
School Counselor Competencies

History and Purpose

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) supports school counselors' efforts to help students focus on academic, personal/social and career development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society. In recent years, the ASCA leadership has recognized the need for a more unified vision of the school counseling profession. "The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs" was a landmark document that provided a mechanism with which school counselors and school counseling teams could design, coordinate, implement, manage and enhance their programs for students' success. The ASCA National Model® provides a framework for the program components, the school counselor's role in implementation and the underlying philosophies of leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change.

The School Counselor Competencies continue the effort for a unified vision by outlining the knowledge, attitudes and skills that ensure school counselors are equipped to meet the rigorous demands of our profession and the needs of our Pre-K-12 students. These competencies are necessary to better ensure that our future school counselor workforce will be able to continue to make a positive difference in the lives of students.

Development of the Competencies

The development of the School Counselor Competencies document was a highly collaborative effort among many members of the school counseling profession.

A group of school counseling professionals that included practicing school counselors, district school counseling supervisors and counselor educators from across the country met in January 2007 to discuss ways to ensure that school counselor education programs adequately train and prepare future school counselors to design and implement comprehensive school counseling programs. The group agreed that the logical first task should be the development of a set of competencies necessary and sufficient to be an effective professional school counselor.

The group created a general outline of competencies and asked ASCA to form a task force to develop draft school counselor competencies supporting the ASCA National Model. The task force used sample competencies from states, universities and other organizations to develop a first draft, which was presented to the whole group for feedback. After comments and revisions were incorporated, the revised draft was released for public review and comment. Revisions through the public comment were incorporated to develop the final version. The school counselor competencies document is unique in several ways. First, this set of competencies is organized around and consistent with the ASCA National Model. Second, the competencies are comprehensive in that they include skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for meritoriously performing the range of school counselor responsibilities (e.g., counseling, coordinating, consulting, etc.) in all four components of comprehensive school counseling programs: foundation, management, delivery and accountability. These

competencies have been identified as those that will equip new and experienced school counselors with the skills to establish, maintain and enhance a comprehensive, developmental, results-based school counseling program addressing academic achievement, personal and social development and career planning.

Applications

ASCA views these competencies as being applicable along a continuum of areas. For instance, school counselor education programs may use the competencies as benchmarks for ensuring students graduate with the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for developing comprehensive school counseling programs. Professional school counselors could use the School Counselor Competencies as a checklist to self-evaluate their own competencies and, as a result, formulate an appropriate professional development plan. School administrators may find these competencies useful as a guide for seeking and hiring highly competent school counselors and for developing meaningful school counselor performance evaluations. Also, the School Counselor Competencies include the necessary technological competencies needed for performing effectively and efficiently in the 21st century.

I. School Counseling Programs

School counselors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to plan, organize, implement and evaluate a comprehensive, developmental, results-based school counseling program that aligns with the ASCA National Model.

I-A: KNOWLEDGE

ASCA's position statement, The Professional School Counselor and School Counseling Preparation Programs, states that school counselors should articulate and demonstrate an understanding of:

- I-A-1 The organizational structure and governance of the American educational system as well as cultural, political and social influences on current educational practices
- I-A-2. The organizational structure and qualities of an effective school counseling program that aligns with the ASCA National Model
- I-A-3. Impediments to student learning and use of advocacy and data-driven school counseling practices to act effectively in closing the achievement/opportunity gap
- I-A-4. Leadership principles and theories
- I-A-5. Individual counseling, group counseling and classroom guidance programs ensuring equitable access to resources that promote academic achievement; personal, social and emotional development; and career development including the identification of appropriate post-secondary education for every student
- I-A-6. Collaborations with stakeholders such as parents and guardians, teachers, administrators and community leaders to create learning environments that promote educational equity and success for every student
- I-A-7. Legal, ethical and professional issues in pre-K—12 schools
- I-A-8. Developmental theory, learning theories, social justice theory, multiculturalism, counseling theories and career

counseling theories

- I-A-9. The continuum of mental health services, including prevention and intervention strategies to enhance student success

I-B: ABILITIES AND SKILLS

An effective school counselor is able to accomplish measurable objectives demonstrating the following abilities and skills.

- I-B-1. Plans, organizes, implements and evaluates a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model
 - I-B-1a. Creates a vision statement examining the professional and personal competencies and qualities a school counselor should possess
 - I-B-1b. Describes the rationale for a comprehensive school counseling program
 - I-B-1c. Articulates the school counseling themes of advocacy, leadership, collaboration and systemic change, which are critical to a successful school counseling program.
 - I-B-1d. Describes, defines and identifies the qualities of an effective school counseling program
 - I-B-1e. Describes the benefits of a comprehensive school counseling program for all stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, school boards, department of education, school counselors, counselor educators, community stakeholders and business leaders
 - I-B-1f. Describes the history of school counseling to create a context for the current state of the profession and comprehensive school counseling programs
 - I-B-1g. Uses technology effectively and efficiently to plan, organize, implement and evaluate the comprehensive

school counseling program

- I-B-1h. Demonstrates multicultural, ethical and professional competencies in planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating the comprehensive school counseling program

- I-B-2. Serves as a leader in the school and community to promote and support student success
 - I-B-2a. Understands and defines leadership and its role in comprehensive school counseling programs
 - I-B-2b. Identifies and applies a model of leadership to a comprehensive school counseling program
 - I-B-2c. Identifies and demonstrates professional and personal qualities and skills of effective leaders
 - I-B-2d. Identifies and applies components of the ASCA National Model requiring leadership, such as an advisory council, management system and accountability
 - I-B-2e. Creates a plan to challenge the non-counseling tasks that are assigned to school counselors

- I-B-3. Advocates for student success
 - I-B-3a. Understands and defines advocacy and its role in comprehensive school counseling programs
 - I-B-3b. Identifies and demonstrates benefits of advocacy with school and community stakeholders
 - I-B-3c. Describes school counselor advocacy competencies, which include dispositions, knowledge and skills
 - I-B-3d. Reviews advocacy models and develops a personal advocacy plan
 - I-B-3e. Understands the process for

development of policy and procedures at the building, district, state and national levels

- I-B-4. Collaborates with parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders and other stakeholders to promote and support student success
 - I-B-4a. Defines collaboration and its role in comprehensive school counseling programs
 - I-B-4b. Identifies and applies models of collaboration for effective use in a school counseling program and understands the similarities and differences between consultation, collaboration and counseling and coordination strategies.
 - I-B-4c. Creates statements or other documents delineating the various roles of student service providers, such as school social worker, school psychologist, school nurse, and identifies best practices for collaborating to affect student success
 - I-B-4d. Understands and knows how to apply a consensus-building process to foster agreement in a group
 - I-B-4e. Understands how to facilitate group meetings to effectively and efficiently meet group goals
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- I-B-5. Acts as a systems change agent to create an environment promoting and supporting student success
 - I-B-5a. Defines and understands system change and its role in comprehensive school counseling programs
 - I-B-5b. Develops a plan to deal with personal (emotional and cognitive) and institutional resistance impeding the change process
 - I-B-5c. Understands the impact of school, district and state educational policies, procedures and practices supporting and/or impeding student success

I-C: ATTITUDES

School counselors believe:

- I-C-1. Every student can learn, and every student can succeed
- I-C-2. Every student should have access to and opportunity for a high-quality education
- I-C-3. Every student should graduate from high school and be prepared for employment or college and other post-secondary education
- I-C-4. Every student should have access to a school counseling program
- I-C-5. Effective school counseling is a collaborative process involving school counselors, students, parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders and other stakeholders
- I-C-6. School counselors can and should be leaders in the school and district
- I-C-7. The effectiveness of school counseling programs should be measurable using process, perception and results data

II: Foundations

School counselors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to establish the foundations of a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model.

II-A: KNOWLEDGE

School counselors should articulate and demonstrate an understanding of:

- II-A-1 Beliefs and philosophy of the school counseling program that align with current school improvement and student success initiatives at the school, district and state level
- II-A-2 Educational systems, philosophies and theories and current trends in education, including federal and state legislation
- II-A-3 Learning theories
- II-A-4 History and purpose of school counseling, including traditional and transformed roles of school counselors
- II-A-5 Human development theories

and developmental issues affecting student success

- II-A-6 District, state and national student standards and competencies, including ASCA Student Competencies
- II-A-7 Legal and ethical standards and principles of the school counseling profession and educational systems, including district and building policies
- II-A-8 Three domains of academic achievement, career planning, and personal and social development

II-B: ABILITIES AND SKILLS

An effective school counselor is able to accomplish measurable objectives demonstrating the following abilities and skills.

- II-B-1. Develops the beliefs and philosophy of the school counseling program that align with current school improvement and student success initiatives at the school, district and state level
 - II-B-1a. Examines personal, district and state beliefs, assumptions and philosophies about student success, specifically what they should know and be able to do
 - II-B-1b. Demonstrates knowledge of a school's particular educational philosophy and mission
 - II-B-1c. Conceptualizes and writes a personal philosophy about students, families, teachers, school counseling programs and the educational process consistent with the school's educational philosophy and mission
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- II-B-2. Develops a school counseling mission statement aligning with the school, district and state mission.
 - II-B-2a. Critiques a school district mission statement and identifies or writes a mission statement aligning with beliefs
 - II-B-2b. Writes a school counseling mission statement that is specific, concise, clear and comprehensive, describing a

- school counseling program's purpose and a vision of the program's benefits every student
- II-B-2c. Communicates the philosophy and mission of the school counseling program to all appropriate stakeholders
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- II-B-3. Uses student standards, such as ASCA Student Competencies, and district or state standards, to drive the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program
- II-B-3a. Crosswalks the ASCA Student Competencies with other appropriate standards
- II-B-3b. Prioritizes student standards that align with the school's goals
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- II-B-4. Applies the ethical standards and principles of the school counseling profession and adheres to the legal aspects of the role of the school counselor
- II-B-4a. Practices ethical principles of the school counseling profession in accordance with the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors
- II-B-4b. Understands the legal and ethical nature of working in a pluralistic, multicultural, and technological society.
- II-B-4c. Understands and practices in accordance with school district policy and local, state and federal statutory requirements.
- II-B-4d. Understands the unique legal and ethical nature of working with minor students in a school setting.
- II-B-4e. Advocates responsibly for school board policy, local, state and federal statutory requirements that are in the best interests of students
- II-B-4f. Resolves ethical dilemmas by employing an ethical decision-making model appropriate to work in schools.
- II-B-4g. Models ethical behavior
- II-B-4h. Continuously engages in

- professional development and uses resources to inform and guide ethical and legal work
- II-B-4i. Practices within the ethical and statutory limits of confidentiality
- II-B-4j. Continually seeks consultation and supervision to guide legal and ethical decision making and to recognize and resolve ethical dilemmas
- II-B-4k. Understands and applies an ethical and legal obligation not only to students but to parents, administration and teachers as well

II-C: ATTITUDES

School counselors believe:

- II-C-1. School counseling is an organized program for every student and not a series of services provided only to students in need
- II-C-2. School counseling programs should be an integral component of student success and the overall mission of schools and school districts
- II-C-3. School counseling programs promote and support academic achievement, personal and social development and career planning for every student
- II-C-4. School counselors operate within a framework of school and district policies, state laws and regulations and professional ethics standards

III: Delivery

School counselors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to deliver a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model.

III-A: KNOWLEDGE

School counselors should articulate and demonstrate an understanding of:

- III-A-1. The concept of a guidance curriculum
- III-A-2. Counseling theories and techniques that work in school, such as solution-

- focused brief counseling, reality therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy
- III-A-3. Counseling theories and techniques in different settings, such as individual planning, group counseling and classroom guidance
- III-A-4. Classroom management
- III-A-5. Principles of career planning and college admissions, including financial aid and athletic eligibility
- III-A-6. Principles of working with various student populations based on ethnic and racial background, English language proficiency, special needs, religion, gender and income
- III-A-7. Responsive services
- III-A-8. Crisis counseling, including grief and bereavement

III-B: ABILITIES AND SKILLS

An effective school counselor is able to accomplish measurable objectives demonstrating the following abilities and skills.

- III-B-1. Implements the school guidance curriculum
- III-B-1a. Crosswalks ASCA Student Competencies with appropriate guidance curriculum
- III-B-1b. Develops and presents a developmental guidance curriculum addressing all students' needs, including closing-the-gap activities
- III-B-1c. Demonstrates classroom management and instructional skills
- III-B-1d. Develops materials and instructional strategies to meet student needs and school goals
- III-B-1e. Encourages staff involvement to ensure the effective implementation of the school guidance curriculum
- III-B-1f. Knows, understands and uses a variety of technology in the delivery of guidance curriculum activities
- III-B-1g. Understands multicultural and pluralistic trends when developing and choosing guidance curriculum

- III-B-1h. Understands the resources available for students with special needs
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- III-B-2. Facilitates individual student planning
- III-B-2a. Understands individual student planning as a component of a comprehensive program.
- III-B-2b. Develops strategies to implement individual student planning, such as strategies for appraisal, advisement, goal-setting, decision-making, social skills, transition or post-secondary planning
- III-B-2c. Helps students establish goals, and develops and uses planning skills in collaboration with parents or guardians and school personnel
- III-B-2d. Understands career opportunities, labor market trends, and global economics, and uses various career assessment techniques to assist students in understanding their abilities and career interests
- III-B-2e. Helps students learn the importance of college and other post-secondary education and helps students navigate the college admissions process
- III-B-2f. Understands the relationship of academic performance to the world of work, family life and community service
- III-B-2g. Understands methods for helping students monitor and direct their own learning and personal/social and career development
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- III-B-3. Provides responsive services
- III-B-3a. Understands how to make referrals to appropriate professionals when necessary
- III-B-3b. Lists and describes interventions used in responsive services, such as consultation, individual and small-group counseling, crisis counseling, referrals and peer facilitation
- III-B-3c. Compiles resources to utilize with students, staff and families to effectively address issues through responsive services
- III-B-3d. Understands appropriate individual and small-group counseling theories and techniques such as rational emotive behavior therapy, reality therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, Adlerian, solution-focused brief counseling, person-centered counseling and family systems
- III-B-3e. Demonstrates an ability to provide counseling for students during times of transition, separation, heightened stress and critical change
- III-B-3f. Understands what defines a crisis, the appropriate response and a variety of intervention strategies to meet the needs of the individual, group, or school community before, during and after crisis response
- III-B-3g. Provides team leadership to the school and community in a crisis
- III-B-3h. Involves appropriate school and community professionals as well as the family in a crisis situation
- III-B-3i. Develops a database of community agencies and service providers for student referrals
- III-B-3j. Applies appropriate counseling approaches to promoting change among consultees within a consultation approach
- III-B-3k. Understands and is able to build effective and high-quality peer helper programs
- III-B-3l. Understands the nature of academic, career and personal/social counseling in schools and the similarities and differences among school counseling and other types of counseling, such as mental health, marriage and family, and substance abuse counseling, within a continuum of care
- III-B-3m. Understands the role of the school counselor and the school counseling program in the school crisis plan
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- III-B-4. Implements system support activities for the comprehensive school counseling program
- III-B-4a. Creates a system support planning document addressing school counselor's responsibilities for professional development, consultation and collaboration and program management
- III-B-4b. Coordinates activities that establish, maintain and enhance the school counseling program as well as other educational programs
- III-B-4c. Conducts in-service training for other stakeholders to share school counseling expertise
- III-B-4d. Understands and knows how to provide supervision for school counseling interns consistent with the principles of the ASCA National Model
- III-C: ATTITUDES**
School counselors believe:
- III-C-1. School counseling is one component in the continuum of care that should be available to all students
- III-C-2. School counselors coordinate and facilitate counseling and other services to ensure all students receive the care they need, even though school counselors may not personally provide the care themselves
- III-C-3. School counselors engage in developmental counseling and short-term responsive counseling
- III-C-4. School counselors should refer students to district or community resources to meet more extensive needs such as long-term therapy or diagnoses of disorders

IV: Management

School counselors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to manage a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model.

IV-A: KNOWLEDGE

School counselors should articulate and demonstrate an understanding of:

- IV-A-1. Leadership principles, including sources of power and authority, and formal and informal leadership
- IV-A-2. Organization theory to facilitate advocacy, collaboration and systemic change
- IV-A-3. Presentation skills for programs such as teacher in-services and results reports to school boards
- IV-A-4. Time management, including long- and short-term management using tools such as schedules and calendars
- IV-A-5. Data-driven decision making
- IV-A-6. Current and emerging technologies such as use of the Internet, Web-based resources and management information systems

IV-B: ABILITIES AND SKILLS

An effective school counselor is able to accomplish measurable objectives demonstrating the following abilities and skills.

- IV-B-1. Negotiates with the administrator to define the management system for the comprehensive school counseling program
- IV-B-1a. Discusses and develops the components of the school counselor management system with the other members of the counseling staff
- IV-B-1b. Presents the school counseling management system to the principal, and finalizes an annual school counseling management agreement
- IV-B-1c. Discusses the anticipated program results when implementing the action plans for the school year
- IV-B-1d. Participates in professional

organizations

- IV-B-1e. Develops a yearly professional development plan demonstrating how the school counselor advances relevant knowledge, skills and dispositions
- IV-B-1f. Communicates effective goals and benchmarks for meeting and exceeding expectations consistent with the administrator-counselor agreement and district performance appraisals
- IV-B-1g. Uses personal reflection, consultation and supervision to promote professional growth and development

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- IV-B-2. Establishes and convenes an advisory council for the comprehensive school counseling program
 - IV-B-2a. Uses leadership skills to facilitate vision and positive change for the comprehensive school counseling program
 - IV-B-2b. Determines appropriate education stakeholders who should be represented on the advisory council
 - IV-B-2c. Develops meeting agendas
 - IV-B-2d. Reviews school data, school counseling program audit and school counseling program goals with the council
 - IV-B-2e. Records meeting notes and distributes as appropriate
 - IV-B-2f. Analyzes and incorporates feedback from advisory council related to school counseling program goals as appropriate

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- IV-B-3. Collects, analyzes and interprets relevant data, including process, perception and results data, to monitor and improve student behavior and achievement
 - IV-B-3a. Analyzes, synthesizes and disaggregates data to examine student outcomes and to identify and implement interventions as needed
 - IV-B-3b. Uses data to identify policies,

practices and procedures leading to successes, systemic barriers and areas of weakness

- IV-B-3c. Uses student data to demonstrate a need for systemic change in areas such as course enrollment patterns; equity and access; and the achievement, opportunity and information gap
 - IV-B-3d. Understands and uses data to establish goals and activities to close the achievement, opportunity and information gap
 - IV-B-3e. Knows how to use and analyze data to evaluate the school counseling program, research activity outcomes and identify gaps between and among different groups of students
 - IV-B-3f. Uses school data to identify and assist individual students who do not perform at grade level and do not have opportunities and resources to be successful in school
 - IV-B-3g. Knows and understands theoretical and historical bases for assessment techniques
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- IV-B-4. Organizes and manages time to implement an effective school counseling program
 - IV-B-4a. Identifies appropriate distribution of school counselor's time based on delivery system and school's data
 - IV-B-4b. Creates a rationale for school counselor's time to focus on the goals of the comprehensive school counseling program
 - IV-B-4c. Identifies and evaluates fair-share responsibilities, which articulate appropriate and inappropriate counseling and non-counseling activities
 - IV-B-4d. Creates a rationale for the school counselor's total time spent in each component of the school counseling program
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- IV-B-5. Develops calendars to ensure the effective implementation of the school counseling program

- IV-B-5a. Creates annual, monthly and weekly calendars to plan activities to reflect school goals
 - IV-B-5b. Demonstrates time management skills including scheduling, publicizing and prioritizing time and task
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- IV-B-6. Designs and implements action plans aligning with school and school counseling program goals
- IV-B-6a. Uses appropriate academic and behavioral data to develop guidance curriculum and closing-the-gap action plan and determines appropriate students for the target group or interventions
- IV-B-6b. Identifies ASCA domains, standards and competencies being addressed by the plan
- IV-B-6c. Determines the intended impact on academics and behavior
- IV-B-6d. Identifies appropriate activities to accomplish objectives
- IV-B-6e. Identifies appropriate resources needed
- IV-B-6f. Identifies data-collection strategies to gather process, perception and results data
- IV-B-6g. Shares results of action plans with staff, parents and community.

IV-C: ATTITUDES

School counselors believe:

- IV-C-1. A school counseling program and guidance department must be managed like other programs and departments in a school
- IV-C-2. One of the critical responsibilities of a school counselor is to plan, organize, implement and evaluate a school counseling program
- IV-C-3. Management of a school counseling program must be done in collaboration with administrators.

V: Accountability

School counselors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to monitor and evaluate the processes and results of a school coun-

seling program aligning with the ASCA National Model.

V-A: KNOWLEDGE

School counselors should articulate and demonstrate an understanding of:

- V-A-1. Basic concept of results-based school counseling and accountability issues
- V-A-2. Basic research and statistical concepts to read and conduct research
- V-A-3. Use of data to evaluate program effectiveness and to determine program needs
- V-A-4. Program audits and results reports

V-B: ABILITIES AND SKILLS

An effective school counselor is able to accomplish measurable objectives demonstrating the following abilities and skills.

- V-B-1. Uses data from results reports to evaluate program effectiveness and to determine program needs
- V-B-1a. Uses formal and informal methods of program evaluation to design and modify comprehensive school counseling programs
- V-B-1b. Uses student data to support decision making in designing effective school counseling programs and interventions
- V-B-1c. Measures results attained from school guidance curriculum and closing-the-gap activities
- V-B-1d. Works with members of the school counseling team and with the administration to decide how school counseling programs are evaluated and how results are shared
- V-B-1e. Collects process, perception and results data
- V-B-1f. Uses technology in conducting research and program evaluation
- V-B-1g. Reports program results to professional school counseling community
- V-B-1h. Uses data to demonstrate the value the school counseling program adds to student achievement

- V-B-1i. Uses results obtained for program improvement
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- V-B-2. Understands and advocates for appropriate school counselor performance appraisal process based on school counselors competencies and completion of the guidance curriculum and agreed-upon action plans
 - V-B-2a. Conducts self-appraisal related to school counseling skills and performance
 - V-B-2b. Identifies how school counseling activities fit within categories of performance appraisal instrument
 - V-B-2c. Encourages administrators to use performance appraisal instrument reflecting appropriate responsibilities for school counselors
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- V-B-3. Conducts a program audit
- V-B-3a. Completes a program audit to compare current school counseling program implementation with the ASCA National Model
- V-B-3b. Shares the results of the program audit with administrators, the advisory council and other appropriate stakeholders
- V-B-3c. Identifies areas for improvement for the school counseling program

V-C: ATTITUDES

School counselors believe:

- V-C-1. School counseling programs should achieve demonstrable results
- V-C-2. School counselors should be accountable for the results of the school counseling program
- V-C-3. School counselors should use quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate their school counseling program and to demonstrate program results
- V-C-4. The results of the school counseling program should be analyzed and presented in the context of the overall school and district performance



AMERICAN
SCHOOL
COUNSELOR
ASSOCIATION

1101 King St., Suite 625
Alexandria, VA 22314-2944
www.schoolcounselor.org