

# ***Steps Toward Understanding: Teacher Perceptions of the School Counselor Role***

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## **Abstract**

Successful school counselors have many stakeholders supporting their comprehensive program. Classroom teachers are vital members of the counseling team, so it becomes essential to periodically review their perceptions of the school counseling program and the role of the professional school counselor (PSC). In recent years, school counselors have experienced much change within the field. Many of these changes are due to the implementation of the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) national model, the Transforming School Counseling Initiative, the No Child Left Behind Act, the College and Career Readiness Index (CCRPI), and other national and state programs. Additionally, ASCA (2004) redefined the role of the PSC. Examining teachers' perceptions of PSCs may be helpful for understanding teachers' support for the ASCA supported PSC role. This action research study was conducted as a review of one school counseling program by teachers and staff.

According to Gysbers & Henderson (2012), leading school counseling theorists, guidance and counseling in the schools continues to undergo reform, changing from a position-services model to a comprehensive program firmly grounded in principles of human growth and development. Therefore, it becomes beneficial for professional school counselors (PSCs) to regularly assess their programs for needed change and make improvements. Role ambiguity can occur when a PSC has no clear understanding of function, is considered quasi-administrative, or lacks support to adequately complete a task. Role conflict and confusion creates stress and conflict for both the PSC and the program stakeholders (Thompson, 2002), thus the importance of assessing for clear roles. Role mutations have seriously distorted the professional image of PSCs. Only when PSCs can collectively describe their role and function will they be able to respond to criticisms and develop comprehensive models of accountability. Moreover, what are frequently defined as school counseling functions often arise from these inaccurate views and do not require the minimum of a master's level degree and special skills training. Usually these tasks

can be handled by most of the paraprofessional or administrative staff currently utilized in the schools (Thompson, 2002).

While there are numerous studies on the relationship between PSCs and administrators, there is limited research in the area of teacher perception of the ASCA -defined PSC role (Reiner, Colbert, & Perusse, 2009). Because there is need for further related research, this action research study (ARS) reviews the school counseling program at one rural high school in Northwest Georgia by focusing on the perception of the PSCs role according to ASCA standards and as viewed by the classroom teachers. Through a review of recent literature, the foundation for this ARS was established. Six independent studies reviewing educators' perceptions of the PSCs role are presented below.

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Role Definition**

According to ASCA (2005), the role of a PSC includes implementing three pillars of the ASCA model. These consist of delivery, management, and accountability. The role of the PSC within the delivery system includes providing culturally competent school counseling services to students and parents within guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support. PSCs are also held accountable through data driven, standards based, and research proven programs; as well as the completion of periodical program evaluations which help manage and improve the comprehensive program. Stakeholders in school counseling programs include parents, students, teachers, administration, and community members and all perceptions need to be consistent. Aside from Gysbers & Henderson, many school counseling programs are based on the widely accepted theories of child development from Adler, Sigmund Freud's behaviorism, and Carl Rogers' Person Centered concept (2012). Their considerations for PSCs' roles are congruent with their respective theories.

### **Current Studies on Perception of School Counselor Roles**

There appears to be a gap in the current literature in teachers' perceptions of the PSCs' role. In searching the keywords "teacher perception" in ASCA's online version of their journal Professional School Counseling, 148 results were returned. Only one of these was a nationwide survey of this topic, which is reviewed below. The other 147 studies resulted in principal and/or administrators' views, or did not concern the PSC's role. Upon an advanced search in ERIC, using keywords "school counselor" and "teacher perception" only 22 results were obtained and nearly all were about the school psychologists' role or teachers' perceptions of another topic.

A qualitative study (Amatea & Clark, 2005) examined the perceptions of the roles of PSCs by 26 school administrators. The respondents included 11 elementary school administrators, 8 middle school administrators, and 7 high school administrators who were individually interviewed. While not classroom teachers, administrators are usually former teachers who bring with them prior knowledge and experiences

related to PSCs. They also work within the school and collaborate within the school counseling program. The purpose of the study was two-fold: to generate ideas for PSCs to improve their programs, and provide guidance for their development of professional goals. The study was based on a grounded theory of symbolic interactions which is designed to build deeper awareness between groups. An assumption of this theory is that "reality" is susceptible to different interpretations by both individuals and society. The data was analyzed based on similarities and differences and found role conceptions fell along three major dimensions: valued role activities (innovative school leader, collaborative care consultant, responsive direct service provider, and administrative team player), extent of role specialization, and style of role coordination (Amatea & Clark, 2005).

"Administrators reported that they expected their counselors to work directly with students experiencing difficulties, to offer classroom guidance, and to consult with teachers about students, the role this group appeared to value most highly was that of the counselor as an innovative leader" (Amatea & Clark, 2009, p. 22). In other words, these administrators insisted PSCs lend their unique qualifications not only to students, but to other stakeholders as well. PSCs were also found to be valuable for collaborative student case consultation because of their training and knowledge of social, psychological, and academic needs of students. They are presumed to function in this capacity at two levels: collaboratively and directly. Direct service to students through classroom guidance, within small groups, or individually was also found to be highly desired among school administrators. Limitations of this study include the small sample size and the emphasis on what job duties administrators preferred their PSCs to do (Amatea & Clark, 2005).

The implications of this study are important for collaboration between administrators and PSCs. It helps PSCs reexamine existing roles and define necessary changes to move forward (Amatea & Clark, 2005). Ultimately, PSCs are responsible for educating their administration and staff about their appropriate roles, services offered, and specialties and skills they might offer their schools and staff. Furthermore, Amatea and Clark's (2005) findings might have implications when designing counselor education programs with the needs of schools and the role of PSCs in mind.

A nationwide study of teacher perceptions of school counselors' responsibilities according to the ASCA model was conducted to investigate teachers' knowledge and expectations of the school counselor's role (Reiner, Colbert, & Perusse, 2009). The conclusions were believed to be helpful for PSCs in obtaining support from teachers. Participants were high school teachers from every state in the nation. High school teachers were the focus due to the lack of conformity in elementary school counseling positions. The sample sizes were proportional to the size of each state. The majority of participants was female, working in a suburban school, and had been teaching in their current school between 6-10 years. Most of the respondents had one to five or more PSCs working in their school (Reiner et al., 2009).

A 56-item Likert-type questionnaire adopted from the ASCA National Model was developed listing appropriate and inappropriate PSC activities for the purpose of illustrating the best use of time for a PSC. Limitations were noted because the participants were restricted to high school teachers only, and those employed only in public schools. The study revealed that for 13 of the 16 appropriate responsibilities, the mean participant response fell between agree and strongly agree that PSCs should engage in that duty (Reiner et al., 2009). A few of the responsibilities that teachers rated highest were as follows: assist students with academic planning, assist students with career planning, and assist students with personal/social development. For 5 out of 12 items of inappropriate PSC duties, teachers reported they agree or strongly agree that PSCs should be spending time on these activities. Most teachers agreed that PSCs should be registering and scheduling new students, administering tests, calculating GPAs, maintaining records on students, and working with one student at a time in a therapeutic, clinical mode. So again it appears there is a need for school staff to be educated on appropriate tasks for PSCs.

These findings propose that high school teachers agree that PSCs should engage in the tasks that ASCA states as appropriate responsibilities, but they also disagree with nearly half of the inappropriate activities (Reiner et al., 2009). The results indicate high school teachers would be supportive of PSCs who want to engage in tasks suggested by ASCA, particularly assisting students in academic, career, and personal/social development.

These results support the belief that PSCs are responsible for educating their colleagues about their role within the school. The study also suggests that teachers believe that counseling is an important role for school counselors, and it is important for PSCs to advocate for the time and resources to provide this service to students.

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This study promotes the idea that PSCs should conduct their own research, not only to further their data driven program, but to allow their stakeholders a chance to be heard.

A recent Canadian study (Joy, Harris, Hesson, & 2011) was conducted on 90 pre-service teachers before graduating from their educational programs to assess their knowledge of school counseling and what they perceive counselors' roles to be. Since teachers and students spend a great deal of time together, they become a critical referral source for PSCs. Therefore, pre-service teacher perceptions of the responsibilities and roles of PSCs influence the likelihood of them making referrals as they enter the profession. According to Joy et al. (2011), the formation of teachers' attitudes surrounding school counseling begins early in their education. The survey asked a few simple questions: what tasks the teacher considered to be important for school counselors, and what areas they feel school counselors need to be more involved in. The results were as follows: 72% of respondents felt they had moderate knowledge of school counseling, 19% reported very little knowledge, and 9% felt they had strong knowledge. Thirty seven percent of pre-service teachers had contact with a PSC for personal reasons, and 33% had contact for professional reasons. When asked to imagine working as a teacher, 99% said they would refer a student to a PSC, and 93% felt they would consult with a PSC. In reference to perceptions of PSC job duties, 61% felt that academic/career counseling is a typical job duty. Fifty six percent reported personal counseling to be a job

responsibility, 37% found administering student assessments was a task, 27% and 26% considered Individual Education Plan (IEP) collaboration and teacher collaboration respectively. Other responsibilities noted were consulting with parents (13%), organizing psychoeducational activities (13%), and making outside referrals (11%). Ultimately, pre-service teachers reported high respect for PSCs, citing their special skill set and expertise (Joy et al., 2011). While they had a favorable opinion of PSCs, more education is needed for pre-service teachers concerning the roles and responsibilities of PSCs as revealed by the reported data.

The results suggest it would help student teachers if educational preparation programs require student teachers to work with a PSC during internships, as well as offer a course in the area of school counseling. Limitations of this study include a relatively small sample size and the lack of attention about the teachers' perceptions of time allotments.

An action research study of a North Georgia elementary school counseling program determined the staff perceptions and utilized this information to make program improvements (Sherwood, 2010). This school has a diverse racial and socioeconomic population that makes for an interesting study. The researcher distributed 50 surveys, and 31 were completed and returned. The survey consisted of 10 items to be answered with a 4-point Likert scale, as well as 3-open ended sentence completion questions.

In addition, nine respondents were selected based on their willingness to volunteer for an interview with the

researcher. The researcher was careful to interview a representative sample of staff members to gain insight from various grade levels and content areas concerning the needs of students (Sherwood, 2010). These conversational interviews lasted approximately 15-30 minutes. Interviewees were asked to evaluate the overall school counseling program, noting areas of improvement as well as strengths.

The data indicated the PSC received mostly positive (strongly agree or agree) reviews in the areas of meaningful and regular classroom guidance lessons, timely and appropriate referral responses, meeting with parents when requested, and recommendation of services to students. The results of the 3 open-ended survey questions ranged from personal praise for the PSC to suggestions for time management. Some of the new program areas suggested by staff members included: more individual counseling for students with significant needs, parenting workshops, meeting with grade level teachers on a monthly basis, and conducting classroom guidance in individual classrooms. Results from individual interviews suggested several common themes for improving services, such as more classroom guidance, follow-up guidance lessons, and collaborating with teachers on the guidance topics to allow for reinforcement in the classroom. Two teachers expressed frustration for the PSC being used to handle discipline or administrative issues (Sherwood, 2010).

While helpful, this study was limited due to its inclusion of only one school, minimizing the generalizability of its results. The researcher recommends the use of a pilot survey before administration to the entire staff so as to dismiss items that were faulty. Furthermore, the measurement tools utilized in this study were not psychometrically tested. Finally, while Reiner, et al. (2009) note the need for PSCs to do research the interviews were conducted by the PSC in the role of researcher, which may have altered the responses of the participants. The results indicate that most teachers at this elementary school perceive the school counseling program to be operating successfully. The ARS also points to a need for future program evaluations to survey other stakeholders to determine their awareness and accessibility of the school counseling program (Sherwood, 2010).

A similar small ARS was conducted to collect data that would provide a better understanding of how parents view the school counselors at another suburban elementary Atlanta school. Surveys, interviews, and archived data were utilized to gain insight into parents' conceptions of the school counseling program. The data was analyzed according to frequency counts as well as common themes within interviews. Twenty-five percent of surveys were returned completed to the investigator. Fifty percent of parents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that elementary PSCs are valuable assets. The findings further indicated that while most parents are aware of the PSCs' role, there are also many who do not realize the scope of importance of the PSC within the school (Gillilan, 2006). During interviews, the publication of a brochure was suggested for parents to identify services offered and the main job responsibilities of PSCs. Many parents mentioned that their children have discussed classroom guidance lessons with them. In conclusion, while this study was small and limited to one school, the emphasis on communication

and role definition between parents and PSCs could be further reaching.

A study was conducted (Munro, 2007) to investigate teacher perceptions of career guidance programs at one high school because the researcher was concerned that some did not appreciate this value. A 14-item survey was created asking teachers to rate their opinion on the importance of each career development activity presented by PSCs. A 5-point Likert scale was used for data collection. Seventy percent of surveys were returned completed. Post-study interviews were conducted to assess teacher understanding of the results. Munro (2007) found teachers ranked parental/familial influences as most important to students when making career decisions, with the Georgia College 411 program being ranked second. Career fairs, GCIS (Georgia Career Information Systems), job shadowing, counselor-led groups, Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), teacher presentations, classroom discussion, and career films ranked 3-10, respectively. These results are interpreted as possibly due to the cultural influences from the large Hispanic population of the school. Overall, teachers at this school appear to understand and agree with the importance of each student's completion of a career plan as they work with the PSC.

Taking the findings from this study, PSCs can learn to better communicate to teachers the importance of career assessments, as well as more parental involvement. It is crucial that students understand the correlation between

education and career, while involving teachers and parents in the post-secondary career readiness process.



### **Summary and Conclusions**

While these studies varied in their methodology, participants and data analyses, the results were largely similar. Overall, while teachers, administrators, and parents are supportive of PSCs and school counseling programs, many of them would benefit from further education and clarification where school counseling roles are concerned. Action research focusing on teacher perceptions of school counseling programs at the school level would help PSCs to promote their programs more fully. Utilizing and understanding teacher perceptions will build bridges between the school counselors and one of the primary stakeholders of their operation.

Results of these studies are helpful, but more research is needed. According to ASCA (2005), successful implementation of the ASCA National Model requires the support of teachers. In order to accomplish this task, input from classroom teachers becomes paramount. Only by communicating and clarifying

their viewpoints can school counselors continue to grow their programs. The benefits of this particular action research study are twofold; first, the assessment of the school counseling program was expected to lead to its advancement. Secondly, research is truly a proactive professional activity which contributes to the accountability, advocacy, and advancement of the school counseling profession (Allen, 1992).

### **Method**

A mixed methods approach was conducted for this action research. AR allows PSC's to examine their programs to determine effectiveness and bring about change (Sherwood, 2010). According to Mills (2010) action research allows the investigator insight into a program from the data collected. Although AR studies may be limited in their generalizability to other programs, they are enormously helpful in demonstrating accountability for the program under evaluation. School counselors may be better able to justify and market their programs if they demonstrate that research has indicated their effectiveness (Mason & Uwah, 2007). Declarations of appropriate and inappropriate school counselor roles and responsibilities were utilized from the ASCA Executive Summary in the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005). The purpose of this ARS was to reveal (a) the teachers' perception of current PSCs' role, (b) understand how teachers perceive the ASCA approved appropriate counseling tasks, and (c) discover the perception of how PSCs time is spent. The hope was the findings would generate a greater teacher understanding of the school counseling program and provide clearer guidance in the design of program improvement.

### **Participants**

The study was conducted at a rural high school in Northwest Georgia comprised of 1050 students, 68 certified teachers, and 2 PSCs. Qualified participants consisted of certified classroom teachers who held an interest in expressing their perception of the PSCs' role within their school. All staff members were informed of the ARS and its purpose prior to distribution of questionnaires via flyers and email. Surveys were placed in each teachers' mailbox. Informed consent denoted participation was voluntary and with no pressure to participate. Inclusion criteria were a valid teaching certification and agreement to participate.

### **Instrumentation**

The survey was developed after reviewing the literature and information on how to develop Likert scale survey items (Boynton & Greenhalgh, 2004). No validity or reliability data was conducted on the survey assessment. A 4-point Likert scale rated 9 questions on the expectations of PSCs, followed by a 4 question local needs assessment, and finally teacher perceptions of PSC task importance. In addition to demographic data there was also an optional comments section. The comment section gave participants the opportunity to express additional feedback to the PI concerning the school counseling program. Participants were instructed to review

only the program and not the individual personalities of the school counselors or the counseling department staff. Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire honestly and return it to the PI's mailbox within one week. No names were included on the surveys.

### **Data Analysis**

For this ARS, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the PI developed survey, open comments section, and field notes from informal conversations with teachers by the PI. Descriptive statistics from teacher surveys were calculated to determine what teachers perceive the PSC role to be within the school. The first 4 survey questions asked teachers for demographic data such as their age, years of experience, highest degree achieved and subject area taught.

To organize quantitative results within the Expectations of School Counselor section each item was assigned a 4 point value: 4 = consistently, 3 = most of the time, 2 = rarely, 1 = never. Results were tallied on 3 different occasions, percentages and central tendencies were calculated for each question.

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Field notes were used to triangulate the data collection so as to cross check the data by informal discussions with teachers. Comparing a variety of data sources adds to the richness of action research (Mills, 2010).

### **Results of Data Collection**

Of the 68 surveys distributed, 28 were returned with a return rate of 41%. Results were entered into Excel and the percentage, mean and standard deviation (SD) determined for each question. The total responses from demographic data (items 1-4) were placed in rank order from lowest to highest. The majority of respondents (n = 12; 42%) reported between 6 and 15 years of teaching experience. Eleven teachers (39%) reported being between 41 and 50 years of age. Nine teachers each reported having a master's (32%) or a specialist degree (32%). Subject areas taught averaged 4 participants per area. Some teachers chose not to answer all the survey questions.

### **Expectations of School Counselor**

As shown in **Table 1**, the expectations that rated the highest in frequency were as follows: assisting students with academic planning (68%), collaborating with teachers to identify and solve student needs problems, and concerns (50%), assisting the principal with identifying and resolving student needs, issues and problems (42%), and assisting students with academic (68%), and personal/social development (39%).

**Table 1**

### *Expectations of School Counselor Results: Likert Scale Statements*

| Statement  | Consistently | Often | Rarely | Never | N/A |
|--|--------------|-------|--------|-------|-----|
| 1. Design individual student academic programs   | 28%          | 32%   | 28%    | 7%    | 3%  |
| 2. Counsel students with excessive tardiness/absenteeism                                   | 7%           | 57%   | 28%    | 3%    | 3%  |
| 3. Interpret cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests                                    | 7%           | 50%   | 32%    | 0%    | 7%  |
| 4. Counsel students with disciplinary problems   | 21%          | 46%   | 28%    | 0%    | 3%  |
| 5. Assist the principal with identifying and resolving student needs, issues, and problems | 42%          | 50%   | 3%     | 0%    | 3%  |
| 6. Assist students with academic planning  | 68%          | 39%   | 7%     | 3%    | 0%  |
| 7. Assist students with personal/social development  | 39%          | 42%   | 14%    | 0%    | 3%  |
| 8. Assist students with career planning  | 39%          | 46%   | 7%     | 3%    | 3%  |
| 9. Collaborate with teachers to identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems   | 50%          | 32%   | 17%    | 0%    | 3%  |

Note: Responses for "In your opinion, what services do the school counselors in your school provide?" were on a 4-point scale (4=consistently, often, 2=rarely, 1=never). Response percentage/n=28.

**Table 2**

*Perceptions of Importance Results: Likert Scale Results*

| Statement   | Extremely Important | Important | Not Important | Not At All Important | No Response |
|---|---------------------|-----------|---------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 1. Counsel individual students for the purpose of personal/social development.            | 64%                 | 32%       | 3%            | 0%                   | 0%          |
| 2. Counsel individual students for the purpose of career planning.                        | 78%                 | 21%       | 0%            | 0%                   | 0%          |
| 3. Counsel individual students for the purpose of academic planning.                      | 67%                 | 35%       | 0%            | 0%                   | 0%          |
| <b>4. Work with one student at a time in a therapeutic, clinical mode.</b>                | 21%                 | 42%       | 35%           | 0%                   | 0%          |
| 5. Collaborate with teachers to identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems. | 46%                 | 67%       | 3%            | 0%                   | 0%          |
| 6. Interpret student records.   | 32%                 | 67%       | 17%           | 0%                   | 0%          |
| 7. Disseminate information to parents and students about colleges.                        | 60%                 | 39%       | 0%            | 0%                   | 0%          |
| 8. Assist in preparation for the implementation of Common Core and CCRPI.                 | 14%                 | 21%       | 60%           | 7%                   | 0%          |
| <b>9. Design academic master schedule and/or individual student scheduling.</b>           | 67%                 | 35%       | 14%           | 0%                   | 0%          |
| <b>10. Administer aptitude, achievement, or cognitive tests.</b>                          | 14%                 | 46%       | 39%           | 0%                   | 0%          |

*Note:* Responses for “Ideally, what do you believe is the most important use of a school counselors time?” were on a 4-point scale (4=extremely important, 3=important, 2=not important, 1=not at all important). Response percentage/n=28. Statements in **boldface** correlate with ASCA’s definition of inappropriate

**Perceptions of Importance**

Teachers’ perceptions correlated at 67% to the statement that counseling students for academic planning purposes was extremely important. Interestingly, **Table 2** shows 67% teachers also reported that designing a master schedule and registering individual students was of extreme importance, which according to ASCA (2005), is an inappropriate task for PSCs. The percentages of responses for perceptions of highest importance were as follows: counseling students for career and academic planning (78%), disseminate college information to students and parents (60%), and collaborating with teachers to identify and resolve student problems (46%). Similar to the results of the inappropriate responsibilities, a few of the expectations of PSCs were also what teachers perceive to be important tasks, such as administer aptitude, achievement, or cognitive tests (46%), and work with one student at a time in a therapeutic, clinical mode (42%).

Qualitative data was obtained from the optional comments section. This provided an opportunity for staff opinions on the improvement of the counseling program. Of the 28 responses, 5 teachers left comments. One participant did not provide responses for the expectations of school counselor section. This responder commented that he or she did not know what PSCs did and did not have enough information to answer the questions. Three comments concerned the description of testing related job tasks. These comments indicated they would like to see a school member other than the PSC test and appropriately place students; two felt the school psychologist should be responsible for administering and interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests. One respondent questioned whether counseling students with excessive absenteeism “is done by someone else?” Another comment indicated that PSCs need constant contact with students, especially those experiencing problems. A final comment noted the importance for PSC to communicate often with parents and teachers.

## Local Needs Assessment

The results of the local school needs assessment are displayed in **Table 3**. Teachers indicated a need for academic advisement (50%) and student small group counseling (39%). Classroom guidance (17%) or teacher/staff guidance (14%) were seen as unnecessary services for this school.

**Table 3**

### *Local School Needs Assessment Results*

| Service                        | Definitely want | Want | No opinion | Don't want |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|------|------------|------------|
| Classroom guidance             | 17%             | 32%  | 28%        | 21%        |
| Student advisement             | 50%             | 35%  | 14%        | 0%         |
| Teacher/staff guidance         | 14%             | 21%  | 50%        | 14%        |
| Student small group counseling | 39%             | 35%  | 17%        | 7%         |

Note: Responses for "What types of counseling services would you like to see implemented at your school?" were on a 4-point scale (4=definitely want, 3=want, 2=no opinion, 1= don't want). Response percentage/n=28.

## Discussion

The ARS, designed to evaluate the school counseling program at a rural high school, indicates that teachers perceive the role expectations and services of PSCs as important. Their perceptions also correlate to the importance of meeting the needs of students. A large majority of teachers perceive the role of the PSC as a collaborator and a problem solver, as well as resource for student academic, personal/social, and career success. Teachers appear to conceptualize the PSCs served students with ASCA endorsed services most of the time. Teachers at this high school "agreed strongly" that PSCs should engage in 3 of the inappropriate tasks, most specifically designing a master schedule and/or individual student scheduling (85%). PSCs who devote a large percentage of time to making schedule changes, planning programs, and sorting paperwork function as guidance administrators (Thompson, 2002). In the past, many school counselors had little sense of their role within school, so they turned to clerical and administrative duties (Wittmer, 1993). The ARS results also revealed that teachers are under the impression that it is suitable for a PSC to operate in a therapeutic, clinical mode with students (63%). While it is important for PSCs to foster the social/emotional health of students, teachers mistakenly believe that clinical mental health services are an essential piece of the school counseling program. ASCA supports the role of the PSC as the most appropriate educator to advocate for the mental health needs of children. However,

this is increasingly difficult to do given the large number of students served by a single PSC (Thompson, 2002).

These findings suggest that while teachers are supportive of ASCA endorsed tasks, they also support unsuitable uses of the PSCs time. These results correlate with an earlier study conducted by Reiner et al. (2009): they found PSCs engaged in the following inappropriate activities: registering and scheduling all students; administering cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests; maintain student records, computing grade point averages and acting in a clinical therapeutic role

## Interventions

The outcomes of this ARS offered many valuable considerations for evaluating and improving the school counseling program. Future interventions include following the suggestions of the local needs assessment by implementing more student small group counseling and classroom guidance. Considerations may be made for better assisting teachers as advisors. However, due to the large size of the student population and the availability of 2 PSCs, initiating a full school counselor advisement program may be challenging at best. Based on previous and current research, PSCs are advised to continually educate their administration and staff as to their appropriate job responsibilities and use of time. PSCs may benefit by demonstrating their effectiveness in appropriate responsibilities and tasks by following the guidance of the ASCA National Model (Reiner et al., 2009). Perhaps in-service activities during the opening meetings of the school year would be an appropriate time

to reorient teachers and staff to the roles and responsibilities of their PSCs. Additionally, posters or pamphlets reporting the tasks of school counselors might be prepared for faculty and staff to share with parents and in turn help them understand the roles and responsibilities of the school counseling professionals. Creating a website and social media networking are an increasingly important source for information dissemination. By celebrating and promoting National School Counseling Week with a focus on the value and role of school counseling programs and utilizing other school-wide events and announcements over the public address system can also lead to better understanding of the school counseling programs (Thompson, 2002). Lastly, meeting with each department within the school to explain programs, offer services and resources that the school counseling program may offer can improve awareness.

## Limitations

There are several limitations with regard to this ARS. First, the data from the study only included one mid-sized rural high school. While this ARS could be replicated in other schools, these results are specific only to the school counseling program in this school. However, the many interventions suggested may be employed in other programs with positive results. Secondly, the responses were collected only from public high school teachers. Responses were voluntary and may be limited to those teachers who held strong opinions regarding the school counseling program and who were willing to share their ideas for improvement. Another

limitation might include the perception of the individual personalities of the PSCs and/or counseling staff within this particular school. While the avoidance of this perception was discussed this constraint was not within the control of the PI. Finally, one of the participants admitted he/she had little to no knowledge of the role or tasks of a PSC, and therefore felt he/she was unable to accurately assess a school counseling program.

Although some adjustments and improvements were suggested for the school counseling program at this high school it seems that classroom teachers who responded to this ARS largely perceive the PSCs to be a vital part of the school's successful operation

### **Conclusions**

Although some adjustments and improvements were suggested for the school counseling program at this high school, it seems that classroom teachers who responded to this ARS largely perceive the PSCs to be a vital part of the school's successful operation. This research provides the PSCs empirical information regarding teachers' perceptions of the PSCs' roles when implementing and endorsing their school counseling program.

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