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School Counseling

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School Counseling

The field of school counseling promotes all students' academic success in a K-12 school setting specifically focusing on three primary domains: academic, career, and personal/social learning. School counselors strive to collaborate with all members of a school community including, administrators, teachers, parents, community, and other support staff to advocate for the needs of each student and create a safe and supportive school culture. School counselors act as key members of the educational team and help lead school transformation by adhering to accountability standards, following ethical codes, providing leadership, and by developing a comprehensive school counseling program for all students. Each state has different certification requirements for school counselors, but specialized training is required in each state.

History of the Profession

In order to understand modern trends in the profession of school counseling, it is important to consider that the history of school counseling practices exists in its current iteration as an evolutionary outcome of earlier foundational philosophies of the educational field. As a profession in the American school systems, the origins of school counseling are acknowledged to have begun during the 19th century and flourished during the 20th century. The profession of school counseling has evolved throughout history, turning from a strict vocational model, transforming into a medical model, and now currently encompasses three domains of service to students: academic, personal/social, and career, each of these three domains interweave to transform into the work that modern day professionals now strive to maintain.

Early in the field of school counseling the focus was primarily on the vocational needs of students. During the 19th and early 20th century the needs of America included increased labor workers to support America's industrialization. Frank Parsons, often considered the "Father of Guidance" provided a foundational framework for vocational guidance that is still commonly integrated into the work of professional school counselors. Another key element in the history of the school counseling profession included the shift to the medical-model of counseling. Psychoanalytical and behavioral counseling primarily dominated the mental hygiene movement, but these theories were eventually replaced by the humanistic approach during the mid 1900s. This period of time and the inclusion of the behavioral-based considerations led to the need to examine the best approaches to support a student's personal/social development. Academic support is another critical element of the history of the profession. Legislative mandates throughout history have been a factor in prioritizing a student's academic success. However, it the No Child Left Behind Act, is a pivotal transitional point in which school counselors became another key school professional responsible for student success and implementation of mandated testing and academic progress.

An understanding of the three developmental facets remains a crucial foundational component for today's school counselors. Throughout the course of history, school counseling has grown as a profession to include standards-based accountability, a focus

on narrowing the achievement gap, and ensuring that all students are successful in all three domains of their education.

Training of School Counselors

Each state has varying certification requirements, however, most certification programs involve training in human growth and development, individual counseling, group counseling, theoretical frameworks and models of counseling, career counseling, appraisal, research and program evaluation, cultural and social foundations, ethics and professional orientation, and field based clinical experience. This multifaceted approach to training helps to build a comprehensive view of school counseling and prepares school counselors to effectively, competently, and ethically meet the expectations of the role of professional school counselors in all schools.

Roles and Responsibilities

The professional school counselor influences others to create a unified commitment to a common purpose through collaboration, teaming, shared vision, leadership, and implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program. An expectation of the school counseling profession is to provide a comprehensive school counseling program that parallels the ASCA National Model with emphasis on working jointly with all students to develop personal/social, academic, and career goals. In addition to focusing on the three domains - personal/social, academic, and career - counselors are expected to perform the following functions: counseling and coordination, leadership, teaming and collaboration, advocacy, and assessment of data. In order to be an effective school counselor, the roles and functions of the job must be fully understood, implemented, and reviewed on a regular basis.

With an increasingly diverse student population, another critical element to effective and ethically responsible school counseling is the need for multicultural counseling. Professional school counselors are charged with the responsibility of understanding and continuing to focus on multicultural issues within their school systems and within the world so they can be social advocates for all youth, families, and the school community. Multicultural counseling competence is an area that needs constant professional development as our country's fabric is continually transforming and changing.

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Further Readings

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