

Recommended and Non-Recommended Tasks for School Counselors

School counselors' duties are focused on the overall program delivery of the comprehensive school counseling program—direct and indirect student services, program management, and school support. Administrators are encouraged to eliminate or reassign inappropriate tasks, allowing school counselors to focus on the prevention and intervention needs of their program. The following chart represents a comparison between the two similar types of activities and serves as a helpful tool when explaining school counseling program activities to teachers and/or administrators.

Recommended Activities for School Counselors	Not Recommended Activities for School Counselors	Rationale
Keeping school administration updated about pertinent and important information about student wellbeing	Reporting details about students to school administration	School counselors have an ethical obligation to maintain the confidentiality of conversations with students. Outside of “need to know” information (exceptions to confidentiality such as risk of harm to oneself, by others, or toward others), all information should be kept confidential in order to build and maintain effective counseling relationships.
Advocating for students at individual education plan (IEP) meetings, student study teams and school attendance review boards	Preparation of individual education plans (IEP) and facilitating student study teams	Learning Support teachers are specialists in preparing and facilitating IEPs and student study teams. School counselors serve as advocates for students with special needs, encourage family involvement in their child’s education and collaborate with other educational professionals to promote academic achievement, social/emotional wellness and college/career readiness for all.
Working with students to provide individual, small- and large-group counseling services	Provide on-going therapy or long-term counseling in schools to address psychological disorders	Counseling is planned and goal focused, and is short term in nature. School counselors do not provide therapy or long-term counseling in schools to address psychological disorders. School counselors are trained to respond to student mental health crises and need to address these barriers to student success by offering education, prevention, and crisis and short-term intervention until the student is connected with available community resources if needed.
Providing recommendations for school staff regarding wellness activities and advocating for mental health support	Providing counseling to school staff	<p>The primary role of school counselors is to support students. Providing counseling to staff would take time away from students and has the potential to interfere with the need to maintain working relationships with colleagues.</p> <p>We know that in many international school settings, school counselors may be the only resource in a community available to counsel families. However, it is not always appropriate or within a counselor’s scope of practice to provide regular ongoing therapy to staff, families and students.</p>

Recommended Activities for School Counselors	Not Recommended Activities for School Counselors	Rationale
Assisting the school principal with identifying and resolving student issues, needs and problems	Assisting with duties in the principal's office	<p>Assisting with the daily routine and duties of the principal's office is beyond the scope of the role of the counselor and takes away counselors' responsibilities.</p> <p>School counselors should serve on leadership teams and should be involved in decision making that impacts student success.</p>
Being visible and approachable for students as much as possible	Providing supervisory duties	School counselors placed in a role of possible disciplinarian has the potential to damage the counseling relationship and/or perception of counselors.
Collaborating with teachers to present school counseling core curriculum and SEL lessons	Teaching classes when teachers are absent or being the primary person responsible for teaching SEL lessons	<p>Teaching SEL is a shared and collaborative responsibility with everyone in the school building.</p> <p>Being the primary person to plan and deliver SEL lessons would require more time than would be feasible to manage other aspects of a counseling program such as individual counseling and responsive services.</p>
Counseling students as to appropriate school dress code	Sending students home who are not dressed according to the school's dress code	Serving as the person to send a student home, places the counselor in the role of a disciplinarian which can damage the counseling relationship.
Counseling students with disciplinary problems	Performing disciplinary actions	Disciplining students can damage the counseling relationship.
Counseling students who are tardy or absent	Responsibility for signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent	<p>Counseling students to explore reasons for ongoing occurrences is a preventative measure to support student success.</p> <p>Tardies and absences can have a negative outcome on a student's academic success and can be an indicator of other concerns in a student's life.</p>
Individual student academic program planning	Registration and scheduling of students	Counselor's time is best devoted to supporting students to explore academic options that align with students' aspirations.
Interpreting cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests	Coordinating, proctoring or administering cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests	Counselors are trained to interpret these tests which is a specialized skill. Rather than spend time administering, proctoring and coordinating tests, school counselors' time is better used providing direct and indirect counseling services.

Recommended Activities for School Counselors	Not Recommended Activities for School Counselors	Rationale
Interpreting student records	Maintaining student records	School counselors have specialized skills and training to interpret student records. Maintaining records should be managed by support staff members which will allow the school counselor to spend more time in direct services to students.
Analyzing grade-point averages in relationship to achievement	Computing grade-point averages	Counselor's time is best spent analyzing data and meeting with students to review their GPA and personal and academic goals.
Disaggregated data analysis	Data entry	Data entry should be managed by support staff members which will allow the school counselor to spend more time planning and delivering programs and activities requiring specialized skills and training.
Ensuring that student records are maintained as per school regulations	Clerical record-keeping	School counselors are familiar with the contents of student records. Maintaining student records should be managed by support staff members which will allow the school counselor to spend more time in direct services to students.

References and Acknowledgements

- Adapted from the Sample School Annual Agreement from the American International School Bucharest, Romania.
- American School Counselor Association. (2016). ASCA ethical standards for school counselors. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- American School Counselor Association (2019). ASCA school counselor professional standards & competencies. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- American School Counselor Association (2019) The School Counselor and Use of Support Staff in School Counseling Programs. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-StatementsThe-Professional-Counselor-and-Use-of-Support-Staff>
- Fezler, B. and Brown, C. International School Counseling Association. (2011). International model for school counseling programs.