

Introduction

In January 2004, The New York State School Counselor Association's Governing Board agreed that conducting a strategic analysis of the Association and developing a long-term strategic plan was in the best interest of the Association's membership¹.

Strategic planning has been defined as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape what we are, what we will do, and why we do it. The purpose of planning is not to create a document that will sit on a shelf when it is done. The purpose is to examine the organization and decide if what we are today is what we want to be tomorrow. If not, the strategic plan is a broad road map defining the direction we want to move in. Ancillary to the strategic plan is the annual work plan, describing what specific actions will be taken during the year to implement the plan.

During 2004 and 2005, the Board conducted its strategic analysis, including:

1. Initiating and agreeing on process, January 2004
2. Identifying mandates, January 2004
3. Clarifying mission and values/ stakeholder analysis, January 2004
4. Assessing the environment: internal strengths & weaknesses, May 2004
5. Assessing the environment: external opportunities & threats, August 2004
6. Identifying strategic issues, August 2004
7. Formulating strategies, August 2005

¹ Primary sources:

Bryson, John M. (1988). Strategic planning for public and non-profit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Bryson, J. M., & Alston, F. K. (1996). Creating and implementing your strategic plan: A workbook for public and nonprofit organizations. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Following is an overview of the process undertaken and the results of the Board's strategic analysis. Step 7 includes the Board's 2005-2006 work plan. The Board will update this work plan annually.

Step 2: Identifying/Clarifying Organizational Mandates

The purpose of this step is to clarify the formal and informal mandates placed on the Association (the "musts" it confronts) and to explore their implications for organizational action. The Board identified three primary mandates guiding its operation.

1. ASCA's state chapter charter

ASCA's state charter is the document that authorizes NYSSCA to operate as a state division of the American School Counselor Association.

2. Association By-laws

NYSSCA's By-laws are the rules by which the Association and the Governing Board operates.

3. Current mission and vision statements

Mission

The Mission of the New York State School Counselor Association is to promote excellence in the profession of school counseling in order to enhance the development of all students.

Vision

NYSSCA will be recognized as the state school counseling association and school counseling will be recognized as integral to every student's educational experience.

Beliefs

Respecting the worth of the individual; Enabling positive change; Acquiring and applying knowledge; Empowering leadership; Promoting collaboration

As part of this step, the Board held a discussion on the mission and vision of the Association. The chart below describes the results of this discussion on Six Questions Toward a Mission.

Six Questions Toward a Mission	
Who are we as an organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Volunteers ➤ Advocates ➤ Learner organization ➤ Non-profit ➤ “Sum is greater than the whole” concept
What are the basic needs we exist to fill or problems we exist to solve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Disseminate information and skill ➤ Networking ➤ Provide voice for profession ➤ Raise the bar for professional practice ➤ Change perception of profession ➤ Support improved practice ➤ Advocate improved access for students
What do we do to recognize or anticipate and respond to these needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Get feedback from members ➤ Collaborate with others ➤ Promote profession ➤ Model good practice ➤ Lobby ➤ Provide professional development opportunities
How should we respond to our key stakeholders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Engage them ➤ Recognize excellence in practice ➤ Offer resources ➤ Surveys/needs assessments ➤ Recognize/respond to people in timely manner ➤ Offer resources specific to members’ needs

<p>What is our philosophy and what are our core values?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Schools counseling improves student achievement ➤ We value change and growth ➤ Advocate for school counseling ➤ We believe in power of support to families and students
<p>What makes us distinctive or unique?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Primary focus on New York State school counseling ➤ We have long history of service to profession ➤ We're "in the know"; we have connections and information ➤ We are activists for collaboration, change, and excellence

Step 3: Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholders are any people, groups, or entities that can place a claim on the Association's resources or output or is affected by that output. The key to any association's success is the ability to address crucial stakeholders' needs.

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Their Stake	How do they judge assoc. performance?	How do they influence the assoc.?	How important are they?
Members	Professional Identity Professional Development	What they get from the Association Value received Reputation of Profession Useful Information	Provide resources Economic support Direct feedback Advocating for Assoc.	Most important
Non-member counselors	Same as above	What they see and hear about the association: ➤ Conferences ➤ Publications ➤ Talk between colleagues	We want them! Criticism Too many non-members draws legitimacy into question	Important, but often difficult to influence.
Counselor Educators	They need our connections: State Ed Dept. ASCA We are influencing the profession they are training people for.	Influence with State Education Dept. Quality of our products Number of members	Promote membership to students Improve our skills though their work	Important

Students/Parents	Benefit from quality of and access to school counseling programs Advocacy Assoc. provides for them.	Probably don't know about us. Judge assoc. by perception of school counselors they encounter	Should be focus of everything we do. Our work with the profession is ultimately to serve students.	After members, this group is the most important.
ASCA	Legitimacy of their Assoc. Prospective Leaders Resources	Number of state residents in ASCA Performance of NYSSCA at ASCA events	Set the tone for profession Provide logistical support Charter Provide professional info.	Somewhat important
Administrators	Receive information on the profession. Gain skills through our work. Association creates the "bar" against which they judge the profession.	Influence we have in improving the work of counselors in their schools. Collaboration.	Control the purse strings for counselor involvement Determine role of counselors in schools	Least important of primary stakeholders

Step 4: Assessing the Environment: Internal Strengths & Weaknesses

In this step the Association's strengths and weaknesses are evaluated and their strategic implications noted. Coupled with Step 5, this SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats) Assessment is used to clarify the environment in which the Association operates. SWOT analyses provide valuable clues about the probable contours of effective strategies since every successful strategy builds on strengths and takes advantage of opportunities while minimizing the impact of weaknesses and threats.

Internal Strengths	
Professional Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Affiliations with other groups ➤ Active at national level through ASCA ➤ Long-term affiliation of some officers
Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Officers passionate about profession ➤ Shared common vision of Association as means to improving student learning ➤ Officers committed to Association
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Officers able to work as a group ➤ Able to solve problems
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Officers have a variety of knowledge and experience
Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Association currently in the black ➤ Apparent long-term stability
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All levels of profession represented ➤ Variety of staffing needs met by volunteer board members

Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Annual conference has been growing ➤ Variety of workshops offered during the year ➤ <i>New York State Model for Comprehensive K-12 School Counseling Programs</i>
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Internal Weaknesses	
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Apolitical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School counselors not politically active ➤ Lack of awareness of need for Association in political realm ➤ Non-members apathetic
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Fuzzy Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Board needs to see “big picture” ➤ Association moving in too many directions at one time ➤ Many voices within the profession wanting to be heard ➤ Money spent without considering future needs
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Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Association needs to sell benefits of membership ➤ Large state makes networking with all counselors difficult ➤ Membership is small compared to all possible members (less than 10%) ➤ No idea of why people join, rejoin, or decline to do so
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Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Need diverse representation on Executive Board ➤ Little connection with local Associations ➤ Not utilizing past leaders ➤ Not enough time to meet all goals
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of clear operating policies
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Newsletter needed to communicate with members ➤ Many board members do not respond to e-mail ➤ Webpage could be updated to improve communication ➤ Some board members ignore requests for help/input ➤ Role of association misunderstood by many potential members ➤ Lack of consistent public relations
Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poor follow through by board members ➤ Too many tasks for too few people ➤ Board members have difficulty completing tasks they've volunteered for
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No mechanism for developing leaders ➤ Underutilizing past leaders ➤ Summer academy has changed focus to min-conference, away from leadership development

Step 5: Assessing the Environment: External Opportunities and Threats

External Opportunities	
Legislative Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Counselor licensure bill ➤ Opportunity to create laws with Sen. Ortiz
Professional Development/ Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Educational reform demands professional development for educators ➤ Regional workshops ➤ Conference ➤ <i>New York State Model for Comprehensive K-12 School Counseling Programs</i> offers opportunities ➤ Association is disseminator of best practice ➤ Summer academy is good model-counselor/admin training, identifying future leaders ➤ NYSSCA has information others need
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ American School Counselor Association ➤ Other professional associations in state- psychologists, social workers, administrators ➤ NYSED- open to PPS as leaders in schools ➤ Other state School counselor associations ➤ Counselor educators ➤ Other groups with youth/ social justice focus- PTA, etc. ➤ Teachers unions
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strategic planning process offers new opportunities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ New board members offer new perspectives ➤ Board focusing on future ➤ Incorporation/ 501 c 3 status ➤ Board structure- redefine?
Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Membership growth allows new services to be offered ➤ 501 c 3 might allow grants and sponsorships
Legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Societal change means increased need for school counselors, which means increased legitimacy of Association ➤ ASCA offers NYSSCA opportunities- nominate people for awards and get NYers on their board ➤ NYSSCA is the only group dedicated to school counseling in state- making it legitimate ➤ Many areas of state have low membership rate- this allows for us to grow there
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Many areas of state have low membership rate- this allows for us to grow there ➤ Membership types can change to allow more growth ➤ Survey members for data on membership patterns
Resources (or- What have we done for them lately?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Professional development opportunities ➤ Discussion forum ➤ Promoting research in field ➤ Political Advocacy ➤ Use of technology to network

External Threats	
Budget/Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School budget cuts prevent individual counselor participation ➤ Economy forcing price increases, draining association resources ➤ Increased association service require additional revenue
Relationship with NYSED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Staffing and budget cuts at NYSED forcing reevaluation of department priorities. ➤ Staff restructuring makes continuous contact difficult
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Change in counselor job roles is a threat ➤ Job cuts across state reduce potential members ➤ NYSSCA lacks official stance on political issues ➤ Limited collaborative advocacy with other groups
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Professional school counselors in NY lack “one vision, one voice” ➤ No professional identity in NY for school counselors ➤ School counselors unaware of membership benefits ➤ Some counselors don’t know about us or understand what we do ➤ No clear market position
Apathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School counselors’ daily routine prevents recognition of need for association ➤ Lack of professional interest prevents increased membership

<p>Planning & Implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Board members' professional responsibilities impede task completion ➤ Long-term financial solvency can prevent growth
<p>District-level Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Counselor preoccupation with duties impedes interest in professional affiliation ➤ No district support for counselor involvement equals no membership growth
<p>Membership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ New counselors lack awareness of association ➤ Lack of diverse membership structure limits membership growth
<p>Organizational competition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Counselors have a variety of professional affiliation opportunities ➤ Limited finances prevent counselors from joining more than a few organizations ➤ Competition from some organizations is deliberate and confrontational ➤ Relationship with ASCA needs further growth
<p>Big Picture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Changes in education environment create confused operating atmosphere ➤ Other education professionals lack knowledge about profession

Step 6: Identifying Strategic Issues

Strategic issues are defined as “the fundamental policy questions affecting the organization’s mandates, mission and values, product or service level and mix, clients, users or payers, cost, financing, or management” (Bryson, 56). They are the questions that must be answered if the Association is to survive and ultimately thrive. Once determined, those questions were rephrased as statements, becoming the Association’s top Strategic Issues for 2005-2008.

Strategic Issues	
1	NYSSCA shall provide services that lead to recruiting and retaining members.
2	NYSSCA shall provide professional development and growth opportunities to all school counselors.
3	NYSSCA will be the prime resource provider to professional school counselors, counselor educators, graduate students, and other interested parties in New York State.
4	NYSSCA will collaborate with other professional groups and agencies to promote the profession and improve student achievement.
5	NYSSCA will advocate for all students to receive school counseling services.

Step 7: Formulating Strategies

Each summer, NYSSCA’s Governing Board shall formulate an annual work plan. This plan will encompass the Board’s plans for addressing the above listed Strategic Issues. The President shall coordinate this event, ensuring that all officers are allowed input into the process.