



ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success

K-12 College-, Career- and Life-Readiness Standards for Every Student

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

ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success K-12 College-, Career- and Life-Readiness Standards for Every Student

Each of the following standards can be applied to the academic, career and social/emotional domains.

Category 1: Mindset Standards

School counselors encourage the following mindsets for all students.

- M 1.** Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being
- M 2.** Sense of acceptance, respect, support and inclusion for self and others in the school environment
- M 3.** Positive attitude toward work and learning
- M 4.** Self-confidence in ability to succeed
- M 5.** Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes
- M 6.** Understanding that postsecondary education and lifelong learning are necessary for long-term success

Category 2: Behavior Standards

School counselors provide culturally sustaining instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling to help all students demonstrate:

Learning Strategies	Self-Management Skills	Social Skills
B-LS 1. Critical thinking skills to make informed decisions	B-SMS 1. Responsibility for self and actions	B-SS 1. Effective oral and written communication skills and listening skills
B-LS 2. Creative approach to learning, tasks and problem solving	B-SMS 2. Self-discipline and self-control	B-SS 2. Positive, respectful and supportive relationships with students who are similar to and different from them
B-LS 3. Time-management, organizational and study skills	B-SMS 3. Independent work	B-SS 3. Positive relationships with adults to support success
B-LS 4. Self-motivation and self-direction for learning	B-SMS 4. Delayed gratification for long-term rewards	B-SS 4. Empathy
B-LS 5. Media and technology skills to enhance learning	B-SMS 5. Perseverance to achieve long- and short-term goals	B-SS 5. Ethical decision-making and social responsibility
B-LS 6. High-quality standards for tasks and activities	B-SMS 6. Ability to identify and overcome barriers	B-SS 6. Effective collaboration and cooperation skills
B-LS 7. Long- and short-term academic, career and social/emotional goals	B-SMS 7. Effective coping skills	B-SS 7. Leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse groups
B-LS 8. Engagement in challenging coursework	B-SMS 8. Balance of school, home and community activities	B-SS 8. Advocacy skills for self and others and ability to assert self, when necessary
B-LS 9. Decision-making informed by gathering evidence, getting others' perspectives and recognizing personal bias	B-SMS 9. Personal safety skills	B-SS 9. Social maturity and behaviors appropriate to the situation and environment
B-LS 10. Participation in enrichment and extracurricular activities	B-SMS 10. Ability to manage transitions and adapt to change	B-SS 10. Cultural awareness, sensitivity and responsiveness

Overview

The 36 ASCA Student Standards are broad standards that identify and describe the knowledge, attitudes and skills students should be able to demonstrate as a result of a school counseling program. School counselors use the standards to assess student growth and development, create culturally sustaining strategies and activities and build a program that helps students achieve their highest potential. The ASCA Student Standards can be aligned with initiatives at the district, state and national levels to reflect local priorities.

To operationalize the standards, school counselors write or select measurable learning objectives that align with specific mindsets or behaviors, which become the foundation for classroom instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling activities addressing student developmental needs. The learning objectives directly reflect the school counseling program's vision, mission and goals, as well as the school's academic mission.

Research-Based Standards

The ASCA Student Standards are based on a review of research and college-, career- and life-readiness documents that identify strategies influencing student achievement and academic performance. The ASCA Student Standards are organized on the framework of noncognitive factors presented in the critical literature review "Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners," conducted by the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (2012).

This literature review recognizes that 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" (University of Chicago, 2012, p. 2). The ASCA Student Standards are based on the evidence of the importance of these factors.

All 36 standards can be applied to any of the three school counseling domains of academic, career and social/emotional development. 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 general categories of noncognitive factors related to academic performance as identified in the University of Chicago 2012 literature review. These categories synthesize the "vast array of research literature" (p. 8) on noncognitive factors including mindsets, learning strategies, self-management skills and social skills for success.

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

Category 2: Behavior Standards – These standards include behaviors commonly associated with being a successful student. The behaviors are visible, outward signs that a student is engaged as well as 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 and avoidance of distractions or temptations to prioritize higher pursuits over lower pleasures.
- c. **Social Skills:** Acceptable behaviors that improve social interactions, such as those among peers or between students and adults.

Grade-Level Learning Objectives

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

Grade-level learning objectives are housed in the ASCA Student Standards database at www.schoolcounselor.org/learningobjectives. School counselors can search the database by keyword to quickly and easily identify learning objectives that will meet student developmental needs and align with specific ASCA Student Standards. The database also allows school counselors to contribute to the learning objectives by sharing other ways to meet or align with a specific standard.

Domains

The ASCA Student Standards can be applied to 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-, career- and life-readiness for every student. The domain definitions 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 lifespan.

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

Implementing the ASCA Student Standards

School counselors use the ASCA Student Standards to guide the development, delivery and assessment of the three direct student services as defined by the ASCA National Model: instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling. The standards help school counselors determine what student knowledge, attitudes and skills will be measured as they work to help all students become college-, career- and life-ready.

School counselors deliver the ASCA Student Standards to all pre-K–12 students in classrooms, groups or individual settings in a manner that is appropriate for the students' development level/age. School counselors review achievement, attendance and discipline data to guide the selection of specific mindsets and behaviors appropriate for the individual, group or grade level, as well learning objectives to operationalize the standards.

School counselors implement the ASCA Student Standards through the following steps.

1. *Identify need.*

School counselors identify a specific student challenge found in the school's student outcomes (achievement, attendance, discipline). Challenges could include:

- underperformance in achievement (standardized test scores, grades, credits earned)
- overrepresentation in discipline (offense categories, consequences)
- higher absenteeism (absences, late arrivals, early departures, chronically absent)

Specific developmental stages or differences may also serve as the basis for school counselor interventions. If the issue is related to underlying systemic issues, the school counselor advocates to change policies, guidelines and practices to address the systemic issues.

2. *Collect supplemental data.*

School counselors collect supplemental data, soliciting opinions, beliefs and insights from stakeholders who are directly involved with students experiencing the identified challenge. These stakeholders include but are not limited to parents, teachers, administrators and students.

3. *Select student standard.*

School counselors select a specific mindset or behavior that best aligns with the data and the factors suggested in the supplemental data.

4. *Write learning objectives aligned with the student standard.*

School counselors operationalize the selected mindset or behavior by selecting or writing a measurable student learning objective(s) that will help students attain the standard. The learning objective(s) identify the specific knowledge and/or skills students need to attain that stated standard.

5. *Create pre-/post-assessment.*

School counselors create a pre-/post-assessment based on the student learning objectives and selected student standard.

6. *Select or develop strategies.*

School counselors select or develop strategies, activities and/or interventions that facilitate attainment of the learning objectives.

7. *Administer pre-test.*

School counselors administer the pre-test to determine the baseline knowledge and skills of targeted students.

8. *Deliver selected or designed strategies.*

School counselors deliver the strategies, activities and/or interventions to targeted students.

9. *Administer post-test.*

School counselors administer the post-test, assessing the students' acquisition of the knowledge and skills.

10. *Reflect for improvement of practice.*

School counselors reflect on the process, identifying what might be improved when next delivered.

School counselors use the ASCA Student Standards to ensure equity and improve access for all students. While the standards are based on a review of research and other college-, career- and life-readiness documents that identify strategies influencing student achievement and academic performance, learning happens within the context of the school environment. Students learn best in environments that are accepting, respectful, supportive and inclusive, and students cannot attain these standards in an inequitable environment.

As part of the implementation of a school counseling program based on the ASCA National Model, school counselors shape ethical, equitable and inclusive school environments that help all students achieve and succeed. School counselors have an ethical responsibility to provide curriculum and activities that ensure equitable academic, career and social/emotional development opportunities for all students.

Implementing the ASCA Student Standards through the lens of equity and access is essential to improving outcomes for all students. Without careful and thoughtful implementation, standards such as these can reinforce the status quo, including gaps in achievement, opportunity and attainment, and disproportionate rates of discipline and suspension for students of color. School counselors are aware that factors such as educators' beliefs, mindsets and behaviors can also perpetuate inequitable learning environments. The ASCA Student Standards should be used to promote equity and access for all students and create a school culture free of bias and oppression.

When faced with data exposing inequitable student outcomes, school counselors address the issue in two ways:

- work to help students attain the ASCA Student Standards
- use their leadership, advocacy and collaboration skills to address underlying systemic issues and create systemic change in the school

This combination of direct and indirect student services facilitates systemic change and affects students' ability to attain the ASCA Student Standards. To deliver indirect student services, school counselors:

- Advocate for policies, practices and guidelines that dismantle bias and promote equity for all
- Lead efforts to challenge policies, procedures, practices, traditions, customs or other behaviors perpetuating intentional or unintentional biased behaviors and outcomes
- Serve on school/district committees focused on ending bias, including committees addressing academic content
- Advocate for learning materials and resources in all content areas that promote diversity and inclusion and address systemic barriers
- Recognize and respond to incidents of bias among staff and students
- Collaborate with families, educators, businesses and community organizations focused on promoting opportunity and ending disparity, bias and oppression
- Present workshops for parents/families on how to foster and support respectful student behaviors

Collecting Mindsets & Behaviors Data

Collecting meaningful Mindsets & Behaviors data relies on the development of effective measures. School counselors go beyond asking if participants enjoyed the activity or if they believed it was beneficial. Rather, school counselors ask questions around the key Mindsets & Behaviors data concepts:

knowledge, attitudes and skills. Answering these questions helps school counselors communicate how students are different as a result of the school counseling program.

Asking questions that are developmentally appropriate and will lead to meaningful results requires thoughtful consideration. The mindsets and behaviors selected for the intervention or activity not only provide the basis for content but also form a basis on which questions are developed. Brainstorming statements that begin with stems such as I believe..., I know... and I can... guide question development. Once several of those statements have been written, they can be reworded into prompts that become data measures for multiple mindsets and behaviors.

Simple, meaningful questions can be most helpful in creating a data story. Measurement is less time-consuming when the mindsets and behaviors measures are easy-to-administer, easy-to-score and easy-to-analyze. No more than three to five questions or prompts are needed for any one measure. Forcing that limitation maintains the concentrated focus of both the intervention and the measure. It ensures the least amount of time is spent completing and scoring the assessment.

The ASCA Student Standards: Helping Students Become College-, Career- and Life- Ready

All students have the right to access a school counseling program that prepares them for the future and promotes equity and access for all. The ASCA Student Standards serve as the foundation for school counselors' work in direct student services for all students and describe the knowledge, attitudes and skills students should be able to demonstrate as a result of a school counseling program. School counselors use the ASCA Student Standards to assess student growth and development, create culturally sustaining strategies and activities, and build a program that helps students achieve their highest potential.

Citation Guide

When citing from this publication, use the following reference:

American School Counselor Association (2021). *ASCA Student Standards; Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Resources Used in Development of ASCA Student Standards (2021)

The following documents were the primary resources that informed ASCA Student Standards.

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.
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.
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.
Framework for 21st Century Learning	Partnership for 21st 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.
ISTE Standards for Students	International Society for Technology in Education	Describes the standards students need to be prepared to thrive in a constantly evolving technological landscape.
Social Justice Standards: A Framework for Anti-bias Education	Learning for Justice	Presents anchor standards and age-appropriate learning outcomes that allow educators to engage a range of anti-bias, multicultural and social justice issues.
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.



1101 King Street • Suite 310 • Alexandria, VA 22314
 (703) 683-ASCA • asca@schoolcounselor.org