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The Role of School Counselors: What are Their Responsibilities According to Teacher Candidates and Future Administrators?

Kathryn Lubniewski, EdD[1*] Meghan Bradley[2] Caitlin M. Santaniello[3]
School of Education, Monmouth University, 400 Cedar Avenue, West Long Branch, New Jersey 07764, United States
* E-mail of the corresponding author: kservili@monmouth.edu

Abstract
Teachers and administrators work with school counselors each day, so it is critical to evaluate their perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of school counselors before they begin their careers. Changes in the field of school counseling and counselor education over the last few decades has added to the varied perceptions of the roles of school counselors within K-12 settings (McGowan, 2021). Without mutual understanding of each other's roles, education professionals will not be able to collaborate effectively to address the needs of their students. There are few studies that have examined the perceptions of teachers and administrators, as many researchers evaluate the views of individuals who are already working in the field as teachers and administrators. Thus, the researchers in this study examined the perceptions of over 150 teacher candidates and future administrators at a private postsecondary institution in New Jersey regarding their views on the appropriate and inappropriate roles of school counselors, in hopes of disseminating the data with institutes of higher education to help inform their instruction around the roles of school counselors. With these results, implications for the training of teacher candidates and future administrators will be discussed.
Keywords: perceptions about school counselors, teacher candidates, future administrators, role of the school counselor
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1. Introduction

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has worked to define the responsibilities and roles of school counselors within the ASCA National Model. This model outlines the appropriate and inappropriate responsibilities held by professional school counselors; guides the development of comprehensive school counseling programs; and describes the role school counselors play in supporting students' academic, personal, and career-related development (ASCA, 2019).

Despite the popularity of this model in schools in the United States, many teachers, administrators and community members remain unclear about the role of school counselors (Clark & Amatea, 2004; Robertson, Lloyd-Hazlett, Zambrano & McClendon, 2016). A study by Joy, Hesson, and Harris (2011) found that teacher candidates (pre-service teachers studying across all disciplines) and future administrators, especially, need to be provided with more information regarding the work of professional school counselors prior to beginning their field work placements. This study found that these individuals did not possess the knowledge nor understanding of the role of school counselors, often stating that school counselors should participate in duties inappropriate for their roles. The present study aims to distinguish what teacher candidates and future administrators perceive to be the duties of school counselors versus what they believe to be inappropriate duties. The results of this study will assist teacher and administrator educators to build upon their students' knowledge and understanding of the role of school counselors during undergraduate and graduate coursework.

2. Role of the Professional School Counselor

Despite ASCA's and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs' (CACREP) outlines describing the role of school counselors, many remain misguided about what it is that school counselors do daily (Roberston et al., 2016). This lack of continuity within the profession has led to the blurred identities of these professionals as they are often tasked with inappropriate tasks at all school levels (Robertson et al., 2016). Some of these inappropriate tasks include assisting with duties in the principal's office, supervising classrooms, coordinating school-wide individual education planning meetings, or providing long-term therapy (ASCA, 2017). Because school counselors may often spend much time on non-counselor tasks rather than appropriate ones such as academic advisement, group counseling, school-wide instruction, (Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004; Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb; 2010), they may be ultimately unable to meet the diverse needs of their students.

The rapid changes to the field of school counseling in the past few decades has contributed to the lack of clarity among other educational professionals (McGowan, 2021). These changes, including the title change from guidance counselor to school counselor, remain confusing in the present day. At the beginning of the 20th

century, teachers (the first guidance counselors) began providing vocational guidance in schools to assist students in developing career-related skills (ASCA, 2012). The professional identity of counselors has also changed, partially due to various states eliminating the required teaching experience needed to become a school counselor (Goodman-Scott et al., 2021). As time continued, the realm of services provided by these individuals expanded as they integrated a clinical approach into their work to meet students' psychological needs (ASCA, 2012).

During the 1980s, educational professionals disagreed about the appropriate roles of the counselors in relation to advocacy, collaboration, or program planning (ASCA, 2012). Educational counseling professionals were no longer solely providing vocational guidance to students but social-emotional and academic counseling as well. During the 2000s, there was greater emphasis on accountability in addition to the recognition of the three school counseling domains of academic, career, and personal/social development (ASCA, 2012). Guidance counseling became known as school counseling at a national level during this time.

School counselors are in a unique position to provide preventative and remedial services for all students on individual and school-wide levels (Dodson, 2009). School counselors are leaders within their schools and local communities by collaborating with parents and faculty (Beale & McCay, 2001) and by providing individual and group counseling services, community outreach, consultation, coordinating curricula, and crisis/responsive services (Joy & Jackson, 2000). They are specifically trained in these areas and should be implementing such services daily.

However, because their role is so often misunderstood and influenced by administrators, the actual quality of services provided are negatively impacted (Lieberman, 2004; Clemens, Milson, & Cashwell, 2009). When school counselors' roles are not clarified, they may be tasked inappropriately by being used as disciplinarians, administrative assistants, clerical workers, or database programmers (Lieberman, 2004), and these assignments decrease the amount of time school counselors have to focus on students' academic, personal, and career development (Dahir et al., 2010). School counselors may also be tasked with different responsibilities in different school districts or school levels. Some may be used as administrators who assist with discipline and/or implement responsive programming while others may be collaborators who meet students' needs in a developmental and preventative manner (Clemens et al., 2009). Such differences may cause others, specifically teachers and administrators, to have skewed views of the actual responsibilities of school counselors.

To assist school counselors in creating comprehensive, developmentally appropriate programs which would allow them to engage in appropriately designated tasks, ASCA created its National Model. The ASCA National Model provides school counselors with a framework for leading students, faculty, and community members through advocacy efforts, collaboration, leadership, and systemic change (ASCA, 2019). From implementing the model in their schools, school counselors can more effectively meet the needs of their students by providing direct services including instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling, as well as appropriate indirect services such as consultation, referrals, and collaboration (ASCA, 2019). For example, if a school counselor is inappropriately responsible for coordinating state-wide testing in his or her school, then he or she may not be able to spend enough time working with students individually or in groups, which are two of their appropriate responsibilities (ASCA, 2017). The ASCA National Model is driven by data and is only successful when school counselors are fulfilling their proper roles and duties.

3. Teachers' and Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of School Counselors

There is a lack of research investigating teachers' and teacher candidates' perceptions of school counselors. According to Reiner, Colbert, and Perusse (2009), many studies conducted in this area focus on the consultation and collaborative efforts between school counselors and teachers. In 2004, Beesley conducted a study focusing on teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of school counselors and found that many teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the counseling services provided at their schools especially in the areas of career planning, college preparation, community referrals, multicultural competencies, peer mediation, and substance abuse. These respondents believed that the school counselors were adept in providing classroom guidance, group/individual/crisis counseling, consultation, assessment, and scheduling services (Beesley, 2004). Clark and Amatea (2004) conducted similarly found that most of the teacher-interviewees expressed that school counselors were most skilled in collaborating with others and providing classroom guidance.

Another study regarding teachers' perceptions of the role of school counselors utilized a Likert-type scale survey outlining the appropriate and inappropriate responsibilities for school counselors as listed by ASCA (Reiner et al., 2004). The survey was used to assess which responsibilities the participating teachers believed school counselors should engage in as well as the ones they believe school counselors do engage in daily. Several of the activities that the respondents believed to be appropriate for school counselors (and are appropriate) included academic counseling, career planning, assisting students with their personal/social development, and working with administrators to identify and resolve student issues. However, the respondents did say that the following inappropriate tasks should be completed by school counselors: registering and

scheduling all new students, administering assessments, computing grade-point averages, or facilitating clinical counseling. Many of the participants believed, though, that it would be unsuitable for school counselors to perform disciplinary actions, supervise study halls, or assist with duties in the principal's office. By utilizing a similar Likert-type scale survey, the current researchers were able to identify the areas of discrepancy between confusion for teacher candidates.

Compared to the amount of research conducted on working teachers' perceptions of the role of school counselors, there is even less research assessing teacher candidates' perceptions. One such study that explored this topic was conducted by Joy et al. (2011), which found that teacher candidates believed that the following responsibilities are typical of school counselors: one-on-one counseling, assessment, collaboration with teachers and parents, coordinating classroom lessons, and acting as a liaison (Joy et al., 2011). Very few thought that counselors should engage in administrative or teaching duties. Despite these results, many of the participants' courses never discussed school counselors' responsibilities, and as a result, they reported having little to moderate understanding of the role of school counselors.

4. Administrators and Future Administrators' Perceptions of School Counselors

Although there are more studies that have been conducted regarding administrators' perceptions of the role of school counselors, there is still a lack of research on future administrators' views of school counselors. Some studies found that administrators have overall positive views of school counselors (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Chata & Loesch, 2007); yet some also found that administrators did not have an accurate understanding of the appropriate and inappropriate responsibilities of the school counselors in their buildings (Perusse et al., 2004; Zalaquett & Chatters, 2012). As the leaders of their schools, administrators often delegate tasks and duties to staff and faculty members, including school counselors. Misconceptions surrounding school counselors' roles result in improper assignment of their responsibilities, taking away the opportunity for them to effectively fulfill their jobs.

Perusse et al. (2004) found that when a principal believed a school counselor is responsible for an inappropriate task, school counselors often performed those same tasks, such as registering new students or maintaining student records. Similarly, Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, and Marshall (2001), used a five-point Likert-type scale and found many administrators, despite correctly identifying which tasks are recommended for school counselors to engage in, also stated that school counselors should be tasked with new student registration, assisting with discipline, manage special education processes, and perform administrative duties, all of which are inappropriate duties for school counselors. Fitch et al. found that many administrators lack knowledge regarding the appropriate functions of school counselor, potentially because graduate programs for administrators at the time did not include coursework on school counseling programming. It can thus be noted that principals influence the responsibilities that school counselors are tasked with daily (Fitch et al., 2001; Perusse et al., 2004), demonstrating that it may be fruitful for administrators to be introduced to the appropriate role of school counselors to ensure that school counselors' time and skills are being used impactfully.

Amatea and Clark (2005) found that principals often view school counselors as providing one of four primary functions: school leaders, collaborative consultation, responsive services, or administrative assistants. Although school counselors should certainly serve as leaders, collaborate and consult with others to best support students, and provide crisis/responsive services within their buildings, school counselors should not serve as administrative agents or assistants (ASCA, 2019). Zalaquett and Chatters (2012) also found that middle school principals believed that school counselors should engage in more responsive services and collaborative consultation through increasing the time they spend doing individual/group/crisis/career counseling, classroom guidance, consultation, collaboration with the community, and academic advising.

Despite these positive perceptions of school counselors, nearly 25% of those surveyed by Zalaquett and Chatters (2012) were unaware of the ASCA National Model. Another study also found that many principals had little or no exposure to the ASCA National Model prior to their work or during their work (Leuwerke, Janice, & Qi, 2009). As a result, principals often ask school counselors to perform responsibilities not aligned with the ASCA National Model standards. This is an issue not only for school counselors, but for the students they serve.

Chata and Loesch (2007), though, found that future principals were able to differentiate between suitable and unsuitable responsibilities for school counselors according to the ASCA National Model. Notably, younger respondents seemed to be more in favor of ASCA's recommendations for counselor responsibilities in comparison to older respondents (Chata & Loesch, 2007), because newer administrators were briefly exposed to the ASCA National Model during their graduate programs (Costanza, 2014). Even though many of the respondents were able to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate ASCA responsibilities, some did not appear to agree with the school counselor profession's recommendations for effective school counselor functioning (Chata & Loesch, 2007). Addressing these inconsistencies prior to working in the field is a crucial aspect of administrator preparation.

5. Study Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to examine teacher candidates' and future administrators' views of the role of school counselors. There is a lack of research regarding teacher candidates' and future administrators' perceptions of the role of school counselors (Joy et al., 2011). It is important to discern these individuals' perceptions of school counselors because they collaborate with counselors often and investigating their views of school counselors can be helpful in furthering their knowledge about working with them before they enter the professional arena. If they do not hold positive or appropriate views of school counselors during training, this may have implications for their ability to effectively collaborate with them throughout their careers. It may also have implications for the way education programs inform teacher candidates and future administrators about the appropriate role of school counselors at the K-12 levels.

Because of the common lack of understanding of what school counselors do and how they affect students, assessing teacher candidates' and future administrators' ability to differentiate the appropriate and inappropriate responsibilities of school counselors will be useful in their future training as educational professionals. This study aims to assess their perceptions of the role of school counselors through administering a survey including both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What types of responsibilities do teacher candidates and future administrators believe school counselors engage in daily?
2. What responsibilities do teacher candidates and future administrators believe school counselors should engage in?

6. Methodology

6.1 Participants

The sampling population included undergraduate students studying to be teachers, graduate students who have already obtained their teaching certification and are furthering their education, and graduate students enrolled in the administration/supervisory programs at a private postsecondary institution in New Jersey. The survey was distributed to 449 teacher candidates and future administrators. Of the targeted sample, 162 total students responded to the survey (N=162). Out of the 162 students who participated in the survey, 151 completed the entire survey (16 male [10.6%], 135 female [89.4%]). Out of 424 teacher candidates, 147 participated in the survey (34.7%), and out of 25 future administrators, 15 participated in the survey (60%). Of the teacher candidates, approximately 34% identified themselves as college freshmen or sophomores, while over 64% identified themselves as students of higher credit status. Of those completing the survey, 96% of the identified racially as white, and 7.28% identified as Latino/a.

Over 90% of the participants were studying to be teachers. Participants studying to be teachers came from a variety of teaching disciplines and levels, including P-3 certification, 9-12 history/political science, 9-12 mathematics, K-6 interdisciplinary studies, and K-6 English. None of the participants were working towards a degree in K-6 music or K-6 foreign language. Over half of the teacher candidates will be graduating with their Teacher of Students with Disabilities (TSD) certificate. Approximately 11.26% of the participants will be eligible to teach English as a Second Language (ESL/ELL). Over 60% of the respondents' experience in school settings comes from their student teaching or clinical placements (e.g. field work, service learning). Only 20 (12.3%) of the participants indicated they learned about school counselors in one or more of their courses.

6.2 Procedure

The researchers received permission to conduct this study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at a midsize private university. Upon request, the list of potential participants was gathered from the university based on the students' declared majors. Potential participants received information regarding the study via an email. Such information included the purpose of the study, information about the survey, benefits of participating in the study, and informed consent. Participants who agreed to participate in the study were given the options to complete the survey electronically or through paper surveys administered in university classrooms. To select classrooms in which to administer the survey, the researchers analyzed the number of students in each of the education classes and consulted with the professors with the largest classes. Upon approval from classroom professors, dates and times were chosen for survey administration. The data from both paper and electronic surveys were collected and analyzed.

6.3 Instrument

The current study was designed after reviewing mixed-methods research on the perceptions of teacher candidates which utilized Likert-type surveys (Beesley, 2004; Reiner et al., 2009). However, as suggested by Reiner et al. (2009), the current study does not only focus on teacher candidates but also future administrators to distinguish any differences in their perceptions between those new to the educational profession and those with much

experience.

The researchers developed a three-section survey to be used in the current study. The instrument included a demographic questionnaire, quantitative section, and qualitative section. The quantitative portion of the instrument included a 28-item Likert-type scale using the appropriate and inappropriate responsibilities of school counselors listed in the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2017). The Likert-type scale in this study asked participants to rate tasks on the level of appropriateness for a school counselor to perform using following ratings as a guide: 1 = "disagree"; 2 = "neither agree nor disagree'; 3 = "agree." ASCA (2017) designates the following 14 tasks as suitable for school counselors to engage in and another 14 tasks that school counselors should not engage in.

Appropriate Tasks	Inappropriate Tasks
(1) Individual student academic program planning	(15) Coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students
(2) Interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests	(16) Coordinating cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs
(3) Providing counseling to students who are tardy or absent	(17) Signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent
(4) Providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems	(18) Performing disciplinary actions or assigning discipline consequences
(5) Providing counseling to students as to appropriate school dress	(19) Sending students home who are not appropriately dressed
(6) Collaborating with teachers to present school counseling core curriculum lessons	(20) Teaching classes when students are absent
(7) Analyzing grade-point averages in relationship to achievement	(21) Computing grade-point averages
(8) Interpreting student records	(22) Maintaining student records
(9) Providing teachers with suggestions for effective classroom management	(23) Supervising classroom or common areas
(10) Ensuring student records are maintained as per state and federal regulations	(24) Keeping clerical records
(11) Helping the school principal identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems	(25) Assisting with duties in the principal's office
(12) Providing individual and small-group counseling services to students	(26) Providing therapy or long-term counseling in schools to address psychological disorders
(13) Advocating for student at individual education plan meetings, student study teams, and school attendance review boards	(27) Coordinating school-wide individual education plans, student study teams, and school attendance review boards
(14) Analyzing disaggregated data	(28) Serving as a data entry clerk

These 28 tasks were used in the survey to address whether the participants were aware of daily tasks for which school counselors should be responsible. For example, participants were directed to rate how much they agree with statements such as "A school counselor is responsible for supervising classrooms or common areas."

The secondary portion of the survey served to collect qualitative data regarding the participants' perceptions of the additional responsibilities they believed that school counselors should engage in as well as any areas they believed that school counselors should be more involved. The participants were asked the following questions: (a) What additional responsibilities do you believe school counselors engage in on a daily basis?; and, (b) Do you perceive a need for school counselors to be more involved in any particular areas?

6.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics was used to exemplify the demographic information collected. Survey responses to the Likert-type scale portion of the survey were assessed through the Qualtrics cross tabulation feature and SPSS. Z-scores were calculated from the Likert-type scale items to obtain the statistical significance between the participants' responses and the actual suitability of the listed responsibilities for school counselors to be engaging in according to ASCA (2017). To determine statistical significance, the researchers used > 0.05.

The two open-ended responses were managed by recording all responses in Microsoft Excel. The researchers used peer examination during data analysis procedures to ensure credibility of the qualitative analysis results (Merriam, 1998). First, both the researchers individually studied and analyzed each interview transcript through ongoing and recursive analysis methods. In this process, they summarized the main points of the findings in relation to the research questions. After that, they each identified and coded the data using the open coding strategy (Glesne, 2016; Rossman & Rallis, 2003) by looking for key words and phrases and

supporting statements from the transcribed interviews. After the individual analysis, they collaboratively compared the findings. Validity and credibility were determined by cross-checking the results among the researchers (Yin, 2002). As a result, 170 out of 176 coding analyses were the same (96.6%). If there were any differences, consensus was reached through reviewing the data once and again and discussion among the researchers. After reviewing the coding of the data, the researchers used a thematic analysis approach by synthesizing the findings related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

7. Results

7.1 Quantitative Data

The following tables depict the results found for the appropriate and inappropriate tasks for school counselors, respectively, from the Likert-type Scale used in the survey. When reviewing the data included in Table 1, it is noticeable that most of the participants agreed that 12 out of the 14 appropriate responsibilities were, indeed, appropriate for school counselors to engage in (e.g. interpreting student records, working with the principal, providing individual and small group services).

However, as represented in Table 2, only 5 out of the 14 inappropriate responsibilities were described as inappropriate by many of the participants. For example, coordinating school-wide individual education planning meetings, coordinating paperwork entry of all new students, teaching classes in the absence of teachers, sending students home for inappropriate clothing, or signing passes for tardy students were the only responsibilities deemed as inappropriate according to the responses from participants. The other 9 tasks were considered as appropriate by the participant pool. These results demonstrate that the participants do not have an accurate perception of the true responsibilities of school counselors.

Some of the survey items on the Likert-type Scale were found to be statistically significant after finding the z-score approximations. There was statistical significance in items 6, 8, 10, 21, 23, 25, and 27. For these items, the majority of respondents incorrectly identified tasks listed in the Likert scale as appropriate when they are not or inappropriate when they are. There was no statistical significance in items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 26, and 28. The majority of participants correctly identified listed tasks as appropriate or inappropriate.

7.2 Qualitative Data

Out of the 151 surveys completed, 95% (n=144) included written responses to the two open-ended items. Out of the 288 responses to the items, 181 were coded. The rest were thrown out due to a non-answer (e.g., “unsure,” “no,” or “I don’t know”) or because responses were so specific that they were not inclusive of the themes. The first open-ended question asked teacher candidates and future administrators to identify the responsibilities they believe that school counselors engage in daily. The second open-ended question prompted participants to state which areas school counselors should be engaging in more frequently.

7.2.1 Open-Ended Response 1

Responses were coded from the 120 participants who responded to the first open-ended question. Several common themes were mentioned throughout the responses to the first question. Many responses included more than one coded theme (e.g. mentioning mental health, taking an ecological systems approach, and academic advising in the same response). The following themes were mentioned the most through the responses to the first question.

7.2.1.1 Mental health

The researchers found that 26% of participants identified that school counselors focus on students’ mental health concerns daily. For this study, any responses including the words or phrases “personal issues,” “emotions,” “emotional,” “self-esteem,” “anxiety,” “depression,” “mental health,” “substance use,” “unsure of themselves,” “making sure students are okay,” etc. were coded by the researchers in the category of mental health. One participant stated that school counselors should “[help] children who are unsure of themselves and need help,” while other participants wrote “talking to students who are in need” and “helping students with personal problems” as a school counselor’s responsibilities regarding mental health.

7.2.1.2 Professional relationships

The researchers found that 21.7% of participants identified that building professional relationships with students is one of a school counselor’s key responsibilities. For this study, any responses including “giving advice,” “listening,” “mentoring,” “relationship,” “getting to know them,” or “staying up to date with students,” were coded as responses in the category of professional relationships. Participants made the following statements about a school counselor’s responsibilities related to professional relationships: “to pay attention to all of the students within the school,” “forming more personal connections with their students than their teachers would,” and “counseling students individually.”

7.2.1.3 Collaborating with stakeholders

Over 12% of participants identified collaborating with stakeholders as part of a school counselor’s daily

responsibilities. Any responses including the phrases "collaborating with parents," "collaborating with teachers/faculty," "collaborating with administrators," "collaborating with community members," or "keeping faculty/teachers informed" were coded within this theme. Participants made the following statements associated with this theme: "meet with parents to discuss student issues," "assisting teachers with strategies to support student emotional needs," "maintain positive relationships with and between staff and teachers," and "talking with faculty about students [and] going to meetings about students."

7.2.1.4 Academic support

Out of all the participants, 12.5% mentioned "grades," "standardized testing," "progress in classes," "paperwork," or "academics" as an area of responsibility for school counselors. These phrases define this study's definition of academic support. Some participants made the following statements about school counselors' role in providing academic support: "help students achieve their best in school through grades," "working with students to create and organize plans for their academic well-being," and "helping students reach goals and succeed in classes."

7.2.1.5 Supporting the school climate

Any participant responses including the phrases "safety," "school culture," or "school climate" were coded as supporting the school climate. Over 12% of participants stated these words/phrases in their answers. Some notable participant statements include: "they need to make sure that all students are safe," "school counselors are responsible for making sure that students feel comfortable and safe within the school," and "making sure the school is a healthy environment in all aspects."

7.2.1.6 Postsecondary planning

Responses including the words or phrases including "college," "career" or "future" were coded within the theme of postsecondary planning, and 11.7% of participants mentioned these in their answers. Some responses include: "helping students with planning for school and future plans, especially in a high school," "school counselors in high school also have to prepare students for college applications and college in general," and "they should help students with career plans and goals."

7.2.1.7 Taking an ecological perspective

Taking an ecological perspective was mentioned in 11.7% of the responses and was defined to be inclusive of "anything to do with the family or the home," "outside factors/lives," and "cultural perspectives." Participants mentioned that school counselors should "[understand] behavior and how [students'] outside lives relate to it," "recognize [students'] family system, their cultural background, and their academic/personal needs," and "helping students with….issues outside of school that affect their learning."

7.2.1.8 Working with students with disabilities

When the terms "IEP," "504" I&RS," "CST," "disabilities" or "tiered systems of support" were mentioned, they were coded within the theme of working with students with disabilities. The researchers included "tiered systems of support" within this category because students in need of Tier 2 or Tier 3 support often receive interventions through the Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) processes in schools in the area in which the study was conducted. Over 9% of the participants mentioned that working with these students or in this area is something that school counselors do daily. Quotes from participants include: "runs I&RS and holds the 504 plans," "sit on IEP committees and coordinate with special education professionals," and "help in creating IEP plans for students with behavioral needs."

7.2.2 Open-Ended Response 2

For the second open-ended question, 61 people chose to respond. Those responses were coded. The following themes were most commonly mentioned throughout the responses to the second question:

7.2.2.1 Involved in the school

Responses including "being present," "being there," "observing classes," "visiting classes," and "school involvement" (e.g. activities, duties, leadership) were coded within the theme of school involvement. Over 21% of participants stated that school counselors should be more involved in the school system. Responses include: "they should visit classrooms more often to observe," "they need to be in the building on a daily basis, not between schools," and "after school activities."

7.2.2.2 Mental health

Nearly 15% of participants mentioned that school counselors should be more involved in addressing students' mental health concerns. Some quotes pulled from the responses include: "school counselors should constantly work with those students who are dealing with issues and provide them with positive techniques. Counselors should take responsibility and provide staff and student workshops on mental health issues," and "emotional/social development."

7.2.2.3 Professional relationships

Nearly 15% of responses to the second qualitative question were coded within the theme of professional relationships. Some participants said: "the most important job for a counselor is to be involved with the students and be there for them whenever needed," and "engage more with students on a day to day basis."

7.2.2.4 Postsecondary planning

Over 13% of the participants mentioned that school counselors should be more involved in the area of postsecondary planning. Some of the responses were: "they should be more involved in preparing students for what they want to do beyond school whether it be college or going straight into the workforce," and "helping students make the transition to high school and college."

7.2.2.5 Collaborating with stakeholders

Nearly 13% of the participants also stated that school counselors should collaborate more frequently with other school stakeholders including parents/guardians, faculty, and community members. One participant said: "in my cooperating district, I would like to see the school counselor a little more involved with the teacher/student relationship, and how to guide the teacher and student bond to grow."

8. Discussion

This study investigated teacher candidates' and future administrators' perceptions of the role of school counselors: what do they do, what should they do, and to which appropriate and inappropriate responsibilities they believe school counselors should engage in (ASCA, 2017). Participants stated that school counselors should be responsible for 12 out of the 14 appropriate activities in addition to 5 out of the 14 inappropriate activities. The inappropriate tasks that the participants suggested school counselors conduct are related to the activities they suggested that school counselors do engage in or should engage in, namely, working with students identified for special education services.

Some of the appropriate and inappropriate tasks listed in the Likert-type scale seem very similar. For example, "ensuring student records are maintained as per state and federal regulations" and "maintaining student records" may appear to be the same task, but they are very different. The former signifies that school counselors keep student records for a specific number of years and confidentiality, while the latter describes the day-to-day upkeep of student records. Additionally, Reiner et al. (2009) found it appropriate for school counselors to "interpret cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests," it is inappropriate for them to "coordinate cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests," Reiner et al. (2009) also explained that "while teachers support some of the inappropriate activities, one could argue that several of the highly endorsed activities may be supported because respondents did not detect the language nuances of certain questions." The results of the current study may suggest the same.

Many of the participants in this study have not taken any courses mentioning nor explaining the appropriate and inappropriate responsibilities of school counselors. In fact, when asked to rate their knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of school counselors, only 4.86% of all respondents stated that they were extremely familiar with these educational professionals. These findings echo the results found by Joy et al. (2011), who also found that many teacher candidates were unfamiliar with the work that school counselors engage in. In the present study, nearly 51.39% of participants reported they were moderately familiar with the role of school counselors and 22.92% reported only slight familiarity. Therefore, most of the participants reported moderate to little knowledge of the responsibilities of school counselors. Due to the lack of counselor-related coursework in the field of education, most of the participants' understanding of school counselors comes from either personal or professional experiences, including student teaching, field work, or full-time work. The lack of understanding of the work of school counselors amongst teacher candidates and future administrators is concerning due to the immense amount of collaboration conducted between teachers, administrators, and school counselors each day in the school building.

Current participants reported that school counselors address students' mental health needs, establish professional relationships with their students, collaborate with school stakeholders, provide academic support, work to support the school climate, conduct postsecondary planning (especially at the high school level), use an ecological systems approach, and work with students with disabilities. However, participants also stated that school counselors should be more involved in the school as a whole and engage with students on a more routine basis. As one participant stated, "The counselors need to make sure they need to be more involved in activities like school assemblies when school wide so that they remain visible to the school." The studies by Joy et al. (2011) and Clark and Amatea (2004) both found similar results: teacher candidates, especially, perceive school counselors as uninvolved in school activities or the school community. Remaining visible to the students and staff is an important implication for school counselors to stay aware of students' concerns, build rapport with both students and faculty, and implement innovative programs.

Participants also reported that school counselors should be even more involved in addressing students' mental health concerns, especially drug/alcohol use, suicide, and crises. Participants may have shared these overall beliefs due to their own experiences in schools as a student or educator or even due to the widespread movement towards mental health wellness and social-emotional learning. Additionally, teacher candidates or future administrators may not be aware of the amount of mental health counseling school counselors do each day due to limitations of confidentiality and minimal disclosure (ASCA, 2016).

Interestingly, only 48.3% believed that school counselors should provide teachers with suggestions for effective classroom management; and yet, many participants commented that school counselors should collaborate with parents and faculty more frequently. Nearly 30.5% of participants reported on the Likert-type scale portion of the survey and several participants reported on the open-ended questions that school counselors should also perform disciplinary actions. Since 59% of the teacher candidates who participated in the survey are pursing degrees/certifications in elementary education, this is not completely surprising. At the elementary level, participants also viewed school counselors as quasi-administrators who may be involved in discipline often. However, according to ASCA (2017), disciplining students is not a recommended responsibility for school counselors due to the damage it can do to the counseling relationship. This has implications for school counselors, specifically at the elementary level, as they should be aware that discipline is not within their scope of responsibilities, and they should make this known to other faculty members.

Like the results found by Joy et al. (2011), many of the participants believed school counselors should be more involved with the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and Child Study Team (CST) processes. Because many of the participants identified themselves as future special education teachers, the researchers were surprised to see that the participants did not yet understand a school counselor's role regarding IEPs. One student reported: "[school counselors] help in creating IEP plans for students with behavioral needs." On the Likert-type scale questionnaire, 72.2% of participants reported that school counselors are responsible for coordinating school-wide education plan meetings. Although school counselors may be consulted for their input regarding students' academic goals, school psychologists, school social workers, or Learning Disability Teacher Consultants (LDTC) are the professionals more appropriately tasked with creating IEPs (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Several participants also suggested that school counselors work with students from "lower socioeconomic areas specifically - students need the extra support and guidance." This would involve taking an ecological systems perspective where a counselor views a student's presenting problem from a variety of lenses (individual, home, school, neighborhood, society, world) (Eamon, 2001).

Although the participants in this study agreed that many of the appropriate tasks are truly appropriate for school counselors and the majority of the open-ended response agreed, there was some discrepancy especially in the realms of special education, discipline, and paperwork. This suggests that there is still work to be done in educating teacher candidates, future administrators, and even current educational professionals regarding the true role and responsibilities of school counselors.

8.1 Limitations

This study was limited to undergraduate and graduate students studying to be teachers or administrators at one university in the Northeast region of the United States. Future administrators participating in the study did not specify if they worked in public or private schools, nor did all of them mention the number of years they have worked in their positions or the demographics of their students. Each participant holds their own biases based on their individual experiences. For example, some may have more extensive experience collaborating with school counselors while others may have limited experience. The study's generalizability is also slightly limited because participating in the study was voluntary, and the data collected is not completely representative of the teacher and administrator-education programs at this college. Although many of the participants fully completed the survey, there were participants who only completed the quantitative portions. This may be because they were uncomfortable sharing their more in-depth thoughts or due to a lack of time. The perceptions of 14.7% of participants – those who had not yet worked in schools in any capacity – may skew the results as well. The perceptions of all participants may have been based off their personal experiences with their own school counselors rather than their professional experiences as teacher candidates or future administrators.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Implications

School counselors' roles remain unclear to many teacher candidates and future administrators. It may be beneficial for universities to incorporate field experiences where teacher candidates volunteer in the school counseling offices to learn more about the work they do. To make this process effective, it may be beneficial for education students to interview prospective counselors to ensure that they are engaging in appropriate counseling responsibilities on a daily basis. Without doing so, this may perpetuate the problem of teacher candidates misunderstanding the role of school counselors in the school. This can help teacher candidates and future administrators learn about school counselors prior to starting their careers, allowing them with more opportunities for effective collaboration and consultation on behalf of their students. Without an awareness of school counselor work, other educational professionals will not be able to refer students to their services appropriately. Additionally, school counselors should continue advocating for themselves and their roles daily to make best use of their time while using best practices to help their students.

Further research can be done in other areas of the United States as well as internationally as each state and

country has their own credentials for counselor education (Goodman-Scott et al., 2021). It may be beneficial to explore the consistencies and inconsistencies between counsellor roles between various schools around the world. This research was limited to one private postsecondary institution in New Jersey, but a similar research study could be replicated at a different institution.

10. Disclosure Statement

The researchers declare that they have no conflict of interest. All procedures followed were in accordance with the IRB and the ethical standards surrounding studies involving live participants. There are no financial forms of support to acknowledge nor any sponsors.

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Table 1. Appropriate Responsibilities

Item	Appropriate Responsibility Stem	M	Statistical Significance	Frequency of Participants Stating Appropriate for School Counselors
1	Individual student academic program planning	2.68	-	79.5%
2	Interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests	2.46	-	60.3%
3	Providing counseling to students who are tardy or absent	2.72	-	77.5%
6	Providing counseling to students as to appropriate school dress	2.22	0.0001	50.3%
7	Collaborating with teachers to present school counseling core curriculum lessons	2.61	-	68.9%
9	Interpreting student records	2.77	-	83.4%
10	Ensuring student records are maintained as per state and federal regulations	2.71	0.0289	77.5%
12	Helping the school principal identify and resolve student issues, needs, and problems	2.91	-	94.7%
13	Providing individual and small-group counseling services to students	2.91	-	93.4%
14	Advocating for students at individual education plan meetings, student study teams, and school attendance review boards	2.92	-	92.7%
17	Analyzing disaggregated data	2.31	-	40.4%
19	Providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems	2.92	-	94.0%
22	Analyzing grade-point averages in relationship to achievement	2.48	-	62.9%
25	Providing teachers with suggestions for effective classroom management	2.11	0.0473	48.3%

Table 2. Inappropriate Responsibilities

Item	Inappropriate Responsibility Stem	M	Statistical Significance	Frequency of Participants Stating Appropriate for School Counselors
4	Coordinating cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs	2.48	-	79.5%
5	Assisting with duties in the principal's office	2.07	-	39.1%
8	Supervising classrooms or common areas	2.05	0.4094	41.1%
11	Maintaining student records	2.74	-	78.1%
15	Coordinating school-wide individual education plans, student study teams, and school attendance review boards	2.60	-	72.2%
16	Coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students	2.53	-	65.6%
18	Serving as a data entry clerk	1.74	-	18.5%
20	Providing therapy or long-term counseling in schools to address psychological disorders	2.44	-	64.9%
21	Keeping clerical records	2.11	0.0333	36.4%
23	Computing grade-point averages	1.87	0.0161	29.8%
24	Teaching classes when teachers are absent	1.34	-	11.3%
26	Sending students home who are not appropriately dressed	1.48	-	14.6%
27	Performing disciplinary actions or assigning discipline consequences	1.81	0.0008	30.5%
28	Signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent	1.50	-	14.6%