Volume 25, 2017

# From Your GSCA President

## Tinisha Parker, PhD

Greetings, School Counselors!

It's hard to believe that we are on the cusp of ending yet another school year! For some it is the first of many, for others it's a drill known all too well, and for some entering retirement, this will be the last time closing out the school year. No matter your place on this continuum, know that your work has made a difference in the lives of so many. For your many sacrifices and dedication to our profession, I say thank you!

These last few months prior to sending our students off into summer bliss will be hectic, but take the opportunities this school year provides to make the most of the remaining time you have with your students. All year long you have exercised a mindset that allowed you to accomplish more then you believed possible both in your own development and that of your students. Promoting student success #ItsAMindset became more than a tagline at conference; it became a way of thinking and processing through challenging moments and we've almost made it to the end of the year!

A good coach once said "Finish the Drill"! I believe this sentiment is applicable to many aspects of life. So I implore you to continue this work and to serve as that last burst of energy, positivity, or encouragement that many students will need to make it to the end of the school year, perhaps you need this as well. Explore the articles in this journal and add to your toolbox of knowledge as you continue to make a difference in the lives of your students. The gains you make with your students are significant and will impact your school and community but the gains we make collectively with our students across Georgia will impact our state and beyond. Our work makes a difference! You make a difference!

Thank you for an AMAZING year; promoting student success is truly a mindset…..now let's Finish the Drill!

Sincerely,
Tinisha Parker, PhD
GSCA President

# From Your GSCA Journal Editor

## Dr. Karen D. Rowland
by Karen D. Rowland, PhD, NCC, LPC

The articles in this edition of the journal, though varied in their focus all illustrate the importance of the school counselor in providing counseling programs that promote student success, the theme chosen for this year's GSCA focus. Promoting students success is indeed a "mindset" that all school counselors should gladly embrace.

Once again, it is my honor and pleasure to share with you the work that your colleagues have done and are continuing to do in their role as school counselors, school counselor supervisors, school counselor educators and school counselors-in-training. I hope that you are encouraged to write and share what you are doing as you provide that life line in your school and a heart in your community!

A very special thank you to the editorial review board members, DeeAnn Clarington, a school counselor at Mount Zion Elementary School in Clayton County Public Schools and Dr. Lee Grimes, a counselor educator at Valdosta State University.

# The Relationship between Anger Management Techniques and Discipline Reports

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to target students who show aggressive and bullying behavior due to a lack of anger management and self-control skills. Two groups of boys in grades 2-4 participated in anger managements groups that either followed an anger management curriculum or followed the anger management curriculum plus breathing techniques. The study found that the boys in the anger management plus breathing techniques group, in general, showed an increase in anger control and a decrease in discipline reports.

## Introduction

Emotion regulation is a person's ability to adapt their emotions appropriately within the social context (Kuzucu, 2016). Anger, on its own, is not necessarily a negative emotion. It does become negative when it leads to aggression and other negative consequences (Seshardri, 2014). All students deserve a school environment where they feel safe and welcome but if these behaviors are allowed to continue students will continue to feel unsafe in the school environment. Many of these students who are exhibiting these behaviors are doing so because they lack the necessary skills involved in emotion regulation. An intervention that teaches students how to better regulate their emotions and behaviors is needed for students at Whitesburg School, a P-8 in a southern state.

## Literature Review

Experts have many definitions for anger. Oolup, Brown, Nowicki, and Aziz (2016) state that anger is "an emotional condition that is often socially instigated through the perception of threatening, frustrating or stressful circumstances and environments" (p. 280). Golden (2016) describes it as follows:

> Anger is a powerful and challenging emotion triggered by feelings of threat to our physical or mental well-being. It is also often a reaction to and a distraction from some form of inner pain that may be associated with anxiety, shame, powerlessness, or disrespect. (p. 57)

Park and Kim (2012) define anger as a "powerful emotion that has been associated with a host of negative psychological outcomes, including externalizing problems such as aggression and delinquency" (p. 1339). Another definition of anger given by Sukhodolsky, Smith, McCauley, Ibrahim, and Piasecka (2016) is "a negative affective state that may include increased physiological arousal, thoughts of blame, and an increased predisposition toward aggressive behavior" (p. 58). It can be triggered by frustration and can vary in duration and intensity (Sukhodolsky, Smith, McCauley, Ibrahim, & Piasecka, 2016, p. 59).

Even though anger is mostly seen as a negative emotion, not all experts agree on anger being only negative. There are those who feel that if anger is managed well, it can be a positive emotion also. Howie and Malouff (2014) state that, "Anger is a normal human emotion that can be instrumental for motivating an individual towards assertiveness and the necessary action to defend one's self in the face of personal threat from the environment" (p. 310). Golden (2016, p. 57) proposes that when anger is informed by self-reflection, anger can become healthy. Lowth (2015) states, "Getting angry is normal, but letting anger get the best of you is not." It is not the anger itself that is negative, it is the behavior and consequences that come with the anger that make anger seem negative. In many instances anger can lead to aggressive behaviors, sometimes including physical altercations. Golden (2016) also says that when those who are angry act impulsively, they can be dangerous (p. 57).

Interventions can help those who have anger issues learn to control their anger and regulate their emotions. Golden (2016) proposes that when those who are angry learn to stay calm, have compassion for themselves, and being aware will help their anger be healthy instead of destructive. It is important that students, as early as possible learn the skills to help them manage and regulate their emotions, especially anger. Rice and Howell (2006) discuss how important is when planning an intervention for anger to use anger reflection and control techniques since these have been shown to be more successful at reducing overall anger. When those who have problems with anger are used to acting out when they are angry, this usually leads to more aggressive behavior and more anger (Rice & Howell, 2006, p. 52). Rice and Howell also discuss the three main ways people express their anger: anger-out, anger-suppression, and anger-reflection/control. Anger-out is anger express outwardly, anger-suppression is anger held in, and anger-reflection/control is a cognitive way or expressing anger.

How students regulate their anger can be influenced by their family and culture. Social skills can also play a part in how a student regulates their anger. Park and Kim (2012) discuss how family dynamics can influence how Korean-American students regulate their anger. Negative relationships within the family can lead to low anger control by Korean-American students. This can lead more to anger-out and anger-suppression methods of expressing anger. However, when students have more positive relationships within the family and a more independent self-construal, this can lead to more anger-reflection/control methods of expressing anger.

The role of family dynamics in influencing how student express anger is not far-fetched. Children and adolescents need to develop anger regulation skill and one of the first places they will learn that skill is within their families. But family dynamics are not the only factor that mediate how students regulate their anger. Students' social skills also help mediate their anger control skills. A lack of social skills can lead

to aggression and behavioral problems (Kuzucu, 2016). Kuzuco states, "Aggressive behavior is predicted by anger in adolescents. Anger leads to adolescent to misinterpret existing cues, and this misinterpretation is more likely results in physical, verbal, and indirect aggression" (p. 850). Because of their lack of social skills, adolescents cannot read social cues correctly which leads to misunderstanding, which in turn can lead to anger and aggression. It is important for adolescents to develop these skills so that they can use social problem-solving instead of aggression to help them through troubles (p. 851).

There are many reasons why anger control is an important skill to develop in children. When children are young they start to learn how to deal with and regulate their anger. When they learn maladaptive forms of anger control, this can later be tied to deficits in social and academic skills (Daniels, Mandleco, & Luthy, 2012). For example, tantrums in children after a certain age are an abnormal way to deal with anger, which can become more serious as they get older (Daniels, Mandleco, & Luthy, 2012). This can be indicative of a more serious issue that may need a referral for services (p. 572). When students feel these negative emotions without any way to manage them or regulate them, they can make students feel disadvantaged at many levels, such as socially or academically (Sharp, Carr, & Panger, 2016).

Another reason anger regulation is important is that poor anger regulation leads to high risk behavior along with the aggression. Gambetti and Giusberti (2016) state that there is evidence that "during adolescence anger increases vulnerability to risky behaviors and predicts numerous risk decisions, such as violence, smoking,

and substance abuse" (p. 343). Cooley and Fite (2016) also echo this sentiment when they state:

Emotional competence requires coping with negative emotions in a manner that is responsive to the demands of the social context. Thus, adaptive emotion regulation involves strategies, such as behavioral distraction and social support seeking, used to modulate emotional arousal in order to avoid undesired consequences and prevent negative emotions from overwhelming and impairing one's ability to engage in goal-directed behavior. (p. 536-537).

Anger can lead to risky decisions in children and adolescents. This habit of risky decisions can continue into adulthood and lead to more serious consequences.

There are many interventions that can help students learn to manage and regulate their anger. Many studies discussed the use of groups to help students learn how to manage their anger (alavinezhad, Mousavi, & Sohrabi, 2014; Burt, Patel, Butler, & Gonzalez, 2013; Fitzsimmons, Isaacs, &McCloy, 2015; Ho, Carter, & Stephenson, 2010; Seshadri, 2014; Steffgen, 2017; Tosun, 2014; "Training Helps Teens Manage Anger," 2012). Group training for anger management may have many functions. One of those functions is helping those with anger issues learn appropriate social skills within the group, such as leadership (Burt, Patel, Butler, & Gonzalez, 2013). Replacing poor anger management and social skill with more positive ones can be beneficial to the recipient for the long term. This is can also be helpful to students with special education needs. Ho, Carter, and Stephenson (2010) found that there was some success to having these interventions with students with special education needs to a moderate degree.

In interventions for anger, it is important that there is a cognitive component to the training. When there is a cognitive component, it has been shown that the anger management training was more effective over the long term (Burt, Patel, Butler, & Gonzalez, 2013; Fitzsimmons, Isaacs, & McCloy, 2015; Steffgen, 2017). A more holistic approach to anger management can not only teach anger management skills but also coping skills for other difficult emotions which can lead to less aggressive behaviors and other negative consequences (Burt, Patel, Butler, & Gonzalez, 2013). When trying to decrease the aggression and negative consequences related to anger, more positive means of dealing with problems need to be addressed because the anger and aggressive behavior can be related to each other (Tosun, 2014).

Nontraditional methods of group anger management training have also been shown to be effective in helping with anger regulation. Art therapy can be used to help express anger in a more productive and less aggressive way by giving the participant an outlet when they cannot express their anger verbally (alavinezhad, Mousavi, & Sohrabi, 2014). Online therapy is also a means for those with anger regulation issues to seek out help. It can be especially helpful for those who would not or could not participate in a face-to-face intervention (Howie & Malouff, 2014). Also, when dealing with children, it is important when working with groups to have visual aids of how anger can build up and using that visual representation to talk about how to not let anger "bubble up" (Seshadri, 2014). There are many ways to reach children and adolescents who are dealing with anger issues.

The literature shows that anger is not inherently negative but if children and adolescents do not know how to regulate and manage their anger, it can lead to aggression and other negative consequences. The purpose of this study is to use this concept to help students learn better ways to manage their anger and develop better coping skills. This would lead to a decrease in office discipline referrals for these students and a more safe and inviting environment for all students and staff.

## Methods
### Participants
For this study, students in grades 2-5 (ages 7-11) at Whitesburg P-8 will be selected based on their discipline referral history. The students had been referred to the Problem Solving Team (PST) for behavior. Students with at least three discipline reports or those who have been referred to PST for aggressive behaviors will be chosen. The students represent a variety of racial and economic backgrounds. Parents will be notified of their children's selection for the intervention groups by sending a letter home describing the intervention group. On the letter will be an opt-out option for parents to sign and send back to the school if they do not want their children to participate in the intervention.

### Measures
Anger control will be measured by a questionnaire, modified to meet the students' age levels, measuring their level of anger control (Outlook Associates of New England, n.d., see Appendix). The questionnaire contains 20 statements about anger. The participants will be asked to rate each statement on a five-point scale where 1 is never, 2 is rarely, 3 is sometimes, 4 is frequently, and 5 is always. Scores for a participant could range from 20 to 100.

The questionnaire will be giving to students during the first group session and the last group session to determine if anger control has improved after the intervention.

*Procedure*
Participants were chosen based on their discipline history and referral to the PST for behavior issues. Participants will assigned into one of two groups. The two groups will receive interventions. Each of the intervention groups will be divided up into smaller groups of four to six students to conduct the group sessions with. The first intervention group will participate in a small group focused on anger management. The small group curriculum used will be from Griffith's (2012) Creative Small Groups: Ready-to-Use Lessons for Grades K-5. The group session will last approximately 30 minutes. The second and third grade groups will participate in seven weekly sessions on anger management. The fourth and fifth grade groups will participate in eight weekly sessions on anger management.

The second intervention group will also participate in the small group curriculum on anger management. In addition to the small group curriculum, at the end of each session the group will learn some breathing and relaxation techniques (Roberts, 2014). Each week the students will learn breathing and relaxation techniques to help them better control and regulate their emotions, especially anger.

**Small group session 1 for second and third grades.** The first session is an orientation session for the participants. The materials needed for this session are a board or chart paper and animal cards (Griffith, 2012, p. 41-44). First students will get an introduction to the group and why the group could be helpful to them. Students will also complete the questionnaire during this first group session. After the questionnaire is filled out and turned in to the group leader, the group will move into Griffith's (2012) first anger management group lesson (p. 23).

Students will be shown animal cards. The animal cards show a number of different animals. Students will be directed to choose an animal that best represents their anger. Each student will then explain their choice. The group leader will make note of which animal card each student chooses. If students are having trouble explaining their choice, the group leader can ask clarifying questions such as:

> How is your anger like something this animal does? Which of your angry actions or attitudes might make others think of this animal? What might happen when this animal is angry? What usually happens when you act like this animal? What other animal would you prefer to be like when you are angry? (Griffith, 2012, p. 23)

While students are explaining their animal choice or answering the clarifying questions, the group leader is writing the behaviors and actions the students mention on the board or chart paper.

After all students have had their turn, the group leader will ask the following questions to open up a discussion on which behaviors may cause the most or least problems:

> Which behavior is hardest for you to control? Which behavior gets you into the most trouble? Does anyone else in your family behave this way when angry? What usually happens? How do you feel when your family member does this? (Griffith, 2012, p. 23)

This discussion concludes the first session. The group leader reminds the students that during this group, they will be working on ways to help them control their behavior when angry.

**Small group session 2 for second and third grades.** The materials needed for this session are a few sets of the animal cards, a board or chart paper, scissors, light-colored construction paper, glue sticks, and crayons. This session will start with asking students to select the animal card they chose in session one. If the students do not remember their card, the group leader can remind them. Then each student will select a different animal card that represents having anger control. The group leader will ask each student what about their new animal helps the student help control angry behavior. The group leader will summarize the responses on the board or chart paper. Then the group leader will lead the group in brainstorming other ideas for controlling their anger and add those to the list.

Next the group leader will give each student a piece of construction paper, a glue stick and crayons. The students will pick two animal cards, one for anger and one for anger control. They will color their cards and then glue the cards to opposite sides of the construction paper. The group leader will tell the students that they can use these cards as a reminder of the lesson about anger control.

**Small group session 3 for second and third grades.** The group leader will need the animal cards, pipe cleaners, colored beads, and the "Rules For Getting Your Anger Out" handout for each student (Griffith, 2012, p. 47). The group leader will start this session by using the animal cards to review the anger behaviors that cause problems for the students. The group leader will then lead a discussion of why anger energy must be let out in a safe way. The students will then brainstorm ways they can safely let out their anger energy without getting in trouble. The group leader will discuss with the students appropriate times and places to engage in these behaviors.

Next each student will receive the "Rules For Getting Your Anger Out" handout and each rule will be discussed with the group leader. The group leader will then discuss how counting to 10 can help them learn to delay responding to something that makes them angry. The group will then use the pipe cleaners and colored beads to create a tactile device to help them count slowly to 10 since most students count too fast to get the benefit from the exercise. The group leader will give the following instructions to create the devices:

> Fold over about one inch of the end of the pipe cleaner, twisting it around itself to create a loop. Slide the beads onto the pipe cleaner. Fold over about one inch at the other end of the pipe cleaner, creating another loop. These loops keep the beads on the pipe cleaner. (Griffith, 2012, p. 26)

The group leader will instruct the students to slide one bead from one end to the other of the pipe cleaner as they count to 10. The sliding of the bead helps the student pause between the numbers. The group leader and students will practice counting to 10 using the bead. The group leader will then remind the group to use the beads the next time they need to calm down from being angry.

**Small group session 4 for second and third grades.** The group leader will need

a board or chart paper, "Egg-Ons" print outs (Griffith, 2012, p. 48), scissors, and pencils. The group leader will explain that "Egg-Ons" are behaviors or words that escalate angry behaviors. An egg-on can be a thought, a word, or an action. They can come from the person who caused the anger or bystanders. The group leader will then provide examples of egg-ons. The group leader and students will then come up with more egg-ons to write on the board or chart paper in a T-chart. On the other side of the T-chart, the students will brainstorm words or thoughts that would counter each egg-on. The group leader will then give each student a cut-out egg and a pencil. The students will then select on egg-on from the board and write it on one side of the egg. On the other side of the egg, the students will write words or thought that will not escalate their anger.

**Small group session 5 for second and third grades.** The group leader will need two pitchers, water, food coloring, eye dropper, and oil. The group leader will prepare this lesson by filling one of the pitchers with water and placing a small amount of oil in the other pitcher. The group leader will explain to the students that many like to think about how they would like to get revenge on those who we think have wronged us. The group leader then reminds students that thinking about revenge keeps them angry and hurts themselves. The group leader will then give examples of revenge thoughts and then let the students come up with more. The group leader will remind the students that it is important to talk about their anger. The group leader will then use the pitchers to demonstrate how thinking about or waiting on revenge keeps them angry. The group leader will pour about half the water from the full pitcher to the other pitcher explaining to the students

that the clear water show them when they are calm and thinking clearly. The food coloring represents revenge and when it is added to the water (with the oil in the bottom), the food coloring stays on the surface for a while but eventually seeps into the rest of the water. The group leader will then ask the students for suggestions on how to turn the water back to the way it was. After each suggestion, the group leader adds more clear water to the colored water. The students will see that even the water gets lighter, it will not return to clear. The group leader reminds the students that the only way to clear their minds is to get rid of the thought of revenge completely and start with fresh water.

**Small group session 6 for second and third grades.** The group leader will need copies of the "I Can Control Myself" handout for each group member and pencils (Griffith, 2012, p. 49). The group leader will start by asking students to describe something inside of them that stops them from acting on their anger or hurting others when they are angry. The group leader will explain to the students that this is their conscience and if they listen to it, it will help them think before they act. The group leader will talk with the students about how certain parts of our body are associated with certain feelings and thoughts. For example, the brain is associated with clear thinking, the heart is associated with caring, and the stomach associated with nervousness. The group leader will then ask what body parts could help them control their anger and what that body part might say to them when they are angry. Each student receives a copy of the "I Can Control Myself" handout and a pencil. The students will then be asked to draw the body part that helps them control their anger and write how it helps them

control their anger. The students will take the worksheet with them as a reminder to control their angry behaviors.

**Small group session 7 for second and third grades.** The group leader will need drawing paper and crayons for this last session. The group leader will discuss with the students "hot thoughts" that lead to anger (Griffith, 2012, p. 31). These thoughts make anger erupt faster and keeps anger going for longer. The group leader then ask the students for the most ridiculous place they can think of to get rid of their hot thoughts. The group leader will encourage acting silly to help with the students' creativity. The group leader will then suggest to students that they imagine that place when they feel anger to help them cool down then next time they have hot thoughts. Each student will get drawing paper and crayons to draw where their hot thoughts go. They will then share with the group. The group leader will congratulate the students on what they have learned in the group over the weeks. They will also review some of the things they have discussed throughout the sessions. Students will then fill out the questionnaire they completed in the first session to compare their anger control to how it was before they participated in the group.

**Small group session 1 for fourth and fifth grades.** The first session is an orientation session for the participants. The materials needed for this session are a board or chart paper, scissors, and a few sets of the animal cards. First students will get an introduction to the group and why the group could be helpful to them. Students will also complete the questionnaire during this first group session. After the questionnaire is filled out and turned in to the group leader, the group will move into

Griffith's (2012) first anger management group lesson (p. 32).

Students will be shown animal cards. The animal cards show a number of different animals. Students will be directed to choose an animal that best represents their anger. Each student will then explain their choice. The group leader will make note of which animal card each student chooses. If students are having trouble explaining their choice, the group leader can ask clarifying questions such as:

> What might happen when this animal is angry? What might make this animal angry? How is your anger like something this animal does? Which of your angry actions or attitudes might make others think of this animal? What kinds of things tend to make you angry? What usually happens when you act like this animal? (Griffith, 2012, p. 32)

The group leader will then make two T-charts on chart paper with the first chart's columns being Reasons Animals Get Angry and Angry Animal Behaviors. The second chart's columns will be Reasons People Get Angry and Angry People Behaviors. The students will complete the charts with the group leader. The group leader will then ask the following questions:

> What are some common reasons why animals and people get angry? Which reason do you agree with most/least? What behavior is hardest for you to control? Which behaviors gets you into the most trouble? Does anyone else in your family behave this way when angry? What usually happens? How do you feel when he/she does this? (Griffith, 2012, p. 32)

The group leader will then remind the students that they will be learning how to control angry behaviors during the group.

**Small group session 2 for fourth and fifth grades.** The group leader will need the animal cards, the two charts from session 1, chart paper, drawing paper, and crayons or markers. This session will start with asking students to select the animal card they chose in session one. If the students do not remember their card, the group leader can remind them. The group leader will review the charts from session 1. Then each student will select a different animal card that represents having anger control. The group leader will ask each student what about their new animal helps the student help control angry behavior. The group leader may ask the following clarifying questions:

What stops you from acting in a hurtful way or saying hurtful words when you're angry? What about the animal you chose is similar to something that might help you control your angry thoughts, words, and actions? (Griffith, 2012, p. 33)

Each student will get a chance to explain why they chose a particular animal, including specific traits that animal has represents control of anger. The group leader will record these traits on chart paper. The group will then brainstorm more ideas for keeping control of their anger. The group leader will give each student drawing paper and crayons and ask them to draw their two animals for anger and control with a line in the middle separating the two animals. The group leader will ask the students to identify specific animal behaviors that personally relate to them and let them share those behaviors with the group.

**Small group session 3 for fourth and fifth grades.** The group leader will need the "Rules For Getting Your Anger Out" handout for each student, small clear plastic soda bottles with lids, water, liquid soap, food coloring, and glue. The group leader will lead the students in making a Churning Feelings Bottle (Griffith, 2012, p. 34). The group leader will review the angry behaviors talked about in session two and discuss how these behaviors could cause problems. The group leader will ask the students to come up with ways they can let people know they are angry without getting into trouble. The group leader will talk about how angry energy needs to be let out in a safe way and each student will receive the "Rules For Getting Your Anger Out" handout and discuss the rules. Student will make their own Churning Feelings Bottle by filling their bottle with water and then adding liquid soap and a few drops of food coloring. They will then but glue on the lid of the bottle and screw on the lid. The group leader will tell the students that their Churning Feelings Bottle can be used as a reminder of the way angry feeling can bubble up but dissipate over time.

**Small group session 4 for fourth and fifth grades.** The group leader will need pencils and the "Heat Up or Cool Down" handout for each student (Griffith, 2012, p.50). The group leader will explain that another problem with anger is that students will use negative or aggressive words. The group leader will provide examples of this kind of language. The group leader will tell students that sarcastic language can also create more anger. The group leader will also go over body language that also fuels anger, for example, rolling eyes or making a face. The group leader will lead a discussion on why these behaviors keep anger going. The students will receive the "Heat Up or Cool Down" handout and a pencil. The group leader will go over each statement with the students and the students will write cool down statements in the right column of their worksheet.

**Small group session 5 for fourth and fifth grades.** The group leader will need the "Beliefs That Fuel Anger" handout (Griffith, 2012, p. 52), the "Faulty Beliefs Cards" (p. 53), the "Faulty Belief Statement Cards" (p. 54), scissors, and for each student the "Hot Thoughts That Turn Up The Heat Inside" handout (p.51). The group leader will tell the students about hot thoughts and how they keep anger turned up. The group leader will then ask students to identify their own hot thoughts. The group leader will then use the "Faulty Belief Cards" and "Beliefs That Fuel Anger" to discuss reasons to hot thoughts. When the group leader is done with the discussion, the group leader will place the "Faulty Belief Cards" face up on the table. The group leader will also place the "Faulty Belief Statement Cards" face down on the table. Each student will draw a card and tell what type of hot thought it is. The student will then match it with the "Faulty Belief Cards" on the table. Each student will receive a copy of the "Hot Thoughts That Turn Up The Heat Inside."

**Small group session 6 for fourth and fifth grades.** The group leader will need a trash can, index cards, pencils, small balloons, flour, scoops, and funnels. The group leader will explain that it is helpful to have an exact way to get out their angry thoughts and feelings. The group leader will give the example of writing bad feelings down on paper and throwing them in the trash can. Each student will receive an index card and a pencil. The students will write down a recent angry thought on the card. They will share their thought with the group. Each student will then tear up their card into small pieces and throw them in the trash can. The group leader will tell the students that it is important to release anger energy. The group leader will go over ways to release anger energy, for example, going for a walk or shooting hoops. The leader will set out the funnels, scoops, and flour on the table and give each student a balloon. The students will fill their balloons using the scoops and funnels with flour until no more flour can be added. They will then tie off their balloons. The group leader will explain that the balloon can be a stress reliever. The students can squeeze the balloon to get rid of some of their angry energy.

**Small group session 7 for fourth and fifth grades.** The group leader will need a short story or book that includes problems, Accordion Book handout (Griffith, 2012, p. 55), pencils, glue sticks, and scissors. The group leader will tell the students that if they hold on to anger for a long time, the more likely they are to act on those thoughts. The group leader will discuss how thoughts of revenge also make people hold on to anger longer. The group leader will explain how acting on those thoughts can get them into a lot of trouble. The group leader will ask the students how getting even benefits them and get them what they want. The group leader will ask how students could feel better without getting revenge. The group leader and students will discuss how a decision can change the day for everyone around them. The group leader will read the short story or book to the students. The group leaders and students will then retell the story by changing the characters' decisions to have a more positive outcome. Each student will receive a copy of the Accordion Book and instruct the students how to put their accordion book together. Each student will complete the book with a scenario in which they decide to not act on their anger.

### Small group session 8 for fourth and fifth grades.

The group leader will need a list of topics discussed and activities completed, Flip Book pattern (Griffith, 2012, p. 56-58), scissors, and a stapler. The group leader will review the topics and activities discussed over the group sessions. Each student will receive a set of flip book pages. The group leader will instruct the students to write their names in the top rectangle on the first page. The group leader will review each page with the students and have students complete the pages. The students will staple the pages together to make a flip book of strategies. The group leader will congratulate the students on what they have learned in the group over the weeks. Students will then fill out the questionnaire they completed in the first session to compare their anger control to how it was before they participated in the group.

### Breathing and relaxation sessions.

For the second experimental group, these students will also participate in a brief, 10-15 minute, breathing exercise to help students learn to relax and release tension. The group leader will lead the students in an active breathing exercise named "Sunshine Breath" (Roberts, 2014, p. 66-67). The students will stand with both feet planted about shoulder or hip width apart and arms by their side. The students will close their eyes and start to observe their breathing. The group leader will instruct students to take a deep breath in slowly while raising their arms above their heads in a circle. Their hand will meet at the top of the circle above their heads. The group leader will instruct students to exhale while bringing their hands down to the center of their body. On the next inhale, the group leader will instruct the students to push their hands back above their heads. On the

next exhale, the students will bring their arms back to their sides. This cycle will be repeated around five times. After the fifth round students will sit quietly for about a minute breathing until the group leader instructs the students to open their eyes. This breathing exercise will be done at the end of the small group session for the second experimental group.

### Results

There was a total of 14 students selected by the advisory committee in grades two through four. Four of the students were not chosen for the small groups due to a lack of parental permission to participate in the small groups. Five students participated in the anger management small group curriculum only (Group 1). The other five students participated in the anger management small group curriculum with the breathing techniques (Group 2). The students were sorted into the two groups based on their daily schedule and when they could meet. The anger management curriculum was followed with fidelity for both groups.

Table 1 shows the number discipline reports for each student from the beginning of the school year until the end of the group and how many discipline reports each student had after the small groups had started. Six of the students did not have a significant decrease in the number of discipline reports because they had very few discipline reports to begin the semester. One of the students only received one discipline report after starting the group. Two students, both in Group 1, did not decrease in discipline reports and one student had more after starting the group than before the group.

Table 2 shows the results of the anger

control questionnaire before and after the small group for both Group 1 and Group 2. The participants in Group 2 overall showed a greater decrease in their anger control scores than the participants in Group 1. The average decrease in the anger control questionnaire for Group 1 was 10.8 compared to 16.8 for Group 2.

### Discussion

This research study was used to target students who had shown aggressive and bullying behavior due to a lack of anger management and self-control. The purpose was to reduce the amount of discipline reports filed on the students. During the first PST meeting of the school year, students were selected, based on their behavior, for the intervention groups. Some students had a long list of discipline reports, while some had only one or none but were still participating in behaviors that could become more serious if there was no outside intervention.

Overall, the findings of the research were consistent with prior research on anger management in children. The students who did not learn to control their anger would act out more aggressively when they did get angry (Gambetti & Giusberti, 2016; Rice & Howell, 2006). These students also seemed to lack social skills in the classroom and small groups settings that would lead to more desirable behaviors (Daniels, Mandleco, & Luthy, 2012; Kuzucu, 2016). Those students who did well in the small group did learn some more appropriate social skills to deal with their anger (Burt, Patel, Butler, & Gonzalez, 2013). This lead to less discipline reports for those students. It is interesting to note the difference between Group 1 and Group 2 when it comes to discipline reports and their anger control questionnaire. The second group did have

an additional intervention but I do not believe that this is the main reason for the difference in the anger control questionnaires. The personality of the two groups was very different. Group 1 had two 2nd graders who were very aggressive and resistant to the group activities and process. The other students in the group could have fed off this disdain for the group and, as a result, not have improved as much as they were capable. Group 2, overall, was more open to the small group curriculum. This group was a little bit older overall, with two 4th graders, two 3rd graders, and only one 2nd grader so they may have had a little more maturity than Group 1.

The study has some strengths. The anger management and breathing techniques were both strong interventions for anger management and self-control. The instrument used to measure the students' anger control allowed students to think through why they chose the number they chose for each question. This led some students to think about why certain things were triggers for them over others. Many of the students did see a decrease in discipline reports and more anger control.

Some limitations of the study were the selection of the groups. Having a more selection process for the groups could have led to a better mix, especially in Group 1. The anger control questionnaire is a good tool for the students, but to really measure how much the group was affecting the students' everyday lives, it would have been more beneficial to have some teacher input as to how well the students were managing their anger and showing good self-control.

This study could be implemented school wide with age and developmental appropriate interventions for students younger and

older than the targeted group. This could be an intervention that is started earlier in the school year when teachers start to see signs of trouble with their students. This could be an alternative to other punishments for repeat offenders, especially for the older students.

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# The Relationship between Implementation of the American School Counselor Association National Model and Secondary School Counselor Burnout

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between the implementation of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model and burnout in secondary school counselors who were ASCA members (n=494). An inverse relationship was discovered between implementation and burnout based on survey results. Results indicated that secondary school counselors had high levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment; and were in a developmental phase of implementing the ASCA National Model.

Keywords: ASCA, secondary school counselor, burnout, school counseling, comprehensive school counseling programs

The Relationship between Implementation of the American School Counselor Association National Model and Secondary School Counselor Burnout
Secondary school counselors deal with the psychological, emotional, and social problems of clients, which require the con-stant engagement of their active attention and empathic skills (Florio, 2010). Since secondary school counselors are in the business of working with adolescents, their own levels of frustration may negatively affect the counseling relationship and cause workplace burnout. Burnout is based on a combination of interpersonal factors and institutional variables (Galek, Flannelly, Greene, & Kudler, 2011), and tends to occur when there is a significant mismatch between the nature of the job and counselor in six different areas: work overload, lack of control, insufficient rewards, breakdown of workplace community, lack of fairness, and value differences (Maslach, 2003).

Secondary school counselors may be at a heightened risk of burnout due to continual changes in schools, the allocation of inap-propriate job duties, and the lack of role clarification (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006). Rayle (2006) found, in a comparative study, that elementary school counselors experi-enced the greatest level of job satisfaction and lowest level of job-related stress, while secondary school counselors experienced the lowest level of job satisfaction and the highest level of job-related stress. Much of the research related to burnout in school counselors has been conducted with K-12, elementary, and middle school counselors, rather than specifically targeting secondary school counselors. In addition, only limited research is available on the effectiveness of the implementation of the ASCA National Model within school counseling programs. This study was designed to examine the extent of burnout in relation to the imple-mentation of the ASCA National Model by secondary school counselors across the nation. The research questions included 1) what was the degree of burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inven-tory Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), among a national sample of professional secondary school counselors?, 2) what was the level of implementation of the ASCA National Model, as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Sur-vey (SCPIS), among a national sample of professional secondary school counselors?, and 3) was there a relationship between the levels of implementation of the ASCA National Model and the degree of burnout among professional secondary school counselors, as measured by the individual item-level responses of the MBI-HSS and the SCPIS? The purpose of this paper is to review the role of secondary school coun-selors, the ASCA National Model, and the relationship between the implementation of the ASCA National Model and burnout among secondary school counselors.

## Literature Review

Several researchers have found that school counselors have higher levels of burnout compared to other mental health care professionals (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Although few studies have focused on school counselors and burnout, Moyer (2011) found that a lack of supervision and increased non-guidance activities increased the likelihood of school coun-selor burnout, and that school counselors were less likely to show empathy towards students if they were burnt-out. Wachter, Clemens, and Lewis (2008) assessed the relationship between the impact of Adlerian themes and school counselor burnout among 249 school counselors from one Midwestern state and found that 14.4% of the variance in school counselor burnout was explained by the themes of self-es-teem and perfectionism. Finally, results of a study by Gunduz (2012) indicated that self-efficacy predicted depersonalization and personal accomplishment dimensions of burnout in school counselors among 194 school counselors working in public elementary schools (N=94) and secondary schools (N=100) in Mersin, Turkey. These studies indicated that school counselors may experience burnout related to a lack of supervision, increased non-guidance activities, and low levels of self-esteem/self-efficacy.

## Secondary School Counselor Role

Today's school counselors are asked daily to multi-task and to be flexible in their job functions, and are often misrepresented or misunderstood by colleagues, counse-lor educators, staff, administrators, and communities (American School Counselor Association, 2012). Traditionally, the sec-ondary school counselor's role has included making academic recommendations, record keeping, report writing, vocational planning, test administration and scoring, scheduling, and other assigned administra-tive duties (Tang & Erford, 2004), while also helping students resolve emotional, social, and behavioral problems. Professional secondary school counselors often find

themselves with no clearly defined role in school environments because the school administration lacks education regarding the duties of a school counselor (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011). Researchers have attempted to define the role of the secondary school counselor by surveying the perceptions of students, teachers, administrators, and counselors (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Coogan & DeLucia-Waack, 2007; Falls & Nichter, 2007). As a result, differing definitions of the secondary school counselor's role have evolved and have created confusion.

Currently ASCA is attempting to clarify the specific role of the secondary school counselor to school counselors and school communities (American School Counselor Association, 2013b). ASCA states that secondary school counseling programs are "essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set appropriate career goals and realize full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community" (American School Counselor Association, 2013b, para. 13). Secondary school counselors can implement a comprehensive school counseling program by providing classroom guidance (e.g., academic skills support, coping strategies), individual student planning (e.g., goal setting, transition plans), responsive services (e.g., peer facilitation, referrals), and system support (e.g., consultation, program management) (American School Counselor Association, 2013b). To further address the roles and responsibilities of secondary school counselors, ASCA created a comprehensive school counseling program for school counselors to have a voice.

## American School Counselor Association National Model

The ASCA model serves as a best practice model for a comprehensive school counseling program (American School Counselor Association, 2012) and is considered "the premier blueprint for the development and implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs" (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009, para. 2). The ASCA model was created to unify and clarify the role of the school counselor and assist them in creating and evaluating comprehensive school counseling programs (American School Counselor Association, 2012). The ASCA model focuses on eliminating the achievement gap, meeting the needs of all students, connecting programs to the school's mission, and evaluating data to drive student outcomes (McGannon, Carey & Dimmitt, 2005).

School counselors utilize the ASCA model to (a) create equity in access to help every student, (b) standardize school counseling across state lines, and (c) emphasize the critical impact school counseling has on students' educational functioning (American School Counselor Association, 2012). Overall, the ASCA model provides guidelines so that school counseling programs can be "comprehensive in scope, preventative in design and developmental in nature" (American School Counselor Association, 2012, p. xii).

To date, 45 states have adopted comprehensive school counseling programs based on the ASCA model (American School Counselor Association, 2013a). This is an increase from 2008, when 17 states had established models, 24 states were in progress, and 10 were at the beginning stage of development (Martin, Carey, & DeCoster, 2009). Because the ASCA model is rela-

tively new, some concerns exist regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the model. Cervoni and DeLucia-Waack (2011) found that, although the ASCA model is widely distributed, there is still much ambiguity surrounding the role of the school counselor at the institutional level, creating concerns for job satisfaction. They further found that role conflict, time spent on counseling duties, time spent on consultation related duties, and time spent on non-ASCA tasks were all significant predictors of job dissatisfaction (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011). In addition, the true effects of the ASCA model on increased student academic achievement has been debated (Brown & Trusty, 2005). Brown and Trusty (2005) asserted that the ASCA model focused too heavily on academic components and that not all components of the ASCA model should be devoted to scholastic achievement.

## Burnout and the ASCA National Model

According to ASCA, "The ASCA model brings school counselors together with one vision and one voice, which creates unity and focus toward improving student achievement" ( 2012, p. xii). The ASCA model framework attempts to create structure and clarity to promote the role of the school counselor and may provide as a protective factor against burnout. If a school counseling program can prevent or effectively manage burnout symptoms, the school can sustain productive and dedicated school counselors without having to train new employees.

The strength of the ASCA model focuses on school counselors creating evidence-based programs, which may alleviate burnout. Sabella (2006) reported that "the ASCA National Model has empowered counselors

and other stakeholders to develop goals and plans instead of only responding to events and issues" (p. 412). According to Dimmitt and Carey (2007), clear expectations about the role of the secondary counselor and functions are critical to the application of the ASCA model. The ASCA model themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systematic change give role clarification and can prevent job dissatisfaction (Pyne, 2011). If counselors have defined roles, this reduces role ambiguity and the possibility of burnout (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Moyer, 2011). Benefits of using the ASCA model for secondary school counselors include limiting inappropriate job duties, gaining administrative support, using data for advocacy, staying organized, and improving teamwork through collaboration (Gomez-Lee, 2012; Moyer, 2011). These benefits can be linked to protective factors for burnout among secondary school counselors, and are factors that may reduce burnout in the profession, based on recent research (Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Moyer, 2011).

## Method

A survey method was used to collect data to correlate the level of burnout based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) score, and the implementation of the ASCA National Model. The goal was to understand ASCA secondary school counselors' perceptions of their implementation of the ASCA National Model (not implemented, development in progress, partly implemented, or fully implemented) and to determine whether there was a correlation between burnout and degree of implementation.

The research questions for this study were 1) what was the degree of burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Invento-

ry (MBI-HSS), among a national sample of professional secondary school counselors?, 2) what was the level of implementation of the ASCA National Model, as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS), among a national sample of professional secondary school counselors?, and 3) was there a relationship between the levels of implementation of the ASCA National Model and the degree of burnout among professional secondary school counselors, as measured by the individual item-level responses of the MBI-HSS and the SCPIS?

## Participants

Participants were identified from the ASCA membership directory, which is available to members of the organization on the ASCA website (www.schoolcounselor. org) and listed 27,267 members' email addresses. The e-mail addresses of those ASCA members who identified themselves as secondary school counselors were entered into a generic electronic mailing list. All states and regions were included with only the work setting of "High/Secondary" selected. A total of 5,003 secondary school counselors had provided email addresses on the membership website. Of the 5,003 surveys distributed, 277 surveys failed in distribution and 573 surveys were returned. Due to incomplete or unusable responses, list-wise deletions were used to reduce the sample to 494 secondary school counselor members of ASCA. After inaccurate email addresses, non-respondents, and incomplete surveys were eliminated, the response rate was 9.88%. No stratification was used in sampling. Participation was anonymous and voluntary.

Participants were asked to provide demographic information to describe the sample. The average age of participants was 46. A large majority of the participants were female (79.8%). Most participants identified as Caucasian (86.6%), with smaller percentages self-identifying as African American (6.5%), Hispanic American (3.6%), Asian American (0.4%), and Other (1.2%). Most respondents indicated that they held a master's degree in counseling (71.9%), while others held a master's degree in education (17.6%), master's degree in psychology (2.2%), master's degree in social work (0.6%), doctoral degree in counseling (4.9%), doctoral degree in education (2.4%), or a doctoral degree in psychology (0.4%).

## Measures

The instruments used for this study included the first author's demographic survey which included regarding age, gender, ethnicity, and highest educational level, Elsner and Carey's (2010) School Counseling Program Instrumentation Survey, and Maslach, Jackson and Leiter's (2010) Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey.

The SCPIS measured the level of implementation of the ASCA National Model as not present, development in progress, partly implemented, and fully implemented (Clemens, Carey, & Harrington, 2010). In addition, the SCPIS had two sub-scales including program orientation and school counseling services. The SCPIS was located at http://www.umass.edu/school-counseling/schoolcounseling-program-implementation-survey.php and is available for free use. The first author contacted the the creator of the SCPIS and received permission for use in this study. The three-factor model found 53% variance and a two-factor model was performed with 47% of the variance accounted for in the intercorrelation matrix (Clemens et al., 2010). Through these statistical procedures, it can be assumed that the SCPIS is a valid instrument for assessing the ASCA National Model (Clemens et al., 2010). The SCPIS is valid and reliable, despite the small amount of variance explained by the factor solutions (Clemens et al., 2010). The SCPIS was used for this study since it focused on the implementation of the ASCA National Model and is one of the few instruments available on the topic of implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs.

The MBI-HSS measured levels of burnout on three sub-scales: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (Dp), and personal accomplishment (PA) (Maslach et al., 2010). The MBI-HSS is available for purchase from www.mindgarden.com and was specifically purchased for the purpose of this study. Based on the longitudinal nature of the MBI-HSS, there has been a high degree of consistency within each subscale making it a reliable tool (Maslach et al., 2010). The reliability coefficients for the three sub-scales were .90 for EE, .79 for Dp, and .71 for PA with a standard error of measurement of 3.80 for EE, 3.16 for Dp, and 3.73 for PA (Maslach et al., 2010). Five samples reported data on test-retest reliability of the MBI-HSS, and all samples found a high degree of consistency and stability within each subscale. In addition, the MBI-HSS had convergent and discriminate validity.

## Procedures

The survey was prepared through a web-based quantitative survey solution, QualtricsTM. The survey was sent by email through QualtricsTM to participants and included a study description, a participant anonymity statement, consent form to participate, and access to the survey via a secured electronic link. All potential participants were sent a "reminder" email message after two weeks and the end of data collection was announced by a final email message after one month.

Participants, after opening the on-line version of the survey, were asked to provide demographic information to provide descriptive data. Following the demographic information, the survey presented the SCPIS and the MBI-HSS. The last question on the survey allowed for participants to provide an optional, free response to communicate their perceptions of the implementation of the ASCA National Model and/or burnout in secondary school counselors. Once all questions were answered, the survey thanked participants for their time and offered participants an opportunity to receive a summary of the study's results by submitting an email to the researcher. Upon the deadline of the survey, data were logged into an Excel spreadsheet and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 22) was used to run analyses including descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

## Results

### Burnout

Descriptive statistics were computed to measure the degree of burnout. The MBI-HSS scale assessed frequency of burnout on a scale where 0 = never, 1 = a few times a year or less, 2 = once a month or less, 3 = a few times a month, 4 = once a week, 5 = a few times a week, and 6 = every day. Burnout scores were obtained using the three MBI-HSS subs scales of emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (Dp), and personal accomplishment (PA). The scores were compared to the Mental Health Occupational Subgroup

on the MBI-HSS. For the Mental Health subgroup, the EE scale categorized as high burnout (21 or over), moderate burnout (14-20), and low burnout (0-13); the Dp scale categorized as high burnout (8 or over), moderate burnout (5-7), and low burnout (0-4); and the PA scale categorized as high burnout (0-28), moderate burnout (29-33), and low burnout (34 or over) (Maslach et al., 2010). The PA scores are interpreted in the opposite direction of the EE and Dp scores. A high degree of burnout is determined when there are high scores in both EE and Dp, and a low score in PA. A low degree of burnout is determined when there are low scores in both EE and Dp, and a high score in PA. An average degree of burnout is determined when all three sub-scales are moderate score averages.

The mean EE (emotional exhaustion) score for all respondents was 3.52 (SD = 1.36), with a total score of 31.7 indicating a high level of EE for both mental health and the overall MBI sample. This indicated that participants felt emotional exhaustion a few times a month on average. The mean Dp (depersonalization) score was 2.06 (SD = 1.01), with a total score of 10.28 indicating a high level of Dp for mental health, yet a moderate level of Dp for the MBI overall sample. This indicated that participants felt depersonalization once a month or less on average. The mean PA (personal accomplishment) score was 5.96 (SD = 0.76), with a score of 47.72 indicating a low level of PA for both mental health and the overall MBI sample. This indicated that participants felt personal accomplishment a few times a week to almost daily on average.

### Implementation of the ASCA National Model

Descriptive statistics were computed to measure the degree of implementation of the ASCA National Model. The SCPIS questionnaire was used to obtain participants' implementation of the ASCA model scores. The SCPIS scores ranged from 1-4, with 1 = not present, 2 = development in progress, 3 = partly implemented, and 4 = fully implemented. For this study, the two-factor model was calculated for program orientation by summing items 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, and 14; and for school counseling services by summing items 2, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, and 20 (Clemens et al., 2010). Higher scores indicated more fully implemented ASCA model programs.

The mean SCPIS value indicated the level of the implementation of the ASCA model was between "development in progress" and "partly implemented" (M = 2.85, SD = 0.64). Similar results were found for the two subscales, including the program orientation subscale (M = 2.58, SD = 0.79) and the school counseling services subscale (M = 2.84, SD = 0.70). The results indicated that participants perceived the implementation of the ASCA model as transitioning from "development in progress" to "partly implemented."

### Correlation between Burnout and Implementation of the ASCA National Model

A Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between participants' overall implementation of the ASCA model, based on the SCPIS, and degree of burnout, based on three sub-scales (EE, Dp, and PA). For emotional exhaustion, a weak inverse correlation was found ($(492) = -.26$, $p < .00$), indicating a significant relationship between the level of implementation of the ASCA model and degree of burnout (see Table 1). Implementation of the ASCA model by participants was associated with reduced emotional exhaustion. For depersonalization, a weak inverse correlation was found ($(492) = -.19$, $p < .00$), indicating a significant relationship between the level of implementation of the ASCA National Model and degree of burnout (see Table 1). Implementation of the ASCA model by participants was associated with reduced depersonalization. For personal accomplishment, a moderate positive correlation was found ($(492) = .31$, $p < .00$), indicating a significant relationship between the level of implementation and the degree of burnout (see Table 1). Implementation of the ASCA model by participants was associated with increased personal accomplishment.

A Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the sub-scale of program orientation regarding the level of implementation by the SCPIS and degree of burnout, based on the three sub-scales of burnout (see Table 1). For emotional exhaustion, a weak inverse correlation was found ($(492) = -.16$, $p < .00$), indicating a significant relationship between program orientation and degree of burnout (see Table 1). Program orientation of the ASCA model was associated with reduced emotional exhaustion. For depersonalization, a weak inverse correlation was found ($(492) = -.15$, $p < .00$), indicating a significant relationship between program orientation and degree of burnout (see Table 1). Program orientation of the ASCA model by participants was correlated with reduced depersonalization. For personal accomplishment, a weak positive correlation was found ($(492) = .25$, $p < .00$), indicating a significant relationship between program orientation and degree of burnout (see Table 1). Program orientation of the ASCA model by participants was associated with increased personal accomplishment. A significant relationship was found between burnout and the program orientation sub-scale of the implementation of the ASCA model, although the correlations were weak.

A Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the sub-scale school counseling services based on the SCPIS and degree of burnout, based on the three sub-scales of burnout (see Table 1). For emotional exhaustion, a moderate inverse correlation was found ($(492) = -.35$, $p < .00$), indicating a significant relationship between school counseling services and degree of burnout (see Table 1). For depersonalization, a weak inverse correlation was found ($(492) = -.22$, $p < .00$), indicating a significant relationship between school counseling services and degree of burnout (see Table 1). For personal accomplishment, a moderate positive correlation was found ($(492) = .34$, $p < .00$), indicating a significant relationship between school counseling services and degree of burnout (see Table 1). A significant relationship was found between burnout and the school counseling services sub-scale of the implementation of the ASCA model, although only weak to moderate correlations were found.

### Discussion

This study differs from previous studies in that it surveyed secondary school counselors regarding their perceptions and practices of implementing the ASCA model and the relationship to burnout. Previous studies have examined burnout within schools (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Gunduz, 2012; Lambie, 2007; Moyer, 2011) and the relationship of implementation of the ASCA model to job satisfaction (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Pyne, 2011; Rayle, 2006). The main objectives of this

study were to examine the overall degree of burnout, level of implementation of the ASCA model, and relationship between burnout and implementation of the ASCA model. Results of this study indicated that significant relationships existed between burnout and implementation of the ASCA model. This is significant because currently there is limited evidenced-based research that promotes the benefits of the ASCA National Model and this study contributes to the support of the ASCA National Model.

## Burnout

Based on results of the MBI-HSS, the participants in this study indicated, on average, high levels of emotional exhaustion (M = 3.52), depersonalization (M = 2.06), and personal accomplishment (M = 5.96). These results were unusual because, typically, high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are associated with low levels of personal accomplishment, which causes burnout in professionals. However, these findings are parallel to Butler and Constantine's (2005) finding of high levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment in school counselors. This may indicate that, although secondary school counselors experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, they still experience a high level of personal accomplishment which may combat burnout in the work place.

## Implementation of the ASCA National Model

Based on results on the SCPIS, the participants in this study indicated "development in progress" regarding the implementation of the ASCA model. The level of implementation was higher on the school counseling services sub-scale (M = 2.84) as compared to the program orientation sub-scale (M= 2.58). A mean

score of "partly implemented" was found for the following items: "School counselors use computer software to access student data" (M = 3.67), "The program has an effective referral and follow-up system for handling student crises" (M = 3.27), and "The program ensures that all students have academic plans that include testing, individual advisement, long-term planning, and placement" (M = 3.23). These scores suggested that the more traditional components of school counseling, such as academic planning and student referrals, are still the most implemented components of school counseling.

Items on which the lowest mean implementation scores were found included: "School counseling priorities are represented on curriculum and education committees" (M = 2.43), "School counselors analyze student data by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic level to identify interventions to close achievement gaps" (M = 2.37), and "Needs assessments are completed regularly and guide program planning" (M = 2.36). These findings suggested (a) under-representation of school counseling on educational committees, (b) lack of data to document student success, and (c) minimal data for program evaluation, which are newer elements of the role of professional secondary school counselors articulated in the ASCA model. Results of this study lend support to previous research findings that suggested a comprehensive school counseling program is beneficial to both the school counselor and the school community (Moore-Thomas, 2004; Pyne, 2011; Rayle, 2011), but that professional secondary school counselors appear not to have fully implemented the ASCA model.

## Relationship between Burnout and the ASCA National Model

An inverse relationship was found between emotional exhaustion ( (492) = -.26, p < .00) and depersonalization ( (492) = -.19, p < .00) on the MBI-HSS and the implementation of the ASCA model on the SCPIS. A positive relationship was found between personal accomplishment ( (492) = .31, p < .00) on the MBI-HSS and the implementation of the ASCA model on the SCPIS. In other words, as the implementation of the ASCA model increased, feelings of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization decreased and feelings of personal accomplishment increased.

These findings were consistent with Pyne (2011) and Rayle's (2006) results that, if school counselors utilized a comprehensive school counseling program, they had higher levels of job satisfaction. It seems reasonable to assume that, if professional secondary school counselors had higher levels of job satisfaction, their programs would have a more engaged counseling staff and there would be a reduction in feelings of burnout, although Pyne (2011) did not measure burnout directly. Typically, school counselors with job dissatisfaction have higher levels of burnout. Rayle (2006) found that school counselors who utilized a comprehensive school counseling program had greater perceptions of mattering. Although this study did not measure mattering directly, the results indicated that professional secondary school counselors who utilized the ASCA model had greater perceptions of personal accomplishment.

## Limitations

Certain limitations and delimitations applied to this investigation. Participants' responses may have been biased based on personal beliefs or opinions. Furthermore,

the ASCA model and burnout are defined constructs (American School Counselor Association, 2012; Maslach, 2003), yet it is possible that participants in the study may have had differing definitions of implementation of the ASCA model and burnout. Finally, the participants who completed the survey may have been more interested in the topic than those who did not complete the survey; therefore, the sample may not be representative of the larger population. Finally, the results of this study are generalizable only to secondary school counselors who are members of ASCA.

## Implications for Counselors and Future Research

The authors sought to understand the relationship between the implementation of the ASCA model and burnout among secondary school counselors. Evidence suggested that secondary school counselors understand the ASCA model, yet feel that the ASCA model is difficult in actual implementation based on the developmental level of implementation found in this study. Few tools are available to measure the implementation of the ASCA model, and none are specifically designed to evaluate attitudes regarding the ASCA model and burnout. As counselor educators work to prepare secondary school counselors, they might consider including more practical application assignments in school counseling coursework. ASCA, as the premier organization for school counseling, should consider creating more tools and training for secondary school counselors to learn skills and strategies for advocacy and integration of the ASCA model. Secondary school counselors seem to understand the ASCA model, yet need assistance and support with the actual implementation of the ASCA model from mentors and school administration. Therefore, school coun-

selors need to advocate and help bring awareness regarding the ASCA model to their school communities.

In the future, a quantitative study could investigate specific areas of the ASCA model related to burnout, such as the ASCA components of foundation, management, delivery, and accountability or the ASCA themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systematic change. For qualitative researchers, it could be valuable to conduct interviews with a range of stakeholders to better understand the implementation of the ASCA model and burnout in secondary school counseling. A focus group might be able to shed light on why professional secondary school counselors have high levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

Further investigation is recommended into the MBI-HSS and the role of the secondary school counselor. This study could be replicated with a national population of secondary school counselors that is not limited to ASCA members. A qualitative study might be implemented to explore variables related to personal accomplishment and how these relate to professional secondary school counselors' prevention of burnout. Such a study could have implications for self-care practices and prevention of burnout among mental health professionals. This study analyzed multiple variables; future researchers may want to analyze each variable on a more detailed level utilizing a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approach.

## Conclusion

The results of this study suggested a relationship between the implementation of the ASCA model and burnout in secondary school counselors. The findings indicated

that secondary school counselors have made some strides in the implementation of the ASCA model, yet barriers still exist which impeded full implementation of the ASCA model. This study provided evidence-based support for the ASCA National Model and contributed to the literature surrounding school counseling, the implementation of the ASCA model, and secondary school counselors' burnout. Overall, secondary school counselors' perceptions and practices of implementing the ASCA model had an inverse relationship with burnout. Findings indicated that implementation of the ASCA model was associated with lower levels of burnout.

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Table 1

Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficients for the Relationship between Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) and School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS)

| Variable | SCPIS | Total | Program Orientation | | School Counseling Services | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | P | P | P | P | P | P |
| Emotional exhaustion scale, MBI-HSS | -.26 | .00* | -.16 | .00* | -.35 | .00* |
| Depersonalization scale, MBI-HSS | -.19 | .00* | -.15 | .00* | -.22 | .00* |
| Personal accomplishment scale, MBI-HSS | .31 | .00* | .25 | .00* | .34 | .00* |

Note.*$p < 0.01$

# TEENAGE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS: Effect on Social Adjustment

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TEENAGE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS: Effect on Social Adjustment

## Abstract

High school female students often have challenges transitioning to high school. There are many possible obstacles that exist but some female students may experience difficulties with maintaining interpersonal relationship with their female peers. It is very common for high school settings to have various types of social cliques that exist. In some instance it is difficult for female students to gain acceptance within these particular social groups. This challenge leaves some female students feeling socially isolated and can have various effects.  For some students the idea of being popular or part of the "in crowd" is paramount. The inability to successfully develop healthy peer relationships can also involve instances of relational aggression. Professional school counselors can work to address these areas of concern through the development of small group counseling with strategic goals for the female students. Overall, the goal is to help the high school female students improve their overall self-concept and improve peer relationships.

## Introduction

In many high school settings, various social groups exist that may often be referred to as adolescent cliques. These cliques may have a deeper meaning which essentially may represent a hierarchy of the social status within the culture of the school. One of the popular groups has been termed as "Queen Bees" this name was popularized by Rosalind Wiseman. Wiseman is a former teacher and wrote this provocative book entitled "Queen Bees and Wannabees" in 2002. She addressed the concern many girls face in seeking social acceptance in the school setting.

As a result of the female cliques that are formed it often creates an environment that fosters relational aggression in the young ladies. Some of the females face ostracism from the very girls that they are trying to befriend because of their style of dress, hair and makeup. Due to the mean girl behavior exhibited some girls might find it difficult to develop healthy and appropriate peer relationships leaving them feeling socially isolated in the school environment.

This social isolation hinders the development of establishing friendships and experiences such as attending the high school dances and participating in clubs and extra-curricular activities. Many students are not learning the proper social skills needed for relating to their peers. In order to identify the problem is first imperative to ascertain what types of social cliques that exist within the school setting. Lakeside High School serves 2335 students in grades 9-12 and is located in a predominantly upper middle class suburban community serving students from the Northlake area of the DeKalb County School District.  The student body is composed of 34% White, 27% Black, 32% Latino, 7% Asian and 1% other racial groups including Native Americans. The subjects of this particular study are 9th and 10th grade female students. The advisory committee consists of the administrators over discipline, social worker and the professional school counselor. The counselor will be responsible for running the small group. The study is important because it is vital to try and improve female peer relationship dynamics and thus reducing potential disciplinary actions that may occur.

There exist various social cliques within the school setting and the female cliques are prevalent and at times difficult which lead to some challenges. The challenges that exist within the girls may often lead to disagreements and at times fights. The bad behavior is often addressed by the administrator of discipline and often consults the professional school counselors to help mediate the conflicts between the girls. This is done as an effort to practice restorative justice.

## Literature Review

High school females often maintain friendships they developed in elementary and middle school. They continue these friendships in high school and at times these bonds may be closer than their immediate family relationships. Often at this age, many high school age students have some type of conflict with their parents as they seek independence and acceptance. Indeed, adolescents report engaging in at least one disagreement with close friends every day (in contrast to three to four daily disagreements with parents; Laursen & Collins, 1994). Higher levels of conflict in friendships have been linked to greater loneliness (Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1993) and greater aggression (Adams & Laursen, 2007; see also Burke & Laursen, 2005, for similar findings). However, similar to studies of parent-adolescent conflict, several studies have failed to find connections between conflict between friends and various indicators of adolescents' social adjustment (e.g., Demir & Urberg, 2004). Due to these particular research findings, other factors should be considered when determining possible traits that might exist within high school female students and maintaining positive social adjustment.

It is a normal behavior and expectation to see high school females having at least one peer friendship with another female student. Participant perceptions are a strong predictor of individual well-being, but friends may have differing views about positive and negative features of their relationship (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998).  Unfortunately, high school females may unwillingly engage in friendships that may be deemed as harmful and negative. Often these friendships are riddled with what is considered "girl drama" and

jealousy and betrayal. On the other hand a positive friendship would be defined by the exact opposite qualities. The traits exhibited are often loyalty, trust, support, encouragement and other positive traits. There is considerable overlap in friends' perceptions of these relationship qualities. Children report the greatest congruence in perceptions of positive friendship qualities, whereas adolescents report the most congruence in perceptions of negative friendship qualities (Furman, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1993).

There is evidence that positive friendship qualities are associated with adolescent school involvement and academic achievement, and that negative friendship qualities are associated with adolescent behavior problems (Berndt & Keefe, 1992; Loeber, Farrington, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Van Kammen, 1998). These findings have focused exclusively on self-reports of predictor and outcome variables, raising concerns that shared reporter variance may inflate the magnitude of associations between friendship quality and adolescent adjustment. Although there is general agreement that shared perceptions of friendship should promote individual adjustment (Buhrmester & Prager, 1995), outcomes associated with positive and negative views of adolescent friendship have yet to be identified.

Females that have expressed at least one good friendship may also have very low behavioral problems. Friendships are critically important to adolescent development, providing validation and camaraderie, insight and emotional support, instrumental assistance and social skills training (Vitaro, Boivin, & Bukowski, 2009). All friendships should not be considered to be the same or

viewed as all being equal. Friends differ along dimensions such as notably, by adolescence, friends are common recipients of disclosure and central sources of social support (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006).

In fact, research on friendships has identified a variety of ways that friends respond to one another's talk about personal problems (see Glick & Rose, 2011; Leaper, Carson, Baker, Holiday, & Myers, 1995; Rose & Asher, 2004).

Many of the possible responses to friends' disclosures can be conceptualized as positive engaged responses. For example, responses such as offering support or agreement, asking a question, sharing a related experience, offering relevant information, giving advice, or simply acknowledging the friends' statements all indicate positive engagement in the conversation. However, not all responses are supportive, and some can be classified as negative responses, such as changing the subject, minimizing the problem, saying something explicitly nonsupportive, or even remaining silent. Companionship, aid, security, and closeness (Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin, 1994). In fact, considerable research indicates that girls disclose to friends more than do boys (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). Although fewer studies specifically focus on talking about problems, the studies that do also indicate that girls disclose to friends about problems more than boys (Glick & Rose, 2011; Rose & Asher, 2004).

Moreover, research regarding co-rumination in friendship, or friends extensively discussing and rehashing problems, indicates that girls communicate more than boys (e.g., Hankin, Stone, &

Wright, 2010; Jose, Wilkins, & Spendelow, 2012; Rose, Carlson, & Waller, 2007; Smith & Rose, 2011; Stone, Hankin, Gibb, & Abela, 2011). Both sexes form social structures that lead different members to assume specific roles and characteristics. For example, in a female group (as seen in the movie) the one with the power is like the "Queen Bee" with a contingent of followers. Her friends do what she wants, she is charming when she wants to be, she's manipulatively affectionate, and she takes no responsibility for hurting another's feelings, and defines right and wrong by the loyalty or disloyalty shown to her. She is usually the one who decides who should be the victim. Relational aggression negatively impacts "mirroring" - a peer group's reflected reaction to an individual. Caught in the web of punishing aggression by peers, a young person's internal sense of self becomes diminished and felt as being "a loser" - "a reject" and "not as good". Self-esteem is low and feelings of insecurity may persist throughout life. What is also affected is the ability to trust as an adult and to be free to be open to close relationships. A recent development in social aggression is cyber bullying, acted out by both sexes. In this type of aggression, the perpetrator uses social networking tools - email, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat - to inflict damage, particularly the spreading of socially harmful rumors of others.

Recent reports of several suicides by young adolescents who were targeted speak to the damaging power of this kind of aggression. Adolescent girls often perpetrate aggression by gossiping and spreading rumors about others, attempting to ruin relationships and manipulating and excluding others. For the past few decades, research has also looked at the differences

between people who use physical forms of aggression and those who use more indirect or relational forms of aggression (Marsee, M.A.; Frick, P.J.2007). Although girls and boys may not differ in the overall use of relational aggression they may differ in how damaging this use of aggression is to their peer relationships (Card, N.A.; Stucky, B.D.; Sawalani, G.M.; Little, T.D., 2008) Girls who used high levels of relational forms of aggression showed the worst adjustment problems; this was notwithstanding the level of physical aggression they displayed (Marsee, M.A.; Frick, P.J.; Barry, C.T.; Kimonis, E.R.; Centifanti, L.C.M.; Aucoin, K.J. 2014). For girls, then, a high use of relational aggression for multiple purposes (retaliatory and for personal gain) may demarcate girls who have problems maintaining satisfying and prosocial relationships with others. For example, girls who used high levels of relational aggression showed low levels of caring and empathy toward others, characteristics associated with a callous-unemotional (CU; i.e., lack of remorse or empathy, callous use of others, shallow or deficient emotions) interpersonal style (Stickle, T.R.; Marini, V.A.; Thomas, J.N., 2014) Adolescent girls who gossip and work to ruin relationships by freezing people out may show adjustment problems, but also, this may depend on their reasons for using relational aggression. Relational aggression, on its own, may be particularly important to look at in girls, because these aggressive tactics appear to negatively affect girls more than they affect boys.

Relational bullying can be harmful to an adolescent girls' mental health. According to Fanning (2002), and Muscari (2002), relational bullying has been proven to harm girls' mental health and future emotional

welfare and can lead to anxiety disorders and depression. Recent studies reveal that bullies and victims have poor psycho-social health. Craig (1998) and Smith (1991) state that bullies are more aggressive, antisocial, and impulsive. On the other hand, victims are more passive, anxious, and mistrustful (Craig, 1998; Olweus, 1993; Schwartz, McFayden-Ketchum, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1998).

Relational aggression is more prevalent in girl adolescents than boy adolescents. There has been a growing awareness that aggression in relationships can be a compelling concern for girls in the past few years (Arts, 1998; Hoyt & Scherer, 1998). Aggressive behavior is prominent among the complicated interactions of social, cognitive, emotional and biological factors (e.g., Boxer & Dubow, 2002; Tisak et al., 2006).

A number of studies have shown that the most common form of aggression among girls is relational aggression. According to Cummings, Hoffman, and Leschied (2004) relational aggression is defined as: …manipulation of other with the goal of causing harm to the relationship and the victim through behaviors such as: (a) excluding a girl from a social group, (b) gossiping about another girl so that other girls will reject her, or (c) threatening termination of a friendship unless a girl does what the aggressor wants (p. 286). According to Horne, Stoddard and Bell (2007) the effects of aggression is no less dangerous as those effects of physical violence. Research and statistics indicate female aggression is on the rise. There is not extensive research or information readily available on female bullies.

Researchers of aggression and bullying research rarely reviewed females because the original thought was that only males were aggressive (Gomes, 2007). Snyder, Sickmund, & PoeYamagata's (1996) study shows that in the United States, girls under 18 years of age being arrested for violent crimes have increased 125% between 1985 and 1994. This reflects a consequential rise in rates for girls being arrested for aggravated assault (134% for girls versus 88% for boys) and "simple" assault (141% for girls versus 102% for boys), (Moretti, Holland, & McKay's, 2001). This research is built from studies of relational versus overt aggression in girls and boys and gender differences in aggressive behavior. Teenage girls who have aggressive behavior tend to use aggressive acts as a way to get revenge or to relieve boredom. In Paquette & Underwood's (1999) study, adolescents were asked to reflect why they might have been the victim of relational aggression and the answer mentioned most was that the aggressor was trying to get revenge or make them mad. Two more broad answers appeared when they asked teenage girls why a fictional character described in a story engaged in relational aggression. The teenage girls said that it was something fun to do to ease boredom, and the second answer had to do with creating jealousy, seeking attention, revenge, self-protection, and inclusion in a group involving friendship (Reynolds & Repetti, 2010). Relational aggression can be both overt and subtle.

Many high school females begin forming friendships that begin as early as elementary or middle school. Although the friendships are meaningful they often involve some type of internal conflict. There are times when the friendships

that high school females engage in are not necessarily healthy or beneficial. The friendships either involve negative or positive traits such as loyalty and trust as well as negative traits such as "girl drama" which can negatively impact the friendship. Moreover there is some evidence to support the idea that positive friendship qualities enhance a female's school experience. This evidence is mainly based on student's self- reporting of this information. Females report if they are able to maintain at least one good friendship are more likely to have very few behavioral problems within the school setting. It is important to note that not all female friendships should be considered the same. According to the research, a major component of female friendships is the ability to disclose. Another key characteristic of some female friendships is corumination. Corumination is considered a relatively new term that describes a frequent and obsessive discussion of a problem or negative opinions.

Relational aggression is also prevalent among some female friendships. Generally, some females will assume a power role in the relationship and this causes an imbalance because the aggressor will target the victim. The victim will offer suffer with low self-esteem. Social media has played a major role in relational aggression. The aggressor may post mean comments about the victim or spread false rumors about the victim. This behavior often causes conflict within the school setting. Various cases of cyberbullying have been directly linked to young people committing suicide some of which who recorded the event on social media. Overall, relational aggression may be displayed more in females than their male counterparts. Research has shown that

females that display aggression is now on the rise. Researchers also suggest that there is a correlation to aggression and violent crimes. Interestingly, females who were the victims of relational aggression seemed to have justified the unhealthy behavior that was displayed towards them. Overall, it is very imperative for high school females to learn how to properly developed and maintain positive female social relationships.

## Method
There are a number of young ladies who have expressed social isolation and the inability to make friendships with the other female students. This leads to sadness, insecurity and low self-esteem for the students. These students often become withdrawn and may even develop absenteeism as a method of escape and avoidance. The most severe cases are those young ladies who develop social anxiety and lack of desire in school attendance. In seeking efforts to support these students the professional school counselors have discussed developing an intentional small group to address the challenges of social adjustment and to encourage the girls to develop the necessary tools in cultivating and maintaining healthy peer relationships.

The professional school counselors will review their caseload for potential female students to target and also seek the referrals from the teachers as well. The administrators will also be allowed to refer female students that they deem suitable to participate in the small group.

It has been agreed upon that the small group will run in two sessions. The group will be composed two groups which include one for 9th and 10th grade girls. The group

will be held during 4th period which is the longest period of the day. The students will be given a permission form which must be signed in order to participate. The group will run for 6 weeks at a time and will rotate new girls upon the completion of the group as deemed necessary. The title of the girls group will be called CHICK Chat.

All potential subjects will be issued a parent/guardian consent form to participate in the group. Students are required to return the signed consent form in order to participate in the group. A copy of the letter will also be emailed to the parent/guardian. If the form is not returned within a few days a follow up phone call will be made to the parent/guardian to ensure that the forms are returned in a timely manner.

There are 16 female participants who will participate in the small group CHICK Chat. The participants were selected based on counselor and administrative referral. The participants all returned the parent/guardian permission form and agreed to participate in the small group. The participants' ages range from 14 – 16 years of age. The ethnicities of the girls are Caucasian, African American and Mexican. The participants in this group can not necessarily be used as a generalization of female friendships as well as the results. The female participants that were selected for the small group but did not participate were solely those female students who did not return the required permission form for participation. "The use of these referred students as participants in this study greatly restricts the generalizability of the results."

Table 1
Select Demographic Characteristics of 9th Grade Female Participants

| Student | Age | Ethnicity | Behavior/Attendance |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 14 | African American | No referrals |
| 2 | 15 | Hispanic | One referral |
| 3 | 15 | Caucasian | 5 unexcused absence |
| 4 | 14 | Hispanic | 3 unexcused absences |
| 5 | 15 | African American | Two referrals |
| 6 | 16 | Hispanic | 7 unexcused absences |
| 7 | 15 | Caucasian | None |
| 8 | 14 | Multiracial | None |

Table 2
Select Demographic Characteristics of 10th Grade Female Participants

| Student | Age | Ethnicity | Behavior/Attendance |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 16 | Hispanic | 2 |
| 2 | 15 | Caucasian | 4 absences |
| 3 | 15 | African American | None |
| 4 | 15 | African American | 1 referral |
| 5 | 16 | Caucasian | None |
| 6 | 16 | Hispanic | 3 absences |
| 7 | 15 | African American | 1 referral |
| 8 | 15 | Hispanic | 4 absences |

## Measure

Attitudes towards overall female friendship was measured using a questionnaire developed by the professional school counselors for this particular study. The pre assessment survey includes 12 questions. The survey measures the female participants' attitudes and thoughts about

friendships. The survey measure also contains questions about overall self-concept. Lastly, the survey measure the females' attitudes about handling conflict with others. The survey was created using a Likert scale with answers that range from strongly agree – strongly disagree. The responses could possibly range from all strongly agree to all strongly disagree. Female participants were allowed to complete the initial pre data survey. The survey was completed in the computer lab. All participants were notified that the survey would be completed via google docs and all responses would be anonymous. The questionnaire is listed below in table 3.

### Table 3 Pre-Survey Items

CHICK Chat Pre-Survey

1. I have a positive attitude towards myself.
2. I often experience loneliness.
3. I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am a good friend.
5. I am happy with the number of friendships that I have.
6. I am happy with the quality of friendships that I have.
7. I trust my friends.
8. I am able to express my feelings without hurting others.
9. Social media has an impact on my friendships.
10. I am able to effectively communicate and express myself to others.
11. I know how to effectively handle conflict with my female peers.
12. It is important for me to develop female friendships in high school.

During the initial session of the groups the professional school counselor will discuss the purpose of the group. The professional school counselor will allow the female participants to introduce each other and

complete an initial icebreaker. The students will take the letters of their first name and use each letter to describe themselves. The icebreaker is devised to help establish a rapport for the members. The professional counselor will allow the female participants to establish group ground rules that will be used during each session of the group. The ground rules will be written down and posted in the group sessions. The professional school counselor will also review the importance of confidentiality and situations or scenarios in which other adults may have to be informed.

During the second session the group will review the ground rules established in the first setting. The group will discuss the topic of the session which is friendships. The female participants will be allowed to write down and discuss a recipe for a good and bad friendship. The friendship recipe for both friendships will be discussed. The participants will be allowed to discuss how either friendship has had an impact on them. The professional school counselor will encourage the participants to focus on selecting positive traits such as honesty, loyalty, trust, respect and other traits when both choosing and becoming a friend.

During the third session of the group there will be a discussion on communication and how to communicate effectively to others. Female participants will be allowed to journal write about a situation where they disagreed with a friend if possible. The students will be given 10 minutes. The female participants will be allowed to discuss journal writings. During the fourth sessions the professional school counselor will review positive traits and qualities that the participants have agreed upon as important in developing friendships. The students will also discuss how gossip and

rumors may have an impact on female friendships. The female participants will be introduced to "Think before you speak or post." Think – is an acronym True – Helpful- Important – Necessary- Kind. The female participants will review 4 scenarios related to gossip and rumors and discuss the importance of the Think acronym. The female participants will view social media posts and how words have the power to hurt others and cause conflict.

During the fifth session of the group student will focus on how to deal with conflict in a positive manner. The students will learn how to use I feeling statements. The students will also focus on how to listen to others and how to coping mechanisms when anger is triggered. Female participants will watch brief clips of female reality shows which displays negative behaviors. Female participants will discuss clips and how to effectively resolve conflict.

During sixth and final session – the female participants will take the post survey same survey at the end of the session. Female participants will discuss self- esteem and overall self-concept. The female participants will discuss the importance of thinking positive of themselves as well as speaking positive words about themselves. The female participants will also review the definition of empathy and kindness towards others. The students will go to the white board and allow the other female participants to write at least one positive word or trait that they observe about one another. Each of the participants will complete the activity. The female participants will review all of the components of each session. Each participant will be given

a small box (friendship tool box) and they will use index cards to create friendship tools to put in their tool box. The tools will include items they have learned from the group sessions.

The intentional intervention is to offer the group as a means to help 9th and 10th female grade students in developing at least one healthy friendship. It is also important as an intervention to reduce possible incidents of relational aggression displayed that may result in discipline referrals. The female participants will be monitored while participating in the group and afterwards. Data on the female participants overall grades, attendance and behavior will be monitored and reviewed while the group is occurring and also once the group ends to see if there is a long term effect of participation. Teacher and administrator observations will also be taken in to consideration in determining group effectiveness.

Under the ASCA Model, when collecting data for running a small group is important to assess data from the process to perception and then outcome data. The goal is to enhance the perception of female friendships and thereby assessing the outcome data to determine if an overall change has occurred in female participants developing and maintaining at least one healthy female friendship.

### Results
Overall, the development of the small group for girls has been considered positive. The young ladies benefited from the intentional interventions and appeared to have enjoyed the new connections formed with their peers within the small group. As discussed earlier, the young ladies were selected based on referrals and the

students' willingness to return the required permission forms. The administrators were concerned with developing strategies and interventions that would be able to improve school attendance and also reduce possible conflicts that exist within females.

The group participants were initially given a pre-test survey. The results are as follows:
1. I have a positive attitudes towards myself. Yes – 72 % no 8% and maybe 20%
2. I often experience loneliness. Yes – 42% no 15% and maybe 43%
3. I have a number of good qualities. Yes 91% no 9% maybe.
4. I am a good friend. Yes 74% maybe 26%
5. I am happy with the number of friendships that I have. Yes 78 % no 13% and maybe 9%
6. I am happy with the quality of friendships that I have. Yes 81% no 4% and maybe 15%
7. I trust my friends. Yes 51% no 6% maybe 43%
8. I am able to express my feelings without hurting others. Yes 51% maybe 15% no 34%
9. Social media has an impact on my friendships. Yes 56% maybe 44%
10. I am able to effectively communicate and express myself to others. Yes 50% no 20% maybe 30%
11. I know how to effectively handle conflicts with my female peers. Yes 45% no 25% maybe 30%
12. It is important for me to develop female friendships in high school. Yes 85% maybe 15%

The pretest survey was insightful and necessary to gain initial data of the thoughts and perceptions of the female participants.  Some of the females reported

negative attitudes towards themselves. The other survey responses that presented areas of concerns were the ability or inability to express their feelings without hurting others.

The initial session of the group allowed the girls to meet one another and to establish ground rules to be used within the group. All of the participants displayed a positive attitude towards the other girls. Although some of the girls were aware of one another no one in the group considered themselves to be friends with one another. In general, the participants chose qualities that they believe are necessary for friendships. Such qualities included honesty, trust, loyalty and respect. The group participants openly discussed some of the challenges experienced with their respective friends. One particular participant openly discussed her anger issues and how it affected her friendships at times. The young ladies listened attentively and showed support towards the participant and offered suggestions for improving future challenges.

The next session involved the participants examining both ineffective and effective communication techniques that females may use with one another. The participants viewed a couple of YouTube video clips from the movie Mean Girls. The movie provides relative content for the group's discussion and focus. The participants were introduced to journal writing which is an effective way to express and process their feelings and experiences. The participants were encouraged to use the journals on a daily basis and would be allowed to share their entries with the group if they desired. The participants also shared various challenges that they experienced with social media. The participants discussed

the most popular social media apps used were Instagram and Snapchat. Many of the participants discussed the conflicts that arose as a result of what could be considered mean or inappropriate posts.

The fifth session began as a review of the topics that were discussed in the group. The participants presented as receptive and eager. One of the participants disclosed that she blocked several of the people she had been connected with on Instagram and her "IG drama was over." The participants viewed a brief clip about the negative effects of reality TV and its depiction of women. Most of the participants agreed that they don't like the violence amongst females that they see on TV. However, all of the participants report that they have seen at least one reality show involving women and some enjoy watching shows such as Love and Hip Hop. The viewed clip involved a conflict with two of the characters. The participants discussed how this could have been better handled. The participants were introduced to "I" statements as a strategy. The participants were able to practice scenarios with a partner using the "I" statements." They were encouraged to continue to add these new tools to their journals.

The final session of the group was a review of the various topics that were discussed previously. Overall, the participants stated that they felt the group was worthwhile. The results indicated, the females felt they felt better about themselves through the discussions and also that their conflicts had decreased. The participants were led in an exercise about Positive Affirmations that they can utilize. The participants were enlisted to take turns going to the smart board and having the other young ladies choose positive words about the individual.

Initially, the young ladies seemed a little nervous and apprehensive. The girls used positive words such as brave, beautiful, nice and funny. The girls all seemed to be empowered by the affirmations and were encouraged to write daily affirmations.

## Summary
The goal of the particular group was to address possible relational aggression that was being displayed with certain females. The Advisory committee comprised of administrators and professional school counselors met to discuss ways to combat potential discipline referrals and overall conflict that was occurring with targeted students. It was important to demonstrate and emphasize the importance of the female students displaying positive regard towards one another, and also placing emphasis on improving their overall academic performance. It is vital that the young ladies realize the importance of maintaining a good academic standing and its relationship to post-secondary goals.

The participants were allowed to have a brief discussion about the lessons from each of the sessions. The girls created their friendship box of the attributes they required for positive friendships including how to be good to yourself. The celebration of the six week experience including pizza and cupcakes. The girls enjoyed the ending of the group. The girls were encouraged to seek out support when needed for themselves.   Initially, it was undetermined how the young ladies would respond to participating in the group. One of the major dynamics of a small group is ensuring that the girls would develop a positive rapport with one another in order to work on the determined goals.

At the start of the group there appeared

to be some hesitancy on the girls feeling comfortable to discuss the topics with one another. However, after ground rules were established and the girls completed the ice breakers they seem to become more comfortable with one another.

Overall, the pre survey seemed to be honest and reflective about the initial responses based on the mindsets of the young ladies. Early on it appeared there were some young ladies who were more comfortable than others in disclosing or discussing the various topics. It took some others a little longer to feel comfortable. Interestingly enough the girls appeared to be eager to support one another and at times encouraging as well.

The results of the post survey appeared to be valid as well. The advisory team seemed to be in agreement that the development of the small group displayed some effectiveness. The group sessions allowed the young ladies to discuss an array of topics which was very revealing and telling about their overall self-concept and the need to feel affirmed in a safe space. Many of the young ladies exhibited individual and collective struggles in their own identity. There was a common thread of the need for acceptance and also the importance of seeing themselves in a positive light. The challenges lie in the negative effects of social media and the relationship it now has on one's self esteem. The young ladies became aware of the alarming statistics about the increasing rates of depression in young ladies as a result of social media.

There were a lot of interesting points that came out as a result of the group discussions. The young ladies were given an opportunity to have more one on one attention which resulted in a positive

regard overall. The young ladies seemed to have benefited from the additional support of setting goals to improve their behavior as well as their academic performance. They were now exposed to various college options and how disciplinary actions may be brought to question when they apply to college.

The committee felt that ongoing support to these young ladies could be addressed by participating in either a mentorship program or joining My Sister's Keeper which is a newly formed group for young ladies. During President Barack Obama's presidency, the group My Brother's Keeper was established. It was designed to address opportunity gaps that young men may face and ensure that the young men reach their full potential. The female component is My Sister's Keeper both groups were established in my school district. This group has been established this year for girls and it was suggested by the committee for the young ladies to gain participation in the group. The groups allow students to participate in college visits and fairs and helps guide them to develop short and long term goals for academic success.

In general the committee was pleased with the outcome of the small group and believe that the girls showed progress from the initial meeting to the final session. It was suggested that there could possibly be rotating groups for female students identified as in need of additional support. It might be also beneficial to establish or gather incentives for the young ladies who make sufficient progress and to reward them for improvement in behavior or academic progress. In speaking with some of the faculty members they agreed to take on the role of mentors for students who were in need. This will also help to support

the needs of the students.

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# A School Counselor's Guide to Promoting a Culture of Academic Success

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## Abstract

Graduation rates are affected by several factors in which school counselors are not always aware of. Current research highlights several demographics at a higher risk for dropping out of high school including low socioeconomic status, African-Americans, Hispanics, teen pregnancy and students whose parents dropped out of high school. This manuscript is intended to recognize community-based and school-based intervention programs to increase graduation rates as a whole and ways to advocate for these students. Further, the manuscript will provide important research in regards to additional risk factors to target students through a comprehensive school counseling program.

## A School Counselor's Guide to Promoting a Culture of Academic Success

School counselor roles have changed drastically over the last decades, from major duties and responsibilities, to school administration preferences. Although school counselors have varying duties, dependent upon the school, school counselors aim to enhance academic success and performance through the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program. Specifically, school counselors may focus on increasing graduation rates within the school and community they serve.

In fact, graduation rates in the state of Georgia are a key element when determining a school's College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). According to the Georgia Department of Education website, "CCRPI is a comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication platform for all educational stakeholders that will promote college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students" (2015). Graduation rates are a quick and quantitative way for a state's Department of Education to decide whether a school is improving, declining or staying stagnate. Many school systems turn to school counselors to track cohort graduation numbers of each class of students to assist in determining the likelihood of success in this area. It is also common for school administration to specifically look to the school counseling department to implement needed interventions and curriculum to target at-risk students who are not on track to graduate or school-wide programs when there is a concern for dwindling graduation rates. The National Center for Education Statistics states "… the 2014-2015 adjusted cohort graduation rate for public high school students rose to 83%" (2017). Although Georgia's Department of Education has reported increased graduation rates every year since 2011, the 2015 four-year cohort graduation rate of 78.8% still has room for improvement (2015).

The intent of this manuscript is to provide school counselors with practical resources, selected interventions and unique opportunities to increase graduation rates for at-risk students as well as school-wide initiatives to promote a culture of academic success. The resources discussed throughout the manuscript will allow school counselors to choose which classroom guidance lessons, small group, and individual counseling lesson plans are the most appropriate for their target populations. Further, the following manuscript, will also introduce a variety of risk factors, including teen pregnancy, low-income, single parent households, English Language Learners and first-generation college-bound students that school counselors come into contact with regularly but do not have the time to address each group or each person individually due to the range of assigned duties. By introducing these risk factors, school counselors can decide which sub-group of students is producing the highest decrease in graduation rates in their specific school. The article will conclude with how school counselors can target these students and generate large increases in graduation rates by applying correct interventions and altering parts of their comprehensive school counseling program to meet the needs of the students.

## Literature Review

According to Koenig, J. A., Hauser, R. M., the National Academies Press, the National Research Council, and the National Academy of Education (2010), "…high school graduation rates have long been used as a central indicator of education system productivity and effectiveness…" (pp.9). Koenig et al. (2010) go on to say that "Earning a high school diploma is one of the most important factors associated with social and economic success in America. A high school diploma signifies that the bearer has both the cognitive and noncognitive attributes important for success in adulthood" (pp.13). Knowing how important employers believe a high school diploma to be in regard to the abilities of an employee shows the importance of tailoring a school counseling core curriculum, school-wide incentive plans, small group and individual counseling sessions to increase graduation numbers. Not only is a high school diploma important for job-seeking purposes, but studies indicate high school graduates live 6 to 9 years longer than high school dropouts, and although high school dropouts make up less than 20% of overall population, they make up 41% of the incarcerated population (Koenig, et al., 2010). A high school diploma does not just give vocational opportunities for students, but it can make a difference in a person's life expectancy and freedom.

According to the case study done by Todd McKee and Caldarella (2016): The United States has a high percentage of students dropping out of high school. Approximately 10% of students entering high school eventually leave before graduation without a diploma or equivalency. Research into high school completion has identified dropping out of school as a personal and social crisis.

Todd McKee and Caldarella (2016) go on to say high school dropouts

have limited life opportunities and, as a group, can become a drain on social services. Students who drop out are four times more likely to be unemployed and if employed earn one-third less income than high school graduates. They have fewer employment options and usually end up in low-skilled, low-paying positions with few opportunities for advancement.

## Risk Factors

There are early risk factors, which can be identified as early as sixth grade to discourage students from dropping out of high school (Todd McKee & Caldarella, 2016). Social and academic risk factors are the most common risk factors to pinpointing students who are at risk for not graduating. High school counselors must begin making partnerships and relationships with their middle school counselor counterparts to provide easier high school transitions and bridge programs as well as communicating the names of students who need more support during high school. Todd McKee and Caldarella (2016) stated that "… identification of high school students at risk for dropout [must be done] by the first semester of ninth grade year" to effectively make change (pp.515). Students who are on track after their freshman year are "… four times more likely to graduate than students who were off track" (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2016). "It comes as no surprise that ninth grade marks the year with the highest percentage of grade retention" (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2016). Among other early risk factors to identify: family income, parents' education and family structure are all positively correlated with high school dropout as well as a larger number of minorities, African-American and

Hispanic males particularly (Todd McKee & Caldarella, 2016). Academic risks such as test scores, previous school performance, specifically in core classes, and problems with attendance are associated with high school dropout as well (Todd McKee & Caldarella, 2016).

## Special Populations

As school counselors work to increase graduation rates, there are several key groups and populations who can be targeted through a comprehensive school counseling program. According to Beatty (2001), "…dropping out is significantly higher among Hispanic and African-American students, students in poverty, among students in urban schools, among English-language learners, and among students with disabilities" (pp. 14). The numbers for dropping out are much higher for Hispanic students who were born outside the United States compared to those who are born in the United States (Beatty, 2001). This data allows school counselors to concentrate on the populations who are at the highest risk of high school dropout by knowing which students to invite for group counseling initiatives and teaming up with ESOL/ELL teachers for classroom guidance lessons. Bradley and Renzulli (2011) stated one reason Hispanic and/or Latin@ students drop out is "Latinos, traditional cultural values may instill motivations for working that go above and beyond financial impetuses to work" (pp. 525). School counselors should be aware that "…in Mexico school is a luxury and adolescents are expected to work. For Latino boys, one of the most common explanations of dropout is that they are working many hours during and even prior to adolescence" (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011). By knowing which Hispanic country

a student and his or her family are from, school counselors will be able to explain the importance of cultural differences and expectations in the United States without devaluing the students' culture, family or heritage.

Some schools and school districts may be predominantly made up of Hispanic and/or African-American students, therefore, focusing on these two ethnic groups may not be possible, as this may be the majority and/or all of the student body. Another way a school counselor can identify students who need to be targeted with intervention programs is by focusing on the students' parents. "The judicial abrasion (divorce) or preclusion (out-of-wedlock births) of the father from his sons and daughters biases the children in the direction of not achieving a high school diploma" (Mackey & Mackey, 2012). Focusing on students who fall into the above ethnic categories but also may come from a family of divorce, or a family where the student was born out of wedlock, may also provide another way for school counselors to center on the group of students who are at the highest risk for dropout. Another way to incorporate parental characteristics is identifying those students who did and did not complete their own high school diploma or complete any college work. According to Lundetrae (2011), "…parents educational level was found to influence drop-out in both Norway and USA", and showed that "…highly educated parents increase the likelihood for youth to enter higher education and predict better results in mathematics, reading and science for 15-year-olds" (pp. 634). "The likelihood for dropout was more than three times as large for youth with low educated mothers compared to youth with high educated mothers (Lundetrae, 2011). Although

most school counselors are aware of the repetition which can occur across generations in regards to education, Lundetrae (2011) notes that it is important to look at the educational attainment of both parents, whether in the home or not in the home, as "…both parents' educational level had an impact on drop-out" (pp. 634).

## Alternate Programs

Oftentimes, school counselors will refer students who may be at-risk of aging out of the public school system or who may be several credits away from graduating to a GED program thinking this is in the student's or the school's best interest. Giambo (2010) brings light to the GED pass/fail rate when he states:

The composition of Florida's GED students has changed in recent years to include more 17 to 20 years olds, rather than previously more typical adults. The reason cited is that schools are referring students to GED programs, even though both the GED pass rate from community colleges for these are low.

Another issue with referring students to GED programs is students, oftentimes, do not follow through with beginning the GED program, as there is no accountability once the student has left the high school. Educational laws vary from state to state in regard to students being referred to GED programs. Certain states (i.e. Florida) determine leaving high school to enter into a GED program or adult education program will not count against a school's dropout rate, whereas some states (i.e. Georgia) do count these students against a school's dropout rate. School counselors need to research their state laws in accordance to this as well as be aware of the unusually low GED pass rates in their specific state, to be able to advise students to the most

appropriate option available.

## Integration into School Counseling Program

School counselors work to assist students to remove barriers in a student's education so they are able to have success in the classroom and in life after high school. Awareness of the long-lasting effects of not possessing a high school diploma is critical to understanding the need for interventions and the continued focus on increasing graduation rates.  Knowing how to target students who may benefit the most from needed interventions allows for the limited resources and finances available to school counseling programs to be utilized in the most effective ways (Bowers, Sprott & Taff, 2012).

Once school counselors know who and why to provide intervention programs to within their school, school counselors must then decide how to integrate these initiatives within their comprehensive school counseling program.  Freeman, Simonsen, McCoach, Sugai, Lombardi & Horner (2015) suggest "…early and universal direct social skills instruction along with a mastery learning approach to academics has been shown [to] increase the odds of high school completion (pp.294).  Freeman et al. (2015) research the findings from schools who implemented the Schoolwide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (SWPBIS) framework and notes one of the most important impacts of SWPBIS is that it "…provides explicit instruction to students about pro-social behaviors that lead to increased positive reinforcement within the school environment" (pp.294).  This is important for school counselors, as school-wide positive reinforcement can provide the results needed to improve a school culture while simultaneously increasing

high school graduation rates.  "The critical features of SWPBIS include: clearly defining, teaching, and reinforcing school-wide expectations: using data-based decision-making to monitor implementation and results; providing differentiated levels of support for students in response to student need; and establishing systems to support ongoing implementation" (Freeman et al., 2015).  Ecker-Lyster and Niileksela (2016) discuss other types of programs which research shows to have been successfully implemented in schools to decrease dropout rates such as "… weekly support group meetings that focused on enhancing students' academic and interpersonal skills, combined with daily one-on-one interactions with an adult mentor…" (pp. 27).  Mentorship programs such as the Boys and Girls Club and local sorority/fraternity alumni groups or partnerships with community businesses would allow little to no financial burden on a school system while providing the needed mentors for students.  Another way to improve school retention and engagement, is utilizing service-learning and community engagement projects for at-risk students so they, too, can give back within their community and feel a sense of belonging (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2016).  "Disruptive behavior and poor social skills are considered academic risk factors that have the potential to influence a student's decision to drop out of high school" (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2016). To target this group, providing students with ways to develop social skills through classroom guidance and small group counseling as well as helping parents understand the need for improving social skills can positively effect graduation rates (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2016).

There is not much conflict among research

in regard to the populations which are identified as having positive correlations with high school dropout.  It is evident through the review of case studies, journals and articles that targeting these groups as early as middle school is key for effective intervention and change.  The topic of high school dropout is relevant to each high school counselor in the United States, as school counselors work to make educational improvements within their school and school district daily.  School counselors attempt to assist students to remove barriers within the educational environment to encourage all students to be successful during high school and with their post-secondary lives.  Identifying students who are at risk for not being successful is fundamental to improving school culture, utilizing school resources appropriately and targeting vulnerable populations and subgroups to implement intervention.

Practitioner-Based Recommendations
Community-Based Interventions

Increasing community involvement within a school counseling program is a great way to produce increased graduation rates. Students with adult connections are more likely to feel encouraged by those around them, to have someone advocate for them and are provided with different perspectives when needing or seeking advice.  Community mentorships are a key example of giving students adult connections.  Most schools require anyone working with students to be given a background check, which can cost anywhere from $30 to $50. Partnering with organizations such as Boys and Girls Club or local sorority and fraternity organizations is a great way to find mentors as well as the organizations are usually responsible for the cost of the background check.  Another way to find mentors within your

community, while avoiding the cost, is to partner with local or state mentor matching programs. Many community members do not know which schools to directly reach out to and often reach out to mentorship matching programs.  Mentorship matching programs allow for schools to partner with this organization and have their need for mentors publicized in the geographical area. However, if/when a cost for a background check does fall onto your school, school counselors need to have already provided your administration with the reviewed literature, which shows the benefits of mentor/mentee relationships and how it will affect students and data.

Community-based incentive programs are another great way to increase community support while increasing graduation rates and providing students with a career after high school.  School counselors need to research to find businesses and companies who provide incentive programs to high school-aged students, such as Southwire Company in Carrollton, Georgia. According to the Southwire Company 12 for Life website, 12 for Life provides students "…with classroom instruction, on-the-job training, key work/life skills, mentoring and employment opportunities" (Southwire Company, 2013).  12 for Life allows students to attend a public high school during a portion of the day and then spend four hours working a shift in a Southwire facility earning a paycheck, above minimum wage, but if students miss school, they are not allowed to work (Southwire Company, 2013).  Programs such as 12 for Life focus primarily on students who are at risk of dropping out and need the skills and income to be successful and complete their high school degree. "Since the launch of 12 for Life, [Carroll County School System's] dropout

rate has plunged from 35% to 22%. A total of 851 kids have graduated from the program so far, 40% whom have gone on to college" (Helman, 2014).

### School-Wide Interventions

Although focusing on students who fall into at-risk demographics, which have been discussed, is a good way to target students for interventions, there are students who always surprise school counselors when and if they choose to drop out of high school. School-wide interventions allow school counselors to focus on the entire student body with an inclusive mindset. Providing freshman transitional information sessions for students and families allows for time to teach freshman students which classes are needed to graduate, which classes are needed to attend four-year universities, how to read a transcript, the differences between middle and high school and understanding grade point averages. As Ecker-Lyster and Niileksela stated in 2016, "…ninth grade marks the year with the highest percentage of grade retention", and through bulletin boards around your high school, freshman expo nights, open houses and visiting the middle schools who move into your high school are ways to provide this information to each entering ninth grade class (pp.28). Open houses and bulletin boards also allow school counselors to provide this information to the entire student body who may have transferred into your high school after ninth grade or who missed this information earlier in their high school career. For example, bulletin boards with the state and school's graduation requirements or a timeline showing recommendations for each academic year for students going into a variety of post-secondary opportunities (i.e. technical school, junior college, university, work-

force).

Tracking cohort numbers is another way school counselors can directly track each graduation cohort. Keeping up with the student body number and the numbers within each graduating class allows school counselors to identify each student who is not accounted for and who may have dropped out or transferred schools. If a student transfers schools but the other school does not request transcripts or provide information the student has entered their school system, it will appear as if this student is a drop out from your high school when that is not the fact. Following up with graduation cohort numbers allows for unaccounted students to be addressed before it is too late. It is recommended that school counselors follow cohort numbers bi-weekly to have a better chance of reaching students to ask questions about their current educational situation. Tracking cohort numbers also allows for attendance to be seen to assist in identifying students for small group and individual interventions. Tracking cohort numbers is an easy way to add data into a school counseling program, but a team made up of the registrar, attendance clerk, school social worker and other guidance department staff will need to be utilized to use the data to implement change within the graduation rate.

### Classroom-Level Interventions

Due to the limitations of school counselors being able to interrupt educational teaching through classroom guidance lessons, it may be difficult to enter classrooms often. School counselors need to model their comprehensive program based on the ASCA school counseling model, so a partnership agreement with their administration is created at the beginning

of the school year which states the topics and number of classroom guidance lessons school counselors will deliver. This will allow school counselors to advocate for their school counseling program as well as have administration support when entering classrooms. School counselors can also advocate for their program by getting teachers and other educators in their school involved within their program. Communication is fundamental for the school to stay informed of what is going on in the counseling department. School counselors can get this information to other educators through a counseling department newsletter, bulletin boards, school announcements, e-mailing information to teachers and updating the counseling department website. To increase graduation rates as well as prepare students for the next chapter in their lives, school counselors must be providing a variety of information when developing classroom guidance lessons. For example, oftentimes, school counselors only educate students on four-year college exploration, simply because of time restrictions. Alternatives to a traditional college-bound future also need to be discussed and embraced, including two-year colleges, military branches and students who wish to enter directly into the workplace. To increase graduation rates with Hispanic and/or undocumented students, school counselors can partner with the school Spanish teacher and ELL teacher to identify students who would benefit from a guidance lesson as well as provide bilingual information when needed. Guidance lessons for this population can include Hispanic-centered information such as local colleges with Hispanic-friendly campuses, scholarships for Hispanic and/or undocumented students, resources specifically for this population—like

mentorships and leadership conferences—and any other practical information which will assist these students with success after high school. When giving ninth grade students guidance lessons, school counselors should incorporate a school tour to show students where the school counselors' office is and the college and career center. School counselors can also incorporate other locations in the school which are beneficial to find resources when needed that students may not be aware of, such as the free/reduced lunch application, how to check out SAT/ACT study books, where to rent laptops, etc.

### Small Group Interventions

Although small groups may feel like the most difficult intervention to provide in high schools because school counselors are being pulled in several different directions at times, having a plan and staying on track with each lesson does have the ability to provide change in students' lives as well as in the data collected. A small group that can be utilized is one targeting minority students who want to attend a four-year university. This small group, made up of tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students, meets once per week throughout the fall semester discussing different colleges, financial aid, scholarships, college application processes and deadlines and ending the small group with an off-campus college tour field trip for the small group. This small group will add students each year as members of the group graduate, and students who have been in the small group throughout their time in high school can also act as mentors for the younger students. Another small group, which can be implemented, is one for all pregnant students within a high school. This would be a small group which would continuously be occurring based on the need of the

high school to ensure each pregnant student is invited to attend the group during their pregnancy. This small group can include information on how to apply for government programs which provide financial resources for food, daycare, and medical care such as the Georgia services Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and Medicaid.

School counselors can also allow time for students to use school phones and computers to apply and follow-up on these programs through the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). This small group can also be used for group/peer counseling where students share how pregnancy has changed their relationships with family members, the fathers of their children and friends as well as helping students understand alternative options to graduation which is available in your school district like night school, which does not require students to attend school for eight full hours but still provides the same high school diploma upon completion. This small group can also serve as an open question and answer time for students about things like Hospital Homebound services and how that will occur while they are home recovering from childbirth. Targeting African-American males with no father figures can create another small group. This group can discuss future goals and not letting the past alter their future, finding drive and determination from others, incorporating mentors for these students so they can develop adult connections and introducing post-secondary options which they may have not realized were options previously. Another small group, which can make an impact on graduation rates, is having a

small group for students who transfer to your high school for a "New Student" small group. This small group can be particularly helpful for students who transfer from out of state and who are not familiar with Georgia's HOPE scholarship program, Georgia colleges, state requirements for graduation, discussing clubs and sports available at your high school to encourage students to get involved, and other resources which are specific to your high school which will assist students in feeling more included.

### Individual Interventions

Meeting with students individually can provide a time for students to feel more calm and confident to ask their school counselor questions. It is beneficial for all senior students to meet with their school counselor one-on-one in the fall of their senior year so school counselors can provide these students with reassurance they are on the right track to graduate, explain free/reduced lunch benefits, selective service registration, voter registration, to give them a checklist and timeline for their senior year as well as allow for each student time to ask any questions they may have. School counselors should meet one-on-one with all junior students during the spring of the student's junior year. This allows two individual meetings, at the least, for every student to meet with their school counselor during their time in high school. During the junior meeting, school counselors and students will discuss how the student is doing in current courses, how the student can improve their GPA, which college entrance exam tests should be taken and when, required courses for next year and any other questions the student may have. It is beneficial for middle school counselors to provide the high school

counselors with names of students who would benefit from individual transition meetings during their first semester of high school. This individual counseling session will allow students to feel like they "know" someone at their new, larger school while providing information on the differences of middle school and high school and how the student will react to those differences. Lastly, individual interventions should be made when teachers refer students to the school counselor. Although not every school counselor referral is useful, teacher referrals are important to investigate, as they may warrant peer mediation, a student being moved into a small group which is taking place, reaching out to a parent/guardian or a further referral being made to an outside agency.

### School Counseling Considerations

Through the review of literature and understanding the importance of increasing graduation rates, school counselors can begin making several changes to their comprehensive school counseling program to implement programs and strategies for the advancement of their school and students. School counselors must be at the forefront of collecting data in a variety of ways and utilizing that data to target students for intervention. Using advanced statistical methods, such as correlations, to identify students who may benefit from involvement and participation within classroom guidance lessons, small groups or individual counseling allows for school counselors to provide information to the important stakeholders. School counselors will provide unique small group opportunities, which are school-specific, and empower students to remove their own educational barriers. School-specific small groups should be driven by needs found within data collection, such as

schools who have 5 to 15 students who are pregnant can create a pregnancy small group or a school who has a large number of new students throughout the year and would benefit from a new student small group. School counselors must begin communication with their middle school counselor counterparts to ensure early intervention when students begin high school since the reviewed literature went into detail about ninth grade being a pivotal time in a student's academic career. School counselors must actively network within their community to find partners and resources who want to be involved with the school counseling program. School counselors must begin providing lesson plans based on the ASCA standards, mindsets and behaviors, and obtain signed administrative agreements with their administrative staff. By doing this, school counselors will be able to engage the administration to better understand the school counselor's vision and data-driven initiatives, as their support can impact the success or failure of every program. School counselors will continue to ensure information is given to the entire student population through school-wide interventions, bulletin boards, newsletters, website upkeep and social media outlets so each student has the ability to receive information if/when they have not been targeted for further interventions.

Administrators need to use the provided literature and research as a tool to be better equipped to recognize the uses and needs of data within their school. Administrators must begin taking more of an initiative to be involved and understand the comprehensive school counseling program within their schools. Administrators may be missing out on opportunities to provide change within their

school, student population and data by not partnering with school counselors and taking time to understand and advocate for the school counselor duties and responsibilities stated in the ASCA school counseling model. Administrators should take time to observe school counselors daily routines to better understand the required time and effort in which they need and utilize to create and deliver a comprehensive school counseling program.

## Conclusion

School counselors play a crucial role in increasing high school graduation rates and are continuously discovering new and helpful strategies to make a well-rounded school counseling program. In this manuscript, a review of the literature provided a better understanding of how and when to target specific student populations through the use of data. Further, identifying students who fall into certain demographics and characteristics who may benefit from implementing classroom guidance lessons, small group interventions and individual interventions which are data-driven and school-specific. The positive ways in which networking within the community and opening the lines of communication among school counselors within a school district can positively impact the work school counselors are doing were also discussed. Administrators must support their school counselor and take time to fully understand school counselor duties and responsibilities per the ASCA model. School counselors and administrators must understand the need and evidence-based research for the continued data-centered school counseling program to implement change and advocacy in regards to high school graduation rates.

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# College and Career Counseling in Rural Schools: A Review of the Literature

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## Abstract

The recent legislation calls for attention to be given to rural education. Although the minority of the Georgia population lives in rural areas, school counselors play many roles in the lives of students in rural areas due to limited resources. This review summarizes the current literature on strategies utilized by school counselors in rural schools. Implications for practice and future research to assist rural Georgia school counselors are discussed.

## College and Career Counseling in Rural Schools: A Review of the Literature

Across rural communities, diverse people, challenges, and opportunities can be found (see Flora, Flora, & Gasteyer, 2015). This is no less true in our southeastern state of Georgia. Year after year, more schools are opened to serve our students in rural areas. School counselors work with students at all levels of K-12 education and their work is often shaped by policy. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has created special opportunities for rural schools. For example, rural schools are now able to transfer funds between Title II and IV, as well as from Title II/IV to Title I through a Rural Consolidated Plan (Battelle for Kids, 2016). Under the Title V, the recent Part B Rural Education Initiative there are 105 local education agencies (LEAs) in the state that are eligible for federal- and state-funded resources (GA DOE, 2015).

Given that over almost one-third of public school students in Georgia live in rural areas (NCES, 2014-2015) and one-third of these students are minorities (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014), this initiative is an acknowledgement that rural schools lack the personnel and resources needed to meet student needs. Given this focus on rural education matters, the role of school counselor within rural schools is of interest more than ever. The climate of rural communities uniquely positions school counselors, especially as primary college and career educators. Many of the specific aims of the initiative, including increasing parental support, teacher professional development, and improving opportunities for disadvantaged students, overlap with the direct and indirect student services that school counselors provide per the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2012) model.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Americans living in rural areas across the United States are becoming college educated more than ever before, especially women (USDA, 2017). However, the education gap between urban and rural America is growing with a smaller proportion of rural residents completing a college degree compared to their urban counterparts (USDA, 2017). Furthermore, a racial and ethnic disparity exists as only half of minorities from rural areas of the United States are likely to obtain a college degree as compared to their white counterparts from similar rural areas (USDA, 2017). Given that farming and agriculture are major industries of the rural U.S., including Georgia, school counselors must understand the cultural influences that shape how students and their families value postsecondary education (Brickman & Wimberly, 2014).

It has been well documented that school counselors play many roles within schools and the community (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009; Monteiro-Leitner, Asner-Self, Milde, Leitner &, Skelton, 2006; Vann-Morrison, 2011). Within the rural context school counselors have also been described as social justice advocates (Grimes, Haskins, & Paisley, 2013-2014), giving voices to students that do not fit the status quo of their particular town (Wimberly & Brickman, 2014). According to ASCA (2014), college and career counseling entail the support of both Mindsets and Behaviors. These include not just having a positive outlook, but also deploying learning strategies, effectively managing time, and cultivating social skills. This paper summarizes the current research on strategies utilized by school counselors working in rural areas. To put the role of school counselors in context, we first describe rural Georgia in comparison to urban parts of the state.

## Rural Georgia

Even though only about 17% of the state's population reside in rural areas (USDA, 2016), stark disparities exist across the settings of urban and rural Georgia. These socio-economic differences may affect the role and resources for school counselors practicing in rural Georgia. For example, the average per-capita income for rural Georgia residents in 2015 was $30,870 compared to $ 42,290 for urban residents (USDA, 2016). While poverty rates in urban parts of Georgia are reported to be as high as 15.9%, the poverty rate in rural Georgia is 22.9% (USDA, 2016). The unemployment rate in rural Georgia is 6.0%, while in urban Georgia it is 5.3% (USDA, 2016). In addition to these economic markers, educational attainment over the past few years is lower in rural Georgia with 20.7% of the rural population not possessing a high school degree compared to 13.3% of urban Georgia (USDA, 2016). Even though a higher proportion of the population has a college degree than ever before, only 15% of rural residents have obtained a college degree compared to 31% of urban residents in Georgia (USDA, 2016).

## Need for Comprehensive Models

Continued development and adherence to national models such as ASCA's (2014) Mindsets and Behaviors is an important framework for school counselor best practice, and was highlighted as a need in past research focused on school counselors' experiences in the State of Nebraska (Barnes, Scofield, Hof, & Vrbka, 2005). Nebraska is a state noted to have an abundance of rural school systems (Barnes, et al., 2005, p.25). Given Nebraska school counselors' experience in rural areas, a Nebraska Department

of Education survey was sent out and completed by 428 Professional School Counselors to assess the progress of staff and program needs, and preparedness of Nebraska school guidance programs (Barnes et al., 2005). The survey included 32-items related to components of the Nebraska School Counseling Guide including response services, systems support, individual student planning, and curriculum; a list of specific items made up each component (e.g. guidance and counseling plans, adequate facilities, evaluations, responsiveness and service, access, career services, developmental emphasis, use of competencies) (Barnes et al., 2005, pp. 26-27). The survey asked counselors to indicate (yes, no, or unsure) if various items within these components were incorporated into their counseling programs (Barnes et al., p. 27).

After analyzing the data within each component, Barnes et al. (2005) found contradictory and inconsistent school counselor self-reports of knowledge and use of strategies designed to enhance program effectiveness (p. 29). For instance, when asked if they used a specific Nebraska school model for planning and improvement, 60% of school counselors surveyed responded "no" or "unsure" (Barnes et al., p. 29). The results of this study highlight the importance of creating, implementing, and evaluating comprehensive models and strategies that are then consistently used by a majority of school counselors in order to better provide program best practice (Barnes et al., 2005). In consideration of this need, reviewing programs and models that are effectively utilized helps fulfill the goal of promoting and supporting rural school counselors' use of effective strategies. Hence, the purpose of this review is to

identify current research on effective career and college counseling strategies used in rural schools.

### College and Career Counseling Strategies in Rural Schools
### Academic Development
One strategy within career counseling that rural school counselors could employ would be targeting upper-level high schools in their decision-making regarding college. This strategy involves promoting students' academic development, a main domain of ASCA (2014) Mindsets and Behaviors for student success. Self-regulation skills, including goal setting and help seeking, are some soft skills that school counselors can use to support decision-making and development. These type of soft skills translate across contexts and could benefit students in both the workforce and postsecondary schools.

**Self-regulation Skills.** Lapan, Aoyagi, and Kayson (2007) studied how this type of development during high school affected students after graduation. In particular, the lead researcher developed the Integrative/Contextual Model of Career Development (ICM; Lapan, 2004) and implemented it in a previous study. ICM is a research-based approach which focuses student development in the area of six core areas. The program helps students to develop positive self-efficacy expectations, outcome expectations, and career-enhancing attributions… explore their options and develop personally meaningful goals… enhance the perceived fit between themselves and the world of work… integrate work readiness behaviors and prosocial skills into their everyday actions… identify career paths of interest to them… and become successful students and self-regulated, lifelong

learners (Lapan et al., 2007, p. 267).

Students were surveyed to monitor how they applied these skills and attitudes into their lives. Across 8th, 10th, and 12th grades this strategy was successful. For example, female participants improved their academic performance by getting better grades, were more likely to participate in work-based learning experiences, and reported wanting to go to college more often than male students (Lapan, Tucker, Kim, & Kosciulek, 2003). By the end of 12th grade, students putting the ICM skills into practice were more likely to desire going to college or other postsecondary training (Lapan et al., 2003).

Of these seniors, 87 graduates were called three years later and asked questions about their status in school or work, quality of life, and success within their current role (Lapan et al., 2007). The more the students participating in the ICM career development in 12th grade reported taking away from the program, the better their reported quality of life and success in their current roles as workers or students. In particular, having counselor support during the original implementation was significantly associated with greater success in the graduates' current roles at school or work in the form of proactivity (e.g., goal setting, help seeking, as well as skills and relationship building. Thus, the goal is not just to expose students to the ICM components, but to start sooner and provide consistent guidance toward developing these crucial skills with long lasting benefits.

### Career Development
A second domain in ASCA (2014) standards is career development. Strategies for working in rural areas and

promoting career development can take many forms depending on the resources available in a particular area and school. As highlighted in a qualitative study by Morgan, Greenwalt, and Gosselin (2014), school counselors' perceptions about competency to use career counseling techniques can also affect the career development process. A group of 9 secondary school counselors from rural, suburban, and urban areas of two midwestern state were asked questions about their experience in career counseling education, training, and perceived level of confidence and preparedness (Morgan et al., 2014, pp. 485-487). Themes found from questions about use of career counseling were divided into the main areas of: awareness about and competency in career counseling (incompetence versus competence), theory versus reality, importance of colleague networks and use of technology, and current school counselor career development training needs (Morgan et al., 2014). Overall, school counselors reported not feeling adequately prepared to provide career counseling by their master's counseling programs and relied on colleague support and use of technology to aid them in career counseling interventions and strategies (Morgan et al., 2014). Support and information from colleagues on career counseling, as well as use of accessible technology (e.g., computer-based career interventions) were two important strategies that emerged from the study.

### Classroom Guidance
In addition to school counselor career counseling preparedness and training, identifying effective strategies and programs for student successful career development is also important. Martinez, Baker, and Young (2017) identified one

strategy to promote student career and college readiness— a classroom guidance curriculum developed by the first author called Preparing for Post–High School Education: Motivated, Informed, and Ready (PPHSE:MIR) (p. 174). In order to evaluate the efficacy of this curriculum, Martinez et al. (2017) assessed and compared results from 9th grade students taking English classes at a rural high school (88 in the treatment group and 75 in the control group) (pp. 175-176).

For 5-weeks students were exposed to the classroom guidance curriculum (PPHSE:MIR) or independent learning. The PPHSE:MIR guidance curriculum program, implemented by school counselors, included eight modules with lessons on SMART goals, career exploration, pathways to college, and others related to career and college readiness (Martinez et al., 2017, p. 176). Before and after the intervention, student scores were analyzed on pre and post assessments measuring knowledge of post-secondary education entry requirements, ability to maintain future hopes and dreams, and career and college readiness self-efficacy (Martinez et al., 2017, pp. 177-179). Results showed support for the use of the PHSE:MIR with the treatment groups' higher post-test scores on measures of knowledge of post-secondary education entry requirements and career and college readiness self-efficacy (Martinez et al., 2017), further reflecting the need for effective career development curriculum and programs.

## Social/Emotional Development
Another domain outlined in ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors standards is social/emotional development (ASCA, 2014). Nicholas, Goforth, Sacra, and Ahlers (2017) reinforced the need for rural

student access to mental health services, and identified collaboration between educators (teachers and administrators) and "specialized support personnel" (SSP), including school counselors and mental health professionals, as a key factor in accessing services (p. 38). In order to facilitate collaboration, best practice approaches to meet rural student social-emotional needs were identified: enhancing educator training on mental health, multi-tiered systems of support, effectively utilizing SSP (Nicholas et al., 2017).

## Collaboration
Enhancing rural educator training through various mental health organization programs (e.g., NAMI, NBCC, state health and human services) can help educators gain knowledge and address stigma surrounding mental health issues, so educators can identify these issues, communicate observations with school counselors, and collaborate with SSP to support the mental health needs of students (Nicholas et al., 2017). In addition to educator training, collaboration is supported by using a multi-tiered system of tiered service (Tiers I, II, and III); starting with Tier I universal school prevention and intervention services for all students, moving to Tier II for identified students with possible need for individualized or group interventions, and finally to Tier III for students with more persistent or serious social/emotional issues that might need referral to community mental health services (Nicholas et al., 2017, pp. 42-43). A third approach to support collaboration is effectively utilizing SSP by recognizing the role of school counselors and other mental health professionals within the school, as well as school counselors understanding the role of educators (Nicholas et al., 2017). One strategy for encouraging

utilization and collaboration are "Professional Learning Communities"— defined as organized meetings between educators and SSP with focus on specific questions to understand the needs of each student, and the criteria used to assess and implement goals (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2009 as cited in Nicholas et al., 2017, pp. 43-44).

## Advocacy
The duty to learn and utilize multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skill, and advocate for client multicultural considerations are ethical tenants of the counseling profession (ACA, 2014; ASCA, 2012; CACREP, 2015, F.2.). Advocating for students from various sexual orientations and identities is a part of this ethical duty. School counselors and students in rural areas at times struggle with options for advocacy because of limited resources, and lack of knowledge or support from rural communities regarding LGBTQ issues (Robertson & Full, 2015). Strategies identified by Robertson and Full (2015) for gaining additional knowledge and skill when advocating for LGBTQ students in rural areas include: community collaboration, community youth and family support groups, university affiliated organizations, school-based support groups, cultural advocacy groups (pp. 7-12).

Community collaboration education involves accessing and utilizing material from supportive LGBTQ organization internet sites, as these sites can be a good starting point to then organize more direct support in rural areas (Robertson & Full, 2015). When creating support within a rural community for LGBTQ students, one suggested resource are youth and family support groups that

can be provided by community agencies, religious organizations, or local chapters of national family organizations like "PFLAG" (Robertson & Full, 2015, pp. 8-9). Connecting to local university LGBTQ advocacy organizations can also be beneficial, as these organizations often have material for use in secondary school education, and promote awareness and advocacy through ongoing community events (Robertson & Full, 2015). Two final advocacy strategies provided by Robertson and Full (2015) involve, creating school-based alliance groups between gay and straight students, and encouraging participation and connection to larger community groups that address various kinds of discrimination and prejudice.

## Implications for Practice, Counselor Education, and Research
Across the three domains of the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success, the current research identifies the following strategies for working within rural communities: consistent instruction in self-regulatory skills over time to support academic development, comprehensive classroom guidance to promote career development, and collaboration with the community and advocacy for social/emotional development. Other factors to consider when addressing career development include understanding how student identities and backgrounds such as SES, social class, family, and gender impact student career perceptions and aspirations (Eshelman & Rottinghaus, 2015; Meece et al., 2013; Meece, Askew, Agger, Hutchins, & Byun, 2014).

For instance, Eshelman and Rottinghaus (2015) studied how student perceptions of SES and Social Class effected student career expectations. A sample of 100 high

school students from two rural Midwestern schools completed a survey packet evaluating demographic information, education and career aspirations and expectations, perceived SES (assessed by asking about primary caregivers' occupation and education), and perceived social class (assessed using the Scale of Subjective Social Status—Youth Version (Goodman et al., 2001)) (Eschelman & Rottinghaus, 2015). Results indicated that perceived SES and social class significantly contributed to the direction of educational aspirations and expectations, and perceived SES also contributed to occupational aspirations and expectations (Eschelman & Rottinghaus, 2015, pp. 327-328).

In a larger study that also investigated influences on rural student educational and occupational aspirations, Meece et al. (2014) looked at the impact of familial, economic, and gender-related variables on future aspirations. Rural high school students (N=8754) in grades 9-12 from at 73 schools in 34 states were randomly selected to participate in two survey studies that examined student and teacher responses to questions about student, family, and community characteristics and influences (Meece et al., 2014). Data was analyzed using an ordinary least squares regression (run separately according to gender), and indicated: rural girls had higher educational aspirations that supported their future goal of non-traditional gender occupations; parental expectations influenced all measures; students with positive attachment to and perceptions of rural lifestyles and rural opportunities had lower educational and occupational aspirations; perceived academic competence and student rating of school value predicted level of educational aspirations (Meece et al., 2014, p. 251). Eshelman and Rottinghaus (2015) and Meece et al. (2014) recommend understanding and addressing factors that influence career and academic aspirations in order to best serve rural school students.

## Leadership Roles

As it is the case in many towns across Georgia, a school counselor in a rural place is oftentimes the only school counselor in school district. This unique position provides an opportunity to take the lead across situations. Wimberly and Brickman (2014) suggest four areas in which school counselors should consider taking a leadership role: assisting with the principal, advocating for students, initiating collaboration, and promoting systems thinking.

In terms of working closely with principals, the lack of personnel means that school counselors are more likely to be assigned additional duties by principals. Doing this grunt workis seen as a foot in the door that allows school counselors to learn more about the school and students. This data enables the school counselor to do their job more efficiently and ultimately argue for their own position and the reassignment of duties that detract from helping student directly. Essentially, Wimberly and Brickman (2014) offer a positive perspective of the socialization process of school counselor: by biding time, rural school counselors gain insight and earn more decision making abilities within their schools.

With an elevated status within the school system, rural school counselors are also able to be leaders by advocating for students. Again, Wimberly and Brickman (2014) suggest that building rapport and relationships with stakeholders within the community allows school counselors to be a voice for the voiceless. Of course, this still takes the courage to oppose others and contract issues of inequality within a system that may promote the status quo. By getting to know the students within the rural setting, as well as the cultural factors within their lives, school counselors can identify the individuals or groups that need help increasing their strength through strategic action. Collaboration is a strategy that school counselors utilize across tasks. Wimberly and Brickman (2014) urge school counselors to use consultation as an opportunity to shine. Being the only school counselor means that that consultation with teachers, parents, and other adults in a student's life can be an opportunity to build relationships within the community.

Furthermore, rural communities are often small systems. If school counselors use systems-thinking they can help students navigate their futures, as well as effect positive change in the lives of others. Concrete practices that Wimberly and Brickman (2014) offer include sponsoring extracurricular activities, accepting a leadership role in the community, using input from the community to create school counseling goals, addressing the school board to showcase school counseling efforts, publicizing effort and goals in local businesses and areas of interest in town, as well as creating a brand for the school counseling program.

## Counselor Education

In regards to school counselor education, there are many aspects of working within the rural context that have been identified. For example, Wilson, Schaeffer, and Bruce (2015) interviewed 21 school counselors about their experiences regarding supervision. After triangulating their findings, six themes emerged: "dynamics of rural living, supervision from school administrators, supporting development through technology, desire for increased connection through supervision, and the identification of roles and responsibilities" (Wilson et al., 2015, p. 27). Counselor educators need to go beyond presenting the roles and responsibilities of school counselors in ideal settings by presenting authentic scenarios within college and career counseling that take "place" into account. Scenarios and role-playing in counselor education should include rural settings with the multi-dimensional nature of college and career advising. For example, scenarios could include relationship building with local institutions of higher education, educating parents about options, using technology and available online inventories and resources, etc. In addition, the school counselor supervisors should become part of this ongoing dialogue about rural issues and how this actually makes their job unique. By including supervisors in such a reflective activity, it makes it more likely that they will emphasize and share these aspects of their day-to-day life.

## Further Research

In conclusion, this literature review highlights that there is a paucity of research on career and college counseling in rural schools. Although it is well understood that rural counselors have multi-faceted roles within rural communities, we just do not know what works best in a rural context to support students in their career and college planning. More descriptive and experimental research documenting rural school counselor practices, as well as the manipulation of staffing (e.g., having

a school counselor dedicated to college advising) would help future students get the most effective services. Future research documenting the counselor education process within the rural setting could also illuminate which experiences are most beneficial in preparing school counselors for college and career advising.

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# Cyberbullying and the Law: Implications for Professional School Counselors

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**Abstract:**
Cyberbullying or the use of technology to intimidate, harass, or bully has become increasingly problematic. School Counselors are in a unique position to provide prevention and intervention services concerning acts of cyberbullying, however varying state laws and confusing legal language has created ambiguity regarding the "reach" and legal responsibility of schools. A clear definition of cyberbullying, an explanation of state and federal laws, and implications for school counselors will be discussed.

*Keywords:* cyberbullying, internet, schools, legislations, school counselors, law

Cyberbullying and the Law: Implications for Professional School Counselors
The Internet and social media have revolutionized the way we maintain and develop relationships, as well as the way in which we communicate. For children, adolescents and teenagers growing up in what some call the "digital age", the use of technology such as computers, cell phones and tablets to communicate are the norm. Likewise, it is common for them to be adept at accessing social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, Wisper, Omegle and Instagram. Unfortunately, the increase in the use of technology and the popularity of social media websites has also revolutionized the act of bullying and researchers have found that the anonymity afforded by these sites has led to what is known as cyberbullying (Barlett, 2015; Barlett, Gentile & Chew, 2016). Unlike traditional bullying, victims of cyberbullying have no refuge from the bully and the attacks are often anonymous. Cyberbullying or the act of bullying via the use of technology (Ybarra, Korchmaros, Oppenheim, 2012) has become commonplace in nearly all age groups, transcending culture, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation, and age while simultaneously disrupting the educational environment. This is apparent in media coverage, increased suicide rates (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Litwiller & Brausch, 2013) and the increase in lawsuits related to cyberbullying (Conn, 2011; Benzmiller, 2017). School counselors are often expected to intervene when acts of cyberbullying are committed, however varying state laws and ambiguous language have the potential to create confusion regarding the "reach" and legal responsibility of schools. This article seeks to provide a clear definition of cyberbullying, identify state and federal laws regarding the act of cyberbullying, and discuss the implications for school counselors.

## Definition
Scientific literature defines cyberbullying in several diverse ways, which impacts the overall results of the research (Tokunaga, 2010; Sticca & Perren, 2013; Zych, Ortega-Ruiz, & Del Rey, 2015). Unfortunately, these definitional inconsistencies steer researchers to investigate contrasting phenomena within the same label (Tokunaga, 2010). Tokunaga (2010) and Slonje, Smith, and Frisén (2013) identified instances of problematic cyberbullying definitions. First, the absence of the term "repeatedly" in some definitions limits the capability to formulate conclusions and make cross-study comparisons with other research. Second, the emphasis of power imbalance in the definition is often ambiguous due to the lack of need for physical strength, but authors note that anonymity and the sense of powerlessness from the difficulty to remove or avoid material in cyberspace contributes to power imbalance. Third, the conceptual and operational definitions influence item response from participants. Fourth, the lack of conceptual agreement limits the ability to develop reliable and valid measures of cyberbullying. Therefore, an integrative definition of cyberbullying is essential for both conceptual and operational lucidity (Tokunaga, 2010).

Tokunaga (2010) purports the following definition of cyberbullying to develop an integrative definition for literature "Cyberbullying is any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others" (p. 278). In an effort to clarify the meaning of cyberbullying for research participants, Tokunaga (2010) proposed the following addendum to be included with the definition, "In cyberbullying experiences, the identity of the bully may or may not be known. Cyberbullying can occur through electronically mediated communication at school; however, cyberbullying behaviors commonly occur outside of school as well" (p. 278).

## Types of Cyberbullying
There is wide diversity in the methods used to determine types of cyberbullying in scientific literature. Although some investigations consider cyberbullying to be a single construct, some may differentiate by types of cyberbullying (Slonje, Smith, and Frisén, 2013). Some studies distinguish between types of cyberbullying based on the media used such as internet, tablets, and mobile phones, others may utilize the type of action/content for example, threats, flaming, or exclusion,

and others may discriminate based on specific ways of using information and communication technologies (ICTs) like text messages, instant messaging, and email (Notar, Padgett, & Roden, 2013; Slonje, Smith, & Frisén, 2013).

The prominence of technology in today's society has greatly escalated the use of cyberbullying. Adolescents and children usually perceive anonymity while using chat rooms, emails, blogs, Facebook, etc. due to the difficulty to trace Internet activity, and there seems to be a false sense of courage derived from not having to face his/her victim (Notar, Padgett, & Roden, 2013; Sticca & Perren, 2013). The specific types of cyberbullying identified in literature pertaining to behavior or content are flaming, cyberharassment, cyberstalking, denigration (put-downs), masquerade/impersonation, outing, exclusion, trickery, sexting, falsifying identify, threats, plishing, and online grooming (Notar, Padgett, & Roden, 2013; Slonje, Smith, & Frisén, 2013). Identified types of cyberbullying in literature according to the utilization of ICTs include mobile phone calls, voicemails, text messages, online games, instant messaging, email, picture/video clip bullying, chatroom, social media, and websites (Notar, Padgett, & Roden, 2013; Slonje, Smith, & Frisén, 2013; Sticca & Perren, 2013).

## Outcomes

Recent literature indicates that cyberbullying is at an all time high. The School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) states that 21.5% of students ages 12-18, reported being victims of traditional bullying and 6.9% report being cyber-bullied (U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011). While the Youth Risk

Behavior Survey (YRBS) found that 19.6% of students were bullied at school and 14.8% were bullied via technology, a 7.9% increase from the previous study (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013).

Additionally, researchers have found that cyberbullying can have severe outcomes for both the victim and the perpetrators. Several studies have linked depression and suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Litwiller & Brausch, 2013; Sampsa-Kanyinga, Roumeliotis & Xu, 2014), substance abuse (Goebert, Else, Matsu, Chung-Do & Chang, 2011; Litwiller & Brausch, 2013), anxiety (Campbell, Spears, Slee, Butler & Kift, 2012), and poor academic performance (Eisenberg, Neurnark-Sztainer, & Perry, 2003; Kowalski & Limber, 2013) to individuals who are victims of cyberbullying, while individuals who cyberbully have been linked to delinquency, antisocial behaviors and violent crime (Espelage, Basile, & Hamburger, 2012; Farrington, Loeber, Stallings & Ttofi, 2011; Farrington & Ttofi, 2011). The rise in occurrence of cyberbullying, as well as the potentially devastating effects of cyberbullying has caused great concern amongst educators, parents, and community leaders. School counselors are often responsible for addressing far-reaching outcomes and mental health concerns of both the victim and perpetrator of cyberbullying.

## Legislation

Cyberbullying laws are relatively new. Currently, there are no federal statutes against cyberbullying unless a victim's civil rights are violated, and then offenders are usually prosecuted utilizing state laws and regulations (Jordan & Austin, 2011). Although, there are no direct cyberbullying federal laws, schools that receive

federal funds must resolve incidents that involve an overlap between bullying and discriminatory harassment which is safeguarded by the U. S. Department of Education (ED) and the U. S. Department of Justice (DOJ) under federal civil rights laws (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). Georgia bullying laws emphasize behavior that takes place within the academic environment (Ga. Code Ann. § 20-2-751.4.). Legislation defines bullying behavior including via electronic technology, consequences for violation, and preventative programs (Ga. Code Ann. §§ 20-2-751.4, 20-2-751.5.).

## Federal Legislation

Many federal legislative proposals have been introduced to the U. S. Congress, but legislation addressing cyberbullying have not passed or are still pending. The Megan Meier Cyberbullying Prevention Act (2009) was a proposed federal law that was not enacted, but the legislation defined cyberbullying and proposed that those in violation of this law would be fined and/or imprisoned for up to two years. The Safe Schools Improvement Act (2015) proposes the prohibition of bullying (including bullying via electronic communications) that is "severe, persistent, or pervasive" and interferes with a student's ability to receive an education as well as provide preventative programs in school systems. However, the act is still pending.

 There are no federal laws specifically addressing cyberbullying, however, there are laws that may be violated if certain criteria are met within the incident such as the Civils Rights Act of 1964. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-352) prohibits discrimination based on age, race, sexual orientation, disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, and nationality.

Therefore, cyberbullying incidents that involve discriminatory harassment against an individual's civil rights could be prosecuted at the federal level. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (P.L. 92-318) prohibits discrimination based on sex in school systems that receive federal funding. Hence, it protects students from being bullied based on their gender, gender identification, sexual orientation, etc. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P. L. 93-112) protects individuals from discrimination based on disability by any organization receiving funding from the Department of Education and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U. S. C. §12101) safeguards individuals from harassment due to a disability.

## Cyberbullying Laws in Georgia

According to Georgia law, cyberbullying is a form of cyberstalking. Cyberstalking is committed when a person is harassing and/or intimidating another person by contacting (phone, notes, electronic communications and etc.) a person without the recipients' consent or placing another person under surveillance (including electronic) (Ga. Code Ann. § 16-5-90.). Stalking is a misdemeanor, therefore, a convicted person can face of up to12 months, a fine of up to $1,000, or both (Ga. Code Ann. §§ 16-5-90, 17-10-3.).

Georgia law defines bullying as repeated attempts or threats of physical harm, intimidation, or producing fear that is sufficient to disrupt a student's educational environment including written, verbal/physical acts and electronic communication (Ga. Code Ann. § 20-2-751.4). This legislation also requires schools to implement anti-bullying policies and notify parents of these policies and the consequences of bullying. A portion of the

law states that teachers are obligated to report any incidence of bullying. The law also states that consequences for bullying should be developmentally appropriate. For example, after three offenses for students in grades 6th-12th, the offenders are to be removed from the school system using appropriate procedures. Georgia legislation prohibits physical, verbal, or disrespectful conduct (including language) against teachers and other students during school hours, at school functions, and on buses (Ga. Code Ann. §20-2-751.5). This law also prohibits destruction of school or personal property, possession of a weapon, falsely reporting of inappropriate behavior (of either a student or teacher), or eliciting others to engage in any of these behaviors. Georgia schools are required to implement programs that promote character, such as kindness, respect, and tolerance, as well as anti-bullying programs or curricula (Ga. Code Ann. §20-2-145).

Although cyberbullying laws are a more recent development in our legislative history, federal and state laws have been emerging to respond to this growing concern among youth. While federal laws protect citizens' civil rights, state laws protect students from other forms of bullyingl. Kiriakidis and Kavoura (2010) suggest that community involvement is crucial in the prevention of bullying behavior. State laws not only prohibit the behavior, but also elicit community involvement by requiring school systems to implement preventative programs into their curriculum (Ga. Code Ann. §20-2-145). Both federal and state laws continue to evolve and develop to meet the needs of students.

## Discussion

Although the focus has been cyberbullying laws in Georgia, the authors recognize that cycberbullying is a nationwide concern for parents, educators, community leaders and law enforcement (Li, 2007). The diversity in the behaviors identified as cyberbullying and the variety of devices used to facilitate these behaviors alongside the inconsistencies found in the definition of cyberbullying have had an impact on both researchers and participants within the cyberbullying cycle. Tokunaga (2010) provided the following comprehensive definition and addendum as an attempt to minimize stakeholders' and researchers' confusion regarding the identification of cyberbullying: "Cyberbullying is any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others" (p. 278). The following addendum was later added to the definition, "In cyberbullying experiences, the identity of the bully may or may not be known. Cyberbullying can occur through electronically mediated communication at school; however, cyberbullying behaviors commonly occur outside of school as well" (Tokunaga, 2010, p. 278).

In addition to the identification of a universal definition for cyberbullying, the complexity of state laws and the lack of federal legislation add further confusion for educators and researchers alike. In lieu of clear state guidelines, most states have deferred responsibility to the corresponding state departments of education to address within the bounds of the schools' federally mandated anti-harassment policies. While the negative outcomes of cyberbullying have been well documented in literature, the varied definitions of cyberbullying and the terminology utilized in state laws impedes researchers' ability to develop reliable and valid measures of cyberbullying. This issue prevents accurate documentation of cyberbullying occurrences and potentially the establishment of federal legislation to prevent this increasingly, troublesome issue.

## Implications for School Counselors

School counselors play a key role by providing prevention and intervention services concerning cyberbullying. However, due to the complexity of federal and state statues as well as confusion regarding 1st amendment rights educators have expressed confusion concerning their role in the intervention of cyberbullying behaviors (Stewart & Fritsch, 2011). As a result, many school professionals fear legal repercussions and express concern regarding involvement (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011; Stone, 2013), while others perceive themselves as unequipped to deal with cyberbullying (Slovak & Singer, 2011).

School professionals must address their confusion and perceptions of inadequacies regarding legal barriers and cyberbullying overall. Expanding knowledge of state and federal laws, as well as school district policies will eliminate the confusion regarding educators' authority to intercede during cyberbullying events. School counselors should attend regular continuing education sessions as well as stay abreast of current literature and legislation to increase preparedness for addressing cyberbullying incidents at ones' school site. Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla & Daciuk (2012) recommend raising professionals' knowledge of cyberbullying dynamics, risk factors and harmful consequences by providing additional training regarding dynamics of cyberbullying within the victim and bully cycle.

Local Education Associations can be proactive in addressing cyberbullying behaviors within the student population. An example of an initial proactive step would be to provide school counselors and other educators with professional development or psycho-education focused on safety strategies from the beginning of the student's formal education years (Li, 2007) and continued throughout their academic years is beneficial. Interventions for various developmental stages should include activities that nurture the development of empathy and interpersonal relationships, which develop into a positive social support system (Olweus & Limber, 1999). Classroom guidance focused on positive and responsible behaviors when using technology can also prove useful. Finally, students' awareness of their false perception of anonymity in cyberspace and the advances in technology that allows tracking of virtual footprints (e.g., IP-address) to identify bullies and their victims (Sticca & Perren, 2013) may result in bullies reconsidering their behavior and lead to a decrease in cyberbullying incidents.

## Conclusion and future studies

With the prevalence of cyberbullying on the rise as well as accessibility to technology increasing school counselors will need to continue to stay abreast of the literature. In the future, analysis of school district bullying policies as well as the variance in state laws can increase awareness. This aforementioned research can be used as a platform to lobby for federal bullying laws to include cyberbullying. Other future studies include data collection of online digital resources

available for students, school counselors, other school administrators to use when combating bullying and cyberbullying. Cioppa, O'Neil & Craig (2015) identified limited self-efficacy research done on cyberbullying interventions and programs. The authors specifically declared that "when we can rise up to the challenges in program content and evaluation, we can create a safe school that fosters healthy relationships both online and in face-to-face interactions" (p. 68). Ultimately, awareness of the outcomes for the victim and perpetrator, knowledge of federal legislation, current and proposed state laws along with preventative methods within the school environment is a key component in this ongoing battle to meet the needs of students.

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# PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELORS' ADVOCACY: Mandated Testing and Other Inappropriate Roles and how to advocate for change.

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## Abstract

This paper examines many roles that are assigned to the professional school counselor. It examines those roles, their appropriateness and origin as related to the school counselor. It identifies appropriate professional school counselor roles and then suggest strategies for advocating for these roles. It also examines specific the counselor's role in mandated testing, suggesting testing's negative effects on the school population.

## Introduction

The pilfering and misappropriation of children's and youth's best advocate and resource, the Professional School Counselor (PSC), has become a major issue in the K-12 school setting. A situation that affects the school environment and arguably society at large. The participants range from misguided school administrators, compliant and obedient educators to mandate-happy federal and state education officials. Many combined factors contribute to the improper and ineffective use of the Professional School Counselor. This article will examine this profession's inappropriate roles, appropriate roles and strategies for advocating the effective uses of a school counselor.

A proactive model in the delivery of counseling services in our schools should be a mandated service of our school counselors. Comprehensive guidance and counseling plans and systems are in place in most American schools, recommending eighty percent of a counselor's time be devoted to student services (ASCA, 2015), although the implementation is often thwarted by administrators. Principals and coordinators, for various reasons, assign menial, administrative and time-consuming tasks to their school counselors. Students deserve the attention, assistance and benefits afforded them by the proper implementation of the professional school counselor within their schools.

## MENTAL HEALTH

The multitude of societal issues from violence, suicide, social isolation, drop-out rates, learning disabilities and homelessness have besieged our society. These challenges all have high correlations with a single factor, mental illness. Mental health issues pervade our students. Anxiety disorders amongst 13-18 year olds reach a lifetime prevalence of twenty-five percent, meaning 1 in 4 teenagers will struggle with Anxiety, with six percent reaching the "severe" level. Twenty percent of teens will experience depression before they reach adulthood, with 10 to 20% having depressive symptoms at any given time. Depression alone increases the risk of suicide by 12 times (NIMH, 2015). The prevalence of Autism, although not a mental illness, and issues surrounding its diagnosis and treatment continue to increase in the school (CDC, 2017).

These complex issues can be identified, treated and managed by a trained professional, benefitting the student, the school environment, the family and ultimately society. This trained professional, the school counselor, is housed within the population, on-call to render services, yet they are many times invariably saddled with other roles. Although school psychologists and school social workers are also trained to provide counseling services, they are employed at only a third of the rate of school counselors' nationwide (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012). Many school counselors have to work in a reactive stance to mental health issues in the school when a proactive model can identify, educate and help treat mental illnesses before they propagate and become chronic or psychotic. Some of these maladies may manifest in harmful and negative outcomes to all involved.

## TESTING and the SCHOOL COUNSELOR

The professional school counselor's role as the administrator, coordinator and facilitator of state mandated testing has become a particularly troublesome trend. A recent state survey of fifty thousand plus teachers revealed that 44% drop-out by the fifth year. It also revealed a 16% dip in teacher candidates entering preparation programs and only 2.7% said they would very likely encourage students to enter the teaching field (State of Georgia, 2015). Most revealing, respondents stated that their main reason for leaving the profession was the number of state mandated tests. The Georgia State Superintendent of Schools (2015), reflecting the opinion of many educators, further laments that "excessive testing severely limits our students' ability to learn. We are continuing to explore every possible avenue to minimize the burden of testing on our students and teachers."

A superintendent of a rural system in Georgia with forty-two years of experience laments the encumbrances that testing provokes: dictating and disrupting the school schedule and calendar for extended periods, the curriculum of test-prep, the reliance of a single test score to judge a student and the school system, and the comparisons of school systems without appropriate controls for moderating variables (A.Fort, personal communication, May 18, 2017). Comparisons that are published and graded on social media and websites are used to make business, housing and commerce decisions thus affecting the tax dollar and revenue of the system. Spencer (2017) suggests that the goal of testing should not be for rankings on Zillow and School Digger.

## TESTING AND A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Many teachers find state-mandated testing harmful for students and teachers

alike. Pressure, perceived and real, placed on teachers to produce higher scores, results in unfavorable practices commonly employed over more effective ones. Teachers are forced to "teach the test" rather than focusing on skills and content knowledge. Many educational "best practices" encourage team-work, collaboration, and creativity in order to produce life-long learners and yet the measure of teacher and student success is in the format of an extensive, multiple-choice, high-stakes test. Teachers and students are constantly crushed by the formidable weight of these tests for fear of failure based on a few hours' worth of data-retrieval. Roughly 135 days of skills, content knowledge, algorithms, and facts are crammed into a few hours for several days and then used to determine the successes and--seemingly more importantly-- failures of every person in that classroom.

Scores are then evaluated to rank a school's ability to produce college and career-ready citizens. In what way could these tests prove the college and career readiness of an individual without requiring the application of skills and content knowledge? If our "best practices" and real-world applications of content knowledge and skills require collaboration, individual contributions, and responsibilities, then our rankings should also require a similar format in the form of performance-based portfolios and long-term projects focused on college and career readiness. All of these pressures can exacerbate or trigger any existing mental illnesses within teachers and students. Advocating alternative approaches to evaluation and success from high-stakes testing and implementing practical applications is a viable solution for

what plagues the world of education: high-stakes, state-mandated testing.

## APPROPRIATE ROLES FOR THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR

School administrators, for various limiting reasons, have commandeered and minimized the effectiveness and mission of this highly-trained and educated professional. All professional school counselors attain a Master's Degree with specific and required curricula. Most curricula includes the study and practice of career counseling, lifespan development, psychological assessment, counseling theories, counseling skills, social and cultural diversity, psychological diagnosing, psychopharmacology, group procedures and processes and many other relevant courses.

The American School Counselors Association (ASCA) recommends school counselors should spend most of their time in direct service to students, which is primarily a face-to-face format. School counselors' duties are focused on the overall delivery of a program that includes a guidance curriculum, individual student planning and responsive services (2015). The ASCA model also advocates for indirect services to a student, including referrals, consultation and collaborations beneficial to the student, parent and community. In order to accomplish these goals, ASCA suggests that professional school counselors should not be engaged in activities that include:

- coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students
- coordinating cognitive, aptitude and achievement testing programs
- signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent

- performing disciplinary actions or assigning discipline consequences
- sending students home who are not appropriately dressed
- teaching classes when teachers are absent
- computing grade-point averages
- maintaining student records
- providing therapy or long-term counseling in schools to address psychological disorders
- coordinating schoolwide individual education plans, student study teams and school attendance review boards
- serving as a data entry clerk

## SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Solutions, strategies and advocacy within the systems seem to be limited, nationally, state-wide and locally as state and local administrators, along with teachers, are forced into compliance with their employers. Solutions from the outside, which means parents and the public, must provide advocacy and leadership. Spencer (2017) states that "parents must help stop the compliance culture that is hurting our schools and the wasting of tax dollars." The following are some suggested strategies for ensuring a successful and effective application of the professional school counselor in the local school:

### Target Testing:

As mentioned previously, this task seems to burden many schools. Most tests are mandated by the federal or state government, yet personnel to execute the mandates are usually not provided or funded. Although most states require an administrator to be the test coordinator, it is in title only as no enforcement or direct oversite is usually provided by the state. This leaves delegate-prone school administrators, mainly principals

and assistant principals, assigning the facilitation, administration and organization to usually the only other subordinate certified professional not in the classroom – the school counselor.

Many counselor education programs currently instill the objectives of advocacy, leadership and social justice in their graduates. Unfortunately applying these concepts can be challenging when a counselor is saddled with the responsibility of school testing. They can become labeled as "complainers" and not "playing for the team." Advocating for boundaries to your boss, the principal, may be intimidating as many school counselors may fear retribution, and the possible loss of renewal of an annual contract. Counselors may attempt to maintain their boundaries and identity through careful education and promotion of the importance of direct contact with students, presenting a comprehensive plan that incorporates the assignment of various tasks to other school personnel (e.g., administrative assistants, volunteers, teachers). Teachers could be provided an extra planning period for test coordination to accommodate the additional roles and responsibilities.

### Utilize the Public, Parent/Teacher Organizations, Leadership Teams and Advisory Councils:

Parents, guardians and the public, as challenged previously, maintain the power for change within their local and state schools. An educated public about the importance of an effective professional school counselor is paramount. This can be achieved thorough a strong collaboration with a school's Parent Teachers Organization (PTO), as they can advocate for change without fear of conflict or compromise. They can also appeal to

their state and federal legislatures through direct contact or petitions. Many citizens have active online petitions targeting these issues. School counselors should plan to be actively involved with their school's parent organization and provide accurate, non-biased and objective information to these organizations while balancing the motivation for a successful common goal.

Some states have recently enacted legislation, so called anti-testing bills that have reduced the number of tests required or have allowed parents to "opt-out" their children from testing. In one southern state (2016), the legislature reduced the number of required tests, and deferred participation decisions to the local systems (Tagami, 2016). State education departments have begun to reduce redundancy in testing, allowing one of numerous tests to qualify a student, for example in an admission to higher education or a joint enrollment program.

Partnering with professional organizations that have experience lobbying legislators can also be beneficial; a state or national counseling or teacher organization may be beneficial. They have experience lobbying legislatures and rallying members and affected individuals, bringing a sizable contingency to the debate. Also educating local board members through proper channels can be beneficial as principals and administrators are hired and fired mostly by local school boards. School board members, mainly elected by the school district's public, and not necessarily in the education profession may be unsure of the role of school counselors.

Most schools form Leadership Teams, which usually include administrators, department heads, teachers and other specialists within the school. Hopefully a school's counselor is also a member of the team, as suggested by ASCA (2015) standards. These teams usually address issues within the school. This is a platform that should allow a counselor to advocate for their appropriate roles, although caution should be taken against advancing their own agenda. They should also avoid any dual relationship or a conflict of interest dilemmas, especially if they are a member of the team. An additional resource for advocacy is Advisory Councils, these usually contain similar goals and objectives as a Leadership Team but are comprised of parents, community representatives, students and several school officials.

## Summary

The increasing importance of having an effective, proactive and professional school counseling program is vital for the success of students, the main goal of every educator. Allowing the school counselor the appropriate tools, resources and commitment to accomplish their portion of the overall student's success is necessary. One of the main proponents and issue affecting students and society is mental illness. In today's society this issue needs to be addressed and can be implemented and facilitated by a professional school counselor. A prominent barrier across the states, even nationally, is the increase in mandated student testing. The facilitation and administration of this increase has predominately been placed on the school counselor, reducing direct and indirect student contact hours that could be utilized to address issues such as increasing mental health in the student population. Hopefully in the near future strategies and solutions suggested will be implemented to reach this goal.

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All manuscripts should conform to the guidelines for publication listed in the  latest Edition of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual.

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