



School Counselors Support Equity & Access for All New York State Students

(Adopted 2021)

New York State School Counselor Association (NYSSCA) Position

Creating, supporting, and sustaining a culture of access and equity to upper-level courses requires being responsive to students' backgrounds, experiences, cultural perspectives, traditions, and knowledge when designing and implementing a college and career-ready bound culture and assessing its effectiveness. School Counselors are advocates for the equitable treatment and opportunities of all students in school and the community. Our role is to ensure equitable access to foundational courses, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate Program (IB), dual enrollment, or early-college course program.

Rationale

New York State Public Schools currently serve 2,598,921 students. Of those students, 43% are white, and 55% are of color. According to New York State Education at a Glance, in August 2019, the graduation rate for white students was 90%, while the graduation rate for black students was 75.3%, and the graduation rate for Hispanic students was 74.5%. Wealthy districts had the highest graduation rates at 95.1% compared to 70% for the highest-need districts. Also, female students graduated at a higher rate by nearly 10% compared to male students.

School counselors must promote equal access and equity in education to close graduation rates' discrepancy gaps. Schools must acknowledge and address factors that contribute to differential outcomes among groups of students. It is critical to ensure that all students routinely have opportunities to experience high-quality upper-level instruction and receive the necessary supports to succeed.

Many students of color, first-generation, and low-income students aspire to college; however, the college application process can present significant obstacles (Page & Scott, 2016). Historically, underrepresented populations have faced barriers to participating in a rigorous curriculum and higher-level classes (Vazquez & Altshuler, 2017). Some students in schools report there are no adults in the school with whom they feel they can discuss these issues because many of these students come from underrepresented social or cultural groups. Research finds that when students and school counselors can connect, school counselors have the potential to become empowering agents (Emde, 2015). School counselors can help students in identity development contribute to their success (Maxwell & Henriksen, 2012).

Family participation in the college-going decision-making process is critical (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011). School counselors can seek family engagement in the college-going process to ensure students from diverse backgrounds are included. The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016) states that all students have the right to a school counselor who acts as a social-justice advocate, helping students from all backgrounds and circumstances and consulting when the school counselor's competence level requires additional support.

Roles

School counselors' intentional efforts can reduce racial and societal equity and access disparities in Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate Program (IB), dual enrollment, or early-college course programs. School counselors promote the equitable treatment of all students in school and the community by developing and implementing a comprehensive school counseling program promoting equity and access for students. School counselors work to help close achievement, opportunity, attainment, and funding gaps in their schools, districts, and communities. School counselors are mindful

of school and community perceptions of underrepresented groups' treatment and understand the importance of collaborating with school and community groups to help all students succeed.

School Counselors need to:

- Maintain knowledge and skills for working in a diverse and multicultural work setting
- Maintain professional knowledge of the ever-changing and complex world of students' culture
- Inform the school staff of changes regarding different demographic groups within the community
- Create an environment that supports students and encourages any student or group to feel comfortable to come forward with problems
- Promote the development of school policies leading to equitable treatment of all students and opposing school policies hindering equitable treatment of any student
- Advocate for open enrollment to foundational courses, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate Program (IB), dual enrollment or early-college course program
- Use district-specific data to work with school boards and administration to make policy changes that will lead to closing achievement gaps
- Develop plans to address the underrepresentation of specific student groups such as ethnic groups, low-income students, English Language Learners, and Students with Disabilities
- Ensure that students are provided with appropriate support to excel in their academic, social-emotional, and career college readiness
- Support students when they feel like they are being treated in a biased or negative manner and avoid exhibiting self-destructive behaviors such as truancy, withdrawal, acting out, and nonparticipation in-class activities
- Attend professional development to get updates on trends and changes to AP, IB, dual enrollment, or early college courses
- Act as a liaison between home and school, promoting an understanding and encouraging creative solutions for students handling multiple responsibilities beyond a typical load
- Collaborate with families in seeking assistance services for financial literacy, job skills and placement, and free services (such as childcare assistance), as well as providing parents educational opportunities to assist them in supporting their students' education

Summary

School counselors recognize and distinguish individual and group differences and strive to value all students and groups equally. School counselors promote the equitable treatment of all students in school and the community by ensuring access to foundational courses, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate Program (IB), dual enrollment or early-college course program, and the support to achieve success.

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