

# School Counseling Standards

First Edition

for school counselors of students ages 3–18+

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*National Board Certification  
Promotes Better Teaching,  
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# Preface

## About the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (National Board) is a not-for-profit professional organization, created and governed by practicing teachers and their advocates. The founding mission of the National Board is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by

- maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do;
- providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards; and
- advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification into American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers.

Recognized as the “gold standard” in teacher certification, the National Board believes higher standards for teachers means better learning for students.

Founded in 1987, the National Board began by engaging teachers in the development of standards for accomplished teaching and in the building of an assessment—National Board Certification—that validly and reliably identifies when a teacher meets those standards. Today, there are 25 certificate areas that span 16 content areas and four student developmental levels. The essence of the National Board’s vision of accomplished teaching is captured in the enduring document *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do*, at the heart of which are the Five Core Propositions:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

The National Board believes that board certification should become the norm, not the exception, and should be fully integrated into the fabric of the teaching profession. In other professions, such as medicine, engineering, and architecture, board certification has helped to create a culture of accomplished practice and is a major reason why those professions are held in such high regard by the public. Those professions did what teaching must now do: strengthen the coherent pipeline of preparation that begins in pre-service and continues through board certification and beyond, with each step engineered to help teachers develop toward accomplished. More than 110,000 teachers had achieved board certification by 2014, a number which represents the largest group of identified teaching experts in the country. Given the size of the teaching workforce, however, this sizable number represents fewer than 3 percent of teachers.

For most children that means they go through their entire schooling without being taught by a board-certified teacher. Each teacher who pursues board certification helps to close this gap, strengthening the profession and the quality of teaching and learning. In a world where board certification is the standard that all teachers aspire to and most achieve, students experience accomplished teaching throughout their schooling, unleashing their potential.

## About the Standards

Every child deserves an accomplished teacher—one who is qualified to equip students with the skills to succeed in a global community. The core mission of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is to create field-specific standards for accomplished teaching that are grounded in the Five Core Propositions and that articulate the actions that accomplished teachers employ to advance student learning. Each standards document represents a professional consensus on the attributes of practice that distinguish accomplished teaching in that field. Many school systems use the standards as the basis for ongoing professional development, and many colleges and universities incorporate the standards into their undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs.

Standards are developed and revised by a committee of 12–15 members who are representative of accomplished professionals in their field. A majority of standards committee members are practicing Board certified teachers. Other committee members are experts in academic content and child development, including teacher educators, researchers, and other professionals in the relevant field. Standards are disseminated widely for public comment and subsequently revised as necessary before adoption by the National Board's Board of Directors.

Throughout the development of both the standards and the certification process, the National Board ensures broad representation of the diversity that exists within the profession; engages pertinent disciplinary and specialty associations at key points in the process; collaborates closely with appropriate state agencies, academic institutions, and independent research and education organizations; and establishes procedures to detect and eliminate instances of external and internal bias.

National Board Standards and certifications are defined by the developmental level of the students and by the subject or subjects being taught. Teachers select the subject area that makes up the substantive focus of their teaching. They may choose Generalist certificates if they do not focus on one particular subject area in their practice. The four overlapping student developmental levels (listed below) indicate the age of the majority of their students.

- Early Childhood (EC)—ages 3–8
- Middle Childhood (MC)—ages 7–12
- Early Adolescence (EA)—ages 11–15
- Adolescence and Young Adulthood (AYA)—ages 14–18+

## About Certification

National Board Certification® is a voluntary, standards-based process designed for teachers to transform the Five Core Propositions into practice. In order to be eligible for certification a teacher must

- Hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution<sup>1</sup>;
- Have a minimum of three years' teaching experience at the early childhood, elementary, middle school, or high school level; and
- Where it is required, hold a state teaching license.

The assessments, aligned with the Five Core Propositions and the standards, are designed so that teachers demonstrate their practice by providing evidence of what they know and do. The evidence-based assessment honors the complexities and demands of teaching.

In 2014, the National Board initiated revision of the assessment to make the process more flexible, affordable, and efficient for teachers. In all certificate areas, candidates for National Board Certification are now required to complete four components: three portfolio entries, which are submitted online, and a computer-based assessment, which is administered at a testing center. Teachers develop portfolio entries that require analysis of their practice as it relates to student learning and to being a reflective, effective practitioner. Designed to capture what a teacher knows and is able to do in real time and in real-life settings, the portfolio consists of description, analysis, and reflection focused on student learning that is captured on video and in student work samples. The process requires teachers to reflect on the underlying assumptions of their practice and the impacts of that practice on student learning.

Teachers also demonstrate content knowledge by responding to open-ended and multiple choice questions delivered at a secure testing site. The assessment center component complements the portfolio, validates that the knowledge and skills exhibited in the portfolio are accurate reflections of what a candidate knows, and provides candidates with opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills not sampled in the portfolio.

Assessments are based on the standards and are developed for every certificate area by educators who specialize in the same content and student developmental level as the candidates. Educators who are themselves practitioners in the certificate area score the submitted portfolio entries. They must successfully complete intensive training and qualify for scoring on the basis of their understanding of National Board Standards and scoring guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> Candidates registering for the Career and Technical Education certificate are required to hold a bachelor's degree only if their state required one for their current license.

# Foundation of National Board Certification for Teachers

## Five Core Propositions

The National Board framework for accomplished teaching was established in its 1989 publication, *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do*. The Five Core Propositions serve as the foundation for all National Board standards and assessments, defining the level of knowledge, skills, abilities, and commitments that accomplished teachers demonstrate. Teachers embody all Five Core Propositions in their practices, drawing on various combinations of these skills, applications, and dispositions to promote student learning.

### 1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

Accomplished teachers base their practice on the fundamental belief that all students can learn and meet high expectations. They treat students equitably, recognizing the individual differences that distinguish one student from another and taking account of these differences in their practice. They adjust their practice based on observation and understanding of their students' interests, abilities, skills, knowledge, language, family circumstances, and peer relationships. They view students' varied backgrounds as diversity that enriches the learning environment for every student.

Accomplished teachers understand how students develop and learn. They consult and incorporate a variety of learning and development theories into their practice, while remaining attuned to their students' individual contexts, cultures, abilities, and circumstances. They are committed to students' cognitive development as well as to students' ownership of their learning. Equally important, they foster students' self-esteem, motivation, character, perseverance, civic responsibility, intellectual risk taking, and respect for others.

### 2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

Accomplished teachers have a rich understanding of the subject(s) they teach and appreciate how knowledge in their subject is created, organized, linked to other disciplines, and applied to real-world settings. While maintaining the integrity of disciplinary methods, content, and structures of organization, accomplished teachers develop the critical and analytical capacities of their students so they can think for themselves.

Accomplished teachers command specialized knowledge of how to convey and reveal subject matter to students. They are aware of the preconceptions and background knowledge that students typically bring to each subject and draw upon pedagogical and subject matter understandings to anticipate challenges,



modify their practice, and respond to students' needs. They also demonstrate a commitment towards learning about new strategies, instructional resources, and technology that can be of assistance. Their instructional repertoire and professional judgment allow them to generate multiple paths to knowledge in the subjects they teach, and they are adept at teaching students how to pose and solve their own problems so they can continue exploring and advancing their understanding.

### **3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.**

Accomplished teachers view themselves as facilitators of student learning within dynamic instructional settings. They create, enrich, maintain, and alter learning environments while establishing effective ways to monitor and manage those environments and the student learning that occurs within them. They possess a comprehensive knowledge of instructional methods, know when each is appropriate, and can implement them as needed. They use instructional time constructively and efficiently, customizing physical layout, resources, and instructional methods. They enlist the knowledge and support of a wide range of stakeholders to provide their students with enriched opportunities to learn. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of pedagogical approaches they may take, as well as the suitability of these approaches for particular students.

Accomplished teachers know how to engage students in varied settings and group configurations. They create positive and safe learning environments that guide student behavior and support learning, allowing the schools' goals for students to be met. They are adept at setting norms for social interaction among students and between students and teachers. They understand how to motivate students and value student engagement, supporting them as they face and learn from challenges.

Accomplished teachers assess the progress of individual students as well as that of the class as a whole. They apply their knowledge of assessment to employ multiple methods for measuring student growth and understanding. They use the information they gather from monitoring student learning to inform their practice, and they provide constructive feedback to students and families. They collaborate with students throughout the learning process and help students engage in self-assessment.

### **4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.**

Accomplished teachers possess a professional obligation to become perpetual students of their craft. Committed to reflective learning, they are models of educated persons. They exemplify the virtues they seek to inspire in students—curiosity, honesty, fairness, respect for diversity and appreciation of cultural differences—and the capacities that are prerequisites for intellectual growth: the ability to reason and take multiple perspectives, to be creative and take risks, and to adopt an experimental and problem-solving orientation.

Accomplished teachers draw on their knowledge of human development, subject matter, and instruction, and their understanding of their students to make principled judgments about sound practice. Their decisions are not only grounded in established theories, but also in reason born of experience. They engage in lifelong learning, which they seek to encourage in their students.

Accomplished teachers seek opportunities to cultivate their learning. Striving to strengthen their teaching and positively impact student learning, teachers use feedback and research to critically examine

their practice, seek to expand their repertoire, deepen their knowledge, sharpen their judgment and adapt their teaching to new findings, ideas and theories.

## **5. Teachers are members of learning communities.**

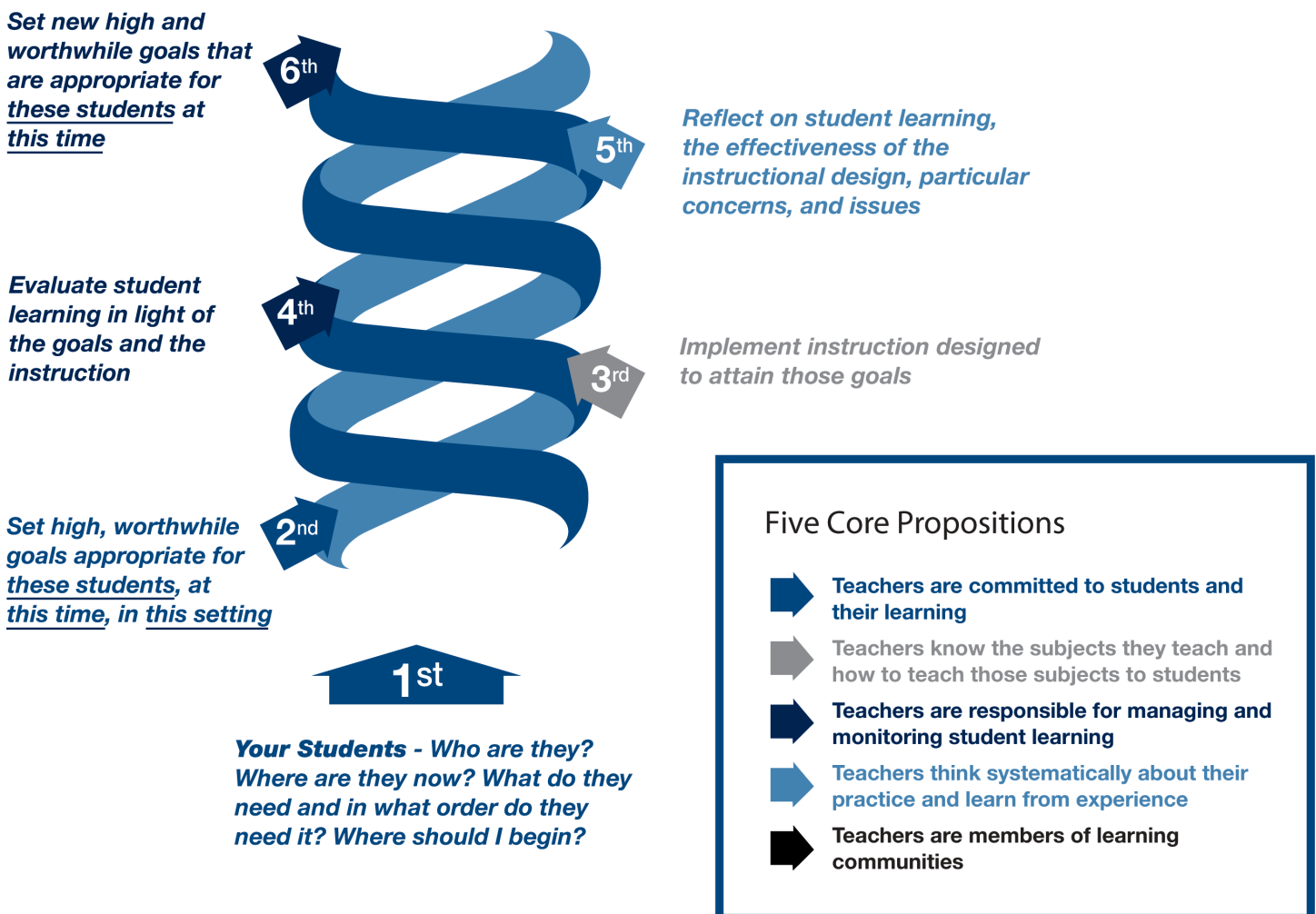
Accomplished teachers participate actively in their learning communities to promote progress and achievement. They contribute to the effectiveness of the school by working collaboratively with other professionals on policy decisions, curriculum development, professional learning, school instructional programs, and other functions that are fundamental to the development of highly productive learning communities. They work collaboratively and creatively with families and the community, engaging them productively in the work of the school and cultivating students' connections with the opportunities, resources, and diversity they afford.

Accomplished teachers can evaluate school progress and the allocation of school resources in light of their understanding of state and local educational objectives and their knowledge of student needs. They are knowledgeable about and can advocate for specialized school and community resources that can be engaged for their students' benefit, and are skilled at employing such resources as needed.

# Architecture of Accomplished Teaching

The Architecture of Accomplished Teaching provides a view of how the use of the Five Core Propositions and the standards that are developed from them result in student learning. As depicted in the Architecture of Accomplished Teaching illustration, shown below, one strand represents teaching practice as grounded in the Five Core Propositions, while the other strand represents the teacher’s impact on students and their learning.

## The Architecture of Accomplished Teaching: What is underneath the surface?



The National Board program certifies accomplished teachers who positively influence student learning through effective teaching practice. The process includes the core propositions for all teachers, a common set of accomplished teaching standards specific to the content field and students’ developmental levels, and a set of evidence-based assessments specific to the field that certify what accomplished teachers know and do.

# Standards

## Introduction

Throughout the past century, the role of the school counselor has evolved to reflect the changing face of society and needs of students. In the early 1900s, as industrialization continued to change the workplace and career possibilities broadened, demand grew for career and educational guidance services in the schools. This responsibility generally fell on teachers, who often performed this role without formal training or definition of their duties. The National Defense Education Act of 1958 prompted the widespread use of full-time guidance counselors, but their roles often remained in the same vein as their teacher predecessors: remediation, reactive crisis management, and administrative and clerical duties.

Guidance counselors found themselves working in a limited capacity with a small portion of the student body in their schools. In addition, the workplace was demanding higher skills, family structures were changing, and schools were adjusting to safety threats and budgetary cutbacks. Guidance counselors knew that they needed a systematic approach that would reach all students, guide students to academic success, and ensure that students develop into self-confident, productive citizens and workers. These conditions led to the introduction of a new school counseling program and a new designation for its practitioners: *school counselors*.

Founded on developmental psychology, educational philosophy, career development, and counseling methodology, this school counseling program is developmental, systematic, sequential, clearly defined, and accountable. Such a comprehensive program promotes and supports student success through academic, career, and personal/social development and is an integral part of the total education program of the school. School counseling programs utilize strategies to enhance academic achievement, provide career awareness, develop employment readiness, encourage self-awareness, foster interpersonal communication skills, and facilitate successful transitions for every student.

Accomplished school counselors are educators who use their knowledge of students, counseling, pedagogy, curriculum integration, and the unique context of their school and community to influence students' learning and well-being. The "classroom" of a school counselor may be the entire school, another educator's classroom, or the school counselor's office. School counselors may be facilitating whole-school workshops, leading small-group discussions, or providing one-on-one instruction. They systematically plan and facilitate activities and monitor students' progress to ensure that each student reaches desired goals. They are also integral members of the instructional team of the school and work with teachers, administrators, and other members of the learning community to advance student learning.

As specialists in intervention, school counselors are in the unique position to be the eyes, ears, and heart of the entire school. They are often the first school personnel to become aware of problems that individuals or groups of students may be experiencing. With their specialized training in crisis response, accomplished school counselors intervene quickly, methodically, and effectively during and after a traumatic

event. Because school counselors know that unexpected events will occur, they anticipate difficult times and organize their schools and communities in advance of a crisis. They are aware of the resources of their community and use this knowledge, through sound advice and appropriate referrals, to benefit students.

Accomplished school counselors know that an effective school counseling program is one that meets the needs of every student and that is part of a continuum of programs that meet the needs of students and families throughout students' educational lives. Whether working with one grade level of students, all grade levels in a school, or the full range of preK–12 students across schools, accomplished school counselors know the developmental characteristics of students throughout the life span and sequence their school counseling program to build from early childhood through adolescence and young adulthood. As leaders of a school counseling program, these school counselors plan, deliver, and continuously modify their program, based on data indicating student needs and desired student outcomes, in order to promote student achievement and growth and the mission of the school.

Many school counselors work in environments that pose great challenges to achieving their professional goals. Such issues as student load, travel to multiple schools, less-than-optimal facilities and equipment, and curricular and school demands can present obstacles to student success. Yet accomplished school counseling occurs even in the context of such daunting challenges. Accomplished school counselors work to bring about positive change, improve their techniques, and strengthen the quality of the school counseling program, even under the most challenging conditions.

Accomplished school counselors are advocates for their profession. They recognize that their roles have evolved and that with this evolution some stakeholders are not fully aware or accepting of the school counselor's professional responsibilities or the role of the school counseling program. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the school counselor to communicate a clear and compelling message about the importance of the program and to continually build relationships with families, agencies, the business community, policymakers, and the general public. Accomplished school counselors know how and when to influence policies and procedures that affect students, students' future prospects, or the school environment as a whole. They are spokespeople for fair, student-centered programs that are in the best interest of all stakeholders.

And yet, beyond their implementation and advocacy of a program, beyond their vast knowledge base, and beyond their ability to deliver effective instruction, is the true reward of the school counseling profession: having a positive impact on the lives of students. It is such connections with people—their growth, dreams, and interactions—that have been both the attraction and the ongoing joy of school counseling.

## **Developing High and Rigorous Standards for Accomplished Practice**

In 2000, a committee of school counselors and other educators with expertise in this field began the process of developing advanced professional standards for school counselors of students ages 3 to 18+. The School Counseling Standards Committee was charged with translating the Five Core Propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards into a standards document that defines outstanding practice in this field.

This NBPTS Standards document describes in observable form what accomplished school counselors should know and be able to do. The standards are meant to reflect the professional consensus at this

point about the essential aspects of accomplished practice. The deliberations of the School Counseling Standards Committee were informed by various national and state initiatives on school counseling standards that have been operating concurrently with the development of NBPTS Standards.<sup>1</sup> As the understanding of school counseling and learning continues to evolve over the next several years, *School Counseling Standards* will be updated appropriately.

These standards recognize, reflect, and imply varied approaches to school counseling. The National Board understands that such factors as the context in which school counselors practice, the backgrounds and experiences they bring to their role, and the professional choices they make during their careers contribute to a diverse population of accomplished school counselors. Examples given throughout the standards illustrate a range of possible activities and strategies that accomplished school counselors might employ to advance student learning and do not represent a prescriptive or exhaustive list. School counselors who use vastly different strategies may achieve at the highest levels of these standards.

An essential tension of describing accomplished practice concerns the difference between the analysis and the practice of school counseling. The former tends to fragment the profession into any number of discrete duties, such as designing learning activities, facilitating career exploration, modeling effective interpersonal behavior, and monitoring the school counseling program. School counseling as it actually occurs, however, is a seamless activity.

Everything an accomplished school counselor knows through study, research, and experience is brought to bear daily through innumerable decisions that shape learning. School counseling frequently requires balancing the demands of several important educational goals. It depends on accurate observations of particular students and settings. And it is subject to revision on the basis of continuing developments. The professional judgments that accomplished school counselors make also reflect a certain improvisational artistry.

The paradox, then, is that any attempt to write separate standards that dissect what accomplished school counselors know and are able to do will, to a certain extent, misrepresent the holistic nature of how school counseling actually takes place. Nevertheless, the fact remains: Certain identifiable commonalities characterize the accomplished practice of school counselors. The 11 standards that follow are designed to capture the extensive and profound craft, artistry, proficiency, and understandings that contribute to the complex work that is accomplished school counseling.

## The Standards Format

Accomplished school counseling appears in many different forms, and it should be acknowledged at the outset that these specific standards are not the only way accomplished school counseling could have been described. No linearity, atomization, or hierarchy is implied in this vision of accomplished school counseling, nor is each standard of equal weight. Rather, the standards are presented as aspects of school counseling that are analytically separable for the purposes of this standards document but that are not discrete when they appear in practice.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, American School Counselor Association (ASCA), *National Standards for School Counseling Programs* (Alexandria, Va.: Author, 1997). Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), *The 2001 Standards* (Alexandria, Va.: Author, 2001). ASCA, Draft, *National Model for School Counseling Programs* (Alexandria, VA: Author, in press).

The document follows a two-part format for each of the 11 standards:

- I. **Standard Statement**—This is a succinct statement of one vital aspect of the practice of the accomplished school counselor. Each standard is expressed in terms of observable actions that have an impact on students.
  
- II. **Elaboration**—This passage provides a context for the standard, along with an explanation of what school counselors need to know, value, and do if they are to fulfill the standard. The elaboration includes descriptions of school counselors' dispositions toward students, their distinctive roles and responsibilities, and their stances on a range of ethical and intellectual issues that regularly confront them.



# School Counseling Standards Statements

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has developed the following 11 standards of accomplished practice for school counselors. Standard I describes the school counseling program and presents a lens through which to view the knowledge and application expressed in the other standards. The standards have been ordered as they have to facilitate understanding, not to assign priorities. They each describe an important facet of accomplished school counseling; they often occur concurrently because of the seamless quality of school counseling. The standards serve as the basis for National Board Certification in this field.

## Standard I: School Counseling Program

Accomplished school counselors develop and deliver a school counseling program that is comprehensive, demonstrates continuous improvement, and advances the mission of the school.

## Standard II: School Counseling and Student Competencies

Accomplished school counselors apply deep and broad understanding of academic, career, and personal/social student competencies.

## Standard III: Human Growth and Development

Accomplished school counselors apply comprehensive, in-depth knowledge of human growth and development to improve student learning and well-being.

## Standard IV: Counseling Theories and Techniques

Accomplished school counselors demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of established and emerging counseling theories. They possess a thorough knowledge of techniques and processes that form the foundation for effective school counseling with a diverse population.

## Standard V: Equity, Fairness, and Diversity

Accomplished school counselors model and promote behavior appropriate in a diverse and global society by showing respect for and valuing all members of the community. They demonstrate fairness, equity, and sensitivity to every student, and they advocate for equitable access to instructional programs and activities.

## Standard VI: School Climate

Accomplished school counselors work to establish and foster an emotionally, socially, and physically safe learning environment for students, staff, and families.



## **Standard VII: Collaboration with Family and Community**

Accomplished school counselors work collaboratively with families and community members to achieve common goals for the education of students, improvement of schools, and advancement of the larger community. They are knowledgeable of the community and community resources, and they utilize available resources to make appropriate referrals based on the needs of students.

## **Standard VIII: Informational Resources and Technology**

Accomplished school counselors are skilled in the selection and use of informational resources and technology and use them to facilitate the delivery of a comprehensive school counseling program that meets student needs.

## **Standard IX: Student Assessment**

Accomplished school counselors understand the principles and purposes of assessment, and the collection and use of data. They regularly monitor student progress and communicate the purpose, design, and results of assessments to various audiences.

## **Standard X: Leadership, Advocacy, and Professional Identity**

Accomplished school counselors work as leaders and advocates in the promotion of student learning and achievement. They adhere to ethical practices and engage in professional growth and development.

## **Standard XI: Reflective Practice**

Accomplished school counselors integrate their knowledge, skills, and life experiences to respond effectively to new or unexpected critical events and situations. They monitor and refine their work with continuous, in-depth reflection.

*The pages that follow provide elaborations of each standard that discuss the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and habits of mind that describe accomplished teaching in the field.*

# ***Standard I***

## ***School Counseling Program***

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***Accomplished school counselors develop and deliver a school counseling program that is comprehensive, demonstrates continuous improvement, and advances the mission of the school.***

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Accomplished school counselors serve as advocates and leaders for the development, implementation, and management of a school counseling program that is comprehensive, and they use the framework of such a program to organize their school counseling activities. They are expert in the elements of the program—foundation, delivery system, management system, and accountability—and their interrelationship. They deliver a program that is data driven, that is relevant to both students and the local community, and that focuses on academic, career, and personal/social competencies and on desired outcomes for student achievement. They clearly communicate the purpose and structure of such a comprehensive school program so that all stakeholders are aware of the importance of the program to the mission of the school and the success of its students. Accomplished school counselors use formal and informal assessments to evaluate students and programs. Using these data and their knowledge of students and the school community, they advocate for changes in the school counseling program to enhance effectiveness in achieving student outcomes, program goals, and the school's mission.<sup>1</sup>

### **Foundations of the Program**

Accomplished school counselors know that the foundation of a school counseling program consists of its beliefs (i.e., philosophies and assumptions); mission; student competencies found in the academic, career, and personal/social domains; and program accountability. They can articulate how the program supports the mission of the school by promoting and enhancing the learning process of every student through integration of academic, career, and personal/social development.

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<sup>1</sup> This standard includes material drawn from the following sources: American School Counselor Association (ASCA), *National Standards for School Counseling Programs* (Alexandria, Va.: Author, 1997). Gysbers, Norman C., and Patricia Henderson, *Developing and Managing Your School Guidance Program* (Alexandria, Va.: American Counseling Association, 2000). Moreno Valley Unified School District School Counseling Department, *Moreno Valley Unified School District Program Model* (Moreno Valley, Ca.: Author, 1999). Tucson Unified School District Guidance and Counseling Department, *Program Handbook* (Tucson, Ariz.: Author, 1999). Also consulted was ASCA, Draft, *National Model for School Counseling Programs* (Alexandria, Va.: Author, in press).

Using their knowledge of the history, theories, and techniques in their field, accomplished school counselors establish their own philosophy of school counseling programs. They believe that every student has a right to benefit from a school counseling program that is comprehensive and proactive and that focuses on prevention and on students' developmental needs. School counselors work to achieve support among all personnel involved in managing and implementing the program.

## Delivery of the Program

Accomplished school counselors recognize that a school counseling program that is comprehensive has the potential to mobilize resources on behalf of every student. Through skillful planning and intentional allocation of their time, school counselors<sup>1</sup> are able to shift their emphasis from reactive, responsive services to proactive, prevention activities that can reach more students. By changing their focus and time to reach every student in a meaningful way, they are better positioned to advocate for programs and policies that support academic, career, and personal/social development.

This school counseling program is student centered and outcome driven. It is a framework that facilitates communication among counselors and among members of a school learning community. Through this framework, school counselors join with instructional teams, administrators, parents,<sup>2</sup> agencies, and business and industry to maintain high academic standards, increase safety and security, and invite every student to stay in school and reach new heights of success. School counselors also provide direct services to students and their parents and indirect services through teachers and other professionals. They are comfortable and skilled working with individual students, small groups of students, a full classroom, or the entire student body. They raise visibility of what they do and how they work, and they commit to being accountable for achieving student outcomes.

## Guidance Curriculum

Accomplished school counselors deliver a guidance and counseling curriculum composed of organized, sequenced objectives and activities centering on academic, career, and personal/social development of students. Through a systemwide needs assessment, school counselors identify student competencies for their schools. These competencies provide the content for their school counseling programs. (See [Standard II—School Counseling and Student Competencies](#).) For example, after analyzing the needs assessment, the accomplished school counselor may determine that it would be necessary to deliver lessons on self-respect, study skills, critical thinking skills, résumé writing, interviewing skills, friendship skills, or personal safety.

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<sup>1</sup> In this document, all references to *school counselors*, whether stated explicitly or not, refer to accomplished school counselors.

<sup>2</sup> *Parents* is used in this document to refer to the primary caregivers and guardians of children.

The school counseling curriculum can be delivered in stand-alone lessons or integrated throughout the school curriculum. School counselors develop units with sequential lessons to achieve goals. Often, school counselors will team with classroom teachers on delivering lessons or will consult with teachers on how to integrate the school counseling curriculum into the teacher's subject-specific plans. For instance, a school counselor could address character education or career planning in conjunction with a teacher's literature lesson. School counselors also possess a broad repertoire of strategies to engage students in active learning. They may use simulations, games, structured activities, manipulatives, support groups, guest speakers, or discovery learning.

## Individual Planning

Through effective assessment, advisement, placement, and follow-up, accomplished school counselors help students and their families develop and maintain a clearly identified but flexible direction while enrolled in that school. They systematically monitor students' academic progress, present career development information, and provide counseling or references for personal/social development.

School counselors encourage high aspirations and challenging coursework in conferencing with student and parents. They also may facilitate student-led conferences where students share academic portfolios with their parents as they explore goals together. When a student is not demonstrating satisfactory growth in an academic program, the school counselor collaborates with teachers, parents, and students to design an academic program that more closely matches the student's goals and aspirations and allows the student to experience success. School counselors help the students and their parents decide on proper placement and reasons for the lack of growth. If the issue is related to motivation, the school counselor works with the student and teachers to develop a plan to improve academic progress. As systemic thinkers, school counselors are comfortable with district, school, class, and individual records of progress and the future importance of these records to students. School counselors are able to interpret these records to inform all stakeholders of the progress of every student.

## Responsive Services

The education community calls upon school counselors during times of personal, interpersonal, or schoolwide duress. Accomplished school counselors respond quickly, calmly, and effectively to issues such as child abuse and neglect, grief and loss, suicide, violence, teasing, bullying, sexual harassment, and conflict. Skilled in teamwork, they are adept at forming, facilitating, and managing multidisciplinary approaches to problem solving on behalf of individual students, small groups, or the entire school. School counselors demonstrate effective individual and small-group counseling skills, and they form various student counseling groups that address the needs of the school. Accomplished school counselors consult with staff and other professionals and make appropriate referrals. When appropriate, they refer students with problems such as depression, eating disorders, and substance abuse to other

appropriate professionals, or they collaborate with others to apply widely used interventions for these students.

Accomplished school counselors notice when individual teachers need support. Because school counselors are often the first to be aware of members of the school community who may be struggling, they are well positioned to serve as mentors, consultants, and referral agents. Teachers new to the profession or new to the school, as well as more experienced teachers, can benefit from a skilled school counselor who can help them cope with such issues as job stress and challenging student behavior. School counselors model stress management and demonstrate effective approaches for managing disruptive classroom behavior. They advise teachers on how and when to refer students for academic support and on ways to interact with parents.

## System Support

Accomplished school counselors are in the unique position of viewing the entire school community and the entire academic, career, and personal/social development of students. They serve as a liaison among all of the stakeholders and the student in order to ensure successful student development. School counselors recognize that individual student success depends on cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders. They facilitate communication among teaching staff, administration, families, student services personnel, agencies, businesses, and other members of the community for the benefit of all students.

As advocates for individual students, school improvement efforts, and the school counseling profession as a whole, accomplished school counselors provide visible school leadership and confront relevant, high-impact issues while they promote the wellbeing of every student. They help design, plan, implement, and assess schoolwide initiatives, such as academic improvement or anti-bullying programs. As specialists in human development, they are integral parts of school improvement teams that focus on the education of students. (See [Standard III—Human Growth and Development](#).) They share responsibility with teachers and administrators for helping students meet academic standards and school goals.

## Management of the Program

Accomplished school counselors are flexible thinkers who are willing to make adjustments to their program when presented with sound documentation to support new methods. They are innovative and balanced thinkers who combine their management skills, professional knowledge, and outstanding interpersonal skills to deliver a program that meets the missions and goals of the students, the program, and the school. Their belief in the value and potential success of all students as well as their own problem-solving skills and visionary perspective enable accomplished school counselors to act as advocates to maintain a student-focused program.

### ***Management Agreements***

When planning the school counseling program, school counselors work collaboratively with colleagues, including teachers and administrators, to establish clear agreements of responsibility. Accomplished school counselors are systems thinkers who intentionally use data, plans, and schedules to guide decision making. They share this information with administrators to reach a consensus on the organization and responsibilities of the school counseling department.

### ***Action Plans***

Accomplished school counselors use their strong organizational skills and available data to develop an action plan that addresses student competencies and matches these competencies appropriately to activities, materials, and curricula. Accomplished school counselors use these action plans to help students acquire, develop and demonstrate competencies within the three domains of academic, career, and personal/social development.

### ***Use of Data***

School counselors collect and evaluate process and outcome data using appropriate evaluative instruments; compare results with expectations; document short-, intermediate-, and long-range impacts of the school counseling program; and adjust the program accordingly. They show that each activity implemented as part of the school counseling program was developed from a careful analysis of student needs. For example, a school counselor who has collected data showing that 20 percent of students in the school have failed mathematics would use the data to create a conversation on the need for a plan to increase student academic success in mathematics. The educational team, of which the school counselor is a part, would determine what student competencies are required for success; develop a plan; determine where those competencies are being taught in the school curriculum, where additions need to be made, and how best to incorporate those competencies into the school day; arrange appropriate follow-up to evaluate the plan and make necessary changes; and use these data as part of an ongoing evaluation of the school counseling program.

### ***Use of Time***

Accomplished school counselors continually evaluate time allocations for the delivery of the school counseling program. They understand the necessity for program balance and maintain a balance among delivery system, management system, and accountability while understanding that student achievement is their main priority. They customize time allocations for their program based on sound evidence of student and community needs, and they do so in the spirit of contributing to the overall school mission. They recognize that the components of a school counseling program are not independent, but interdependent, which complicates accurate time-utilization studies. For example, is counseling a depressed student part of responsive services, or could the session be related to motivational issues that support a



student's individual plan for meeting school and career goals? Accomplished school counselors deal with such ambiguities and maintain their commitment to students.

### ***Calendars***

Accomplished school counselors are able to view the entire school and school year with an eye to the importance of clear schedules and timing. They work with the school administrator to create a shared vision that ensures that the program's goals are obtained. They develop and maintain a master calendar that ensures that students, parents, teachers, and administrators know what is scheduled in order to optimize participation and planning. For example, the accomplished school counselor establishes a schedule for schoolwide counseling activities and provides that information to all involved parties.

### ***Advisory Councils***

Accomplished school counselors recognize the importance of involving all stakeholders as they consistently review their program in relation to best practices and align it with federal, state, and district requirements. They seek the input of others to review their program's goals and results. As a formal structure they may establish an advisory council that consists of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and colleagues who periodically review the program goals, competencies, and results and make recommendations to the school counseling department, principals, and others. Composition of the advisory council should reflect the diversity of the community and should include representative stakeholders of the school counseling program. (See [Standard VII—Collaboration with Family and Community](#) and [Standard X—Leadership, Advocacy, and Professional Identity](#).)

## **Accountability of the Program**

Accomplished school counselors accept accountability for the school counseling program and utilize data to report the effectiveness of the program to all stakeholders. They know that they must collect data both before and after the school counseling activity in order to answer the key questions that underlie all of their choices—How were students changed? How was the school affected?

Accomplished school counselors collect, analyze, and evaluate data that link the school counseling program to students' achievements and academic successes. They use data to show what activities enabled them to achieve their planned goals and what activities need to be adjusted. They develop reports that include short-term, intermediate, and long-term results that become baseline data for continuous program improvement.

This accountability for the program includes evaluations of school counselors that reflect the unique training and responsibilities of their profession. Such areas as professionalism, program implementation, and program evaluation appear in the tools used to examine basic standards of practice expected from a school counselor.

The accomplished school counselor uses these tools for self-evaluation and to create a professional development plan. (See [Standard XI—Reflective Practice](#).)

The accomplished school counselor completes a yearly program audit for the purpose of collecting information to guide future actions of the program and to improve future results for students. Program results are shared with all stakeholders in order to promote collaboration that advocates for continuous and seamless student and program growth. (See [Standard IX—Student Assessment](#).)

Accomplished school counselors recognize multiple opportunities to apply foundational knowledge and finely honed counseling skills in the delivery of the school counseling program. They are systems managers who use their excellent communication, relational, and group-process skills to address significant issues facing students, teachers, administrators, and parents. They believe in the importance of accountability in providing a school counseling program that provides for the success of every student. Through the interrelationship of all of these elements of the school counseling program, accomplished school counselors advocate for schools and students.



## ***Standard II***

# ***School Counseling and Student Competencies***

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*Accomplished school counselors apply deep and broad understanding of academic, career, and personal/social student competencies.*

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Accomplished school counselors possess a thorough knowledge of the academic, career, and personal/social competencies that students at all developmental levels need for lifelong success. The academic competencies on which school counselors focus relate to the strategies that help support and maximize student learning; the career development competencies provide an important foundation for transitions from school to work and adult life; and the personal/social competencies help foster academic and career success.<sup>1</sup>

School counselors address the competencies in the academic, career, and personal/social domains—which are interrelated, mutually supportive, and the foundation of a school counseling program—throughout their school counseling activities. Research shows a strong link between achievement of these competencies and student success in school and throughout life. School counselors encourage students’ hopes and optimism that they can be successful within the domains at their developmental level, and school counselors continually seek to involve parents in their child’s school experiences to help students reach their goals. (See [Standard VII—Collaboration with Family and Community](#).)

### **Academic Competencies**

Accomplished school counselors use effective academic counseling to encourage every student to succeed. Knowledge of students’ strengths, areas for growth, abilities, aptitudes, interests, and motivations enables school counselors to promote the highest academic standards. School counselors implement counseling strategies and activities that support and maximize student learning and achievement. They do so in many settings: in classrooms, in their offices, and anywhere that they are working with students in the school.

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<sup>1</sup> These definitions of academic, career, and personal/social competencies are from American School Counselor Association, *National Standards for School Counseling Programs* (Alexandria, Va.: Author, 1997), 1.

With a thorough knowledge of the schoolwide academic program, school counselors encourage students and their parents to make appropriate academic decisions that lead to success in school and beyond. Accomplished school counselors use their knowledge of human growth and development and counseling to work in partnership with the faculty to assure the appropriateness of academic work in fair, equitable, and diverse learning situations. They are integral members of the instructional team and join with teachers in accomplishing the school's mission. School counselors may also build relationships with post-secondary institutions to provide students with current entrance requirements and scholarship information, and with local employers to help students learn about employers' academic expectations of high school graduates who wish to enter the work force. They may provide for continuity of skills development by building relationships with before- and after-school care programs.

To enrich the entire curriculum and encourage independent lifelong learning, accomplished school counselors actively teach the awareness, development, and application of skills needed in all areas of academic study, and they are adept at integrating such skills into the schoolwide curriculum. For example, the school counselor might work with a mathematics teacher to combine a lesson on lapsed time with lessons on time management and organization. Or, they may show students how to form study groups to enhance the learning of all participants and then monitor students as they practice their skills.

Accomplished school counselors work with students, teachers, and parents to make academic plans. They facilitate communication among students, parents, and staff to set goals, monitor the success of the plan, and make appropriate changes. Furthermore, school counselors help students and their parents make academic transitions from elementary school to middle school to high school, and then to post-secondary education or to work.

## **Career Competencies**

Accomplished school counselors are dedicated to their role in the career development process of students. Through effective career counseling, school counselors use student knowledge, skills, interests, and motivations to encourage all students to explore school-to-future opportunities throughout their preK–12 experiences. School counselors continually help students expand their awareness of careers and of the skills needed to achieve tentative career choices. From the earliest age of students, school counselors introduce the concept of careers and career pathways and expose students to an array of career possibilities. School counselors help students understand the relationship between consistent effort in school and career success. They acquaint students with role models from diverse gender, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. School counselors recognize the benefits of forming partnerships with business and industry, and they serve as liaisons between the school and students' future employers.

School counselors enhance student awareness of careers by using such resources as age-appropriate career inventories, computerized career information systems, career fairs, and job shadowing. They use research-based strategies and activities that help students acquire relevant skills, self-knowledge, positive attitudes, and specific career knowledge. They describe traditional and nontraditional careers and show how these relate to career choice. Accomplished school counselors tailor career instruction, assessment, and dissemination of accurate, up-to-date career information to meet the needs of every student equitably, including those with special needs associated with disabilities or other unique characteristics, or qualities related to culture, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or language.

Accomplished school counselors facilitate student development of career plans. These may take the form of career portfolios across grade levels—either print-based or electronic—that document self-awareness and exploration activities as well as planning and preparation for career choices, which may include post-secondary education and training plans and means for financing postsecondary options. School counselors understand the importance of updating these plans annually and of involving parents in the process.

School counselors and teachers become partners on how to integrate career development in content areas through counselor-led staff development. School counselors team with teachers to contextualize lessons, thereby enhancing learning.

## **Personal/Social Competencies**

Accomplished school counselors believe that developing the social and emotional dimensions of students is as critical as career and academic development. They observe, cultivate, and assess the social development of students, noting their comfort level in the school environment, relationships with friends, respect accorded to peers and faculty, sense of belonging, character, integrity, and concern for themselves and others. School counselors offer encouragement and direction to improve interpersonal communication skills and to enhance students' self-respect and respect for others. They encourage students to develop an awareness and appreciation of the needs, views, and rights of others. They employ specific strategies that encourage respect for individual differences related to skills, culture, gender, ethnicity, language diversity, sexual orientation, physical or learning exceptionalities, and other factors. They often, for example, design and direct activities that require students to work cooperatively within a diverse group toward a common goal.

Accomplished school counselors are dedicated to preparing students to be well-adjusted, productive members of society; therefore, they are dedicated to the personal/social development of every student. They model what it means to be caring and ethical by being open-minded and fair. They build appropriate relationships with students and are aware of individual talents, aspirations, and concerns. Through effective personal/social counseling, accomplished school counselors encourage all students to achieve at their highest level. School counselors are aware that a strong sense of self, awareness of one's personal strengths and limitations, knowledge

of how to interact effectively and respectfully with others, and a sense of personal responsibility contribute directly to one's academic and career success.

Accomplished school counselors use varied strategies to develop each student's awareness of personal talents, skills, abilities, preferences, and perspectives. They understand that self-confidence comes from the development of skill and competence. They encourage students to take appropriate risks and to measure successes and setbacks appropriately. School counselors know that every student needs to feel successful regardless of personal, home, family, and community circumstances. They work collaboratively to recognize each student's diligence and high academic and career aspirations.

Accomplished school counselors create a variety of opportunities for students to take action, assume responsibility, exercise leadership, and develop initiative. To further students' personal/social development, accomplished school counselors encourage students to be actively involved in school activities, such as ambassador programs, mentor programs, and student organizations. They encourage activities that go beyond the school setting, such as canned food drives, service club projects, and community musical presentations. Through such participation, school counselors assist students in acquiring awareness of their roles as contributing members of society.

Basing decisions on data and identified competencies, accomplished school counselors develop ways of instilling in students the character traits that are important to their lives both in and out of school. In the school setting, school counselors are expert in dispute resolution, stress management, creating and maintaining healthy relationships, and resisting pressure to degrade one's body through unhealthy choices. They help students accept consequences for their actions. School counselors teach problem solving and provide students with opportunities to practice making sound judgments. Accomplished school counselors combine their knowledge of academic, career, and personal/social competencies to provide students with the traits needed for successful lives.

## ***Standard III***

# ***Human Growth and Development***

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*Accomplished school counselors apply comprehensive, in-depth knowledge of human growth and development to improve student learning and well-being.*

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Accomplished school counselors use their extensive knowledge of human growth and development to support student success in the academic, career, and personal/social development domains. They apply developmentally appropriate counseling and educational techniques, consult with other stakeholders to address developmental needs, and examine and adapt programs to meet the needs of the individual learner.

Accomplished school counselors possess extensive knowledge of many theories of human growth and development. They are familiar with theories in such areas as cognitive, moral, and social development. They know different theories of personality as well as theories about the formation of gender, cultural, racial, and ethnic identities. School counselors also have a deep understanding of theories of social learning, including resiliency, abnormal and normal behavior, and family systems.

Accomplished school counselors have a thorough understanding of developmental stages through the life span. They understand the cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and moral development and needs associated with such stages as early and middle childhood, early adolescence, and adolescence and young adulthood. They also have deep understanding of developmental stages and needs of adults, which helps them to work with parents and other caregivers, as well as with colleagues and the community, on behalf of students. For example, school counselors understand the adolescent student's need for autonomy as it affects school performance and the parents' needs to provide advice and protection. School counselors can assist both students and parents in resolving issues of independence while maintaining emotional support.

Accomplished school counselors use their broad knowledge of human growth and development and of learning theories to work effectively with individual students. They are aware of individual students' preferred learning styles, personalities, interests, and extracurricular activities. They are also cognizant of experiential backgrounds that affect acquisition of knowledge, such as age, gender, cognitive and motor development, multiple intelligences, culture, socioeconomic status, language experiences, and exceptionalities. They combine their knowledge of individual students with their background in human growth and development to use appropriate counseling techniques and sound instructional approaches.

Accomplished school counselors understand that developmental assets are the internal and external building blocks for the healthy development of well-adjusted, productive adults.<sup>1</sup> For example, they know the roles in students' development of family support, other adult relationships, service to others, creative activities, school engagement, integrity, sense of purpose, positive view of personal future, and interpersonal competence. They know that assets such as these help students to be caring, responsible, and resilient individuals and to avoid high-risk behaviors, such as alcohol and drug use, sexual activity, and violence. Accomplished school counselors know strategies for helping students build developmental assets, and they understand the importance of focusing on student strengths, fostering student expression, and conveying optimism about the potential of every student. School counselors also help other adults in their school community accept the role of strengthening protective factors for students, and they facilitate planning to increase the likelihood of every student becoming a well-adjusted individual.

Accomplished school counselors are knowledgeable about the developmental needs of students with exceptionalities. They know about federal and state laws related to students with exceptional needs, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.<sup>2</sup> They know about the special needs of gifted and talented children. They understand the support that is needed when acquiring English as a new language. They know how to encourage learning for children who may be at risk because of such factors as the environment in which they live, learning difficulties, and poverty. They serve as advocates for children with special needs in all stages of their development and work collaboratively with teachers and with school specialists, such as school psychologists, social workers, and speech therapists. School counselors are prepared to provide individual and group interventions to assist students with particular needs, and they use the most effective strategies to meet the varied learning needs of children.

Possessing a strong background in educational practice, accomplished school counselors know an array of specific teaching and classroom-management techniques that are relevant to the developmental level of every student. They implement developmentally appropriate guidance lessons for students across developmental levels. For example, when helping students new to a school with transitions, they might offer a four-year-old an orientation at the school without a parent, help set up a buddy system for a middle childhood student, establish a small support group of new students for early adolescents, or provide a formal orientation program for students at the adolescence and young adulthood level. School counselors also employ appropriate strategies for specific student needs, such as proximity control, seating arrangements, lighting, and grouping strategies.

In the school setting, school counselors are expert on theories, research, and related information that affect student learning in school, community, and family environments. School counselors provide curriculum design and instructional

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<sup>1</sup> Search Institute. "Developmental Assets: An Overview." 2002. <<http://www.searchinstitute.org/assets>> (29 August 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Public Law 105-17, 105th Cong., 1st session (4 June 1997).

strategies that assist students to respond maturely to educational and social expectations. School counselors know how to design specific interventions that engage students in planned decision making, prioritizing, and problem solving. Accomplished school counselors also offer guidance to parents and teachers in devising developmentally appropriate expectations for student behavior and creating behavior management plans.

In their consulting capacity with students, parents, administrators, and teachers, accomplished school counselors use their knowledge of human growth and development and of students to provide critical input on issues related to attendance, behavior, and academic achievement. In addition, they identify resources that support student achievement, such as study groups, mentoring, and test-taking skills. As advocates for systemic change, school counselors critically review policies, procedures, school improvement initiatives, materials, and strategies that support the growth and developmental needs of every student.



## ***Standard IV***

# ***Counseling Theories and Techniques***

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*Accomplished school counselors demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of established and emerging counseling theories. They possess a thorough knowledge of techniques and processes that form the foundation for effective school counseling with a diverse population.*

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Accomplished school counselors use their extensive knowledge of the theories and best practices that support their profession to develop a sound, consistent, professional philosophy of counseling that guides their work with a diverse student population. They articulate the philosophy and belief systems that direct their work with individuals, small groups, full classes, the entire school, and the community. Using this background, they critically examine emerging trends and approaches, continually refine their skills, and consistently share their strong knowledge base with the entire school community to ensure that the needs of every student are met by both the school counseling program and other schoolwide programs. The foundation of the school counseling profession contains knowledge and professional attitudes that promote student development, learning, and achievement.

Accomplished school counselors know the history and philosophy of the major theories in their field, such as humanistic principles, behaviorism, and cognitive-based models. School counselors also know how theorists have modified and varied the basic theories, and they know how to analyze and synthesize different theoretical perspectives to form their own philosophy of counseling. For example, they know that the evolution of brief counseling is derived from cognitive principles, and they are able to articulate if, when, and why they would use brief counseling.

Accomplished school counselors maintain a strong knowledge of individual counseling processes that assist students in setting and reaching goals, solving problems, and maximizing abilities. They understand that their one-on-one counseling with students must be efficient as well as effective. They are outcome-oriented and understand that the counseling relationship must be developed and conducted in a limited period of time. Accomplished school counselors approach individual counseling from a strength-based orientation, seeking to reinforce what is going well in students' lives while helping students resolve their personal issues. They know the theories behind and the procedures for such processes as active listening, establishing rapport, and using reflective statements, and they integrate spoken and



unspoken messages as they facilitate students' self-exploration and problem solving. Accomplished school counselors recognize that their role as student advocate is critical, and they strive to balance the needs of the student with the needs of the school.

Knowledge of the principles of group counseling processes is also a vital part of the repertoire of accomplished school counselors. They possess a deep understanding of theoretical models of the group process, and they understand group member roles, group behaviors, and stages in a group's development. School counselors know the theory and purpose of establishing group connections on various interactional levels within the group, such as recognizing when to interact on an individual level, when to encourage further dialogue between two group members, and when to acknowledge whole-group behaviors. They understand the differences in group dynamics for all developmental levels and for various topics. They also know how to be a leader, facilitator, participant, and observer in group discussion and when each is appropriate to their goals.

Whether working with individuals or groups, accomplished school counselors know how to build and maintain strong relationships with students, parents, and members of the faculty, staff, and administration. School counselors know and possess highly developed communications skills, including clear, concise writing; active, intentional listening; and excellent verbal and nonverbal skills that convey warmth, respect, and genuineness. The accomplished school counselor knows the importance of communicating effectively with students and parents whose primary language is not English and of securing interpretation and translation services as appropriate. They know how to nurture relationships while maintaining clear boundaries in their professional relationships. They have a strong command of the ethical codes of their profession. (See [\*Standard X—Leadership, Advocacy, and Professional Identity\*](#).) School counselors are trustworthy and demonstrate honesty, dependability, and appropriate confidentiality. They know how and when to involve other members of the student's environment and to do so in a way that preserves the counseling relationship.

Accomplished school counselors are expert in theories and policies related to multicultural counseling and differences among diverse populations. For example, a school counselor encountering conflicts among cultural groups in a school would know appropriate mediation strategies for such conflicts. School counselors are widely read on multicultural issues and share their knowledge with their colleagues. They also possess self-knowledge of their personal values, beliefs, and prejudices about multicultural and diversity issues and how they affect the counseling relationship.

In addition to these counseling processes, accomplished school counselors have deep understanding of issues that allow them to provide assistance and resources within the context of a school counseling program. For example, they understand the stages of grief and how to make appropriate interventions based on these stages. They understand the emotions and experiences commonly associated with divorce, as well as types of coping skills to recommend to students. They

understand strategies for anger management and conflict resolution. Similarly, they understand the effect on students and families of transitions, such as those from grade level to grade level, school to school, family to family, or city to city, and they are knowledgeable about theories and practices for helping students work through such changes. Accomplished school counselors possess knowledge of strategies appropriate to particular conflicts or issues, such as play techniques, art techniques, journal writing, and character education strategies, and they know how to tailor interventions to students of particular developmental levels.

Accomplished school counselors understand the relationship between motivation and behavior and know how to articulate theories of motivation and change to stakeholders. They understand basic human needs and how individuals attempt to fulfill them, sometimes productively, sometimes ineffectively or dangerously. They are able to identify student motivation issues, and they know techniques that help students increase their motivation. School counselors collaborate with the educational community to ensure that the school's practices, expectations, and climate engage learners in meaningful ways. They help students understand the relationship among motivation, effort, and achievement at school.

Though they are not therapists, accomplished school counselors know the literature concerning the identification of and intervention strategies for common disorders that affect the school population. For example, they have studied the characteristics, causes, and treatment for such disorders as bulimia, social anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and chronic alcohol syndrome, and they can articulate that information to all concerned parties. They are sensitive to indications of impending violence or suicidal behavior. School counselors provide information that assists the learning community in coping with these disorders and experiences.

Accomplished school counselors are familiar with national, state, and local standards for counseling in general and school counseling in particular. They stay current in their knowledge of the school counseling field, and they understand how to implement standards-based school counseling in their daily practice to help students learn, achieve, and grow.

# Standard V

## *Equity, Fairness, and Diversity*

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*Accomplished school counselors model and promote behavior appropriate in a diverse and global society by showing respect for and valuing all members of the community. They demonstrate fairness, equity, and sensitivity to every student, and they advocate for equitable access to instructional programs and activities.*

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Accomplished school counselors dedicate themselves to helping others in the learning community to understand and meet the needs of heterogeneous populations as society becomes more culturally diverse, as gender-based stereotypes dissipate, and as the philosophy of inclusion becomes the norm. They promote equitable access to programs and activities for every student, plan and deliver interventions that will result in schoolwide appreciation for a culturally diverse world, and have high expectations that students will treat one another fairly and with dignity.

### Promoting Diversity

Accomplished school counselors know that each student in the school is a unique person whose individual or family background includes a tremendous wealth and variety of human experiences. They view the many forms of diversity manifest in students—such as language background, race, culture, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, family configuration, physical or psychological exceptionalities, sexual orientation, and literacy experiences—as opportunities for creating a rich, schoolwide academic environment; meaningful career education programs; and successful personal/social interactions. They assist in the development of cultural awareness and promote respect for each student's worldview.<sup>1</sup>

Through continued research, reading, and experience, accomplished school counselors have expertise in all aspects of diversity. They possess a thorough knowledge of the stages of racial, cultural, and gender identity and the current literature on the personal and educational issues concerned with various types of exceptionalities. To serve as models for the rest of the educational community, school counselors realize that they must first address their own biases and recognize

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<sup>1</sup> Here, *worldview* is defined as an individual's perception of the world based on his or her experiences as well as the socialization processes of the person in interaction with members of his or her reference group (i.e., culture, country). This definition is from Gladding, S., *The Counseling Dictionary: Concise Definitions of Frequently Used Terms* (Upper Saddle, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2001), 129.

the importance of expanding their own understanding to accommodate the views of others. For example, because school counselors often work with families with varying configurations, they examine their biases about family composition; recognize the unique characteristics, parenting styles, and challenges associated with various configurations; and are inclusive in their language and actions so that all students feel that their family composition is recognized.

Accomplished school counselors know how culture affects the way students learn, that children of different cultures may come to school with prior learning experiences that distinguish them from their peers, and that student behavior often results from cultural experiences. For example, because some cultures hold school personnel in such high regard, students raised in those cultures might consider school counselors unapproachable; others might think it disrespectful to make eye contact with adults. Some students may come from cultures that reward individual rather than group achievement; others come from cultures that emphasize group achievement. When school cultural norms differ from those at home, school counselors know that students can feel alienated or isolated and can become confused, anxious, or afraid. School counselors help these students understand the dual roles in which they sometimes find themselves and recognize that they may need to behave differently at school than at home.

Accomplished school counselors are knowledgeable about appropriate counseling strategies for diverse populations, and they adjust their counseling styles and techniques to effectively respond to the needs of students whose worldviews and cultural experiences differ from those of the dominant culture. They recognize that students with different characteristics and backgrounds may require different types of counseling interventions. Accomplished school counselors use counseling approaches that honor the traditions of students and families. They know how to avoid behaviors that are incompatible with the worldview of a particular student, such as valuing the individual without considering the family.

School counselors believe that students are entitled to be proud of their cultural heritage and personal identities. They know that stereotypical thinking and prejudicial behavior result, in part, from a lack of awareness and appreciation of individual differences and commonalities. Therefore, school counselors help to educate the school community about the diversity and commonalities within the school to ensure that those diverse and common elements become integral parts of academic, career, and personal/social development. School counselors also introduce students to aspects of diversity with which students may be unfamiliar. They may use prevention and intervention strategies to reduce or eliminate hostility and intolerance and to increase civility. For example, they may establish multicultural clubs, age-appropriate prejudice-reduction groups, and celebrations of cultural events.

Accomplished school counselors select and recommend research-based instructional materials and experiences that promote positive images of people of varying races, genders, religions, cultures, and physical and mental abilities. For example, they select and promote counseling and teaching materials that positively

depict children and adults with exceptionalities and that avoid using gender-specific terms and racially stereotypical language. Accomplished school counselors also advocate for the use of testing and assessment tools that are free of racial, cultural, and gender bias. (See [Standard IX—Student Assessment](#).)

## Promoting Fairness and Equity

Accomplished school counselors are committed to understanding and applying principles of equity and fairness. By showing respect for and valuing all members of their communities, school counselors model and promote the attitudes and behaviors necessary for successful living in a diverse society. They hold all students to high and challenging standards, and they seek equitable access to meaningful learning opportunities for all students.

Accomplished school counselors model welcoming, respectful behavior and are eager to work with every student. They understand the many ways in which students distinguish themselves from their peers and they respond appropriately with strategies that not only advance individual student learning but also help to improve understanding among all members of the learning community. They understand that some students may harbor beliefs that differ from the attitudes school counselors wish to develop, such as a belief in racial or gender superiority. They model fairness by openly challenging stereotypical attitudes when they are encountered. They respond directly to such challenges, emphasizing the importance of equity, fairness, and respect.

Accomplished school counselors work with other members of the school community to ensure a clear understanding of each student's specific needs. Recognizing that treating all students exactly alike is not always the most equitable approach, school counselors regularly confront a host of ethical dilemmas regarding the allocation of their time and other resources, and they recognize their obligation to foster growth in every student. The accomplished school counselor strives to ensure that, regardless of an individual's background, all students are treated with fairness and respect and have access to high-quality programs that allow them to grow as individuals and as students.

Accomplished school counselors understand and comply with legislation relevant to fairness and equity, including federal requirements and state and local policies. When appropriate for the developmental level, they also help students understand policies and legislation that are related to fairness and equity. For example, they may examine sexual harassment law through role play of social or business situations to clarify what constitutes prohibited behavior.

School counselors are aware of the differing developmental levels of interaction in schools. They recognize the unique needs of the very young child who is just beginning to interact with peers, the student in middle childhood who is developing a sense of belonging in a group, and the early adolescent who is yearning to be independent. They understand that adolescents and young adults are keenly aware

of attributes such as gender, ethnicity, physical development, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, home language, or special needs that identify them as the same as or different from their peers. (See [Standard III—Human Growth and Development](#).)

Accomplished school counselors are well versed in the needs of students with exceptionalities, serving as advocates for those with special gifts and talents as well as those with particular cognitive, social, emotional, linguistic, or physical needs. School counselors face the further challenge of knowing that many students, by the very nature of their exceptionalities, are often viewed as outsiders and are therefore excluded from opportunities, and they work to correct these inequities. They do this by using the inclusion of students with exceptionalities as a learning experience for other students and by helping to involve students with exceptionalities in and beyond the academic setting.

Accomplished school counselors are instrumental in supporting and promoting programs that facilitate the transition of students for whom English is a new language toward mastery of Standard English and toward continuing progress in their school subjects. They advocate against children being labeled as developmentally handicapped or learning disabled on the basis of their inability to reach academic levels or to perform well on standardized tests because of language skills not yet developed. They also work with school staff to provide interpreters and translators for parents to facilitate communication.

School counselors are leaders in equity and fairness, and they take a proactive role in the school community on these issues. They advocate for the curtailment and elimination of school policies and practices that do not provide equity and fairness for all students. For example, in response to collected data, they may act as child advocates to prevent the disproportionate placement of minorities in special education programs, and to make advanced classes available to students from all groups. They may work to influence school district policy to ensure access and equity in the hiring, assignment, and promotion of all staff. They may provide in-service training for the teaching staff to help them better understand how to identify the real cause of a problem, such as the cultural dimensions of certain behaviors, and inform the staff of individuals in the community who can mitigate potential problems and conflicts. They may develop programs to address the concerns of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students and their families. They may join with others to design reasonable and effective intervention and prevention strategies to close the achievement gaps among the school population, such as establishing after-school sessions on test-taking and study skills, developing programs to encourage parental advocacy, or building mentoring programs that provide positive role models who emphasize high academic standards and positive personal conduct.

Accomplished school counselors believe that every student deserves the respect of high expectations. They use data to challenge assumptions of academic ability that are based on stereotypes of students', parents', and staff members' cultural, racial, ethnic, or economic background. While statistics may suggest that certain patterns of student performance are true, school counselors understand that generalizations

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based on these traits are detrimental to the success of students. Therefore, they are passionate in their efforts to advocate for and ensure equitable and fair access to opportunities for each student to succeed.



## ***Standard VI***

# ***School Climate***

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***Accomplished school counselors work to establish and foster an emotionally, socially, and physically safe learning environment for students, staff, and families.***

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Accomplished school counselors view themselves as facilitators in the establishment and maintenance of a productive learning environment that results from the careful blending of attention to the needs of individual students and the goals of the entire school community. They take an active role in creating and supporting the mission and vision of the school. Their organizational and facilitation skills, along with a deep understanding of their school, equip school counselors to take leadership roles in school improvement efforts. By advocating and modeling respect for others, accomplished school counselors can make a positive impact on school climate.

Accomplished school counselors are familiar with the research that identifies the importance of a positive school climate and the theories, models, and systems for improving school climate, such as developmental assets, conflict management, motivational theories, and invitational learning. They utilize local, state, regional, national, and international resources for enhancing school climate.

School counselors understand the foundational role of school climate on student learning. They also recognize that perceptions and self-concept are not constructed in isolation but occur within the context of school climate issues. They know that school climate can be affected by societal occurrences, such as local, state, national, or global incidents.

Accomplished school counselors are knowledgeable about school climate evaluation instruments. They ensure that such assessments are fair, valid, reliable, and culturally appropriate. When collecting and using data, they are mindful of the purpose for which the data are being used, whether related to attendance, grades, attitude, achievement, or program delivery, and focus their efforts accordingly. School counselors use these data to ensure that interventions meet the desired goals. These data also provide opportunities to engage in action research. (See [Standard I—School Counseling Program](#).)



## Approaches to School Climate: Working with Students

Accomplished school counselors know the impact of mutual respect on student learning and staff morale, and they work to promote positive interpersonal relationships through modeling and direct instruction. They know the elements of group dynamics and the corresponding processes for facilitating growth. School counselors empower students to take responsibility for their personal and social interactions through anger management, peer mediation, and peer tutoring. They may facilitate schoolwide programs, such as partnering with a retirement home or collecting items for a homeless shelter or food bank, that extend the inviting atmosphere of the school. They encourage students to become involved in altruistic activities because they know that participation in such activities increases positive self-concept in students. They also facilitate students' development and implementation of systemwide programs to promote morale, such as spirit weeks or cultural diversity weeks.

Accomplished school counselors know appropriate prevention (proactive) and intervention (reactive) strategies for the school community. They provide effective, nonbiased, small- and large-group instruction in assertiveness training in areas such as sexual harassment, conflict resolution, and personal safety. They work directly with students who seem disenfranchised or alienated from the school. School counselors also recognize, identify, and provide prevention and intervention techniques to respond to hate language, bullying, harassment, intimidation, and gang and clique activity. They may implement peer programs that encourage students to know each other as individuals, thereby forging a bond that precludes misunderstanding. For example, a school counselor who observes the bullying of students with disabilities could arrange for the "bullies" to pair with the students with disabilities on a field trip so they get to know each other; after the trip, both groups would reflect on and write about their experiences. School counselors teach students to reach out to peers who are troubled and assist them in obtaining help.

## Approaches to School Climate: Working with the Entire School

Accomplished school counselors collaborate with all stakeholders to ensure that the physical and emotional environment of the school is safe and inviting. They initiate conversations with staff to promote and maintain a positive school climate.

School counselors know that a hostile learning environment jeopardizes student achievement and undermines instruction and staff morale. As knowledgeable and skilled facilitators and educators, accomplished school counselors are proactive in the development of a safe learning environment. They work with students, staff, administration, and the community to develop and implement school safety initiatives and prevent school violence. They are involved in the creation and delivery of the school and district crisis-management plans. They influence policies and conditions both in the classroom and throughout the school that create an environment that is inviting to everyone. They also promote and publicize activities related to the improvement of school climate to staff, parents, and the community.

Accomplished school counselors conduct effective in-service activities. They present to staff members the new communication styles and skills that students have been taught, such as how to talk out conflicts. They also present schoolwide workshops to the staff on such topics as drug and alcohol abuse prevention, civility, character education, and teachers' development of inviting learning environments.

Accomplished school counselors, working with students and the entire school community, facilitate the establishment of a school climate that contributes to educational achievement for every student. They combine their knowledge of people, theories, data, and leadership to advocate for an emotionally, socially, and physically safe learning environment.

# ***Standard VII***

## ***Collaboration with Family and Community***

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*Accomplished school counselors work collaboratively with families and community members to achieve common goals for the education of students, improvement of schools, and advancement of the larger community. They are knowledgeable of the community and community resources, and they utilize available resources to make appropriate referrals based on the needs of students.*

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In their role as liaisons connecting the student's school life to the life at home and in the community, accomplished school counselors work extensively with the entire school community, including families, agencies, businesses, and industries. School counselors maintain contacts with a variety of community resources through collaboration with and referrals to and from the school community. By joining forces with people vitally concerned with education, school counselors provide for the academic, career, and personal/social development of students.

### **Collaboration with Families**

Accomplished school counselors know that families are among the strongest allies in the development of students. Involvement with families helps school counselors learn about students' backgrounds as well as parental expectations and aspirations. School counselors encourage families to become a part of school life by including them in discussions and plans for students' academic, career, and personal/social development. They effectively communicate with families about students' accomplishments, successes, and needs for improvement, including plans for attaining higher goals. School counselors help students and families make academic and career plans by acquiring and sharing knowledge about institutions of higher learning, vocational/training programs, and occupational outlooks.

Accomplished school counselors know that relationships between the school and families need to be congenial and productive. To achieve this goal, they facilitate communication between parents and school staff. School counselors seek common ground and attempt to build understandings that will serve the best interests of the student and the school. They also work to educate parents on key issues that affect student learning. For example, school counselors may conduct discussions with parent groups on such topics as student developmental stages, discipline strategies,

communication skills between parent and child and between parents and the school, and the influence of technology in assisting the academic success of students. (See [Standard VIII—Informational Resources and Technology](#).)

## Collaboration with the Community

Accomplished school counselors have excellent knowledge of the resources available to students in the community, and they use their interpersonal skills and their ability to work within a system to coordinate and integrate community resources with the school program. When needs arise, school counselors can refer students and their families to community and governmental entities, such as health care providers, child protection agencies, extended day programs, service organizations, tutoring programs, shelters, and public library services. They work collaboratively with colleges and universities to nurture students' academic development through programs such as summer institutes. They have contacts with a variety of community members who can assist students of all ages in obtaining knowledge about volunteer programs and the world of work. They know how the work of legislative policymakers affects the schools, and they are willing to step into policymaking positions in order to participate in educational reforms that will benefit all children. School counselors are able and willing to use their strong communication skills and knowledge of students and the educational process to serve as consultants and resources to educate the public on school issues. They are able to coordinate and collaborate with various community programs for the timely delivery of services to students, families, and schools.

Accomplished school counselors use advisory councils to maintain family and community relations as well as to obtain input regarding the delivery and management of the school counseling program. They recognize that the functions of the advisory council may vary depending on the size of the school counseling program, the length of time the program has been in existence, needs of the community, and other factors. Accomplished school counselors provide the data and analysis needed for advisory council members to provide support, input, and recommendations for program development and improvements.

Accomplished school counselors recognize that the school is only one of several service providers that can affect a student's life. School counselors may serve on multi-agency teams aimed at protecting children or promoting children's well-being. In the role of liaison to other service providers, the school counselor contributes to strengthening the community while creating a nurturing environment for students.

## ***Standard VIII***

# ***Informational Resources and Technology***

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***Accomplished school counselors are skilled in the selection and use of informational resources and technology and use them to facilitate the delivery of a comprehensive school counseling program that meets student needs.***

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Accomplished school counselors understand that appropriate and high-quality informational and technological resources are vital to high-quality education. Lifelong learners themselves, they combine a thorough knowledge of traditional resources with informed awareness of the newest resources in their field. Accomplished school counselors are adept at determining the effectiveness and appropriateness of varied resources for their student population.

Accomplished school counselors are proficient at selecting academically sound materials that have true educational merit and that meet their curriculum goals. They conscientiously collect resources that will enable them to improve student learning, including print and nonprint resources, Web-based materials, and emerging technologies. Accomplished school counselors review new materials to determine how to incorporate them effectively into their program. They select and develop resources that can be used to address a range of educational objectives in the academic, career, and personal/social domains. They evaluate materials for quality and suitability, and are sensitive to their use by students with differing learning styles, multiple intelligences, exceptional needs, special talents, and various language backgrounds. They also select resources that are diverse in form, style, theme, gender, cultural content, and level of difficulty.

Viewing colleagues and the community as important resources with whom they can collaborate and enrich learning experiences, accomplished school counselors willingly share resources and encourage others to do so. They model for students the importance of collegiality in obtaining resources. Within their schools and districts, they work cooperatively with library media specialists and technology coordinators. They also identify community resources by collaborating with colleges, universities, government bodies, and other institutions to promote student learning in the areas of academic, career, and personal/social development.

Accomplished school counselors use their broad knowledge of resources to integrate learning for all students. They actively contribute ideas about resources

to multidisciplinary teams that seek curriculum integration to help students become successful academically, vocationally, and personally. Accomplished school counselors also identify academic content standards that relate to interpersonal skills and provide resources to teachers to support student skill development.

Accomplished school counselors recognize the increasing importance of technology as a tool for working with students. For example, to enhance student career-development activities, they may help students use computerized career courses, inventories, and other pertinent resources. They use software and technological resources to assist in many student interventions, including educational and training opportunities, employment opportunities, scholarships and financial assistance, and personal/social information. School counselors understand the opportunities technology provides to encourage a global perspective among students within the realm of academic, career, and personal/social learning. For example, a school counselor interested in increasing awareness among students of universality of adolescent behavior in a global context might establish a videocam exchange with students in Singapore to discuss adolescence in different cultures. School counselors are aware of and familiar with assistive technologies that increase success for students with exceptional needs. They may, for example, advocate for a voice simulator for a student who is without speech or help students gain access to updated tools for visual enhancement.

In addition to using technology to support their work with students, accomplished school counselors recognize the increasing value of technology in working with their own program and with parents and the community. School counselors view informational management and organization strategies as necessary tools for accessing resources and monitoring student success. They recognize the timesaving capabilities of managing student data electronically and seek out emerging innovations that allow reallocation of their time for direct student contact. For example, they may use graduation-credit worksheets and four-year planners to track the academic development of each student. Through technology—such as e-mail, voicemail, and Internet sites—school counselors in isolated locations can make and maintain connections with professional organizations, colleagues, and other stakeholders. They may share parenting-skills sites or update counseling resources with other stakeholders. They have a thorough knowledge of the legal and ethical codes that relate to the use of school counseling services via the Internet, and they clearly communicate these codes to others. (See [\*Standard X—Leadership, Advocacy, and Professional Identity.\*](#))

In situations in which funds are limited, particularly in terms of technology, accomplished school counselors are models of resourcefulness. While proactively working to rectify inequities in resources within the school, school counselors distinguish themselves by locating external resources. They might write grant proposals, ask for donations, seek sponsorships from businesses, or access other resources in the community. (See [\*Standard VII—Collaboration with Family and Community.\*](#)) School counselors recognize and utilize informational resources and technological tools that are goal oriented and student focused. Their ability to use

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available resources—however limited or extensive—to promote effective learning while advocating for equitable attainment of resources is what distinguishes them as accomplished in their use of resources.



# Standard IX

## Student Assessment

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*Accomplished school counselors understand the principles and purposes of assessment, and the collection and use of data. They regularly monitor student progress and communicate the purpose, design, and results of assessments to various audiences.*

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Accomplished school counselors understand the design and purpose of varied assessments and they are adept at explaining the purposes and designs of assessments to students, parents, staff, and the community. They are proactive in their mission to use assessment results to facilitate student planning for academic growth, and they support the school's appropriate use of assessments, assessment information, and improvement tools stressing that any assessment only measures a portion of a student's abilities. They use test data to determine which strategies would be the most effective to address identified needs, questions, or issues. School counselors ethically report individual and group assessment results to appropriate audiences. (See [Standard X—Leadership, Advocacy, and Professional Identity](#).)

Accomplished school counselors know how to select assessments for individual and group use. They recognize the relevancy, limitations, and impact of various assessments on the academic, career, and personal/social development of students. They interpret individual test data, such as grades, achievement test scores, language development measures, teacher and parent questionnaires, and student interviews, in order to advise each student on a set of clear goals for student improvement or enrichment.

School counselors take a leadership role, with others in the school community, in promoting the proper environment for high-stakes, large-scale assessments. They work to assure that services to students are not diminished by the coordination and administration of those assessments and that students receive assistance in preparing for tests. They may offer test anxiety-reduction strategies to students as well as test-taking skills.

Accomplished school counselors are well versed in a variety of assessments and inventories that can be used to match student talents, interests, and values to future areas of employment. They use these assessments throughout the preK–12 curriculum to expose students to a variety of careers and career skills, and to help students match their talents to various career fields that they may wish to explore.

School counselors collaborate with staff, students, and parents to monitor student progress on a regular basis to encourage student initiative and responsibility. Accomplished school counselors further use assessment as a reflective, analytical tool for students to discover their own talents and abilities. School counselors help students to evaluate their own performance and to develop ways to best present their talents and abilities to others.

Accomplished school counselors recognize how certain assessments affect particular groups, and they advocate for assessment practices that best meet the needs of every student. School counselors promote the use of a variety of assessment instruments for students as well as appropriate modifications and accommodations in the assessment of students with exceptional needs. They are knowledgeable about laws, regulations, and professional practices regarding student assessments within a linguistically and culturally diverse school. They recognize that decisions regarding student placement and special programs or courses are based on multiple criteria. Accomplished school counselors are skilled at evaluating and selecting assessments that are not culturally, linguistically, class, or gender biased.

Accomplished school counselors advocate for careful use and analysis of data in order to develop the academic, career, and personal/social development of every student. They clearly explain the principles and purposes of assessment to others. They collaborate with others as they analyze, disaggregate, and report data to improve school performance, and they use assessment data as the basis of their own professional decisions.

# ***Standard X***

## ***Leadership, Advocacy, and Professional Identity***

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*Accomplished school counselors work as leaders and advocates in the promotion of student learning and achievement. They adhere to ethical practices and engage in professional growth and development.*

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Accomplished school counselors set high standards for themselves as counseling professionals in the education community. They are leaders in their field who are active advocates for the counseling profession and who recognize the importance of their individual role in shaping the future of their profession. Their leadership and advocacy support every student through program development, educational reform, and school change efforts. Following a professional code of ethics at all times, accomplished school counselors find numerous ways to enhance their professional growth. This attention to leadership, advocacy, ethical practices, and professional growth results in improved counseling skills and programs for every student.

### **Leadership**

Accomplished school counselors accept a leadership role as an opportunity to further increase the visibility and impact of the school counseling program. They are confident in their own capacity to highlight student needs, thereby removing barriers to student success. Because of this persistent commitment to student success, accomplished school counselors communicate a clear and compelling vision that inspires others to consider new possibilities and to realign resources on behalf of students. School counselors know that many school-related issues are complex and multifaceted, but they remain optimistic that they can influence conditions for student success through their inner drive and courage. For example, in a high school where data show large-scale academic deficiencies, an accomplished school counselor might recommend a schoolwide reading program to enhance proficiency and present a plan to implement the strategy.

Accomplished school counselors also know that significant goals related to student achievement cannot be accomplished without support and assistance from others. They help to build networks of people thinking together, sharing information, and collaborating to tackle difficult challenges. They are comfortable and articulate in expressing data-based evidence of student needs to other educators, parent and community groups, and policy makers.

As schools institute improvement teams, accomplished school counselors take an active role in providing collaborative leadership. Recognized by their peers as educators with specialized skills for managing teams, for inspiring optimism, and for offering structured approaches to reach consensus on complex issues, it is often school counselors who facilitate schoolwide planning sessions. They are trusted by their colleagues to conduct meetings efficiently and with sensitivity to all points of view. They model effective communication skills, even under duress, and help to set a group norm that promotes shared problem solving and decision making. Through their own commitment to lifelong learning, they display current knowledge of innovations in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, as well as research-based approaches to enhancing student motivation and parent engagement. They are catalysts for creative solutions and help to translate these into practical action steps. They are able to balance the need for in-depth dialogue with the realities of time constraints and pressure to show immediate progress. Recognizing the individuality of team members, accomplished school counselors integrate differing styles of thinking and communicating and value controversy as a means to gain clarity and commitment.

Accomplished school counselors are motivated by a personal mission to work collaboratively to protect the right of every student to achieve, which is why counselors are often looked to by their peers for direction and guidance. They earn the respect of others with their determination and integrity on behalf of students' rights. Accomplished school counselors advocate for the belief that all educators have a moral and ethical obligation to support every student, regardless of ethnicity, family structure and history, socioeconomic status, or other factors beyond the control of the student.

As leaders, accomplished school counselors make sound judgments about styles of leadership appropriate to different settings and issues. They apply their emotional intelligence to ensuring that participation occurs in constructive ways, and they confront nonproductive behaviors with openness and empathy, helping others feel valued and supported during change processes. Accomplished school counselors are leaders who strive to implement a vision in which every student succeeds.

## **Advocacy and Collaboration**

Accomplished school counselors assert themselves as advocates for their students and their practice. At the top of their priorities is meeting student needs for academic, career, and personal/social support, particularly for those students and their parents/guardians who are less able to access policymakers, such as chief school executives, school boards, state departments of education, and legislatures. They may work to improve district and state guidelines for school counseling programs and other programs that benefit the school. They may become politically active as a means to advocate for positive system change, increase support for students, and enhance the overall climate for academic, career, and personal/social development. They may assume leadership roles in professional organizations. They may propose, design, and conduct presentations and in-service workshops that communicate

the importance of a comprehensive school counseling program to a wide audience, including colleagues, administrators, parents, school boards, superintendents, the media, and the community.

Collaboration with other school counselors, counselor educators, and stakeholders is another important aspect of an accomplished school counselor's professional identity. They work collegially with other school counselors to further their professional growth, and they serve as mentors to other school counselors. They encourage and support the training of new entrants to the field by serving as consultants and site supervisors for school counselors in training.

## Ethics

Accomplished school counselors adhere strictly to the profession's codes of ethics, including codes that have been established by the American Counseling Association (ACA), American School Counselor Association (ASCA), and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC), and other relevant codes of ethics. They recognize that, in many states, a violation of a code of ethics constitutes a violation of law. School counselors know the state and national laws, as well as district and school policies, related to the reporting of behaviors such as child abuse and sexual harassment. School counselors respect each individual's right to privacy and understand the scope and limits of the concept of confidentiality. They know that violation of a student's rights of privacy and confidentiality could result in criminal or civil action. In addition, they know that in many states, school counselors do not have privileged communication with students and that courts can subpoena their written records and verbal communications.

Accomplished school counselors use their knowledge of ethics to protect the rights of every student and to guide the school in protecting the rights of all stakeholders. School counselors recognize that each person has the right to be treated with respect and dignity while being entitled to self-direction and self-development. They recognize that each person has freedom of choice and the ensuing responsibility for actions taken. In making difficult ethical decisions, they know when they can act independently and when they should involve supervisors and others from their school in making decisions. School counselors also know the limits of their skills, training, and job responsibilities, and know when to make referrals to outside agencies. Accomplished school counselors are able to extend their knowledge of ethics to students, parents, and colleagues, and they recognize opportunities to reinforce ethical behavior.

## Ongoing Professional Growth

Accomplished school counselors are lifelong learners who consistently demonstrate their own commitment to continued improvement and professionalism. They have a thorough knowledge of updated research across all areas of counseling. They regularly read professional journals, access counseling- and education-related Web sites and other technological resources, and apply their knowledge of research

to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate new information. They understand such research methods as qualitative, quantitative, action, and outcomes research, as well as the implications these methods may have on findings. They know how to critically analyze and use research and assessment data and know when and how the data link to specific school improvement initiatives. School counselors avail themselves of professional resources by attending district, state, and national conferences, and they participate in advanced education programs and workshops. Such personal study enables them to clearly articulate a rationale for their actions and decisions.

Accomplished school counselors keep current in their field, especially as emerging trends and issues in school counseling—such as changing family structure, the emphasis on comprehensive school counseling programs, and awareness of the diversity of students within a school—affect their profession. School counselors may work with educational researchers or other colleagues to examine the profession of school counseling and add new knowledge to the field, which they may then share with colleagues through publications in professional journals or presentations at professional conferences. School counselors also refine and monitor their own school counseling skills and service delivery through formal and informal supervision and dialogue. For example, they may engage in peer supervision, group supervision, and professional clinical supervision; observe other effective school counselors; and solicit feedback informally from other school counselors about their work.

## ***Standard XI***

# ***Reflective Practice***

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*Accomplished school counselors integrate their knowledge, skills, and life experiences to respond effectively to new or unexpected critical events and situations. They monitor and refine their work with continuous, in-depth reflection.*

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Accomplished school counselors think reflectively about their practice, and they use that self-reflection to achieve both short- and long-term goals. At times, this self-reflection is nearly intuitive, combining their knowledge, skills, and experience to respond quickly and effectively to crisis situations. At other times, this self-reflection is a slow, thoughtful process, allowing school counselors to examine their practice and improve their services to students.

Accomplished school counselors are adept at knowing what to do in new and unexpected critical events and situations. Their ability to synthesize and integrate their knowledge, skills, and life experiences allows them to think comprehensively and creatively and to act accordingly. They demonstrate advanced skills in relationship-building by handling difficult situations, such as confrontations with hostile parents or overstressed teachers, or schoolwide trauma. They are skilled facilitators and mediators, and, when appropriate, they do not hesitate to step in when differences of opinion escalate to interpersonal conflict. They frequently anticipate issues before they become serious problems and see beyond symptoms to potential root causes. For instance, an accomplished school counselor who notices a subtle increase in absenteeism, disciplinary actions, and negative classroom behavior could develop a hypothesis that the actions result from stress or depression rather than automatically regarding these behaviors as problems or passing off the concern to administrators. The school counselor could then provide stress management or coping skills to students or make appropriate referrals to reduce the likelihood of serious consequences. School counselors synthesize anecdotal and empirical evidence with contextual cues to facilitate effective and efficient problem solving.

Understanding the school as a whole system and as part of a larger system with political, demographic, historical, and economic elements is essential to the practice of accomplished school counselors. They are attuned to the routines of the school cycle, and they anticipate recurring events. They combine reflective practice and interpersonal skills to build coalitions that can address issues in comprehensive ways. They facilitate broad-based groups in discovering innovative and cost-effective strategies to address systemic issues.



Facing a multitude of pressing issues, accomplished school counselors are able to respond calmly, methodically, and responsibly to direct each situation to the most effective problem solver. The volume, intensity, and complexity of student issues, however, often outdistance a school counselor's training or resources of time, energy, and emotional stamina. Through thoughtful self-reflection, accomplished school counselors know when they should handle a situation themselves and when to refer the situation to another professional. They are alert to when their own psychological reserves run low and apply appropriate self-care strategies. They have a support system in place that allows them opportunity to reflect and to refresh and renew themselves.

Students benefit from school counselors whose reflective practices lead them to evaluate how they allocate their time and focus on the best results for students. Accomplished school counselors understand that their primary resource is time and that they must analyze how to apply their knowledge and skills efficiently to achieve positive results for students. During their careers as school counselors, they have learned how to handle multiple requests for assistance in timely ways, and they continue to improve these skills. They are deeply committed to reaching each student in a meaningful way and resist the temptation to focus exclusively on responsive services.

Through in-depth reflective practice, accomplished school counselors examine their counseling skills, constantly challenge themselves to improve, take responsibility for their own professional growth and development, and reinvigorate themselves professionally. They know that both their own performance and the performance of their program are vital to ensuring the success of every student. In their reflective practice they monitor their own performance in terms of self-imposed standards as well as ones set for them by others. Students observe the school counselor as the model of a lifelong learner committed to school counseling and as an advocate for the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes success for all students.

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# Epilogue

The 11 standards in this report represent a professional consensus on the characteristics of accomplished practice and provide a profile of the accomplished school counselor. Although the standards are challenging, they are upheld every day by school counselors like the ones described in these pages, who inspire and instruct the nation's youth and lead their profession. By publishing this document and offering National Board Certification to school counselors, NBPTS aims to affirm the practice of the many school counselors who meet these standards and challenge others to strive to meet them. Moreover, NBPTS hopes to bring increased attention to the professionalism and expertise of accomplished school counselors and in so doing, pave the way for greater professional respect and opportunity for these essential members of the teaching community.

In addition to being a stimulus for self-reflection on the part of school counselors at all levels of performance, *School Counseling Standards* is intended to be a catalyst for discussion among the entire education community about accomplished practice in this field. If these standards can advance the conversation about accomplished school counseling, they will provide an important step toward the NBPTS goal of improving student learning in our nation's schools.

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# Acknowledgments

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Katherine S. Woodward  
Director, Certification Standards  
2002

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