



# ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies

The ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies outline the mindsets and behaviors school counselors need to meet the rigorous demands of the school counseling profession and the needs of pre-K–12 students. These standards and competencies help ensure new and experienced school counselors are equipped to establish, maintain and enhance a school counseling program addressing academic achievement, career planning and social/emotional development. These standards and competencies can be used in a variety of ways including:

## **School counselors**

- Self-assess their own mindsets and behaviors
- Formulate an appropriate professional development plan

## **School administrators**

- Guide the recruitment and selection of competent school counselors
- Develop or inform meaningful school counselor performance appraisal

## **School counselor education programs**

- Establish benchmarks for ensuring school counseling students graduate with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to develop a school counseling program.

## **Organization of the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies**

The ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies are organized by mindset standards and behavior standards and competencies. The standards are broader topics that describe the knowledge, attitude and skills school counselors need to implement a school counseling program. The competencies are more specific and measurable indicators of the behavior standards.

**Mindsets:** The mindset standards include beliefs school counselors hold about student achievement and success. Although it may be possible to measure these beliefs, the mindsets are more readily recognized through the behaviors a school counselor demonstrates as a result of the implementation of a school counseling program. Therefore, the mindset standards do not have correlating competencies.

**Behaviors:** The behavior standards include essential behaviors school counselors demonstrate through the implementation of a school counseling program including:

1. Professional foundation – the essential skills that are the basis of a school counselor’s professional orientation
2. Direct and indirect student services – interactions that are provided directly to students or indirectly for students in collaboration with families, teachers, administrators, other school staff and education stakeholders
3. Planning and assessment – activities necessary for the design, implementation and assessment of the school counseling program

Each behavior standard has specific competencies that are measurable indicators of the broader standard. These competencies can be used to further define the behaviors necessary for the implementation of a school counseling program.

The mindsets and behaviors standards are found in the following chart, and the behavior competencies are listed afterwards.

## ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies

### MINDSETS

School counselors believe:

- 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 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. School counseling programs promote and enhance student academic, career and social/emotional outcomes.

### BEHAVIORS

School counselors demonstrate the following standards in the design, implementation and assessment of a school counseling program.

Professional Foundation	Direct and Indirect Student Services	Planning and Assessment
<b>B-PF 1.</b> Apply developmental, learning, counseling and education theories	<b>B-SS 1.</b> Design and implement instruction aligned to ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success in large-group, classroom, small-group and individual settings	<b>B-PA 1.</b> Create school counseling program beliefs, vision and mission statements aligned with the school and district
<b>B-PF 2.</b> Demonstrate understanding of educational systems, legal issues, policies, research and trends in education	<b>B-SS 2.</b> Provide appraisal and advisement in large-group, classroom, small-group and individual settings	<b>B-PA 2.</b> Identify gaps in achievement, attendance, discipline, opportunity and resources
<b>B-PF 3.</b> Apply legal and ethical principles of the school counseling profession	<b>B-SS 3.</b> Provide short-term counseling in small-group and individual settings	<b>B-PA 3.</b> Develop annual student outcome goals based on student data
<b>B-PF 4.</b> Apply school counseling professional standards and competencies	<b>B-SS 4.</b> Make referrals to appropriate school and community resources	<b>B-PA 4.</b> Develop and implement action plans aligned with annual student outcome goals and student data
<b>B-PF 5.</b> Use ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success to inform the implementation of a school counseling program	<b>B-SS 5.</b> Consult to support student achievement and success	<b>B-PA 5.</b> Assess and report program results to the school community
<b>B-PF 6.</b> Demonstrate understanding of the impact of cultural, social and environmental influences on student success and opportunities	<b>B-SS 6.</b> Collaborate with families, teachers, administrators, other school staff and education stakeholders for student achievement and success	<b>B-PA 6.</b> Use time appropriately according to national recommendations and student/school data
<b>B-PF 7.</b> Demonstrate leadership through the development and implementation of a school counseling program		<b>B-PA 7.</b> Establish agreement with the principal and other administrators about the school counseling program
<b>B-PF 8.</b> Demonstrate advocacy for a school counseling program		<b>B-PA 8.</b> Establish and convene an advisory council for the school counseling program
<b>B-PF 9.</b> Create systemic change through the implementation of a school counseling program		<b>B-PA 9.</b> Use appropriate school counselor performance appraisal process

## PROFESSIONAL FOUNDATION

### **B-PF 1. Apply developmental, learning, counseling and education theories**

- a. Use human development theories to have an impact on developmental issues affecting student success
- b. Use learning theory to support student achievement and success, including students with diverse learning needs
- c. Use established and emerging evidence-based counseling theories and techniques that are effective in a school setting to promote academic, career and social/emotional development, including but not limited to rational emotive behavior therapy, reality therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, Adlerian, solution-focused brief counseling, person-centered counseling and family systems
- d. Use counseling theories and techniques in individual, small-group, classroom and large-group settings to promote academic, career and social/emotional development
- e. Use career development theories to promote and support postsecondary planning
- f. Use principles of multitiered systems of support within the context of a school counseling program to provide instruction and interventions matched to student need

### **B-PF 2. Demonstrate understanding of educational systems, legal issues, policies, research and trends in education**

- a. Explain the organizational structure and governance of the American educational system as well as cultural, political and social influences on current educational practices
- b. Explain educational systems, philosophies and theories and current trends in education, including federal and state legislation
- c. Explain and/or inform the process for development of policy and procedures at the building, district, state and national levels
- d. Explain the history of school counseling to create a context for the current state of the profession and school counseling programs
- e. Explain the nature of academic, career and social/emotional counseling in schools and the similarities and differences between school counseling and other fields of counseling, such as mental health, marriage and family, substance abuse counseling, social work and psychology, within a continuum of care
- f. Delineate the roles of student service providers, such as school social worker, school psychologist or school nurse, and identify best practices for collaborating to have an impact on student success
- g. Articulate a rationale for a school counseling program
- h. Use education research to inform decisions and programming
- i. Use current trends in technology to promote student success

### **B-PF 3. Apply legal and ethical principles of the school counseling profession**

- a. Practice within the ethical principles of the school counseling profession in accordance with the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors
- b. Adhere to the legal responsibilities of the role of the school counselor including the unique legal and ethical principles of working with minor students in a school setting
- c. Adhere to the ethical and statutory limits of confidentiality
- d. Fulfill legal and ethical obligations to families, teachers, administrators and other school staff
- e. Consult with school counselors and other education, counseling and legal professionals when ethical and legal questions arise
- f. Resolve ethical dilemmas by employing an ethical decision-making model in accordance with the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors
- g. Model ethical behavior
- h. Engage in continual professional development to inform and guide ethical and legal work

### **B-PF 4. Apply school counseling professional standards and competencies**

- a. Stay current with school counseling research and best practices
- b. Conduct and analyze self-appraisal and assessment related to school counseling professional standards and competencies
- c. Use personal reflection, consultation and supervision to promote professional growth and development
- d. Develop a yearly professional development plan to ensure engagement in professional growth opportunities related to relevant professional standards and competencies and personal limitations

### **B-PF 5. Use ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success to inform the implementation of a school counseling program**

- a. Select ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success to address student needs demonstrated in data
- b. Prioritize ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success aligned with school improvement goals
- c. Select or create competencies aligned with the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success and the Common Core State Standards or other state-specific standards

### **B-PF 6. Demonstrate understanding of the impact of cultural, social and environmental influences on student success and opportunities**

- a. Demonstrate basic knowledge and respect of differences in customs, communications, traditions, values and other traits among students based on race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or intellectual ability and other factors

## PROFESSIONAL FOUNDATION, cont.

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- b. Explain how students' cultural, social and economic background may affect their academic achievement, behavior, relationships and overall performance in school
- c. Maintain and communicate high expectations for every student, regardless of cultural, social or economic background
- d. Explain the dynamics of cross-cultural communications and demonstrate the ability to communicate with persons of other cultures effectively
- e. Collaborate with administrators, teachers and other staff in the school and district to ensure culturally responsive curricula and student-centered instruction
- f. Understand personal limitations and biases, and articulate how they may affect the school counselor's work

### **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

### **B-PF 8. Demonstrate advocacy for a school counseling program**

- a. Model school counselor advocacy competencies to promote school counseling program development and student success
- b. Advocate responsibly for school board policy and local, state and federal statutory requirements in students' best interests
- c. Explain the benefits of a school counseling program for all stakeholders, including students, families, teachers, administrators and other school staff, school boards, department of education, school counselors, school counselor educators, community stakeholders and business leaders
- d. Articulate and provide rationale for appropriate activities for school counselors
- e. Articulate and provide rationale for discontinuation of inappropriate activities for school counselors
- f. Use data (e.g., closing-the-gap reports) to promote reduction in student-to-school-counselor ratios and reduction of inappropriate non-school-counseling-related tasks
- g. Participate in school counseling and education-related professional organizations

### **B-PF 9. Create systemic change through the implementation of a school counseling program**

- a. Act as a systems change agent to create an environment promoting and supporting student success
- b. Use data to identify how school, district and state educational policies, procedures and practices support and/or impede student success
- c. 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
- d. Develop and implement a plan to address personal and/or institutional resistance to change that better supports student success



## DIRECT AND INDIRECT STUDENT SERVICES

### **B-SS 1. Design and implement instruction aligned to the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success in large-group, classroom, small-group and individual settings**

- a. Use student, school and district data to identify achievement, attendance and discipline issues to be addressed through instruction
- b. Assess cultural and social trends when developing and choosing curricula
- c. Identify appropriate evidence-based curricula aligned to the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success or select/develop other materials informed by research and best practice if evidence-based materials do not exist
- d. Demonstrate pedagogical skills, including culturally responsive classroom management strategies, lesson planning and personalized instruction
- e. Create lesson plans identifying activities to be delivered, standards to be addressed, to whom activities will be delivered, how they will be delivered and how data will be assessed to determine impact on student outcomes
- f. Use a variety of technologies in the delivery of lessons and activities
- g. Engage with school administrators, teachers and other staff to ensure the effective implementation of instruction
- h. Analyze data from lessons and activities to determine impact on student outcomes

### **B-SS 2. Provide appraisal and advisement in large-group, classroom, small-group and individual settings**

- a. Develop strategies to provide appraisal and advisement to students and families about attaining the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success
- b. Use assessments to help students understand their abilities, values and career interests
- c. Include career opportunities, labor market trends and global economics to help students develop immediate and long-range plans
- d. Help students cross reference individual assessment results (e.g. MBTI, Holland Code, ASVAB, O\*Net) with occupational/career goals
- e. Help students understand how academic performance relates to the world of work, family life and community service
- f. Help students understand the importance of postsecondary education and/or training as a pathway to a career
- g. Help students and families navigate postsecondary awareness, exploration, admissions and financial aid processes
- h. Connect students to workplace experiences to deepen understandings and explore career interests

### **B-SS 3. Provide short-term counseling in small-group and individual settings**

- a. Use data to identify students in need of counseling intervention

- b. Provide support for students, including individual and small-group counseling, during times of transition, heightened stress, critical change or other situations impeding student success
- c. Explain the difference between appropriate short-term counseling and inappropriate long-term therapy
- d. Explain the impact of adverse childhood experiences and trauma, and demonstrate techniques to support students who have experienced trauma
- e. Respond with appropriate intervention strategies to meet the needs of the individual, group or school community before, during and after crisis response

### **B-SS 4. Make referrals to appropriate school and community resources**

- a. Maintain a list of current referral resources, consistent with school and district policies, for students, staff and families to effectively address academic, career and social/emotional issues
- b. Communicate the limits of school counseling and the continuum of mental health services
- c. Articulate why diagnoses and long-term therapy are outside the scope of school counseling

### **B-SS 5. Consult to support student achievement and success**

- a. Gather information on student needs from families, teachers, administrators, other school staff and community organizations to inform the selection of strategies for student success
- b. Share strategies that support student achievement with families, teachers, administrators, teachers, school staff and community organizations
- c. Consult with school counselors and other education and counseling professionals when questions of school counseling practice arise
- d. Facilitate in-service training or workshops for families, administrators, other school staff, teachers or other stakeholders to share school counseling expertise

### **B-SS 6. Collaborate with families, teachers, administrators, other school staff and education stakeholders for student achievement and success**

- a. Partner with others to advocate for student achievement and educational equity and opportunities
- b. Explain the potential for dual roles with families and other caretakers
- c. Identify and involve appropriate school and community professionals as well as the family in a crisis situation
- d. Supervise school counseling interns consistent with the principles of the ASCA School Counseling Professional Standards & Competencies

## PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

### **B-PA 1. Create school counseling program beliefs, vision and mission statements aligned with the school and district**

- a. Analyze personal, school, district and state beliefs, assumptions and philosophies about student success
- b. Compose a personal beliefs statement about students, families, teachers, school counseling programs and the educational process consistent with the school's educational philosophy and mission
- c. Analyze the school's vision and mission
- d. Create a school counseling vision statement describing a future world where student outcomes are successfully achieved
- e. Create a school counseling mission statement aligned with school, district and state missions
- f. Communicate the vision and mission of the school counseling program to administrators, teachers, other school staff and stakeholders

### **B-PA 2. Identify gaps in achievement, attendance, discipline, opportunity and resources**

- a. Collect and analyze data to identify areas of success or gaps between and among different groups of students in achievement, attendance, discipline and opportunities
- b. Review, disaggregate and interpret student achievement, attendance and discipline data to identify and implement interventions as needed
- c. Create goals based on student, school and/or district data to close the achievement, opportunity and/or information gaps

### **B-PA 3. Develop annual student outcome goals based on student data**

- a. Use achievement, attendance and/or discipline data to create annual student outcome goals aligned with school improvement plans
- b. Write goals in a measurable format such as the SMART goal format, and include baseline and target data within the goal statement
- c. Use student data and results from survey tools to monitor and refine annual student outcome goals
- d. Communicate annual student outcome goals to administrators, teachers, other school staff and stakeholders

### **B-PA 4. Develop and implement action plans aligned with annual student outcome goals and student data**

- a. Design and implement school counseling action plans aligned with school and annual student outcome goals and student data
- b. Determine appropriate students for the target group of action plans based on student, school and district data

- c. Identify appropriate ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success addressing needs identified in action plans
- d. Select evidence-based curricula and activities to accomplish objectives, or select/develop other materials informed by research and best practice if evidence-based materials do not exist
- e. Identify appropriate resources needed to implement action plans
- f. Identify intended impact on academics, attendance and discipline as result of action plan implementation
- g. Explain basic research sampling, methodology and analysis concepts as they relate to research outcomes and action research

### **B-PA 5. Assess and report program results to the school community**

- a. Explain concepts related to program results and assessment within a school counseling program
- b. Review progress toward annual student outcome goals
- c. Analyze data to assess school counseling program effectiveness and to inform program development
- d. Collaborate with members of the school counseling team and with administration to decide how school counseling programs are assessed and how results are shared
- e. Use data to demonstrate the value the school counseling program adds to student achievement
- f. Use presentation skills to share effectiveness data and results of action plans and activities with administrators, advisory councils, teachers, faculty and staff, families, school boards and stakeholders

### **B-PA 6. Use time appropriately according to national recommendations and student/school data**

- a. Articulate the distinction between direct and indirect student services
- b. Assess use of time in direct and indirect student services and program management and school support to determine how much time is spent in each school counseling program component
- c. Articulate the best use of a school counselor's time to meet student needs as identified through student data and program goals
- d. Organize and manage time to effectively implement a school counseling program using skills including scheduling, publicizing and prioritizing time
- e. Create annual and weekly calendars to plan activities reflecting annual student outcome goals
- f. Identify, evaluate and participate in fair-share responsibilities

## PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT, cont.

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### **B-PA 7. Establish agreement with the principal and other administrators about the school counseling program**

- a. Complete managing templates for the school counseling program with other members of the school counseling staff
- b. Discuss school counseling with the principal and/or supervising administrator to formalize delivering, managing and assessing the school counseling program
- c. Explain and model the appropriate role of the school counselor and the organization of the school counseling program
- d. Explain annual student outcome goals, their basis in student data and their alignment with the school improvement plan
- e. Advocate for the appropriate use of school counselor time based on national recommendations and student needs
- f. Finalize the annual administrative conference template after presentation to and discussion with the principal and/or supervising administrator

### **B-PA 8. Establish and convene an advisory council for the school counseling program**

- a. Determine appropriate education stakeholders for representation on the advisory council

- b. Develop effective and efficient advisory council meeting agendas to inform stakeholders about the school counseling program
- c. Explain and discuss school data, school counseling program assessment and annual student outcome goals with the advisory council
- d. Record advisory council meeting notes, and distribute as appropriate
- e. Analyze and incorporate feedback from the advisory council related to annual student outcome goals as appropriate

### **B-PA 9. Use appropriate school counselor performance appraisal process**

- a. Explain and advocate for appropriate school counselor performance appraisal process based on school counselor standards and implementation of the school counseling program
- b. Explain how school counseling activities fit within categories of a performance appraisal instrument
- c. Utilize components of the ASCA National Model to document data-informed, student-focused activities that demonstrate evidence of meeting standards of performance appraisal instruments

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