

Why Elementary School Counselors

American School Counselor Association

"Today's young people are living in an exciting time, with an increasingly diverse society, new technologies and expanding opportunities. To help ensure that they are prepared to become the next generation of parents, workers, leaders and citizens, every student needs support, guidance and opportunities during childhood, a time of rapid growth and change. Children face unique and diverse challenges, both personally and developmentally, that have an impact on academic achievement.

– "Toward a Blueprint for Youth: Making Positive Youth Development a National Priority," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Elementary School Students' Developmental Needs

The elementary years are a time when students begin to develop their academic self-concept and their feelings of competence and confidence as learners. They are beginning to develop decision-making, communication and life skills, as well as and character values. It is also a time when students develop and acquire attitudes toward school self, peers, social groups and family. Comprehensive developmental school counseling programs provide education, prevention and intervention services, which are integrated into all aspects of children's lives. Early identification and intervention of children's academic and personal/social needs is essential in removing barriers to learning and in promoting academic achievement. The knowledge, attitudes and skills that students acquire in the areas of academic, career and personal/social development during these elementary years serve as the foundation for future success.

Meeting the Challenge

Elementary school counselors are professional educators with a mental health perspective who understand and respond to the challenges presented by today's diverse student population. Elementary school counselors don't work in isolation; rather they are integral to the total educational program. They provide proactive leadership that engages all stakeholders in the delivery of programs and services to help students achieve school success. Professional school counselors align with the school's mission to support the academic achievement of all students as they prepare for the ever-changing world of the 21st century. This mission is accomplished through the design, development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive, developmental and systematic school counseling program. ASCA's National Standards in the academic, career, and personal/social domains are the foundation for this work. The ASCA National Model: A Framework For School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2002), with its data-driven and results-based focus, serves as a guide for today's school counselor who is uniquely trained to implement this program.

Elementary School Counselors Implement the Counseling Program by Providing:

School Guidance Curriculum

1. Academic support, including organizational, study and test-taking skills
2. Goal setting and decision-making
3. Career awareness, exploration and planning
4. Education on understanding self and others
Peer relationships, coping strategies and effective social skills
5. Communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution
6. Substance abuse education

7. Multicultural/diversity awareness

Individual Student Planning

1. Academic planning
2. Goal setting/decision- making
3. Education on understanding of self, including strengths and weaknesses
4. Transition plans

Responsive Services

1. Individual and small-group counseling
2. Individual/family/school crisis intervention
3. Conflict resolution
4. Consultation/collaboration
5. Referrals

System Support

1. Professional development
2. Consultation, collaboration and teaming
3. Program management and operation

Elementary School Counselors Collaborate with:

Parents

Parent education
Communication/networking
Academic planning
College/career awareness programs
One-on-one parent conferencing
Interpretation of assessment results

Teachers

Classroom guidance activities
Academic support, including learning style assessment and education to help students succeed academically
Classroom speakers
At-risk student identification and implementation of interventions to enhance success

Administrators

School climate
Behavioral management plans
School-wide needs assessments
Student data and results
Student assistance team building

Students

Peer education
Peer support
Academic support
School climate
Leadership development

Community
Job shadowing, service learning
Crisis interventions
Referrals
Parenting classes
Support groups
Career education

**These examples are not intended to be all-inclusive

Why Elementary School Counselors?

Elementary school years set the tone for developing the knowledge, attitudes and skill necessary for children to become healthy, competent and confident learners. Through a comprehensive developmental school counseling program, counselors work as a team with the school staff, parents and the community to create a caring climate and atmosphere. By providing education, prevention, early identification and intervention, school counselors can help all children can achieve academic success. The professional elementary school counselor holds a master's degree and required state certification in school counseling. Maintaining certification includes on-going professional development to stay current with education reform and challenges facing today's students. Professional association membership enhances the school counselor's knowledge and effectiveness.