

Explanation of the Use of Data

The focus and direction of the comprehensive school counseling program is based on student needs as determined through a review of the school's data. Understanding and using data are essential to ensuring every student receives the benefits of the school counseling program.

School counselors show that activities implemented as part of the school counseling program are developed after a careful analysis of achievement, behavior, and attendance data. The use of data helps school counselors:

- Monitor student progress
- Identify students who are having difficulties or behavior problems
- Identify barriers to learning
- Understand factors affecting student behavior
- Identify access or equity issues
- Close achievement or opportunity gaps
- Assess and evaluate the effectiveness of activities within the school counseling program
- Improve, modify, or change services provided to students
- Educate stakeholders about the power of a comprehensive school counseling program
- Advocate for additional resources to increase program effectiveness

A comprehensive school counseling program requires school counselors to be proficient in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of student achievement and behavioral data. While the management section of the ASCA National Model aids school counselors by providing tools for planning and data collection, the accountability section helps with data analysis and program results.

Disaggregating data

To ensure every student achieves high academic standards, it is important to understand aggregate, global data from the entire student body. However, it is even more important to understand the disaggregated data. When disaggregating data, school counselors separate data by variables to determine if there are any groups of students who are not performing as well as others.

For example, a school counselor may be pleased with data revealing that 85 percent of all seniors attend post-secondary education, but he/she may not be as pleased if disaggregated data reveals that 93 percent of white students attend post-secondary education compare with only 42 percent of students of color. Disaggregated data often brings to light issues of equity and access and helps focus the discussion upon the needs of specific groups of students.

Although there are many ways to disaggregate data, frequently used categories include:

- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Socio-economic status (free or reduced lunch)
- Course enrollment
- Language spoken at home
- Special education
- Grade level