"It Wasn't Mentioned and Should Have Been": Principals' Preparation to Support Comprehensive School Counseling

Kendra Lowery
Ball State University, kplowery@bsu.edu

Marilynn Quick
Ball State University, mquick@bsu.edu

Lori Boyland
Ball State University, lgboyland@bsu.edu

Rachel Louise Geesa
Ball State University, rlgeesa@bsu.edu

Renae D. Mayes
Ball State University, rdmayes@bsu.edu

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Introduction

When given the requisite organizational support to perform standards-based student-centered activities (ASCA, 2004), school counselors play a vital role in promoting socioemotional growth and the academic wellbeing of all students (DeSimone & Roberts, 2016; Janson, Militello, & Kosine, 2008). Unfortunately, many counselors are assigned non-counselor related tasks such as lunch supervision, student discipline, paperwork, and test administration (ASCA, 2012; Bardhosi, Schweinle, & Duncan, 2014; Edwards, Grace, & King, 2014), in large part because school principals and district administrators are unaware of appropriate counselor roles (Graham, Desmond, & Zinsser, 2011). As a result, counselors cannot adequately address the many individual needs students and families face regarding academics, socioemotional issues, and college and career readiness - the desired outcomes of comprehensive school counseling programs (CSC) wherein counselors address individual student needs and facilitate learning about post-secondary choices (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009; Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2010).

The Problem

A misalignment of counselor roles is a problem on national and state levels, particularly when many indicators suggest there is much to be done to support students. In 2014-15, while the national four-year high school graduation rate was 83%, it was 78% for Hispanics, 75% for Blacks, 72% for American Indians/Alaska Natives, 76% for economically disadvantaged students, and 65% for students with disabilities and students identified as limited English proficient (nces.ed.gov). Almost 21% of students reported being bullied in 2015, and the largest percent of students reported they were the subject of rumors and/or name calling (nces.ed.gov). In 2017, 27% of high school graduates that took the ACT met college and career readiness benchmarks in all four content areas of English, reading, math, and science (act.org). Many students are underserved. Students in turnaround schools, so designated because of low academic performance, are subjected to low expectations, a lack of instructional resources,

poor administration of data to monitor student progress, and inferior remedial tutorial services (Hines et al., 2017).

In Indiana, where we reside, the need for CSC programs is evident. Although the 2015 four-year graduation rate (87%) was slightly higher than the national rate, and all sub-groups were higher except for Blacks (same) and Asians (88% compared to 90%) (nces.ed.gov), only 35% of high school graduates took the ACT (act.org). Data compiled by the Indiana Youth Institute (2018) illustrates the need for structural and individual student support. In 2016, 10.3% of students completed a two-year degree on time. Many Indiana children also face challenges to getting their basic needs met: Almost half receive free or reduced-price meals; slightly over 16,000 children were identified as homeless or housing unstable; and an opioid epidemic has resulted in more people who have died from drug overdoses than homicides and car crashes combined. There are devastating consequences for children living in homes where adults suffer from drug addiction. Children can be removed from their home, and many suffer from strained relationships with adult caregivers or neglect. Although counselors cannot eradicate these challenges, they may be able to support students to address them in meaningful ways.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) developed standards that articulate the roles and responsibilities of counselors to support student growth, development and achievement. As part of a national and state agenda to increase principal preparation to develop and effectively collaborate with school counselors within CSC models, combined with our awareness of the national and state data demonstrating the need to improve the wellbeing and post-secondary outcomes of children, faculty from the Department of Educational Leadership and the School Counseling Program heeded the call to collaboratively examine our programs to determine what needs exist and how we might address them. This study is a result of a program review of the principal preparation program to understand current practices and feedback regarding the preparation of practicing Indiana principals who are graduates of our program regarding principal and counselor collaboration.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which educational leadership graduates who are practicing administrators are aware of and implement characteristics of comprehensive school counseling (CSC) programs and whether they felt they were adequately prepared to do so through the principal preparation program at our university. Specifically, we sought to analyze school principals' perceptions of the effectiveness or value of the school counselor's role; the type and percentage of time allotted for tasks school counselors perform; and to determine and address the gaps in our current educational leadership preparation program.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided our study:

1. In what ways do our program graduates, who are practicing school principals organizationally support characteristics of CSC and are there differences by graduates' personal (gender, years of administrative experience) and school (size, level, race, income) demographic variables?

2. How well are school leaders prepared to support a CSC model and the role of the school counselor based on ASCA national standards?

3. What changes do school leaders suggest should occur in our preparation programs?

The ASCA standards and the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders formed the conceptual framework for our analysis. This study is significant because it contributes to an increasing body of literature regarding principal and school counselor collaboration. Our use of program graduate data allowed us to focus on how we have prepared practitioners and areas for improvement. Because the principal participants are graduates from our program, we hold ourselves accountable for the extent to which they understand and effectively support the role of the school counselor. Therefore, this study is also significant because the findings not only provide valuable information for our program development. Our process may serve as a model

for other principal preparation program faculty to identify areas for the development of effective principal and counselor collaboration.

Our study is organized into five sections. First, we explain the context of our university and program. Second, we present our review of literature regarding principals and CSC programs. Third, we explain our methods for data collection and analysis. Fourth, we present our findings. Finally, we discuss our findings and implications for program development.

Program Context

Ball State University is a Midwestern mid-sized, public institution. Our school leadership preparation programs include three degree programs (masters which leads to principal licensure, educational specialist for the superintendency, and doctorate) and one principal licensure program. The vast majority of our faculty have been P-12 educators in one or more settings (private, traditional public and/or public charter schools). Most have also been school or district administrators. We prepare over 400 principal and 80 superintendent candidates in our program annually; therefore, research-based improvements in curricula and field-based experiences have potential for broad impact. In the next section, we review extant literature regarding school administrator and school counselor relationships, preparation, and current practices.

Literature Review

As education programs in the United States shift to better meet students' needs, the responsibilities and roles of school counselors have changed. In addition to addressing academic, socioemotional and college and career readiness goals of students, critically conscious school counselors "use their position to affect systemic change in school to address inequities" (Hines et al., 2017, p. 7). However, organizational structures to support these changes often do not exist. Possible reasons for this include a lack of principal knowledge about the roles and ethical responsibilities of counselors, staff shortages, and lack of funding for counselor positions (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Janson et al., 2008; Kimber & Campbell, 2013).

Increased principal capacity to understand and collaborate with counselors will likely create changes in this area. School administrators are in a position to support school counselors by sharing their value of the profession with others, actively engaging in activities to learn more about the school counseling profession, and having conversations with counselors about their role (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Dahir et al, 2010; Desimone & Roberts, 2016).

In order for ASCA standards to be realized, principals must have the knowledge and skills to effectively support counselors in their appropriate roles. School administrators should develop a research-based understanding of the role and function of school counselors (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Clemens, Milson, & Cashwell, 2009; Dahir et al., 2010; Janson et al., 2008). Additionally, pre-service programs for school administrators and counselors should incorporate research and training regarding responsibilities and methods for collaboration between the two disciplines (Chata & Loesch, 2007; DeSimone & Roberts, 2016).

Research regarding appropriate school counselor roles and principals' capacity to effectively collaborate with counselors is well-established within the field of school counseling (Niebuhr, Niebuhr, & Cleveland, 1999; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000; Stone & Clark, 2001) and has increased within the field of educational leadership (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Carnes-Holt, Range, & Cisler, 2012; Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2010; Kimber & Campbell, 2013; Yavuz, Dahir, & Gumuseli, 2017). In the following sections, we provide an overview of topics related to school administrator and school counselor collaboration, including: appropriate school counselor roles; implementation of CSC programs; effective student-to-school-counselor ratio; and continuous professional development. We conclude with what is known about topics related to principal capacity to effectively collaborate with counselors and how principals and counselors view each other.

Appropriate School Counselor Roles

Roles, responsibilities, and functions of school counselors vary based on the experiences, training, preparation, expectations, and support of school counselors and administrators (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Carnes-Holt et al., 2012; Cinotti, 2014). ASCA developed a national model for counseling (ASCA, 2004, 2012) that describes appropriate and inappropriate roles and functions of school counselors (see Figure 1). As the school leader is responsible for creating structures for faculty to perform their roles, it is important for pre-service and practicing school leaders to learn the appropriate activities for counselors. This knowledge will help to ensure counselors' time is not misallocated, and optimizing counselors' time for appropriate activities will facilitate the development of CSC programs.

Figure 1

Appropriate activities for school counselors	Inappropriate activities for school counselors
Individual student academic program planning	Coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students
Interpreting cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests	Coordinating cognitive, aptitude and achievement testing programs
Providing counseling to students who are tardy or absent	Signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent
Providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems	Performing disciplinary actions or assigning discipline consequences
Providing counseling to students as to appropriate school dress	Sending students home who are not appropriately dressed
Collaborating with teachers to present school counseling core curriculum lessons	Teaching classes when teachers are absent
Analyzing grade-point averages in relationship to achievement	Computing grade-point averages
Interpreting student records	Maintaining student records
Providing teachers with suggestions for effective classroom management	Supervising classrooms or common areas
Ensuring student records are maintained as per state and federal regulations	Keeping clerical records
Helping the school principal identify and resolve student issues, needs and problems	Assisting with duties in the principal's office

Providing individual and small-group counseling services to students	Providing therapy or long-term counseling in schools to address psychological disorders
Advocating for students at individual education plan meetings, student study teams and school attendance review boards	Coordinating school wide individual education plans, student study teams and school attendance review boards
Analyzing disaggregated data	Serving as a data entry clerk

Figure 1. ASCA National Model: Appropriate and Inappropriate Roles and Functions of School Counselors. The American School Counselor Association (2012) designed and published this set of appropriate and inappropriate activities, and additional items may be relevant to consider.

Implementation of CSC Programs

CSC programs are designed for school counselors to better support the school's mission (ASCA, 2017b; DeSimone & Roberts, 2016). School administrators should be knowledgeable about the essence of CSC programs to ensure that school counselors' responsibilities are supported and students' abilities to access school counselors are increased (Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007). According to ASCA (2017b), CSC programs include state-credentialed school counselors and incorporate data-based decision making to ensure equitable access to high quality education to all students in a systemic fashion. With intentional CSC program training, school counselors and administrators will likely be positioned to effectively collaborate to achieve these goals.

Effective Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio

The identification and support of individual student needs can be challenging for school counselors when they are faced with too many students (Bardhoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan, 2014; Sears & Navin, 1983). School administrators need more guidance on how to increase support for school counselors with a balanced and appropriate number of students to work with throughout the school year (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Niebuhr et al., 1999). ASCA recommends a ratio of 250 students to one school counselor (ASCA, 2012); however, the national average ratio

during the 2014-2015 school year was 482 students to one school counselor (ASCA, 2017a). In our state of Indiana, the ratio was 543 students to one school counselor during the 2014-2015 school year (ASCA, 2017a) - over twice ASCA's recommended ratio. Additional training for school administrators about school counselors' roles may support more funding and resources to reduce the student to school counselor ratio in order to provide students more individualized attention regarding their academic, social, and emotional needs.

Principal Capacity to Support Comprehensive School Programs

Several researchers have identified important aspects of effective principal-counselor relationships that support CSC programs. These include pre-service principal and counselor preparation, collaboration, and principal knowledge to support standards-based counseling programs. Studies revealed that pre-service educators benefit from learning about the counselor role and this is maximized when done collaboratively between leadership and counseling programs (Bringman, Mueller, & Lee, 2000; DeSimone & Roberts, 2016; Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). Findings from research about practicing counselors and principals indicate that much of their success as leaders (Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2010) relies on proper principal training about the counselor role (Bardhoshi & Duncan 2009; Leuwerke, Walker, & Shi 2009). Key areas for such training include ethical decision-making, such as respecting confidentiality in collaboration with administrators (Williams & Wehrman 2010), and the service delivery of tasks that align with ASCA standards (Clemens et al., 2009; Curry & Bickmore, 2013).

In the review of literature, we identified trends in school counselor and administrator collaboration regarding knowledge of aspects of the ASCA National Model and implementation of CSC programs. We also summarized research regarding leadership preparation program improvement to create principal candidates who can effectively collaborate with counselors to facilitate student success. Next, we explain our conceptual framework used to analyze data.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for our research is the result of our alignment of the ASCA national model and the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL), as both sets of standards are centered upon student well-being, academic success, and social-emotional learning. As described above, The ASCA National Model is a student data-driven counseling program that promotes student success. The model "brings school counselors together with one vision and one voice, which creates unity and focus toward improving student achievement" (ASCA, 2012, p. 1). Key to the implementation of CSC programs are counselors' abilities to establish a foundation that allows for the teaching of student outcomes, management of their time committed to ASCA recommended counselor services, delivery of curriculum in collaboration with other professional educators, indirect student services, and accountability through the examination of data and formal evaluations based on standards for school counselors. These knowledge, skills, and abilities are explained in detail in the School Counselor Competencies (2012). ASCA envisions CSC programming as "an integral component of the school's academic mission" (p. 1), which further aligns school counselor roles and responsibilities with those of administrators and teachers.

The model includes Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (updated from ASCA National Standards for Students in 2014), and Ethical Standards for School Counselors (last revised 2016). The Mindsets and Behaviors consist of 35 standards, or "attitudes, knowledge, and skills" (ASCA, p. 1) that students ought to demonstrate as a result of school counseling programs. The six mindset behaviors relate to students' belief systems about academic work. The 29 behavior standards are actions typically associated with successful students and are categorized in one of three subcategories: learning strategies, self-management skills, and social skills.

The Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016) identify the responsibilities counselors have as "social justice advocates" (p. 1) to ensure equitable access and learning for all students. The standards identify the responsibility counselors have to students, parents/guardians, school, and themselves as counseling professionals. Other responsibilities are outlined for administrators/supervisors and school counseling intern site supervisors.

A focus on student relationships, learning and college-career readiness is an expectation for school leadership preparation programs. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), notes that the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) represent a more purposeful shift towards making student relationships and learning outcomes the focus of the work of educational leaders. The set of 10 standards, which applies most directly to the work of principals and assistant principals, includes ten interdependent domains or aspects of school leadership that are integral to student success. The standards are divided into four areas that jointly place student learning at the center: mission, ethics, and equity; professional norms and collaboration, collaboration with community, and management; curriculum and assessment, and care for students; and finally, school improvement. When adhered to, standards that guide the work of school leaders and counselors, that place students at the center (NPBEA & ASCA), create a foundation for collaboration for student success. The next section is an explanation of our methods for the study.

Methods

We conducted a survey of alumni of our graduate-level principal preparation and school counseling programs. Data for this paper includes only the responses from principals and assistant principals. The survey was adapted from one that was conducted by the Indiana Chamber Foundation (Oliver, Fleck, & Money-Brady, 2016).[*] Additionally, elements of the 2008 College Board/NASSP, and ASCA survey, developed for school principals and counselors, were

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[*] Both surveys were made possible with funding from The Lilly Foundation, Inc.

adapted for specific survey items. The independent variables analyzed for this study included: gender, years of administrator experience, school size, and school level (elementary, middle school/junior high school, high school, and other). The dependent variables were the overall expression of the administrators' perceived values of school counselors and school counseling program at their schools as well as the value of individual survey items pertaining to the ASCA national standards.

The survey consisted of 10 Likert scale questions, 15 slider questions, and two open-ended responses. The 10 Likert scale questions sought perceptions on the school counselor's role and the effectiveness of their school counseling program. The five-point Likert scale allowed participants to indicate their level of agreement, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The internal consistency of the Likert scale questions was obtained with an overall Cronbach's alpha of .881.

The next section included 15 slider questions which asked participants to indicate the type of tasks their school counselors perform and the percentage of time allotted for each of those tasks. A sliding bar allowed participants to indicate any percentage between 0 and 100. A statement in the survey clarified, "Since this is an estimate, it does not have to equal 100%."

Finally, two open-ended items invited participants to describe the strengths and weaknesses of their principal preparation program. A list of email addresses for administrators was created by comparing graduates from the last 10 years with the Indiana Department of Education's (doe.in.gov) list of licensed principals in the state.

Survey Participants

Surveys were sent to approximately 300 current Indiana administrators and school counselors, who were alumni from Ball State University's leadership and school counseling programs.   The return rate of 51% represented 116 administrators and 37 school counselors. Survey participants included in the analysis for this paper includes 38 principals and 49

assistant principals (87 total). Survey participants included 60% male and 40% female administrators with 61% having served one to five years as an administrator and 88.5% in administrative positions from one to 10 years. Participants were distributed across rural (39%), suburban (32%), and urban (29%) settings, and worked in large schools comprised of 1000 or more students (30%); medium schools comprised of 500-999 students (41%); and small schools comprised of 499 or less students (29%).

Data Analysis

We applied descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze responses to the quantitative questions. These items resulted in five items with significant differences based on the use of chi-square tests. We analyzed the two open-ended questions using first-cycle coding techniques in which the first and fifth authors identified categories based on the text of the responses. Larger themes were identified after second-cycle coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The two authors shared iterations of their first and second cycles of coding throughout the process to ensure consistency.

Findings

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 suggest that although it is a priority in Indiana, the college and career readiness needs of all students may not be met. The lowest level of agreement among participants was regarding the extent to which school counselor programs address college and career readiness (M = 3.74). Administrators were not very satisfied with the school counselor's role in their schools (M = 3.87), nor did they feel that the school counselors' responsibilities are aligned with the school's improvement plan (M = 3.98) when compared with other items.

Table 1

Principals' Perceptions on School Counselors/Programs

Likert Scale Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
School counselor's tasks positively impact the overall school climate.	86	4.40	0.708
I consider our school counselors to be a vital part of our school's leadership team.	87	4.29	0.914
Our school counselor has the appropriate level of knowledge and skill to positively impact student outcomes.	86	4.21	0.738
The school counselor program addresses social and emotional student issues.	84	4.13	0.889
School counselors have a shared responsibility in the development of the school's goals and metrics that indicate success.	87	4.05	0.963
The school counselor program plays a pivotal role in the implementation of school wide strategies to improve student outcomes.	84	4.02	0.891
The work being done by the school counseling program positively impacts our school's overall performance.	84	4.01	0.843
School counselors' responsibilities are aligned with the school's improvement plan.	86	3.98	0.84
I am satisfied with the school counselor's role in my school.	84	3.87	1.05
The school counselor program addresses the college and career readiness needs of our students.	84	3.74	1.007

Note: The five-point Likert scale ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. There were 87 total responses. Some participants did not respond to all of the items but we included their responses to the items they completed.

Conversely, the highest mean level of agreement among participants included their regard for the school counselor's role based on the following three items: School counselor's tasks positively impact the overall school climate (M = 4.40); I consider our school counselors to be a vital part of our school's leadership team (M = 4.29); and, Our school counselor has the appropriate level of knowledge and skill to positively impact student outcomes (M = 4.21).

Inferential Statistics

We conducted Pearson correlations and chi square tests comparing principals' responses on the survey items with their demographic (independent) variables. From these analyses, we identified five areas that demonstrated statistically significant correlations or differences. These findings were all related to school size and will be described next.

Finding 1 is based on the item: "The work being done by the school counseling program positively impacts our school's overall performance." There was a statistical difference (p = .05) between administrators of schools with 1000 or more students and schools with 500-999 students. Principals of large schools believed school counseling had a greater impact on the school's performance than administrators from medium sized schools.

Finding 2: School size and college and career readiness. Differences were found in the comparison of principals' responses to survey item 10: "The school counselor program addresses the college and career readiness needs of our students." Although the mean for this item was the lowest overall (M = 3.74), the perceptions of administrators from schools of 1000 or more students was significantly different (p = .05) from those of their counterparts (M = 3.47) in schools of 500-999 students. Principals of large schools (M = 4.12) reported that the school counseling program better addressed the needs of students for college and career readiness.

Findings 3, 4, and 5 were evident after an analysis of the sliding scale questions. We asked participants to indicate the approximate percentage of time their school counselor(s) spends doing 15 tasks during the academic year (See Table 2). We explained that since this is an estimate, all of the items did not have to equal 100%.

Table 2

Slider Scale Questions

Question	# Responses	Mean
1. Academic scheduling.	62	23.37
2. Individual Meetings with students concerning academic issues.	72	22.13
3. Individual meetings with students concerning social/emotional issues.	74	34.68
4. Facilitating classroom guidance lessons (e.g., teaching a lesson in a classroom on a specific topic).	61	16.69
5. Facilitating small group counseling (e.g., study skills group, grief/loss group, test anxiety group, etc.)	62	14.90
6. Supervision duties (e.g., lunch supervision, bus duty, etc.)	54	10.76
7. Test coordination/proctoring (e.g., ISEP, PSAT/SAT, Accuplacer, AP, IB, etc.)	66	19.77
8. Use of data (data collection, analysis, reporting) to assess school needs and gaps.	50	10.92
9. Collaboration with school faculty.	65	17.85
10. Parent outreach (e.g., education, student planning, etc.)	74	18.43
11. Program evaluation (e.g., interventions and activities as well as total school counseling program).	55	10.49
12. Advocating for school wide strategies that address equity and access issues for underserved students.	50	14.56
13. Facilitating professional development to school faculty (e.g., training on suicide prevention, anti-bullying, etc.).	53	10.92
14. Crisis response planning and response.	61	13.23
15. Time spent on college and career readiness.	63	14.70

Finding 3: School size and academic scheduling. A significant difference (p = .018) was found regarding the time principals estimated counselors spent on academic scheduling. Not surprisingly, 59% of principals of schools of 1000 or more students, which are primarily high schools, reported that school counselors spent 25% or more of their time on academic scheduling, whereas 81% of principals of schools of 499 or less students and 76% of principals of schools of 500-999 students reported that their counselors spent less than 25% of their time on academic scheduling.

Finding 4: School size and class lessons. The fourth significant difference (p = .031) was principals' estimation of counselor's time spent "Facilitating classroom

guidance lessons."   In large schools, 96% of principals estimated this occurred less than 25% of

the time compared to 68% in small schools. In small schools, 32% of principals

indicated their school counselors facilitated classroom guidance lessons more than 25% of

the time.

Finding 5: School size and data use. The final significant difference was found (p = .02)

in the use of data to assess school needs. All (100%) of principals of small and medium schools

indicated that counselors spent less than 25% of their time on this task. However, 13.6% of principals

in large schools indicated their counselors spent 25-50% of their time using data.

Open-Ended Responses: Strengths and Areas for Improvement

Two questions at the end of the survey allowed participants to provide narrative

responses. The first question, Tell us about the strengths of your principal preparation program

in preparing you to effectively collaborate with school counselor(s), garnered 59 responses. Two

themes emerged from our analysis. Participants indicated that they (1) received no preparation;

and/or (2) benefited from learning general leadership skills that are applicable to supporting

school counselors.

Principals Were Not Prepared to Collaborate with School Counselors

Most participants indicated that they did not learn any content related to effective school

principal and counselor collaboration. Some wrote statements such as, "I don't think there was

any preparation to collaborate with counselors." One response articulated why addressing this

gap is critical:

> It wasn't mentioned and should have been. Principals need to be taught that a school
>
> counselor is NOT an assistant principal. They should not be coordinating ISTEP+,
>
> attending Case Conferences as a Public Agency Rep, doing discipline.

Some participants acknowledged that they learned how to effectively collaborate with

school counselors through practical experience rather than the program. One participant noted,

"I think I learned these predispositions more through my school experience than the principal

preparation program…" Another participant credited their school counselor with helping them understand how to implement best practices and standards for school counselors.

Principals Gained General Leadership Skills to Collaborate with School Counselors

Participants highlighted the leadership skills of collaboration with stakeholders and problem-solving/decision-making that were developed in the program as having helped them to effectively collaborate with the school counselor.

Collaboration with stakeholders. Participants were able to transfer the skills they developed for collaboration with stakeholders to their collaborate with school counselors, although they were not specifically trained to do so. This was evident in responses such as, "BSU preached all stakeholders need to be involved in all processes of the school. I felt that I was/am prepared to work well with counselors and other school stakeholders." Another responded, "My program prepared me to look at perspectives of all parties at the table and all stakeholders. This allows me to work well with the counselor in my building." One candidate explained why this was valuable: "I believe that the overall emphasis on collaboration throughout the program helped to prepare me to effectively collaborate with school counselors."

Problem-solving/Decision-making. One participant noted: "I was taught to consider all stakeholders in decision making and that includes using school counselors to leverage learning for students." Other participants explained that "looking holistically at issues" and understanding the different perspectives and strengths of a variety of team members were valued in the program. Additionally, two participants identified the use of case studies as beneficial for honing their decision-making skills.

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Open-Ended Response #2

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The second open-ended question, "How could your principal preparation program have better prepared you to effectively collaborate with your school counselor(s)? sought graduates' thoughts about how our program might better prepare candidates to collaborate with the school counselor. Four themes emerged from an analysis of the responses. Participants felt the

program should include content to increase understanding about (1) the role of the counselor; (2) skill-building for how to collaborate with the counselor; and (3) the social emotional needs of students. Fourth, participants shared how the incorporation of this content into curriculum and course design could have better prepared them.

Explain the Role of the Counselor

Knowledge about the role of the counselor was identified as an area that was missing from principal preparation that would have better prepared our graduates to effectively collaborate with the school counselor for role assignment, hiring, and evaluation. Two participants expressed the value in knowing "best practices" regarding the counselor role.

Some indicated that it would have been beneficial to know how to redistribute non-counselor tasks such as supervision and testing coordination. One participant stated, "It would have been a good exercise getting more experience in scheduling and in assessments, that way counselors could be more supported in these areas and have more time for addressing social and emotional needs, omitting obstacles for students."

A need to understand how to hire and evaluate school counselors is also beneficial and became evident in comments such as, "It might have been helpful to have more information about hiring and what to look for in these types of positions." Another participant pointed out: "…since I supervise counselors, it would be beneficial to know what the role of an effective or highly effective counselor looks like."

Teach Specific Skills for Collaboration with Counselors

Principals explained that learning how to support counselors as team members for helping achieve student success is important. One participant shared, "Collaborating with the school counselor to appropriately address the students' needs is key. I would have liked to learn more about that." Another graduate expressed the need to include counselors "as part of your school leadership team and move them away from the old traditional guidance staff model." Finally,

two participants posited that class opportunities for working with counselors and understanding the principal and counselor relationship would have been helpful.

Teach Principal Candidates About the Social Emotional Needs of Students

Participants felt they would have been better prepared to collaborate with school counselors if the principal preparation program had, as one participant stated, provided more information "on the social emotional learning of students." Because of this lack of training, participants reported they do not feel "prepared to assist the students or the counselors with helping" students. Some reported feeling at a deficit when the school counselor was on leave because they were left to take on that role with no understanding of student personal and family needs. One principal wrote, "Having an SEL [social emotional learning] piece linked to a school improvement plan could be discussed in a principal preparation program."

Program Course Content and Design Should Include Counselor-Specific Learning

Ideas for how to incorporate essential understandings about the school counselor included the creation of a separate course because, according to one participant, "We [principal candidates] need to know where our roles meet and differ." Participants also saw opportunities for learning about the role of the school counselor and how to collaborate effectively with them in existing coursework. Some thought engaging in real life application by practicing collaborative skills with aspiring principals and counselors would have been beneficial. Another suggestion for incorporating skills practice was to include opportunities in the internship. Seven participants recommended a required project dedicated to collaborating with school counselors within the internship course.

The qualitative data indicated that our program graduates were not trained specifically about the role of the counselor and would benefit from training about the counselor role and how to effectively support it. Many suggestions for how to incorporate this training were offered. Next, we turn to a discussion of our findings in relation to our conceptual framework.

Discussion

The value that administrators (participants) attributed to their school counselors and counseling programs varied significantly based on school size. However, some of these findings may partially reflect the differences in counselors' roles in high schools, compared to elementary and/or middle schools. Although data analysis based on school level (elementary, middle/junior high, or high school) did not result in significant differences, the preponderance of the large schools were high schools. For example, the number of administrators representing schools with 1000 or more students indicated that 19 administrators were from high schools, 5 from middle school/junior high schools, one from an elementary school, and one designated as "other."

The ASCA national model and ethical standards are relevant for counselors who are expected to "have unique qualifications and skills to address preK-12 students' academic, career and social/emotional development needs" (2016, p. 1). Additionally, the Mindsets and Behaviors are created to support students' college and career readiness. Likewise, the standards for educational leaders (PSEL) do not distinguish between standards based on school level. Standard 2 states that all leaders are expected to act "according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being" (p. 10). As we have shown, this focus on students' well-being is a common expectation for both counselors and school leaders, demonstrating the need for professional collaboration. As the capacity of pre-service and practicing principals to collaborate with counselors increases, there will hopefully not be any differences about the value of the counselor based on school level. Therefore, we recommend future research that explores what differences, if any, emerge regarding principal and counselor collaboration based on school level.

The lowest mean reported by administrators was on the survey item asking if their school counseling programs addressed students' college and career readiness needs. Therefore, it appeared that our respondents were aware that their counseling programs should

be improved in the area of college and career readiness. ASCA (2014, 2016) agrees that this is a priority area and proposed that college and career readiness should be prevalent for every student.

Analysis of open-ended responses indicated that most participants did not feel that they were intentionally prepared by the principal preparation program to effectively collaborate with school counselors. However, they identified ways in which they were prepared to collaborate with stakeholders that they were able to transfer to their collaboration with school counselors. Participants identified several opportunities for improved principal preparation to support counselors. These include specific course objectives that explain the role of the counselor, how to collaborate with the counselor, content that helps principal candidates understand the social emotional learning needs of students, and finally, opportunities to practice principal and counselor collaboration in class activities that provide real life application and required projects during the internship.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

The findings based on school size may have been impacted by the student-to-counselor ratio. We did not ask for that information in the survey. However, as reported in our literature review, during the 2014-15 school year, Indiana's ratio (543:1) was over twice ASCA's recommended ratio of 250:1 (ASCA, 2017a). The counselor-to-student ratio will be important to take into consideration in future studies. We recommend that per PSEL Standard 9, administrators across schools, districts, and states prioritize the funding of counseling positions to better align with the recommended ratio. This will create the organizational structure necessary to support counselors to "optimize their professional capacity to address each student's learning needs" (p. 17). It is also important to include other independent variables besides school size, such as racial and income demographics of the schools in future research. This will provide for a more nuanced analysis through a lens of social justice that considers

access and opportunity to high-quality educational services for all school settings and student sub-groups.

Implications for our Program

These findings present great opportunity for the integration of knowledge of comprehensive school counseling programs in educational leadership coursework that is aligned with professional standards. We have explained how increasing understanding about the role of the counselor, how to collaborate with the counselor, and the social emotional needs of students are central to both ASCA and PSEL standards.

The findings will also frame the redesign of our program to prepare principal candidates to more effectively collaborate with and support school counselors. Highly-regarded departments of educational leadership have recognized the need to improve their training of school leaders, and research about the requisite knowledge and skills of principals to effectively support counselors indicates this is needed nationally (Oliver et al., 2016). School leaders appear to need more intentional training at the pre-service and practitioner phases of their careers to better support school counselors and comprehensive counseling models.

The necessity for collaboration for the preparation of principals to support comprehensive school counseling is loud and clear from the extant literature:

Given the proximity of many school counseling training programs to educational leadership programs it seems reasonable and pertinent that those faculty members from both domains to not only collaborate but also consider team teaching. The nature of the school environment is conducive to professionals teaming to meet the needs of the students (Graham, Desmond, & Zinsser, 2011, p. 103).

We plan to respond to this data by teaching our principal candidates the skills necessary for such collaboration in conjunction with faculty from school counseling in the manner stated above. We also plan to redesign our courses and internship to create more opportunities to support CSC programs. We recommend that other leadership preparation and counseling

programs do the same. Collectively, we must also stay attuned to the growing research

regarding principal counselor relationships and study the ways in which building the capacity for

collaboration contributes to increased student outcomes.

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