

Second Edition



# Introduction to School Counseling

Theory, Research, and Practice

Jered B. Kolbert, Laura M. Crothers,  
and Tammy L. Hughes



“This book is a tour de force within the school counseling literature. *Introduction to School Counseling* provides a reader-friendly blueprint for conceptualizing, planning, and delivering comprehensive school counseling programs within complex twenty-first-century school contexts. This book strikes an important balance between theory, research, and practice; situates school counseling prominently within school reform initiatives; provides concrete strategies and recommendations for school counseling programs; and recognizes diversity and social justice as an indispensable component of school counseling.”

**Norma L. Day-Vines, PhD, Associate Dean for Diversity and Faculty Development, Professor of Counseling and Human Development, Johns Hopkins University**

“I will gladly use this textbook with our students. It is current, comprehensive, well-written, thoroughly researched, and exceedingly accessible. Even though I am deeply familiar with the content, I found myself reading with great interest and enthusiasm. I highly recommend this textbook for all who wish to learn about the past, the present, and the future of the school counseling profession. The authors have constructed an engaging textbook for graduate students and practicing professionals alike.”

**Kevin Wilkerson, PhD, NCC, ACS, Associate Professor, Department of Counseling and Human Services, University of Scranton**

“This book does an outstanding job establishing the modern-day context of school counseling both by reviewing the evolution of the field with compelling analysis of diverse perspectives on important trends and developments and by featuring impressive use of data and research to separate opinions from facts. Great examples to illustrate sometimes-vague concepts abound, as do concrete and practical suggestions for both novice and seasoned school counselors. Throughout, the writing is clear, crisp, and learner-friendly.”

**Johnston M. Brendel, EdD, LPC, LMFT, Clinical Associate Professor, the College of William and Mary**



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# Introduction to School Counseling

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This book is a comprehensive introduction to the profession for school counselors in training, providing special focus on the topics most relevant to the school counselor's role, and offers specific strategies for practical application and implementation.

In addition to the thorough coverage of the fourth edition of the *ASCA National Model*, readers will find thoughtful discussions of the effects of trends and legislation, including the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), multitiered systems of support (MTSS), and school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS). The text also provides readers with understanding of how school counselors assume a counseling orientation within the specific context of an educational setting. Each chapter is application-oriented, with an equal emphasis both on research and on using data to design and improve school counselors' functioning in school systems. Complementing this book is the companion website, which includes PowerPoints, templates and handouts, annotated website links and video links for students, and a test bank and discussion questions for instructors.

This book is essential reading for all school counselors in training as it provides a comprehensive look at the profession and explores topics that are most relevant to the role of school counselor.

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Jered B. Kolbert, Laura M. Crothers,  
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Designed cover image: Getty Images

Second edition published 2023  
by Routledge  
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge  
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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First edition published by Routledge 2016

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Kolbert, Jered B., author. | Crothers, Laura M., author. | Hughes, Tammy L., 1977– author.

Title: Introduction to school counseling : theory, research, and practice / by Jered B. Kolbert, Laura M. Crothers, and Tammy L. Hughes.

Other titles: Introduction to professional school counseling

Description: Second Edition. | New York : Routledge, 2023. | "First edition published by Routledge 2016"—Copyright page. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022027795 (print) | LCCN 2022027796 (ebook) | ISBN 9780367766108 (Hardback) | ISBN 9780367766092 (Paperback) | ISBN 9781003167730 (eBook)

Subjects: LCSH: Educational counseling—United States. | Student counselors—In-service training—United States.

Classification: LCC LB1027.5 .K5968 2023 (print) | LCC LB1027.5 (ebook) | DDC 371.4—dc23/eng/20220812

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022027795>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022027796>

ISBN: 978-0-367-76610-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-76609-2 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-16773-0 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003167730

Typeset in Sabon  
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

Access the companion website: [www.routledge.com/cw/kolbert](http://www.routledge.com/cw/kolbert)

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Dedicated to

Jered B. Kolbert: To my children, Kennedy Isabel and Karlana Swanhild.

Laura M. Crothers: To my children, Meredith Julia Lipinski, Samuel Conrad Lipinski, and Caroline Susan Lipinski.

Tammy L. Hughes: I would like to thank my husband, Dr. Jeff Miller, and son, Mason, for always giving me the time to work and write. I am also thankful for the opportunity to work with youth and systems that serve them during trying times.

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## Author Biographies

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# History and Trends in the School Counseling Profession

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**Box 1.1 2016 Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, n.d.) School Counseling Specialty Area Standards**

- 1.a History and development of school counseling
- 2.a School counselor roles as leaders, advocates, and systems change agencies in P-12 schools
- 2.m Legislation and government policy relevant to school counseling

**Box 1.2 ASCA (2019a) Standards for School Counselor Preparation Programs (ASCA CAEP SPA)**

- 1.1 Describe the organizational structure, governance, and evolution of the American education system, as well as cultural, political, and social influences on current educational practices and on individual and collective learning environments.
- 1.2 Describe the evolution of the school counseling profession, the basis for a comprehensive school counseling program, and the school counselor's role in supporting growth and learning for students.
- 7.2 Describe the impact of federal and state laws and regulations, as well as district policies, on schools, students, families, and the school counseling practice.

The school counseling profession continues to pursue the long-sought objective of achieving a consistent identity. The role of the school counselor (SC) often varies between districts and even schools within the same district (ASCA, 2019b; Gysbers & Stanley, 2014). In some schools, SCs function in a manner similar to mental health therapists, providing individual counseling to at-risk students. In other schools, SCs are heavily burdened with clerical duties, which may include registering and scheduling new students, coordinating standardized test administrations, coordinating student study teams, maintaining attendance records, completing college applications, etc. Role confusion appears to be prevalent among school counselors and is associated with a lack of self-efficacy (Jellison, 2013).

A new elementary SC once complained to one of the authors that each principal of the three schools in which she worked had an entirely different view of her role. One principal

wanted her to function as a crisis counselor, expecting her to constantly be on call to assist with students who had been removed from class for disciplinary reasons. Another principal requested that the SC primarily organize the administration of various standardized tests. Finally, her remaining principal wanted her to establish a comprehensive school counseling program, including the development of a school counseling curriculum; however, she found that her duties at her other schools interfered with her ability to implement such a program.

Many SCs in training enter the profession with the expectation that they will essentially entail providing individual counseling to students. While individual is certainly an important aspect of the role of SCs, school counselors in training are often surprised to learn, and maybe a bit intimidated as well, that the role of the SC is much more encompassing with best practice (Cinotti, 2014) considered to entail the provision of comprehensive programming in which SCs provide a variety of direct and indirect services. Direct services that SCs are expected to provide include instruction, appraisal, and advisement, and indirect services involve collaboration, consultation, and referrals, and the collection and analysis of data to evaluate the effectiveness of the school counseling program (ASCA, 2019b). Readers of this chapter are encouraged to be mindful of their experience in learning about the multifaceted role of SCs. Most likely, SCs in training are likely to feel more comfortable with some aspects of functioning as SCs and less comfortable with others. For example, SCs in training tend to be attracted to those aspects of the position that involve working closely with students and more anxious about collaborating with teachers, consulting with parents, or using data to analyze the effectiveness of school counseling activities. The role of SCs can be thought of as encompassing the merging of both the education and the counseling professions. Learning to become an expert educator and counselor requires considerable training and experience, which is a challenging but highly worthy objective. Readers of this book are encouraged to adopt a long-term perspective, viewing the role of becoming SCs as a long-term process in which the SCs must regularly assess their strengths and areas for improvement.

Chandler et al. (2018) assert that there are two prominent reasons for role ambiguity among SCs. First, many stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and parents, misunderstand the role of SCs. For example, SCs' responsibilities may be largely influenced by established traditions or customary roles from the past. Recently, an SC informed one of the authors that upon assuming a new elementary school counseling position, she was informed by the principal that she was in charge of conducting student lice checks because that was what the previous SC did. The other prominent reason for role confusion is that administrators often assign SCs noncounseling duties to meet the needs of the school. It is not unusual for SCs to be assigned to cover classrooms for absent teachers, because substitute teachers are lacking. The authors of a study published as recently as 2018 concluded that role confusion among SCs persists (Chandler et al., 2018). In order to understand the current state of the profession, it is essential to understand its history.

### **Origins of the Profession**

The Industrial Revolution during the turn of the twentieth century changed the United States from an agrarian to an industrial economy, resulting in a large immigration of both Americans and European immigrants to cities attracted to manufacturing and industrial jobs (Savickas, 2009). The rise of factories also spurred an increase in the use of child labor, with children as young as eight not attending school in order to work in coal mines and factories (Erford, 2018). Due to the large increase of newcomers to the cities and concerns about the use of child labor, "social reformers began to call for vocational guidance"

(Savickas, 2009, p. 194) to be provided by professionals, whereas previously such efforts had been conducted by charity workers. The efforts to provide vocational guidance to the immigrants to American cities are considered to be the origins of what is now referred to as the school counseling profession (Slaten et al., 2019). Erford (2018) points out that many of the societal issues that contributed to the rise of the school counseling profession at the turn of the century, namely, economic and technological challenges and social justice issues, are similar to the challenges currently facing today's society.

Frank Parsons, a trained civil engineer and lawyer, was a social activist who sought to improve the lives of the underprivileged who were being exploited by the new industries (Gysbers, 2010). Parsons, who has been given the title the "Father of Guidance," promoted the use of a more formal, scientific approach to career decision-making, recognizing this process as one of life's most important decisions, second only to choosing a spouse to replace the haphazard manner in which youth typically at that time entered the workforce (Gysbers, 2010). Parsons (1909) criticized public schools for being overly focused on book learning, recommending that schools emphasize industrial education. He advocated for a formal approach to guidance, referred to as Parsons's trait and factor, which involves a three-step approach to vocational guidance: (1) finding your aptitudes, strengths, and interests; (2) developing a knowledge of the career choice and conditions for success; and (3) understanding the relationship between the first two steps. Within a few years of the publication of Parsons's book *Choosing a Vocation*, more than 900 high schools in the United States included vocational guidance (Geisler, 1990).

### Box 1.3

#### Did You Know?

Parsons's trait and factor theory was originally developed as the talent-matching approach, which later became the trait and factor theory of occupational choice. The premise of this theory is to match people's individual talents to the attributes required in particular jobs (careers.govt.nz, n.d.).

While Parsons has been given the moniker of the "Father of Guidance," Jesse B. Davis, a principal, is often regarded as the "first school counselor" through his efforts to create a systematic guidance program in Michigan public schools (Pope, 2009). Davis (1956) argued that "students should be respected for their own abilities, interests, ideas, individual differences and cultural identity" (Davis, 1956, p. 176) in an effort to support all the students within the school setting. In order to incorporate classroom guidance into the general curriculum, Davis encouraged English teachers to take on the role of teaching guidance, representing the first time that teachers were encouraged to assume a counseling role (Thompson, 2012).

The advocacy of Parsons, Davis, and other early pioneers in vocational guidance resulted in the establishment of a national professional organization, the National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA), in 1913 (Wilson, 2013). The initial objectives of the NVGA included decreasing the large number of adolescents who were leaving school for manufacturing jobs through the incorporation of vocational guidance within the educational system and providing training for vocational counselors. Up until the 1940s, the primary role of vocational counselors was to help students in preparing for the world of work. Most

of the counseling services provided within the schools were practiced by teachers, administrators, and deans of students, who often received no additional pay or little guidance, with few full-time school counselors in existence (Gysbers, 2010).

The emphasis on vocational guidance was reinforced by the federal government's efforts to respond to the decline of the economy during the Great Depression (Erford, 2018). To address the need for a national occupational classification system, the first edition of the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* was published in 1938, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics was created in 1940. The US Employment Service was created in 1933, and several laws during the 1930s provided funding for vocational guidance activities.

The emergence of humanism in the 1940s moved the profession toward a more person-centered approach, emphasizing personal growth and one-on-one support (Slaten et al., 2019). Although Carl Rogers was not directly involved in advocating for the profession of school counseling, Rogers's concepts of unconditional positive regard and his nondirective, client-centered approach have become foundational competencies for school counselors in training (Thompson, 2012). Rogers's theoretical premise of the self-determination of the client was extended by school counselors to students and resulted in SCs seeing themselves as child and adolescent specialists. Training programs de-emphasized the traditional trait and factor theory in favor of approaches that emphasized the promotion of students' self-concept and social adjustment. This new movement pushed the topics of self-esteem and personality into the forefront of training, with the adjustment of the individual becoming the new goal of guidance and counseling. This shift moved the profession from its vocational focus to the mental hygiene model for school counseling. With that shift came another change in title and function from guidance to pupil personnel services.

In 1957, the Russians' launch of the first space satellite during the height of the Cold War led many Americans to perceive the nation to be at risk of falling behind the Russians in terms of technological and scientific proficiency. The National Defense Education Act (NDEA), passed in 1958, greatly increased the funding for the hiring and training of secondary SCs, resulting in a tripling in the number of SCs nationwide between 1958 and 1967 (Thompson, 2012). Secondary SCs were tasked with using standardized tests to identify exceptional students and encourage them to pursue careers in the sciences, engineering, and mathematics (Baskin & Slaten, 2014). Whereas the NDEA encouraged SCs to attend to the academic and career needs of exceptional students, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965) promulgated a different role for SCs, as the act provided grants to local school districts to establish programs to prevent school dropout, particularly among the economically disadvantaged and students with disabilities (Erford, 2018).

The ESEA also increased the number of elementary SCs (Gysbers, 2010). While elementary SCs were in existence as early as the 1920s, during the first several decades of their professional functioning, their positions were primarily viewed as educational and not therapeutic. Furthermore, the foundational guidance provided by elementary SCs was seen as a vital component to the education of all students. However, gradually, there was increasing overlap in the duties of school psychologists, school social workers, and SCs. There was also debate regarding the relationship between elementary and secondary SCs, with some arguing that elementary SCs should seek to see themselves as distinct and separate from secondary SCs. Dinkmeyer was a strong advocate for elementary SCs at this time, asserting that the roles and functions of elementary SCs should include consultation, counseling, classroom guidance, group guidance, and coordination of services. Both NDEA and ESEA resulted in a significant increase in the number of SCs and in college and universities providing preparation programs. In addition, the combined effects of the

legislative acts also resulted in the elimination of the counselor-teacher position that was prevalent in the beginning of the century and the hiring of many full-time counselors (Baskin & Slaten, 2014). SCs were categorized under pupil personnel services, which usually included a school psychologist, a social worker, a nurse or health officer, and an attendance officer (Cinotti, 2014).

### **Box 1.4**

#### **Did You Know?**

There is a substantial overlap between the roles of a mental health counselor and a clinical social worker—both perform psychotherapy—but social workers tend to be more focused on modifying the environment to accommodate their clients, while counselors are more strongly oriented toward helping their clients adapt to the environments in which they function (OnlineEducation, n.d.).

Governmental legislation influenced by the civil rights and women's liberation movements during 1960s and 1970s impacted the school counseling profession, often in a contradictory manner. The Vocational Education Act of 1963, the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968, and the Career Education Incentive Act of 1976 sought to address inequities in employment and poverty and redirected the profession's focus back to its origins of career awareness and career decision-making (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). In contrast, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 encouraged school counselors to address social issues, as the act provided grants to local school districts to establish programs to prevent school dropout, particularly among the economically disadvantaged and students with disabilities (Erford, 2018). These acts, along with legislation resulting in the mainstreaming of special education students, increased SCs' focus on diversity and the needs of special populations.

The 1970s witnessed a major shift in the profession as school counseling was defined as involving the provision of a comprehensive, developmental program (Baskin & Slaten, 2014; Cinotti, 2014). The redefinition involved developing comprehensive approaches consisting of using planned developmentally appropriate, measurable student outcomes (Cinotti, 2014). This movement toward a comprehensive approach was not largely realized, as budgetary reductions in the 1970s led to the reduction of SCs. In order to create more visibility and ensure the continuance of the profession, SCs' role and identities shifted to more administrative tasks and responsibilities. These new responsibilities were often what today are considered noncounseling roles, such as scheduling, recess duty, clerical duties, etc. (Baskin & Slaten, 2014).

There were also internal divisions with the school counseling profession during the 1960s and 1970s that contributed to role ambiguity (Gysbers, 2010). Some sought to adhere to a psychologist modeling of counseling, which emphasized using individual counseling to meet the needs of at-risk students, whereas others preferred a guidance educational model, which emphasized prevention through the provision of comprehensive services. Because many graduate programs in school counseling at that time emphasized a psychological orientation, many states began to eliminate the requirement of teaching experience for school counseling certification. As of 2021, only Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, and Texas still required teaching experience as

requirement to become a school counselor (ASCA, n.d.A). Studies have consistently demonstrated that having prior teaching experience is not an indicator of perceived effectiveness for SCs (e.g., Moyer & Yu, 2012).

### **Comprehensive Developmental Guidance Programs (CDGPs)**

The pupil personnel services model of the 1960s and 1970s included the provision of direct services, primarily provided to at-risk students, but lacked a systemic approach for promoting student development, often resulting in school counselors being assigned to administrative or clerical tasks (Slaten et al., 2019). SCs were encouraged to develop and define their own roles and responsibilities based on the needs of each school. This individualized movement added fuel to the fire of the role confusion in the field of school counseling.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the concept of a comprehensive program was developed to address the profession's lack of clarity and focused on the school counseling program versus the role of the school counselor (Baskin & Slaten, 2014). Comprehensive school counseling programs were based upon five foundational premises (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). First, school counseling is a program that, similar to other educational programs, has standards, activities, and interventions to enable students to achieve the standards; the activities and the interventions are provided by certified personnel and use accountability measures to determine students' acquisition of the standards. The second premise is that school counseling programs are developmental and comprehensive. School counseling programs are developmental in that they seek to promote students' growth in three areas of student development: academic, career, and social/emotional. They are also developmental in that they are guided by developmental theories that indicate what most students need at that stage/period of development. For example, in a CDGP program, elementary students are exposed to the world of work by learning the various types of careers, middle school students are assisted in exploring the world of work, examining how their abilities and interests apply to specific careers, and high school students are supported in developing career plans. They are comprehensive in that they seek to impact the entire student population through the provision of a range of services rather than merely focusing upon at-risk students or students with whom SCs meet individually. Third, school counseling programs use a team approach in which while the SC is the leader of the team, the entire school staff is expected to be involved in the delivery of the program. Fourth, school counseling programs are created and maintained through a process of systematic planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating. The fifth premise is that school counseling programs include leadership and advocacy to promote systemic change. Unfortunately, the adoption of Gysbers and Henderson's CDGP was slow and inconsistent (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008). Federal funding to support the profession's movement toward the implementation of a comprehensive, standards-based curriculum was provided through the Elementary School Counseling Demonstration Act of 1995 and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act of 1990 (Erford, 2018).

### **Current Challenges to the School Counseling Profession**

The continued need of the school counseling profession to achieve a consistent identity is currently affected by declining education budgets and the considerable emphasis on accountability for educational institutions. Although ASCA (2019b) recommends a ratio of one school counselor per 250 students, there is no federal requirement for a particular ratio and states vary widely in their school counselor ratios, with some states not even

mandating school counselors (Ohrtman et al., 2016). As of 2019, the national average was 455 students per counselor (Tate, 2019). Sometimes, school counselors are among the first school personnel to be eliminated due to budget reductions. The increasing expectation that schools and educators should be accountable for students' achievement or lack thereof, an expectation which is significantly represented in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2002) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; US Department of Education, n.d.) of 2015, has exerted pressure on the profession to identify how school counselors contribute to the academic mission of schools and to measure the impact of these contributions.

The school counseling profession must not only establish a niche within the education professions but also help the public understand their role and the positive impact of school counseling–related programs in order to counter some of the common negative perceptions of school counselors. School counseling students may find that they receive interesting reactions when they reveal what they are studying to laypeople, and it is common for such individuals to complain that their school counselor only helped them with scheduling, claimed that they would not amount to anything, etc. A national survey of recent high school graduates conducted in 2009 revealed that the students primarily gave their high school SCs a fair or poor rating and viewed them as less helpful than teachers in providing career development (Johnson et al., 2010). Moreover, 67% of respondents rated their school counselor as fair or poor for the assistance they provided in selecting a college, and 55% rated their school counselor as fair or poor in the assistance they provided with the college application process. In China, where there has been a rapid increase in the number of SCs in the past several decades, high school students generally had positive perceptions of the services they received from SCs, but they reported that they wanted more vocational guidance and more knowledge of achievement tests from their SCs (Shi et al., 2014).

### **The ASCA National Model**

The ASCA published the *National Model* in 2003 to increase unity within the profession and hasten the profession's adoption of comprehensive programming. The *ASCA National Model*, which was subsequently revised in 2005, 2012, and 2019, is the form of comprehensive school counseling that is most utilized across the country (Dahir et al., 2009) and is considered best practice for SCs (Cinotti, 2014). The *ASCA National Model* integrated three widely used comprehensive programs, i.e., the comprehensive (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006), developmental (Myrick, 2003), and results-based approached created by Johnson and Johnson (2003). The objective of the *National Model* is to integrate CDGPs (Dahir et al., 2009) into the academic mission of schools to ensure that SCs support the mission of the school and are perceived as integral members of the school. The focus shifted from the services provided by SCs to viewing school counseling as an integral program that supports but is also distinct from the school's academic curriculum. Organizations which collaborated with ASCA in the creation of the ASCA Model include the College Board and Education Trust (Gysbers, 2010), more about which will be discussed later.

The *ASCA National Model* (2019b) consists of four components that are considered necessary to create and maintain effective comprehensive programming. The four components are *define*, which includes the standards that are used to promote student development and assess the effectiveness of the school counseling program; *manage*, which consists of the program focus and planning tools to guide the development and implementation of a school counseling program; *deliver*, which identifies the direct and indirect student services school counselors use in providing the school counseling program; and *assess*, which

includes the methods SCs use to determine the effectiveness of the school counseling program. Furthermore, the four themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change are interwoven throughout the *ASCA National Model*. The *ASCA National Model* emphasizes that SCs use education-based approaches to promoting student development and do not function as mental health therapists. A study published in 2017 estimated that, on average, school counseling programs have implemented the *ASCA National Model* at about a three-quarter level (Fye et al., 2017).

The components and various aspects of each component of the *ASCA National Model* are a major focus of this textbook and will be discussed in greater depth in each chapter.

ASCA has established standards, referred to the ASCA Student Standards (2021), which students should be able to exhibit as a result of the school counseling program. The ASCA Student Standards indicate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to achieve academically, to be college and career ready, and for social/emotional development. SCs operationalize these standards by selecting “competencies that align with the specific standards and become the foundation for classroom lessons, small groups, and activities addressing student developmental needs.”

### **Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP)**

Shortly after the publication of the first edition of the *ASCA National Model*, ASCA established the RAMP designation. To receive the RAMP designation, SCs must submit an extensive application to ASCA which is reviewed by an independent panel of SCs using a rubric that is available on ASCA’s website (ASCA, n.d.B). The RAMP designation indicates that the school’s counseling program is consistent with *the model* and is recognized by the professional community as following best practice. The application requires a narrative documenting the efforts in ten components, including the activities in developing the school counseling program’s vision and mission statements, annual student outcome goals, classroom and group mindsets and behaviors action plan, annual administrative conference, calendars (annual and weekly), lesson plans (classroom and group), classroom instruction results report, small-group results report, and closing-the-gap action plan/results report. Schools receiving the distinction are allowed to identify themselves as a RAMP-designated school, which is often appealing to school administrators as it is an indication of excellence. RAMP status is maintained for five years, and schools may reapply for RAMP status at the end of the term, a process which is referred to as re-RAMPing. As of April 2022, ASCA’s website lists 425 schools which at that time have received the RAMP designation (ASCA, n.d.C).

### **Education Trust’s Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI)**

One of the organizations that ASCA partnered with to reform the school counseling profession is Education Trust (n.d.), which is a national nonprofit organization that seeks to reform education for the purposes of eliminating the opportunity gap that affects students of color and low-income families. Education Trust formed a subgroup in 1995 called the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC), which seeks to ensure that school counselors are capable of helping all groups of students reach high academic standards by serving as an advocate, leader, team member, and consultant in removing barriers to students’ high achievement. Education Trust’s Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) has primarily focused upon modifying the way in which school counselors are

educated in graduate schools, providing grants to select universities to train students in a transformed model of school counseling and encouraging state departments of education to adopt new standards for school counselor preparation (Perkins et al., 2010). The TSCI vision for school counselors involves the following: (1) de-emphasizing a mental health perspective in favor of an academic/student achievement focus, (2) adopting a whole school or systems perspective vs. focusing on individual student issues, (3) using data to effect change as opposed to school counselors simply being involved with data as part of record-keeping, and (4) serving as change agents to promote educational equity (Education Trust, 2009).

### **No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**

The NCLB Act of 2001 (2002) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; US Department of Education, n.d.), which replaced NCLB in 2015, are probably the most significant pieces of educational legislation in the past several decades, and both have had a profound impact upon the school counseling profession. A primary aim of the NCLB Act was to increase schools' accountability for ensuring student achievement through the administration of statewide standardized tests. The NCLB also strove to reduce the achievement gap between White and Asian students and historically disadvantaged groups, including Latin@ American, Black, and Native American students; economically disadvantaged students; students with disabilities; and students with limited English proficiency. NCLB mandated that states require school districts to collect "disaggregated data" of subgroups (defined by gender, race, ethnicity, disability status, low-income status, English-language proficiency, and migrant status) and implement corrective actions to address the needs of these subgroups. Whereas in the past, students were held liable for a lack of academic achievement, now teachers and school personnel were also deemed as accountable for student achievement.

Although the NCLB Act emphasized the need for schools to provide programs for issues typically associated with school counseling, including dropout prevention, career counseling, substance abuse counseling, safe and drug-free schools, etc., a major concern for the profession was that SCs were not involved in the educational reform initiated with NCLB, nor were they explicitly identified in this legislation. This spurred the school counseling profession to undergo modifications in order to be perceived as integral members of the academic mission of schools and educational reform through closer collaboration with other education professions and contributed to the ASCA's creation of the *National Model*.

While NCLB (2002) did not explicitly identify the role of SCs, the act impacted the profession. The NCLB Act's (2002) emphasis on accountability resulted in a renewed commitment to accountability for SCs (Dahir, 2004). The NCLB Act required schools to use empirically supported teaching methods. Likewise, the school counseling profession sought to increase the rigor of studies evaluating the impact of school counseling-related programs and interventions. Prior to NCLB, evaluation studies yielded support for the effectiveness of a variety of school counseling interventions, including providing group, peer, and individual counseling and conducting classroom lessons (McGannon et al., 2005). However, much of this research did not employ an experimental design and thus did not qualify as scientifically based according to the definitions used by the NCLB Act. Consequently, the Center for School Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation (CSCORE) was established to develop the research base required for evidence-based practice (Carey et al., 2008).

The NCLB Act (2002) was comprehensive and was designed to impact various aspects of education, including activities that historically have been associated with the role of school counselors. For example, the NCLB Act mandated that schools regularly provide parents and the public data regarding students' achievement and to create programs that involve parents in meaningful ways. The "safe and drug-free schools" provision of NCLB required that state departments of education identify schools that are unsafe. Schools that had consistently high levels of violent behavior for two years could be designated "persistently dangerous" and suffer penalties, such as voluntary student transfers.

A national survey of SCs revealed that while 2.3% of the participants identified positive effects of NCLB upon the school counseling program's delivery system, 33.6% of the study participants identified negative impacts, including teachers being hesitant to yield class time for counseling or the developmental curriculum, testing responsibilities interfering with counseling students, and a decreased focus on the social and emotional needs of students (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006). Although 25.1% of the SCs indicated that they were engaging in activities related to the testing process that are considered to be appropriate within the *ASCA National Model*, such as interpreting tests and counseling students about test anxiety, majority of SCs identified they had to engage in testing activities that are not considered appropriate by ASCA. Inappropriate activities included functioning as the building test coordinator, proctoring tests and conducting makeup tests, ensuring the implementation of test accommodations for students with disabilities, and providing academic remediation. Dollarhide and Lemberger (2006) concluded that the high-stakes testing ushered by the NCLB Act reinforced the perception that SCs function as test administrators. In order to counter this perception, these authors recommend that SCs use data to advocate the need for students' holistic development.

In 2015, the NCLB Act was replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; US Department of Education, n.d.), which continued the emphasis on the accountability of school personnel for student achievement and establishing high standards for educating all students (Brown et al., 2019). However, ESSA provides more flexibility to states and districts for establishing standards and determining how growth will be measured, including nonacademic factors, and identify the consequence for insufficient performance. School districts are still required to assess students' learning in the form of standardized testing in reading and math in grades 3–8 and once in high school, but ESSA reduces the emphasis on standardized testing in several major respects, which are listed as follows (National Education Association [NEA], 2015):

- The NCLB requirement that schools demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward achieving 100% proficiency in reading and math was replaced with the requirement that states must establish long-term achievement goals with measures of interim progress.
- Federal funding is provided to states to develop alternative assessments that will reduce duplication of assessments.
- High schools may apply to use another nationally recognized assessment, such as the ACT (2016), instead of the state assessment test.
- States may establish a cap limiting the amount of time students engage in test-taking.
- Parents have the right to opt children out of state assessments where local and state policies allow them to do so.
- Elementary and middle schools may provide a measure of student growth or another academic indicator to assess differences among student groups.

The ESSA maintains the NCLB Act's emphasis on reducing the achievement gap but uses different indicators to identify struggling schools and different interventions to support those schools (NEA, 2015). Whereas NCLB required that all schools which failed to meet AYP for several years provide students the option of transferring to other schools and restructuring of the school's leadership and staff, ESSA uses different indicators to identify struggling schools. In ESSA, states would have to identify and provide assistance to schools which are the bottom 5% of performers, schools which have a graduation rate below 67%, and schools which have subgroups (e.g., race, gender, special education) which are struggling. Under ESSA, schools identified in need of support must implement evidence-based, locally determined interventions, and for schools which have a low-performing subgroup, the school must identify in their improvement plan resource inequities that likely contribute to the underperformance of the subgroup. ESSA indicates that schools may, but are not required to, permit students to transfer to another school. SCs were explicitly identified as professionals who should contribute input to the required improvement plan for struggling schools (ASCA, 2015).

ESSA increased emphasis on students' college and career readiness in a number of ways (Malin et al., 2017). Federal funds from ESSA can be used to encourage students' participation in dual-enrollment programs and career and technical education (CTE) to encourage cross-sector partnerships with higher education institutions and to prepare educators to integrate academic and CTE strategies, including funds to train SCs regarding use of labor market information and financial literacy. Furthermore, ESSA granted states the right to use students' postsecondary readiness and completion of advanced coursework as indicators of school performance.

ASCA (2015) issued a statement in support of ESSA, citing the legislation's emphasis on academic and career counseling, importance of providing students with a well-rounded education, and improving the safety and health of school environments. In ESSA, the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program (ESSCP) was incorporated into a large block grant along with many other programs. This large block grant now explicitly lists school counselors as being eligible for federal professional development monies, which could result in increased funding for school counselors.

Brown et al. (2019) identified three aspects of ESSA that are very relevant to the role of SCs: whole-child education, college and career readiness, and home-school-community partnerships. Whereas NCLB emphasized academic outcomes content areas, ESSA places greater emphasis on preparing students for their futures with technology, innovation, and career and life skills. More funding is available for programs that promote a well-rounded education and which "may be conducted in partnership with an institution of higher education, business," etc. (US Department of Education, n.d., pp. 176–177). Such plans may include

college and career guidance and counseling programs, such as postsecondary education and career awareness and exploration activities; training for counselors to effectively use labor market information in assisting students with post-secondary education and career planning; and financial literacy and federal financial aid awareness activities.

(p. 176)

SCs are uniquely positioned to assume leadership on ESSA's emphasis on college readiness, given that they are the only professionals within the school who receive formal training in providing college guidance. SCs can enhance the program's capacity to educate

all families on the costs of college attendance (Bryan et al., 2011). Most high school students overestimate the cost of university tuition (Nienhuser & Oshio, 2017). Large percentages of high school students and their parents lack awareness of financial aid sources (Montalto et al., 2019) or underestimate the amount of aid available (George-Jackson & Gast, 2015). Students with lower levels of information about college are less likely to intend to attend college (Dynarski & Scott-Clayton, 2013), apply to college (Roderick et al., 2011), or enroll in college (Bryan et al., 2011). Students from urban schools and low-income families have less information about the cost of tuition and sources of financial aid (George-Jackson & Gast, 2015). Although students in urban high schools are provided by SCs with considerable information about college entrance process and requirements, students are often not informed regarding how to determine whether their current performance would make them competitive college applicants (Shamsuddin, 2016). Students of color and low income receive less information about attending college from family members who are less likely than nondisadvantaged parents to have attended college themselves (Welton & Martinez, 2013).

SCs must collaborate with others in increasing students' college access. In the ASCA's position statement on college access professionals, the role of the SC is distinguished from a college access professional who serves to assist students in navigating pathways to college (ASCA, 2016). SCs enhance graduation rates through career planning and increasing financial literacy and facilitate a culture of college and career readiness.

ESSA permits educational agencies to use funds to “develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive programs and activities that . . . foster and support, safe, healthy, supportive, and drug free-environments that support academic achievement; [and] promote the involvement of parents in the activity of the program” (p. 178). Some of the programs identified in ESSA include programs designed to prevent drug use, bullying, violence, and harassment, school-based mental health services, and programs that promote relationship-building skills. It is hoped that the explicit identification of these programs in ESSA will result in increased funding opportunities and opportunities for SCs to implement such programs (Brown et al., 2019). Brown et al. (2019) points out that implementing prevention programs requires that SCs collaborate with other school-based professionals and community members. The ASCA (2019c) position statement regarding promoting safe schools states that “school counselors collaborate with teachers, administrators, parents/guardians, and the community to deliver prevention programs encouraging student growth and achievement and ensuring a safe school climate.” Although SCs are trained in providing mental health services, their primary role is not to provide individual counseling (Brown et al., 2019). ESSA's support of supplemental programs for mental health services in schools through schools' collaboration with outside entities means that SCs need to collaborate with other mental health professionals in providing school-based mental health services.

The inclusion of school-based mental health services reflects the trend within the past several decades of schools serving as the site for mental health services for children which are often provided by community health professionals rather than school-based mental health providers, such as SCs or school psychologists. It has been estimated that 70–80% of youth behavioral health services are delivered in the schools (Merikangas et al., 2010). Training programs have emerged to cater to this trend. For example, Penn State's counselor education program offers a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling in schools and communities (Penn State University, n.d.). Often, school-based mental health services involve a team approach in which a team of involved “stakeholders,” such as the child's teachers, administrators, mental health professionals, and the child's parents/

caregivers collaborate in devising interventions to address a child's personal/social needs (Messina et al., 2015). Although the role of SCs in such teams appears to be evolving, it is possible the SCs' primary role on such teams may be to serve as the liaison between both families, the mental health system, and the educational system, given that they are one of the few professionals who have received training in both the educational and mental health systems.

Brown et al. (2019) assert that ESSA offers increased opportunities to SCs to collaborate with parents and families. Under the NCLB Act, funds for professional development were limited to teachers and administrators, but ESSA explicitly states that funds may be used for the professional development of SCs. Brown et al. (2019) encourage that these funds be used to train SCs to enhance their collaboration with the families of socially and economically disadvantaged youth, as Brown et al. (2019) suggest that revisions of ESSA emphasize that schools seek to develop socially just partnerships with parents and families.

The increased flexibility within ESSA for defining accountability may result in an expanded role for SCs. Whereas NCLB focused primarily on defining accountability in terms of academic achievement indicators, ESSA grants states the right to allow school districts to use such indicators as student and teacher engagement, postsecondary readiness, and school climate/safety (Education Week, 2015). The opportunity to use more varied forms of indicators may lead to an increased emphasis on career and personal/social development, which have been traditionally associated with the school counseling program.

Some have argued that one of the reasons the school counseling profession has lacked a consistent identity is related to its little to no involvement in educational reform movements. As school districts look to eliminate personnel, the profession no longer has the luxury of watching educational reform from the sidelines. The American School Counselors Association (ASCA) has sought to be actively involved in the educational reforms that have had considerable impact on school operations within the past two decades.

## **Common Core State Standards**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are an initiative by states to use universal standards in English and mathematics (ACA School Counseling Task Force, 2013) in order to ensure that graduating students are college- and career-ready. The CCSS were developed by the states to address some of the perceived limitations of the NCLB Act (2002). The NCLB Act sought to increase standardization within education by requiring states to establish academic standards and corresponding assessments (National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers (n.d.). The NCLB Act left it up to the individual states to define proficiency, and research indicated that the states' definition of *proficiency* vary widely. Another common concern is that the NCLB Act's focus on proficiency meant that state assessments were designed to measure a low to moderate level of knowledge and skills. The CCSS Initiative seeks to develop a higher level of standards that are based on skills necessary for postsecondary success. Students would be required to understand content at a deep level and be able to apply the content to problem-solving and reason from evidence, as these skills were deemed to be required to succeed in college. It has been hypothesized that student outcomes on the CCSS would be used as an early identifier of student performance; therefore, SCs would need to use this data in scheduling and student placement, in college and career selection, and for identifying remedial services for students (ACA School Counseling Task Force, 2013). Although most states had

indicated a commitment to adopt the CCSS, many states have rescinded their commitment. ESSA requires that states adopt “challenging” academic standards but explicitly states that states do not have to adopt the CCSS (Education Week, 2015). In summary, initially it looked as if the CCSS could have had a major impact upon the profession; as of late, there has not been much discussion in the professional literature regarding the need for SCs to focus upon the CCSS.

### **Professional Associations and the School Counseling Profession**

The Occupational Information and Guidance Service (OIGS) of the late 1930s may have been the first official voice for the school counseling profession (Gysbers, 2010). This organization eventually became the National Association of Guidance Supervision and Counselor Trainers, currently known as the Association of Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES). Concerned with the lack of consistency in the education and training of the school counselors, the OIGS collaborated with the Division of Higher Education of the US Office of Education. The American Personnel and Guidance (APGA) grew out of the NVGA, and eventually the APGA became the American Counseling Association (ACA). In 1952, the APGA (which is now ACA) created the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) division, which was the first organization specific to SCs.

Initially, the focus of APGA (now ASCA) was influenced by the profession’s origins in providing vocational guidance. The term *guidance* rather than *counseling* was used to refer to what all counselors did (Sweeney, 2001). *Guidance* implied that the SC used a directive form in advising students and maintained student records about their schedules and progress. In the 1989, ASCA adopted the term *school counselor*, as the term *guidance counselor* was seen as no longer being reflective of the profession (ASCA, n.d.D). The term *guidance counselor* was perceived as being reactive, involving the provision of services to some students, lacking the use of standardized measurements of effectiveness, an ancillary role within the school, and not being an integral member of the school’s academic mission. In contrast, ASCA intended the term *school counselor* to be associated with data-driven decision-making, meeting the needs of all students, use of achievement, attendance, and behavior data to measure effectiveness, involving a commitment to school improvement, leadership, and a planned program versus the role of providing services.

ASCA, from its inception, has sought to define, unify, and promote the school counseling profession. The mission of ASCA (n.d.E) is to “represent school counselors and to promote professionalism and ethical practices.” The organization provides professional developmental opportunities, including holding an annual conference and offering online specialty certificates; seeks to influence legislation relevant to the profession; initiates and supports research and evaluation on school counselors; and publishes ethical standards. There is an affiliated organization within each state.

The ASCA separated from the ACA in 2018. There was contention between ACA and ASCA regarding the professional identity of school counselors. The ASCA’s perspective is that SCs’ primary professional identification should be as educators. The former director of the Education Trust’s Transforming School Counseling Initiative, Dr. Peggy Hines, believes that one of the primary obstacles to the school counseling reform concerns the training of school counselors (Hines et al., 2011). She argues that SCs are unprepared to implement comprehensive programs to promote students’ college and career readiness because their master’s-level training focuses upon providing mental health therapy to individual clients and their professors often lack an understanding of the school context.

The separation of ASCA and ACA will likely have implications on the preparation of SCs that are difficult to forecast at this time. The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), which was formed in 1981 for the purpose of developing standards of preparation for all types of counseling professionals, has been the primary organization for issuing standards regarding the preparation of SCs since the 1980s (Gysbers, 2010). The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC), which was created in 1982 for the purpose of developing a national credentialing that assesses students' mastery of CACREP's eight knowledge areas, issues a National Certified Counselor (NCC) certificate and also issues certificates for the specific types of counseling professionals, including the National Certified School Counselor (NCSC) designation. Some states and school systems offer increased salaries for NCSCs. In 2019, the ASCA worked with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) in issuing separate standards for school counselor preparation (ASCA, 2019a). The ASCA's expressed rationale for issuing new standards is that the CACREP standards "do not address the critical role of a comprehensive school counseling program for all students, nor do they fully address the unique role of school counselors distinct from the roles of clinical counselors."

## Summary

The evolution of school counseling has been more cyclical than linear. Initially, the profession's focus was upon vocational education. However, school counseling now emphasizes a more holistic view of students, as reflected in the *ASCA National Model's* prioritization of the academic, career, and social/emotional domains. The original focus of "guidance counseling" involved assessments for career decision-making; however, educators often presumed that the role of an SC was coordinator of assessments related to learning. Ironically, this controversy continues to concern the profession, as the coordination of testing is a time-consuming responsibility of many SCs. Although SCs are trained in test preparation, the distribution, scheduling, and proctoring of tests is not considered by ASCA to be effective use of the professional school counselor's time. The movement in the 1980s and 1990s toward a comprehensive, standards-based approach to school counseling is regarded as a turning point in the effort to establish legitimacy for the school counseling profession. The *ASCA National Model* seeks to align school counseling with the mission of schools, ensure that school counselors devote 80% of their time to provision of direct and indirect services to students, and promote the utilization of strategies for management and accountability to ensure that school counselors impact the entire student population. Perhaps more importantly, the school counseling profession's commitment to a comprehensive, standards-based system of service delivery renders it less vulnerable to the reactionary responses of prevailing political and social issues.

The paradigm of the profession has been changed through viewing school counseling as an integral component in the education system and not merely as that which is provided by or to a few lone individuals within the school or district. In embracing this shift, the school counseling profession has taken the next step in its evolution. With legislative advocacy and proactive behaviors exhibited on the part of individual SCs, state school counseling organizations, and national professional organizations, school counseling is poised to no longer be viewed as ancillary to the educational system but rather as a program that ensures the holistic development of all students.

The profession seems to have recognized that a reactive mode in which we attend to students' crises limits SCs ability to impact the entire student population and is not likely

to yield the type of impact that is readily recognized by teachers, parents, and administrators. An SC had told one of the authors that her role was to help students in any way possible. The SC provided an example in which she had assisted a student by looking through the garbage in the cafeteria to help the student locate his retainer. The problem with this example is that the SC did not feel that it was necessary to use comprehensive services, such as classroom or small-group instruction, or data to evaluate the impact of her school counseling program, as she was confident that others would perceive her caring. Thus, the SC most likely missed opportunities to help students in meaningful ways, such as enabling students to think about their life purpose or learn how to more effectively relate to others or motivate themselves to pursue their life goals.

The challenge facing the profession is how to use systematic and comprehensive approaches to impact the entire student population. Ideally, school counseling programs should be driven by students' developmental needs, providing students with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to negotiate changes in their lives. Thankfully, within the last several decades, there has been the development of a consistent and unique professional identity for SCs, and the emergence of frameworks such as the *ASCA National Model*, that can enable SCs to assume a proactive approach.

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## **Professional Identity of School Counselors and the American School Counselor Association National Model (2019)**

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### **Box 2.1 2016 Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, n.d.) School Counseling Specialty Area Standards**

- 1.a History and development of school counseling
- 1.b Models of school counseling programs
- 2.a School counselor roles as leaders, advocates, and systems change agencies in P-12 schools
- 2.c School counselor roles in relation to college and career readiness
- 2.d School counselor roles in school leadership and multidisciplinary teams
- 2.f Competencies to advocate for school counseling roles
- 2.l Professional organizations, preparation standards, and credentials relevant to the practice of school counseling
- 3.a Development of school counseling program mission statements and objectives

### **Box 2.2 ASCA (2019a) Standards for School Counselor Preparation Programs (ASCA CAEP SPA)**

- 1.2 Describe the evolution of the school counseling profession, the basis for a comprehensive school counseling program, and the school counselor's role in supporting growth and learning for all students.
- 4.1 Plan, organize, and implement a variety of instructional and counseling strategies as part of a comprehensive school counseling program (direct and indirect student services) to improve pre-K–12 student attitudes, knowledge, and skills.
- 5.1 Use data and student standards, such as the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success and appropriate state standards, to create school counseling program goals and action plans aligned with school improvement plans.
- 6.1 Explain appropriate scope of practice for school counselors defined as the overall delivery of the comprehensive school counseling program, providing education, prevention, intervention, and referral services to students and their families.