



School Counseling in North Carolina

2006

In October 2005, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction commissioned EDSTAR, Inc. to conduct a statewide assessment of school counseling services in North Carolina. The primary objective was to identify the most effective practices for school counselors in order for students to attain the most benefit from school counselor services. Much of the findings were consistent with the best practices described in *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*. School counselors utilizing models such as *The ASCA National Model* were able to provide data that definitively showed their students were being more successful as a result of comprehensive school counseling programs. Another major finding of this study was that excessive non-counseling duties were seriously detrimental to the capacity of school counselors to provide students with services necessary for student success.¹

National best practice guidelines state the following for effective, comprehensive school counseling programs that significantly improve the academic, personal/social and career success of students:²

- ⌘ School counselors are trained and certified in school counseling with unique qualifications and skills to address all students' academic, personal/social and career development needs.
- ⌘ School counselors design and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs that promote student achievement and are preventative in design and developmental in nature.
- ⌘ Comprehensive school counseling programs are driven by student data in order to address identified student needs (e.g. discipline, attendance, academics, etc.).
- ⌘ School counselors maintain data to show the impact of the school counseling program on school improvement and student achievement and success.
- ⌘ Comprehensive school counseling programs are a collaborative effort between the professional school counselor, parents and other educators.
- ⌘ School Counselors collaborate with other school staff to integrate guidance into the overall school curricula.
- ⌘ School counselors spend 80 percent of their time in direct services such as individual and group guidance and counseling, parent and teacher workshops, and consultations with stakeholders regarding strategies to help students.
- ⌘ A school-counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250 is recommended for maximum program effectiveness.
- ⌘ Counseling services provided by school counselors are confidential except in cases of clear and imminent danger to the counselee or others or when legal requirements demand that confidential information be released.
- ⌘ School counselors are committed to continual personal and professional development in order to maintain and enhance the total school counseling program.

American School Counselor Association: <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>

Increased research shows students tend to be more successful in schools with comprehensive school counseling programs. School Counselors are specifically trained to address barriers to learning that are preventing our students from reaching their fullest potentials. Jennings, Pearson and Harris's research on addressing barriers through school mental health services is referenced in The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health's *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America*. This research provides evidence that school mental health programs improve educational outcomes by decreasing absences, decreasing discipline referrals, and improving test scores.³ Within *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America*, the President's Commission recommends that federal, state, and local child-serving agencies fully recognize and address the mental health needs of youth in the education system in order to promote overall success.⁴

Examples of Appropriate and Inappropriate School Counselor Activities

Inappropriate/Ineffective:

Testing Coordination
Performing Disciplinary actions
Substituting for absent teachers
Computing grade point averages
Maintaining student records
Assisting with administrative duties in the principal's office

Appropriate/Effective:

Interpreting cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests
Counseling students with disciplinary problems
Collaborating with teachers to present guidance curriculum lessons
Analyzing grade-point averages in relationship to achievement
Interpreting student records
Assisting the school principal with identifying and resolving student issues, needs and problems

Examples of Who Coordinates Testing in Various North Carolina Schools

- * Assistant Principal (more appropriate position of authority in enforcing standardization)
- * IRT (Instructional Resource Teacher)/ CCR teachers (Cross Categorical Resource)
- * Curriculum Coordinator or Literacy Facilitator
- * Certified Teacher Who Also Teaches Subjects Part of the Day/Half-Time Teaching Position
- * Title I Teacher
- * Teacher Position Used to Create an Academic/Instructional Facilitator Position
- * Locally Funded Testing Coordinator Position
- * Intervention Coordinator
- * Office Assistant
- * Clerical Staff for the Pre And Post-Testing Planning and Logistics
- * CDC (Career Development Coordinator)
- * Registrar

References

1. EDSTAR, Inc. (2006). *North Carolina's School Counseling Program Review: A Statewide Survey and Comprehensive Assessment*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.
2. American School Counselor Association (2003). *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
3. Jennings, J., Pearson, G., & Harris, M. (2000). *Implementing and Maintaining School-Based Mental Health Services in a Large, Urban School District*. *Journal of School Health*, 70, 201-205.
4. New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2003). *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America. Final Report*. Rockville, MD: DHHS Pub. No. SMA-03-3832.

Other Suggested Readings on Effectiveness of School Counseling

American Counseling Association (2006). *Effectiveness of School Counseling*. Alexandria, VA: Author. <http://www.counseling.org/>
This article is a summary of twenty-two research sources that address the effectiveness of school counseling such as the Institute of Medicine's findings that mental health and psychological services were essential for many students to achieve academically, and recommended that such services be considered mainstream, not optional and a *Professional School Counseling* article in which studies on high school attrition indicate that preventive counseling of students reduces the risk of these students dropping out later.

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