

School Counselor Certification in New York State:

Answering the Questions of the Day

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“The research couldn’t be more clear, compelling and consistent. Students need highly-qualified teachers and a high-level curriculum to be successful in the world of work and postsecondary education. School counselors are in a unique position to make sure that all students have access to these resources.”

Stephanie Robinson, Principal Partner
of the Education Trust (Education Trust)

Introduction

In May 2006, the New York State School Counselor Association's Governing Board established an Ad-Hoc Committee on Certification and Preparation. Responding to members' concerns about the quality of preparation programs across the state, the Board directed the committee to develop a proposal for changing certification requirements and present that proposal to officials at the New York State Education.

First meeting in June 2006, committee members represented a wide range of professional and geographic areas, including professionals working at all educational levels. Significantly, the current president of all three professional organizations operating in the state, the New York State School Counselor Association (NYSSCA), the New York Counseling Association (NYCA), and the New York Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (NYACES), were members of the committee.

The committee's report (see Appendix A) was presented to the following officials at the New York State Education Department in August 2006:

- Robert Bentley, Executive Director, Professional Licensing
- Nancy Brennan, Associate, Office of Teaching Initiatives
- Ruth Pagerey, Supervisor, Teacher Education Programs, Office of College and University Evaluation
- Barbara Downs, Assistant, Teacher Education Programs

During this meeting, Department representatives requested information regarding how New York's requirements for initial certification compare to other states' requirements, trends in school counselor preparation across the country, and data on the impact of school counseling programs on students' academic achievement, graduation rates, school safety, and other topics. We offer this paper in response to those questions.

This paper will address three questions, each in its own section:

1. What are the trends in school counselor preparation nationally?
2. How do New York State's initial certification standards compare with those in other states?
3. What impact does school counseling have on factors such as academic achievement, school safety, and the like?

Finally, the paper will offer conclusions and recommendation for next steps in addressing students' needs by improving school counselor preparation and increasing certification requirements for potential school counselors.

We undertake an ambitious task in this paper, one that is essential to improving the preparation of school counselors, and more importantly, the services those professionals will provide to the students of New York State. We continue to believe that increasing initial school counselor certification requirements will transform graduate preparation programs and ultimately improve the academic environment in which students learn everyday.

Section 1: National Trends in School Counselor Preparation

A number of organizations across the country advocate changes in school counselor training to meet the demands of today's challenging education environment. These groups all speak to the importance of student support and counseling in schools' academic missions. The Education Trust's Transforming School Counseling Initiative envisions school counselors as change agents responsible for breaking down learning barriers and creating educational environments where all students' needs are met. The Education Trust specifically mentions the use of data to effect change, learning styles knowledge and applications skills, and understanding and management of organizational change as skills school counselors must have (New York State School Counselor Association, 2005, pp. 122-123).

Both the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and its state chapter, the New York State School Counselor Association have developed models of professional practice that expand on the Education Trust's work. ASCA's *National Standards for School Counseling Programs* (1998) describes the academic, career, and personal/social competencies students develop as they work with school counselors. *The National Model for School Counseling Programs* (2003) provides a framework for implementing school counseling programs that deliver those competencies and are accountable to school's academic missions. NYSSCA's *New York State Model for Comprehensive K-12 School Counseling Programs* (2005) takes a similar approach, but specifically links counselors' work to the New York State Learning Standards.

The New York State Education Department also recognizes the importance of student support and counseling in schools' academic mission (Gardiner, 2004). In 2005,

the Department unveiled its “Supportive Learning Environment Standards.” Once approved, these standards will be used to evaluate schools’ efforts in developing environments promoting learning. Schools’ efforts to improve students’ academic, career, and personal/social development are among the topics evaluated. School counselors are primarily responsible for these areas in schools.

Taken as a whole, the changes advocated by these and other groups demand improved training. Current certification requirements do not require prospective school counselors to be trained in using data to effect systemic change. They do not require that prospective school counselors know about learning styles and their impact on academic achievement. They do not demand school counselors in training know how to work with teachers to create differentiated learning environments. They do not insist graduate students know how to develop and evaluate comprehensive programs designed to address children’s academic, career, and personal/social skills.

Unfortunately, professionals entering the field in New York State are unprepared for the challenging environment they face. Counselor education programs are designed to meet the New York State Education Department’s requirements for provisional certification as a school counselor. These minimum preparation requirements do not prepare professionals to successfully meet the challenges of a career in school counseling. Students do not build the skills they need to fulfill the responsibilities of the job.

A variety of authors have proposed changes to school counselor preparation programs that will allow incoming professionals to fulfill the responsibilities of their job and that reflect the work of the Education Trust, ASCA, NYSSCA, and other groups.

Hayes and Paisley (2002) recommend a systems-oriented approach to preparation to ensure counselors are prepared to work as educational leaders. This will require educators to reconceptualize the nature of instruction to reflect the current understanding of learning. In short, they claim that many current programs utilize an antiquated method of instruction.

To meet the demands of the field, preparation programs must reexamine their core values, focusing on the role school counselors play in human development. Programs must also increase the amount of practical experience in which students are involved. Technological literacy is also essential. Counselors must be able to utilize technology for communication, information sharing, and data collection, analysis, and assimilation. Student evaluation must focus not just on student satisfaction with the program, but on student proficiency as counselors.

House and Sears (2002) propose a new approach to counselor preparation that moves school counselors from helper-responders to proactive leaders focused on achievement for all students. Their proposal advocates a paradigm shift with eight essential elements, “(a) criteria for selection and recruitment of candidates for counselor preparation programs; (b) curricular content, structure, and sequence of courses; (c) methods of instruction, field experiences, and practice; (d) induction process into the profession; (e) working relationships with community partners; (f) professional development for counselor educators; (g) university/school district partnerships; and (h) university/state department of education partnerships” (p. 157).

These elements will allow school counselors and counselor educators to improve their participation in the political process, allowing them to cope with conflicting

demands of their various consistencies. Teaching students to be advocates, leaders, risk-takers and data users will align their work with educational reform movements and make them essential to educational change.

Martin (2002) uses similar language when discussing changes to counselor preparation. She believes school counselors are in a critical position to address gaps in student achievement and promote equity and access to academic programs for all students. School counselors, among the only professionals in schools responsible for working with all students, have a school-wide perspective. Traditionally, school counselors have been record keepers. Access to those records allows them to use the data at their fingertips to effect systemic change. Unfortunately, she claims, most counselors lack the preparation to succeed in this area.

Among the changes Martin advocates are moving school counselors from an ancillary, nice-to-have, role, to a necessary, must-have one. They must be prepared to contribute to the schools' academic missions, guiding students toward academic success and high achievement. Counselors cannot simply be mental health providers in schools, making students feel good about themselves. They must empower students to create successful futures. In a larger sense, the profession must move beyond simply believing in the worth of all individuals. It must be able to measure and document its effectiveness and show results that prove this belief.

Paisley and Hayes (2003) mirror the themes seen in other articles, focusing particularly on counselors' work in the academic realm. They cite the demands of the education reform movement for proof of effectiveness, rather than proof of effort, as a primary resource for the need to transform preparation programs. School counselors must

be "...committed to realizing documented outcomes that affirm a belief in the capacity of every child to become an effective and contributing citizen" (p. 199). Counselors must link their work to schools' missions. Their work in the career and personal/social realms must have relevance to the academic realm. They too claim that counselors are not ready for this role.

To prepare students for this role, the authors recommend five components be included in all preparation programs: counseling and coordination, educational leadership, advocacy, team building and collaboration, and use of assessment data. Additionally, they recommend three curricular strands be addressed across the components: awareness, knowledge, and skills related to multiculturalism, the use of technology to improve educational practice, and the application of the ASCA National Standards for School Counseling Programs (p. 202).

Dear (2002) describes the skills, currently not taught in most preparation programs, that counselors in 2021 will need to serve students. He lists technological literacy, cultural, linguistic, and academic development skills, the ability to build coalitions between schools and community agencies, understanding of issues such as violence, self-esteem, and issues of equity, and understanding systems and systemic change.

Counselors are the link between the community and the school. They work on the frontline between teachers and administrators as liaisons between those groups and the community. To effectively fulfill this role, they must have experience with both the internal and external. They must understand personal development and growth while

being skilled in group dynamics, conflict resolution, crisis intervention, and problem solving.

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs

Professional school counseling has developed a voluntary standard of excellence regarding counselor preparation programs. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP) was founded to promote professional competence in counseling and related professions through the development of preparation standards, encouragement of excellence in program development and accreditation of professional preparation programs (CACREP). “The CACREP (2001) standards require counselor education programs to include eight core curriculum standards regarding the areas in which master's-level students are to obtain knowledge and demonstrate experience. These core curriculum standards are Professional Identity, Social and Cultural Diversity, Human Growth and Development, Career Development, Helping Relationships, Group Work, Assessment, and Research and Program Evaluation” (McGlothlin & Davis, 2004, p. 274). Susan Seem, Past-president of the CACREP Board of Governors describes these guidelines as developed specifically to reflect the changes in professional school counseling, including those reflected in the materials developed by the Education Trust and American School Counselor Association, cited above (personal communication with S. Seem, June 10, 2006).

CACREP’s proposed revisions to their standards (2006a), when approved, will require graduate students to “demonstrate the professional knowledge and skills/practices that are necessary to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of

all PK-12 students” (p. 42). While space here precludes a complete listing of all the knowledge and skills/practices CACREP discusses, a brief review verifies that the organization is reflecting current professional trends in their standards. CACREP describes eight standard areas for the preparation of school counselors. We offer one skill or knowledge area, out of many, that the organization cites as essential that prospective school counselors acquire.

Foundations

“Designs and implements prevention and intervention/ plans for student problems that demonstrate an understanding of the effects of (a) atypical growth and development, (b) health, (c) language, (d) ability level (e) culture, (f) diversity, (g) socioeconomic status, and (h) factors of resiliency on student learning and development” (p.42).

Counseling, Prevention, and Interventions

“Knows how to design, implement, manage and evaluate programs to enhance the academic, career and personal/social development of all PK-12 students” (p. 42).

Diversity and Advocacy

“Understands educational policy and reform in schools and demonstrates knowledge of the cultural, ethical, economic, legal, and political issues surrounding diversity, equity, and excellence in terms of student learning” (p.43).

Assessment

“Analyzes assessment information in a manner that produces valid inferences when evaluating the needs of individual students and assessing the effectiveness of educational programs” (p.44).

Research and Evaluations

“Analyzes and uses data (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, and needs assessments) to help the school evaluate student needs and outcomes” (p. 45).

Academic Development

“Implements research-based differentiated instructional strategies that draw upon subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge and skills to promote the achievement of all students” (p. 46).

Collaboration and Consultation

“Knows how to build effective working teams of school staff, parents and community members to promote the academic, career and personal/social development of all PK-12 students” (p. 46).

Leadership

“Knows how to design, implement, manage and evaluate a systemic and comprehensive counseling and guidance program (e.g., ASCA National Model)” (p. 47).

Finally, CACREP describes the necessary field experiences for school counselors in training through an accredited program. Students are required to complete:

- A supervised practicum experience totaling at least 100 clock hours with at least 40 hours of direct service to students (p. 15).
- A supervised internship of 600 clock hours begun after successful completion of the student’s practicum with a minimum of 240 hours of direct service to students (p. 15).

Unfortunately, most preparation programs in New York State do not apply for CACREP accreditation. As of November 2006, only six programs in the state, out of more than thirty total programs, were accredited (CACREP, 2006b, p. 13).

Section 2: State School Counselor Certification Requirements Comparison

The professional school counseling community has stated possessing a masters degree is expected of all entry level school counselors. The American School Counselor Association notes “Professional school counselors have a master’s degree or higher in school counseling or the substantial equivalent...” (2004a). Other requirements include field training and passing an examination (ASCA, 2006a). In many respects, New York’s requirements to enter the field fall significantly below that of other states.

Appendix B illustrates the difference between New York’s requirements and that of the rest of the nation’s ten most populous states. When compared to states with similar population sizes, that table shows how far below other states’ requirements New York’s standards fall. A brief comparison of the Empire State’s requirements to that of other states here will further reveal how far below the norm the state’s requirements are. A complete comparison of all states’ requirements would take more space than now available. The American School Counselor Association offers a complete review of the matter online (ASCA, 2006a).

New York is one of just three states in the Union that does not require a masters degree in counseling, school counseling, guidance, or a similar field for entry level certification. New York requires completion of a bachelors degree and 30 graduate credits (NYSED). Alaska requires completion of a bachelors degree (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development). Utah requires admission to a state approved counselor training program, but not completion of that program, for entry into the field (ASCA, 2006a). In all other states and the District of Columbia, prospective school

counselors are required to complete a masters degree prior to being granted recognition by the state (ASCA, 2006a).

New York's requirements for field training prior to certification also fall behind those of other states. New York requires only a "supervised practicum in counseling" (NYSED). The New York State Education Department offers no direction for how long such an experience must occur, what such an experience must include, or where such an experience must be completed. Many other states offer greater guidance on the subject and require significantly more than New York. New Hampshire, for examples, states "candidates must have completed a 600 hour internship in a general school setting under the direct supervision of a state certified school counselor with at least 2 years experience as a state certified school counselor in NH public schools" (ASCA, 2006a). Vermont requires a "...supervised 600 clock hour internship in school guidance; and minimum 60 hours of experience at both the elementary/middle (PK-6) and middle/secondary (7-12) levels, under the supervision of a licensed school counselor" (Vermont Department of Education).

Like New York requires of classroom teachers and, soon, school administrators, many states require prospective school counselors to pass some form of assessment to prove their competence in the area. New York has no such requirement. Several states require applicants for certification to pass the PRAXIS II: School Guidance and Counseling assessment, including, but not limited to Arkansas, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia (Educational Testing Service). Others, including but not limited to Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, and

Vermont require certification applicants to pass a state developed examination prior to granting certification (ASCA, 2006a).

While passing a test does not guarantee a school counselor can serve students well, it does ensure a school counselor has a basic understanding of the profession and the duties one will undertake. In the case of the PRAXIS II: School Guidance and Counseling assessment, passing the test exhibits an understanding of counseling and guidance skills, consultation, coordination, and professional issues (Educational Testing Service, 2005, p.2). State designed assessments have a similar function. For example, the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators: School Counseling assessment measures knowledge of individual development and learning, educational exploration and career planning, counseling and guidance, consultation and collaboration, assessment instruments and strategies, and professional identity and practice (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2006, 1).

Section 3: The Impact of School Counseling

Richard Wong, Executive Director of the American School Counselor Association, describes the changes in research on school counseling by stating that rather than focus on how much work school counselors do, "...the focus has shifted to assessing how students are different as a result of what counselors have done" (2002). While that is true at a national level, in New York State little coordinated effort has been made to prove the impact of school counseling on issues such as academic achievement, graduation rates, school safety, and the myriad other issues facing schools today. With that in mind, the New York State School Counselor Association has established a committee on data, tasked with collecting evidence of the impact of school counseling (Hardy, 2006). The committee will design data collection methods, collect data, and share their finding with the professional community, the New York State Education Department, the New York State Legislature, and other interested parties.

From a broader prospective, a wealth of information exists on the impact of school counseling. Our brief review of the pertinent literature will focus on the following areas:

- Academic Achievement
- Student Behaviors and Attitudes
- Career Development
- Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

Academic Achievement

School counseling programs have been shown to have significant impact on students' academic achievement. Boutwell and Myrick (1992) describe an elementary

school counselor led small group intervention for students who are failing academically, the “Go For It Club”. The club met once or twice a week for 30 minutes and consisted of study skills, goal setting, and behavior modification techniques, as well as fun activities. Academic outcomes were positively impacted by the program.

Praport (1993) discusses the fact that school dropouts were more likely to exhibit low self-concept as well as high absenteeism. A group counseling intervention was created to address these two factors. It was found that students who were identified as potential dropouts responded well to this type of intervention. It was also found that students who were contacted within one or two weeks by a counselor after they dropped out, could often be convinced to return to school or an alternative program.

In a meta-analysis, Whiston and Sexton (1998) reviewed 50 studies in the guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support categories in elementary, middle, and high school settings. The writers felt that given all that counselors do on a daily basis, there were a small number of research studies. They did find, however, that many of the interventions, including group, individual, and guidance curriculum activities led to positive outcomes for students.

Brigman and Campbell (2003) used a quasi-experimental (intervention group vs. control group) study to assess the use of a school counselor implemented intervention on Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test scores in three elementary schools, one middle schools, and two high schools. Students who received the counselor led “Student Success Skills” curriculum at all levels had significantly higher reading and math scores than the control group.

Gerler and Herndon (1993) and Lee (1993) investigated the ten session “Succeeding in School” curriculum, though which school counselors worked with students to improve academic performance. Gerler and Herndon found that students enhanced their understanding of how to be a successful student while Lee found that students receiving the curriculum showed higher academic achievement in math.

Cook and Keffenberger (2003) conducted a study of the “Solution Shop” program, a group counseling, study skills effort to establish academic goals, involve parents, closely monitor progress, and create positive attitudes regarding academic achievement. The researchers show how counselors can use data to monitor programs and to make decisions about the program. They found that their intervention caused 20 of the 35 participants to increase their GPA. All but two participants maintained or improved their GPA.

Webb, Brigman, and Campbell (2005), replicating Brigman and Campbell’s previously cited study, used a pre/post-test, treatment-control group design to evaluate the “Student Success Skills” curriculum provided by school counselors. They found the treatment group had significantly higher math scores on the FCAT than the control group, while 78 % of the treatment group students had higher reading scores than the control group. Teachers also reported that curriculum participants had improved behavior in the social, academic, and self-management dimensions.

Most recently, Bemak, Chung and Siroskey-Sabdo (2005) found school counselors were able to have an impact on attendance, grades, discipline referrals, and aspirations. The researchers discuss the Empowerment Groups for Academic Success

(EGAS) program used with at-risk urban high school girls. Group work is recommended because of its effectiveness and also because urban caseloads are generally high.

Student Behaviors and Attitudes

Cheek, Bradley, Reynolds, and Coy (2002) studied a counselor lead group counseling program for elementary school students identified as being below standard on a benchmark achievement test or who had shown test anxiety while taking the test. The group sessions aimed to increase student knowledge around test taking strategies as well as provide relaxation techniques that the students could use in the test taking situation. All 16 students participating reported less stress and 75% passed the reading and 94% passed the math tests.

Lapan, Kardash, and Turner (2002) describe how school counselors can enhance student achievement by helping students become “Self-Regulated Learners”. Counselors can help students learn effective learning strategies such as identification of prior knowledge, summarizing, activation of prior knowledge, note-taking, organization, comprehension monitoring, and imagery. Counselors can work with students in groups or individually to become self-regulating and self-motivated.

Bailey and Paisley (2004) describe “Project: Gentleman on the Move”, a program created for African American adolescents. This developmental, comprehensive program addresses multiple facets of the youth’s lives. Parents, teachers, counselors, and adult male role models are involved in affecting academic and social performance. Results are positive in that many of the 300 participants have gone on to success in their personal lives. The writers suggest that culturally aware counselors can replicate this program with similar results.

Finally, in a meta-analysis of middle school interventions, Sink (2005) connects school counselor interventions to the qualities of high-performing middle schools. These qualities are an academic emphasis, collegiality and affiliation, and instructional leadership. All 13 studies described had an effect on the academic emphasis dimension. The majority of the studies also had an effect on collegiality and affiliation, and instructional leadership dimensions. Sink also emphasizes the notion that counselor interventions often have intermediate rather than immediate effects on student outcomes. Many times a gain in an academic skill can be measured due to a counselor led program, while effects on particular test scores are less clear.

Career Development

Peterson, Long, and Billups (1999) describe career interventions with 8th graders in three settings. Their premise was that 8th graders are making complex choices as they choose high school classes and programs. Many of these high school students are challenged in their high school careers and later because they made misinformed or inaccurate choices. The study showed a computer aided, counselor led transition program taught students proper sequences for courses and helped them create proper programs much more than the common practice of handouts with minimal discussion.

Mosconi (2003) evaluates the effects of a values clarification curriculum on high school students' definitions of success. A counselor led program using values clarification techniques gave students additional tools in their career and college search process. Students were given these values clarification tools in addition to the typical abilities and interests inventories that are completed. This allows high school students to make these important decisions with a broader awareness of their values.

Blackhurst, Auger, and Wahl (2003) studied children's perceptions of vocational preparation requirements. A study of 119 elementary students showed that the vast majority of these students had very high educational aspirations, that by 5th grade 84% were able to connect college attendance with job preparation, and that even by 5th grade students were unable to accurately identify which careers require a college education. Implications of this study suggest that late elementary school is a good time for counselors to work with students on specific career topics including vocational preparation required by various careers.

Lapan, et al. (2003) studied 884 8th, 10th, & 12th graders' School to Work Opportunities and attitudes. Students reporting greater support from their school counselors and teachers correlated with the career development variables of the study. Curriculum strategies were also positively correlated with career development variables. The writers suggest that the counselor implications of this study revolve around the use of data collected, programs created and implemented around the career development constructs.

Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

Perhaps the area of most concern for researchers recently has been the impact of comprehensive school counseling programs. The American School Counselor Association introduced *The National Model for School Counseling Programs* (2003) as an example to be used in linking school counseling to schools' academic missions. That publication spurred a series of state-level publications like *The New York State Model for Comprehensive K-12 School Counseling Programs* (NYSSCA, 2003). *The New York State Model* links school counseling to the New York State Learning Standards and

provides a model for accountability linking school counselors' work to schools ultimate missions.

Offering meta-analysis of 30 years of empirical studies, Borders and Drury (1992) show clear positive student outcomes based upon counselor interventions. Special attention was given to the facets of developmental comprehensive programs, various interventions such as classroom guidance, individual and group counseling, coordination, and consultation. This is an important, early study tracing counseling interventions and outcomes since the 1960s.

Based on data gathered in an accreditation process in Missouri, Lapan, Gysbers, and Sun (1997) found in high schools with comprehensive guidance programs that are more completely in place, the following occurred: Students reported higher grades, students reported that they school was preparing them for later life and reported that career and college information was accessible, and that their school's climate was positive. This data was gathered from 236 high schools in Missouri.

Continuing the study of school counseling in Missouri, Lapan, Gysbers, and Pertroski (2001) found, in schools where the comprehensive guidance program was more fully implemented: students felt safer; there were better relationships between students and teachers; there was a greater satisfaction with their education; perceptions that their education was more relevant; and that they were earning higher grades.

In a large scale study, Sink and Stroh (2003) sought to find out whether students attending elementary schools with Comprehensive Developmental Guidance (CDG) programs had higher academic achievement test scores. They found using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Washington Assessment of Student Learning that students who

attend a school where there is a CDG program for multiple years do better academically and have higher achievement test scores than those students who attend schools without a CDG program.

Urban school counseling programs in New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Washington, Trenton, and Baltimore are described in relation to school counseling activities (Holcomb-McCoy & Mitchell, 2005). Counselors reported that they were engaging for the most part in appropriate counselor activities, but felt that most of their time was spent attending to academic achievement issues and that the major concerns for students are weak families, academic issues, and poverty.

Section 4: Conclusions

We draw three main conclusions based on this investigation. First, school counselors' work, and the preparation they need to complete that work, has changed in the last ten years, yet New York State has largely missed the boat on these changes. Starting with the release of ASCA's *National Standards for School Counseling Programs*, and continuing with the work of the Education Trust, and the release of documents like *The National Model for School Counseling Programs* and *The New York State Model for Comprehensive K-12 School Counseling Programs*, the profession has endeavored to link its work to the national educational reform movement. Those efforts describe methods for linking school counseling to the academic mission of schools and making school counselors as accountable as all other professionals in schools for students' success.

Unfortunately, while this movement has been successful elsewhere, New York has not been so successful. Yes, some graduate programs are teaching this new model to students. Yes, some schools do have excellent school counseling programs that reflect the profession's changing nature. Overall, that is not the case. Take for example the involvement of graduate programs in CACREP. As we have already seen, CACREP requires their accredited programs be on the cutting edge of school counseling practice and theory. As of this writing, only six of the more than thirty graduate programs in the state have been granted CACREP accreditation (CACREP, 2006b, 13). New York falls behind in its professional practice as well. In 2003, the American School Counselor Association created RAMP, a program recognizing schools for excellence in school counseling practice. Recognized schools have fully implemented data-driven school

counseling programs, accountable to their schools' academic missions. In the three years the program has existed, no school from New York State has been recognized (ASCA, 2006c).

Second, New York has fallen behind nearly all other states in requirements for initial certification as a school counselor. As we discussed earlier, New York is one of only three states in the Union that does not require applicants have a masters degree before receiving certification to work in the field. Further, the state has among the lowest field experience requirements in the country. Finally, unlike it requires of many educators, New York State does not require applicants for certification to prove their knowledge of the field through some kind of assessment.

What has this weakness wrought? Our evidence here is only anecdotal, but it is telling. Laura Barber, Director of Guidance for Somers Central School District, describes it this way:

They (school counseling interns) must be articulate, able to take initiative in a situation and able to communicate. They must have some knowledge of why they want to go into the field of counseling and should have a pretty good idea of what the profession will entail by the time they are doing their internship. They must be familiar with group and individual counseling skills, the NY state graduation requirements, the use of technology and be open-minded to others. I realize that these are very basic things to ask but...ours (interns) were not close to any of these things... I am also appalled at how few hours are still being required of interns. I recently heard of one (intern) who only needs 75 hours?? Right

now the interns are coming ill prepared to work in our offices and 75-100 hours is barely getting them started on what they need to be able to know and do if they are going out into the field (2006).

In Laura's opinion, and in ours, too often, school counselors are being sent into the field unprepared to do the work they are expected to do.

Finally, the research is clear. School Counselors can and do make positive impacts to schools' missions. They help students achieve academically. They improve graduation rates. They help improve student attitudes, thereby improving school environments. School counselors are members of the academic team, as essential to students' success as any other member of that team. The time has come to ensure that tomorrow's students have access to higher quality school counseling programs.

Section 5: Recommendations

What do we recommend happen now? First, the New York State Education Department must begin the process of increasing the requirements for initial certification as a school counselor. Our professional community, as represented by three different professional associations, is united in believing that we must better prepare the newest members of our community. Increasing certification requirements will force graduate programs around the state to improve their course offerings and increase field experience requirements. Assessing certification applicants' knowledge and preparation through an assessment will ensure that they have at least a basic understanding of their work. One possible model for certification requirements is the proposal previously submitted to NYSED and offered as Appendix A of this paper.

Another is the CACREP standard, described previously. CACREP offers a model for certification that ensures school counselors are prepared to face the challenges of the changing academic environment. It ensures prospective school counselors understand how to utilize data to impact student achievement, know how to build comprehensive, developmental programs that address students' academic, career, and personal/social needs, and know how to address students' individual learning needs.

Second, our professional community must continue to educate current professionals on the skills they need to be successful in the new challenging academic environment. Changing certification requirements is essential, but it will take years to have a significant impact. Practicing school counselors require up-to-date skills and knowledge to serve students well. Professional associations in particular must design and

implement timely, specific professional development activities to ensure practitioners have the skills they need to serve students well.

Further, our community must also continue to collect data on the impact our work has, especially the impact it has in schools in the Empire State. We know we do good work, that we help students every day, but we must speak the language of those making decisions. That is the language of accountability. How do we impact student achievement, graduate rates, school safety, and all the rest of the areas the general public sees as important?

This is the Empire State. New Yorkers take pride in being the best in the nation. Yet, in this area, we rank near the bottom. School counselors want to be held to a higher standard. We want school counseling in New York to be at the cutting edge of the profession. We are working to make that happen because we know we can impact student achievement, school safety, and all the other areas already discussed. We can improve students' lives. But we must improve the preparation new professionals receive. Increasing certification requirements is the first step on that journey.

Appendix A:
Recommendation for New York State School Counselor Certification Requirements
(Originally presented summer 2006)

The School Counselor

School counselors are educators possessing a Masters Degree or higher in school counseling. School counselors possess a unique skill set in social and cultural diversity, human growth and development, career development, helping relationships and counseling theory and practice, group work, assessment, and research and evaluation.

School counselors work within a comprehensive, developmental, data driven program to build student competencies in the academic, career, and personal/social domains. Their efforts improve student achievement and help students reach the New York State Learning Standards. The skills school counselors deliver help New York students compete successfully as leaders in the global marketplace.

School counselors work with all students in the school to increase academic achievement by creating a supportive learning environment in collaboration with students, all school staff members, and the community. They are leaders within the school community through their collaboration with the instructional team, advocacy for students, and their ability to connect the educational and mental health communities. They network with community resources to ensure students' academic, career, and personal/social needs are met.

School counselors are professionals dedicated to their craft. They adhere to high ethical standards as defined by the American School Counselor Ethical Code (ASCA, 2004). They are life-long learners, continuing their professional development for the benefit of students. School counselors are part of a professional community dedicated to improving practice for students' benefit.

School counselors operate within the following areas of practice: counseling, collaboration, coordination, and curriculum to ensure data-driven results-based programs. School counselors are integral members of the instructional team. Their specialized training in school counseling makes them uniquely qualified to improve student achievement and build supportive learning environments.

Highly Effective School Counselor

Recognizing that all students deserve highly effective professionals in their schools, we believe a highly effective school counselor must:

- A. Possess the knowledge and skills to maximize student achievement through academic, career, and personal/social counseling;
- B. Engage in ongoing professional development linked to school counseling through a professional growth plan;
- C. Align a comprehensive K-12 school counseling program to the American School Counselor Association National Standards for School Counseling Programs and the New York State Learning Standards;

- D. Possess a unique skill set merging clinical and health related knowledge within the context of student achievement, which includes the primacy of relationships, empathy, the role of emotions and understanding problems in a systemic framework;
- E. Understand his or her own cultural socialization and its impact on the ability to work with diverse student populations and settings; and
- F. Understand that the use of data is integral to the development, implementation, and evaluation of counseling programs and interventions within the context of student achievement.

Outstanding Training Programs

An outstanding training program for school counselors consists of an initial Masters Degree of 48 credits hours. Training programs will include at least 700 hours of field experience, completed minimally over 1 academic year. The 700 hours is inclusive of practicum and internship hours, as determined by individual graduate programs. This qualifies the graduate for the Initial Certification as a School Counselor. The Professional Certification is subsequently earned upon completion of an additional 12 credits in courses related to school counseling and two years experience within 5 years of receipt of Initial Certification. Students in field experiences will be required to maintain a professional membership in a school counselor related association and liability insurance throughout the entirety of their field experience. The following knowledge and skills areas will be included in all training programs:

- A. Human Growth and Development
- B. Helping Relationships
- C. Group Work
- D. Career Development
- E. Program Assessment
- F. Social and Cultural Foundations
- G. Research and program evaluations
- H. Knowledge of major counseling theories and their application in school settings
- I. Professional Identity
- J. Psychopathology and Psychopharmacology
- K. Foundations of school counseling, legal and ethical issues, role and function, public policy, education policy
- L. Planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating comprehensive development programs, such as The New York State Model for Comprehensive K-12 School Counseling Programs
- M. Crisis intervention models
- N. Understanding of cultural contexts of schools, communities, and populations
- O. Strategies for overcoming barriers to learning
- P. Advocacy for all, especially for underserved populations
- Q. Curriculum development and implementation for student achievement with an emphasis on linking curriculum to the New York State Learning Standards and American School Counselor Association's National Standards for School Counseling Programs

- R. Classroom/ behavior management strategies for student achievement S.
Collaborative models for development of safe learning environments
- S. Collaborative models for increasing student success
- T. Systems theory, theories and models of consultation, systems change
- U. Leadership strategies, qualities, and perspectives from a student support services perspective
- V. Use of technology to meet school counseling goals
- W. Understanding and using data for decision making, evaluation of student learning, counseling outcomes, program improvement, educational equity, and school climate
- X. Use of a variety of assessment tools to identify, prevent, and remediate factors that affect the development and functioning of students

Outstanding training programs for school counselors integrate theory and practice early and often, from the beginning to the end of the program.

Pre-certification Testing

Pre-certification testing has become a part of all teacher certifications issued by the New York State Education Department. Several such tests are already in use around the country for school counselors and could be used by the Department either as model for required testing or as required tests. The Educational Testing Service offers the PRAXIS: School Guidance and Counseling exam, designed to measure the subject specific knowledge school counselors should have prior to entering professional practice. This test is already required by several states for licensure or certification, including Arkansas, Nevada, Oregon, Tennessee, West Virginia, and others.

Additionally, several states have created their own pre-certification tests for school counselors. When creating a test for school counselors in New York, we urge the Department to review those exams already in use around the country. The Illinois State Board of Education, for example, utilizes a test designed to assess whether examinees possess the minimum knowledge necessary for work as a school counselor. The Illinois Certification Testing System's school counselor exam evaluates examinees' knowledge of student development across domains, assessment, instruction, and services, the school environment and counseling program, and the school counseling profession.

Postgraduate Training

Like all educators, school counselors require ongoing professional training beyond their initial preparation. This will include experiences as part of their induction to the school system and ongoing professional development. As stated above, to achieve Professional Certification, school counselors must complete an additional 12 credits of graduate study beyond their initial Masters Degree. To ensure the professional's continued effectiveness in working within the school setting, such credits can be from courses in school counseling or other, related fields, such as, but not limited to:

- Educational Theory and Practice,
- Educational Leadership, and
- Special Education.

School counselors should be assigned mentors upon employment by a school, in the same manner as teachers. Such mentors must be professionally and permanently certified school counselors. Since not all school districts employ more than one school counselor or may not employ another school counselor that is permanently certified, school districts must make every effort to assign a mentor from a neighboring school that is permanently certified. Local and state school counselor associations may be able to facilitate such relationships.

School counselors must complete at least 150 hours of professional development every five years to maintain permanent certification, school counselors must complete relevant professional development in the same manner as other certified educators. Professional development credit can be awarded for conference attendance, presenting at conferences, graduate courses, relevant workshops offered through the school district or BOCES, publication of professional articles and books, leadership in professional associations, and service as a field supervisor for school counselors in training.

Appendix B: Initial School Counselor Certification Requirements
Top 10 States by Population
(Worlдатlas.com, 2006)
(ASCA, 2006a, ASCA 2006b)

State Name	Education Requirements	Field Experience Requirements	Examination Requirements	Prior Teaching Experience?	Continuing Education Requirements	Website
California	Complete post baccalaureate degree study consisting of a minimum of 48 semester units in a Commission-accredited professional preparation program specializing in school counseling, including a practicum with school-aged children and obtain the recommendation of a California college or university with a Commission-accredited Pupil Personnel Services program specializing in	None noted	Pass the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) Total scaled score must be at least 123 (41 in each of the three sections: reading, writing, and math).	No	Renewal of a professional clear teaching or services credential requires the completion of 150 clock hours of professional growth activities pre-approved by a professional growth advisor and 90 days? experience during the five-year period.	http://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/leaflets/cl606.html

	school counseling					
Texas	Master's degree from an accredited institution of higher education; successfully complete a school counselor preparation program	Structured, field-based training must be focused on actual experiences with each of the standards identified in Texas law (relating to Standards for the School Counselor Certificate) to include experiences at diverse types of campuses.	Minimum score of 240 on School Counselor Exam (TExES #152)	Must have two years of classroom teaching experience.	All school counselors are required to complete at least 200 clock hours of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) during each five-year renewal period. Counselors are encouraged to complete a minimum of 40 clock hours of CPE each year of the renewal period. One semester hour of credit earned at an accredited institution of higher education is equivalent to 15 CPE clock hours.	http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac\$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=5&ti=19&pt=7&ch=239&sch=A&rl=Y
New York	Baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education or from an institution	Supervised field practice of an indeterminate length.	None	No	None	http://eservices.nysed.gov/teach/certhelp/CertRequirementHelp.do#cfocus

	<p>authorized by NY Department of Education; AND For a provisional certificate (five years):</p> <p>At least 30 semester hours of approved graduate study in the field of school counseling, including supervised practice in school counseling. One year of paid full-time approved experience as a school counselor in PreK-12 setting may be substituted for the internship/practice. Completion of a Child Abuse Identification and a school violence prevention and intervention Workshop</p>					
Florida	(1) Plan One. A master's or higher degree with a graduate major in guidance and counseling or	Three semester hours in a supervised counseling internship.	Professional Education Test; College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST); Subject Test in	None	Sixty inservice points from an approved provider or three semesters of college credit.	http://www.fldoe.org/edcert/rules/6A-4-0181.asp

	<p>counselor education which includes three (3) semester hours in a supervised counseling practicum in an elementary or secondary school, or</p> <p>(2) Plan Two. A master's or higher degree with thirty (30) semester hours of graduate credit in guidance and counseling to include the areas specified below:</p> <p>(a) Three (3) semester hours in principles, philosophy, organization and administration of guidance,</p> <p>(b) Three (3) semester hours in student appraisal including administration and interpretation of</p>		<p>School Guidance and Counseling</p>			
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	<p>standardized tests,</p> <p>(c) Three (3) semester hours in education and career development information practices and systems,</p> <p>(d) Three (3) semester hours in learning, personality theory, and human development,</p> <p>(e) Three (3) semester hours in counseling theories and individual counseling techniques,</p> <p>(f) Three (3) semester hours in group counseling and guidance techniques,</p> <p>(g) Three (3) semester hours in consultation skills and techniques for</p>					
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	<p>conferring with groups such as agencies, teachers, and parents,</p> <p>(h) Three (3) semester hours in legal, ethical, and current issues affecting school counselors,</p> <p>(i) Three (3) semester hours in specialized counseling techniques for use with elementary or secondary level special populations such as exceptional students, dropouts, and minorities, and</p> <p>(j) Three (3) semester hours in a supervised counseling practicum in an elementary or secondary school.</p>					
Illinois	Hold a master's degree awarded by	The internship shall be of a length that is	Pass the ISBE Examination for	Applicants must hold or be	Counselors are not required to	http://www.isbe.state.il.us/certification/pdf/cert_guide.pdf

	<p>a regionally accredited institution of higher education in school counseling, another counseling or related field (e.g., social work or psychology), or an educational field</p>	<p>determined by the approved program to be adequate to enable candidates to meet the standards but shall entail at least 600 hours and last no less than one semester, during which candidates shall engage in the performance of various aspects of the counseling role and shall be gradually introduced to the full range of responsibilities associated with that role. However, the internship for an individual with at least two years of teaching experience may, at the discretion of the institution offering the approved program, consist of no fewer than 400 hours. In each case at least 240 hours of the internship shall involve direct service work with school-age individuals and</p>	<p>School Counseling and meet all Illinois requirements for certification.</p>	<p>qualified to hold a teaching certificate; OR have completed, as part of an approved program, coursework addressing: A) the structure, organization and operation of the educational system, with emphasis on P-12 schools; B) the growth and development of children and youth, and their implications for counseling in schools; C) the diversity of Illinois students and the laws and programs that have been designed to meet their unique needs; and</p>	<p>complete professional development courses or continuing education courses to maintain their certificates. There has been discussion regarding changing this requirement, but currently no coursework is required.</p>	
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		groups.		D) effective management of the classroom and the learning process. Examination: Pass the ISBE Examination for School Counseling and meet all requirements for certification.		
Pennsylvania	Completion of an approved graduate program in school counseling	Supervised counseling practicum experiences, prior to and separate from the field experience, providing direct service with individuals and groups (60 clock hours) and minimum of an additional 300 clock hours of internship/supervised field experiences to include instructional experience and a minimum of 70 hours (elementary) and 75 hours (secondary) of direct service with	Must score 173 on Praxis Mathematics, 172 on Praxis Reading, and 173 on Praxis Writing. Also must score a minimum of 590 on the Praxis II School Guidance and Counseling.	None	All certified Pennsylvania professional educators must complete six collegiate credits, six continuing professional education credits, 180 hours of professional education, or a combination of credits and hours every five years to renew their certification. One credit is equal to 30 hours.	http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=94&q=32455

		individual and group clients.				
Ohio	Master's degree from an approved program in school counseling	Successful completion of an internship consisting of 600 contact hours in a school setting OR master's degree, successful completion of an internship consisting of 600 contact hours in a school setting, and a one-year induction under the supervision of a licensed school counselor OR master's degree and 3 years experience as a licensed school counselor in another state.	NTE OR Praxis II: Specialty Area Exam.	A one-year induction under the supervision of a licensed school counselor unless have two years of successful teaching experience under a standard teaching certificate, or provisional or professional teacher license; or three years of experience as a licensed school counselor in another state.	Each educator is responsible for the design of an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) based on the needs of the educator, the students, the school, and the school district, subject to approval of the LPDC. In accordance with the approved plan, the educator must complete six semester hours of coursework related to classroom teaching and/or the area of licensure; or 18 continuing education units (180 contact hours) or other equivalent activities related to classroom	http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=1310&Content=19703

					teaching and/or the area of licensure as approved by the LPDC of the employing school, district or agency since the issuance of the license to be renewed. Coursework, CEUs or other equivalent activities may be combined.	
Michigan	Master's degree or higher from an approved School Counselor Education program that includes at least all skills and content areas of their equivalent required by Michigan.	Completion of not less than a 600 clock hour internship with school-aged pupils under the supervision of a credentialed school counselor or a school counselor educator in an approved school counseling program. At least 300 of the 600 clock hours shall be in a school setting.	Michigan Test for Teacher Certification—Guidance Counselor Section.	Hold a valid elementary or secondary teaching certificate following the completion of an approved school counselor preparation program.	Completion of six semester hours of academic credit from an approved teacher preparation institution, or the submission of evidence of the equivalent, in continuing education units completed through professional development programs or professional activities defined and approved by	http://www.michigan.gov/documents/2005-086_ED_-_School_counselor_rules__12-21-05__strike_bol_148683_7.pdf

					the state board or in any combination thereof every five years.	
Georgia	Master's degree or higher in an approved school counseling program from a regionally accredited institution.	None noted.	A passing score on the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators™ (GACE™) school counselor content assessment.	None.	A professional clear renewable certificate is valid for five years, during which time holders must earn 10 quarter hours (six semester hours) of acceptable college credit or 10 staff development units of Georgia staff development credit. Coursework may be earned toward a higher degree, toward adding a certificate field or in an area of assessed need. College credit must be earned at regionally accredited colleges. CEUs are not acceptable for certification purposes.	http://www.gapsc.com/Teacher Certification/Documents/Cert_Rules_12_03/505-2-.202.pdf

New Jersey	To be eligible for the standard educational services certificate with a school counselor endorsement, a candidate must hold a master's or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university	Supervised field practice of an indeterminate length.	None.	None.	No continuing education required.	http://www.nj.gov/njded/code/current/title6a/chap9.pdf
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