

» Foundation

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Introduction

The comprehensive school counseling program’s foundation serves as the solid ground upon which the rest of the program is built. The decisions made as the foundation is being developed or modified become the “what” of the program. The “what” is defined as the student knowledge, attitudes and skills that are learned because of a school counseling program. Designing a strong foundation requires a collaborative effort with staff, parents/guardians and the community to determine what every student will receive as a benefit of a school counseling program.

The purpose of this component is to establish the focus of the comprehensive school counseling program based on the developmental needs of students in the areas of academic, career, social/emotional, and community involvement. Elements of the foundation include three sections:

- Program Focus
- Student Standards
- Professional Competencies



School Counseling Beliefs Development Tool

(with Example)

Belief	This belief is important for students because...	What this belief means for the program...	What this belief means the school counselor will do...
All students can achieve and meet high standards	Conveys a message of personalization for each student	Program is designed to meet the needs of all students	Implement a comprehensive standards-based program



Program Focus

Beliefs

Beliefs are discussed early in the process of developing a comprehensive school counseling program. Having clear, explicit beliefs about students, families, teachers and the educational process are crucial in supporting student success. Open, honest dialogue is required to ensure school counseling teams and departments explore complex issues from many points of view. When working within a school counseling team, it is important for each team member to contribute to the discussion on beliefs to develop a common understanding of diverse viewpoints.

Effective school counseling belief statements:

- Indicate agreed-upon beliefs about the ability of all students to achieve
- Address how the school counseling program meets student developmental needs
- Address the school counselor's role as an advocate for every student
- Identify persons to be involved in the planning, managing, delivery and evaluation of school counseling program activities
- Include how data inform program decisions
- Include how ethical standards guide the work of school counselors

Sample Beliefs

School counselors in the Everett Naismith Middle School Counseling Program believe:

- All students can achieve and meet high standards that will result in college and career success
- Student developmental needs are best met by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program
- School counselors must be leaders, advocates and collaborators who create equitable access to rigorous curriculum and opportunities for self-directed personal growth for every student
- Student achievement is maximized by participation in a comprehensive school counseling program that is planned, managed, delivered and evaluated by licensed professional school counselors
- Data must be analyzed and translated into goals that guide the development of the comprehensive school counseling program promoting student achievement
- Applying the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors empowers school counselors to make decisions based on the highest moral principles to promote the maximum development of every student

Vision Statement

Vision focuses on the future, more specifically, a preferred or desired future (Levin, 2000). When discussing the vision of a comprehensive school counseling program, school counselors communicate what they want to see in the future for the school community related to student achievement and other student outcomes. A discussion about vision builds off of the discussion of beliefs and becomes the picture of what school counselors hope to see in the next five to 10 years (National School Boards Association [NSBA], 2009).

School counselors can promote the success of every student by developing a vision of learning for all students that is shared and supported by stakeholders (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). This vision “ensures that equitable academic, career, post-secondary access and social/emotional opportunities for all students through the use of data to help close achievement gaps and opportunity gaps” is clearly articulated in a vision statement (ASCA, 2010).

The vision statement for the school counseling program aligns with the vision of the school and district. It describes not what we are but what we want to become and what life will be like for students, staff, parents and stakeholders from the perspective of the school counselor (NSBA, 2009). It is shaped by how school counselors view the world and reflects what they believe about students, families, teachers and the educational process that drive their ability to support success for all students (Dahir & Stone, 2012).

A review of research shows that a shared vision or mission is “a characteristic of effective schools, helps

foster inclusive and equitable schools, directs positive school change and ideally guides quality professional development” (Kose, 2011, p. 120). All of these areas fit within a comprehensive school counseling program. A clearly formed vision statement shapes school counselors’ actions, instills their work with meaning and reminds them why they are in the profession (Leithwood & Hallinger, 2002).

An effective vision statement:

- Describes a future world where the school counseling goals and strategies are being successfully achieved
- Outlines a rich and textual picture of what success looks like and feels like
- Is bold and inspiring
- States the best possible student outcomes that are five to 10 years away
- Is believable and achievable (Kose, 2011; Levin, 2000)

Sample Vision Statement

The students at Woodburn High School are lifelong learners who graduate with meaningful experiences and essential skills to choose from a wide variety of post-secondary options. Students have a strong community identity, as well as an understanding of the global context of their world. All students participate in a comprehensive counseling and educational program based on rigor, relevance, and relationships. Students have a strong sense of self-identify which drives them to proactively and positively impact their profession, family, and community.



Mission Statement

A mission statement provides the focus and direction to reach the vision, creating one focus or purpose in the development and implementation of the comprehensive school counseling program. The school counseling mission statement aligns with school and district's mission. Therefore, the school counseling program supports the learning environment and at the same time makes unique contributions to meeting students' needs and nurturing their growth.

The program's mission statement is clear, concise and specific to the program's intent and what the program will contribute to the overall mission of schools.

An effective mission statement:

- Aligns with the school's mission statement and may show linkages to district and state department of education mission statements
- Is written with students as the primary focus
- Advocates for equity, access and success of every student
- Indicates the long-range results desired for all students

Sample School Mission Statement

The mission of Molalla High School is to develop powerful and confident adults who are controlling their own destiny and influencing their worlds. "Professionals developing professionals who are ready for anything."

Sample School Counseling Mission Statement

The Molalla River School District's Comprehensive School Counseling Program is an integral component of the district's overall educational program. Our licensed school counselors provide a comprehensive and developmentally appropriate program addressing the academic, career and personal/social needs of all students.

In partnership with other educators, parents, and the community, school counselors advocate for students to maximize potential while promoting individual uniqueness and multicultural diversity. Our program is designed to assist students in gaining the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become successful and responsible citizens.

Program Goals

Program goals define how the vision and mission will be accomplished and will guide the development of curriculum, small-group and closing-the-gap action plans. School counseling program goals are statements about a desirable outcome toward which the program is willing to devote resources (Dimmit, Carey, & Hatch, 2007). These goal statements address specific student outcomes, including student achievement, attendance, behavior and school safety, through one or more of the four domains: academic, career, social/emotional development or community involvement.

Program goals are based on school data and focus attention on issues related to an achievement, opportunity or attainment gap. Goal setting, based on school-specific data and aligned with the school counseling vision and mission, gives focus to the school counseling program. Typically program goals are developed at the beginning of the school year.

Effective program goals

- Promote achievement, attendance, behavior and/or school safety
- Are based on school data
- Address school wide data, policies and practices, and address closing-the-gap issues
- Address academic, career, social/emotional development or community involvement

The SMART goal format (Doran, 1981) is frequently used for writing program goals. SMART is an acronym for specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented and time bound. This acronym is often used to help an individual identify goals and the necessary steps needed to accomplish a given tasks. See template, [SMART-Goal Format Template, page 91](#).



Goal Setting: The Process

The goal-setting process often begins by identifying a “burning question” related to educational issues (Young & Kaffenberger, 2009). It builds on courageous conversations about beliefs about student learning and student inequalities and is founded in data such as student enrollment patterns in rigorous classes, incidences of discipline referrals or student absences (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007; Haycock, 2001; Marzano, 2010; Singleton & Linton, 2006).

Although there may be many ways to identify a goal, the following process suggests four ways to examine data elements.

1. Examine the school data profile to identify academic gaps by categories such as race/ethnicity, gender, age or grade level.
2. List current academic, career, social/emotional, and community involvement domain activities and interventions provided to all students. This can help school counselors provide a cursory review of their comprehensive services and consider gaps in their program delivery (Bauman, 2004; Singleton & Linton, 2006; Young & Kaffenberger, 2009).
3. Identify a specific school improvement plan goal and consider the school counseling program activities that align with the school’s instructional accountability goals. Have a discussion with the principal about his/her goals. Principals are often working toward specific goals from the school improvement plan, and it may be timesaving for school counselors to understand the principal’s focus for the year.
4. Complete the school counseling program SMART goals worksheet. (See [SMART-Goal Format Template, page 91](#)).

Sample Goal-Setting Process for Academic Goals

1. School Data Profile Review
Benton High School has traditionally been highly competitive in academic grades, high school exit exam scores, end-of-course exam scores and performance on college entrance exams such as SAT and ACT. In the past few years, the average SAT and ACT scores have declined well below the national average and showed an achievement gap for African-American students especially in mathematics.
2. Current Strategies
 - a. Students and parents are provided with resources on college entrance exams.
 - b. Data are analyzed to determine which students may need additional support to prepare for college entrance exams.

- c. School counselors collaborate with the teachers and administrators to identify additional support for mathematics for students who need assistance.
3. School Improvement Plan
The school improvement plan includes a goal to improve SAT/ACT scores for all students.
4. SMART Goal Development
The following SMART goals are potential goals addressing school data.
 - By the end of year, the school’s average SAT and ACT score will increase by 10 percent.
 - By the end of year two, the achievement gap in mathematics for African-American students will decrease by 50 percent.
 - By the end of year three, the school’s average score on SAT and ACT exams will exceed the national average for all subgroups in the school.

Sample Goal Setting Process for Attendance Goals

1. School Data Profile Review
The district provides the school with daily attendance reports identifying which students have been absent. At the end of the school year, the school receives a report identifying students with eight or more absences for the year. The school counselors review the reports and identify 73 students with eight or more absences.
2. Current Strategies
 - a. Letters are sent to the homes of students with four, seven and 10 absences.
 - b. Students are considered for retention if they have 20 or more absences.
3. School Improvement Plan
A goal of increased attendance is a part of the plan.
4. SMART Goal Development
The following goal was developed.
Students with 10 or more absences in the previous year will have fewer than eight absences this year.

These sample goals promote the academic domain by focusing on an increase in academic achievement, success on college entrance exams and increased attendance. The goals are simple, yet precise. (Young & Kaffenberger, 2013)

Student Standards

Oregon's Mindsets & Behaviors

Oregon's Comprehensive School Counseling Standards (Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 Career and College readiness for Every Student) identify and prioritize the specific knowledge, attitudes and skills that students should be able to demonstrate as a result of a school counseling program (see [Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, page 78](#)). School counselors and other counseling staff use these standards to assess student growth and development, guide the development of strategies and activities, and create a program that helps all students achieve their highest potential.

Oregon's Mindsets & Behaviors are organized in four broad domains to promote behaviors that enhance the learning process: academic, career, social/emotional development and community involvement. Oregon is committed to ensure that all students graduate from high school prepared for career, college, and civic life. Standards across these domains provide guidance and direction for school districts and individual schools for the development of effective school counseling programs.

School-specific standards from the Oregon Mindsets & Behaviors are the foundation for classroom lessons, small group and large group activities, and within a school counseling program. The standards directly reflect the school counseling program mission and

goals. The Mindsets & Behaviors can be aligned with district, state and/or national documents to reflect the district's local priorities.

Use the Mindsets & Behaviors program planning tool (available at www.schoolcounselor.org) to identify grade-level specific standards for the school counseling program.

Other Student Standards

District and state initiatives often contain educational standards for students. School counselors are encouraged to consider how these other student standards complement and inform their school counseling program and, select competencies from other standards that align with Mindsets & Behaviors and school counseling program mission and goals.

The following are examples of other student standards:

- Framework for 21st Century Learning, www.p21.org/
- The National Career Development Guidelines, www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/3384/ncdguidelines2007.pdf
- State academic standards www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/Pages/default.aspx
- Early Learning and Kindergarten standards www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/Pages/default.aspx

Career and College Readiness

Students who are career and college ready must identify and demonstrate well-developed social-emotional skills and identified individual and community core principles that assure academic, vocational, and personal success. Students who are career and college ready in social-emotional and character development reflect these descriptions:

- Demonstrate character in their actions by treating others as they wish to be treated and giving their best effort.
- Assume responsibility for their thoughts and actions.
- Demonstrate a growth mindset and continually develop cognitively, emotionally and socially.
- Exhibit the skills to work independently and collaboratively with efficiency and effectiveness.

- Strive for excellence by committing to hard work, persistence and internal motivation.
- Exhibit creativity and innovation, critical thinking and effective problem solving.
- Use resources, including technology and digital media, effectively, strategically capably and appropriately.
- Demonstrate an understanding of other perspectives and cultures.
- Model the responsibility of citizenship and exhibit respect for human dignity.
- Demonstrate additional indicators as identified in Oregon's College and Career Readiness Definition (education.oregon.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Adopted-College-and-Career-Readiness-Definition.pdf)

Professional Competencies

ASCA School Counselor Competencies

The ASCA School Counselor Competencies outline the knowledge, attitudes and skills that ensure school counselors are equipped to meet the rigorous demands of the profession and the needs of our preK-12 students. These competencies are necessary to ensure school counselors have the professional skills necessary to make a positive difference in students' lives.

The competencies are applicable along a continuum of areas including school counselor education programs. School counselor educators may use the competencies as benchmarks for ensuring students graduate with the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed for developing and implementing school counseling programs. School counselors use the ASCA School Counselor Competencies as a checklist to self-evaluate their own competencies and, as a result, formulate an appropriate professional development plan.

ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors

Ethics are the customs, norms, standards and accepted practice of the school counseling profession (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2010). The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016) specify the principles of ethical behavior necessary to maintain the highest standard of integrity, leadership and professionalism. They guide school counselors'

decision-making and help standardize professional practice to protect both students and school counselors.

Ethical decision-making models provide direction to school counselors when faced with an ethical dilemma. The use of a professionally structured decision-making process ensures a consistent and fair standard of practice is used in addressing an ethical dilemma. ASCA's Ethical Standards include a nine-step process for ethical decision making.

1. Define the problem emotionally and intellectually
2. Apply the ASCA Ethical Standards and the law
3. Consider students' chronological and developmental levels
4. Consider the setting, parental rights and minors' rights
5. Apply the moral principles
6. Determine potential courses of action and their consequences
7. Evaluate the selected action
8. Consult
9. Implement the course of action

To read ASCA's Ethical Standards for School Counselors, go to www.schoolcounselor.org/ethics.





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