A Primer on Designing a School Counseling Curriculum

Mark D. Nelson and Dawn S. Tarabochia
Montana State University

Abstract

One of the main contributions of school counselors is the development and designing of school counseling curriculum. Professional standards for the school counseling profession have been created to assist school counselors in the design process. The purpose of this article is to provide school counselors with a primer on designing school counseling curriculum. This article will provide a brief review of literature associated with designing school counseling curriculum and an overview of school counseling curriculum frameworks. Additionally, the article will provide clarification to terms associated with curriculum development, such as domains, standards, and competencies as well as options for school counselors to organize and deliver curriculum. Lastly, this article will provide specific tools and examples to assist school counselors in the development and design of school counseling curriculum. Specific examples and tools include: planning a school counseling curriculum; examples of domains, standards, and competencies using the terms outlined with the article; examples for developing assets; a tool to assist school counselors in organizing theme development and classroom activities; and lastly a classroom activity template.

Keywords: school counseling curriculum, school counseling curriculum development, and school counseling curriculum frameworks.

A Primer on Designing a School Counseling Curriculum

According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), school counselors design and deliver school counseling programs that address the developmental needs of all students (2019). More specifically, school counselors are responsible for the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of comprehensive school counseling programs that meet the needs of all students (ASCA, 2019; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Myrick, 2011). Historically, the school counseling profession has seen a variety of transformations, thus resulting in a variety of models and programs; several program models are still in use throughout the U.S. today (ASCA, 2003, 2005, 2012: Gysbers, 2010; Gysbers, Stanley, Kosteck-Bunch, Magnuson, & Starr, 2017; Johnson & Johnson, 2001). School counseling programs have also evolved and are currently conceived as comprehensive, developmental programs that include a curricular component previously referred to as a guidance curriculum and are currently often referred to as a school counseling curriculum (ASCA, 2012: Gysbers, 2010; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988, 2012; Gysbers et al., 2017, Johnson & Johnson, 2001; Myrick, 2011). The purpose of this article is to provide school counselors with a brief overview of the evolution of counseling curricula and a process for how to design a curricular framework. Numerous appendices are included that counselors can use during the design process.

School counselors are responsible to plan, design, implement, and evaluate school counseling programs. School counseling programs generally include a foundation that consists of the philosophy, mission, and curricular elements upon which a program is built (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Myrick, 2011). A

counseling curriculum is a structural framework that assists a school counselor in the design, delivery, and assessment of school counseling-based academic content.

There are a variety of school counseling program models throughout the U.S. (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers et al., 2017, Johnson & Johnson, 2001; Myrick, 2011). Some professionals in the school counseling field would suggest that the only school counseling program model being utilized is the current ASCA model; however, it should be noted that ASCA's membership includes 34,750 U.S. members (S. Wicks, personal communication, September 20, 2018) while the U.S. Department of Labor's *Occupational Employment Statistics* indicates that in 2018 there were 141,390 educational, guidance, school, and vocational counselors employed in elementary and secondary schools in the U.S. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2018). These data suggest that approximately 25% of school counselors in the U.S. are members of ASCA and may possibly implement the ASCA school counseling program model in their schools. The other 75% of school counselors may utilize another school counseling program model (e.g., state or local model), an ASCA model, or no program model at all. Regardless of the model utilized, school counselors work in schools assisting students in their academic, career, and social/emotional opportunities and challenges.

Without specific data from school counseling literature, it seems reasonable to assume the many schools and school counselors utilize a school counseling program approach to their counseling-related work with students. Most of the common school counseling program models being used include a curriculum component (ASCA ,2012; Gysbers et al., 2017, Johnson & Johnson, 2001; Myrick, 2011). In order to plan and design a curriculum for a school counseling program, school counselors must select an

overall framework for the curriculum and a set of goals or standards that include corresponding competencies or student learning outcomes.

Curricular Framework

The National Career Development Guidelines were originally published in 1989 and revised in 2004 (National Career Development Association [NCDA], U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). The guidelines were organized around three domains: (a) personal/social development, (b) educational achievement and lifelong learning, and (c) career management. Each domain has multiple goals (analogous to standards) with corresponding competencies for each goal. This organizing framework was replicated in several other school counseling curricular models over time (ASCA, 2014; Campbell & Dahir, 1997, Gysbers et al., 2017). The school counseling field embraced the essential domains of academic, career, and personal/social development as an organizing framework for school counseling guidance curricula. Consequently, school counselors teach curricular content designed to help students develop the attitudes/beliefs, knowledge/information, and competencies/skills necessary to be successful in their academic, career, and personal/social pursuits.

As school counselors design counseling curricula, they must choose an organizing framework based upon the needs of their students. These decisions can be influenced by the environmental aspects related to families, communities, schools, and local or state requirements. It is impractical to conclude that a *one-size-fits-all* approach found in many marketed curricula is appropriate in the design of counseling curriculum development. Therefore, it is a school counselor's responsibility and opportunity to

design a curriculum and find classroom activities or lessons that fit into the curricular framework.

In general, most school counseling programs used in the U.S. contain a fundamental objective to promote the career, academic, personal/social (sometimes referred to as social/emotional) development of all students (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers et al., 2017; Johnson & Johnson, 2001; Myrick, 2011). Recently, there has been a shift from personal/social to social/emotional development. The term *personal development* may be a useful alternative that can be defined to include the intrapersonal (within a person) and interpersonal (between persons) aspects of a student. In addition, the school counseling literature includes models that focus on student development such as the PACES (physical, affective, cognitive, economic, social) model of student well-being (Nelson, Tarabochia, & Koltz, 2015), or the Developmental Assets Framework (Search Institute, 2007). These or other child and adolescent developmental models can be integrated as standards or competencies within an academic, career, social/emotional framework.

There have been and continue to be various terms used to describe elements of a curriculum. To simplify the process, the following terms related to the counseling curricular framework are suggested: domains, standards, and competencies.

In this article the use of a basic three-domain concept of student development (academic, career, and personal) is proposed; it should be noted that school counselors may decide to expand the number of domains. For example, intrapersonal and interpersonal could be separate domains or an additional domain may be added if it is deemed essential (e.g., community involvement as a fourth domain, Oregon

Department of Education, 2019). Within each domain, there may be several standards (sometimes referred to as goals) and within each standard there may be multiple competencies (sometimes referred to as indicators). Standards are generalized statements directly related to the goals of the domain area. Competencies are defined herein as the more measurable attitudes, skills, or knowledge that students can demonstrate or perform. The idea behind this tiered framework is that if students are achieving numerous competencies in several standards within a given domain, then a school counselor may conclude that students have acquired the attitudes, knowledge, skills necessary to be successful within that given domain (e.g., career development).

Counseling Curriculum Design

The first task in designing a school counseling curriculum involves selecting a set of domains, standards, and competencies. Many school counseling programs that use the ASCA model include ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors (2014) as their curricular framework. However, this choice may present several challenges. First, simply choosing a generalized framework follows the one-size-fits-all approach and may not fit the needs of the student's needs at a local or regional level. This decision is probably best made by a small team of school counselors. Second, it is clearly stated that the mindset standards and behavior standards listed were based upon a report, *Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners*, that summarized research on noncognitive factors related to the academic performance (Farrington et al., 2012). It is questionable whether these behaviors and mindsets are germane to elementary or early middle school students. Finally, the ASCA framework asserts that each of the mindsets and behaviors can be applied to academic, career, and social/emotional domains. It seems to suggest

that all the mindset and behavior standards could occur as a repeated list under the academic, career, and social/emotional domains. While the mindset standards and behavior standards of the ASCA framework offer some useful standards, especially for the academic performance of adolescents, other models may provide additional emphasis on the career and social/emotional development for students.

Domains, Standards, and Competencies

For the purposes of this article the use of a simplified structural framework that defines student development as being composed of academic, career, and personal domains is suggested. Each domain includes standards designed to characterize the developmental domain. Each standard contains multiple competencies. School counselors and/or teachers deliver classroom lessons or activities designed to address a standard. When students achieve or demonstrate most of the competencies within a given standard, counselors may conclude that the standard has been met. The overall goal of implementing a counseling curriculum is to provide lessons and activities so that the standards of each domain are met. Domains provide the overarching definition and structural categories of student development.

Standards are the principal elements or goals within each domain. School counselors can design their domain standards based upon various curriculum models. Many counseling curricula are composed of a small number of standards for each domain. See Appendix A for several examples of curricular frameworks that counselors may use to select domains and standards. It is recommended to start more simply in order to create a straightforward framework that may be expanded over time.

Competencies are the student outcomes that are produced from teaching a counseling curriculum. They are more specific statements that describe the attitudes that students hold, the knowledge they retain, and the skills they demonstrate. Competencies are typically grade or level (e.g., middle school) related. For example, ASCA maintains a database of competencies that are based upon students' mindsets and behaviors. There are additional sources of competencies that are available to counselors. ASCA's original (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) domains, standards, and competencies offers a generally well-balanced set of competencies (originally termed, indicators). While the original set was not organized by grade level, Nelson (2011) assigned competencies to elementary, middle, and high school levels during the development of guidance curriculum activities (see Appendix B). The Developmental Assets (Search Institute, 2007) contain 40 assets that may also be used as competencies (see Appendix C). Over the past 25 years, the Search Institute has extensively researched the Developmental Assets which include surveying over six million young people across the U.S. and internationally (Search Institute, 2019).

Organizing the Curriculum Delivery

So far the steps in the design process include: (a) select the domains, which typically embrace three (e.g., academic, career, personal) areas or more; (b) develop standards for each domain, and (c) design or select competencies for each of the standards, usually in sufficient number to allow them to be categorized by grade level. Appendix B provides one example of how domains, standards, and competencies can be selected and organized. Once a curricular design has been determined, attention should be shifted towards the *who, how, and what* aspects of delivering the curriculum.

School counselors oversee the coordination, implementation, and evaluation of the counseling curriculum.

It is noteworthy to consider several points related to delivery of a counseling curriculum. First, it is helpful to note that the domains and the standards are designed to remain constant throughout the K-12 grades. The competencies would need to be developmentally appropriate and therefore would change throughout a student's K-12 experience. Consequently, counselors are helping students develop multiple competencies within each standard at each grade or grade level (e.g., middle school).

Who. School counselors are not responsible to deliver *all* the lessons or experiences related to the curriculum; however, they are responsible in determining whether the curricular content is being delivered to students. Others who might deliver counseling curriculum content includes teachers, and possibly psychologists or other professionals assigned to teach or train students.

How. The how and when aspects vary depending on a variety of school-related variables. For example, it is important for the school counselor to know what parts of a counseling curriculum are taught by another discipline in the school such as family and consumer sciences, health, physical education, business to name a few. Also, some schools may have home room periods or advisory classes that may provide access for teaching a counseling curriculum. Typically, curricula are taught in classroom settings by teachers or counselors. In addition, the curricular content may also be delivered via small group experiences, group counseling, planning sessions with individuals or small groups, and even through parent interactions such as conferencing, or parent education programs.

What. The curriculum domains, standards, and competencies comprise what is taught or practiced. However, a curricular framework only serves as an outline for the curriculum. Counselors use the outline to organize a delivery scheme that will be presentable and acceptable by students. This scheme is founded upon the psychosocial, cultural, and developmental needs of students. Using Appendix B as an example of a hypothetical complete set of domains, standards, and competencies, a process is proposed that integrates domains and standards into a curricular scheme.

Terms and Themes. Appendix B contains three domains (career, academic, personal); however, students may relate better to other terms or phrases such as *learning to make a living, learning to learn, and learning to live*. Describing and explaining curricular elements may be facilitated by using terms associated with student developmental level.

In the example provided in Appendix B, there are three domains and three standards in each domain for a total of nine standards. There are typically nine months in a school year, and it can be tempting to assign one standard to each month and then see that content related to that standard is delivered to all students by teachers or counselors. However, an alternative organizing method may be more effective for students and counselors. Themes (e.g., communication skills) may provide thematic content that allows counselors to combine standards from multiple domains within one theme for a month and may be more easily aligned with content taught by teachers from various subjects. A group of nine themes would be applied to one or more school years. For example, a high school curriculum may have two sets of nine themes, one for 9th and 10th grades and a second set of themes for 11th and 12th grades. It is a decision for

the counselor(s) to determine the best thematic plan for their school. Appendix D contains a planning tool for thematic planning.

Using the planning tool, counselors create 12 themes, four for each domain. Once completed, one theme is eliminated from each domain, leaving nine themes total. Counselors must then map the domains, standards, and competencies into each theme to see that the entire curriculum is covered by the set of nine themes. For example, a middle school, monthly theme of "making decisions" may be seen to address (Appendix B): A.2.C (academic domain, standard 2, competency C); C.2.A. (career domain, standard 2, competency A); and P.2.A. (personal domain, standard 2, competency A). A sample of middle school themes might include: knowing myself and getting to know others; decision making and study skills; communication skills; community involvement; planning my career; self-esteem and coping skills; problem solving and conflict resolution; relationships and family; responsibility and educational planning; positive attitude and changes. Each theme is mapped to ensure that the nine themes cover the curriculum. Counselors will naturally have favorite domains, standards, and competencies and mapping themes balances the curricular content and activities.

When creating a set of nine themes, it is possible that some of the themes created will be overly general or overly specific. Mapping helps identify undesirable themes. If a theme can be seen to encompass too many domains, standards, and competencies (e.g., self-esteem) or too few (e.g., relaxation techniques), it can be replaced or grouped as a classroom lesson or group activity. When a set of nine is finalized, counselors may begin collecting activities for each month's theme. It is also noted that counselors may keep one set of nine for multiple years and change lessons

and activities each subsequent year. It is also possible to generate multiple sets of nine themes in an effort address the developmental differences among different aged students. Taken together, the multiple sets of nine themes should be mapped together to ensure that all the domains, standards, and competencies are addressed for the grade level (e.g., high school). It is recommended to start with one set of nine, teach lessons, and evaluate the results at the end of the year. Consequently, adjustments may be made to the themes, activities, or both.

Identifying and selecting activities for the themes can be most enjoyable part of curriculum development. Activities are chosen to address the domains and standards. Competencies are the student learning outcomes that are the result of learning new knowledge, attitudes, and skills. There are many curricular sources from which counselors can select activities. Many counselors have favorite lessons or activities that they have used over time. Appendix E contains a template that counselors can use to write down activities they have used from memory, or the template can be used when counselors meet and want to create new lessons from collaboration.

Summary

School counselors deliver counseling curricula which are based upon a school counseling program that seeks to enhance the personal, academic, and career development of all students in their schools. Using a variety of sources (several are included here), counselors can create a curricular framework that can originate simply, grow over time, and be modified continuously based upon the needs of students. Counselors are clever and creative professionals who are very capable of designing their own counseling curriculum that promotes student success and well-being.

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Appendix A

Examples of Domains and Standards

ASCA's Original National Standards (Campbell & Dahir, 1997)

Academic Development

- Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.

- Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide variety of substantial postsecondary options, including college.

- Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work, and to life at home and in the community.

Career Development

- Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.

- Students will employ strategies to achieve future career success and satisfaction.

- Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education and training, and the world of work.

Personal/Social Development

- Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

- Students will make decisions, set goals, and take appropriate action to achieve goals.

- Students will understand safety and survival skills.

Missouri School Counseling Program Curriculum Framework (Gysbers et al., 2017)

Academic Development

- Apply skills needed for educational achievement.

- Apply skills of transitioning between educational levels.

- Develop and monitor personal educational plans.

Career Development

- Apply career exploration and planning skills in the achievement of life career goals.

- Know where and how to obtain information about the world of work and post-secondary training/education.

- Apply skills for career readiness and success.

Social/Emotional Development

- Understand self as an individual and as a member of diverse local and global communities.

- Interact with others in ways that respect individual and group differences

- Apply personal safety skills and coping strategies.

National Career Development Guidelines Framework (NCDA, 2005)

Personal Social Development Domain

- PS1 Develop understanding of self to build and maintain a positive self-concept.

- PS2 Develop positive interpersonal skills including respect for diversity.

- PS3 Integrate growth and change into your career development.

- PS4 Balance personal, leisure, community, learner, family and work roles.

Educational Achievement and Lifelong Learning Domain

- ED1 Attain educational achievement and performance levels needed to reach your personal and career goals.

- ED2 Participate in ongoing, lifelong learning experiences to enhance your ability to function effectively in a diverse and changing economy.

Career Management Domain

- CM1 Create and manage a career plan that meets your career goals.

- CM2 Use a process of decision-making as one component of career development.

- CM3 Use accurate, current and unbiased career information during career planning and management.

- CM4 Master academic, occupational and general employability skills in order to obtain, create, maintain and/or advance your employment.

- CM5 Integrate changing employment trends, societal needs and economic conditions into your career plans.

Appendix B

An Example of Domains, Standards, & Competencies (adapted with permission from Nelson, 2011 using original ASCA standards, Campbell & Dahir, 1997)

Career Development

STANDARDS		
Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.	Students will employ strategies to achieve future career goals with success and satisfaction.	Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training and the world of work.
COMPETENCIES		
K-5 A. *Learn how to interact and work cooperative in teams* B. *Learn about the variety of traditional and nontraditional occupations* C. *Learn to make decisions* D. *Learn how to set goals* E. *Acquire employability skills such as working on a team, problem-solving, and organizational skills*	***K-5*** A. *Demonstrate knowledge of the career planning process* B. *Identify personal skills, interests, and abilities and relate them to current career choices*	***K-5*** A. *Learn to work cooperatively with others as a team member* B. *Identify personal preferences and interests which influence career choices and success* C. *Learn how to use conflict management skills with peers*
6-8 A. *Develop a positive attitude toward work and learning* B. *Develop skills to locate, evaluate, and interpret career information* C. *Develop an awareness of personal abilities, skills, interests, and motivations* D. *Understand the importance of planning* E. *Develop hobbies and avocational interests* F. *Utilize time- and task-management skills*	***6-8*** A. *Apply decision-making skills to career planning, course selection, and career transitions* B. *Describe traditional and nontraditional occupations and how these relate to career choice* C. *Demonstrate awareness of the education and training needed to achieve career goals* D. *Learn how to use the Internet to access career planning information*	***6-8*** A. *Demonstrate how interests, abilities, and achievement relate to achieving personal, social, educational, and career goals* B. *Understand the relationship between educational achievement and career success* C. *Explain how work can help to achieve personal success and satisfaction* D. *Understand that work is an important and satisfying means of personal expression*
9-12 A. *Pursue and develop competency in areas of interest* B. *Balance between work and leisure time* C. *Apply job readiness skills to seek employment opportunities* D. *Demonstrate knowledge about the changing workplace* E. *Learn about the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees* F. *Learn how to write a resume* G. *Understand the importance of responsibility, dependability, punctuality, integrity, and effort in the workplace* H. *Learn to respect individual uniqueness in the workplace*	***9-12*** A. *Use employability and job readiness skills in internship, mentoring, shadowing, and/or other world of work experiences* B. *Select course work that is related to career interests* C. *Assess and modify their educational plan to support career goals* D. *Know the various ways which occupations can be classified* E. *Use research and information resources to obtain career information* F. *Understand how changing economic and societal needs influence employment trends and future training* G. *Maintain a career planning portfolio*	***9-12*** A. *Understand that the changing workplace requires lifelong learning and acquiring new skills* B. *Describe the effect of work on lifestyle* C. *Understand the importance of equity and access in career choice* D. *Apply academic and employment readiness skills in work-based learning situations such as internships, shadowing, and/or mentoring experiences*

Academic Development

STANDARDS		
Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the lifespan.	Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial postsecondary options, including college.	Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work, and to life at home and in the community.
COMPETENCIES		
K-5 A. Take pride in work and in achievement B. Use communication skills to know when and how to ask for help when needed C. Articulate feelings of competence and confidence as a learner D. Accept mistakes as essential to the learning process E. Demonstrate how effort and persistence positively affect learning F. Take responsibility for their actions G. Demonstrate the ability to work independently, as well as the ability to work cooperatively with other students	*K-5* A. Establish challenging academic goals at each grade level B. Demonstrate the motivation to achieve individual potential C. Become self-directed and independent learners D. Understand the relationship between classroom performance and success in school E. Seek information and support from faculty, staff, family, and peers	*K-5* A. Seek co-curricular and community experiences to enhance the school experience B. Understand the relationship between learning and work
6-8 A. Display a positive interest in learning B. Apply time management and task management skills C. Develop a broad range of interests and abilities	*6-8* A. Apply the study skills necessary for academic success B. Use assessment results in educational planning C. Apply knowledge of aptitudes and interests to goal setting D. Use knowledge of learning styles to positively influence school performance	*6-8* A. Understand how school success and academic achievement enhance future career and avocation opportunities B. Demonstrate the ability to balance school, studies, extracurricular activities, leisure time, and family life
9-12 A. Identify attitudes and behaviors which lead to successful learning B. Apply knowledge of learning styles to positively influence school performance C. Demonstrate dependability, productivity, and initiative D. Share knowledge	*9-12* A. Learn and apply critical thinking skills B. Organize and apply academic information from a variety of sources C. Develop and implement an annual plan of study to maximize academic ability and achievement D. Use problem-solving and decision-making skills to assess progress toward educational goals E. Identify postsecondary options consistent with interests, aptitude, achievement, and abilities	*9-12* A. Understand that school success is the preparation to make the transition from student to community member B. Demonstrate an understanding of the value of lifelong learning as essential to seeking, obtaining, and maintaining life goals

Personal Development

STANDARDS		
Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.	Students will make decisions, set goals, and take necessary action to achieve goals.	Students will understand safety and survival skills.
COMPETENCIES		
K-6 A. Develop a positive attitude toward self as a unique and worthy person B. Identify and express feelings C. Distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors D. Learn how to make and keep friends E. Understand the need for self-control and how to practice it F. Learn the goal-setting process G. Recognize personal boundaries, rights, and privacy needs H. Demonstrate cooperative behavior in groups I. Identify personal strengths and assets J. Recognize that everyone has rights and responsibilities K. Recognize, accept, respect, and appreciate individual differences L. Recognize, accept, and appreciate ethnic and cultural diversity	**K-6** A. Demonstrate a respect and appreciation for individual and cultural differences B. Understand consequences of decisions and choices C. Demonstrate when, where, and how to seek help for solving problems and making decisions D. Know how to apply conflict resolution skills	**K-6** A. Demonstrate knowledge of personal information (i.e., telephone number, home address, emergency contact) B. Learn the difference between appropriate and inappropriate physical contact C. Demonstrate the ability to assert boundaries, rights, and personal privacy D. Learn techniques for managing stress and conflict E. Learn coping skills for managing life events
6-8 A. Identify values, attitudes, and beliefs B. Understand change as a part of growth C. Respect alternative points of view D. Use effective communication skills E. Know that communication involves speaking, listening, and nonverbal behavior	**6-8** A. Use a decision-making and problem-solving model B. Identify alternative solutions to a problem C. Develop effective coping skills for dealing with problems D. Know when peer pressure is influencing a decision E. Use persistence and perseverance in acquiring knowledge and skills	**6-8** A. Differentiate between situations requiring peer support and situations requiring adult professional help B. Apply effective problem-solving and decision-making skills to make safe and healthy choices C. Learn about the emotional and physical dangers of substance use and abuse D. Learn how to cope with peer pressure
9-12 A. Recognize and respect differences in various family configurations B. Identify and discuss changing personal and social roles C. Identify and recognize changing family roles	**9-12** A. Develop an action plan to set and achieve realistic goals B. Identify long-term and short-term goals C. Identify alternative ways of achieving goals	**9-12** A. Learn about the relationship between rules, laws, safety, and the protection of an individual's rights B. Identify resource people in the school and community, and know how to seek their help

Appendix C

Developmental Assets (Search Institute, 2007)

The Developmental Assets are concrete, positive experiences and qualities essential to raising successful young people. These assets have the power to influence choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible adults.

External Assets

The supports, opportunities, and relationships young people need across all aspects of their lives.

Support

- *Family support:* Family life provides high levels of love and support.

- *Positive family communication:* Young person and their parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek parent(s) advice and counsel.

- *Other adult relationships:* Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.

- *Caring neighborhood:* Young person experiences caring neighbors.

- *Caring school climate:* School provides a caring, encouraging environment.

- *Parent involvement in schooling:* Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

Empowerment

- *Community values youth:* Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.

- *Youth as resources:* Young people are given useful roles in the community.

- *Service to others:* Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.

- *Safety:* Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.

Boundaries and Expectations

- *Family boundaries:* Family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors the young person's whereabouts.

- *School boundaries:* School provides clear rules and consequences.

- *Neighborhood boundaries:* Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.

- *Adult role models:* Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.

- *Positive peer influence:* Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.

- *High expectations:* Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

Constructive Use of Time

- *Creative activities:* Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.

- *Youth programs:* Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.

- *Religious community:* Young person spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.

- *Time at home:* Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

Internal Assets

The personal skills, commitments, and values they need to make good choices, take responsibility for their own lives, and be independent and fulfilled.

Commitment to Learning

- *Achievement motivation:* Young person is motivated to do well in school.

- *School engagement:* Young person is actively engaged in learning.

- *Homework:* Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.

- *Bonding to school:* Young person cares about her or his school.

- *Reading for pleasure*: Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Positive Values

- *Caring:* Young person places high value on helping other people.

- *Equality and social justice:* Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.

- *Integrity:* Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.

- *Honesty:* Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."

- *Responsibility:* Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.

- Restraint: Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Social Competencies

- *Planning and decision making:* Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.

- *Interpersonal competence:* Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.

- *Cultural competence:* Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.

- *Resistance skills:* Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.

- *Peaceful conflict resolution:* Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Positive Identity

- *Personal power:* Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."

- *Self-esteem:* Young person reports having a high self-esteem.

- *Sense of purpose:* Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."

- *Positive view of personal future:* Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

Appendix D

Examples of Organizing Theme Development and Classroom Activities

Planning Curricular Themes

In the space below, list 12 topics/themes (4 career, 4 academic, and 4 personal) that you believe form overarching themes important for students in your school. For example: career choices, study skills, understanding others, or community service.

School Counseling Curriculum Themes

C	C
C	C
A	A
A	A
P	P
P	P

Now, eliminate one theme from each of the 4 so that nine themes remain. Do they work for all grade levels in the building? If not, devising additional sets of nine for the other grade levels is advised. Once the themes are decided, the standards and competencies based on the specific grade level need to be categorize into each of the themes.

A curriculum based on the standards (there are nine standards) or the domains (academic, career, and personal) can be set up, but I have personally found that students respond more favorably to life themes rather than to academic or standards jargon. Once the themes and the curricular approach have been identified, the classroom activities that will assist students in meeting the standards need to be determined.

Appendix E

Activity Template

Title of Activity

<u>Domains and Standards</u>

<u>Materials</u>

<u>Activity</u>

<u>Estimated Time</u>

<u>Specific Suggestions or Follow-up Discussion Questions</u>