

A Self-Assessment Regarding ASCA's School Counselor Competencies

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As a third-generation teacher and after years in the education field, you could say that educating is in my blood (though perhaps humbleness and humility are not, but I can point out that those are not on the ASCA list). At this point, many of the competencies that ASCA lists are ones that I feel I exhibit strongly. With decent scores coming from my annual administrator evaluations, I also have the data to back up my thoughts. There is room to grow, but I am already off to a decent start.

The *ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies* (2019) lists seven different mindsets in which school counselors are to believe. I believe in all of them and feel like I have a good grasp on them besides for M.5, "Effective school counseling is a collaborative process involving school counselors, students, families, teachers, administrators, other school staff and education stakeholders." I have no problem supporting this idea, but my worry-seeking mind is already putting up some red flags on how this can always be implemented. Oftentimes the parents, families, and other stakeholders are ready and eager to be involved with the child's full education experience, but let's face it: those are not always the students who need extra support. So often it is the child whose parent's listed phone number has been disconnected, whose mail home gets returned to the school, and who has no email listed that is needing the full support of all the stakeholders involved. This is a huge issue in my community and school, and will most likely be the community I am serving once completing my program of study.

While I will not use the struggles that come up with this barrier as an excuse to give up, I am open to admitting that this will get in the way of meeting a student's needs as much as possible at times. There can also be issues with having administration see eye to eye with issues that they may not deem as important as school counselors, which can also cause issues. Despite all of this, it is not a reason to stop and ignore a child, simply because it's extra work than it may be for others.

Within the lengthier Behaviors section of this writing, B-SS 6 has very similar wording to M.5. I see that being my biggest concern from the list, but I will not address it again. Beyond that

one, I see two others that I am already stewing over: B-PF 6 and B-PF 9. While I love the idea that I could “Create systemic change through the implementation of a school counseling program” (B-PF 9), I feel myself being a doubting Thomas and wondering if that is too lengthy of a goal. At the same time, I catch myself believing in it already as a teacher- that what I do does make a positive change in the bigger picture- so perhaps it’s more of a wording issue than anything. School counselors are there to help students prepare for their futures and to reach their full potentials, which I am excited to do, so perhaps I am okay with this competency, but am simply worried about being personally up to the challenge.

After over a decade teaching on reservations and schools where native Alaskans were the majority population, I feel that I do a decent job “Demonstrat[ing] understanding of the impact of cultural, social, and environmental influences on student success and opportunities” (B-PF 6), but I know I have so much more growth available in this area. I have seen firsthand how poverty can influence a child in school, and I have also seen how different cultural backgrounds can both help and hinder a child. As the parent of two adopted sons, both coming from different cultures than my own, my eyes have been even more opened to the fact that I need to learn more in this area. I am always eager to learn more about different lives, cultures, and values, and I have taken an active position in Oregon’s new Tribal Inclusion law that begins this fall in 10th grade courses, but the more I learn only shows me how little I know. Growing up in the stereotypical American household with two white parents, two kids, and a dog, I have to often remind myself that this isn’t the reality for many of my students. Losing sight of this could be detrimental to many students.

This list of competencies opens my eyes and feels a bit overwhelming at first glance. At the same time, after taking a breath and rereading, I feel that I am already off to a good start. Many of the competencies expected of school counselors are also expected of teachers. I have a decently solid background in them and, while I still have much to learn, the foundation is already there.

References

American School Counselor Association (2019). *ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies*. Alexandria, VA: Author.