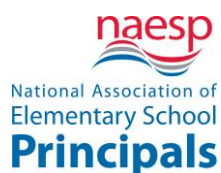


Teachers, administrators and
school counselors collaborating to
achieve high academic standards.

College and Career Readiness for All

A Handbook for Using
Noncognitive Skills to Improve Student Success



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College and Career Readiness

College and career readiness is a phrase that is getting much-deserved attention from educators and education stakeholders alike – not only in schools, but also at the federal level, state education agencies and legislatures, the business community, and the media. The message is clear – all students need to be college and career ready and prepared for at least some post-secondary education and/or training. Post-secondary education is essential not only to improve individual outcomes such as job opportunities, income and overall health, but also for the national good, including maintaining a globally competitive workforce and growing the US economy (ACT, 2011).

While there are many possible routes to obtaining a post-secondary education, just attending post-secondary education is not enough. Students must successfully complete post-secondary degrees in order to reach their fullest potential. So what is needed to help all students be best prepared for higher education so that they are most likely to graduate?

The literature review *Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance* (2012) provides a detailed review of research about predictors of college success. Although test scores are often thought to be the best predictor, research indicates that they actually are not strong predictors of whether a student will graduate from high school or college. As it turns out, high school grades are a stronger predictor for college GPA and college graduation – stronger predictors than test scores, class rank and family background.

Therefore, to increase college graduation rates, research suggests that educators need to focus on helping all students achieve successful grades in high school coursework. And how do we support strong high school grades? The literature review goes on to reveal that the strongest predictors of high school outcomes are GPA and passing courses in the middle grades and in elementary school. In other words, helping students achieve academic success at each grade level throughout K-12 is essential to improving college graduation rates, individual and even national outcomes.

To pass courses and earn higher GPAs, students of course must master and demonstrate content knowledge. But while content knowledge is critical for passing courses and higher GPAs, the literature review synthesizes research on a long list of factors beyond content knowledge and academic skills that have a direct impact on student performance. These factors, often referred to as “non-cognitive” because they are not measured by IQ tests or academic exams, help students engage and thrive in the learning environment and have been shown in a wide range of studies to have a direct positive relationship to a student’s school performance as well as future academic outcomes (Farrington, C.A., et al, 2012; US Department of Education, 2014).

Noncognitive factors include characteristics such as persistence, goal-setting, self-discipline, work habits, learning strategies, homework completion and study skills, among others. These concepts have long been a focus for school counselors and have been part of student standards that are a foundational component of a comprehensive school counseling program. They are also integral in the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, described later in this handbook.

Collaboration is Key

Content knowledge and academic skills are only part of the equation for student success. “School performance is a complex phenomenon, shaped by a wide variety of factors intrinsic to students and the external environment” (Farrington, C.A., et al, 2012, p. 2). Administrators, teachers and school counselors can collaborate to create the external environment where students have the opportunity to develop sets of behaviors, skills, attitudes, and strategies that are crucial to academic performance in their classes. When people in a school work collaboratively in teams and when teams of teachers stay together over a period of time and build their collective knowledge and collective capacity, they find that there’s much greater gain in student achievement (The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Administrators, teachers and school counselors have distinct and complex roles in their schools, and a part of their roles is described below.

- Effective principals create a climate hospitable to education in numerous ways, one of which is encouraging collaboration between teachers, school counselors and other staff (The Wallace Foundation, 2013).
- Effective teachers deliver a standards based curriculum that establishes what students need to learn and decide how to best help students reach those standards. (Common Core State Standards, 2010)
- Effective school counselors deliver academic, career and social/emotional standards that impact student achievement, attendance and behavior (ASCA National Model, 2012).

How can administrators, teachers and school counselors collaborate to help each other reach their individual goals? One way is to help each other reach our own set of standards, whether that be academic content standards or standards related to noncognitive factors. The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors can be a tool to promote that collaboration.

The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors

The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College- and Career Readiness for Every Student are a set of standards based on a survey of research and best practices in student achievement from a wide array of educational standards and efforts. The standards describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes students need to achieve academic success, college and career readiness and social/emotional development.

The 35 mindset and behavior standards identify and prioritize the specific attitudes, knowledge and skills students should be able to demonstrate in order to meet the high standards of college and career readiness. The standards can be used to assess student growth and development and guide the development of strategies and activities that help students achieve their highest potential. The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors can be aligned with initiatives at the district, state and national level to reflect the district’s local priorities.

The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors include standards related to employability skills which have been cited by employers as skills most critical to workplace success in the 21st century. Students must be taught these skills and have the opportunity to apply them to real-world life and work situations (ACTE, 2010).

To operationalize the mindset and behavior standards, school counselors select competencies that align with specific standards and become the foundation for classroom lessons, small groups and activities addressing student developmental needs. The competencies directly reflect the vision, mission and goals of the comprehensive school counseling program and align with the academic mission of the school. These competencies directly align with English Language Arts standards from the Common Core State Standards. They also broadly align with the eight Standards for Mathematical Practice.

Organization of the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors

The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors are organized by domains, standards arranged within categories and subcategories and grade-level competencies. Each is described below.

Domains

The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors are organized in three broad domains: academic, career and social/emotional development. These domains promote mindsets and behaviors that enhance the learning process and create a culture of college and career readiness for all students. The definitions of each domain are as follows:

Academic Development – Standards guiding school counseling programs to implement strategies and activities to support and maximize each student’s ability to learn.

Career Development – Standards guiding school counseling programs to help students 1) understand the connection between school and the world of work and 2) plan for and make a successful transition from school to postsecondary education and/or the world of work and from job to job across the life span.

Social/Emotional Development – Standards guiding school counseling programs to help students manage emotions and learn and apply interpersonal skills.

Standards

All 35 standards can be applied to any of the three domains, and the school counselor selects a domain and standard based on the needs of the school, classroom, small group or individual. The standards are arranged within categories and subcategories based on five general categories of noncognitive factors related to academic performance as identified in the 2012 literature review published by the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research. These categories synthesize the “vast array of research literature” (p. 8) on noncognitive factors including persistence, resilience, grit, goal-setting, help-seeking, cooperation, conscientiousness, self-efficacy, self-regulation, self-control, self-discipline, motivation, mindsets, effort, work habits, organization, homework completion, learning strategies and study skills, among others.

Category 1: Mindset Standards – Includes standards related to the psycho-social attitudes or beliefs students have about themselves in relation to academic work. These make up the students’ belief system as exhibited in behaviors.

Category 2: Behavior Standards – These standards include behaviors commonly associated with being a successful student. These behaviors are visible, outward signs that a student is engaged and putting forth effort to learn. The behaviors are grouped into three subcategories.

- a. **Learning Strategies:** Processes and tactics students employ to aid in the cognitive work of thinking, remembering or learning.
- b. **Self-management Skills:** Continued focus on a goal despite obstacles (grit or persistence) and avoidance of distractions or temptations to prioritize higher pursuits over lower pleasures (delayed gratification, self-discipline, self-control).
- c. **Social Skills:** Acceptable behaviors that improve social interactions, such as those between peers or between students and adults.

The full list of standards can be found [here](#).

Grade-Level Competencies

Grade-level competencies are specific, measurable expectations that students attain as they make progress toward the standards. As the school counseling program's vision, mission and program goals are aligned with the school's academic mission, school counseling standards and competencies are also aligned with academic content standards at the state and district level.

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors align with specific standards from the Common Core State Standards through connections at the competency level. This alignment allows school counselors the opportunity to help students meet college- and career-readiness standards in collaboration with academic content taught in core areas in the classroom. It also helps school counselors directly align with academic instruction when providing individual and small-group counseling by focusing on standards and competencies addressing a student's developmental needs. School counselors working in states that have not adopted the Common Core State Standards are encouraged to align competencies with their state's academic standards and can use the competencies from the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors as examples of alignment.

For a more complete discussion of the grade-level competencies, two videos are available [here](#).

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors Database

The grade-level competencies are housed in the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors database at www.schoolcounselor.org/studentcompetencies. School counselors can search the standards by keyword to quickly and easily identify standards that will meet student developmental needs and align with academic content as appropriate. The database also allows school counselors to contribute to the standards by sharing other ways to meet or align with a specific standard.

The following activities can help schools administrators, teacher and school counselors collaborate to achieve school, school counseling program and teaching goals.

Assess Performance & Trends

School Improvement Plan

Review the School Improvement Plan. What stands out from the following categories?

Goals

Priorities

Performance Targets

Measures

Strategies

Benchmarks

Other

School Data

Review the school's academic, attendance and behavior data. What stands out in these categories?

Academics

Attendance

Behavior

How Do I Contribute?

1. *Each member of the team should individually consider how they can have an impact on student data through the following resources. Add additional resources as appropriate.*
 2. *Each member of the team should share their thoughts with the entire team to help the others understand their role and to receive feedback on their ideas.*
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Teachers

Curriculum Framework and Curriculum/Pacing Guide

School Counselors

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors and SC Core Curriculum Action Plan

Administrators

Before, During, After Instruction and Behavioral Outcomes

Where Can We Connect?

As a group, decide where the most obvious connections occur within the three roles.

Subject Area/Topic	School Counseling Topic	Administration Topic

How Do We Make It Happen?

As a group, create a plan where academic standards and noncognitive standards could be taught collaboratively.

Grade Level	Subject	Lesson Topic	ASCA Domain and Standard (Mindsets & Behaviors)	Curriculum and Materials	Projected Start/End	Delivered By	Other	Other

References

- American School Counselor Association (2014). *Mindsets and behaviors for student success: K-12 college- and career-readiness standards for every student*. Alexandria, VA: Author
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- National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common core state standards*. Washington, DC: Authors.
- Standard, I. C. (2011). *Affirming the goal: Is college and career readiness an internationally competitive standard?* ACT. Iowa City, IA: Author.
- The Wallace Foundation (2013). *The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning*. New York, NY: Author.
- United States Department of Education (2014). *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline*. Washington, DC: Author.

Resources Used in Development of ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors

The following documents were the primary resources that informed ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors.

Document	Organization	Description
ACT National Career Readiness Certificate	ACT	Offers a portable credential that demonstrates achievement and a certain level of workplace employability skills in applied mathematics, locating information and reading for information.
ASCA National Standards for Students	American School Counselor Association	Describes the knowledge, attitudes and skills students should be able to demonstrate as a result of the school counseling program.
AVID Essentials at a Glance	AVID	Promotes a college readiness system for elementary through higher education that is designed to increase schoolwide learning and performance.
Building Blocks For Change: What it Means to be Career Ready	Career Readiness Partner Council	Defines what it means to be career-ready, and highlights the outcome of collaborative efforts of the Career Readiness Partner Council to help inform policy and practice in states and communities.
Career and Technical Education Standards	National Board of Professional Teaching Standards	Defines the standards that lay the foundation for the Career and Technical Education Certificate.
Collaborative Counselor Training Initiative	SREB	Offers online training modules for middle grades and high school counselors that can improve their effectiveness in preparing all students for college, especially those from low-income families who would be first-generation college students.
Cross Disciplinary Proficiencies in the American Diploma Project	Achieve	Describes four cross disciplinary proficiencies that will enable high school graduates to meet new and unfamiliar tasks and challenges in college, the workplace and life.
Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling	College Board	Presents a comprehensive, systemic approach for school counselors to use to inspire and prepare all students for college success and opportunity, especially students from underrepresented populations.

Document	Organization	Description
English Language Arts Standards	National Board of Professional Teaching Standards	Defines the standards that lay the foundation for the English Language Arts Certificate.
Framework for 21st Century Learning	Partnership for 21 st Century Skills	Describes the skills, knowledge and expertise students must master to succeed in work and life; it is a blend of content knowledge, specific skills, expertise and literacies.
NETS for Students 2007	International Society for Technology in Education	Describes the standards for evaluating the skills and knowledge students need to learn effectively and live productively in an increasingly global and digital world.
Ramp-Up to Readiness	University of Minnesota	Provides a schoolwide guidance program designed to increase the number and diversity of students who graduate from high school with the knowledge, skills and habits necessary for success in a high-quality college program.
Social and Emotional Learning Core Competencies	CASEL	Identifies five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioral competencies through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions.
Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Non-Cognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance	The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research	Presents a critical literature review of the role of noncognitive factors in shaping school performance.
What is "Career Ready"?	ACTE	Defines what it means to be career-ready, involving three major skill areas: core academic skills, employability skills, and technical and job-specific skills.