desired performance areas and those who are the furthest from opportunity. Your attention to students' strengths and resilience will be instrumental in the interventions to ensure success.

The following chart is designed to support principals and school counselors as you engage in a dialogue to best support students. This approach incorporates a strengths-based approach to student support, while utilizing data and assessing resource needs to ensure equity and student achievement. Be sure to define and consider multiple interventions and/or resources to address the needs of students.

After reviewing student achievement data, complete the following chart to define and consider implementation of interventions and/or resource allocations.

Student(s) and/or Student Group/ Community	Data: Performance Indicators and Measures	Students' Strengths and Evidence of Progress	Suggested Interventions and/or Resources: Ensuring Equity	Suggested Interventions and/or Resources: Ensuring Student Achievement

Summer Equity and Strategy Data Walks

The purpose of this exercise is to support conversations among principals and school counselors as you ensure equity and student outcomes through summer planning and close-of-year efforts.

After reviewing achievement data and student aspirations, this template will help you engage and empower stakeholders across the school community in support of student aspirations and desired outcomes.

Student(s) and/or Student Group/ Community	Data: Academic Performance Indicators and Measures	Students' Strengths/ Aspirations	Strategies to Advance Student Aspirations and Outcomes	Needed Resources

Cultivating Trust and Respect

Trust and respect are built through the alignment of purpose, beliefs, and a commitment to collegiality. Principals and school counselors acknowledge that mutual trust and respect are fundamental components of an effective working relationship. These components can begin with an awareness of professional expectations and competencies, support for professional growth, empowerment to execute programming, investment, and interest in the success of programmatic efforts.

The absence of trust and respect can lead to an environment where communication is lacking in consistency and quality, and where motivation is often questioned, further challenging the commitment to equity and student achievement. As you begin this section of the toolkit, it is recommended that you complete and review foundational activities included in earlier sections.

Relationship Self-Assessment

In the principal–school counselor relationship, a great deal of respect and trust comes from both parties having a clear understanding of what each wants and needs, and establishing a track record of doing what you say you will do. It is important to gain a clear picture of your current attitudes and beliefs as they relate to your colleagues.

Read each statement and check the response that best corresponds to the current state of your principal–school counselor relationship using the rating scale provided. Total the number of responses in each category and look for patterns. A lower score might suggest that trust building is a priority.

Relationship Self-Assessment for <u>Principal</u>:

1= Disagree   2= Somewhat Disagree   3= Somewhat Agree   4= Agree

	1	2	3	4
Relationship Development				
Mutual trust between the principal and school counselor(s)				
1. I am open to my school counselors' perspective and point of view.				
2. I can engage in a nonjudgmental relationship with my school counselor(s).				
3. I can create and maintain a collaborative relationship with my school counselor(s).				
4. I can empathize with the needs and challenges my school counselors face in designing, implementing, and evaluating the school counseling program.				
5. I can articulate how my relationship with my school counselor(s) can be useful in addressing the needs of the school.				
Mutual respect between the principal and school counselor(s)				
1. I have a deep understanding of the role and professional competencies of my school counselor(s).				
2. I am reliable, consistently including my school counselor(s) in implementing directives, decisions, or initiatives in a timely manner.				
3. I am dependable, willing to collaborate with school counselor(s) on the implementation of directives, decisions, or initiatives.				
4. I am responsible, guiding school counselor(s) in appropriate application of school policies and procedures that support implementation of directives, decisions, or initiatives.				
5. I demonstrate integrity, adhering to a code of morals and values in my interactions.				
6. I am honest, demonstrating veracity and fidelity in all aspects of my relationship with my school counselor(s).				
7. I am able to engage in constructive conflict resolution/management with my school counselor(s)				
Subtotal				
Leadership				
School counselor participation on school leadership teams				
1. I expect the school counselor(s) to be members of the school leadership team.				
2. I expect the school counselor(s) to contribute information in their area of expertise.				
3. I encourage the school counselor(s) to provide consultation in key areas to other members of the leadership team.				
4. I expect the school counselor(s) to participate in problem solving and decision making on the leadership team.				
5. I support school counselor(s) contributions in the implementation of leadership team directives.				

	1	2	3	4
Joint responsibility in the development of goals and metrics that indicate success				
1. I encourage school counselors to align their school counseling program vision/mission to that of the school.				
2. I share school data used for the school improvement plan with the school counselor(s).				
3. I share the goals of the school (and/or district/network) with the school counselor(s) for use in developing their goals.				
4. I expect the school counselors to develop action/implementation plans that are congruent to the goals of the school improvement plan.				
5. I expect school counseling program outcomes to relate to the metrics and goals of the school improvement team.				
A shared vision of what is meant by student success				
1. I collaborate with the school counselor(s) on initiatives that promote higher levels of student success.				
2. I collaborate with the school counselor(s) to promote values and a belief system that supports higher levels of student success.				
3. I can collaborate with the school counselor(s) in creating a schoolwide vision of student success.				
4. I can collaborate with the school counselor(s) to develop and implement initiatives focused on student success.				
5. I can collaborate with the school counselor(s) to demonstrate outcomes of student success.				
Shared decision making on initiatives that impact student success				
1. I am willing to engage in the process of collaborative decision making with the school counselor(s).				
2. I can foster shared decision making with the school counselor(s).				
3. I can weigh the risks in the shared decision making process with the school counselor(s).				
4. I can compromise in the shared decision making process with the school counselor(s).				
5. I can integrate the outcomes of shared decision making into schoolwide initiatives.				
Subtotal				
Collaborative Action				
Open communication that provides multiple opportunities for input to inform decision making				
1. I am willing to participate in collaborative communication with the school counselor(s).				
2. I am aware of my own communication style and the impact it has on the school counselors' input in the decision making process.				
3. I can value input that demonstrates divergent thinking in the school counselor(s).				
4. I provide both formal and informal opportunities for the school counselor(s) to give input in decisions that impact school goals and initiatives.				
5. I provide regular feedback to school counselors on their input in decision making that impacts school goals and initiatives.				

	1	2	3	4
Opportunities to share ideas on teaching, learning, and schoolwide educational initiatives				
1. I provide opportunities for school counselors to share ideas on teaching and learning.				
2. I provide opportunities for school counselors to share ideas that support schoolwide equity initiatives.				
3. I use formal methods of communication with school counselors to share ideas about teaching, learning, and schoolwide initiatives.				
4. I use informal methods of communication with my counselors to share ideas about teaching, learning, and educational initiatives.				
5. I use organized meetings such as faculty and department meetings, professional learning communities, and grade-level meetings to communicate with school counselors about teaching, learning, and schoolwide educational initiatives.				
Sharing information about needs within the school and the community				
1. I share school needs and information with school counselors.				
2. I can share information about the needs of the school to help school counselors create alignment with schoolwide initiatives.				
3. I know how to strategically share information with school counselors to encourage change in the school.				
4. I can create pathways of communication with and for school counselors to identify the needs of the community.				
5. I can sustain pathways of communication with and for school counselors.				
Subtotal				
Equity				
Sharing information about needs within the school and the community				
1. I acknowledge the importance of discussing issues of race, gender, socioeconomic status, and diverse needs of the community with school counselors.				
2. I can discuss issues of race, gender, and socioeconomic status related to student achievement with school counselors.				
3. I can collaboratively commit to addressing schoolwide issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion with school counselors.				
4. I can develop and implement initiatives that support the collaborative commitment to equity with school counselors.				
5. I can engage school counselors in leading ongoing professional development sessions focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion.				
Subtotal				
TOTALS				

Relationship Self-Assessment for <u>School Counselor</u>:

1= Disagree   2= Somewhat Disagree   3= Somewhat Agree   4= Agree

	1	2	3	4
Relationship Development				
Mutual trust between the principal and school counselor(s)				
1. I am open to my principal's perspective and point of view.				
2. I can engage in a nonjudgmental relationship with my principal.				
3. I can create and maintain a collaborative relationship with my principal.				
4. I can empathize with the needs and challenges my principal faces in running the school.				
5. I can articulate how my relationship with my principal can be useful in addressing the needs of the school.				
Mutual respect between the principal and school counselor(s)				
1. I am reliable, consistently following through with directives, decisions, or initiatives set forth by my principal, in a timely manner.				
2. I am dependable, willing to collaborate on the directives, decisions, or initiatives set forth by my principal, in a timely manner.				
3. I am responsible, following policy and procedures that support effective implementation of directives, decisions, or initiatives set forth by my principal.				
4. I demonstrate integrity, adhering to a code of morals and values in my interactions with my principal.				
5. I am honest, demonstrating veracity and fidelity in all aspects of my relationship with my principal.				
6. I am able to engage in constructive conflict resolution/management with my principal.				
Subtotal				
Leadership				
School Counselor participation on school leadership teams				
1. I am a member of the school leadership team.				
2. I contribute information in my area of expertise.				
3. I provide consultation in key areas to other members of the leadership team.				
4. I participate in problem solving and decision making on the leadership team.				
5. I contribute to the implementation of leadership team directives.				
Joint responsibility in the development of goals and metrics that indicate success				
1. I align the school counseling program with the vision/mission of the school.				
2. I review the data and goals of the school improvement plan prior to developing school counseling program goals.				
3. I create alignment between the goals of the school improvement plan and the school counseling program.				

	1	2	3	4
4. I develop an action/implementation plan that is congruent with the goals of the school improvement plan.				
5. I demonstrate program outcomes that relate to the metrics and goals of the school improvement team.				
A shared vision of what is meant by student success				
1. I collaborate with my principal on initiatives that promote higher levels of student success.				
2. I collaborate with my principal to promote values and a belief system that supports higher levels of student success.				
3. I can collaborate with my principal in creating a schoolwide vision of student success.				
4. I can collaborate with my principal to develop and implement initiatives focused on student success.				
5. I can collaborate with my principal to demonstrate outcomes of student success.				
Shared decision making on initiatives that impact student success				
1. I am willing to engage in the process of collaborative decision making with my principal.				
2. I can foster shared decision making with my principal.				
3. I can weigh the risks in the shared decision making process with my principal.				
4. I can compromise in the shared decision making process with my principal.				
5. I can integrate the outcomes of shared decision making into schoolwide initiatives.				
Subtotal				
Collaborative Action				
Open communication that provides multiple opportunities for input to inform decision making				
1. I am willing to participate in collaborative communication with my principal.				
2. I am aware of my own communication style and the impact it has on my principal's input in the decision making process.				
3. I can value input that demonstrates divergent thinking in my principal.				
4. I use both formal and informal opportunities to give my principal input in decisions that impact school goals and initiatives.				
5. I provide regular feedback to my principal on their input in decision making that impacts school goals and initiatives.				
Opportunities to share ideas on teaching, learning, and schoolwide educational initiatives				
1. I can create opportunities to share ideas on teaching and learning with my principal.				
2. I can create opportunities to share ideas that support schoolwide equity initiatives with my principal.				
3. I use formal methods of communication with my principal to share ideas about teaching, learning, and schoolwide initiatives.				

	1	2	3	4
4. I use informal methods of communication with my principal to share ideas about teaching, learning, and educational initiatives.				
5. I use organized meetings such as faculty and department meetings, professional learning communities, and grade-level meetings to communicate with my principal about teaching, learning, and schoolwide educational initiatives.				
Sharing information about needs within the school and the community	■	■	■	■
1. I am aware of the importance of sharing school needs with my principal.				
2. I can share information about the needs of the school to create principal–school counselor alignment in schoolwide initiatives.				
3. I know how to strategically share information with my principal to encourage change in the school.				
4. I can create pathways of communication with and for my principal to identify the needs of the community.				
5. I can sustain pathways of communication with and for my principal.				
Subtotal				
Equity	■	■	■	■
Sharing information about needs within the school and the community				
1. I acknowledge the importance of discussing issues of race, gender, socioeconomic status, and diverse needs of the community with my principal.				
2. I can discuss issues of race, gender, and socioeconomic status related to student achievement with my principal.				
3. I can collaboratively commit to addressing schoolwide issues of equity with my principal.				
4. I can develop and implement initiatives that support the collaborative commitment to equity with my principal.				
5. I can demonstrate outcomes that highlight the shared commitment to equity I have with my principal.				
Subtotal				
TOTALS				

Taking time to reflect on your current levels of trust and respect provides a baseline and highlights specific areas where there is work to be done.

Nonnegotiables for the Principal–School Counselor Relationship

Trust and respect remain the cornerstone of any relationship and are essential for ensuring equity and excellence for faculty, staff, and students and their families. Use the following to brainstorm norms and expectations for your work together. Revisit these prompts whenever there is a shift in the leadership or membership of the team.

Themes and Prompts	Your Responses
Professional Identity	
As I contribute to the success of the school community, I keep these things at the center of my work and professional identity …	
When I consider my professional identity, I want to be sure my colleagues experience me in these ways …	
As a professional, I want to be sure that all of my work shows that I value …	
As I lead, I want to be sure that I am seen as …	
Individual and Team Work	
I work best when I know I am …	
It is important that, as we do this work together, the following considerations remain a priority …	
As I think about the various teams I contribute to, am a part of, or accountable to, I want to be certain I do the following …	
In this professional community, I do hope that all of my colleagues hold these same truths …	
In order to ensure accountability, I expect all of my colleagues and myself to …	
I will be sure that I advocate for the following …	
I am going to name my power and/or privilege as I operate in my professional community and its impact on others in these ways …	

Themes and Prompts	Your Responses
Psychological Safety	
In order to ensure psychological safety in my work, it is important that the following things are honored …	
When conflicts arise, I want to be sure that we create space to do the following …	
It is important that we agree to the following approach as we talk about the issues we face or navigate …	
In our work together, it is important that we agree to the following approaches in order to navigate the power differential and decision right in our working relationship …	
When I make mistakes or experience failures, I want to have the chance to be able to …	
In times of uncertainty or change, it is important that we foster spaces for creativity that allow us to …	
Leadership	
As I lead, I want to be sure that I am seen as …	
All leaders within this school community should be sure to demonstrate the following attributes …	
All faculty/staff, within this school community, should be sure to demonstrate the following attributes …	
It is important that our leaders foster and maintain the following commitments to ensure trust and respect …	
It is important that our leaders are willing to address power, privilege, and the impacts of these concepts on the student and staff experience by …	
As leaders, we will continue to investigate ourselves and our comfort versus the lived experience of others in our community by …	

Actions, Interactions, Behaviors, and Beliefs: Assessing Trust and Respect

How others experience your leadership is an element of how trust and respect are maintained. It is important for both principals and school counselors to understand how your interactions and behaviors are understood and experienced by colleagues.

Complete the worksheet for your role by reading each statement and assessing your performance. For each "No" response, provide a brief explanation.

For Principals:

Statement	Yes	No
I have clearly communicated a vision for the school, for student achievement, and for the growth and development of all faculty and staff.		
I encourage input and participation in developing and assessing the school's mission and vision.		
I have a clear understanding of the professional competencies and expectations defined for school counselors.		
I have a clear understanding of school counselors' unique training, knowledge, and skills.		
I engage in conversations to determine where I can be helpful in contributing to school counselors' professional development, including specific goals and areas for improvement.		
My schoolwide goals are based on data about student needs and characteristics.		
I have knowledge of and support for the school counseling program.		
I create space and demonstrate support for the work of the school counselors within the school community.		
I am able to clearly communicate what I believe to be the best use of school counselors' time.		
The school counseling program plans fit into my vision for the school.		
I receive regular feedback and support from the school counselors and I am able to provide feedback in return.		
I engage school counselors as I monitor and question metrics tied to measures of success within the school community.		
I follow student data throughout the year and support modification of school counselors' plans as needed.		
I support school counselors personally and professionally.		

For School Counselors:

Statement	Yes	No
I have a clear understanding of the principal's vision for the school, for student achievement, and for the growth and continuous development of all faculty and staff.		
I am encouraged and asked for input and participation in developing and assessing the school's progress on mission and vision.		
I have a clear understanding of the professional competencies and expectations defined for principals.		
I have a clear understanding of the principal's unique training, knowledge, and skills.		
I engage in conversations to determine where I can be helpful in contributing to the principal's professional development, including specific goals and areas for improvement.		
The school counseling program goals are based on data about student needs and characteristics.		
I have knowledge of and offer support for the principal's plans.		
I create space and demonstrate support for the principal's work within the school community.		
I am able to clearly communicate what I believe to be the best use of school counselors' time to the principal.		
I feel that the school counseling program fits into the principal's vision for the school.		
I receive regular feedback and support from the principal and I am able to provide feedback in return.		
I engage the principal as I monitor and question metrics tied to measures of success within the school community.		
I follow student data throughout the year and support modification of the principal's plan as needed.		
I am able to support the principal personally and professionally.		

Once both principal and school counselor have completed your worksheets, compare and contrast responses, and determine where gaps emerge. Take time to discuss why these gaps have emerged and how to address them.

Reflection Questions:

- How will I ensure that my words and actions align to promote trust and respect?
- In what ways will I gather feedback? How will I utilize this feedback to improve?
- Who will hold me accountable to these commitments?

Building Trust: Team Checklist

A number of practices and structures cultivate trust and respect, according to the data that informed this toolkit. The purpose of this exercise is to assess your own behaviors and how others experience you and your leadership.

Each team member should complete this exercise, independently and anonymously. The responses should then be tabulated for the group, capturing the number of responses for each category. Be sure to address statements where there is a significant number of "Never" responses, and/or where the comments underscore misalignment or a counter-narrative the experience described in the statement.

Statement	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never	Comments
Our team focuses first and foremost on equity and achievement for all students.					
Our team studies data to understand issues concerning our students.					
Our team members clearly understand their own roles in the school.					
Our principal understands the role and function of school counselors and the school counseling team.					
Our school counselors understand the role and function of the principal.					
Our team creates opportunities to discuss and implement solutions to problems.					
Our team communicates regularly and efficiently, even about the most difficult issues.					
Our team is consistent in addressing conflict or having challenging conversations.					

Statement	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never	Comments
We support one another as professionals.					
The principal gives the school counselors a great deal of latitude and support.					
The school counselors support the principal in public settings; if there is disagreement with a decision, the school counselor finds time to discuss it privately.					
The principal supports the school counselors in public settings; if there is disagreement with a decision or an approach, the principal finds time to discuss it privately with the school counselor.					
Our team members can rely on consistent, thorough, and timely follow through.					
Our school counselors are meticulous in managing their commitments and duties, including tasks they volunteer for and assigned tasks.					
Our school leaders are consistent and thorough with policies and practices.					
Our school leaders are meticulous in managing their commitments and duties, including tasks they volunteer for and assigned tasks.					
Our team members follow procedures and avoid actions that undercut one another's position or authority.					
Our team members are willing and make time to discuss procedures or needed actions that may be in conflict with the position or authority of a colleague.					

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What defines exemplary teamwork?

2. As you review the data from this exercise, what are your thoughts on your teamwork?

3. What evidence might validate your teamwork? Are there particular equity and student achievement outcomes that will support the responses seen in this exercise?

4. Review the collective result of "Sometimes" and "Never" responses. What are some of the trends? How do these areas/items impact your work?

5. What action steps would you suggest to move the "Sometimes" and/or "Never" responses to "Always"?

Defining Trust in the Context of Our School

Building trust isn't easy, in part because it means different things in different contexts, and it requires different facets for different roles.

In no particular order, the table below highlights 20 aspects of trust. As you rank these attributes, 1 to 5, 1 being least important and 5 being most important, share any initial reflections that are critical to the principal–school counselor relationship.

Aspects of Trust	Ranking	Reflections
Credibility		
Consistency		
Reliability		
Honesty		
Security		
Belief		
Courtesy		
Competence		
Open-Mindedness		
Dependability		
Collegiality		
Motivation		
Attitude		
Flexibility		
Discretion		
Respect		

Aspects of Trust	Ranking	Reflections
Safety		
Willingness to Share		
Ability to Listen		
Focus on Others		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		

RECOMMENDED DISCUSSION

Identify a neutral moderator to collate and average the rankings by principal and school counselor. Compare the responses and averages, and then make note of and discuss the differences. Consider the following questions for your discussion:

1. What are the differences in our responses?

    a. Where are there commonalities?

2. Which aspects of trust are absolutely required for an effective working relationship?

3. Are there any aspects of trust that might conflict with another (i.e., courtesy and discretion versus honesty)?

    a. How do we recognize and acknowledge these conflicts?

    b. How do we work through these challenges to ensure trust and respect?

4. How might discrepancies in our performance of trust and respect impact the overall school community?

    a. What specific areas might impact equity and student achievement?

    b. How do we work through these discrepancies to ensure equity and student achievement?

    c. How will we hold each other accountable to these commitments?

5. Is there a difference between personal and professional trust?

   a. How do you define each and is there space for personal trust in the principal–school counselor relationship?

6. How important is trust to one another in the principal–school counselor relationship?

   a. Is trust seen as a mutually important function of the work?

   b. Why or why not?

Sustaining Trust: Clarifying Expectations and Supporting Performance

As it pertains to the principal–school counselor relationship, it is important to have clarifying discussions to review expectations, performance, and needed supports. In particular, it is helpful to ensure that these conversations sustain trust in the principal–school counselor relationship—honoring strategies for effective communication, professional competencies, and limitations of personnel and organizational resources.

School counselors and principals should strive to collaborate with a shared intention to meet the needs of students. There may be times when school counselors and principals don't share the same ideas on how to achieve shared expectations. Transparent communication is crucial to building trust within the principal–school counselor relationship. Below you will find some vignettes illustrating how to facilitate crucial conversations to instill and sustain communication and trust between school counselors and principals.

Vignette 1

Given the new push and district expectations to teach STEM lessons, a school counselor is asked by the principal to teach weekly makerspace lessons. The school counselor is baffled by the request since it doesn't fit within the role expectations of a school counselor. The counselor's initial internal response was, "That's not my job." The school counselor didn't want to come across as insubordinate and wanted to keep a positive relationship with her principal.

After careful consideration the school counselor talked with the principal about using the regularly scheduled counseling lesson class time to incorporate STEM activities that also met the curriculum expectations set for the role of a school counselor.

Vignette 2

With a rapidly growing number of students choosing to learn in a virtual setting, a district has decided to keep students assigned to their regularly assigned school counselor. This gives school counselors a caseload split between seated and virtual students. Principals are encouraged by district leaders to give school counselors time in their schedules to work with virtual students. A school counselor is concerned that she doesn't have time to carve out of her schedule to meet the needs of virtual students since she has lunchroom duties for approximately 2 hours every day.

The school counselor works with the principal to adjust the time spent in the lunchroom each day to provide services to her virtual students, teachers, and families. The school counselor still helps in the lunchroom, but her time spent in that setting is decreased to an hour a day.

In these vignettes, the principal and school counselor are discussing activities traditionally outside of the scope of the school counselor function. The following resource offers a framework for how to have a similar conversation within the principal–school counselor relationship.

Strategies for Clarifying Expectations and Supporting Performance	From Strategy to Action: What Is Your Script?
Center Discussion	Revisit your norms: restate your shared purpose statement for the principal–school counselor relationship;
Ensure Energy for Dialogue	Ask, "Is now a good time for us to connect on XYZ subject matter?"
Share Capacity and Concern	Follow up from the initial point of contact and restate what was shared and your specific concerns and/or limitations.
Ask for Clarity	Ask, "Can you share with me some of the goals that you have regarding this effort? I want to be sure I best understand how I can be helpful."
Demonstrate Support	Share your interest in the goal/objective while also offering any previously held recommendations/suggestions; consider direct alignment to equity and student achievement when framing support.
Seek Middle Ground	After restating goals and expectations, share how your capacity is challenged in meeting this goal; ask, "How might we meet in the middle? Is there a way that we can both achieve our goals in support of our students and program?"
Foster Agreement	Reflect back what was shared in the discussion and define next steps; inquire how you might follow up with one another to ensure success and support for both the goals/objectives defined and your shared concerns and limitations of capacity.

Self-Reflection: When Trust Is Challenged

In the space provided, describe an experience that has challenged trust within the principal–school counselor relationship. In your description, describe what you believe to be the cause of the *trust challenge*. Describe the incident from your point of view, detailing assumptions, obstacles, and a possible way forward.

Use the following questions to capture the essence of the trust failure and collect specific items that can assist with discussions to repair the relationship.

1. How has this incident impacted you and your team?

2. What do you wish to say about the matter? What needs to be heard?

3. What do you believe is your responsibility in this matter? What can change because of your leadership?

    a. For the items/efforts within your control, what are your next steps?

    b. What does follow through look like?

4. What do you believe isn't your responsibility in this matter? What is outside your scope or control?

    a. In addressing the items/efforts outside your control, what needs to be heard and understood? What needs to be changed?

    b. What does follow through look like?

5. What needs to be repaired? How do you suggest these repairs happen?

6. How might trust and respect within the relationship and/or team remain a priority? How can this commitment be assured?

7. How do you wish to handle the next steps? What support do you need in addressing the failure of trust?

8. What do you believe might help prevent a repeat of this situation?

When working toward a more equitable educational experience for your students, trust is essential. By addressing issues of trust and respect, you'll find it easier to have honest conversations and make difficult decisions that result in equitable outcomes.

Leadership, Part I: Collaborating and Sharing Decision Making

Leadership remains a critical facet of the principal–school counselor relationship. The concepts discussed prior to this section—equity, effective communication, trust, and respect—are woven into the tapestry of leadership. This section examines five leadership perspectives—**Distributed Leadership; Entrepreneurial Leadership; Servant Leadership; Strategic Leadership;** and **Transformational Leadership**—and provides an opportunity for principal and school counselor reflections on each approach. From these perspectives, you may find new strategies to ensure collaboration and shared decision making approaches among principals and counselors. The focus on leadership equips principals and school counselors with frameworks instrumental for the development of new approaches or to advance changes within the school community.

Leadership Approaches: Advancing Collaboration and Shared Decision Making

In *Building Ranks* (2018, 140), NASSP emphasizes that collaborative leadership is essential to create a learning environment that can "enable decision making that is informed by diverse perspectives and implementation that is enabled by buy-in, providing stronger learning opportunities for students." *Building Ranks* also charges school leaders to "embrace relationships as foundational to dynamic learning" and to recognize that their own relationships with students, staff, and other stakeholders "serve as a model and set the tone for all other relationships" within the learning community (2018, 80–81). Together, the emphasis on collaborative leadership and strong relationships can help strengthen the principal–school counselor relationship in ways that help ensure equity and student achievement.

The acknowledgment and alignment among perspectives, values, and language are critical for the success of any relationship. The following reflection questions help to ensure clarity for principals and school counselors as they advance their working relationship. From this reflective exercise, principals and school counselors have an opportunity to establish common language, expectations, and understandings to strengthen their work and to advance equity.

Establishing common expectations and language:

1. Guiding Light: When we think of equity at our school, what is our common framework and understanding? How will we ensure equity is a reality across our learning community?

2. Our Nonnegotiables: What matters to us? What should we see in daily practice? How will we ensure accountability in our actions and commitments?

3. Our Common Language: What do we mean when we use the following terms: equality; equity; school leader/principal; school counselor; college counselor; etc.? How do these definitions inform expectations? Can we find agreement on these terms/concepts?

4. Our Continued Development: How do we measure our progress? Where will we find evidence of our success throughout the school community? How will we communicate our progress, successes, and challenges?

ASCA provides a comprehensive resource that explores leadership for school counselors with reflective exercises for self-assessment and detailing one's growth as a leader within the counseling profession (see *School Counselor Leadership: The Essential Practice (2013)*). ASCA also addresses leadership in all standards, including:

B-PF 7. Demonstrate leadership through the development and implementation of a school counseling program

a. Identify sources of power and authority and formal and informal leadership

b. Identify and demonstrate professional and personal qualities and skills of effective leaders

c. Apply a model of leadership to a school counseling program

d. Create the organizational structure and components of an effective school counseling program aligned with the ASCA National Model

e. Apply the results of a school counseling program assessment to inform the design and implementation of the school counseling program

f. Use leadership skills to facilitate positive change for the school counseling program

g. Define the role of the school counselor and the school counseling program in the school crisis plan

h. Serve as a leader in the school and community to promote and support student success

i. Participate in the school improvement process to bring the school counseling perspective to the development of school goals

Five Approaches to Leadership

This next activity calls for a reflection on leadership philosophies and how each might impact collaboration and shared decision making in both the school community and the principal–school counselor relationship.

The following five approaches underscore opportunities for action and reflection: **Distributed Leadership; Entrepreneurial Leadership; Servant Leadership; Strategic Leadership;** and **Transformational Leadership.** Review each leadership approach and consider the direct implications for practice. Specifically examine how each approach informs the principal–school counselor relationship as well as the essence of collaboration and shared decision making.

Leadership Approach	Fundamental Elements of Leadership Approach	Where is this present in my school?
Distributed Leadership	▪ represents an understanding and appreciation for the interdependence and collective power of individual expertise in the practice of leading (Spillane 2004) ▪ leaders are seen across and throughout organizations, based on their expertise and unique contributions to the whole—"leadership *practice* is viewed as a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers and their situation" (Spillane 2005, 144) ▪ "recognizes the important contributions made by multiple individuals at different levels of the school organization … acknowledges that it is no longer feasible for one administrator to serve as the leader for a school community without substantial participation of other educators" (Guthrie, Schuermann 2010, 42)	
Entrepreneurial Leadership	▪ represents a leadership orientation that focuses on cultivating and advancing unique ideas, solutions, and/or improvements within the school community ▪ leaders maintain extraordinary communication skills in order to win the support of stakeholders to support implementation of new ideas, yet remain intrinsically motivated to see efforts through to completion ▪ approach welcomes a higher tolerance for risks in the design and implementation of new efforts/ opportunities, while also building out various plans to assess risk and determine feasibility of an effort (Hentschke 2009, 151–154)	

Leadership Approach	Fundamental Elements of Leadership Approach	Where is this present in my school?
Servant Leadership	▪ represents an approach that is centered on the premise that service is first and leadership, is second: "It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (Greenleaf 2008, 15) ▪ leaders remain interested in and aware of the success of those served before self, thus the purpose of leadership is to ensure and cultivate the best for others ▪ approach focuses on the outcomes of leadership—"The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types … The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? *And,* what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, will they not be further deprived?" (Greenleaf 2008, 15)	
Strategic Leadership	▪ represents an approach that focuses on the direction and action that leaders define on behalf of the organization ▪ leaders are instrumental in aligning the people and the resources/intentions of the organization to the strategy, while also measuring success and advancement of strategy ▪ approach focuses on the alignment established across the organization, needed interventions to ensure success, as well as the development of competencies and capabilities necessary to ensure the success (Davies & Davies 2009, 15)	

Leadership Approach	Fundamental Elements of Leadership Approach	Where is this present in my school?
Transformational Leadership	• similar to **strategic leadership**, this approach includes ensuring a clear and shared understanding of the activities and goals within the organization, while developing people and strengthening culture (Leithwood & Jantzi 2009, 46-48) • "leaders create environments in which each individual feels empowered to fulfill his or her needs as a member of a productive learning community" (Guthrie & Schuermann 2010, 41) • leaders are often seen as *charismatic*, thus appealing to followers on an emotional level while communicating a clear set of values, modeling expected performance, fostering inspiration through vision, and ensuring a level of agreement among members of the organization (Guthrie & Schuermann 2010, 41)	

REFLECTIONS:

1. Which of these leadership approaches best aligns with your professional identity and presence?

2. How would you describe the principal–school counselor relationship with regard to these leadership approaches?

   a. Where has there been great success in the leadership approach?

   b. What are the areas for growth and improvement with regard to the leadership approach?

3. Of these five approaches, define how you might utilize each for different purposes. When do you find it best to use one approach over the other?

School-Based Leadership Team (SLT)

The *Building Ranks* practice-based framework developed by NASSP highlights strategies that foster collaborative leadership in addressing the domains of building culture and leading learning. Of the strategies discussed, the **School-Based Leadership Team (SLT)** is recommended for principals to create structures where staff members are able to work together (NASSP 2018). Through these structures for collaborative leadership, staff members are able to step into leadership roles and to design initiatives that will advance the school's vision, mission, and values (NASSP 2018).

School-based leadership remains a critical factor in the support of student achievement and the success of the school community. The **SLT** has the greatest potential for impact and excellence when it includes the voice and perspective of internal stakeholders—and the communities they serve. Principals understand that the voice of the school counselor is critical to the success of the team and attention to student outcomes; however, data suggest that school counselors' voices and perspectives are often absent from these teams.

Using the table below, reflect on the composition of the **SLT**. As you complete this table, consider where there may be opportunities for change, growth, and continuous improvement. As you consider the structure and composition of your SLT, consider the five leadership approaches and perspectives defined within this section: **Distributed Leadership, Entrepreneurial Leadership, Servant Leadership, Strategic Leadership,** and **Transformational Leadership.**

SLT Member Title	Constituents Served: Direct Indirect	Direct Impact (Number)	Professional Expertise	Resources Networks
Example: Dean of Students, 9–10	Direct: Students/Families; Indirect: Teachers, Assistant Principals, Principal	500 Students	PBIS Certification; Restorative Practices; Coach	Districtwide PBIS network; PTA leadership

1. What is the principal's leadership approach and/or philosophy?

   a. From the principal's perspective, what are the most important characteristics when considering the construction of the SLT?

   b. How does the principal's leadership approach get reflected in the communication approach? How does the principal's leadership approach get reflected in measures of accountability and leadership priority?

2. Where might we need the specific strengths and insights of the school counselor on the SLT?

   a. What are the specific roles and contributions for each member of the SLT?

3. How are we building pipelines for leadership for school counselors and other future SLT members?

4. How can the school counselor help ensure students are represented within the SLT discussions?

Considerations for School Counselor Leadership: Five Essential Characteristics

The table below is an adaptation of the resources in *School Counselor Leadership: The Essential Practice.* As defined in the text, scholars offer five characteristics of school counselor leadership: **resourceful problem solving, systemic collaboration, interpersonal influence, social justice advocacy,** and **professional efficacy**. Consider each leadership characteristic and reflect on its relationship to your own practice.

Leadership Characteristic	Reflections: Evidence from Your Practice
Resourceful problem solving: *School counselors' ability to secure services and programs needed to improve student achievement*	
Systemic collaboration: *School counselors' ability to actively work with stakeholders, implement comprehensive school counseling programs, and align services with the instructional vision and mission*	
Interpersonal influence: *School counselors' frequency in promoting the school counseling program, motivating followers, and accomplishing goals that have schoolwide or districtwide impact*	
Social justice advocacy: *School counselors' ability to challenge the status quo to advocate for all students*	
Professional efficacy: *School counselors' perspective and belief in themselves as leaders and the confidence needed to effect change*	

(Young & Miller Kneale 2013, 19–30)

Leadership, Part II: Advancing Student Achievement

Principals and school counselors are critical partners in the advancement of equity and student achievement as your work focuses on the success of students in and out of the classroom, as well as accessing and directing any necessary supports to ensure success. This section focuses on collaborative opportunities for principals and school counselors and the efforts necessary to ensure academic achievement for all students.

Collaborative Leadership Self-Assessment: Shared Responsibility for Student Success

In the *Building Ranks* framework, NASSP offers three strategies that can foster collaborative leadership in ways that collectively achieve the vision of learning for all:

1. Encouraging staff members and students to step into leadership roles;

2. Trusting and supporting staff members, students, and families when they take calculated risks and initiate ideas aligned with the school's vision, mission, and values (see **Articulating Purpose, Vision, and Mission**); and

3. Creating structures allowing staff members to work together. (2018, 140).

Within the context of the principal–school counselor relationship, collaborative leadership requires a high level of shared commitment and responsibility, especially in ensuring equity and advancing student achievement. Use the following self-assessments to reflect on your commitment to collaborative leadership. Responses from these self-assessments will be instrumental in defining and confirming leadership practices within your school community.

For the following prompts, please respond either "Yes" or "No." Make note of the responses for which you answer "No" as you consider action steps you might take to improve your leadership competencies.

School Counselor Self-Assessment

School Counselor Participation on School Leadership Team	Yes	No
I participate on the school leadership team.		
I contribute relevant information in my expertise area to the school leadership team.		
I contribute to key decisions that impact student achievement.		
Joint Responsibility in the Development of Goals and Metrics	**Yes**	**No**
I align my school counseling program with the vision and mission of the school/principal.		
The school counseling program and activities support schoolwide goals and metrics.		
I demonstrate program outcomes that relate to the metrics and goals of my school.		
I develop an action plan that is congruent to the goals established with my principal.		
I solicit input from teachers, students, families, administrators, and community stakeholders in the development of metrics and goals for the school counseling program.		
Shared Decision Making on Initiatives That Impact Student Success	**Yes**	**No**
I use outcomes data to advocate for positive change in school policies.		
I implement change to foster student success.		
I take a leadership role in facilitating schoolwide change.		

Principal Self-Assessment

School Counselor Participation on School Leadership Team	Yes	No
I include and engage school counselors in my school leadership team.		
I value relevant information from my counselors in their area of expertise when it is presented to the leadership team.		
I welcome and encourage my counselors to contribute to key decisions that impact student achievement.		
Joint Responsibility in the Development of Goals and Metrics	**Yes**	**No**
I ensure that the school counseling program aligns with the vision and mission of the school.		
I ensure that the school counseling programs' activities support schoolwide goals and metrics.		
I monitor program outcomes that relate to the metrics and goals of the school and the school counseling program.		
I review the school counseling program action plans to make sure that they are congruent with the established school program goals.		
I solicit input from teachers, students, families, administrators, and community stakeholders in the development of metrics and goals for the school counseling program.		
Shared Decision Making on Initiatives That Impact Student Success	**Yes**	**No**
I use outcomes data to make positive change in school policies.		
I implement change to foster student success.		
I take a leadership role in facilitating schoolwide change.		

Self-Assessment Review

Review your rating in the three areas of your self-assessment. Prioritize the area in which you need to improve and define action steps toward improving this leadership competency. Consider the manner in which others experience your leadership as well as needed resources and/or supports.

Leadership Competencies for Personal/Professional Improvement	Action Steps for Leadership Development	Resources Needed for Leadership Development

Leadership and Student Achievement

As you work to advance equity and student achievement, the principal–school counselor relationship requires acknowledgment and discussion of varying perspectives on student achievement.

Read through each quote below and briefly describe how you would relate to it, in your role as principal or school counselor, in advancing and improving equity and student achievement. Collate responses and, if necessary, engage a neutral colleague to foster discussion. Use these prompts as a means to advance your shared purpose and the impact of the principal–school counselor relationship.

Leadership	Principal's View on Equity and Student Achievement	School Counselor's View on Equity and Student Achievement
The difference between the impossible and possible lies in a person's determination.		
Leaders instill in their school-based staff a hope for success and a belief in themselves. Positive leaders empower people to accomplish their goals.		
Nothing limits achievement like small thinking; nothing expands possibilities like unleashed imagination.		

Leadership	Principal's View on Equity and Student Achievement	School Counselor's View on Equity and Student Achievement
Believe in yourself and act on your convictions.		
A real leader faces the music, even when they don't like the tune.		
Good leaders develop through a never-ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience.		

Establishing a Culture of Inquiry: School Counselors as Thought Partners for the Academic Program

Culture of Inquiry is an approach to peer-based and facilitated activities that advance the success of schools and student achievement. In a culture of inquiry, school counselors, teachers, students, and administrators all share a quest for personalized and collective learning, asking everyone to observe, be curious, and ask robust questions. This approach requires principals to communicate clarity of purpose and expectations. Additionally, understanding inquiry approaches such as professional learning communities and essential norms and expectations create team alignment and provide the necessary foundation for effective principal–school counselor decision making for student achievement, equity, and success.

The following table offers four possible foundational strategies that can be implemented within schools. Principals, with the support of school counselors, should consider each strategy to **Culture of Inquiry** and provide a brief reflection on the specific areas of interest or concern for your school. Consider the manner in which your school counselors are instrumental as thought partners for the academic program.

Strategy	Reflection
Professional Learning Community: Peer Engagement Peer Feedback Loops	
Student Support and Academic Achievement: Needed Interventions Response to Intervention	
Teacher Support and Academic Achievement: Needed Interventions for Students Students' Response to Intervention	
Commitment to Continuous Improvement: Organizational Learning Capacity Building School Transformation	
Other: Consider specific dimensions of School Improvement Plan or Accreditation/Re-Accreditation efforts	

Culture of Inquiry

There is great synergy and commitment within professional learning communities that engage in continuous improvement exercises. One such approach is through a *Culture of Inquiry*. Some may assign "shadowing" or "learning walks" to this approach, but the purpose remains to lean into our curiosities, points of evidence, and possibilities, while also centering our commitment to equity and student achievement. The conditions for such work do require a level of trust, communication, collaboration, and mutual respect that must be present in all facets of the school climate and culture.

Imagine a new principal introducing the ideas of Culture of Inquiry within your school community. As they introduce the topic, there are some colleagues who seem excited about sharing their space with their peers, whereas others might find it to be disruptive and possibly punitive. However, the overall sentiment is that this experience is to best support student achievement, whether it be through informing the success of interventions or highlighting ways in which principals, teachers, and school counselors can best collaborate to ensure the success of students.

If this were your school community:

- What do you believe would be the immediate reactions of teachers?

- Of your instructional colleagues, who do you believe would open their classrooms for their peers to visit, and what about those peers (or your relationship with those peers) can help inform greater implementation?

- How might you create a welcoming environment and exchange for these experiences?

- What are obstacles or challenges to this work?

- How might the principal and school counselor collaborate to ensure a successful experience, with the student at the center of the work?

Establishing a Culture of Inquiry: Essential Norms and Expectations

Successful implementation of a Culture of Inquiry requires principals to clearly establish norms and expectations. In doing so, it is important that this experience remains rooted in learning and the power of collegiality; this experience shouldn't resemble an evaluative experience. The following highlights essential norms for the implementation of a Culture of Inquiry approach: **Trust, Collaboration, Support, and Communication**. Use the table to consider and note key messages and structures needed to ensure the success of a Culture of Inquiry experience.

Norms and Expectations	Reflection, Message, and Structures
Professional Trust	Messages: *As educators, we remain lifelong learners and value the opportunity to engage with and support one another.* *The experts are in the room and this experience gives us the opportunity to share our strategies and best practices.*
Collaboration Among Peers and Departments	Structures: *How might the principal carve out time for collaboration and planning?* *What are some of the obstacles that stand in the way for a productive experience?* *When might we be able to share our learning and debrief with one another?*
Support for School-Based Professionals	Reflection: *What are some of the ways in which we can continue to sharpen our approach to ensure equity and student achievement for all?* *How can the principal and/or school counselor be instrumental in creating capacity for the work?*

Norms and Expectations	Reflection, Message, and Structures
Communication	Messages: *Our Culture of Inquiry is not an evaluative assessment of your work; instead, it provides a learning opportunity for colleagues and a chance to assess strategies and supports needed for students.* *We maintain a professional learning community through our willingness to learn from one another—this experience is designed to highlight our experts, identify and assess the impact of interventions for our students.*
Other	

Announcing a Culture of Inquiry Experience

The table below offers an action plan approach for the design and implementation of a Culture of Inquiry experience. The expectation is for the school counselor to engage as a thought-partner alongside the principal as it pertains to the academic experience within the school. From this experience, it is expected that the principal and school counselor will engage in data-driven decision making and conversations pertaining to equity and student achievement. For example, a **Culture of Inquiry Experience** might focus on the impact of project-based learning in career-oriented elective courses.

	Key Actions of Principal and School Counselor
1	Principal engages key stakeholders to test messaging, approach, and time necessary to execute the purpose of the Culture of Inquiry organizational learning experience Principal collects feedback from key stakeholders and makes necessary adjustments to the design of the initiative before full school introduction
2	Principal engages entire Professional Learning Community (PLC) to introduce the norms and expectations of the Culture of Inquiry experience, **at the start of the academic year or term** Principal checks for understanding and agreement on the design and implementation of this learning experience and its alignment to accreditation/reaccreditation experiences, as defined by school authorizer
3	Principal meets with teachers and school counselors as a follow-up to the PLC announcement to reiterate norms and expectations, clarifying that the inquiry walks are not evaluative
4	School counselors and teachers meet to define protocol, including specific items and/or experiences to observe School counselors and teachers will define a list of specific "look-for" items; these look-for items might include student engagement, response to interventions, and other matters for the point-in-time of inquiry walk (see Sample Framework below)
5	Prior to inquiry walk, school counselors and teachers should connect if there are emerging student concerns that would further define look-fors to be included in the observation experience, or prior to the inquiry walk
6	School counselors complete the Culture of Inquiry experience and meet with teachers for debrief conversations School counselors will make note of specific considerations that might be helpful for needed student interventions and supports for academic success and/or other needs to advance student achievement
7	Principals connect with school counselors and teachers to hear feedback on the overall experience and key takeaways that might inform the work of the school-site leadership team; Principal, along with school counselors and teachers, designs and implements strategies to support student achievement and teacher success and these plans are kept as evidence for accreditation efforts. These plans can also be used as artifacts for Recognized ASCA Model Program distinction.

Culture of Inquiry: Sample Framework

School Counselor	
Teacher(s)	
Class Period(s)	
Purpose of Inquiry	
Visual of Space	Provide a description or depiction of the classroom space.
Evidence of Engagement	Student Engagement: Describe student engagement in the activity.
Evidence of Intervention	What data/evidence informs the needed intervention? How will we know the intervention is working? What does success look like?
Wonderings	What questions remain or have emerged as a result of this visit? What data will be helpful to best support the student's academic achievement?
Reflections	How can we best support the student to ensure success? How can we best support the teacher?

Principal–School Counselor Strategic Planning Tool

A strategic plan enables stakeholders to develop and agree on the same priorities and focus on the same path to improvement. The tool below recommends strategies and actions to guide discussions for improving student outcomes.

Strategy Phase	Recommended Actions	Discussion: Questions/Concerns
Collect, analyze, and interpret data to identify gaps in student outcomes.	Examine data elements that describe student outcomes, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, family income, and other relevant measures, in order to identify student, school, and community needs. Analyze data to identify inequities.	
Develop and prioritize measurable, data-driven goals aligned with school, district, state, and national goals.	Goals should be specific, quantifiable, time-sensitive statements of what is going to be achieved and when it will be achieved.	
Develop strategies, action plans, and interventions to meet goals.	Develop solutions and interventions that can be successfully implemented within the context of the school and community and will gain support from stakeholders.	
Develop and implement the plans for each goal, including benchmarks to monitor progress.	Develop multilevel action plans for each goal. Identify action items, the specific individuals responsible for implementation and key milestones, and timelines that correspond to each goal.	
Collect and report outcome data to all stakeholders, and adjust strategies and interventions as needed based on results.	Collect results data to determine whether the goals were reached and if strategies, interventions, or implementations need to be adjusted. Present results to administrators and other stakeholders.	
Institutionalize policies, practices, and procedures to sustain gains in equity.	Identify the strategies and interventions that result in positive student outcomes and equity gains to make them standard operating procedures within the context of the school.	

School Counselor Leadership Planning Worksheet

This exercise allows principals and school counselors to work together to identify at least one activity (preferably more) in which each school counselor can serve in a leadership capacity. Note that this isn't a detailed work plan; rather, consider this a resource for creating a summary of activities that each school counselor will lead and essential resources to support success.

Activity	Goal	School Counselor Leader	Activities	Timeframe (Per Activity)	Measurement (Per Activity)	Needed Resources (Per Activity)
Example: Financial Aid Forms	100% of Seniors Complete the FAFSA®	Counselor A	Master Calendar; Parent Newsletter; Training for Advisory Teachers; After-School Workshops; Family Meetings; Document Checklists			

Supporting a New Principal or New School Counselor

Welcoming a new principal or new school counselor is an exciting time for a school community. It requires planning and support, as well as an unwavering commitment to the success of the school community and its stakeholders. A new principal or school counselor can provide opportunities to reassess the strategic direction of the school in order to advance and accelerate student achievement. And the onboarding experience is important in developing the foundation of the principal–school counselor relationship.

Transition Traps

As a new principal or a new school counselor joins your school community, it is important to familiarize them with the culture, expectations, and outcomes for the leaders, learners, and educators. The following table highlights unique challenges that often surface during the transition of a new team member. The common pitfalls captured here illustrate the need for direct strategy and alignment in practice.

Use the table below to guide your leadership transition efforts—this tool can be helpful as you either transition to a new role or if you are supporting someone transitioning into your school community.

Common Pitfalls During Leadership Transitions	Strategies to Avoid Leadership Transition Pitfalls	Personal Commitments and Reflections: What does this look like for me? How do I put these strategies into action?
Sticking with what you know	Embrace new competencies, innovations and efforts that remain responsive to the needs of the new school community	
Falling prey to the 'action imperative'	Embrace listening and learning in order to engage community and build consensus to advance your initiatives	
Setting unrealistic expectations	Negotiate and implement clear, achievable objectives with your supervisor and direct reports	
Attempting to do too much	Establish a critical mass of people and resources in order to remain focused on key initiatives	

Common Pitfalls During Leadership Transitions	Strategies to Avoid Leadership Transition Pitfalls	Personal Commitments and Reflections: What does this look like for me? How do I put these strategies into action?
Coming in with "the" answer	Engage people to understand what is going on and create opportunities to develop support for good solutions	
Engage in the wrong type of learning	Invest time in learning about the cultural and political dimensions of the work and school community, not just operational and instructional efforts	
Neglecting horizontal relationships	Engage faculty and staff to best understand and build supportive alliances with peers and stakeholders, coupled with vertical leadership functions	

(Watkins 2013, 5–6)

College Board has many resources in place to support the transition of a new school counselor. Those new to the profession can explore the College Board **professional development page** to obtain access to a wealth of professional development opportunities, information regarding our programs and services, as well as resources to support their learning.

Advanced Strategies for the New Leader: Principals and School Counselors

The new leader must invest time and energy in their transition to ensure success and sustainability. The following reflective tool offers an action plan that can be modified and implemented by new principals and school counselors.

As you reflect on your transition, take a close look at the strategies recommended. Use these strategies to inform your action items—be sure to offer as much detail as possible, including measures of accountability and resources essential to ensure your success.

Strategies for Transitions	Your Actions	What do you need to ensure your success in the transition?
Prepare yourself: Be sure to take a mental break before transitioning into the new role		
Accelerate your learning: Address the organizational learning curve as quickly as possible by remaining focused and systematic		

Strategies for Transitions	Your Actions	What do you need to ensure your success in the transition?
Match your strategy to the situation: Gain clarity on the school context as a prerequisite for action plan development		
Secure early wins: Identify ways to create value and improve results during the transition period		
Negotiate success: Build and maintain a productive working relationship with the supervisor and manage their expectations		
Achieve alignment: Assess strategic direction, alignment of structure, strategy, processes, and resources		
Build your team: Evaluate, align, and empower members of your team; ensure the right fit for the work ahead		
Create coalitions: Identify and solidify champions and support outside of your direct supervision in order to ensure success		
Keep your balance: Ensure intentionality in developing your balance and good judgment; remain informed, aware of self and entire school community		
Accelerate everyone*:* Invest time and energy in direct reports to ensure optimal performance, growth, and organizational success		

(Watkins 2013, 9–12)

Successful Leadership Transitions: Onboarding Essentials

Every school community maintains unique characteristics and considerations for its environment, structure, stakeholders, expectations, and culture. The following resource helps supervisors and leaders prepare for onboarding new principals and school counselors.

The following grid helps to define activities and artifacts that are essential to the onboarding experience. Use the template as a guide to define your own onboarding action plan or to share with the new principal and/or school counselor. Be sure to identify responsible staff members and/or resources needed for the completion of tasks described within the checklist.

ONBOARDING ESSENTIALS CHECKLISTS: SUPPORTS FOR THE NEW PRINCIPAL AND/OR SCHOOL COUNSELOR

School Orientation Checklist	Stakeholder Connection Checklist	Expectations Alignment Checklist	Cultural Adaptation Checklist
▪ Read and become familiar with all publicly available data, artifacts, budget documents and reports ▪ Review of organizational structures, leaders, calendars, policies ▪ Become familiar with and aware of the physical space of the school, as well as the immediate community surrounding the building	▪ Seek assistance in naming key people to engage with early on and/or before start (faculty, staff, student leaders, families, community leaders, etc.) ▪ Begin to manage calendar and schedule early meetings with key stakeholders ▪ Compose questions and desired outcomes from meetings	▪ Ensure clear understanding of evaluation and/or performance management tools and expectations ▪ Schedule time to review and discuss expectations with supervisor, as well as direct reports ▪ Schedule time to discuss preferred working styles, as well as norms for communication, trust, respect, and collaboration	▪ Inquire about the school culture: engage with colleagues who have a long tenure with the organization, as well as those recently hired to assess (compare and contrast) their experiences ▪ Engage students and families with regard to their experiences, as they pertain to school culture and student experience ▪ Conduct an informal 360-degree feedback check-in with supervisor and direct reports after the first 30 days

(Watkins 2013, 34)

Onboarding Action Plan

With the guidance of the Onboarding Essentials table, create an action plan to address the four checklists: **School Orientation, Stakeholder Connection, Expectations Alignment,** and **Cultural Adaptation**.

Onboarding Essential	Key Action/Activity	Needed Supports	Completion Date
Example: School Orientation	Familiarity with course offerings and instructional program	Provide updated Master Schedule, Academic Program Booklet, and Advising Worksheet	July 31

Five Conversations for New Leaders

Watkins (2013) outlines five critical conversations to have with a new boss that may prove useful as you collaborate with new staff or leadership. The themes of those conversations are: **Situational Diagnosis**, **Expectations**, **Resources**, **Style**, and **Personal Development**. The purpose of the **Situational Diagnosis** conversation is to best understand how your new supervisor understands and interprets the work ahead and the current context. The **Expectations** conversation focuses on understanding and negotiating expectations. The purpose of the **Resource** conversation is to define, acquire, and negotiate for the critical resources needed to advance the work.

During the **Style** conversation, the focus should remain on how you and your supervisor desire to interact now and on an ongoing basis. Lastly, after some time in your role, the **Personal Development** conversation is instrumental in defining what is going well and where development is needed.

The Five Conversations	Proposed Questions and Reflections
Situational Diagnosis	▪ What efforts should be designed, instituted, adapted, concluded, or sustained in order to ensure equity, student achievement, and overall success? ▪ What history or context is important to know and understand? What have we tried? How did we get here? ▪ What resources and/or supports are available to ensure my success in this work? What else do you believe I may need to experience success?
Expectations	▪ What do you believe I should tackle first? What are some of your short-term and intermediate goals for me and my work? ▪ How will we know we have been successful? When will performance be measured and/or assessed? ▪ What data, evidence, and outcomes will prove success and/or progress? How will this information be collected and used?
Resource	▪ What resources are needed to ensure my success in this role? What do I need from my supervisor? ▪ What are the costs and benefits associated with these resources? What are the potential losses if these resources aren't available? ▪ How will these resources increase my capacity and success? How do these resources support equity and achievement for students and stakeholders within our school community?
Style	▪ What is the preferred mode for communication? Which mode of communication works best for specific issues or concerns? ▪ What kinds of decisions do you, as the direct supervisor, wish to be consulted on? When might I make the call on my own? ▪ How are our communication styles alike and where do they differ? What are the implications for the ways in which we interact?
Personal Development	▪ What am I doing well? What data and/or evidence exists that highlights my successes? ▪ What are some of my developmental priorities? Where might I receive support for these developmental priorities? ▪ Where might I improve my performance and/or leadership competencies? How might I receive feedback on these efforts? ▪ Are there opportunities for me to further my professional competencies and leadership development within the school community?

(Adapted from Watkins 2013, 93–95)

Five Conversations Action Plan

The table below can be used to prepare for your discussion around the **Five Conversations** framework. Be sure to create an agenda and sample questions, and also anticipate responses and potential follow-up questions.

Date of Meeting	
Five Conversations (indicate approach)	**Situational Diagnosis** **Expectations** **Resource** **Style** **Personal Development**
What are your desired outcomes?	
Sample Agenda	1. Opening Remarks 2. Review of Agenda 3. Discussion Question 1 4. Discussion Question 2 5. Discussion Question 3 6. Additional Questions 7. Recap of Responses to Questions 8. Discussion of Next Steps 9. Closing Remarks
Opening Remarks	▪ Confirm time allotted for conversation ▪ Revisit professional norms, vision, mission, or other statements ▪ Share your desired outcomes for the meeting ▪ Seek understanding on meeting outcomes ▪ Address early questions
Discussion Question 1	
Discussion Question 2	
Discussion Question 3	

Date of Meeting	
Additional Discussion Questions	
Recap Responses to Discussion Questions	Seek clarity and consensus on the responses shared, especially as they pertain to your desired outcomes for this conversation.
Discussion of Next Steps	- What are my next steps? - What will be helpful to me in meeting these commitments? - What is my anticipated completion date? - What do I need from my supervisor?
Closing Remarks	

Continuous Improvement and Advanced Practices

School communities are among the most dynamic institutions in our society. As such, the need for continuous improvement is essential to meeting and exceeding evolving needs of those who are served by schools, both directly and indirectly. Following are a few promising practices and resources to promote the success of the principal–school counselor relationship.

Job Shadowing

Job shadowing provides a brief glimpse into the experiences of professionals. Whether we call them empathy walks, apprenticeships, or ride-alongs, the tradition of making time to deeply understand someone's work remains an incredible tool in obtaining insights, debunking myths, and informing personal narratives.

Shadowing can strengthen connection, clarity, and overall understanding of the functions of others' work. To ensure a productive shadowing experience, define norms, goals, and boundaries. Following these efforts, each party should reflect on assumptions and questions that may be tested or addressed as a result of the shadow.

During the experience, use this template to capture notes, questions, or reflections that emerge. Take time to reflect and celebrate the contributions of your colleague.

Shadow Date/Time:	
Establishing Norms, Goals, and Boundaries	
Norms: What do we agree to as we begin this experience?	
Goals: What are specific objectives for this experience? Name two to three specific goals.	
Boundaries: What are the professional and personal boundaries we will honor during and after the shadowing experience?	
Objective #1: Notes from the Field	What did you witness and/or experience to inform this objective?
Objective #1: Questions	What questions have emerged as you continue to understand this experience?
Objective #2: Notes from the Field	What did you witness and/or experience to inform this objective?
Objective #2: Questions	What questions have emerged as you continue to understand this experience?
Objective #3: Notes from the Field	What did you witness and/or experience to inform this objective?
Objective #3: Questions	What questions have emerged as you continue to understand this experience?

OTHER: Unique Experiences from Shadowing Experience	Describe any happenings that have informed your thoughts or assumptions, beyond your objectives.
OTHER: Unique Experiences from Shadowing Experience	Share any specific resources or supports you believe would be helpful and/or necessary to advance professional practice.
Reflection	As you reflect on this shadowing experience, where might there be opportunities for greater collaboration and/or support?
Reflection	What are your action items? Where (and how) might you invest in continued learning and professional development?

Shared Professional Development Experiences

As principals and school counselors advance equity and student achievement, investments in professional development must be consistent and substantial. An investment in shared professional development experiences is one strategy to ensure alignment; accelerate performance; and strengthen leadership competencies, capacity, synergy, and respect.

The following activity can foster conversations among principals and school counselors as you advance equity and student achievement through the lens of your own professional growth and needs assessments. This tool begins with a consideration of data points and/or areas of desired improvement for the school community. Data might also include results from self-assessments informing which professional competencies are desired for continued development.

Second, principals and school counselors can define key objectives and desired outcomes for advancing equity and student achievement, as well as professional practice. It is also important to identify what opportunities exist, who are leaders in these content areas, and what are the modes for delivery (in-person workshops and conferences, webinars, and/or certificate programs). This activity closes with consideration of how professional development will be introduced to the school community and/or translated into practice.

Data Points and Areas of Consideration	Key Objectives: Principal	Key Objectives: School Counselor	Thought Leaders Delivery Channel	Strategies for Introducing Practices

Reporting Outcomes to Families and Stakeholders

Measures of student growth, needs, and aspirations are important to share with external stakeholders.

College Board offers multiple data points to share pertaining to student achievement. Many principals and counselors share AP participation data, exam success, and college credits earned to show student success in advanced coursework. Standardized testing data, including SAT and PSAT-related assessment scores, can show student progress year over year and help them plan for college and career.

As you consider your school's vision, mission, and key objectives, what do you want to share with the external community and how? Are there particular services or resources the community might be instrumental in addressing and supporting?

Defined Stakeholder Group	Data Point(s) and Qualitative Considerations	Desired Goals and Outcomes	Outreach Message: What are we asking for and from whom?
Example: Community Businesses	70% of 11th/12th grade students desire internships; 35% are actively looking for opportunities	100% of 11th/12th grade students who desire internships will have at least one placement before graduation	Highlighting the Internship program with community businesses, the ease of participation and the support from school leaders in ensuring the success of placement

The activities and tools shared in this toolkit are meant to lead you to a more satisfying, effective professional relationship with your principal or school counselor. As you utilize the toolkit in ways that best meet your needs, celebrate the purpose and power embedded in the principal–school counselor relationship and how you as professionals come together to cultivate an environment that ensures the success of all students and their families, as well as faculty and staff.

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College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success—including the SAT®, the Advanced Placement® Program, and BigFuture™. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators, and schools. For further information, visit **collegeboard.org**.

College Board's Counselor Community Engagement team promotes the value of school counselors as leaders in advancing school reform and student achievement. It seeks to support school counselors and advocate for equitable educational access and rigorous academic preparation necessary for college readiness for all students. For further information, visit **counselors.collegeboard.org**.

The **American School Counselor Association** (ASCA) is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) professional organization based in Alexandria, VA. ASCA promotes student success by expanding the image and influence of professional school counseling through leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change. ASCA helps school counselors guide their students toward academic achievement, personal and social development, and career planning to help today's students become tomorrow's productive, contributing members of society. Founded in 1952, ASCA currently has a network of 51 state and territory associations and a membership of more than 41,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, visit **schoolcounselor.org**.

National Association of Secondary School Principals Founded in 1916, NASSP promotes excellence in school leadership as the preeminent organization of and national voice for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and aspiring school leaders from across the United States and more than 45 countries around the world. NASSP provides our members with the professional research-based and peer-tested resources, and practical tools and materials they need to serve as visionary school leaders so that every student can be prepared for postsecondary learning opportunities and be workforce ready. NASSP advances middle level and high school education by promoting high professional standards, focusing attention on school leaders' challenges, providing a "national voice" for school leaders, building public confidence in education, strengthening the role of the principal as instructional leader, and advocating for the issues and interests of principals in the news media. NASSP sponsors the National Honor Society, the National Junior Honor Society, the National Elementary Honor Society, and the National Association of Student Councils.

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