



# 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,

## 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,

- 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

**B-SS 1. Design and implement instruction aligned to the ASCA Student Standards:**



## **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. Find a way to integrate school counseling into the school improvement plan

## **Citation Guide**

When citing from this publication, use the following reference:  
American School Counselor Association (2019). *ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies*. Alexandria, VA: Author.