**The School Counselor and Social/Emotional Development**

(Adopted 2017; revised 2023)

**ASCA Position**

School counselors deliver school counseling programs that enhance student growth in three domain areas: academic, career, and social/emotional development. As a part of that program, school counselors implement strategies and activities to help all students enhance their social/emotional development – the mindsets and behaviors students need to manage emotions and learn and apply interpersonal skills - while recognizing that growth in all three domains is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.  

**The Rationale**

As social/emotional experts, school counselors design and implement school counseling programs using the direct student services of classroom instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling, as well as the indirect student services of referrals, consultation and collaboration with families, teachers and administrators to promote all students’ social/emotional development. (ASCA, 2019).  School counselors engaging in direct services yield “desirable outcomes in a variety of areas including students’ social and emotional development, academic performance, and college or career pursuits” (Lemberger-Truelove et al., 2021, p. 1).   
   
The social/emotional domain is composed of standards to help students manage emotions and learn and apply interpersonal skills as early as preschool and kindergarten (ASCA, 2021a).  School counselors teach mindsets and behaviors for student success in all grade levels to enhance the learning process and create a culture of college and career readiness for all students. According to a meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2022), students who had access to social emotional learning (SEL) programs were shown to have positive outcomes including, “improved personal and social skills, attitudes, positive social behavior, and academic performance, and reductions in problematic behavior, emotional distress, and drug use” (p. 23).  In addition, Cipriano et al. (2023) found that students enrolled in schools with SEL programs are “more engaged, have better quality relationships with their teachers, and have demonstrated increased prosociality” (p.5).  
   
The school counselor collaborates with the school-based leadership team and other school staff to identify students’ social/emotional needs.  The school counselor can then implement interventions designed to target social emotional needs including standalone classroom instruction, inclusive and affirming practices, integration of SEL with academic curricula, and whole school approaches (Durlak et al., 2022).  An analysis by Lemberger-Truelove et al. (2021) found that school counseling interventions in the social emotional domain resulted in “greater positive changes in stress tolerance, social curiosity, executive functioning, and academic achievement” (p. 5). Overall, evidence has shown that well-implemented SEL programs can have a more positive impact on academic performance than those that are exclusively educational in nature (Durlak et al., 2022).  

**The School Counselor's Role**

School counselors play a critical role in supporting social/emotional development as they:

* Use evidence-based, inclusive, and trauma-informed curriculum and resources when delivering interventions to enhance social/emotional development.
* Collaborate with classroom teachers to provide school counseling lessons to all students through direct instruction, team-teaching or providing lesson plans for learning activities or units in classrooms aimed at social/ emotional development (ASCA, 2019).
* Provide targeted multi-tiered approaches to support the needs of individuals and small groups of students (ASCA, 2021b; Durlak et al., 2022)
* Understand the nature and range of human characteristics specific to child and adolescent development.
* Identify and employ appropriate appraisal methods for individual and group interventions that support K–12 students’ social/emotional development.
* Use counseling theories that are effective in a school setting to inform both direct and indirect student services supporting K–12 students’ social/emotional development.
* Use assessment in the context of appropriate statistics and research methodology, follow-up assessment and measurement methods to implement appropriate program planning for social/emotional development.
* Collaborate with school staff to create an inclusive and affirming environment for all students
* Collaborate with community resources in supporting students and refer as appropriate when student needs exceed the scope of the school counselor role.

**Summary**

Interventions that promote social/emotional development improve social behavior and academic performance and reduce problematic behaviors and emotional distress. School counselors provide a school counseling program that helps all students enhance their social/emotional development and attain the mindsets and behaviors needed for success while recognizing that growth in the three domains of academic, career, and social/emotional development is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.

**References**

American School Counselor Association. (2019). ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs  
(4th ed.).   
   
American School Counselor Association. (2021a). ASCA student standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for student success: K-12 college-, career- and life-readiness standards for every student. <https://schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/7428a787-a452-4abb-afec-d78ec77870cd/Mindsets-Behaviors.pdf>  
   
American School Counselor Association. (2021b). The school counselor and multitiered system of supports- ASCA position statement.    
<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Multitiered-System-of-Sup>    
   
Cipriano, C., Naples, L., Zieher, A. K., Durlak, J., Strambler, M. J., Eveleigh, A., Wood, M., Ha, C., Sehgal, K., McCarthy, M. F., Kirk, M. A., Ponnock, A., Funaro, M., & Chow, J. (2023). The state of evidence for social and emotional learning: A contemporary meta-analysis of universal school-based SEL interventions. Open Science Framework. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/6PQX2>  
   
Durlak, J. A., Mahoney, J. L., & Boyle, A. E. (2022). What we know, and what we need to find out about universal, school-based social and emotional learning programs for children and adolescents: A review of meta-analyses and directions for future research.  Psychological Bulletin. 148(11-12), 765–782. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000383>  
   
Lemberger-Truelove, M. E., Ceballos, P. L., Molina, C. E., & Carbonneau, K. J. (2021). Growth in middle school students' curiosity, executive functioning, and academic achievement: Results from a theory-informed SEL and MBI school counseling intervention. Professional School Counseling, 24(1\_part\_3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X211007654>