





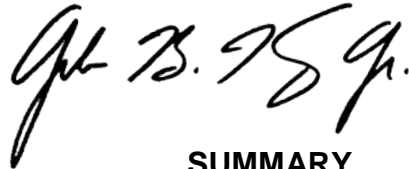
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

To: Higher Education Committee  
P-12 Education Committee

From: John L. D'Agati   
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Subject: School Counseling Regulations

Date: October 18, 2013

Authorization(s): 

**SUMMARY**

**Issue for Discussion**

Should the Board of Regents amend Section 80-2.3(b) and Part 100.2 (j) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education relating to requirements for School Counselors?

**Reason(s) for Consideration**

Review of Policy.

**Proposed Handling**

This item will come before a joint meeting of the Higher Education Committee and the P-12 Education Committee for discussion at the October 2013 meeting.

**Background Information**

New York State currently has 36 registered school counselor preparation programs. From 2010 to 2013, the number of school counselor certificates issued by the New York State Education Department varied from year to year as indicated in the chart below:

Year	Internship Certificates	Provisional Certificates	Provisional Certificates-renewal	Permanent Certificates	Total Certificates Issued	Total Counselors
2010	15	922	95	517	1549	7130
2011	11	890	98	487	1486	6776
2012	5	990	147	474	1616	6624
2013	9	703	99	233	1044	6375

The American School Counselor Association (“ASCA”) recommends a ratio of 250 students for per school counselor, per school building, for counseling success. (ASCA, <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>). Data from the 2012-13 school year show a statewide K-12 student population of 2,705,313 (public and charter schools), with a statewide school counselor population of 6,375. This results in student-counselor ratio of 424 to 1, well above the recommended 250:1.

### **Current School Guidance Program Requirements (K-12)**

Under current regulations of the Commissioner, every public and non-public school must have a guidance program for all of their students reviewed annually. (See Commissioner’s Regulations § 100.2(j)). Specifically, New York State K-6 programs must be designed, with input from the teaching staff, to prepare students for success in their future educational programs. (See Commissioner’s Regulations § 100.2 (j) (1) (i)). In addition, guidance programs must be designed to help students who “exhibit any attendance, academic, behavioral or adjustment problems [,] . . . educate students concerning avoidance of child sexual abuse, and . . . encourage parental involvement.” (See Commissioner’s Regulations § 100.2 (j)(1)(i)).

In New York State grades 7-12, guidance programs must include activities and services that provide for an annual review of every student’s educational progress and/or career plans, either individually or in small groups. (See Commissioner’s Regulations § 100.2 (j)(1)(ii)(a)(b)(c)). Specifically, instruction on career pathways and career planning skills must be provided for every student at each grade level. Additionally, guidance programs must include activities and/or services that enable students “to benefit from the curriculum, . . . help students develop and implement postsecondary education and career plans, . . . help students [exhibiting] any attendance, academic, behavioral or adjustment problems[,] and . . . encourage parental involvement.” (See Commissioner’s Regulations § 100.2 (j)(1)(ii)(a)(b)(c)).

All grades, K-12, are required to develop and submit a district plan which sets “forth the manner in which the district [will] comply with the requirements of Commissioner’s Regulations.” This district plan must be filed in the district office and available for review. This plan must include program objectives, including student learning expectations, “activities to accomplish the [stated] objectives, [and] specification of staff members and other resources assigned to accomplish the objectives, and provisions for the annual assessment of program results.” (See Commissioner’s Regulations §100.2 (j)(1)(d)(iii)).

## **Current School Counselor Requirements (Higher Education)**

While the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education specify the K-12 school guidance program requirements, the requirements for higher education preparation programs are not as specific. The higher education program requirements for school counselors only consist of the completion of an approved program by the Department. The specific coursework within the program is not clearly defined or outlined in regulation for institutions of higher education to follow. (See Commissioner's Regulations § 80-2.3).

Specifically, Commissioner's Regulations § 80-2.3(b)(1) states that for provisional certification, "the candidate shall hold a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education or from an institution approved by the department, and in addition shall have completed 30 semester hours of approved graduate study in the field of school counseling, including supervised practice in guidance." Additionally, § 80-2.3(b)(2) states that for permanent or professional certification, "the candidate shall have completed, in addition to the requirements for the provisional certificate, two years of school experience in the field of pupil personnel services and 30 semester hours of graduate study in the field of school counseling. Within the total program of preparation, the candidate shall have been awarded a master's degree." (See Commissioner's Regulations § 80-2.3(b)(2)).

## **Current Realities**

The P-12 Office of Student Support Services and the Office of Higher Education (OHE), Office of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness conducted a series of interviews with P-12 schools and higher education institutions regarding their current school counseling program design, vision, and concerns. Throughout these calls, interviews, research, and review of course catalogs, the core objectives have been to:

- gain a deeper understanding about school counselor programs at the P-12 and higher education levels; and
- gather feedback regarding school counseling.

In order to learn more about the counseling preparation programs, the OHE reviewed the program catalogs for five counseling programs in New York State. Of these institutions, only two of the five included coursework that required candidates to develop guidance plans for the district, as required by Commissioner's Regulations § 100.2. (See Commissioner's Regulations § 100.2 noting that plans for the district must be reviewed and updated annually.) Only one of the five institutions included a required K-12 career development course, in compliance with Commissioner's Regulations § 100.2(j)(1)(iii)). Furthermore, only one institution offered a course on vocational development and decision-making at various life stages, as required by § 100.2(j)(1)(ii)(b)(c) of the Commissioner's Regulations.

In addition to the review of program catalogs, telephone interviews were set up with three institutions of higher education with school counselor programs to gather feedback from the field: one CUNY, one SUNY, and one independent program. Information gathered during this review revealed misalignments. One common misalignment noted was the variation in the number of credit and internship hours from program to program. This was also referenced by representation from school districts when receiving interns during their practicum. Another common misalignment related to inconsistencies in the program models. Although not currently required, school counseling programs have the option to align to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model<sup>1</sup>. In addition some programs have CACREP accreditation while others do not have discipline-specific accreditation at all. Due to the variation in models and standards, school counselor candidates are entering the field without the same training statewide.

Similarly, P-12 and OHE staff contacted three school districts to learn about their school counseling programs: a small rural district, a suburban district, and a large urban district. Informal phone interviews with the Superintendents and school counseling staff were conducted in each district. Counselor focus and related tasks were similar in each of the three districts. Work with students on college/career readiness, engagement with teachers for academic intervention and counseling of students and parent involvement/outreach was taking place. Numbers of counselors, other resources available to assist, overall approach and student needs differed. The small rural district provides a counselor to the elementary school as well as the secondary school, and has a strong preventive component including bullying prevention. The suburban district strongly focuses on the 'whole child' with creation of a positive school climate and is working to collaboratively monitor the social and emotional wellness of each child and deliver personalized services. The large urban district described its large population of English language learners and its work to develop culturally relevant resources which include outreach to the community. The large urban district also strongly supports the coming together of an in-house interdisciplinary team working together to support students and families. In conclusion, all three districts had suggestions on how to strengthen the school counseling preparation and training through higher education certification.

Recommendations that emerged from P-12 and higher education during these initial conversations include the need for school counselors to have clear working knowledge of the graduation requirements, the common core learning standards, and college and career preparation that includes the application process and information on financial aid, data collection, working with parents and families, and social-emotional development learning. The districts contacted agreed that a professional development requirement for school counselors, once permanent certification was reached, is an important item to consider due to the ever-changing nature of college and career options. Schools have also noted the importance of knowledge of how to review domestic and international transcripts, knowledge of career opportunities for students

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<sup>1</sup> American School Counselor Association (ASCA). [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org)

who are not college bound, partnerships with home and community, and greater knowledge of requirements for special education and English language learners. Higher education programs noted a need for greater consistency in coursework and internship requirements along with the inclusion of coursework on topics such as assessment.

### **Current Recommendations from National and State Associations**

ASCA has advocated for “bringing counselors to the heart of the educational reform movement.” (Mary Ann Clark & Carolyn B. Stone, *School Counselors and Principals: Partners in Support of Academic Achievement*, 2004). School counselors design and deliver comprehensive school guidance counseling programs that strive to promote student achievement both within the K-12 system as well as beyond. As such, the ASCA has developed “The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs” to outline the critical components of a comprehensive and effective school guidance program. Because an individual school’s guidance program is an integral piece of a school’s academic mission, guidance programs will inevitably vary from building to building. However, ASCA strongly advocates adopting a model for school guidance programs to better ensure that the programs throughout the country (or respective state) are more aligned with one another, and thus individual counselors can be better prepared to deliver high quality and effective counseling programs to all school aged children.

Both ASCA and the New York State School Counselor Association (“NYSSCA”) agree that school counseling programs should adopt a set of comprehensive standards to create unity and focus toward improving student achievement. The ASCA National Model: 1) ensures equitable access to a rigorous education for all students; 2) identifies the knowledge and skills all students will acquire as a result of the K-12 comprehensive school counseling program; 3) is delivered to all students in a systemic fashion; 4) is based on data-driven decision making; and 5) is provided by a state-credentialed school counselor. In fact, both ASCA and NYSSCA agree that an effective comprehensive school counseling program is based on standards, data, equitable access, systematic delivery, and revision.

Meanwhile, NYSSCA advocates that a program of study for school counseling include a program of study not less than 60 hours in school counseling and related fields, and inclusive of a master’s degree in counseling, which shall consist of not less than 48 graduate credits from an accredited university. Additionally, NYSSCA asserts that such a program shall also include supervised internships in school settings totaling not less than 600 hours as well as continuing education requirements for qualification for certification throughout one’s career. The Department met with NYSSCA representatives in May 2013, to solicit specific suggestions and recommendations to better support school counselors throughout the state.

## Recommendations/Next Steps

There is currently a lack of basic data illustrating the characteristics of and roles that counselors play throughout districts, especially with regard to their preparation in supporting teachers' transition to and adoption of the Regents Reform Agenda. A district survey has been developed to capture this information that will be distributed statewide in the coming weeks.

In line with gathering specific information from districts, the Department is examining how counselors in the field can be better supported. The Department met with NYSSCA representatives in May 2013 to solicit specific suggestions and recommendations to better support counselors throughout the state.

The following next steps are recommended to the Board:

**Recommendation # 1:** Conduct a survey in the field, analyze results and develop next steps to address identified concerns. Attachment A contains sample questions.

**Recommendation #2:** Increase the level of support the Department provides to school counselors by creating targeted resources that will enhance their knowledge and skill level directly related to implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and college and career readiness<sup>2</sup> through the assistance of a field advisory team; building a counselor skill set around effective career counseling and guidance, including scaffolded exposure to employers and career pathways beginning in the middle grades; building a more comprehensive understanding of high rigor approaches to learning including Career and Technical Education programs and which specific programs best align to college and career readiness; and developing an awareness and understanding of regional economies so as to best guide students in maximizing their options for potential careers.

To ensure that school counselors can contribute to and assist in leading the work of preparing students to be college and career ready, school counselor preparation programs and district programs need to be adequately aligned. Without this, school counselors will continue to graduate from their preparation programs with inadequate and inconsistent preparation, making it difficult to mentor students on essential topics and assist in their preparation for college and careers.

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<sup>2</sup> The operational definition of college readiness is that graduates are able to pass credit-bearing college courses without benefit of non-credit developmental or remedial courses. However, passing college courses does not equate to career readiness. High rates of non-completion in U.S. higher education make clear that many people who enroll in college never earn credentials that demonstrate their readiness for employment (Symonds, W. C., Schwartz, R. B., & Ferguson, R. (2011). *Pathways to prosperity: Meeting the challenge of preparing young Americans for the 21st Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Graduate School of Education, p. 7, & Figure 1, p. 3). A 2008 report from ChildTrends (Lippman, L., Atienza, A., Rivers, A., & Keith, J. (2008). *College and Workplace Readiness: A Developmental Perspective*) compared research findings on college readiness and workforce readiness. While considerable overlap is reported, workforce readiness includes characteristics not addressed in research on college readiness, such as listening skills, group work, the ability to understand technical material, and prior work experience. One implication of these findings is that career guidance is critical, not simply college application guidance.

## **Attachment A**

### **Sample Questions for Recommendation #1**

#### Same P-12 Questions

- What specific characteristics do you look for in a school counselor upon hiring?
- How does your guidance program currently align with the Regents Reform Agenda? How have your requirements changed to meet the new requirements?
- What is the school counselor's role in supporting teachers' work with students in the classroom, specifically as it relates to the Regents Reform Agenda?
- How do your school counselors currently support the needs of students with disabilities, English language learners, and/or students who are struggling academically in your district?
- Are there any specific skills that you feel school counselors should possess, but are currently lacking?
- Describe the assignment of counselors in your school buildings?
- What, if any, training has been provided to your counselors regarding college and career pathways?
- What, if any, training has been provided to your counselors regarding available college financial aid and/or incentives for students?
- How do your school counselors participate and/or assist in attendance monitoring?
- How do you ensure that your counselors are providing sufficient social-emotional support for students?

#### Sample Higher Education Questions

- What are the requirements for entrance into a school counselor program?
- Does your program align with a nationally accredited program? If so, what is it?
- Are there any pre-requisite courses that are required prior to acceptance into a school counselor program?
- How many credits are required for your counseling preparation program? What courses does this include?
- Describe your program's internship/field placement.
- How does your program currently align with the Regents Reform Agenda? How have your requirements changed to meet the new requirements?
- How many of your candidates are seeking school counselor program certification as a second career? How many of your candidates are dually certified?
- Has your institution performed any post-graduation evaluation(s) as to the effectiveness of counselors that complete your program?
- Does your program coursework and/or conversations regarding the Regents Reform Agenda include the Common Core Learning Standards?
- Does your program have additional accreditation and/or has your program adopted one of the national counseling models?