

Aligning School Counselors, Comprehensive School Counseling Programs, and  
the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

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### Abstract

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act contains numerous implications for school counselors, but the affects of NCLB on school counselors' roles and identities has not been thoroughly explored. Further, ways comprehensive school counseling programs and school counselors can thrive while striving to meet the goals of NCLB have been ignored in previous research. Therefore, in this manuscript, the school counseling related facets of NCLB were presented, school counselors' roles according to the legislation were discussed, and empirically supported school counseling interventions available for meeting the goals of NCLB were highlighted. Implications for practicing school counselors concluded the manuscript.

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The American educational system has responded to political changes caused by the most recent reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, currently known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. An increased focus on accountability for student learning and closing the achievement gap (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b) was demanded and the face of American education has changed (Taylor & Davis, 2004), and with it, the role of some school counselors has evolved. To meet NCLB requirements, some school counselors now perform additional roles: they must account for student success rates, attendance rates, and increase their testing duties and academic focus, while at the same time they are not seen as integral parts of the educational system (Taylor & Davis, 2004; Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006). These additional duties come often at the cost of attending to the social and emotional needs of students (Taylor & Davis, 2004; Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006), despite the fact that the role of school counselors is not explicitly enumerated in the current legislation. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2005) has proposed a comprehensive framework to enable school counselors to take a proactive approach in their efforts towards meeting NCLB and programmatic goals; integrating the framework into every school will not only help school counselor better define their roles and become recognized as integral parts of the education system, but also aid schools across America as they strive to meet the evolving goals of NCLB.

In its current form the NCLB legislation does not explicitly enumerate the role of school counselors. However, research suggests some school counselors' duties have

changed or increased as a result of the heightened accountability standards imposed by NCLB legislation (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006; Mitcham-Smith, 2007; Walsh, Barret, & DePaul, 2007; Taylor & Davis, 2004; Dahir & Stone, 2003; Lewis & Borunda, 2006; Galassi & Akos, 2007). Due to the lack of specific guidelines within NCLB, school counselors' roles vary widely, which, at times, affects the well-being of the students for whom the legislation seeks to protect and advocate.

The purpose of this article is to critically analyze the available research concerning NCLB legislation and the role of school counselors, in an effort to identify implications for school counseling practices. Effective and empirically supported strategies, coupled with data driven results, are of particular interest. Although school counselors have at times been excluded in school reform literature, they are in a unique position to exert a powerful influence (Stone & Clark, 2001; National Center for Transforming School Counseling at the Education Trust, 2003). Aligning the roles of school counselors with school counseling related goals within the NCLB legislation can ultimately improve the lives of the nation's students. An illustration of an empirically supported strategy that meets both NCLB and programmatic goals is presented herein, and provides implications for school counseling practices today and in the future.

#### Facets of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

NCLB is built on four pillars: accountability for results; an emphasis on doing what works, using practices based on scientific research; expanded parental options; and expanded local control and flexibility (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a). These four pillars are organized using Titles.

Three sections do not directly address pupil services personnel. Title VI focuses on assessments required under No Child Left Behind and how the new program will support the development and implementation of state assessments; Title VIII focuses on impact aid and how it provides financial assistance to school districts affected by federal activities; and finally Title IX is an overarching section that focuses on general provisions that affect all programs under the No Child Left Behind Act. These three sections have been excluded due to their indirect impact on school counselors. While each Title is important; Titles I through V and VII have direct relation to school counseling and student support services activities and will be detailed further.

### Defined Roles of the School Counselor

#### *School Counselor's Roles according to NCLB*

*Title I.* Title I is the most commonly discussed part of NCLB due to the financial support, through various grant opportunities, to many school districts across the United States. The purpose of Title I is to “ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a).

The school counseling related facets of this part of the law include:

- (a) Local Education Agency Plans, which are developed in consultation with pupil services personnel, and aim to help identified low-achieving children meet challenging academic standards [20 U.S.C. § 6311 (2001)] and provide for potential professional development for pupil services personnel [20 U.S.C. § 6312 (2001)]. These programs take into account the experience of

model programs for the educationally disadvantaged and the findings of relevant scientifically based research indicating services may be most effective if focused on students in the earliest grades [20 U.S.C. § 6312 (2001)].

- (b) Accountability standards, such as adequate yearly progress, that rely on graduation rates, grade-to-grade retention rates, and attendance rates [20 U.S.C. § 6311 (2001)].
- (c) Annual State Report Cards, which may include school attendance rates, the incidence of school violence, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, student suspensions, student expulsions, and the extent and type of parental involvement in the schools [20 U.S.C. § 6311 (2001)].
- (d) School-wide Programs implemented in response to comprehensive needs assessments of the entire school and include strategies to address the needs of all children in the school. Programs include, but are not limited to, counseling, pupil services, mentoring services, and college and career awareness and preparation, such as college and career guidance. All programs under this facet must also address how the school will determine if the targeted needs have been met [20 U.S.C. § 6314 (2001)], and support the opportunity for high-quality and ongoing professional development for pupil services personnel [20 U.S.C. § 6314 (2001)].
- (e) Targeted Assistance Schools, schools which qualify for funding through this clause, may utilize the funds for programs providing services to eligible children. The funds available as a result of this part may be used for

professional development necessary to assist pupil services personnel [20 U.S.C. § 6315 (2001)].

- (f) School Support Teams, which are composed of persons knowledgeable about scientifically based research and practice on teaching and learning and about successful school-wide projects, school reform, and improving educational opportunities for low-achieving students, including pupil services personnel [20 U.S.C. § 6317 (2001)].
- (g) Parental Involvement Programs jointly developed with parents designed to compel schools to develop a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement. The program must also detail the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State's high standards. This facet also compels local educational agency's to educate pupil services personnel, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with, parents as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school [20 U.S.C. § 6318 (2001)].
- (h) Education of Migratory Children provision, which supports high quality and comprehensive educational programs for migratory children to help reduce the educational disruptions and other problems that result from repeated moves and ensure, to the extent feasible, that such programs and projects will provide for advocacy and outreach activities for migratory children and

their families. The program and projects include informing such children and families of, or helping such children and families gain access to, other education, health, nutrition, and social services [20 U.S.C. § 6394 (2001)], and programs to facilitate the transition of secondary school students to postsecondary education or employment [20 U.S.C. § 6394 (2001)].

- (i) Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk, that provide for essential support services to ensure the success of the youth, such as, personal, vocational, technical, and academic counseling, placement services designed to place the youth in a university, college, or junior college program, and information concerning and assistance in obtaining available student financial aid, counseling services, and job placement services [20 U.S.C. § 6438 (2001)]. These programs also provide services to students at-risk of dropping out of school focused on meeting the transitional and academic needs of the students returning from correctional facilities [20 U.S.C. § 6452 (2001)], mentoring services [20 U.S.C. § 6453 (2001)], and career counseling and peer mediation services [20 U.S.C. § 6454. (2001)].
- (j) Comprehensive School Reform efforts supported by teachers, principals, administrators, school personnel staff, and other professional staff provides financial incentives for schools to develop comprehensive school reform that employ proven strategies and proven methods for student learning, integrates comprehensive designs for effective school functioning, including classroom management, high quality and continuous professional



development for teachers and staff, and parental involvement [20 U.S.C. § 6516 (2001)].

- (k) The reauthorization of the Access the Higher Standards Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6531 (2001), under which school counselors are expected to disseminate information regarding the availability of advanced placement test fee payments to eligible students [20 U.S.C. § 6534 (2001)].
- (l) The reauthorization of the Dropout Prevention Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6551 (2001), which provides for school dropout prevention and reentry and raises academic achievement levels by providing funding in an effort to challenge all children to attain their highest academic potential; funding under this provision may be applied towards professional development, release time for professional staff to obtain professional development, counseling and mentoring for at-risk students, and implementing comprehensive school reform models [20 U.S.C. 6561a (2001)].
- (m) A State committee of practitioners which advises each respective State in carrying out their responsibilities under Title I. Pupil personnel services members are eligible to be a part of this committee [20 U.S.C. 6573 (2001)].

*Title II.* Title II continues to provide financial support to State educational agencies, but under this part, the funding is provided to increase student academic achievement by improving teacher and principal quality and holding local educational agencies accountable for improvements in student academic achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a).

Funds provided under Title II may be used to develop and implement mechanisms to assist local educational agencies and schools in effectively recruiting and retaining pupil services personnel [20 U.S.C. 6613 (2001)]. When applying for these funds local education agencies are required to submit a plan enumerating how they will provide training to teachers to improve student behavior in the classroom and identify early and appropriate interventions to help students with different learning styles, particularly students with disabilities, students with special learning needs (including students who are gifted and talented), and students with limited English proficiency [20 U.S.C. § 6622 (2001)].

*Title III.* Title III serves many purposes, but in short, seeks to provide funding to ensure immigrant students and limited English proficient students are provided a sound education and afforded opportunities to succeed. While most of the grant funding provided through Title III is allocated for instructional purposes, a portion is available for better preparing pupil services personnel to work with this population. A professional development grant is available to prepare educators to improve educational services for limited English proficient children through professional development programs and activities. These programs and activities must prepare pupil service personnel, and other educational personnel, working in language instruction educational programs to provide effective services to limited English proficient children [20 U.S.C. § 6951 (2001)].

*Title IV.* A reauthorization of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act which aims to support programs preventing violence in and around schools; that prevent the illegal use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs; that involve parents and

communities; and that are coordinated with related Federal, State, school, and community efforts and resources to foster a safe and drug-free learning environment. These environments must support student academic achievement through the provision of Federal assistance [20 U.S.C. § 7102 (2001)].

Local educational agencies that receive funding through Title IV are compelled to use funds to develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive programs and activities, which are coordinated with other school and community based services and programs, that foster a safe and drug-free learning environments to support academic achievement and create well disciplined environments conducive to learning. These programs include consultation between teachers, principals, and other school personnel to identify early warning signs of drug use and violence and to provide behavioral interventions as part of classroom management efforts [20 U.S.C. § 7115 (2001)]. Funds acquired through Title IV may be used for multiple preventive activities and professional development in prevention, education, early identification and intervention, mentoring, or rehabilitation referral, related to drug and violence prevention [20 U.S.C. § 7115 (2001)]. Prevention activities under this part include expanded and improved school-based mental health services related to illegal drug use and violence, including early identification of violence and illegal drug use, assessment, and direct or group counseling services provided to students, parents, families, and school personnel by qualified school-based mental health service providers, as well as counseling, mentoring, referral services, and other student assistance practices and programs. These programs include assistance provided by qualified school-based mental health services providers and the training of teachers by school-based mental health services

providers in appropriate identification and intervention techniques for students at risk of violent behavior and illegal use of drugs [20 U.S.C. § 7115 (2001)].

*Title V.* This portion of the law has five main purposes; however, only two pertain to the school counseling profession: the fourth and the fifth. The fourth delineated purpose of Title V is to meet the educational needs of all students, including at-risk youth [20 U.S.C. § 7201 (2001)]; and the fifth and final purpose is to develop and implement education programs to improve school, student, and teacher performance, including professional development activities and class size reduction programs [20 U.S.C. § 7201 (2001)]. Funds allocated for these purposes may be used to develop programs to improve the academic achievement of educationally disadvantaged elementary school and secondary school students, including activities to prevent students from dropping out of school [20 U.S.C. § 7215 (2001)]. Funds can also be used to expand and improve school-based mental health services, including early identification of drug use and violence, assessment, and direct individual or group counseling services provided to students, parents, and school personnel by qualified school-based mental health services personnel [20 U.S.C. § 7215 (2001)]. Funds can be used to create academic intervention programs operated jointly with community-based organizations to support academic enrichment and counseling programs conducted during the school day, (including during extended school day or extended school year programs), for students most at risk of not meeting challenging State academic achievement standards or not completing secondary school [20 U.S.C. § 7215 (2001)].

Part B of this facet also extends funding specifically to expand elementary and secondary school counseling programs. In awarding grants under Title V, special consideration is given to applications describing programs that demonstrate the greatest need for new or additional counseling services among children in the schools served by the local educational agency, in part by providing information on current ratios of students to school counselors, students to school social workers, and students to school psychologists. Special consideration is also give to applications proposing the most promising and innovative approaches for initiating or expanding school counseling and which show the greatest potential for replication and dissemination [U.S.C. § 7245 (2001)]. The law further specifies that school based mental health services providers paid from Title V funds spend a majority of their time counseling students or in other activities directly related to the counseling process [U.S.C. § 7245 (2001)].

*Title VII.* The enumerated purpose of this Title is to support the efforts of local educational agencies, Indian tribes and organizations, postsecondary institutions, and other entities to meet the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students so these students can meet the same challenging State student academic achievement standards as all other students [20 U.S.C. § 7402 (2001)]. Activities that may be funded under Title VII include comprehensive guidance, counseling, and testing services for American Indian and Alaska Native children [20 U.S.C. § 7441 (2001)], counseling and support services for students receiving scholarship assistance, and counseling and guidance for Native Hawaiian secondary students who have the potential to receive scholarships [20 U.S.C. § 7515 (2001)].

While the school counseling related goals and school counselor roles as defined by NCLB are important to understand, so too are the roles set forth by authoritative bodies such as ASCA. Once the vast and evolving roles of school counselors are understood, effective strategies for meeting the school counseling related goals of NCLB may be easier to grasp.

#### The ASCA Comprehensive Model and NCLB

The American School Counseling Association supports school counselors' efforts in positively impacting the academic, personal/social and career development of students. The goal is for students to achieve success in school and lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society (<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>). Further, by aligning the ASCA National Model with the school counseling related facets of NCLB, it can be inferred that the ASCA National Model encompasses all the roles enumerated in NCLB (see Figure 1).

As Figure 1 depicts, each school counseling related facet of NCLB can be met through the school counseling Delivery System alone. This holds significant implications for school counselors. According to Paone and Lepkowski (2007), "in a number of ways, NCLB and the ASCA National Model align" (p. 4). However, ASCA goes further to promote a programmatic approach, coupled with student competencies, that define the knowledge, attitudes or skills students should obtain or demonstrate as a result of participating in a comprehensive school counseling program which is evaluated by way of the accountability system, while NCLB measures AYP through test results only. The programmatic approach developed by ASCA is multifaceted and not only meets the

goals of comprehensive school counseling programs, but also provides ample opportunities for school counselors to meet the goals of NCLB as depicted in Figure 1.

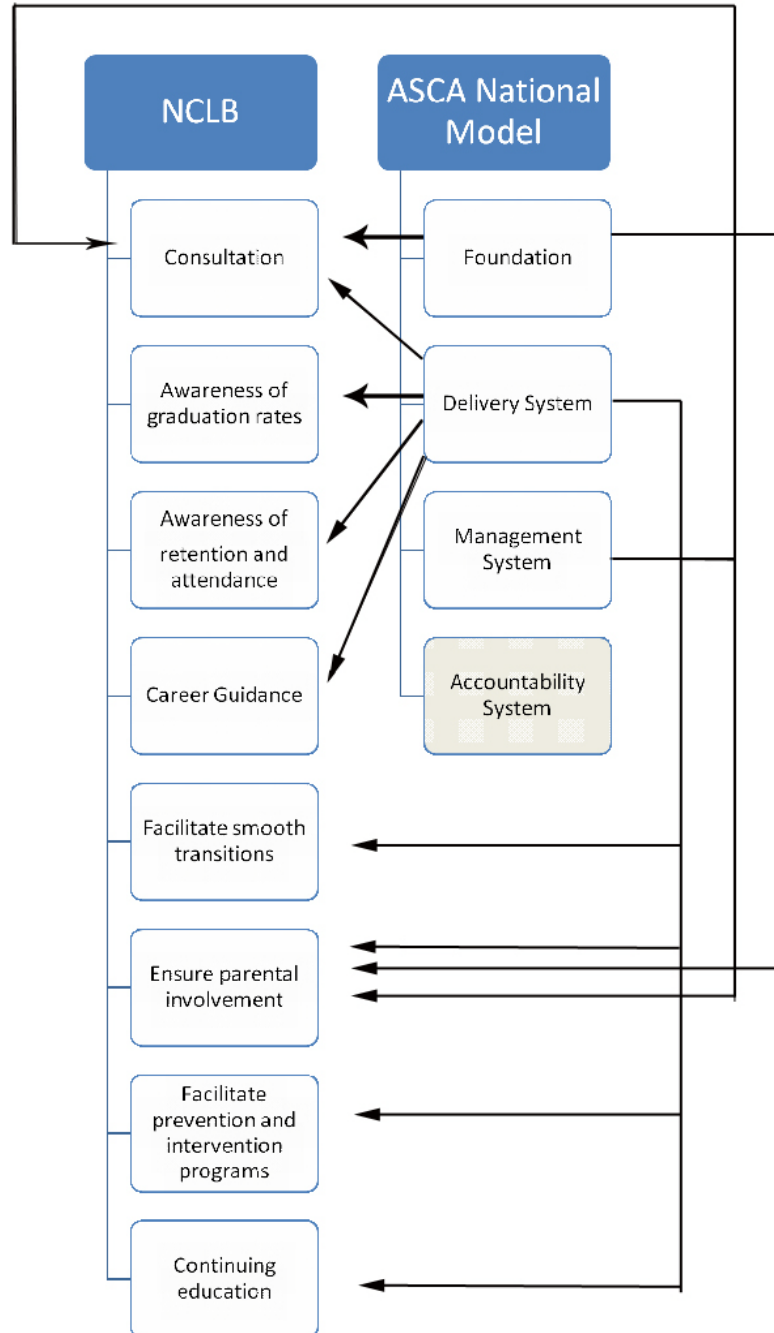


Figure 1. The ASCA National Model and NCLB showing how each aspect of NCLB can be satisfied by different systems within the ASCA National Model.

### School Accountability, the ASCA National Model and NCLB

The national emphasis on accountability for schools has resulted in a renewed emphasis on accountability for school counselors (Dahir, 2004). While a myriad of research currently exists that demonstrates the general effectiveness of school counseling (e.g. Whiston and Sexton, 1998; Borders and Drury, 1992; Gerler, 1985; St. Clair, 1989; and Wilson, 1986); the current form of NCLB requires that interventions be supported by scientifically based research.

Numerous authors (Borders & Drury, 1992; Gerler, 1985; McGannon, Carey & Demmitt, 2005; St. Clair, 1989; Whiston & Sexton, 1998; Wilson, 1986) have presented literature reviews supporting the general effectiveness of assorted school counseling interventions. Their work concluded that school counseling interventions had a substantial impact on students' educational, social, career and personal development. Further, comprehensive, developmental programs, like the ASCA National Model, have been shown to positively impact student outcomes and educational experiences (McGannon et al., 2005). Despite the research that exists regarding the effectiveness of the school counseling profession, the professional duties of some school counselors are continuing to change in response to school reform efforts. Research suggests that school counselors are becoming even more accountable for what they do in response to NCLB (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006), and in turn their focus is shifting away from personal/social concerns.

The question of whether school counseling is effective will not be reviewed further here. The ASCA Web site (<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?pl=>



133&sl=241&contentid=241) lists numerous studies in assorted areas of school counseling supporting the effectiveness of school counseling interventions. The authors outlined above have produced reviews of the effectiveness of school counseling interventions throughout the last thirty years. Instead, we will focus on school counseling outcome based research that specifically addresses the school counseling related goals of NCLB. It is not only important for school counselors to understand how NCLB is changing the profession, but what strategies can be employed to meet the goals of NCLB while maintaining a focus on programmatic goals. Schools across the nation have responded by employing a variety of strategies, however, NCLB encourages schools to utilize methods based upon scientific research. "The National Panel for School Counseling Evidence-Based Practice was established by the Center for School Counseling Outcome Research to improve the practice of school counseling by helping to develop the research base that is necessary for responsible and effective practice" (Carey, Demmitt, Hatch, Lapan, & Whiston, 2008, p. 197).

#### The Current Status of School Counseling Outcome Research Related to NCLB

Presently, there is a dearth of empirical research on effective school counseling practice in relation to NCLB. Publications that do suggest effective practices in response to NCLB mandates are mainly hypothetical in nature. In an effort to assist practicing school counselors with broadening the empirically supported school counseling intervention pool, the National Panel for School Counseling Evidence-Based Practice panel members are currently evaluating existing methods of evidence-based practice by reviewing the research literature (McGannon et al., 2005). The National Panel for School Counseling Evidence-Based Practice's parent organization, the Center for

School Counseling Outcome Research, has completed one research monograph regarding school counseling outcome research and how the issues relate to NCLB. Together these two entities are leading the way in furthering how school counselors meet their goals.

McGannon et al. (2005) reviewed school counseling outcome literature spanning 20 years, from 1985 to 2005, and found several very well done studies and many studies that were not done quite as well. Their review of the school counseling outcome literature highlighted that delivering classroom guidance lessons, providing group, peer and individual counseling are all effective means of meeting the goals of NCLB. However, the highlighted school counseling practices lacked strong empirical research supporting their use.

In identifying school counseling interventions supported by research, the National Panel for School Counseling Evidence-Based Practice adopted a standardized method for evaluating the interventions (see Carey et al., 2008 for further details). The most important standard to recognize in terms of the literature presented herein are the three categories used to evaluate interventions: strong evidence, promising evidence, and weak evidence; only interventions that present strong evidence in each of the seven domains discussed in Carey et al., 2008 will be presented here. One intervention receiving strong support was the Second Step intervention (Carey et al., 2008).

The Second Step Program focused on positively impacting social and emotional aspects of learning, resulting in improved academics. The program curriculum delivers tools for teachers and administrators, including puppets, teaching curriculum, and other helpful tools. The program focuses on both elementary and junior high aged children,

educating students in problem solving skills, social skills, and other emotional skills beneficial to cooperation and positive human interaction. The goal is for students to apply these new skills to numerous environments, including at home, at school, and in public (Carey et al., 2008; Committee for Children, 2009).

Last year the National Panel for School Counseling Evidence-Based Practice began the evaluation of the scientific research evidence supporting the effectiveness of the Second Step interventions (Carey et al., 2008). According to the Committee for Children (2009), the Second Step violence prevention program successfully integrates academics with social and emotional learning; teaching vital social skills, such as empathy, emotion management, problem solving, and cooperation. The Second Step curriculum can be integrated into school counseling delivery systems through the classroom guidance component. The intervention also shows promise for meeting the goals of NCLB and school counselors' programmatic goals.

Following a thorough evaluation, the panel concluded Second Step was an exceptionally well-researched intervention. The scope and quality of its research base have been greatly enabled by federal funding for violence prevention (Carey et al., 2008). The program has also been endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education as an exemplary safe, disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools program and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has named Second Step a promising program in the domain of violence prevention in schools (Carey et al., 2008). The results of the evaluation show strong support for this intervention with few reservations, making it the only effective and empirically supported strategy with data driven results available for meeting the

school counseling related goals of NCLB, as evaluated by the National Panel for School Counseling Evidence-Based Practice. However, in its current form, this intervention only addresses one school counseling related facet of NCLB (see Figure 2).

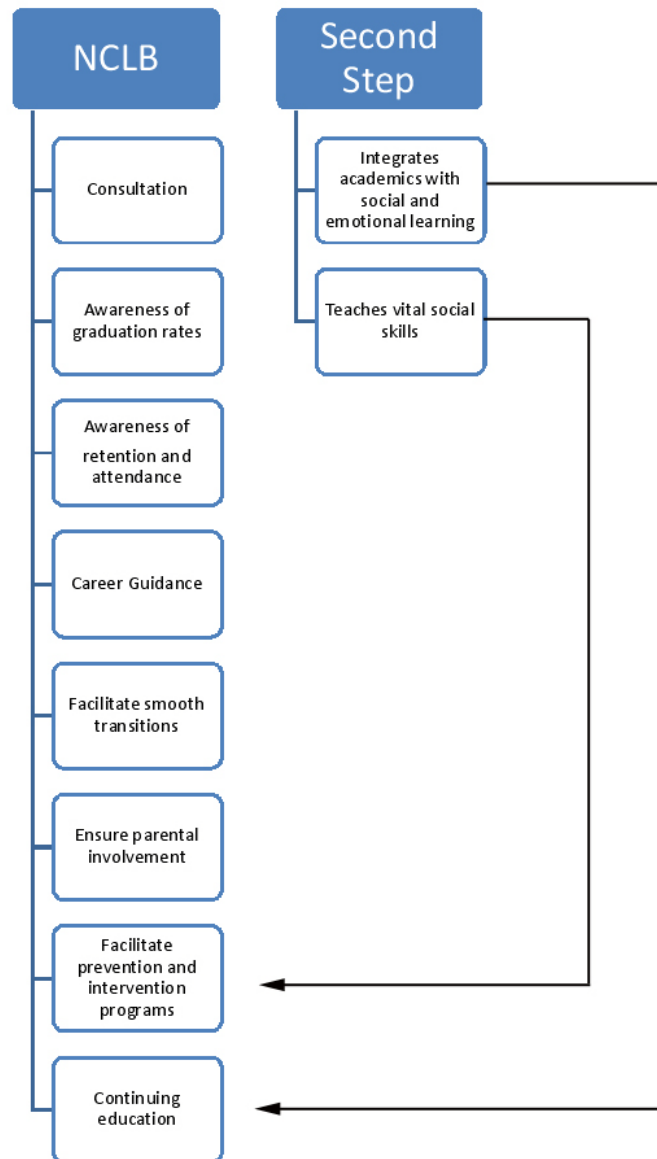


Figure 2. The ASCA National Model and Second Step showing which aspects of NCLB can be satisfied through the Second Step Program.

Figure Two illustrates the reality of outcome based strategies available for school counselors to utilize in meeting the school counseling related goals of NCLB. While research suggests many school counselors are and have been utilizing effective strategies (Borders & Drury, 1992; Gerler, 1985; St. Clair, 1989; Wilson, 1986; Whiston & Sexton, 1998), those strategies are not currently supported with empirical research that meet the rigorous empirical research standards set forth by NCLB. Definitive practices that can be employed at this point to ensure that the goals of NCLB and programmatic goals are met are the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum and implementation of the ASCA National Model. These findings imply that school counselors can be effective by implementing comprehensive programs, such as the ASCA National Model, which encompasses and enumerates a sound delivery system, while including the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum as one of the guidance curriculum units within that delivery system. These strategies are a small step in the directions of meeting the requirements of NCLB now and in the future.

#### Future Research and Implications for School Counselors

“The school counseling community has never been in a better situation to position itself at the forefront of school improvement and educational change” (Dahir, 2004). School counselors are no longer in a precarious position, serving schools at the mercy of their administrators. The end of the struggle for role definition and national support of comprehensive, developmental programs could be on the horizon. Currently, NCLB focuses heavily on academic proficiency and accountability and detracts from needed attention to the personal, social, and emotional development of children (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006). Although school counselors may better serve all

students and school reform efforts through the implementation of comprehensive, developmental programs they still face many difficulties in their implementation. School counselors in the field must implement action research to support effective interventions, while demonstrating how they align with current standards for empirically supported interventions. Meeting these challenges will not only preserve the school counseling profession, but set a standard for the future that all school counselors and stakeholders can appreciate.

Much of the research consulted in this endeavor suggested that additional outcome-based research be done by school counselors (Foster, Young, & Hermann, 2005). It is imperative school counselors in the field complete more action research in an effort to expand the empirically supported interventions currently available and then move towards creating manuals to compliment the ASCA National Model. How those interventions can be reflected in the Delivery System of school counselors nationwide should also be outlined in the research.

In addition to addressing the need for more research, school counselors in the field must ensure they adopt a leadership role, which will better allow them to define their role, adopt a comprehensive, programmatic approach, and utilize data effectively.

### *Leadership Roles*

The ASCA has highlighted the importance of leadership, placing it in the themes that surround the context of the school counselors' work described in the ASCA National Model (Dollarhide, Gibson, & Saginak, 2008). School counselors must take a stance regarding their professional identity, program development, and accountability outcomes for all students (Lewis & Borunda, 2006) as they form an alliance with the

principal in their schools. According to Dollaride, Smith, and Lemberger (2007), “principals desire school counselors who are communicative, systemic in their work, student-focused, and able to take on leadership roles in the school” (p. 366). School counselors exercise leadership through increased collaboration and consultation interventions with significant people in the lives of students, including parents, community members, agencies and other stakeholders in the education process.

### *Role Definition*

According to Paisley and McMahon (2001), the most significant challenge for school counselors is role definition; however, little research has been presented in response to how this challenge has been affected by the mandates of NCLB. School counselors are charged with the duty of defining their role in an effort to allow themselves ample opportunities to be effective. When school counselors fail to define their role in alignment with the mission of the school and their community, school administrators, parents with special interests, teachers, or others may make their agenda the counselor’s priority (Cambell & Dahir, 1997).

### *Adoption of a Comprehensive, Programmatic Approach*

School counselors can advocate for the academic success for every students while delivering the content of a school counseling program in a comprehensive and accountable manner (Dahir & Stone, 2004). Previous school reform efforts prompted the ASCA to focus significant efforts and resources to advocate for the establishments of school counseling programs (Dahir, 2001). School counseling programs defined by statements of what students should know and be able to do are effective, accountable, viable, and visible in the eyes of stakeholders (Dahir, 2004) and support the school

counseling related goals of NCLB. The ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2005) is not only comprehensive, but also takes a programmatic approach, addressing the needs of all students, while defining a consistent identity and philosophy for school counselors (Walsh, Barret, & DePaul, 2007). School counselors demonstrating the alignment of their programs with standards-based reform show how they share accountability for results that contribute to student achievement (Dahir, 2004) and are equipped with the tools to demonstrate their effectiveness.

School counselors can align the goals of NCLB and their comprehensive programs by (a) aligning their student targets with the goals of school reform, (b) using evidence-based best practices, and (c) reporting outcome-based data as way of ensuring accountability of their work with students and their caregivers (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Green & Keys, 2001; Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Myrick, 2003). Further, school counselors should commit to a programmatic approach that is systemic in impact, aligned with the mission of the school and collaboratively developed and delivered (Dahir & Stone, 2003) and move toward utilizing action research coupled with sound data to further the effectiveness of their school counseling interventions.

#### *Use of Data*

Legislators, school boards, administrators, and faculty concerned with accountability may not view the work of school counselors as an effective utilization of financial resources to improve student achievement (Dahir & Stone, 2004; Studer, Oberman, & Womack, 2006), unless school counselors begin to utilize data they have access to each day to showcase the effectiveness of their services. Critical data and



files, including reports of whole school and individual student progress or failure, student placements information, academic success and failure of all students, course-taking patterns, and faculty and students performance information, cross school counselor's desks each day (House & Hayes, 2002). Closely examining these critical data elements in the areas of attendance, socioeconomic impact on class enrollment, graduation and postsecondary planning rates, and standardized testing results can help school counselor identify the needs of their students and systemic barriers that impede student success (Dahir & Stone, 2003).

### Conclusion

NCLB will continue to evolve. It is important that school counselors become partners in the change process and rise to the challenges faced in the wake of those changes without sacrificing their roles in the schools. School reform driven by NCLB has shaped the school counseling profession for too long. School counselors must continue to advocate for a clear professional identity, while educating stakeholders on what they do best, how they do it, and what outcomes can be expected in an effort to reform the school counseling profession for the better. The research concerning effective and empirically supported strategies coupled with data driven results for meeting the school counseling related goals of NCLB is currently insufficient. Comprehensive, programmatic approaches are not implemented in every school, despite the sound research supporting them. School counselors in the field must heed this opportunity to be proactive in school reform rather than react to the mandates that have shaped the school counseling profession from its inception.

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