

**ASCA Position Statements-Cultural Diversity**

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EDSC 550 - Social and Cultural Competencies

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June 4, 2023

### **ASCA Position Statements-Cultural Diversity**

The American School Counselor Association, (ASCA) states that “school counselors have a professional and ethical responsibility” to be aware of the subcultures that we serve. We must be culturally competent and responsive by “collaborating with students and stakeholders” in order to provide an enriching learning environment that respects and acknowledges the cultural diversity of the students that we serve so that we can “promote all students’ academic, career and social/emotional development. Culture affects how we think and feel about ourselves and others. This includes predispositions on education and career. It also affects behaviors and attitudes towards others.

Stanford University published Theory of Change, Monitoring ,and Evaluation to discuss why change theory is important and how to know if we are on the right path to positive changes. We can evaluate our school’s activities that explore and advocate for diversity and inclusion. We can predict how our students will benefit from changes in policy. We then want to track outcomes to ensure that we reach our ultimate goals.

Activities for culturally diverse students can include collaboration with stakeholders, multicultural events, and interventions for students who are struggling. The intermediate outcomes from these activities will be that parents feel valued and give them a voice in issues that are important to them. Multicultural events will make students feel valued and more engaged in the learning process for all subjects. Interventions for cultural conflicts will help students to understand each other and minimize discipline issues. The evaluation process is essential for the success of any program. While many programs have good intentions but may not actually work and in some cases can promote the very thing that it is trying to prevent.

Alfred Adler believes that people are social and learn to behave through their social needs and expectations. “The most benefit comes to the child whose efforts add to the common good for the community (e.g., classroom). Thus, Adlerian counseling is aimed at gaining an insight into self by learning to live effectively in school and in other social settings (Daniels, 1998)” (Wright, 2012. P. 187). As our schools become more diverse we must inform ourselves of the cultures that we serve. We have an obligation to continue to learn and grow so we can deliver equitable services to students. ASCA’s position is, “School counselors recognize and distinguish individual and group differences and strive to equally value all students and groups. School counselors are advocates for the equitable treatment of all students in school and in the community.”

We are obligated to know who our student body is. We need to know their values and expectations of school. In some cultures parents are very committed and involved in their children’s education while other cultures are intimidated or untrusting of school staff. As a counselor, I need to get to know my parents and bridge the expectations gap. Parent meetings are extremely important. We need to give voice to parents who may not feel comfortable approaching us. I have met with parents that felt they had little to contribute because of their own lack of education and it is important to acknowledge their contributions to preparing students for educational success.

It is also important to make sure that students feel comfortable representing their culture at school. Some students are part of the major culture on campus where their country of origin is more than 50% of the student population but some students make up less than 10% of the student population and they need to feel acknowledged as well. We also need to acknowledge the

subcultures represented at school as well. In a world that can be divisive, school counselors have the opportunity and obligation to create events on campus that celebrate diversity. Students need to feel validated in their individuality then they become much more engaged in learning and contributing to the learning process.

In the classroom I invite students of all abilities to express themselves. Social/emotional lessons are aimed at acknowledging differences and showing respect for those differences. When students get frustrated with each other I use that as an opportunity to teach them how to handle conflict when someone is different than they are. Students get confused when they see trans students or students with learning disabilities. Social/emotional lessons need to acknowledge differences in culture and differences in learning styles.

In conclusion, school counselors have specific obligations to engage stakeholders that include students, parents, and community members. We must acknowledge several aspects of culture and subcultures within our student body and community. We must be sensitive to their individual needs so we can deliver support that is individualized for their needs. The subcultures in our schools can include LGBTQ, homeless, gang affiliated or at risk for gang affiliation, and students with special educational needs. We also have to acknowledge students with medical conditions. The Career Technical Education pathways can facilitate exposure to diversity. For example, students in the education pathway will be exposed to students with special needs.

We have multiple opportunities to deliver direct and indirect instruction through classroom instruction, inviting guest speakers to share their expertise, clubs and activities that celebrate diversity. Having a positive attitude, a natural curiosity and deep respect for

differences and connecting those differences to what we all have in common can unite and inspire students to achieve their educational and vocational goals.

## References

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