School Counselors Advocating for their Role in Schools, Districts, and Communities

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School Counselors List Roadblocks to Self-Advocacy

At the beginning of this school year, the GSCA Leadership Team asked over 100 Georgia school counselors about their experiences with advocating for their school counseling programs. We asked the questions below, and then looked for common themes.

- "When it comes to self-advocacy, what roadblocks have you experienced when advocating for your position within your school or district?"
- "What success have you had around self-advocacy?"

Roadblock: Lack of Awareness of the Role of the School Counselor

The school counselors who responded to the questions above shared several common roadblocks to school counseling program advocacy, as well as some tips to overcome some of those roadblocks. However, there was one roadblock that emerged as the most common roadblock to school counselor self-advocacy: The Lack of Understanding about the Role of the School Counselor. While this is a common roadblock to advocating for the school counseling program, school counselors were able to identify keys to their success in advocating for a better understanding of the roles they play in their schools, districts, and communities.

School counselors described the expectations of teachers, school administrators, and parents around what school counselors should be doing with their time as one of the roadblocks to school counselor role-awareness and self-advocacy. Some counselors stated that they feel there is no interest at all in what the school counselor is trained to do or should be doing to serve students. Old ideas of the role of a school counselor, ignoring responsibilities of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) work were other roadblocks to school counselor role awareness that school counselors identified.

Tips for Success in Raising Awareness of the School Counselor's Role

School counselors who have experienced success with advocating for a greater understanding of the role of the school counselor shared tips for success that include defining the school counselor's role, advocating for the use of the school counselor's time, promoting school counselor leadership, and advocating for school counselor-student ratios.

Define the School Counselor's Role

- Implement a comprehensive school counseling program and work towards the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) designation.
- Advocate for being called a School Counselor instead of a Guidance Counselor
- Use resources available from GSCA and ASCA to raise awareness about the role of the school counselor.

Advocate for the use of the School Counselor's Time

- Use use-of-time and program outcome data to request the removal of non-counseling duties from school counselor responsibilities such as:
    - Response to Intervention (RTI) duties
    - administrative duties
    - teaching on specialist rotations.

Promote School Counselor Leadership and Recognition

- Become active in your school, district, and community in leadership roles that raise awareness of the role of the school counselor.
- Encourage the inclusion of school counselors in award programs like "Teacher of the Year" programs to promote school counselor role awareness.

Advocate for Counselor-Student Ratios

- Advocate for full funding of a school counselor ratio of 1:450 for all student categories. All Georgia school counselors should continue to advocate with state Senators and the Senate Appropriations Committee members to make sure all voices are heard.
- Please see the March advocacy update email to all members for notes on how to advocate for The State Budget *aka* HB19: General appropriations.

For an excellent tool and more information on advocating for the role of the school counselor, check out the advocacy resource page on the GSCA page for a PowerPoint presentation on the updated role of the school counselor. This is an excellent, ready-to-use tool to begin to promote understanding of the valuable role school counselors play in our schools and communities.