

**College and Career Readiness:
Developmental Needs, Classroom Management, and Lesson Plans**

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Abstract

College and career readiness is an integral part of a comprehensive school counseling program. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Ethical Standards, school counselors are qualified and expected to provide direct and indirect services that address students' academic, social/emotional, and career needs. In Arizona, and across the country, school counselors are expected to lead systemic change by delivering to all students a comprehensive competency-based program, aligned with state standards for academic, personal, and career development. This paper summarizes developmentally appropriate ideas for school counselors to lead robust college and career readiness classroom guidance. The importance of incorporating college and career readiness by discussing classroom management techniques will enable school counselors to lead an effective program. Three examples of lesson plans at the elementary, middle, and high school level are also provided.

Keywords: school counselor, college, career readiness, classroom guidance, lesson plans

College and Career Readiness:

Developmental Needs, Classroom Management, and Lesson Plans

School counselors play a vital role in college and career readiness. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019) National Model, school counselors advocate for students' college and career awareness, exploration, and decision-making. Using a comprehensive school counseling program, counselors promote and encourage college and career readiness for students and families (Curry & Milson, 2017; Hooper & Van Asselt, 2019). To ensure college and career readiness, counselors follow the Eight Components of College and Career Readiness developed by The College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (2010). The eight concepts include: college aspirations, academic planning for college and career readiness, enrichment and extracurricular engagement, college and career exploration and selection processes, college affordability planning, college and career admission processes, and transition from high school graduation to college enrollment. Implementing these eight components allows counselors to give relevant resources that promote college and career readiness within their school. Overall, a school counselor's role in college and career readiness is to advocate, educate, and prepare students and their families for positive post-secondary outcomes (Gysbers, 2013; Mariani, et al., 2016). However, school counselors have reported feelings of inadequacy when it comes to implementing college and career planning (Morgan et al., 2014). This article will aid school counselors to meet these expectations by addressing developmental needs, managing classroom settings, and utilizing career based lesson plans.

Developmental Needs

According to the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016), counselors are to treat all students and families with respect. Counselors are partially responsible for making

sure each student has equitable access to a rigorous education. A comprehensive program that treats all students equitably can be fulfilled by regularly implementing career-based classroom guidance lessons. Through the use of classroom lessons, the school counselor can demonstrate the importance of career development.

Developmental Needs: Elementary

Elementary school counselors should be bold when implementing college and career readiness into their school counseling programs. Studies show that young children can understand careers and need career education in order to connect academics to the world of work (Curry & Milsom, 2017; Knight, 2014). Knight suggests that helping students make the connection between what careers need college degrees, and which do not, will aid 5th graders in making better informed decisions. Exposure to different careers can also help students remove social and gender barriers that may influence decision making at this age (Knight). School counselors can begin to introduce elementary students to various career options that are developmentally appropriate, such as being community helpers. Community helpers are individuals that reside and work within a community. Common examples of community helpers are firefighters, teachers, doctors, nurses, and mail carriers. These careers are developmentally appropriate because children in elementary school have been exposed to these types of careers. They know who these people are and have seen them at their jobs. After following the Operation Occupation curriculum, 5th grade students reported an increased understanding of career readiness from 9% to 100% (Mariani et al., 2016). In an elementary school, career exploration should be led through the use of exposure, awareness, play, and exploration. These experiences set the foundation of college and career readiness skills that they will build upon as they move into middle school.

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Developmental Needs: Middle

It is a school counselor's role to advocate for a comprehensive school counseling program that meets the needs of all students equitably. The school counselor should begin to implement regular developmentally appropriate lessons addressing the career and college readiness needs of middle school aged students. At the middle school age, they need preparation for the high school transition, exposure to relevant careers, and social interaction. "Adolescents develop formal abstract thought and patterns of thinking about issues with greater complexity and depth, they develop an initial understanding of the dynamic relationship between career choice and multiple factors such as personal economic needs, social status of certain occupations, special talents and abilities, perceived intelligence, interests, and economic urgency" (Curry & Milsom, 2017, pp. 215). School counselors can provide middle schoolers with lessons and opportunities to learn about, and practice, these skills. Sherman-Morris et al. (2019) determined that the best way school counselors believed they could expose students to unknown careers (e.g., geosciences) was through the use of guest speakers and the internet. Educating all students on career options in their early adolescent years encourages them to continue in their educational achievements and sets up a foundation for ongoing success. The transition from middle school to high school is a major event in a child's life. "Knowledgeable school counselors use a collaborative approach involving families, teachers, and community members that can help to ensure a smooth high school transition process" (Curry & Milsom, p. 235).

Developmental Needs: High School

The high school setting needs a program that presents multiple options and benefits all students. The counselor should implement a comprehensive program that incorporates both

college and career knowledge. For example, some of the students may have been taught that the only postsecondary option is college. The school counselor will build upon this by implementing career readiness lessons educating students on other options such as vocational school, technical school, community college, military, and other options including volunteerism. This allows students to understand various postsecondary education routes and informs them regarding possible opportunities. When high school students believe they have a path, it encourages them to finish high school and graduate.

Classroom Management

While school counselors are not traditional teachers in the classroom, it is vital for school counselors to have strong classroom management skills (Buchanan et al., 2017). Having effective classroom management will assist in the overall success and deliverance of the lesson. There are a few basic principles for having effective classroom management at each grade level. The instructor needs to have authority, show warmth and empathy, and create a collaborative atmosphere among peers. Proactive management skills also include: setting clear rules, being prepared, having extra activities ready, discussing consequences, providing engaging lessons where learners want to be involved, respecting students, providing rewards, role modeling, involving parents, monitoring learners, discuss the rationale for rules, verbal encouragement, and maintaining clear expectations (Korb et al., 2015). To establish classroom management, counselors first must set the standard of how the class will behave when they are presenting a lesson. Counselors can reinforce positive behavior using positive language (Buchanan). Another aspect of effective classroom management is to ensure the lessons are developmentally appropriate and adequately challenging to ensure participation and focus.

Classroom Management: Elementary

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In elementary school, students are active and may have shorter attention spans. Developing lessons that allow movement and peer interaction might also help keep their attention during the lesson. Integrating movement into lessons provides students with greater engagement in the classroom and can help eliminate excessive off task behaviors (Miller & Lindt, 2018). In this example lesson, “Career Bingo”, the counselor will begin by reviewing the school counselor’s rules and then the activity rules (Keri, C., n.d.). Throughout the lesson, the counselor will use positive reinforcement and encouraging words. This activity is brief and interactive which is developmentally appropriate for students who are in elementary school. Depending on skill level, the counselor can adjust the careers and the definitions. The counselor can also adjust the number of careers needed to make a BINGO (see Appendix A).

Classroom Management: Middle

In middle school, students are developing a sense of social value and more complex thinking capabilities (Curry & Milson, 2017). Peer influence is a key component in their development, which is why a lesson with peer interaction is beneficial for this age group. In the example lesson “Escape Room Counseling”, the counselor will maintain classroom management by setting the rules at the beginning and then pairing students together into teams that will work cooperatively (Miller, C., n.d.). The teacher can assist the school counselor in pairing the students as they have more insight on how the students work together, or the counselor can allow flexibility and have the students pick a partner. To fit the skill levels needed, the counselor can increase and decrease the difficulty level of the challenges in the lesson (see Appendix B).

Classroom Management: High School

In high school, students are able to focus and have hypothetical-abstract thoughts (Curry & Milson, 2017). They are beginning to visualize their futures. Although this may be a novel

idea for classroom management, it might be helpful if counselors encourage teachers to allow flexibility. Specifically, if high students have opportunities to have real-world experiences, they should encourage those moments, even if they take place during the school day. This may help students heighten their awareness and engagement in college and career readiness classroom lessons. Practicing career interviews allow them to practice necessary real-world skills including listening and communication. The counselor can host a “challenge by choice” and invite interested students to attempt their interview skills in front of a mock panel of 3-4 students. Although not a requirement, advanced students may appreciate the extra challenge, skillset, and application. To simplify, the counselor can first educate students on interview skills in smaller group settings. The counselor may give students a list of beginner interview questions and example responses. There are various ways to scale the lessons to fit the developmental needs of the students and the school community. It is vital to plan, but counselors should make modifications and adjustments, as needed (see Appendix C).

Lesson Plans

Lesson plans should be theory-based and tailored to fit the career needs of the students receiving the lesson. A school counselor should consider the ages, developmental levels, cultural factors, and specific needs of the students to ensure the lesson plan is relevant. A thorough lesson plan includes ASCA’s Mindsets and Behaviors standards, objectives, materials needed, detailed instructions, overall summary, and evaluation (Curry & Milsom, 2017). Appropriate lesson plans educate students on various college and career options and apply to various cultures and learning styles, while still encouraging autonomy and promoting career maturity. These goals also align with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). The ESSA was established by the Obama administration in 2010 to expand upon the No Child Left Behind

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Act. The ESSA advances equity, requires high academic standards, ensures annual statewide assessments, helps support local interventions, increases access to high quality preschool, and maintains accountability for the lowest performing school to improve. The U.S. Department of Education notes that graduation rates are higher than before, more students are attending college, and dropout rates are at historic lows. It seems that the focus on preparing families and students for college readiness has seen some success. It is critical that school counselors continue to contribute to this overarching goal of career preparation.

Conclusion

The American School Counselor Association, ASCA National Model (2019) sets the standards for school counselors to provide college and career readiness via awareness, exploration, and decision-making opportunities. ASCA expects school counselors to use developmentally appropriate lessons to assess students' career interests. An identified means for this process includes the use of large-group classroom lessons which must incorporate classroom management techniques for effective implementation of career assessments. Classroom lesson plans have been shared to help aid the school counselor in the process, including accommodating key developmental needs for elementary, middle, and high school students to address college and career readiness needs connected to the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success (2014). This article was designed to help school counselors strengthen and broaden their comprehensive programs to meet the needs of all students across Arizona.

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Appendix A: Elementary Lesson Plan Template

School Counselor:

Date:

Activity: "Community Helper Career BINGO" (Keri, C., n.d.)

Grade(s): Elementary (K-5)

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (Domain/Standard):

M 6. Develop positive attitudes towards learning, B-SS 1. Use effective oral and written communication skills and listening skills, B-SMS 3. Demonstrate the ability to work independently

Learning Objective(s) (aligns with competency):

1. The students will gain awareness about different careers in the domain of community helpers
2. The students will learn about various careers' daily tasks, interests, and work environment
3. The students will practice listening and comprehension skills in order to complete the activity

Materials: Career BINGO game cards, picturing 24 different community helpers. 24 calling cards with facts regarding each of the community helpers, and writing materials such as pen/pencils.

Procedure: The counselor will pass out career BINGO cards to the students, and writing utensils as needed. The counselor will read facts from the calling cards that describe various community helpers' occupations. Students play until they have received a BINGO or all 24 careers have been called. After the game is finished the counselor will initiate a conversation about the different careers and which careers the students may be interested in.

Plan for Evaluation: How will each of the following be collected?

Process Data: Process data will be collected by the counselors recording the count of (1) the number of students who participated in this activity and (2) recording the careers that the

children showed the most interest in.

Perception Data: Perception data will be collected when the counselor asks the students what they thought about the lesson, taking notes on their responses. The counselor will also collaborate with the teacher, asking for their observation of the lesson and what they witnessed in regards to participation. Perception data can also be collected by recording the time of the lesson and making note of how long the students stayed actively engaged.

Outcome Data: Outcome data will be collected by identifying the number of students who correctly scored a BINGO, meaning they listened to the fact about the occupation and correctly identified the career.

Follow-Up: The next time the counselor comes back into the classroom there will be a follow-up with a matching game, matching the pictures of the community helpers to their job descriptions.

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Appendix B: Middle School Lesson Plan Template

School Counselor:

Date:

Activity: Escape Room Counseling (Miller, C., n.d.)

Grade(s): 6th, 7th, 8th**ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (Domain/Standard):**

M 6. Positive attitude toward work and learning, B LS1. Demonstrate critical-thinking skills to make informed choices, B SS2. Create positive and supportive relationships with other students, B SS6. Use effective collaboration and cooperation skills

Learning Objective(s) (aligns with competency):

1. The students will work in a team using collaborative effort
2. The students will use critical thinking skills.
3. The students will learn about various colleges and careers

Materials: 6 challenge puzzles that address the topics of Ivy League Awareness, Careers that do not need a college degree, Military branches, College Terminology, and a career and training card sort

Procedure: The students will be broken down into two or three teams. Each team will have a variety of challenges to complete. After each challenge is completed, they will receive a key to continue on to the next challenge.

Plan for Evaluation: How will each of the following be collected?

Process Data: Process data will be collected by the counselors recording the number of students who participated in this activity.

Perception Data: Perception will be taken by using a verbal and written assessment at the end of class from the students and getting feedback on whether or not they enjoyed the lesson and what

they would have liked to do differently.

Outcome Data: The counselor will record the times that each team takes for each challenge. The thought behind this is time equals understanding. Challenges that are completed in the quickest amount of times indicate greater understanding. The challenges that take the longest indicate this is not as easily understood material.

Follow-Up: The counselor will do a follow-up with the challenges that took the longest and review the material in a different way. For example, if the students struggle with college terminology, the counselor could follow up with a card matching game using college terminology.

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Appendix C: High School Lesson Plan Template

School Counselor:

Date:

Activity: Retail Sales Interview

Grade(s): 9th-12th**ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (Domain/Standard):**

M 2. Self Confidence in Ability to Succeed, M 5. Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high quality results and outcomes, B-LS 3. Use time-management, organizational, and study skills, B-SS 2. Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.

Learning Objective(s) (aligns with competency):

1. The students will conduct independent research
2. The students will learn about verbal and non-verbal interview skills
3. The students will practice active listening and team work skills

Materials: School computers, writing utensils, paper

Procedure: Students will take 10-15 minutes to conduct research on common interview skills needed and common interview questions. The students will then be split up into groups of two and the students will take turns interviewing one another. The interview is for a retail sales position at a local store. The students will have 5-7-minute interviews to ask the interview questions and practice their interview skills.

Plan for Evaluation: How will each of the following be collected?

Process Data: Process data will be collected by the counselors recording the number of students who participated in this activity.

Perception Data: After the interview process, the counselor will get verbal and written feedback from both the students and the teacher. The feedback will identify the parts of the lesson they

enjoyed and what they would like to do differently.

Outcome Data: The outcome data will be collected by doing an observation assessment, noting the areas where the students struggled and where they were comfortable.

Follow-Up: Making note of the outcome data, the follow-up will review the challenging areas that the students noted during the interview process and application to future plan development. Additional practice will be given to role model strong interview responses and skills where weaknesses were noted.