



The Education Trust

# NCTSC

National Center for Transforming School Counseling

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## Ten Essential Elements for Change in School Counselor Preparation Programs

The Transforming School Counseling (TSC) Initiative seeks to change the school counseling profession by changing the master's degree programs that prepare future school counselors. To help universities focus on critical aspects that require change, The Education Trust has identified ten essential elements to creating systemic change within school-counselor preparation programs. There are questions accompanying each element that will promote thought and discussion about potential changes to your program. Use these questions to help you recognize what currently is succeeding and to identify areas to change. If your university program is interested in joining the TSC Initiative, see our accompanying document, "Joining TSCI."

### **Element 1 A Mission Statement Unique to the Program That Reflects TSC Principles**

Mission statements drive a school counselor preparation program. To better inform prospective and current students of the intent and focus of the program, the statement should be program-specific but congruent with the mission of the college or university. At a minimum, the mission statement should reflect a commitment to train future school counselors to be leaders and advocates in schools. It should address issues of access, equity, and social justice for all students. Ideally, the mission statement should reflect a commitment to close the achievement gaps and work to ensure success in a college and career ready curriculum for all students.

#### **Questions to guide your inquiry:**

- a) Does the school counseling program have a program-specific mission statement?
- b) Is the mission statement congruent with the mission of the college or university?
- c) Does the mission statement accurately reflect the intent and focus of the program?
- d) Does the mission statement reflect a commitment to prepare school counselors to be leaders and advocates in schools, addressing issues of access, equity, and social justice for all students?
- e) Does the mission statement drive the school counseling program?

#### **Find exemplary mission statements at the following schools:**

- California State University, Northridge
- Indiana State University
- Lehman College of the City University of New York



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- Ohio State University
- Portland State University
- University of West Georgia
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst

## **Element 2 An Emphasis on Technological Competency**

Technological competency is essential to improve educational practices and to use data to maximize opportunities for students. School counselors must be proficient in technology to advocate for systemic changes.

- a) Does your program prepare students to be technologically competent?
- b) Does the faculty use technology in all aspects of program design?
- c) Does the faculty demonstrate technological competence in their teaching?
- d) Does the program teach the technology skills needed to advocate for systemic change?

### **Find exemplary uses of technology at the following schools:**

- Canisius College
- Indiana State University
- New York Institute of Technology
- University of Georgia

## **Element 3 Recruitment and Selection of Diverse Candidates**

Preparation programs should make a concerted effort to recruit and select an economically, socially, and culturally diverse group of students. The students in the program should reflect the diversity of the community and the institution. Candidates also should be screened for their commitment to the philosophy and mission of the school counselor preparation program. School counselor educators should be actively involved in the selection and recruitment process.

- a) Does the mission statement guide the selection of candidates for the program? How?
- b) How does the program collaborate with stakeholders external to the university in the recruitment and selection of new candidates for the program?
- c) How does the admissions process screen applicants? How does this differ from self-selection? Is program entry based on GPA and test scores to the exclusion of experience as a leader and advocate?
- d) What is the plan for increasing the diversity of candidates?
- e) How does the screening process assess candidates' beliefs about the role of school counselors in education?
- f) Does the program utilize a cohort model? What is the plan for sustaining the selected cohort of trainees, including candidates of color?



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## **Find exemplary recruitment and selection practices at the following schools:**

- Boise State University
- California State University, Northridge
- New York Institute of Technology
- University of Maryland
- University of North Florida

## **Element 4 Curricular Reform of Content and Sequence**

The curriculum for graduate students should be a structured sequence of courses that prepares students to be leaders and advocates committed to educational equity for all students.

Counselor educators should systematically review and redesign curricular offerings to incorporate current school counseling practices.

- a) What is the rationale for the sequence of courses in the program?
- b) How does this sequence support the philosophy, mission, and goals of the program?
- c) Does curricular content reflect an education focus rather than a mental health focus?
- d) Does the curricular content reflect a focus on leadership, advocacy, multiculturalism, closing the achievement gap, change theory, consultation, use of data, and collaboration?
- e) How does the program prepare counselors to work collaboratively to increase student achievement and bring about institutional changes that challenge educational inequity?
- f) Is the program performance-based?
- g) How does the program balance older and more recent standards for assessments (for example, standardized testing and the bell curve versus standards, portfolio, and performance-type assessments)?
- h) How does the program collaborate with other important stakeholders in the development of the new curricular content, structure, and course sequence?

## **Find exemplary courses and sequences at the following schools:**

- Canisius College
- Indiana State University
- Lewis & Clark College
- New York Institute of Technology
- Ohio State University
- University of West Georgia
- University of North Florida

## **Introduction to School Counseling:**

- Lehman College of the City University of New York
- Lewis & Clark College
- University of Georgia



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## **Element 5 TSC-Focused Pedagogy, Field Experiences, and Practices**

In addition to teaching a TSC-focused curriculum that models the advocacy values counselors should embrace, preparation programs should incorporate early and frequent field experiences in K-12 public schools. Readings, examples, case studies, projects, discussions, and all other class activities should be school-based. Practical application of principles and concepts introduced in classes is essential.

1. How does the faculty focus on the following?  
Learning theories and pedagogy for successful knowledge/skill delivery;  
Learning, rather than teaching;  
Interactive teaching methods, rather than lecture methods;  
Belief systems and self-efficacy;  
Collaboration and teaming;  
Use of data to make informed decisions for systemic change;  
Education reform issues; and  
Early application of theory into practice.
2. How does the program's internship focus on school counseling? What are the guidelines for the internship? How do they differ from guidelines used before the transformation planning? How is a productive collaboration between the university and the K-12 stakeholders demonstrated?
3. How does the program implement supervision focused on school counseling issues, rather than mental health counseling issues? How will it develop and institutionalize collaborations among the university, the school district, and community agencies?
4. How does the program integrate its mission into its teaching and curriculum?
5. How will the program's theory and practice prepare the counselor to be a team member working with teachers, principals, psychologists, and others to solve problems?
6. How are students asked to demonstrate the skills to be effective school counselors? Is the program performance-based?
7. How does the program contextualize field-based experience?
8. How does the program teach students advocacy and leadership strategies?
9. How does the program incorporate multicultural concepts throughout the curricula?

**Find exemplary methods of instruction, field experiences and practices at the following programs:**

- Boise State University
- Lehman College, CUNY
- Ohio State University



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## Element 6 Induction into the Profession

Preparation programs should support new counselors as they enter the profession and begin work in schools. Programs also should encourage student involvement in professional organizations, support student research and presentation at professional meetings and conferences, provide mentors and supervised practices, and follow-up with graduates.

- a) How does the program emphasize the importance of continuing professional development?
- b) What policies and practices are in place to ensure that professional development activities support the program's philosophy, mission, and goals?
- c) How does the faculty work cooperatively with students to conduct research, publish, and present at professional meetings?
- d) How does the faculty encourage students to attend and present at professional meetings and conferences? What encouragement and incentives are available to encourage faculty to attend and present as well?
  - a. How is consultation with others modeled and encouraged?
  - b. How does the program focus on the importance of leadership and advocacy for change?
  - c. How does the program encourage students to take risks for students and challenge the system?
- e) Who are the programs's designated mentors for graduates? What steps do faculty take to secure mentors for new professionals?

### Find exemplary professional induction processes at the following programs:

- The Center for School Counseling Outcome Research
- The Center for Student Support Systems Studies and Services
- University of Georgia

## Element 7 Working Relationships With Community Partners

The program should plan and coordinate relationships among universities and community agencies so that all students have access to resources in their communities. Preparing school counselors to be brokers of community services can help eliminate the opportunity gaps for some students.

- a. How has the program addressed the link between schools and community to create a more solid working relationship?
- b. How does the program focus on integration of services between school and community services?
- c. How are the program's faculty members involved in the community? In what ways do they serve as models for affecting school and community change?
- d. What collaborative efforts exist to support closing the achievement gap through mentoring programs, use of data, and so forth?
- e. How will these changes be institutionalized as university-school district collaborations?



## **Element 8 Ongoing Professional Development for Graduate School Faculty**

School counselor educators within the graduate school need professional development to remain current in Transforming School Counseling practices. This professional development should extend beyond the usual attendance at conferences and workshops.

- a) What professional development activities exist to help counselor educators train school counselors for the new vision? How does this become an intentional plan, not left to chance?
- b) Are counselor educators engaged in focused, reflective discussion on changes in the philosophy of the program and in the role of school counselors in schools?
- c) How often are counselor educators presenting the results of the changes in their program and the profession of school counseling to their peers at professional meetings?
- d) How do counselor educators present information that distinguishes between school counseling using an education-based model rather than a mental health model?

**Find examples of ways school counselor educators can educate themselves on current school counseling trends at the following programs:**

- [TSC Academy](#)
- State School Counselor Academies:
  - California Counselor Leadership Academy
  - Nebraska School Counselor Academy
- The Center for School Counseling Outcome Research

## **Element 9 University-School District Partnerships**

To best support the work of newly prepared school counselors, graduate faculty should be involved in collaborative working partnerships between the university and school districts to assist in curricular revision and recruitment and selection of students.

- a) What collaborative processes are in place for working with the school district(s) and the community for recruiting new candidates for the program?
- b) Are counselors, administrators, and teachers discussing the new role of school counselors and the professional development needs of counselors who were on the job prior to new-vision training?
- c) What plans do the university and school system have for changing the role of school counselors in the district?
- d) How will the university help the school system create a supportive environment for the new-vision trained school counselors?



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## **Find exemplary university-school district partnerships at the following schools:**

- Ohio State University
- University of Georgia
- University of North Florida

## **Element 10 University-State Department of Education Partnerships**

It is critical for school counselor educators to form working relationships with state departments of education to ensure implementation of certification and policy changes important to school counselor preparation and practice.

- a) How are the counselor educators working with the state department of education to create changes in school counseling in the state?
- b) What is the plan for university faculty, state education department, and school district personnel to work together to change the state requirements for school counselors based on the new vision?
- c) How are counselor educators, school district personnel, and state education department personnel collaborating to offer professional development opportunities to school counselors?
- d) How are university faculty and state education department personnel collaborating to present promising research practices to school counselors?

## **Find exemplary university-state departments of education partnerships at the following schools:**

- California State University, Northridge
- Ohio State University
- University of Georgia