

Connecticut Comprehensive School Counseling Program

American School Counselor Association A New Perspective

The Connecticut School Counselor Association has endorsed the American School Counselor Association National Standards for School Counseling programs. The association views these standards as goals to promote and enhance the learning process. A national standards-based program enables all students to achieve success in school and to develop into contributing members of society. This programmatic approach helps school counselors to continuously assess their students' needs, identify the barriers/obstacles that may be hindering student success and advocate to eliminate these barriers.

The American School Counselor Association standards for school counseling recognize that success depends on the involvement and commitment of individual counselors throughout the state.

The ASCA National Standards define the vision and goals for 21st century school counseling programs. The nine standards shift the focus from the school counselor to the school counseling program.

The standards:

- ◇ create a framework for a national model for school counseling programs.
- ◇ establish school counseling as an integral component of the academic mission of schools.
- ◇ encourage equitable access to school counseling services for all students.
- ◇ identify the key components of a developmental school counseling program.
- ◇ identify the attitude, knowledge and skills that all students should acquire as a result of the K-12 school counseling program.
- ◇ ensure that school counseling programs are comprehensive in design and delivered in a systematic fashion for all students.

The National Standards for School Counseling Programs facilitate student development in three broad content areas:

1. Academic Development
2. Career Development
3. Personal/Social Development

A personal commitment from individual counselors is necessary both to refine the new approach and to mount a successful campaign for its adoption as a statewide model.

The change from a constellation of services and activities to a standards based program represents a significant shift in thinking about the way students are supported and in the anticipated outcomes of the program. School counselors will continue to work with students individually, in small groups, in classrooms and in large assemblies. They will continue to provide crisis intervention and group guidance curriculum activities. School counselors will continue to support students' academic success. Standards will help counselors to implement the academic, career, and personal/social components of a school counseling program to ensure that all students will benefit from the program.

The three standards for each content area provide guidance and direction for states, school systems, and individual schools to develop quality and effective school counseling programs. The emphasis is on success for all students. A school counseling program based on ASCA National Standards enables all students to achieve success in school and to develop into contributing members of our society.

Each of the nine standards is associated with a specific list of student competencies that define the specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills that students should obtain or demonstrate as a result of their participation in a school counseling program. These lists are not meant to be all inclusive, nor is any individual program expected to address all of the competencies in the school counseling program. The competencies form a foundation on which to construct measurable indicators of student performance.

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The **academic development** goals serve as a guide for the school counseling program to implement strategies and activities that support and maximize student learning.

Academic development includes strategies for students to:

- ❖ acquire skills, attitudes, and knowledge to learn effectively.
- ❖ employ strategies to achieve success in school.
- ❖ understand the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home and in the community.

The **career development** goals serve as a guide for the school counseling program to provide the foundation for acquiring the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that enable students to make a successful transition from school to the world of work.

Career development includes strategies for students to:

- ❖ achieve future career success and job satisfaction.
- ❖ understand the relationship between personal qualities, education and training and the world of work.
- ❖ develop career goals as a result of career awareness and experiential activities.

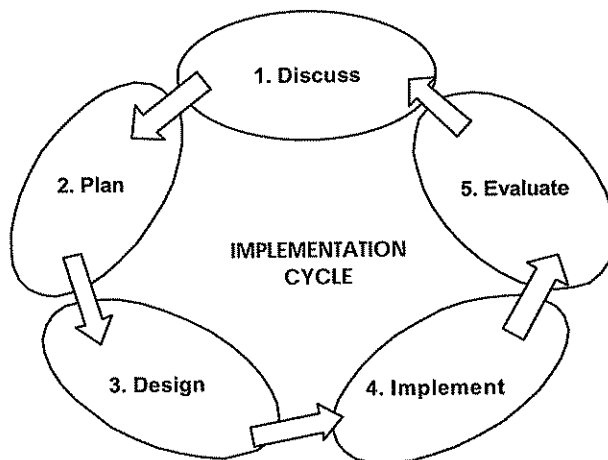
The program goals for **personal/social development** serve as a guide for the school counseling program to provide the foundation for personal and social growth that contributes to academic and career success.

Personal/social development includes strategies for students to:

- ❖ acquire attitudes, skills, and knowledge that helps them understand and respect self and others.
- ❖ use effective interpersonal skills.
- ❖ employ safety and survival skills.
- ❖ understand the obligation to become a contributing member of society.
- ❖ negotiate successfully and safely in the increasingly complex and diverse world of the 21st century.

The educational changes taking place in Connecticut and in local school systems throughout the state are in varying stages of development and implementation. The shift to a standards-based school counseling program should mirror and complement what is underway or soon to be underway in your school system. Think of change as an ongoing process, not as an event.

How do you begin to undertake this shift in thinking and in doing? Implementation does not happen just because you have adopted a model program. You need to engage in a continuous conversation about the progress from "what is" and "what is to be." The implementation is cyclical and circular.



Connecticut School-To-Career Initiative Background Information

School Counselors have a high stake in the School-To-Career (STC) initiative. The following information was gleaned from the School-To-Career tool kits published by the Connecticut State Department of Education and provides school counselors with information about the content of the initiative and the key role they play in its implementation.

To implement the development of School-To-Career (STC) systems for all students in Connecticut, kindergarten through college, a state STC Design Team, comprised of the state departments of Education (SDE), Higher Education (DHE), Labor (DOL), Economic Development (DED), the Community College System (CC) as well as business (led by CBIA) and organized labor, designed a STC regional partnership structure to serve all communities. The Connecticut Learns Unit (CT Learns) of the SDE was created within the Bureau of Career and Adult Education to develop and provide oversight of STC in Connecticut.

Connecticut was then divided into eight (8) STC Regions, A through F. In each region, three lead organizations were identified and invited to convene and facilitate regional partnership meetings and to provide ongoing leadership, technical assistance and professional development to the local districts and other STC partners. These three regional lead organizations, referred to as “tri-conveners,” include each region’s respective Regional Education Service Center (RESC), Regional Workforce Development Board (RWDB,) and regional Community College or colleges (CC). These STC regional partnerships were built, generally, upon the existing structure of current labor markets and workforce development areas. A complete listing of the eight STC tri-convening organizations and STC staff, as well as other lead state STC partners, may be found on the SDE web site, under the Connecticut Learns section of the Bureau of Career and Adult Education.

Additional partners were encouraged to participate in the building of the STC system, including: four-year colleges and universities, tech prep programs, adult education centers, agriculture centers, alternative schools, community organizations, One-stop centers, economic development councils, local and regional employers, Chambers of Commerce and other employer organizations. This configuration of partners would form the foundation of Connecticut’s school-to-career system.

It is important to note that under the heading of Criteria for the Connecticut School-To-Career System, numerous recommendations were made.

The following recommendation is very important to school counselors:

“Be part of a comprehensive career guidance system that begins in the elementary grades and continues by connecting secondary school students to careers and higher education. It is recommended that schools use the developmental guidance curriculum and adapt it to include the career cluster concept. It is also recommended that each student have a written career plan beginning in grade nine. Career development offices in postsecondary schools could help students continue the plan.”

The Connecticut School-To-Career System is a partnership in which employers, education, students, parents, organized labor, state agencies and the community work together to effectively prepare students for the higher education and the global marketplace. It is designed for all students beginning in elementary school continuing through postsecondary education and training, and encourages lifelong learning.

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STC systems include three core elements:

1. **School-Based Learning:** Classroom instruction based on high academic and occupational skill standards and individual guidance and developmental guidance.
2. **Work-based Learning:** Work experience, structured training and monitoring at job sites.
3. **Connecting Activities:** Activities that build and maintain connections between school and work, such as developing courses that integrate classroom and worksite instruction, matching students with participating employers, and training worksite mentors.

High school students successfully completing STC activities may attain the Connecticut Career Certificate if recommended by the school's STC coordinator and approved by the superintendent. These certificates are portable credentials that attest to the attainment of strong academic skills, measured by CAPT, CMT and STC (CASSES in adult education programs), knowledge of and exposure to Employability Skills as well as the Technical Skills associated with career areas that students have elected to explore.

The Connecticut Learns initiative has identified Connecticut's eight most prominent and growing career areas, referred to as Connecticut's Career Clusters. Each of the eight career clusters represents a range of occupations sharing a set of skills and knowledge.

1. Arts and Media
2. Business and Finance
3. Construction: Technologies and Design
4. Environmental, Natural Resources and Agriculture
5. Government, Education and Human Services
6. Health and Biosciences
7. Retail, Tourism, Recreation and Entrepreneurship
8. Technologies: Manufacturing, Communications and Repair

Information on these clusters and their respective required education level, entry-level skills, as well as types of careers available has been developed by the Connecticut Business and Industry Association.

Criteria:

State, regional and local School-To-Career systems should:

- ❖ Be organized around the state-developed career clusters;
- ❖ Prepare students to meet the employer-developed academic, employability and technical standards for each cluster;
- ❖ Be part of a comprehensive career guidance system that begins in the elementary grades, continues through middle school, and connects secondary school students to higher education, training and careers;

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- ✧ Include work place experiences that connect with career clusters students have chosen to explore (job shadowing, internships, community service, etc);
- ✧ Connect the school's program to the employers in the area;
- ✧ Participate in state-offered professional development activities;
- ✧ Provide a link to post secondary education training that is appropriate for the chosen career clusters;
- ✧ Ensure that courses and activities in the school be connected to activities in the work place;
- ✧ Participate in assessment activities that would allow students to acquire a Connecticut Career Certificate for their chosen career cluster, if they elect this credential.

The Role of the Comprehensive Developmental School Counseling Program in the School-To-Career Initiative

Career exploration and awareness are key components of the School-To-Career System in Connecticut. Schools must commit to providing *all* students with an awareness of, and the skills to pursue, the variety of occupations available in the 21st century.

Catherine Chew (1993), in *Tech Prep and Counseling: A Resource Guide*, lists several ways that school counselors can enhance career awareness. They are as follows:

- ✧ Implement a developmental guidance model for grades K-12.
- ✧ Provide all students with interest and aptitude assessments. Provide schoolwide activities that promote the awareness of the full array of career opportunities.
- ✧ Provide students with information about community or technical colleges as well as 4-year colleges and universities.
- ✧ Give attention to women, minorities and students with special needs, and provide them with knowledge of opportunities.
- ✧ Have access to appropriate materials and resources that explain the options of tech prep and technical careers as well as other careers.
- ✧ Help students develop a portfolio that summarizes their educational and experiential credentials.
- ✧ Utilize career planners.

The comprehensive school counseling program supports school counselors in the implementation of all of the above strategies. As noted in the K-12 Developmental Guidance and Counseling publications developed by the Connecticut School Counselor Association (1988,1991,1996), a comprehensive school counseling program model typically includes four major components: the guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services and program management.

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The program also addresses attributes and attitudes, skills and competencies and understandings and applications that are needed to help students in three broad domains of development:

- ✧ Personal/Social (Learning to Live)
- ✧ Educational and Vocational (Learning to Learn)
- ✧ Career Awareness and Exploration (Learning to Earn)

According to the December 1994 issue of *Career and Human Development*, “The school counseling curriculum is the instructional medium that will give *all* students the information that they need about themselves, the labor market, and educational and career paths. At some point, the curriculum must be combined, processed and applied to *all* students and individual basis through individual planning sessions (individual planning component). Of course, no road is completely smooth and personal counseling, consultation, and referrals are part of the responsive services component of a comprehensive developmental guidance program that are provided to meet the immediate needs of students. Finally, the school system must support a planned, sequential program with the resources needed to accomplish the tasks expected. For some schools this program will be a new paradigm for structuring guidance, but one that is absolutely necessary *if all* students are to be served proactively”.

Scope and Sequence

The comprehensive school counseling program is fluid and circular by nature, teaching skills at many levels of complexity. Lessons are dependent on and specific to the cognitive, academic, and social level of the student (Sequence). Building on skills previously taught, learner goals are also cognizant of the proximity of future developmental tasks in the areas of academic, career and personal/social (Scope).

On the following pages, the progress of skills from elementary to middle school then high school is illustrated by the letters IDEAS.

- I** **Introduce** a skill or one aspect of a concept. The goal is to begin building an awareness in a larger area of knowledge. Methods – brief mention of a skill or concept or reintroduction by way of a new aspect of a skill or concept within a new context.
- D** **Develop** a deeper understanding of a skill or concept. The goal is to assist the student in seeing how the skill or concept relates to other areas personalizing it to a student's present situation. Methods - whole class teaching, role-playing, class discussion, teacher reinforcement, videos.
- E** **Evaluate** a larger area inclusive of concepts and skills previously learned. The goal is the integration of concepts and skills with one another. Methods – whole class discussion, cooperative group activities, problem-solving tasks, role playing, guest speakers, videos.
- A** **Analyze** the larger and smaller areas of a concept by breaking it down into parts and finding the relationship between one concept and another. The goal is to encourage the revision and integration of previously learned skills to the increasingly more complex needs of the older student. Methods – cooperative groups, role playing, hands-on career activities, planning for real life situations, individual and group feedback between student and counselor.
- S** **Synthesize** and integrate many aspects of a student's knowledge and life experiences. The goal is to help the student move constructively towards educational and career goals and citizen responsibilities beyond the high school experience. Methods – group activities which assist in educational and career planning, class lessons, cooperative group experiences, career experiences within the community, college fairs, research and speakers.

(Adopted from Seymour Public Schools)

In a fully implemented, comprehensive school counseling program, activities would be written to address every competency within each content area.

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