MINNESOTA’S SCHOOL COUNSELING CRUNCH

HOW KIDS ARE CAUGHT BETWEEN SHRINKING INVESTMENT & INCREASING DEMAND ON THEIR COUNSELORS

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Executive Summary

Minnesota school children’s mental health and academic counseling needs have dramatically increased in the last two years; however, funding and hiring of school counselors has not kept up with this growing demand. Compounding the problem for children is that Minnesota has traditionally lagged behind the rest of the nation in student-to-counselor ratios, ranking 49th out of 50 since the beginning of this decade. As a result, student’s academic, social and mental health problems are going unaddressed.

Consider this:

- Minnesota lawmakers have cut state aid to schools by an inflation-adjusted 13 percent since 2003, cutting the number of teachers, administrators, aides and paraprofessionals whose duties now fall to school counselors;

- With all of these cuts, plus layoffs among school social workers and nurses, counselors are often the school official of last resort helping students deal with problems at home and in school that might lead to dropouts;

- Counselors are also responsible for a bigger chunk of administering standardized tests, forcing them to divert their attention from traditional counseling tasks for about 10 school days in metro areas and up to 30 days in rural districts.

One counselor put it this way:

“The number of students in my school has doubled to tripled with the same number of counselors. I am now doing more recordkeeping and lunchtime supervision. I was able to meet the needs of students in the building ten years ago. Now there are more students with significant needs and less time to meet those needs.”

A survey by Minnesota 2020 and the Minnesota School Counselors Association sought to explore these issues and their consequences. The study found that student mental health care needs have increased in the past 24 months, including interpersonal and family problems, depression, aggressive or disruptive behavior, anxiety and ADHD. About half of counselors say they spend less than 10 percent of their time with students on mental health issues or helping with career guidance. Increased testing and administrative workloads are cutting into counselors’ time with students most at risk of dropping out, and while Minnesota’s dropout rank is among the middle of the states, it is well below Iowa and Wisconsin.

Morale is also low among counselors, with almost 75 percent saying they did not feel completely supported by their school board.

If school counselors are doing the best with the numbers they have, one has to ask: How many dropouts could be prevented if counselors could spend more time helping students with career and educational decisions? How many students would have mental health problems spotted at a younger age and receive the counseling to work through these issues in appropriate ways? How many students would attend college if they were aware of financial opportunities? How many would advance to their full potential if they had a career plan?

“I asked a group of sixth-graders how many were planning to go to college. One student answered ‘I didn’t know I could go to college!’ It’s never even an option for so many students until they hear from an adult
The 21st century workforce requires more students to attain degrees from higher education institutions. School counselors are a linchpin in the process of getting students through high school to college. If Minnesota’s leaders are serious about making the state viable for the 21st century, why are the most critical agents of advice and counsel being restricted from students and their families?

Key Findings

• **Among the nation’s worst**
  Minnesota’s student-to-counselor ratio is among the nation’s worst, and has been for years. Since the 2000-01 school year, it has been second to last among all states.

• **Mental health care needs are exploding**
  The need for mental health care is expanding. More than 90 percent of Minnesota counselors say they have helped students deal with interpersonal and family problems, depression, aggressive or disruptive behavior, anxiety and ADHD in the last 12 months. More than 76 percent say student mental health care needs have increased in the past 24 months.

• **Testing demands skyrocket**
  The dramatic increase in administering standardized tests has fallen almost completely to school counselors. Nearly 50 percent of counselors say they spend at least 10 days each year directly involved with federal- and state-mandated testing, and more than 10 percent say they spend at least 30 days or more each year administering tests.

• **Budget cutbacks, staff cuts reduce time spent with students**
  The state has cut aid to schools an inflation adjusted 13 percent since 2003. This has caused schools to drastically reduce staff, which in turn has moved many duties previously performed by teachers, paraprofessionals and secretaries onto school counselors. Instead of helping students get into college or helping them with personal problems, counselors are performing minor duties such as hall monitoring and parking lot supervision.

• **Less help for students with mental health problems, career guidance**
  Because of inadequate staffing and an increase in duties, about half the counselors say they spend less than 10 percent of their time with students on mental health issues. More than half of counselors say they spend less than 10 percent of their time helping students with career guidance.

• **More dropouts**
  Minnesota’s dropout rank is among the middle of the states and well below neighbors Wisconsin and Iowa. The lack of counselors results in a greater risk of students dropping out, engaging in dangerous behaviors, receiving less knowledge about how to handle common problems at different developmental levels, and less knowledge about higher education and financial aid.

• **Lack of state funding**
  When asked what factors affect the current state of school counseling, 92 percent point the finger at lack of funding from the state. About 60 percent said they don’t get enough support from the Department of Education and 70 percent said there is a lack of support from state elected leaders.
Introduction

Counselors are an essential thread in the fabric of Minnesota’s education system. These professionals, all of whom have at least a master’s degree and are licensed by the state, are charged with providing academic guidance, career exploration and personal and social guidance to students.

Yet their jobs are devolving. With budget cuts system-wide and increased demands from students for mental health care and from the state for test administration, counselors have less time to work with students on career planning, guidance issues or dropout prevention. Some counselors say they devote more than 30 school days to managing standardized tests.

Minnesota’s student-to-counselor ratio has long been among the worst in the nation. Since 2000-01, it has been second to last among all the states, behind only California, according to the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the current U.S. average student-to-counselor ratio is 476:1. The American Counseling Association recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of 250:1. In 2006-07, Minnesota’s ratio was nearly 800:1.

The problem is not new: The number of school counselors in Minnesota has remained steady since the early 1990s at about 1,000, with about half employed in the seven-county metro area. This would seem to indicate an underrepresentation of school counselors in the metro area since about 65 percent of students attend
schools in the metro area. State counseling experts suggest this discrepancy may be due to state and federally mandated tests – bigger districts in the metro area can shuffle testing responsibilities among counselors while counselors in rural districts who might otherwise be laid off are retained simply to handle tests. This assumption is partially corroborated by one survey finding: The number of counselors who say they spend 30 days or more each year administering mandated tests doubles when looking at rural responses only.

Counselors provide services that are not only essential to student well-being, but in their role as career and college counselors they are the bridge between students who might end their education after high school and those who go on to post-secondary education – an important role if we are to produce a workforce that can compete in a technology-driven 21st-century workplace.
What School Counselors Do

The role played by school counselors is often misunderstood. Many parents, as well as voters who don’t have children in the school system, have only a vague idea of their job duties.

School counselors, also called guidance counselors, help students develop competencies in academic achievement, personal and social development and career planning. They follow a comprehensive guidance curriculum to work with students in individual, small group and classroom settings.

Counselors don’t focus only on those students in need: They help every student improve academic achievement, career planning and personal and social development by collaborating with students, parents, school staff and the community.

They help students create an academic plan to prepare for successful careers after high school as well as help them develop the skills they will need to succeed, such as organizational, time management, and study skills.

Dropout prevention is one of a school counselor’s primary duties. One counselor addressed the issue of counselors and their work with dropouts:

“I feel that if I had more time to spend working directly with students, I would have been able to prevent some of my students from dropping out of school. Students who drop out of school typically do not have family support at home for staying in school, and so those students need all the support possible from the high school to continue on to graduation.”

Counselors also help students respond to issues such as divorce or death, as well as childhood and adolescent developmental issues.

They work with students with learning disabilities and mental illness as well as disruptive students, bullies and underachieving students. The National Institute of Mental Health and the U.S. Surgeon General report that while one in 10 children and adolescents suffer from mental illness severe enough to result in significant functional impairment, only 5 percent to 7 percent are identified and receive treatment. These children are at much greater risk for dropping out of school. Also, NIMH reports that 5 percent of the school-aged population suffers from specific learning disabilities, which put them at risk academically and creates a disruptive, negative classroom environment.¹

To perform these tasks, counselors must have at least a master’s degree, a state counselor’s license and undergo intensive training in areas such as human growth and development, individual and group counseling, testing and assessment, research and program evaluation, professional orientation and career development. (See Appendix).

A Record of Success

The positive impact school counselors have on students is overwhelming.

A study of Florida students in 5th through 9th grades found that students in schools with a comprehensive small-group and classroom-based guidance program scored significantly better on standardized test for reading and math. The study used counseling methods that can easily be used in a variety of settings.2

Researchers say school counselors are in a key position to assist schools to reduce the achievement gap among low income and minority children. They can build “partnerships among the school, home, and community to increase students’ chances of success by removing some of the barriers to academic and personal success,” the authors noted.3

A 2004 study of at-risk middle school students in Baltimore County, Md., showed that school counselors help increase academic achievement, raise career awareness, and improve overall student self-efficacy. The researchers made this important link: “As students begin to connect their academic accomplishments with the expectations of the world of work, they are more likely to understand the significance of remaining in school and may make more prudent decisions concerning their short- and long-term futures. It is important, especially at the middle school level that educators and counselors continue to provide the resources necessary to bolster at-risk students’ academic and career skills, thereby enabling them to believe that some of their future dreams can come true.4

A 2006 study showed that lower student-to-counselor ratios decreased both the recurrence of student disciplinary problems and the number of students involved in a disciplinary incident. These effects were greater for minority and low-income students.5

Several studies found that elementary guidance activities have a positive influence on elementary students’ academic achievement. One study of 150 elementary students in Washington state found that early elementary-age students enrolled in well-established comprehensive school counseling programs produce higher achievement test scores over those children without such programs.6

School counseling interventions can reduce test anxiety. Elementary school teachers have reported that state and federally mandated tests have induced signs of anxiety among students such as avoidance, crying, illness, and outbursts of anger. In a recent study, researchers identified 16 K-5 students who had not met the passing

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rate in a standardized test or who had reported feelings of anxiety and stress. Fifty percent of these students had failed the reading portion of the test while 67 percent of failed the math section. Also, when interviewed by the school counselor, all 16 reported feeling frustration and anxiety about the test, even to the point of physical illness and vomiting. The students were taught the “Stop, Drop, and Roll” relaxation technique. Specifically, the students were instructed that when they physically felt the “fire” of anxiety and stress, they should “stop” (put down their pencils and place their hands on the table while concentrating on the coolness of the surface). Then they were to “drop” their heads forward, and “roll” them around gently while taking three deep breaths. Following the administration of the statewide test, the 16 students reported they were more relaxed during the test. Ultimately, 75 percent of the students passed the reading portion of the test and 94 percent passed the math portion. Additionally, all 16 reported less stress and worry about future testing situations.7

Students drop out of school for a variety of reasons, including academic and social reasons. School counselors can implement changes in schools and communities to prevent students from dropping out. Research has shown that 56 percent of high school dropouts were unemployed or were not enrolled in college as opposed to 16 percent of high school graduates. Over their lifetime, dropouts earn considerably less money, achieve lower levels of academic achievement and experience poorer mental and physical health than do high school graduates. Dropouts nationwide constitute 52 percent of welfare recipients, 82 percent of the prison population and 85 percent of juvenile justice cases, and drug use among 17- to 22-year-olds is highest among high school dropouts.8

Studies on high school attrition indicate that preventive counseling, occurring before students are in crisis, reduces the risk of these students dropping out later. This 2002 study found that students are most at risk of dropping out at several points in their education career. Students who transfer or withdraw from school are almost certain not to graduate on time with their cohort despite the prevailing logic that a troubled student might be more successful at another school. Instead of sending the problem elsewhere, interventions to target the root causes that prompted the transfer request can help both the student and school better deal with the problems.9

Health and mental health care services can play an important role in violence prevention, including preventing problem behaviors from developing; identifying and serving specific, at-risk populations; and reducing the deleterious effects of violence on victims and witnesses.10

“I currently have approximately 700 students on my caseload. It is extremely discouraging because I am forced to work only on immediate concerns, not reaching the majority of my students. A lot of student needs go unmet in our school district. The power of individual contact is lost; students are becoming numbers instead of individuals. It is really sad.”


Survey Results

This survey is the result of a collaboration between the Minnesota School Counselors Association and Minnesota 2020. An unscientific, anonymous on-line survey was made available to 703 members subscribed to the MSCA listserv on June 16, 2009 and was closed July 17, 2009 with 312 responses, for a 45 percent response rate.

The survey asked respondents for only minimal demographic information. Fifty six percent described themselves being from the seven-county metropolitan area while 44 percent are from outstate Minnesota. Nearly half say they work in a high school, 21 percent at a middle/junior high/intermediate school, 12 percent at an elementary school, 8 percent at several schools, 6 percent work district-wide and 4.5 percent work at “other.” Nearly 33 percent say they have five years or less experience as a school counselor, 23.8 percent between five and ten years experience, 16.3 percent between 10 and 15 years experience, 16.6 percent between 15 and 20 years, 6.5 between 20 and 25 years, 0.7 percent between 25 and 30 years, and 2.6 percent have 30 or more years experience.

Respondents had the opportunity to provide comments anonymously. We have added some of those comments in italic type in this report.

One of the main responsibilities of school counselors is to help students deal with issues that get in the way of a quality education. When asked about which of their duties suffers under insufficient staffing, most counselors say student mental health issues are left unaddressed. It is important to remember that school counselors are often the primary referral agents and first point of contacts for parents whose children are in need of further assistance with early-onset mental health issues.

What mental health issues have you seen in the last year?
“Of all these areas, the need for mental health has increased the most. I am an elementary counselor. The number of seriously mentally ill students has increased dramatically in the last 10 years. However, due to large case load sizes I am unable to individually serve clients for mental health issues.”

More than 76 percent of counselors say mental health issues have increased in the past 24 months. Yet counselors say that, along with career planning, they can only spend about 10 percent to 20 percent of their time on mental health demands.

**How are students affected without a counseling program?**

“Barriers to direct service provision” are those duties or responsibilities imposed upon school counselors which prevent them from providing direct services to students. Examples might include computer data entry of student schedules, serving as an attendance monitor, distributing/sorting/collating/boxing tests, enforcing discipline, or serving as a dean of students with administrative responsibilities. Counselors were asked how much of their time they are unable to provide direct services to students due to such barriers.

Counselors agree this misdirection of their skills is harmful to students. More than 31 percent said students have less knowledge of how to handle common problems at different developmental levels, such as anger management, transitioning to a new school, bullying, etc. Nearly 26 percent said students are at greater risk of engaging in behaviors with negative impacts, such as fighting and chemical use. More than 20 percent said students don’t get proper information about post-secondary education and financial opportunities.
“I am very saddened by the direction school districts are taking regarding school counseling. In my school district we used to have a very strong elementary counseling program. I believe that the program will be completely eliminated within the next five years.”

Counselors were nearly unanimous in citing the ways students are affected when they lack appropriate student counseling. They say students are often put at greater risk for engaging in negative behaviors such as fighting, bullying, and chemical use; the chances are much more likely that mental health issues will not be discovered or intervened early in a child’s school career; they have less knowledge about how to handle common problems such as anger management, problem solving, bullying or transitioning to new school; students are at greater risk of dropping out; fewer students enroll in post-secondary institutions and they have less knowledge about post-secondary institutions and financial aid; and fewer students create a career path.

One of the barriers to direct service provision is the increasing number of state and federally mandated tests that counselors are required to supervise. There are many tests, but the most onerous is the MCA II, which is Minnesota's answer to the federal No Child Left Behind law requirement that demands every student to be tested every year; if they are not, the school will not be designated as making Annual Yearly Progress and will face governmental punishment. About half of the counselors say they spend at least 10 days each school year doing nothing but getting students to tests and administering those tests. The difference is even more profound for outstate counselors: More than 14 percent say they spend at least 30 school days administering tests.

School counselors feel supported by students, parents, teachers and administrators; however, nearly 31 percent say they don’t feel supported by their school board and 45 percent who say they feel only somewhat supported by their school board.
Methodology
This survey is an unscientific, anonymous on-line survey. It was created in May and June, 2009, as a collaboration between the Minnesota School Counselors Association, which represents more than 700 school counselors in Minnesota, and Minnesota 2020, a non-profit, non-partisan think tank. The survey was distributed to MSCA members via the organization’s listserv and via email message sent directly to members.

The survey was opened June 16, 2009 and was closed July 17, 2009 with 312 responses, for a 45 percent response rate. We believe the reduced response rate is because the survey was conducted immediately after the close of the 2008-2009 school year. However, for the purposes of this study, we find a 45 percent response rate to be sufficient.

We found the demographics to be slightly unusual in several areas. The seven-county metro area has about 65 percent of the state’s students, yet licensing data from the Minnesota Department of Education corroborates what this survey shows: About 55 percent of counselors work in the metro area and 45 percent in outstate Minnesota. This would seem to indicate that counselors are underrepresented in the metro area or overrepresented in outstate Minnesota. Given that Minnesota has an abysmal student-to-counselor ratio, we assume it is the former.

The survey respondents tended to be younger, with about 57 percent of respondents recording 10 years of experience or less as a counselor. This is reflective of the demographic transition within the school counseling profession. Veteran school counselors, many nearing the end of their educational careers, are being replaced with younger graduates from the fields of K-12 education and the social sciences. These new replacements are transforming the profession by melding the traditional role and contemporary training with counselor education programs that place a higher emphasis on mental health.
Conclusion

This situation is intolerable. School counselors are an integral part of our school system, yet Minnesota has the distinction of ranking 49th among 50 states in student-to-counselor ratio – a rank it has held since the beginning of this decade.

To make matters worse, while the ratio of counselors to students in Minnesota has been abysmal for years, counselors have continued to absorb greater duties as the state has required new tests without increasing funding for the personnel to conduct the tests. This has put a strain on the traditional duties required of counselors:

- Student mental health care needs have increased in the past 24 months and more than 90 percent of counselors say they have helped students deal with interpersonal and family problems, depression, aggressive or disruptive behavior, anxiety and ADHD in the last 12 months.
- Because of the increase in duties, counselors say they spend less than 10 percent of their time with students on mental health issues or helping with career guidance.
- Counselors work with students at the greatest risk of dropping out. While Minnesota’s dropout rank is among the middle of the states, it is well below neighbors Wisconsin and Iowa, which have vastly higher student-to-counselor ratios.
- Counselors say they don’t get enough support from the Department of Education or state elected leaders.

This information is startling. School counselors are a key component to a fully functioning school system, yet their numbers are few while their duties are growing away from their core responsibilities.

The need for quality test data requires qualified test administrators. With a master’s degree, school counselors are some of the most highly qualified personnel to assist the school district in the planning for administration and interpreting of test results. It is an ineffective use of school counselors’ education and skills to require them to do such things as pack and unpack test containers or be responsible for all the administrative paperwork associated with such mandated federal and state tests. Training of other employees to handle such perfunctory duties is not an insurmountable problem.

Counselors need to be allowed to do their jobs. By working with students at risk of dropping out, they can decrease the drop-out rate, which decreases the number of people likely to use welfare and the prison system and increases the number of tax-paying citizens in the state. They can work with disruptive students to ease their problems in class and ease the problems other students have with these students in class. They can work with students to ameliorate test anxiety. They can provide financial information for students looking to attend higher education institutions. And perhaps most importantly, they can work with students to help plan a career or a path to higher education, which will allow Minnesota to maintain its status as an educational leader in the United States.

It all starts with two simple decisions: First, we must increase the number of licensed K-12 school counselors to increase student access to academic, career, personal, and mental health resources. The second decision is more immediately achievable: Where school counselors are now employed, they should be allowed to implement the full measure of their education and skills through full access and direct service provision to students. Noncounseling-related duties which interfere with the daily functions of the school counselor must be eliminated in order to ensure increased interaction with students and their parents.
Requirements for Professional School Counselor License

According to Minnesota Rue 8710.6400 a candidate for school counselor licensure shall:

Subp. 2.

A. Hold a master’s degree or the equivalent from a college or university that is regionally accredited by the association for the accreditation of colleges and secondary schools; and

B. Show verification of completing a Board of Teaching preparation program approved under part 8700.7600 leading to the licensure of school counselors in subpart 3 or provide evidence of having completed a preparation program in school counseling accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Services.

Subp. 3.

Subject matter standard.

A candidate for licensure as a school counselor must complete a preparation program under subpart 2, item B, that must include the candidate’s demonstration of the knowledge and skills in items A to K.

A. A school counselor understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of professional school counseling and creates learning experiences that make education meaningful for students. The school counselor must understand:

   (1) The major theories, assumptions, professional challenges and ethics, individual and group counseling methods, skills, and techniques that are central to professional school counseling;

   (2) Basic diagnostic classifications and referral mechanisms of the helping professions;

   (3) Comprehensive professional school counseling and guidance program development, implementation, management, and evaluation;

   (4) The role and function in the total organizational, curricular, and academic structure of the school;

   (5) The organizational structure and changing needs of the school;

   (6) Human growth and development;

   (7) Individual and group appraisal techniques;

   (8) The need for and ability to demonstrate effective communication and human relations skills;

   (9) Social and cultural pluralism and diversity;

   (10) Consultation techniques;
(11) Career theories, stages of career development, the changing world of work, school-to-work transitions, and lifestyle development;

(12) Educational, career, and vocational interest assessment techniques and demonstrate the ability to provide accurate interpretations in this regard;

(13) Academic curricular requirements of students in their respective school settings;

(14) Career and academic postsecondary requirements and expectations;

(15) The special learning challenges facing students including collaboration with special education teams;

(16) The need for student advocacy, including crisis intervention, suicide prevention and intervention, violence prevention, conflict and disciplinary resolution and mediation, and how to mediate conflict and intervene effectively in conflict management and disciplinary prevention and intervention situations; and

(17) The integration of services model and coordination with related human services and how to effectively collaborate with human service networks.

B. A school counselor understands how children, youth, and adults learn and develop and provides learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development. The school counselor must understand:

(1) Human growth and development as it relates to the selection of appropriate counseling skills and techniques;

(2) Human growth and development as they relate to career and academic development; and

(3) Developmental, cognitive, and affective influences on learning and diverse learning styles as these influences relate to the comprehensive school counseling and guidance program.

C. A school counselor understands how students differ in their approaches to counseling and guidance and creates instructional and counseling opportunities that are adapted to students from diverse cultural backgrounds and with exceptionalities. The school counselor must understand the basis underlying:

(1) The application of multicultural counseling techniques;

(2) Counseling approaches to students with special learning needs and areas of exceptionality; and

(3) Counseling approaches related to gender.

D. A school counselor understands and uses a variety of instructional and counseling strategies to encourage student development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills. The school counselor must understand:

(1) The implementation of learning strategies underlying classroom guidance instruction;

(2) The implementation of learning strategies underlying the provision of mental health curriculum;
(3) The associative links between instruction, behavior, and learning;

(4) The associative links between counseling, classroom guidance, and learning;

(5) The transfer of effective decision-making skills to lifelong learning, academic, and career choices; and

(6) Contemporary guidance and counseling and mental health curricula, programs, and instructional materials.

E. A school counselor applies the understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a counseling and learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation. The school counselor must understand:

(1) Interpersonal dynamics in individual and group counseling settings;

(2) Classroom guidance dynamics;

(3) Motivational and learning characteristics, classroom guidance, and mental health curricula; and

(4) The application of counseling, human development, and career theories to classroom settings.

F. A school counselor uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom. The school counselor must understand:

(1) Theoretical approaches and applications of appropriate counseling communication skills in the individual, group, and classroom settings; and

(2) Diverse counseling communication styles related to culture and gender.

G. A school counselor plans and manages counseling and guidance instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and guidance curriculum goals. The school counselor must understand:

(1) Curricular components of the comprehensive counseling and guidance program in the school setting;

(2) The link between school-to-community educational opportunities;

(3) The link between academic, career, and postsecondary planning and instruction; and

(4) How to integrate student emotion, behavior, cognition, and decision making in establishing guidance curriculum objectives.

H. A school counselor understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner. The school counselor must understand:

(1) The theoretical basis for educational, career, and other assessment techniques and interpretation for
which they are appropriately trained;

(2) The basis for making recommendations to administration regarding testing and assessment in the total school curriculum;

(3) The principles of using assessment data and interpreting information in academic instruction and the counseling process;

(4) The ethical, legal, and cultural implications in the use of assessment data in academic instruction and the counseling process; and

(5) The process and implementation of evaluation of the comprehensive guidance and counseling program as a tool to provide optimum guidance and counseling services to students, parents or guardians, families, staff, and the community.

I. A school counselor is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of choices and actions on others and who actively seeks opportunities to grow professionally. The school counselor must understand:

(1) The historical and philosophical foundations of professional school counseling;

(2) Contemporary and research influences on professional school counseling;

(3) The professional school counseling literature, research, organizations, and resources available to aid in the effective updating of the comprehensive guidance and counseling program; and

(4) The importance of self-care in the ability to provide counseling services.

J. A school counselor communicates and interacts with parents or guardians, families, school colleagues, and the community to support student learning and well-being. The school counselor must understand:

(1) The legal standards particular to professional school counseling;

(2) The ethical standards of relevant professional organizations; and

(3) Professional collaboration, integration of services, and networking processes within the helping professions.

K. The school counselor demonstrates through pre-practicum and practicum experiences the ability to provide educational counseling services to students. The practicum experiences must include a series of formal observations and directed instructional experiences with kindergarten or primary, intermediate, middle level, and senior high school students who are participating in a range of educational programming models.