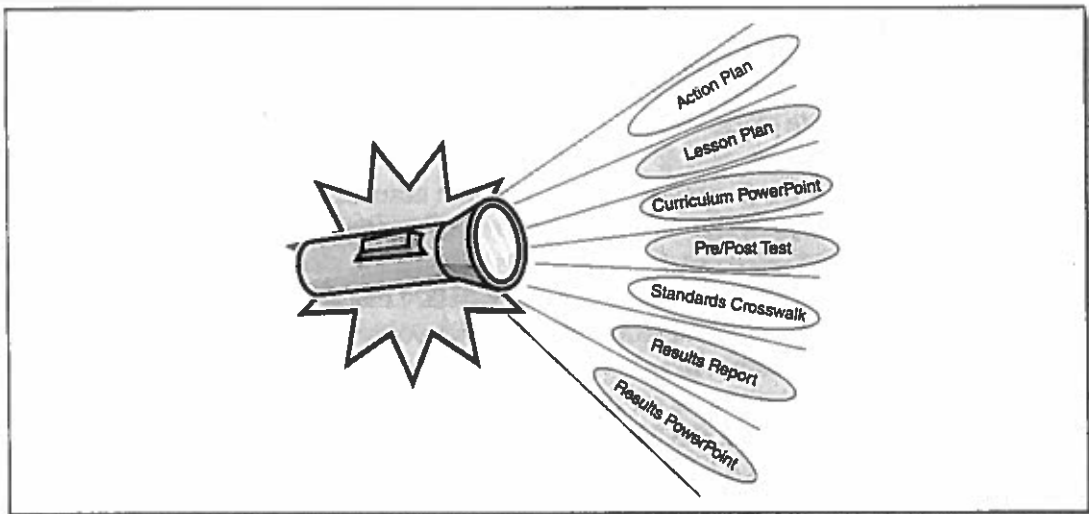


5

Action Plans

A Two-Pronged Approach



The original *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* (ASCA, 2003, 2005), presented two types of action plans, the “Guidance Curriculum” action plan and the “Closing the Gap” action plan, or what this text refers to as the intentional guidance action plan (see Chapter 2). These two types of actions plans represent a two-pronged approach (prevention and intervention) to implementing effective school counseling programs.

In the third edition of the *ASCA National Model* (2012a, 2012e), “Guidance Curriculum” action plans were retitled: “School Counseling Core Curriculum” action plans. In this chapter, school counseling core curriculum action plans will be referred to as *curriculum action plans*.

Curriculum action plans are standards driven and ensure *every* student gets *every* thing (Hatch, 2008). What content will *every* student receive, because he or she came

through the schoolroom door? What can each parent and student be told each student will receive from the school counseling program as a third grader, sixth grader, or ninth grader?

Intentional guidance action plans use data to drive decision making and are created because *some students need more*. Although the curriculum is designed for every student, intentional guidance activities address the discrepancies that exist in meeting students' needs and their achievements. What do the data tell about who needs additional support or assistance? What data drive the need for the activity? Is this a student need or a systems need? In 2012 "Small Group" action plan was added to the third edition of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012a; 2012e). Intentional guidance activities can include small group interventions, schoolwide interventions, and/or interventions addressing policy, programs, practices, or procedures.

SCHOOL COUNSELING CORE CURRICULUM: EVERY STUDENT GETS EVERY THING

The first prong of the two-pronged approach for providing prevention and intervention within the school counseling program is school counseling curriculum. By virtue of breathing, every student in the school receives school counseling curriculum. The curriculum is developmental in design, preventative in nature, and comprehensive in scope, and parents, students, teachers, and other stakeholders know exactly what curriculum their student(s) will receive. The curriculum, much like math or science, is competency driven, created by school counselors and student service professionals to address the standards and competencies of the ASCA Student Standards (ASCA, 2012a, 2012e; Campbell & Dahir, 1997).

The school counselors, in collaboration with site administrators (or in some cases, district coordinators), determine what content will be covered in each lesson and align it with the standards. School counselors create an action plan, calendar these lessons, and collect process data, perception data, and results data. Lessons are designed by school counselors and become consistent from school to school to ensure that when students transfer within a district, they will receive the same curriculum from the school counseling program. For example, just as all third graders are taught multiplication tables, so too are all sixth graders taught the "Time to Tell" violence prevention lesson.

In Chapter 1, examples were provided for schoolwide curriculum action plans. School counselors won't have time to measure every lesson, but they are encouraged to select a few to measure each year to inform their practice. The samples below provide a detailed description for completing the curriculum action plan when measuring the impact of a lesson or unit of lessons.

Curriculum action plans consider the following:

- Lesson content
- Domain and standard to be addressed: academic, career, personal/social
- Description of actual curriculum the school counselor or counseling team will provide
- Assurance that the curriculum is provided for *every* student
- Title of any packaged or created curriculum that will be used
- Timeline for completion of activity
- Name of individual responsible for delivery
- Means of evaluating students' attitudes, skills, and knowledge (ASK) using pre/post tests or demonstration of competency or product

- Expected achievement and achievement-related results for students, stated in terms of what will be demonstrated by the student
- Indication that the plan has been reviewed and signed by the administrator

GUIDELINES FOR USING CURRICULUM ACTION PLANS

Samples of curriculum action plans for elementary, middle, and high schools are shown in Figures 5.1., 5.2, and 5.3. The sections below explain the content of the columns of each of these plans.

Lesson Content

When deciding which content you will provide to every student, it will be helpful to review your developmental crosswalk of the ASCA National Standards. Which domains do you want to be certain to address? Ideally, and with a low ratio, you would want to address every domain, but this may not be possible. Consider your priorities, and begin in these domains. Priorities might include areas the data indicate need attention. Perhaps your Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) or school climate survey indicates you have a high number of students who are feeling unsafe at school, who have been victims of bullying, and so on. Based on these data, you might prioritize this lesson. Then add a few lessons each year until all domains are addressed.

ASCA Domain/Standard

You will note on the blank schoolwide action plan in Chapter 1 (Figure 1.4), that all the standards are listed. Circle or underline which standard each lesson is addressing, or delete the standards not addressed, leaving those that are. Then, once a specific lesson is selected to measure, provide more detail as seen in Figures 5.1–5.3.

Curriculum and Materials

This column asks you to identify the specific content to be taught in the lesson. For example, the competency might be study skills, but the content will vary by grade level and student population. Fourth-grade students may receive the study/test-taking skills curriculum from the “Sunburst” video, seventh graders may use the SIMS study skills techniques, and high school students may use techniques from the College Board. By tracking the different curricula being used (especially in the same grade level) and measuring and comparing the results of lessons, school counseling teams can determine which curriculum is most effective, thereby improving the program and avoiding the cost of purchasing ineffective curriculum.

Projected Start/End

Knowing when an activity will occur and when it will be completed are essential to team planning. This facilitates intelligent planning of when events will take place in the school system. For example, teaching test-taking strategies is most effective when done just prior to statewide standardized test administration. Doing it months before or after students have been tested would miss the critical teaching moment. Similarly, teaching

conflict resolution skills would be more appropriate in the beginning of the school year than at the end, as the skills might be forgotten during the summer.

Projected Number of Students Impacted

This column asks school counselors to provide the number of students projected to receive the school counseling core curriculum. Ensuring every student is accounted for sends a clear message of equity and access for all.

Class/Subject in Which Lesson Will Be Presented

When counselors are deciding in which subject area to deliver their lessons, it is important to recognize and appreciate the standards and competencies that the classroom teachers are required to address. Effort should be made to implement the curriculum in several subject areas as opposed to impacting only one academic area. Perhaps checking to see which of the subject content areas the curriculum also addresses would be helpful. For instance, a lesson on calculating GPA might be well suited for a math course, writing a resume in language arts, violence prevention in social studies, and drug prevention in science.

Evaluation Methods

Before the delivery of services, it is important to consider the criteria by which success will be measured. First, is it necessary for 100% of the students to demonstrate the skill, or is improvement in the number of students successfully demonstrating the skill acceptable in some situations? For example, demonstrating an understanding of promotion/retention criteria or developing an educational plan may be appropriate for all students at every level, while identifying five early warning signs of violence or demonstrating the ability to resolve conflict may be presented to only one grade level or group of students. What type of data will be collected? Will a pre/post test be designed to measure knowledge, attitude, or skills? Will the completion of a competency (such as filling out an interest inventory) be measured? What results data will be measured: attendance, behavior, or academic?

Implementation Contact Person

In this column, specific names are important. Who will be the individual responsible for ensuring the action plan is carried out? Several educators may be involved in an activity; however, it may be helpful for one person to have the primary responsibility.

The Administrator's Signature

The signature of the administrator ensures collaboration in and agreement with the proposed activities of the school counseling program.

Prepared By

While the entire school counseling team is responsible for the programmatic implementation, one person (typically the lead counselor) takes responsibility for preparing the document and keeping the files.

SAMPLE CURRICULUM ACTION PLANS

Figure 5.1 Sample Elementary School Curriculum Action Plan

XYZ Unified School District XYZ Elementary School Counseling Curriculum Action Plan for 20XX-20XX									
Grade Level	Lesson Content (Topic Area)	ASCA National Standard	Curriculum and Materials	Projected Start/Projected End	Projected Number of Students Impacted	Class/Subject in Which Lesson Will Be Presented	Evaluation Methods How will the results be measured?		Implementation Contact Person
							Perception Data: (ASK Examples)	Results Data:	
4, 5	Anti-bullying Violence Prevention	Personal/Social Competency: PS: A2 Acquire Interpersonal Skills PS: C1 Acquire Personal Safety Skills	XYZ Violence Presentation Prepackaged Programs or Anti-bullying Programs	In January During National School Safety Week	300: ALL Fourth and Fifth Graders in School [All students—remember every one receives curriculum, because it has been determined that this is a lesson all students should know]	To Be Arranged With Each Teacher	Attitude: 1. ___% who believe that calling people names hurts them 2. ___% who believe it's okay to hit someone if that person hits you first Skills: 1. ___% who can role play conflict resolution skills 2. ___% who can verbalize an "I statement" Knowledge: 1. ___% who know the steps to conflict resolution 2. ___% who know the consequences of bullying in schools 3. ___% who know who to go to if they need to ask for help	Achievement Related (AR): Number of students who are referred for discipline Number of students suspended Statewide youth survey (Title IV) data on bullying items Achievement (A): Achievement improvements in classes with improved climate	Elementary School Counselor

Principal's Signature _____ Date _____ Date of Staff Presentation _____ Prepared By _____

Figure 5.2 Sample Middle School Curriculum Action Plan

XYZ Unified School District XYZ Middle School Counseling Curriculum Action Plan for 20XX-20XX									
Grade Level	Lesson Content (Topic Area)	ASCA National Standard	Curriculum and Materials	Projected Start/Projected End	Projected Number of Students Impacted	Class/Subject in Which Lesson Will Be Presented	Evaluation Methods How will the results be measured?		Implementation Contact Person
							Perception Data: (ASK Examples)	Results Data:	
6, 7, 8	Promotion / Retention Guidelines Study Skills Importance of Homework	Academic Competency: A: A1 Improve Self-Concept A: A3 Achieve School Success	Counselor-Generated PowerPoint	October- November	1,500 (All students— remember every one receives curriculum, because it has been determined that this is a lesson all students should know)	English (language arts)	<p>Perception Data: Attitude: 1. ___% who believe that doing homework matters 2. ___% who believe that using study strategies will help them do better in school Skills: 1. ___% who can accurately fill out an assignment planner 2. ___% who can calculate a GPA Knowledge: 1. ___% who demonstrate knowledge of best places, times, ways to study 2. ___% who know promotion retention criteria 3. ___% who know where to seek help (tutoring) 4. ___% who can identify three study strategies</p>	<p>Results Data: Achievement Related (AR): Homework completion rate Achievement (A): Compare academic improvement: GPA from Trimester 1 to Trimester 2 and/ or Trimester 1 to Trimester 3.</p>	School Counselors Melon (6) Peach (7) Berry (8)

Prepared By

Date of Staff Presentation

Date

Principal's Signature

Figure 5.3 Sample High School Curriculum Action Plan

XYZ Unified School District XYZ High School Counseling Curriculum Action Plan for 20XX-20XX								
Grade Level	Lesson Content (Topic Area)	ASCA National Standard	Curriculum and Materials	Projected Start/Projected End	Projected Number of Students Impacted	Class/Subject In Which Lesson Will Be Presented	Evaluation Methods How will the results be measured?	
							Perception Data: (ASK Examples)	Results Data:
9	Transcript Review	Academic Competency: A: A3 Achieve School Success A: B2 Plan to Achieve Goals	Counselor-Generated PowerPoint Using District Graduation Requirements and State and CSU/UC Requirements Each Student's Own Transcript Four Year Plan	October (right after first quarter grades)	2,400: ALL in District [All students—remember every one receives curriculum, because it has been determined that this is a lesson all students should know]	English or PE Site Specific or Tech Class?	<p>Perception Data: <i>Attitude:</i> 1. ___% who believe that grades earned in ninth grade matter 2. ___% who believe taking college prep courses is important <i>Skills:</i> 1. ___% who can accurately fill out a four year academic plan 2. ___% who can calculate a GPA <i>Knowledge:</i> 1. ___% who know the graduation requirements 2. ___% who can identify difference between types of GPAs 3. ___% who know college prep requirements</p> <p>Results Data: <i>Achievement Related (AR):</i> Homework completion rate Course enrollment patterns (college prep and advanced math and science coursework—honors, AP, etc.) <i>Achievement (A):</i> Course completion rates (ninth grade credit deficiency rates) College prep graduation rates (data over time)</p>	All High School Counselors

Prepared By

Date of Staff Presentation

Date

Principal's Signature

INTENTIONAL GUIDANCE: SOME KIDS NEED MORE

The second prong of the two-pronged approach to providing prevention and intervention within a school counseling program is referred to as *intentional guidance*. While receiving standards-based curriculum may be adequate for many students, the intentional guidance philosophy is "some students need more." Intentional guidance action plans can be directed toward *students* or *systems* (see Chapter 8). When these plans are directed toward *students*, school counselors design data-driven (as opposed to standards-driven) activities. School counselors monitor student progress individually and schoolwide at regularly scheduled reporting times each year. After analyzing the data, school counselors determine which students need which type of additional intervention support. The specific areas of data-driven needs are focused on attendance, behavior, and achievement. Monitoring these types of data regularly and over time can lead school counseling programs to make decisions for when and how to provide services based on real (not perceived) needs. Programs and services are planned and directly linked to the statistical patterns, trends, and discrepancies that consistently emerge and are evaluated over time.

Students do not all learn at the same pace. Disaggregating the data drives the focus to where additional help is needed, for example, to students with two or more F's on first quarter grade reports, students with ten or more absences in the first quarter, or students with five or more days of suspension. The data show these students need additional assistance. Rather than waiting for students to be referred (reactive model), school counselors query the student database and create intentional guidance action plans detailing specific school counseling activities designed to address the specific student need.

As will be discussed in Chapter 6, because not all students will require or benefit from the same intervention, utilizing an at-risk survey is helpful in determining each student's appropriate intervention. In some cases the appropriate intervention may be small group counseling for social skills, study skills, student engagement or empowerment, and so on. In these instances, school counselors can use intentional guidance action plan forms comparable to those shown in Figures 5.4 through 5.10 or the Small Group Action Plans in the third edition of the ASCA National Model (2012a). Both are designed for targeted student interventions and ask for similar information.

For some students, however, a more comprehensive approach to interventions may be required. When looking at the data, the school counselor may realize the "more" students need is not a small group counseling activity but rather a referral to tutoring, mentoring, or credit deficiency programs; to the SST or RTI team; to the counselor for a few individual, brief, solution-focused counseling sessions (Sklare, 2004); or to an outside agency (social worker, therapist) for family assistance. Intentional guidance action plans in this chapter can also be used for these circumstances. In these cases, the school counselor may also want to consider using the Closing the Gap Action Plan in the ASCA National Model (2012a). The distinction between the Small Group Action Plan and the Closing the Gap Action Plan in the ASCA National Model is that the Closing the Gap Action Plan is designed to address equity issues or discrepancies in behavior or

academic data between students of different *demographic* groups. In this case, it would be discrepancies between groups who are attending, behaving, or performing and those that are not.

Still other students may need the counselor's advocacy to work within the system to change an existing policy or practice that may be denying some students access to or equitable participation in rigorous educational opportunities. These may include social justice issues, parity issues, or issues that stir a moral imperative for counselors to act on students' behalf (Hatch, 2012a; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). An example might be advocating for changes in the curriculum guide when counselors recognize that prerequisite requirements are holding students back rather than moving them forward to more rigorous education. The work of the Education Trust and MetLife Foundation National School Counselor Training Initiative (2002) aligns with this view of intentional guidance for systems change. When the data reveal that the discrepancies between groups stem from systems issues outside of the students' control, interventions are designed and directed toward systemic change. Intentional guidance action plans for systems change will be presented and discussed in Chapter 8.

Intentional Guidance Action Plans Consider the Following:

- What is the target group?
- Why was this group topic or intervention chosen?
- What are the specific *data that drive the decision* to provide this particular intentional guidance activity?
- Domain and standard to be addressed: academic, career, personal/social
- Student competency addressed
- Description of actual activity the school counselor or support services team will ensure occurs
- Resources needed to implement intervention activity
- Projected number of students
- Timeline for completion of activity
- Name of individual responsible for delivery
- Means of evaluating student success (what data will be used to show improvement?)
- Expected result for students, stated in terms of what will be demonstrated by students
- Indication that the intentional guidance action plan has been reviewed and signed by the administrator

GUIDELINES FOR USING INTENTIONAL GUIDANCE ACTION PLANS

Intentional guidance action plans are very similar in design to curriculum action plans. Samples of these plans are shown in Figures 5.4 through 5.10. Note that samples shown in Figures 5.4–5.7 were designed to align with the strategies identified in Goal 3 of Figure 3.8 in Chapter 3. However, they could easily be revised to address attendance, behavior, or study-skill needs at the middle or



high school level. The sections below explain the different content provided in the columns of each of these plans. (Additional Action Plans are available in the on-line appendix.)

Target Group

Focus on an overarching topic for a targeted group of students who are identified because of a data-driven need. Who will you intervene with? What is the principal concern? Poor attendance? Credit deficiency? Lack of homework completion? State the grade level and title of target group here.

Target Group Selection Is Based Upon the Following Data

On this line, indicate the specific data element or reason these particular students are being targeted for intervention. What data were used to select these students? As a reminder, indicating "all students referred for group by teachers" would not be appropriate for this action plan. This plan is for data-driven, not teacher-referral-driven, interventions. If this intervention is related to a program goal or SMART goal (as described in Chapter 3), it might also be appropriate to indicate that here so as to show alignment between this action plan and the program goals.

School Counselor and Other Student Services Professionals

Sometimes interventions are best provided through a collaborative relationship with other support service providers, such as the school psychologist or social worker. Indicate all stakeholders participating in this intervention, and then, in the Type of Activity column, indicate their role.

Intended Effects

Indicate the impact the action plan intends to make on attendance, behavior, or academic achievement.

Type of Activity to Be Delivered in What Manner?

Determining what intervention to provide will require understanding the barrier to learning. Interviewing or surveying the students prior to determining the intervention activity may accomplish this. Perhaps an attendance "hot list" should be created for students who are habitually truant, or an anger management group should be started for those identified as having five or more suspension days for fighting. Indicate what will be done and the intended curriculum (if any).

Often school counselors just indicate they met with the students individually a few times, or they referred them to tutoring or assigned them to a group. As will be

discussed in Chapter 6, determining which intervention is appropriate is an important part of the intentional guidance process. Additionally, sharing the multiple activities involved in the entire process provides a more comprehensive picture of what school counselors do than just indicating "small group."

Resources Needed

What resources will be required to ensure the intervention occurs? Will the intervention require funds to purchase curriculum? Will it require a larger space to hold a group meeting? Identify the resources needed here.

Projected Number of Students Impacted

When implementing the intentional guidance action plan, it is important to ensure there are a significant numbers of students impacted. At least 30 to 40 students are recommended. Understandably, there are small schools and rural schools where there may be fewer students who qualify. However, speaking from a global perspective, it is difficult to sell the results of the program if only a few students participate, because the impact on the entire school is minimal. This is not to say school counselors shouldn't service smaller groups of students; it is to say, however, that very small groups of students with similar needs would not be recommended as appropriate for intentional guidance action plans and evaluation. Additionally, when only a few students on a counselor's caseload are provided ongoing weekly sessions, there may be a tendency to assume these are intensive services for students at the "top of the pyramid." Intentional guidance is not therapy. It is not designed for a few students. It is designed primarily as a Tier 2, not a Tier 3, intervention. (Refer to Chapter 2 for definitions of these tiers.)