



Final Project (Part II): Reflection of ASCA

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## Part II

**Leadership, Consulting and Collaborating.** The field work I did during this final course has been exciting, tough, meaningful and inspiring. As an aide to my mentor, I was able to work closely with teachers, staff and students. Specifically, I was responsible for setting up the Fall master schedule for classroom visits and lessons by the campus counselor. As such, I had direct communication with teachers about their needs and concerns. Because I work on an elementary campus, the areas needing the most attention were identifying emotions/feelings and conflict management.

As I talked with the teachers about their needs, I found myself being careful to not “step on the toes” of those professional educators by assuming I know more than them about classroom management or their students; I didn’t want to come across as a know-it-all, but also didn’t want to be timid about sharing my professional knowledge as a counselor. I don’t recall dealing with this sort of issue (managing professional relationships) specifically in any of my classes, but I know it’s important to establish and maintain respect among my peers.

Additionally, in order to ensure students’ needs are met, I know I’ve got to get teacher buy-in. For that reason, I will continue to be mindful of how to balance effective communication with my colleagues: careful to not overstep, but also not afraid to share my expertise.

**Advocacy and Education.** The Preamble of the *ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors* confirms that school counselors are expected to maintain high standards of integrity, leadership and professionalism.

The document is intended to serve as a guide for the ethical practices of all school counselors and to inform stakeholders (administrators, staff, parents, students) of those best ethical practices, values and expected behaviors of school counseling professionals.

## FINAL COURSE PROJECT (PART II): REFLECTION OF ASCA

The first area, Responsibilities to Students (A.1.), stands out to me as the most important. Specifically that we, as school counselors, have a primary obligation to the students who are to be treated with dignity and respect as unique individuals. I think in the busyness of our days, filled with deadlines and constant “crises”, the individual needs of our students can be glossed over, easily dismissed or overlooked altogether. I hope as a professional school counselor, I will be able to take a moment to see not only the big picture, but the tiny details that must be addressed.

I also have a greater respect and understanding of section A.2., Confidentiality. While we have learned about the importance of explaining informed consent and how confidentiality works with students, I had not seen its explanation “in action” before this practicum. What had confused me was how to explain these big concepts to little ones (K-2). My mentor has provided several effective examples of how to address this issue with students and with parents. For me, visuals are also very important – I like a text-rich environment. So I plan to create a few visual resources to post in my counseling office to (a) remind me to explain informed consent and confidentiality to my students, and (b) to give students an opportunity to absorb the meanings of these concepts in their own time and in their own way. I believe visuals create that freedom.

**Personal Awareness.** I believe counseling is an intervention service used to give students the tools they need to achieve success in school and beyond. It presents an opportunity to help clients (students) define and become aware of their strengths, weaknesses, beliefs and values, and then make decisions based on those fundamentals. Ultimately, I believe the goal of counseling is to empower students to be confident in the decisions they make whether those decisions involve academic matters, career issues, personal concerns or social opportunities.

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In the helper role, we are called to be knowledgeable of the very broad range of behaviors, attitudes, self-concepts, cultural agendas, and feelings that other people exhibit. I believe this is important because the students I serve will come from all walks of life: above all else I must be nonjudgmental. In my opinion, the theory that best highlights that concept is reality therapy/choice theory. Reality therapy is designed to help individuals gain control over their behavior and make choices in their lives. It is based on choice theory, which assumes that people are responsible for their lives and for what they do, feel, and think. Rather than being told what they have to do to get better, the client is a part of that thoughtful journey, realizing through questioning, what he has to do to create the life he imagines for himself.

To me, the job of the counselor using this theory is to empower clients to see themselves as in-control of their own choices, and thereby their own life/happiness/ fulfillment/contentment. I don't want to be a decision-maker for someone else, but I do want to help my students see themselves as effective decision-makers in their own lives.

With regard to self-care, I believe it is important to stay in a place of self-reflection. To me, this means seeking out the consult of trusted colleagues and mentors. Also, it is important to set appropriate boundaries with regard to work time and free time. Work will consume our personal lives if we allow it to; I hope to set a firm standard of leaving work at work. Of course there will be exceptions, but if those exceptions begin creep into the norm, I will turn to those trusted colleagues and mentors in order to get back into a healthier life-work balance.