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### Teacher Perceptions of the School Counselors Role

Jenna M. Marchetta

*The College at Brockport*, [jmarc2@brockport.edu](mailto:jmarc2@brockport.edu)

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Teacher Perceptions of the School Counselors Role

Jenna M. Marchetta

The College at Brockport, State University of New York

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### Abstract

This manuscript examines faculty perceptions of the school counselor's role. The study takes place in a rural intermediate school district where the participants are the faculty. Participants were asked to strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree or disagree with statements based on what School Counselor's role *should be* which current research identifies as being the most important responsibilities of a School Counselor. Results of this study reflect that the teachers and staff of this school do value the important responsibilities. However, participants who had more than 10 years of experience, were less likely to value certain roles such as classroom guidance, teacher consultation, and informing faculty of what the School Counselor's role is. What can be taken away from this study is that there are significant gaps in older generation teacher perceptions pertaining to the different knowledge about School Counselors role responsibilities versus a guidance counselor in the past.

### Teacher Perceptions of the School Counselors Role

Past literature has noted that a counselor's role does not have a specific definition, therefore sometimes causing conflict of how others view their role (Corey, 1986). According to the current research, the role of the School Counselor has been questioned for quite some time, and a few studies on the effectiveness of school counselors, or models that have been implemented show the accountability of School Counselors (Clark & Ametee, 2004). Thus, stakeholders such as teachers may have misconstrued perceptions of school counselors. These concerns include, yet are not limited to the following: classroom guidance, consultation with stakeholders, parent contact, and crisis intervention.

While public education trends toward performance based evaluation for teachers, this study was significant in exploring with deeper ramifications of such trends. There is limited amount of research focusing on teacher perceptions of the School Counselors role and the assistance they can provide to student success. The literature, however, has cited classroom guidance and teacher consultation, and other factors, which contribute to teacher's unawareness of the School Counselors role.

The role of the classroom teacher has become increasingly complicated, however, some of the roles teachers are finding themselves faced with are those outside of their expertise. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA), stated that School Counselors should assist teachers with classroom management, as well as other tasks (ASCA, 2005). Teachers do not have the training or expertise to assist students with mental health concerns. In such cases, it is beneficial to know what teachers believe to be the most valued roles and counseling services are that School Counselors carry out on a daily basis. With this information gathered, School

Counselors can assist teachers in the classroom, as well as helping teachers to understand their role.

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Elementary School Counselors.**

At the present time in New York State, Elementary School Counselors are not state mandated. One study has shown that administrators within the schools think that elementary school counselors are a positive impact to students in regards to their academic, behavioral and mental health (Zalaquett, 2005).

According to Erik Erikson, childhood is defined as beginning at the age of seven and continuing to the age of twelve years old. This stage can also be referred to as Competence: Industry versus Inferiority where children are becoming more aware of themselves and their individuality. Erikson viewed the elementary school years as a *critical* time for the development of self-confidence and during this stage, children are questioning whether they are worthless or successful in their relationships with regards to how they are commended or ridiculed for their efforts (Cherry, 2010).

By providing education, prevention, early identification and intervention, school counselors can help all children achieve future success and could affect long term positive outcomes for children in an impressionable stage. Through delivery of services elementary school counselors aid in a student's development in school, and can help children gain their confidence as learners. Raising achievement test scores, aiding in closing the achievement gap, helping students with disabilities or defining a disability are some of the ways that elementary school counselors impact students (ASCA, 2010).

### **Disabilities and problem behaviors**

A school counselor can affect young, impressionable students in their formative years. When an elementary school student starts to develop into their own self, specific aspects about their learning styles can be uncovered, such as learning disabilities. When a counselor realizes that the student has special needs, immediate action is taken, as the child may need special education or attention. Elementary school counselors act as a collaborator with other school officials to figure out what types of services a student will need. They also work with the student towards improvement of social and behavioral skills, and increasing the student's self-esteem. The counselors have the training to assist these students with figuring out coping skills to deal with their disability. These same coping skills will translate as life skills, which students will use towards their future success (ASCA, 2010; Frye, 2005).

Elementary school counselors advocate for children with disabilities, which is particularly important following a new diagnosis. Students with disabilities have the potential to feel left out when they recognize that they are different from their peers. School counselors develop ways to help students feel as comfortable as possible. As the children learn coping strategies for living with their disabilities, they gain confidence for their future both in school and in society at large (Frye, 2005).

### **Bullying**

A major issue in the schools today is bullying. Bullying can be defined as intent to harm, repetitive acts, and a power imbalance between the bully and the target or victim. It is hard to pinpoint bullying when it first happens because someone's intent is not always clear. Bullying can be relational, which is considered to be social exclusion, spreading rumors, and demanding compliance as a condition of friendship. Bullying can also be overt, which is physically or

verbally hurting someone. Physical bullying can include pushing, shoving, hitting, and threatening physical harm and verbal bullying. Despite the challenge of initially recognizing bullying, vigilance is necessary so that bullying can be identified quickly and the necessary action taken (Bauman, 2008). “The number of victims in elementary grades has been estimated at twice that of secondary students” (Bauman, 2008, 364).

Elementary school counselors have for a long time been a student’s defense for a healthy, non-toxic environment. Although school counselors strive to reduce bullying, violence is one of the most complicated issues in schools today. Teachers and school administrators struggle with ways to prevent bullying from happening, but because their time is taken up with other tasks they have to fulfill, the primary responsibility falls to the school counselor and other professionals in the mental health field. In fact, administrators have been increasingly turning to school counselors for leadership, to create rules against violence, for the prevention of bullying and school safety. School counselors work in a team with teachers and administrators, to establish specific policies and to enforce these problem behaviors such as bullying, early on (DeMato & Curcio, 2004).

Children can be taught that bullying is wrong, which will help to prevent it in the future. Groups and discussion sessions could be used to achieve this goal of making students aware that bullying is a problem. Getting the students to report or talk about bullying incidents that happen either to themselves or to a peer is important. A study showed that most students hesitate and do not tell teachers most of the time when bullying occurs because they see teachers as unkind, inept and unable to fix the problem. Also, counselors were more likely than teachers to report situations and not ignore the incident or use punitive disciplinary actions (Bauman, 2008; DeMato & Curcio, 2004).

**Social behavior.**

Another behavioral problem in the schools is social behavior. Children are forming relationships in elementary school and having either positive or negative interactions. There are always going to be popular and unpopular groups of students in schools, but school counselors can help in the creation of positive interactions between students. Positive social interactions help in the formation of positive social behavior and development. Children who have negative social interactions are more likely to become depressed, drop out of school and act out toward others. Techniques such as role playing, modeling, coaching, feedback and “homework” are used mainly with low-socioeconomic status children because of the lack of positive relationships in their life. Although it is not always the students, who come from low-socioeconomic status families that have negative social interactions, this trend is common. When social skills are first being learned in elementary school, school counselors can show students how to cope with others and learn positive social behaviors (Hepler, 2009; Sherrod, Getch & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009).

Children need positive behavioral support in order for a number of discipline referrals to go down. The school counselor is in a position to take action and implement a program to increase students’ knowledge, attitudes and skills to promote positive behavior. Positive behavior programs introduced in elementary school settings have been shown to reduce discipline referrals and improve student behavior (Hepler, 2009; Sherrod, Getch & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009).

**Supporting students in transition.**

During transition periods, particularly when students transition from elementary school to junior high school, there are developmental changes, including cognitive shifts to formal

operations and puberty, which can impact the transition. Increased academic expectations, room and schedule changes, and a larger student body, create a different environment for students.

The transition period from elementary to junior high school has also shown an increase in student discipline problems (Dimmitt & Carey, 2007).

The four elements of the ASCA National Model, foundation, delivery system, management system and accountability system can be utilized to support students during transition periods. Incorporating the elements with, the themes, advocacy, leadership, collaboration, and systemic change can lead to effectiveness in supporting individual and groups of students in transition, particularly through delivery services. The transition into kindergarten is usually the start of a student's academic career and the foundation of an elementary school counseling program is to engage new students and families. The goals of the school and the schools mission statement can be similar to show the value of creating system wide consistency to provide a safe, productive learning environment for students. Visiting classrooms, communicating and integrating curriculum into the classroom as early as kindergarten, will show students support and that school is a safe, learning community. Delivery system components show students a supportive academic environment; counselors provide help with relationship forming and early intervention on special educational needs from observation of the students. Curriculum developed for elementary students on academic and personal/social skills have shown an impact on academic achievement, behavior and classroom environment. In the management system, communication between counselor and administration, as well as communication between counselor and parents and teachers about the school counseling program goals is essential to the flow of the system. Regular program development is essential to continue improving the program and to keep up with systemic change. The ASCA National

Model values accountability and by gathering data on incoming students, helps to understand how and when problems emerge and what types of prevention and interventions have been effective. The ASCA National Model is a beneficial tool that helps with the delivery of a comprehensive school counseling program through guidance curriculum, management systems, leadership, advocacy and systemic change (ASCA, 2010; Dimmitt & Carey, 2007).

### **Evolution of the School Counselor Role**

There are currently over 260,000 school counselors in the United States (School Counselor Schools, Salaries, and Job Data, 1998-2011). The role of the school counselor has evolved over the past one hundred years, beginning with a concentration on career exploration, moving into personal/social counseling and then academic achievement. Presently in the year 2011, school counselors continue to focus on the academic, personal/social and career developmental domains (Reiner, Colbert & Perusse, 2009).

The role of the school counselor has been questioned for quite some time, and a few studies on the effectiveness of school counselors, or models that have been implemented to show the accountability of school counselors. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) developed a program that was intended to assist school counselors in planning and delivering their services, while also creating opportunities for school counselors to demonstrate their effectiveness and program accountability. A successful school counseling program requires teacher involvement and support. Teacher support is often the result of teachers understanding and valuing the role of the school counselor. Corey (1986) stated that a counselor's role does not have a specific definition, therefore sometimes causing conflict of how others view their role. Thus, stakeholders such as teachers, may have unmet expectations of school counselors (ASCA, 2005; Clark & Ametee, 2004; Reiner, Colbert & Perusse, 2009).

### **History of “Guidance and Counseling in the Schools”**

The multifaceted nature of the current day school counselor role has evolved since the onset of the 20th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, the United States was still immersed in the Industrial Revolution. Teachers were being appointed with the expectation that they would take on an additional role as a vocational counselor. The primary intent was to focus on career transition from high school to the work force. Although teachers were expected to now be counselors, they did not get paid more nor did they have a break during their day (Gyspers & Henderson, 2001; Reiner, Colbert & Perusse, 2009).

As the 20th century continued to unfold, economic, social and political events, along with education reform movements, shaped the nature and structure of school guidance and counseling programs. The vocation component remained, but by the 1950's, there was a personal/social focus, which emphasized a clinical perspective, with counseling dominating the role (Gyspers & Henderson, 2001).

The school counseling profession advanced even further when the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) was passed in part, as a reaction to the United States losing the space race to the Soviet Union. When the USSR launched Sputnik, the US recognized that as a nation, Americans were falling behind in math and sciences, thus potentially impacting the US's standing as a Super Power. The NDEA provided funding for more testing to be done in schools and training institutes for school counselors. Testing would allow for the continuous monitoring of knowledge, skills and performance of the nation's youth and children, particularly in math and sciences (Bauman, Siegel, Falco, Szymanski, Davis, Seabolt, 2003; Myrick, 2003).

From 1951 to 1965, the number of school counselors jumped from 6,780 to more than 30,000. The NDEA added academic development to the role of school counselors. Each of

these aforementioned events shaped the role of the school counselor into a complex, diverse, often misunderstood role, with an emphasis on the academic, career and personal/social developmental domains (Bauman, et al. 2003; Gyspers & Henderson, 2001; Myrick, 2003).

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century School Counseling: Achievement Gap and Accountability**

Twenty-first century school counselor roles are varied and complex, due primarily to the additional job responsibilities that have been added each decade. In 1983, *A Nation at Risk*, the seminal publication of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, identified what was wrong with the nation's public schools, citing declining student achievement as the foremost problem. Based on this, the federal government initiated steps to examine the quality of education US students were receiving. Consequently, school counselors began to assist students with doing better in school. Since 1983, two other initiatives, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and The Education Trusts Transforming School Counselor Initiative, have also added addressing the achievement gap to the responsibilities of the school counselor. (Reiner, Colbert & Perusse, 2009)

As a result of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and the belief in standards-based education reform, states had to develop assessments to give to students in certain grades. The Education Trust's Transforming School Counselor Initiative (TSCI) also expected high academic achievement for all students at all levels, and focused on using data to change policy and practice, promote collaboration with faculty and advocacy for students (Reiner, Colbert & Perusse, 2009).

At the same time, developing a culture of school counselor accountability has also evolved over several years. There were efforts made in the 1920's, 1930's and 1940's to evaluate school counseling programs; studies were conducted and much discussion appeared in

the literature about this topic. The ultimate goal was to try to demonstrate the work school counselors do and how it helps students. There needed to be a better way, however, to demonstrate what school counselors were doing, and how successful they were in helping students. Consequently, in 1952, school counselors formed their own group, The American School Counseling Association (ASCA). The formation of the ASCA was an early attempt to develop improved ways to devise a comprehensive school counseling program (Gysbers, 2004; Minkoff & Terres, 1985).

### **Early School Counseling Models**

Before the ASCA group was formed, there were other efforts to describe the accountability of school counselors. In 1926, Myers, developed four standards to judge whether or not school counseling programs were complete. The four standards were: (1) completeness as measured by the number of guidance and counseling activities; (2) distribution of emphasis as shown by the time devoted by each activity; (3) thoroughness as revealed by the kinds and quality of the work completed; and (4) consistency of organization. Edgerton later presented data that indicated there needed to be seven standards for a vocational guidance program to be complete. The seven standards were: (1) aiding pupils to obtain adequate, reliable and significant information concerning occupations; (2) providing exploratory experiences as an aid to pupils in testing their fitness for certain educational and occupational divisions, and as an aid to teachers in discovering pupils' interests and abilities; (3) collecting and making available for use pertinent information concerning the abilities, aptitudes, temperaments and personality characteristics of individual pupils; (4) assisting individual pupils to evaluate occupational information and the results of exploratory experience in terms of their personal abilities, interests and characteristics, and helping them to plan their vocational preparation; (5) providing

vocational education opportunities for pupils to prepare for the occupations they have chosen; (6) aiding pupils seeking placement to obtain advantageous entry into the occupations chosen; and (7) helping the pupil through employment supervision to progress in his occupation if it proves suitable or to change if it proves unsatisfactory. The standards listed were an attempt to establish standards, and to see which standards, when put together, made a complete school counseling program (Edgerton, 1929; Gysbers, 2004).

In 1961, Wellman and Twiford prepared a bulletin for the United States Office of Education titled *Guidance Counseling and Testing Program Evaluation*. The bulletin was in response to a requirement from the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) that required states to annually evaluate and analyze local programs of guidance and counseling in the schools. The bulletin summarized recommendations for evaluations of school guidance programs and provided outcomes of school guidance programs. The bulletin also offered proposed data collection and procedural methods that could potentially be used to study student success. Youth Guidance Systems was a model developed on the west coast that was implemented around goals, objectives, programs and designs for evaluation. Comprehensive Career Guidance System (CCGS) was then developed to completely plan, implement and evaluate guidance programs. Along with the CCGS, the National Center for Vocational and Technical Education designed a behavioral model for career guidance based on a systems approach focusing on evaluation. Later, another model was developed by the American Testing Program, called the River City Guidance model, which also corresponded with the idea of evaluation of results of school counseling program. In addition to the approaches listed above, an approach to guidance was being advocated in the Program of Learning in Accordance with Needs (PLAN) where guidance was seen as a major component. Guidance was perceived as a major component of PLAN and

was thought of to be part of the everyday instructional program. Following, in 1971, the University of Missouri-Columbia was given a United States grant to assist each state, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, in developing guides for evaluating and implementing career guidance, counseling and placement programs in local schools. By the time this project was complete in 1974, 44 states had developed some type of model to provide career guidance, placement and counseling. As part of the project, a manual was developed showing how to implement, evaluate and develop a counseling guidance program and as guidance programs became more sophisticated with regards to accountability and developmentally systematic, models were then integrated into schools. As the 1970's came to a close and the 1980's began, the issue of accountability was still prevalent. Budget cuts were becoming a cause for concern and the need for accountability was important to show program strengths and weaknesses. During the 1990's, school counselors were recognizing the need to be more active in outcome research to show what they were doing within their program and how it was affecting students. The emphasis on accountability began in the 1920's, and ever since has been a growing concern. School Counselors need to demonstrate effectiveness through program evaluation and obtaining accountability data regarding student results (Gysbers, 2004).

### **Development of a National Model**

In 2003, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) marked the ultimate guide to the development and implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program. Before the National Model, national school counseling leaders, defined school counselors as “essential education partners who support the mission of schools’ and facilitate students’ academic success” (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009, p.1). The National Model furthered ASCA’s decade of effort to connect the work of school counselor’s to enhance schools. Before

the ASCA National Model, the mission to enhance students' learning and a school mission was the primary goal for professional school counselors. After the standards were put in place, as well as the Transforming School Counseling Initiative, theoretical and practical applications were added, along with developmental and results-based school counseling. Previously, school counseling models were service-driven as opposed to now, being a delivery system that is programmatic, focusing on student development and learning, demonstration of results, accountability and initiating systemic change. Accountability, producing results and delivery procedures have all contributed to the changes of the professional school counselors role. The ASCA has contributed greatly to the transformation of the school counselor's role in many schools across the country. Many state education departments have changed their program guidelines to align with the ASCA National Model. Researchers have shown that including accountability and comprehensive counseling programs can change the view of school counseling contributions in a positive way. Students who participate in a comprehensive school counseling program have shown increased socialization with peers, earn higher grades and are involved in fewer classroom disruptions (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009; Gyspers, 2004; Myrick, 2003; Sink & Stroh, 2003).

### **Transforming School Counseling Initiative**

The Education Trust's Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) goal was to improve the school counselor preparation at the graduate level. An assertion of the TSCI, was that school counselors were primarily learning about mental health counseling in their training, but academic success and career counseling were not a priority. Furthermore, the Education Trust asserted that School Counselors were contributing to the achievement gap (Perusse & Colbert, 2007; Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009).

The achievement gap has been an ongoing problem in the education system and it is probable that it will always exist. The achievement gap has been defined as “the discrepancy among educational measures between the performance of groups of students such as grade point averages, dropout rates and standardized test scores” (Trusty, Mellin & Herbert, 2008). Gender, socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity are all contributing factors to the achievement gap. School counselors can play a major role in the closing of the achievement gap because the role they play can help improve drop-out rates, standardized test scores and grade point averages. Programs can be established that will help students to manage academic and personal/social issues, and in turn, assist students in receiving a better education and achieving success in their future (Trusty, Mellin & Herbert, 2008).

The Education Trust wanted School Counselors to play an increasing role in educational opportunities for all students through advocacy, leadership, and collaboration. High academic achievement was the means for closing the gap between low-income students and students of color from other youth. Instead of changing one student at a time, teaming together to work more systematically is considered to be more effective and beneficial to groups of students. The ASCA National Model incorporated leadership, systemic change, teaming and collaboration, and advocacy, which are all concepts of the initial TSCI, into the Model (Perusse & Colbert, 2007; Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009).

### **ASCA National Standards.**

In 1997, the National Standards for School Counseling Programs and the Transforming School Counseling Initiative were introduced and have now become current trends in school counseling. National Standards are meant to link the school counseling program to the fundamental part of the school system as whole. Developing standards gave the outside public

and school administrators an idea of what school counseling programs address. The Standards were designed to endorse the school's mission statement, and enhance the learning process for students, as well as, establish a purpose and assessment of the School Counseling program. The National Education Goals Panel stated, "Standards are tools to use to establish goals for the counselor and student, and in turn specify what a student should know and be able to do" (Dahir, 2001; Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004).

ASCA determined that the Standards would define what students should know and be able to do, based on their participation in the school counseling program. Before the Standards were developed, over 2,000 ASCA members responded to a survey about the purpose these standards should serve. Respondents believed that national standards for school counseling should "promote equitable access to school counseling programs and services for all students, establish similar goals and expectations for all students, identify and prioritize the key content components for school counseling programs, position school counseling as an integral component of the academic mission of school, identify the knowledge and skills that all students should acquire as a result of the pre-K through 12 school counseling program, and ensure that school counseling programs are comprehensive in design and delivered in a systematic fashion for all students" (Dahir, 2001, p. 1). These recommendations helped establish a purpose and direction for the ASCA National Standards and influence the development process (Dahir, 2001).

There were nine National Standards developed; three within the Academic domain, three within the Career domain, and three within the Personal/Social domain. Academic development includes success strategies for school, and understanding the relationship between academics and the workforce. The three standards in the academic domain are the following: (1) students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and

across the life span; (2) students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial postsecondary options, including college; and (3) students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home in the community (ASCA, 2005, p. 33; ASCA, 2003; Dahir, 2001).

Career development includes successful transition from grade to grade, from school to post-secondary education to the workforce and strategies for future career success and job satisfaction. The connection between personal qualities, education and training and future career goals, are also developments in the career domain standards. The three standards in the career domain are the following: (4) students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions; (5) students will employ strategies to achieve future career success and satisfaction; and (6) students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education and training and the world of work (ASCA, 2005, p. 33; Dahir, 2001).

The three standards in the personal/social domain are the following: (7) students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect others; (8) students will make decisions, set goals, and take necessary action to achieve goals; and (9) students will understand safety and survival skills (ASCA, 2005, p. 33).

Increased accountability can change the perception of school counseling professionals in today's reform of the school counseling agenda. The National Standards are a way to show commitment and bring about necessary and positive change in school counseling and to assist students in academic achievement. The National Standards are designed to provide the guide of program content so that student's can grow and succeed in the academic, personal/social and

career domains. The National Standards, therefore, were used in the development of the ASCA National Model (Dahir, 2001).

### **Organizational Structure of the Model**

There are four elements to the ASCA National Model: Foundation, Delivery System, Management Systems and Accountability. ASCA also collaborated with the Education Trust's School Counseling Initiative to include ideas within the four themes: leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change (ASCA, 2005; Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004).

#### ***Foundation***

The Foundation is what the program will provide and what the student will know and be able to do and include the *mission, philosophy, and ASCA National Standards*. “*Beliefs and philosophy* is a set of principles that everyone agrees on which guide the program development, implementation and evaluation”, (ASCA, 2005, p. 22). A *mission statement* describes the program and what is wished for the students. School Counselors are responsible for facilitating student development in the academic, career and personal/social domains. The ASCA National Standards and competencies define the knowledge, attitudes and skills students should demonstrate because of the counseling program (ASCA, 2005).

#### ***Delivery***

A second element of the model is Delivery System, which addresses how the program will be implemented in a school, and includes *responsive services, guidance curriculum, individual student planning, and system supports*. *Guidance curriculum* are structured, developmental lessons designed to teach students about the competencies. *Responsive services* consist of services aimed at responding to students' immediate needs, which require counseling,

peer mediation, information, referral or consultation. *Systems support* includes professional development, consultation, collaboration, teaming, program management and operation activities that enhance the school counseling program as a whole (ASCA, 2005).

### ***Management***

*Management systems* is a third element of the model, which addresses how the school counselors will deliver their services. Components of the management system include use of calendars, action plans, management agreements, advisory councils, and use of time reports. The management system responds to “why the use of data will be important and on what authority or advisory council the program will be implemented”, (ASCA, 2005, p. 23). *Management agreements* organize program responsibilities, and identify how the school counselors are accountable. The *advisory council* is a group of stakeholders, who review the school counseling program results then make recommendations for future programming. *Student monitoring* is another aspect of the Management system, in which monitoring all students’ progress (achievement-related data, standards, and competency-related data), ensures students are receiving the necessary support in order to succeed. The use of data will also assist in closing the achievement gap. The use of data will drive the program and student needs will surface, identifying discrepancies between what School Counselors want students to know, and what is actually being achieved. Action Plans, Guidance Curriculum, and Closing the Gap Action Plans are in place to ensure that the school counseling program reaches every student. The *action plans* describe the data driving the decision addressing specific competencies. The *Use of time* needs to be determined early on in a program to establish how much time is needed for the four components of the delivery system. Delivering services can become complex and to spend the majority of time in direct services with students, knowledge of the difference between

appropriate and inappropriate school counseling program activities will help. *Calendars* are a way to keep track of the amount of time spent in each area of the delivery system. By developing calendars, students, teachers, administrators and parents and guardians will know when planned activities are scheduled to be accomplished (ASCA, 2005).

### *Accountability*

The final element of the ASCA National Model is *accountability*, which demonstrates how students are different from the efforts of the school counseling program. Accountability is measure by the use of results reports, school counselor performance results, program audits, and student acquisition of student competencies. *Results reports* which include process, perception, and results data, make sure that programs are completed, analyzed and changed for improvement. Sharing results with stakeholders is a form of advocating for students and the program as a whole. School counselor performance standards, is a practice that is expected of school counselors who are running a comprehensive school counseling program in which to use for counselor evaluation and self-evaluation. Program audit is a way to show how the school counseling program aligns with the ASCA National Model, providing results for students and guiding future actions within the school. “Standards for each domain provide guidance and direction for states, school systems and individual schools developing effective school counseling programs”, (ASCA, 2005, p. 32). Student competencies define the specific knowledge, attitudes and skills students should obtain, and indicators demonstrate skill acquisition”, (ASCA, 2005, p. 32). Without the elements of the ASCA National Model, direction and organization would be difficult for professionals to know how to go about forming an effective school counseling program (ASCA, 2005).

### *Themes*

There are also four themes incorporated into the ASCA National Model: *leadership*, *advocacy*, *collaboration* and *systemic change*. In the model graphic, the four themes are repeated around the outside to show the impact they have on the school counseling program. *Leadership* is a role school counselor's take on to help students gain access to opportunity. *Collaborating* with teachers and administration is a way to become an effective leader to implement change for students, in the school or district, and in the state as a whole. *Advocacy* is the third theme, which means school counselors essentially work with every student to promote success in school. Advocating for every student and supporting academic success, places school counselors in the leadership role to encourage changes in the school. Collaborating and teaming involves school counseling professionals working together with all stakeholders towards common goals of equity, access and academic success for all students. School counselors try to build effective working relationships among students, colleagues and parents so that all parties involved can be advocated for. Collaborating and teaming helps to work towards collecting and analyzing data to make the changes needed within a school. *Systemic change* is an aspect of the school counseling program where counselors have a unique position; they have access to critical information about students and can collaborate with other leaders in the school. Systemic change happens when policies and procedures are examined and changed because of what data showed. Systemic change involves changing practices that currently perpetuate the achievement gap (ASCA, 2005).

### **Necessary ingredients for the implementation of the ASCA National Model.**

To begin implementing a program, the student-to-counselor ratio must be appropriate. The maximum recommendation is that there should be one counselor to every 250 students. The ideal recommendation is that there should be one counselor to every 100 students. Administrator

support is also vital to the successful implementation of the ASCA National Model. Without the support of administration, a school counseling program could strive, but not thrive.

Administrators working collaboratively with school counselors could improve academic achievement. The result of administrator-counselor collaboration could lead to administrators serving as school counselors' biggest advocates. To follow the ASCA and local policies regarding counseling, it is important to have cooperation between parents and guardians, teachers, and community partners. An example of collaboration with teachers is collecting their student data in order to identify needs as a way to assist in the goals of the program. As student needs arise, systemic change and the use of data is necessary for the success of the student and the school counseling program (ASCA, 2005).

### **School Counseling, According to the Model.**

#### ***Services delivered in school settings.***

The four delivery components of a school counseling program that enhance academic, career and personal/social development for students are *guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support* (Mason & Duba, 2009). "Guidance lessons and activities that focus on relationships, integrity, self-esteem, self-discipline, goal-setting, study skills, time management, anger management, careers, decision-making, and the importance of acquiring a quality education support and enhance the school instruction program", (Mason & Duba, 2009, p. 5).

The individual planning component helps students plan and monitor their learning and career development. School counselors meet with students to discuss their academic standpoint, career aspirations and personal goals and keep track of each intervention and goals. The responsive service provides individual counseling, group counseling, consultations and referrals

to meet the student's immediate needs and concerns. The responsive services provide students with resolution of personal problems that could potentially impact their academic concentration and achievement. The system support are activities for the school as a whole such as professional development, staff and community relations, consultations with teachers and parents, program management, and research and development. It is important for each individual counselor to assess their particular school setting and then decide which percentage of each component to dedicate the time (Mason & Duba, 2009).

*Supporting academic success of students.*

“When a group of people works as a team, more gets accomplished and there are more people benefiting from the ultimate goal”, (Trusty, Mellin & Herbert, 2008, p. 408). In a school, it is important for administrators, teachers, and counselors to work together to achieve a common goal; one example of this is higher academic achievement among students. There are two main areas that counselors focus on in the area of academic achievement: academic skill development and education-career planning. The more students are prepared for a challenging future of education, the better they will perform, and in turn, the more likely they are to reach their long term educational goals (Trusty, Mellin & Herbert, 2008).

School counselors play a role in reducing the achievement gap by ensuring that students, no matter their race, gender, ethnicity or socioeconomic status, have access to high quality curriculum. Students can improve their learning by working in groups or one on one with their school counselor to work on study skills or time management skills. A school counselor can play an instrumental role in getting parents, teachers and students engaged in jointly solving a problem, team building or sharing expertise. Parents working alongside counselors can be a huge motivator to do well. Involving parents in the student's education reinforces the

counselor's lessons, too. Ultimately, School Counselors can make a huge impact on the student and set the tone for the rest of their future education (Trusty et al., 2008).

***Appropriate responsibilities.***

While administrators focus on issues such as the school's budget and teachers focus on preparing students for statewide tests, the counselor should be engaging in personal/social aspects of student's lives. If administrators were to allow counselors to take on tasks such as assisting the classroom teachers in specific skills, such as study skills and personal coping skills, the overall student achievement could be higher. By teachers and school counselors working together, it makes a significant difference in the academic lives of students. Results will happen faster and will ultimately be more effective when working together to achieve specific outcomes. Some inappropriate tasks that school counselors take on are, administering cognitive aptitude and achievement tests or registration and scheduling of all new students. Analyzing grade point averages in relation to achievement, providing teachers with suggestions for better study hall management, and ensuring that student records are maintained are the appropriate roles school counselors should be focusing on (Reiner, Colbert & Perusse, 2009; Sink, 2008).

***Comprehensive school counseling programs.***

School counselors have produced valuable results with regard to the provision of comprehensive school counseling programs. Students enrolled in schools with comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCP) performed better on achievement tests than students who were not enrolled in schools with CSCP. School counselors develop programs and curriculum within comprehensive school counseling programs that directly benefit students' needs in a school. Academic and social skills are two aspects that are incorporated into the curriculum. Comprehensive school counseling programs are one more example of how school counselors

have an impact on a student's education. By teaching students early on the skills of how to study, of how to express their emotions and meet their own needs, success in school and in the students' futures is more likely to happen (Sink, 2008; Sink & Stroh, 2003).

### **Building a Caring School Community**

Counselors also help to provide a sense of belongingness to the school community as a whole. By developing comprehensive, preventative and developmental interventions, the school counselor, along with other faculty, develop effective strategies for a youth's success. The following eight core elements must be present for a school's community to be positive: connectedness, empowerment, safety, collaboration, consistency, shared ownership, respect and lastly, fun. Some strategies that school counselors use in order to implement this idea of a positive school community are: recognition, relationship building, developmental guidance, visibility, evaluation and needs assessment, program/facility facilitation and problem-solving techniques. It takes *an entire staff* to make sure the eight core elements along with recognition, relationship building, developmental guidance, visibility, evaluation and needs assessment, program/facility facilitation and problem-solving techniques take place, but it all starts with the teacher, parents and counselors and their knowledge of the development of children and how to implement strategies into their everyday life (Lindwall, Coleman & Hardin, 2008).

Implementing a caring school community, allows the children to have a voice and to tailor the classroom to their own needs and wants that they agree to follow (Morita, 2010). The students' social, academic and ethical development is fueled by the community in which the student explores where they can feel comfortable taking risks and exploring new ways of learning (Morita, 2010).

### **Stakeholder Perceptions of School Counselors**

The use of counselors for non-counseling tasks is inefficient and not cost-effective. Unfortunately, the role of the school counselor is often skewed in regards to the perception of the role the counselor plays. An effective utilization of the school counselors requires clarity as to what they do for the comprehensive program. Because of the lack of clarity among the role of school counselors, recognition is not always given and role conflict and the inability to maintain a constant role is affected. It is primarily the school principal's responsibility to effectively and appropriately utilize school personnel. Thus, producing successful schools falls into the laps of administration. An effective school is characterized by the understanding of all school officials to agree on role responsibilities in which each staff member contributes their own specialized part. Although, the school principal plays a major role in the functionality of the school, it takes "leadership density" in establishing a successful school where all staff contributes their expertise in their own areas (Lieberman, 2004, p. 554). Increasing faculty clarity of all the different roles in a school setting, such as a school counselor, may direct and encourage more appropriate and productive functioning. Administration, teachers and other school faculty should be proactive in learning the roles and functions of different personnel in the school to increase knowledge about what people do. The ASCA National Model has attempted to give clear definition of the school counselor's role and as school leaders begin to familiarize themselves with the roles of school counselors, the school counselor can then maximize their productivity by being used effectively. If school officials use counselor resources and understand the role of the school counselor, the probability of excellence for students and the school as a whole will heighten (Beesley, 2004; Lieberman, 2004).

School counselors are advocates, leaders, team members, consultant's to students, parents, teachers, principals, and community agencies to help students succeed. School

counselors' main goal is to enhance the academic, personal/social and career achievement with the help of teachers, as they are an integral part of the guidance process. Without the understanding of a school counselor's role, it is difficult to see their effectiveness, perceived strengths, and suggest improvement for role functioning (Beesley, 2004; Lieberman, 2004).

### **Teacher perceptions.**

A study was conducted to see how satisfied teachers are with the overall role of a school counselor. Sixty-seven percent of teachers reported to be somewhat to extremely satisfied with the counseling services provided in their school and 33% reported that they were somewhat to extremely dissatisfied with the services a school counselor provided. Elementary school teachers reported significantly greater satisfaction with school counseling services than middle/junior high or high school. Teachers were asked to rate specific areas of service provided by their school counselor and the strongest domain was classroom guidance, followed by individual/group counseling, consultation and coordination of special education services. The top four domains for recommended improvements were career counseling, academic planning/college preparation, community referrals and public relations. Overall, teachers were satisfied with the services school counselors provide but still believed that there were areas of improvement (Beesley, 2004).

Student's expectations of school counselors are to assist in solving academic problems by developing study skills. Students view the school counselor's role as someone who has knowledge about school curriculum and can provide information about educational and career opportunities. Students also confide in their school counselors in regard to personal/social problems. It was found in this study that teachers believe strongly that the counseling department makes a positive contribution to the school's instructional program. Teachers also

believed that counselors enhance instructional programs, and act as change agents in the school with regards to students' personal/social development, as well as academic development.

Teachers also believed that school counselors designed appropriate interventions for students with special needs (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002).

According to the reviewed studies on stakeholders' perceptions of the school counselor's role, respondents were generally satisfied with the role of the school counselor. Another common finding was that teachers felt strongly that school counselors were not responsible for administrative duties, and when they have to carry out certain tasks, such as conducting psychological examinations, it took counselors away from their professional role (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002).

### **Summary**

A school counselor's role is to support academic, career and personal/social development, facilitate learning opportunities and help build skills to maximize student success. Students with challenges struggle to perform academically. Educators' in schools are realizing that when social and emotional skills are tended to, student academic achievement increases (Clark & Ametea, 2004; Stone & Dahir, 2006).

The ASCA National Model is an effective tool used to develop comprehensive school counseling programs and also to keep their role contained to the most important factors in a student's life: academic, career and personal/social domains. There are various tasks a school counselor is responsible for but it is difficult because they are also expected to carry out roles that are not included in the ASCA National Model. For example, scheduling, disciplinary functions and clerical duties are roles counselors have to perform even though they are not included in the school counselor role statements. Teachers' expectations of counselors are that

their knowledge will have a favorable impact on students and the counseling program as a whole (Clark & Ametea, 2004; Fitch, Newby, Ballesterro & Marshall, 2001).

The object of this study was to determine teachers perceptions of: (1) the most valued roles a School Counselor is responsible for and (2) the most important counseling service. This study will increase elementary school counselor awareness about the role responsibilities that are most valued by teachers. Awareness of teachers' values may impact program revisions and implementations. Teachers were targeted for this study because they are believed to be integral stakeholders in the successful implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2005). Once this is known, school counselors will be able to alter their program to incorporate student needs through systemic change. In order to discover this information, this study is centered on two essential questions:

1. What are faculty perceptions of school counselor role responsibilities?
2. What do faculty members believe to be a school counselor's most beneficial role responsibility?

## **Method**

### **Setting**

This research study was conducted in a rural intermediate school (grades 4-6) outside a metropolitan area in Western New York. This intermediate school served approximately 475 students in grades 4 through 6. During the 2010-2011 school year, this building employed 56 staff members.

### **Participants**

Approximately 60 individuals were chosen as potential participants in this research study. The population consisted of the full-time faculty at the intermediate school. The particular

population was chosen for the primary reason that these were the individuals who interacted with the school counselor on a regular basis. Teachers were targeted for this study because they are believed to be integral stakeholders in the successful implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2005). Furthermore, awareness of teachers' values may impact program revisions and implementations.

### **Procedure**

Each faculty member was informed of the purpose and directions of how to participate in this study at a faculty meeting. Prior to administering the survey, the faculty was informed about the intention of this survey and that it would play no role in other aspects of their job. They were also notified that the study was voluntary and that their responses were confidential. A survey and consent form was placed in the participants' mailboxes located in the school's main office. As indicated in the letter of consent, participants gave their consent by completing the survey. The participants were instructed to place the completed surveys in a locked drop box located in the main office near the participants' individual mailboxes. They were given 2 weeks to complete and return the surveys. The completed surveys were retrieved by the researcher once they were placed in the locked box, two weeks following the administration of the survey. Surveys were distributed to the 56 participants, and 33 were completed resulting in a 59% return rate.

### **Materials**

An anonymous survey was used to collect data regarding teacher perceptions of the school counselor's role. In order to determine what responsibilities faculty members valued most in a school counselor's role, a survey was adapted from the Center for School Counseling Outcome Research & Evaluation at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst School of

Education. The survey measures which school counselor roles and responsibilities teachers and staff value the most. After scores were tallied, percentages were calculated for data analysis.

The original survey consisted of 20 questions in a Likert-type Scale format asking respondents to rank the importance of what school counselors' roles and responsibilities should be. In the first 20 questions, participants were asked to rate the various statements on their belief on the school counselor's role with "1" being *strongly disagree*, "2" being *disagree*, "3" being *agree*, and "4" being *strongly agree*. An additional question was added by the researcher which asked participants to rank the importance of the tasks a school counselor performs specific to their school; Group Counseling, Individual Counseling, Classroom Guidance, Teacher Consultation, Parent Contact, Instructional Support Team/Committee on Special Education/IEP/504 and Professional Consultation. Participants were asked to rank the responsibilities of a school counselor from the "7" being the most important to "1" being the least important. This gave the researcher a clear understanding of the importance of their specific duties. An additional 3 questions were asked for demographic purposes which asked participants to respond to 3 demographic questions, including the number of years they had been teaching or working in that particular institution, the number of years they had been teaching or working in any institution and how much contact they have with the school counselor; *daily, weekly, monthly, or rarely*. The researcher will use this information to compare the differences in number of years they had been teaching or working in that specific institution, the number of years they had been working at any institution and how much contact they had with the school counselor to the response about the roles and responsibilities of school counselors.

### **Purpose**

The researcher used a paper survey to collect data from teachers and staff in an intermediate school (grades 4-6). A nonparametric, quantitative research method was used to identify data. The survey was adapted by the researcher to compare the value that teachers assign to each of the expected responsibilities of school counselors. This study will increase school counselor awareness about the role responsibilities that are most valued by teachers. The first step in the process was to review the literature published in relation to faculty perceptions of the school counselor's role. Literature points to the role of the school counselor often being skewed in regards to the perception of the role the counselor plays (Lieberman, 2004; Beesley, 2004). Because of the lack of clarity among the role of school counselors, recognition is not always given and role conflict and the inability to maintain a constant role is effected (Lieberman, 2004). With this said, this research study focused on determining what school counselors role responsibilities are, therefore increasing awareness of teachers' values which may impact program revisions and implementations.

### **Analysis**

The nature of the scale for each variable was determined by a 4 point Likert-type scale. The researcher manually entered the responses from the paper form of the survey into a program called IBM Statistics with the same respective point system and a significance level of .05. Percentages were calculated according to the data collected from the paper survey. Analyses were made based on the number of years a teacher or staff member were part of the school district, part of the profession as a whole and how much time was spent with the school counselor. Based on the research questions, the hypothesis is that individual counseling is the most important responsibility of a school counselor based on personal experience. The researcher also hypothesizes that there will be a small percentage of a school counselors actual

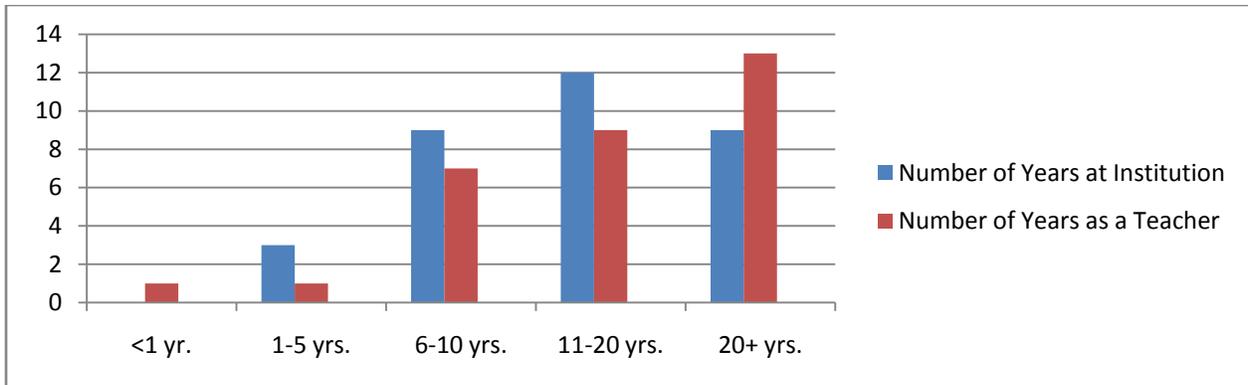
role responsibilities that differ from faculty perceptions of valued school counselor role responsibilities. The researcher hypothesizes there will be a decreased number of valued school counselor roles for those teachers and staff who have been in the profession, as well as the district for a longer period of time.

### **Results**

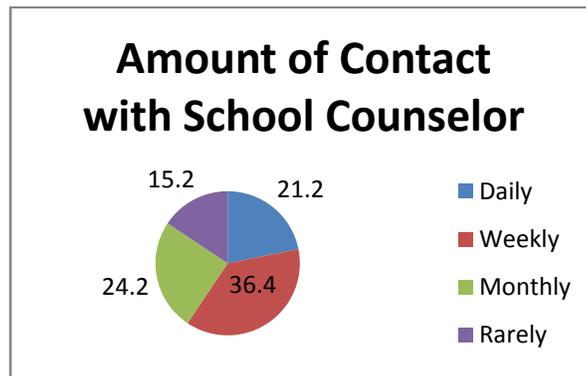
Surveys were distributed to 56 participants, and 33 were completed resulting in a 59% return rate. The results were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. The methods of analysis used were a frequency analysis, and survey results were also tallied into raw scores. Analyses focus on participants' responses to the research instrument. The results were first analyzed to see which school counselor roles and responsibilities teachers and staff place high value on. The results were then compared to determine which specific roles are most important and least important.

Three (9.1%) of those who returned the survey have been at this specific institution for 1-5 years. Nine (27.3%) participants have been at this specific institution for 6-10 years, 12 (36.4%) have been there for 11-20 years and 9 (27.3%) participants have been at this specific institution for 21 years or more.

Of those individuals who completed the survey, 1 (3%) of participant have been teaching for less than 1 year. One (3%) participant have been teaching for 1-5 years, 7 (21.2%) participants have been teaching for 6-10 years, 9 (27.3%) participants have been teaching for 11-20 years and 13 (39.4%) participants have been teaching for 21 or more years.



Out of the total number of participants who completed the survey, 7 (21.2%) people have daily contact with the school counselor. 12 (36.4%) have weekly contact with the school counselor, 8 (24.2%) have monthly contact, and 5 (15.2%) people rarely have contact with the school counselor.



Of the 20 questions on the survey, 21 out of 33 (63%) supported the prediction that teachers and staff who had been teaching for longer periods of time, were less likely to hold a value of importance to School Counselor role responsibilities. Table 1 listed below shows that of the 10 questions that participants strongly disagreed or disagreed, most of these responses were from people who had been teaching for 11-20 or 21+ years. For example, question 8 stated that School Counselors should help to enhance the academic achievement of all students. Three participants (9%) who have been teaching for 11-20 years or 21+ years disagreed with this

statement. Question 10 stated that students should be able to meet with the School Counselor at any time. 18% of teachers who have been teaching for 11-20 years or 21+ years disagreed with this statement. Finally, question 12 stated that School Counselors should work with teachers to provide classroom guidance curriculum. 9% of participants who have been teaching for 21+ years strongly disagreed with this statement. There were 2 participants who disagreed with this statement and they have been teaching for 11-20 years. For the majority of the questions, all participants agreed with the School Counselor role responsibilities.

**Table 1: Number of Years as a Teacher**

		<1	1-5	6-10	11-20	21+
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
<b>Q1</b> School Counselors should help others understand their role.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>
	2=disagree	0	0	0	3/30 <b>10.0%</b>	2/30 <b>6.7%</b>
	3=agree	0	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	4/30 <b>13.3%</b>	3/30 <b>10.0%</b>	5/30 <b>16.7%</b>
	4=strongly agree	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	0	3/30 <b>10.0%</b>	3/30 <b>10.0%</b>	5/30 <b>16.7%</b>
<b>Q2</b> The goals for the School Counseling Program should be clearly defined.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>
	3=agree	0	0	3/30 <b>10.0%</b>	2/30 <b>6.7%</b>	4/30 <b>13.3%</b>
	4=strongly agree	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	4/30 <b>13.3%</b>	6/30 <b>20.0%</b>	8/30 <b>26.7%</b>
<b>Q3</b> The goals of the School Counseling Program should be consistent with the school mission.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	0	0	3/30 <b>10.0%</b>	2/30 <b>6.7%</b>	6/30 <b>20.0%</b>
	4=strongly agree	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	4/30 <b>13.3%</b>	6/30 <b>20.0%</b>	7/30 <b>23.3%</b>
<b>Q4</b> The expectations of the School Counselors should be clearly defined and reasonable.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	1/29 <b>3.4%</b>
	3=agree	0	0	3/29 <b>10.3%</b>	2/29 <b>6.9%</b>	6/29 <b>20.7%</b>
	4=strongly agree	1/29 <b>3.4%</b>	1/29 <b>3.4%</b>	4/29 <b>13.8%</b>	6/29 <b>20.7%</b>	6/29 <b>20.7%</b>
<b>Q5</b> School Counselors should work cooperatively	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	1/31 <b>3.2%</b>	0	1/31 <b>3.2%</b>	2/31 <b>6.5%</b>	1/31 <b>3.2%</b>

with teachers.	4=strongly agree	0	1/31 3.2%	6/31 19.4%	7/31 22.6%	12/31 38.7%
<b>Q6</b> School Counselors should be supported by the administration in the school.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	1/31 3.2%	0	0	1/31 3.2%	1/31 3.2%
	4=strongly agree	0	1/31 3.2%	7/31 22.6%	8/31 25.8%	12/31 38.7%
<b>Q7</b> School Counselors should help students to develop socially and emotionally.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	0	0	1/31 3.2%	2/31 6.5%	1/31 3.2%
	4=strongly agree	1/31 3.2%	1/31 3.2%	6/31 19.4%	7/31 22.6%	12/31 38.7%
<b>Q8</b> School Counselors should help to enhance the academic achievement of all students.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	1/29 3.4%	2/29 6.9%
	3=agree	0	1/29 3.4%	5/29 17.2%	2/29 6.9%	4/29 13.8%
	4=strongly agree	1/29 3.4%	0	2/29 6.9%	6/29 20.7%	5/29 17.2%
<b>Q9</b> School Counselors should provide group guidance activities for students, including topics such as bullying, peer pressure, conflict resolution, etc.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	0	0	1/31 3.2%	1/31 3.2%	1/31 3.2%
	4=strongly agree	1/31 3.2%	1/31 3.2%	6/31 19.4%	8/31 25.9%	12/31 38.7%
<b>Q10</b> Students should be able to meet with the School Counselor at any time.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	1/30 3.3%
	2=disagree	0	0	1/30 3.3%	1/30 3.3%	4/30 13.3%
	3=agree	0	1/30 3.3%	1/30 3.3%	2/30 6.7%	5/30 16.7%
	4=strongly agree	1/30 3.3%	0	5/30 16.7%	6/30 20.0%	3/30 10.0%
<b>Q11</b> The School Counselors should spend a significant amount of time managing crisis situations.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	2/28 7.1%	2/28 7.1%	4/28 14.3%
	3=agree	1/28 3.6%	1/28 3.6%	2/28 7.1%	3/28 10.7%	4/28 14.3%
	4=strongly agree	0	0	3/28 10.7%	3/28 10.7%	3/28 10.7%
<b>Q12</b> School Counselors should work with teachers	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	3/27 11.1%
	2=disagree	0	0	1/27 3.7%	1/27 3.7%	1/27 3.7%
	3=agree	1/27 3.7%	1/27 3.7%	4/27 14.8%	6/27 22.2%	7/27 25.9%

to provide classroom guidance curriculum.	4=strongly agree	0	0	2/27 7.4%	2/27 7.4%	1/27 3.7%
<b>Q13</b> School Counselors should provide orientation information and services to help students transition to middle school.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	1/31 3.2%	0	5/31 16.1%	4/31 12.9%	5/31 16.1%
	4=strongly agree	0	1/31 3.2%	2/31 6.5%	5/31 16.1%	8/31 25.9%
<b>Q14</b> School Counselors should support parent needs.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	1/31 3.2%
	3=agree	1/31 3.2%	1/31 3.2%	4/31 12.9%	8/31 25.8%	9/31 29.0%
	4=strongly agree	0	0	3/31 9.7%	1/31 3.2%	3/31 9.7%
<b>Q15</b> School Counselors should participate in relevant professional development to improve effectiveness, on a yearly basis.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	1/30 3.3%	0
	3=agree	1/30 3.3%	0	2/30 6.7%	6/30 20.0%	3/30 10.0%
	4=strongly agree	0	1/30 3.3%	5/30 16.7%	2/30 6.7%	9/30 30.0%
<b>Q16</b> School Counselors should work as a liaison between all parties involved in student's education.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	1/31 3.2%	0	1/31 3.2%
	3=agree	1/31 3.2%	1/31 3.2%	2/31 6.5%	5/31 16.1%	5/31 16.1%
	4=strongly agree	0	0	4/31 12.9%	4/31 12.9%	7/31 22.6%
<b>Q17</b> School Counselors are an integral part of the student's educational experience.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	1/30 3.3%	0	4/30 13.3%	7/30 23.3%	7/30 23.3%
	4=strongly agree	0	1/30 3.3%	3/30 10.0%	2/30 6.7%	5/30 16.7%
<b>Q18</b> School Counselors should believe that all students can succeed.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	1/31 3.2%	0	1/31 3.2%	3/31 9.7%	5/31 16.1%
	4=strongly agree	0	1/31 3.2%	6/31 19.4%	6/31 19.4%	8/31 25.9%
<b>Q19</b> School Counselors should	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	0

advocate for students.	3=agree	0	0	2/30 <b>6.7%</b>	0	6/30 <b>20.0%</b>
	4=strongly agree	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	5/30 <b>16.7%</b>	8/30 <b>26.7%</b>	7/30 <b>23.3%</b>
<b>Q20</b> School Counselors should provide career education to students.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>
	3=agree	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	0	2/30 <b>6.7%</b>	5/30 <b>16.7%</b>	6/30 <b>20.0%</b>
	4=strongly agree	0	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	5/30 <b>16.7%</b>	4/30 <b>13.3%</b>	4/30 <b>13.3%</b>

Of the 20 questions on the survey, most did not support the prediction that teachers and staff who had the least amount of contact with the school counselor, were less likely to hold a value of importance to School Counselor role responsibilities. Although, Table 2 listed below shows that most of the participants who strongly disagreed or disagreed with statements on the survey, were people who had monthly or rare contact with the School Counselor. There were 25 responses from participants who had daily and weekly contact with the School Counselor where they strongly disagreed and disagreed with some important School Counselor roles such as classroom guidance and crisis management. Overall, there was not a difference in responses whether participants saw the School Counselor daily or rarely.

**Table 2: Amount of Contact with School Counselor**

		Daily Count	Weekly Count	Monthly Count	Rarely Count
<b>Q1</b> School Counselors should help others understand their role.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	1/32 <b>3.1%</b>	0
	2=disagree	1/32 <b>3.1%</b>	1/32 <b>3.1%</b>	0	3/32 <b>9.4%</b>
	3=agree	3/32 <b>9.4%</b>	7/32 <b>21.9%</b>	4/32 <b>12.5%</b>	1/32 <b>3.1%</b>
	4=strongly agree	3/32 <b>9.4%</b>	4/32 <b>13%</b>	3/32 <b>9.4%</b>	1/32 <b>3.1%</b>
<b>Q2</b> The goals for the School Counseling Program should be clearly defined.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	1/31 <b>3.2%</b>
	3=agree	1/31 <b>3.2%</b>	5/31 <b>16.1%</b>	2/31 <b>6.5%</b>	2/31 <b>6.5%</b>
	4=strongly agree	5/31 <b>16.1%</b>	7/31 <b>22.6%</b>	6/31 <b>19.4%</b>	2/31 <b>6.5%</b>
<b>Q3</b> The goals of the School Counseling Program	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	3/31 <b>9.7%</b>	6/31 <b>19.4%</b>	1/31 <b>3.2%</b>	3/31 <b>9.7%</b>

should be consistent with the school mission.	4=strongly agree	4/31 <b>12.9%</b>	6/31 <b>19.4%</b>	6/31 <b>19.4%</b>	2/31 <b>6.5%</b>
<b>Q4</b> The expectations of the School Counselors should be clearly defined and reasonable.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	1/31 <b>3.2%</b>
	3=agree	3/31 <b>9.7%</b>	6/31 <b>19.4%</b>	1/31 <b>3.2%</b>	3/31 <b>9.7%</b>
	4=strongly agree	3/31 <b>9.7%</b>	6/31 <b>19.4%</b>	7/31 <b>22.6%</b>	1/31 <b>3.2%</b>
<b>Q5</b> School Counselors should work cooperatively with teachers.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	2/32 <b>6.3%</b>	2/32 <b>6.3%</b>	0	2/32 <b>6.3%</b>
	4=strongly agree	5/32 <b>15.6%</b>	10/32 <b>31.3%</b>	8/32 <b>25%</b>	3/32 <b>9.4%</b>
<b>Q6</b> School Counselors should be supported by the administration in the school.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	2/32 <b>6.3%</b>	1/32 <b>3.1%</b>	0	1/32 <b>3.1%</b>
	4=strongly agree	5/32 <b>15.6%</b>	11/32 <b>34.4%</b>	8/32 <b>25.0%</b>	4/32 <b>12.5%</b>
<b>Q7</b> School Counselors should help students to develop socially and emotionally.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	1/32 <b>3.1%</b>	3/32 <b>9.4%</b>	0	1/32 <b>3.1%</b>
	4=strongly agree	6/32 <b>18.8%</b>	9/32 <b>28.1%</b>	8/32 <b>25.0%</b>	4/32 <b>12.5%</b>
<b>Q8</b> School Counselors should help to enhance the academic achievement of all students.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	0	0	3/30 <b>10.0%</b>
	3=agree	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	5/30 <b>16.7%</b>	5/30 <b>16.7%</b>	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>
	4=strongly agree	5/30 <b>16.7%</b>	7/30 <b>23.3%</b>	2/30 <b>6.7%</b>	0
<b>Q9</b> School Counselors should provide group guidance activities for students, including topics such as bullying, peer pressure, conflict resolution, etc.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0
	3=agree	1/32 <b>3.1%</b>	1/32 <b>3.1%</b>	0	2/32 <b>6.3%</b>
	4=strongly agree	6/32 <b>18.8%</b>	11/32 <b>34.4%</b>	8/32 <b>25.0%</b>	3/32 <b>9.4%</b>
<b>Q10</b> Students	1=strongly disagree	0	0	1/32 <b>3.1%</b>	0

should be able to meet with the School Counselor at any time.	2=disagree	1/32	<b>3.1%</b>	1/32	<b>3.1%</b>	1/32	<b>3.1%</b>	3/32	<b>9.4%</b>
	3=agree	2/32	<b>6.3%</b>	3/32	<b>9.4%</b>	4/32	<b>12.5%</b>	2/32	<b>6.3%</b>
	4=strongly agree	4/32	<b>12.5%</b>	8/32	<b>25.0%</b>	2/32	<b>6.3%</b>	0	
<b>Q11</b> The School Counselors should spend a significant amount of time managing crisis situations.	1=strongly disagree	0		0		0		0	
	2=disagree	1/29	<b>3.4%</b>	5/29	<b>17.2%</b>	1/29	<b>3.4%</b>	2/29	<b>6.9%</b>
	3=agree	3/29	<b>10.3%</b>	3/29	<b>10.3%</b>	4/29	<b>13.8%</b>	2/29	<b>6.9%</b>
	4=strongly agree	2/29	<b>6.9%</b>	3/29	<b>10.3%</b>	3/29	<b>10.3%</b>	0	
<b>Q12</b> School Counselors should work with teachers to provide classroom guidance curriculum.	1=strongly disagree	0		1/30	<b>3.3%</b>	1/30	<b>3.3%</b>	1/30	<b>3.3%</b>
	2=disagree	1/30	<b>3.3%</b>	3/30	<b>10.0%</b>	0		0	
	3=agree	3/30	<b>10.0%</b>	6/30	<b>20.0%</b>	7/30	<b>23.3%</b>	4/30	<b>13.3%</b>
	4=strongly agree	2/30	<b>6.7%</b>	2/30	<b>6.7%</b>	0		0	
<b>Q13</b> School Counselors should provide orientation information and services to help students transition to middle school.	1=strongly disagree	0		0		0		0	
	2=disagree	2/32	<b>6.3%</b>	0		0		0	
	3=agree	2/32	<b>6.3%</b>	7/32	<b>21.9%</b>	2/32	<b>6.3%</b>	3/32	<b>9.4%</b>
	4=strongly agree	3/32	<b>9.4%</b>	5/32	<b>15.6%</b>	6/32	<b>18.8%</b>	2/32	<b>6.3%</b>
<b>Q14</b> School Counselors should support parent needs.	1=strongly disagree	0		0		0		0	
	2=disagree	2/32	<b>6.3%</b>	0		0		1/32	<b>3.1%</b>
	3=agree	3/32	<b>9.4%</b>	9/32		7/32	<b>21.9%</b>	4/32	<b>12.5%</b>
	4=strongly agree	2/32	<b>6.3%</b>	3/32	<b>9.4%</b>	1/32	<b>3.1%</b>	0	
<b>Q15</b> School Counselors should participate in relevant professional development to improve effectiveness, on a yearly basis.	1=strongly disagree	0		0		0		0	
	2=disagree	0		0		1/31	<b>3.2%</b>	0	
	3=agree	5/31	<b>16.1%</b>	5/31	<b>16.1%</b>	1/31	<b>3.2%</b>	3/31	<b>9.7%</b>
	4=strongly agree	2/31	<b>6.5%</b>	6/31	<b>19.4%</b>	6/31	<b>19.4%</b>	2/31	<b>6.5%</b>
<b>Q16</b> School Counselors should work as a liaison between all parties involved in student's	1=strongly disagree	0		0		0		0	
	2=disagree	0		2/32	<b>6.3%</b>	0		0	
	3=agree	5/32	<b>15.6%</b>	3/32	<b>9.4%</b>	5/32	<b>15.6%</b>	3/32	<b>9.4%</b>
	4=strongly agree	2/32	<b>6.3%</b>	7/32	<b>21.9%</b>	3/32	<b>9.4%</b>	2/32	<b>6.3%</b>

education.						
<b>Q17</b> School Counselors are an integral part of the student's educational experience.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	
	3=agree	4/31 <b>12.9%</b>	7/31 <b>22.6%</b>	6/31 <b>19.4%</b>	4/31 <b>12.9%</b>	
	4=strongly agree	3/31 <b>9.7%</b>	4/31 <b>12.9%</b>	2/31 <b>6.5%</b>	1/31 <b>3.2%</b>	
<b>Q18</b> School Counselors should believe that all students can succeed.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	
	3=agree	4/32 <b>12.5%</b>	2/32 <b>6.3%</b>	4/32 <b>12.5%</b>	2/32 <b>6.3%</b>	
	4=strongly agree	3/32 <b>9.4%</b>	10/32 <b>31.2%</b>	4/32 <b>12.5%</b>	3/32 <b>9.4%</b>	
<b>Q19</b> School Counselors should advocate for students.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	
	2=disagree	0	0	0	0	
	3=agree	2/31 <b>6.5%</b>	2/31 <b>6.5%</b>	3/31 <b>9.7%</b>	1/31 <b>3.2%</b>	
	4=strongly agree	5/31 <b>16.1%</b>	10/31 <b>31.3%</b>	4/31 <b>12.9%</b>	4/31 <b>12.9%</b>	
<b>Q20</b> School Counselors should provide career education to students.	1=strongly disagree	0	0	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	0	
	2=disagree	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	0	0	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	
	3=agree	2/30 <b>6.7%</b>	6/30 <b>20.0%</b>	4/30 <b>13.3%</b>	3/30 <b>10.0%</b>	
	4=strongly agree	4/30 <b>13.3%</b>	6/30 <b>20.0%</b>	2/30 <b>6.7%</b>	1/30 <b>3.3%</b>	

The final question on the survey asked participants to rank 7 counseling services; Group Counseling, Individual Counseling, Classroom Guidance, Teacher Consultation, Parent Contact, Instructional Support Team/Committee on Special Education/IEP/504 and Professional Consultation, in order of importance. The researcher predicted that most participants would say that Individual Counseling and Parent Contact were the two most important School Counselor role responsibilities. The researcher predicted that classroom guidance and teacher consultation were the least important School Counselor role responsibilities. The results show that 88% of participant's value individual counseling the most of School Counselor role responsibilities and 40% of participants valued classroom guidance the least. The research prediction was supported with individual counseling being the most important School Counselor role responsibility. The

prediction that the least important School Counselor role responsibility would be classroom guidance or teacher consultation was also supported by the results.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

According to the results yielded from the anonymous survey, teachers and staff were aware of the roles School Counselor's are responsible for. All participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with eight out of twenty (40%) questions regarding cooperatively working with teachers, support from administration, student's emotional and social development, group guidance activities, orientation for transition periods, being an integral part of a student's educational experience, believing every student can succeed and last but not least, advocating for each and every student. There was only one (3%) participant who *disagreed* with School Counselor's having to participate in professional development to improve their effectiveness, supporting parent needs, as well as, the School Counselor's role being clearly defined and the goals of the program being clearly defined. There were only two (6%) participants who *disagreed* with School Counselor's having to provide career education to students and working as a liaison between all parties involved in a students' education. Educators' in schools are realizing that when social and emotional skills are tended to, student academic achievement increases (Clark & Ametea, 2004).

Three (9%) participants *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with School Counselors helping with the overall academic success of students. Six (18%) participants *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed* with the statement about School Counselors working together with teachers to provide classroom guidance and School Counselor's helping others to understand their role. Eight (24%) participants *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with School Counselors spending a significant amount of time managing crisis situations. Seven (21%) participants *disagreed* or *strongly*

*disagreed* with School Counselors being available at all times for students. According to the reviewed studies on stakeholders' perceptions of the school counselor's role, respondents were generally satisfied with the role of the school counselor (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002). Another common finding was that teachers felt strongly that school counselors were not responsible for administrative duties, and when they have to carry out certain tasks, such as conducting psychological examinations, it took counselors away from their professional role (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002).

In a previous study where teachers were asked to rate specific areas of service provided by their school counselor and the strongest domain was classroom guidance, followed by individual/group counseling, consultation and coordination of special education services (Beesley, 2004). This research supported the finding that individual counseling was the most valued role a School Counselor provides. It does not support classroom guidance being a top value by teachers. Overall, teachers were satisfied with the services school counselors provide but still believed that there were areas of improvement (Beesley, 2004). Although the research study did not measure satisfaction, most participants were aware of the roles School Counselor's carry out on a daily basis and think that a school counselor's role is to support academic, career and personal/social development, facilitate learning opportunities and help build skills to maximize student success (Stone & Dahir, 2006).

In spite of some knowledge, it is apparent that teachers and staff who had been in the field for longer periods of time do not value certain role responsibilities, therefore thinking School Counselor's should not be carrying out these important roles. On the whole, every participant in the study indicated knowledge about the important role responsibilities a School Counselor carries out. Unfortunately, teachers and staff lacked some awareness with regards to

important role responsibilities. Teachers who had been in the profession for a longer period of time did not value the importance of classroom guidance and teacher consultation. They could be unaware of the importance or they might just not want to give up their classroom time.

One particular piece that is important is the fact that all participants *agreed* or *strongly* agreed with the statement that School Counselors should work cooperatively with teachers. A successful school counseling program requires teacher involvement and support (Reiner, Colbert & Perusse, 2009). The current study sought to determine what roles were valued or not valued by teachers and staff because the literature suggested that teacher support is often the result of teachers understanding and valuing the role of the school counselor. Corey (1986) stated that a counselor's role does not have a specific definition, therefore sometimes causing conflict of how others view their role, thus, stakeholders such as teachers, may have unmet expectations of school counselors. This research study shows that professionals are confused and do not value important School Counselor roles.

## **Discussion**

### **Overview**

The current study intended to investigate teachers and faculty perceptions of the School Counselor's role responsibilities, which roles they valued the most and which responsibilities were most important. It was hypothesized that teachers and staff who had been in the field for a longer period of time were less aware of the beneficial role responsibilities School Counselors carried out on a daily basis. It was also predicted that teachers and staff who had less contact with the School Counselor were less aware of the role responsibilities.

### **Limitations**

Although this study had a 59% return rate, it would have been beneficial to have more surveys to analyze. Because most staff members had been working as teachers for 11-20+ years, it is difficult to ascertain if the data gathered is an accurate representation of all faculty perceptions of the valued School Counselor roles. For those that have been teaching for 20+ years, their knowledge might be more guidance based. If this study were to be repeated, the researcher should distribute surveys to multiple school districts to get a wide variety of experienced and inexperienced teachers.

As 88% of the participants indicated that they thought individual counseling was the most important role a School Counselor carries out, it would have been beneficial to break down this category even further. Constructing a survey question directly asking about individual counseling, group counseling, parent/teacher contact, IEP/special education, professional development or perceptions of individual counseling, group counseling, and parent/teacher contact, IEP/special education and professional development would have been helpful in clarifying exactly what the staff valued about these roles. Furthermore, it would have been beneficial to hand out an additional survey before the collection date to give participants another chance to fill it out.

### **Implications for School Counselors**

The findings of this study can provide information that is invaluable to School Counselors to help them determine what next steps to take in the field. Most importantly, School Counselors need to advocate for their profession. What can be taken away from this study is that there are significant gaps in older generation teacher perceptions pertaining to the different knowledge about School Counselors role responsibilities versus a guidance counselor in the past. Some gaps identified by this study include teacher and School Counselor collaboration

in order to conduct classroom management lessons, as well as, parent support and constant counselor availability. School Counselors need to make aware what they are capable of and also how their role responsibilities differ from thoughts of those who have been in the education field for 21+ years. ASCA stated that School Counselors are just as responsible for the overall success of their students as are teachers. Both Counselor and teacher should have a better understanding of the capabilities of their counterparts. School Counselors should consult with teachers and administration to help disseminate this information. Conducting a needs assessment from the students could be one way to target specific focus areas that need attention for the specific institution.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

With this study's completion, it has been determined certain School Counselor roles are more valued than others. A study to survey what classroom teachers' want School Counselor's to focus on in particular from the specific institution would only serve to complement this information. In this way, School Counselors can be more proactive to make sure they are meeting the needs of their students and colleagues, as well. Furthermore, informing all district faculty about the importance of the ASCA model would open their eyes to new ways School Counseling professionals work in the present.

### **Conclusion**

School Counselors wear many hats on a day to day basis. All of the role responsibilities they have are important in their own way. Faculty and staff who work with School Counselors value each of the different role responsibilities differently depending on their own opinions and the amount of time they have been in the field. The American School Counseling Association's

comprehensive model will assist School Counselors in showing what they do, resulting in higher awareness from teachers and staff about the role School Counselor's play.

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