

Final

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ASCA National Model and Professional Identity of School Counselors

Doty Middle School is located in Downey, California with approximately 1,376 students. In this middle school, three school counselors are provided for each grade level. For example, school counselor Carrie Redox is a sixth-grade school counselor with a caseload around 465. The school does not follow the ASCA National Model directly, however, present with similar ideologies. The mission statement from Doty Middle School states, “Developing opportunities for today’s youth through building strong foundations for success in high school, college, and life,” and the mission statement of the Downey school district illustrates, “Downey Unified School District is committed to developing all students to be self-motivated learners and productive, responsible and compassionate members of an ever-changing global society. Our highly qualified staff foster meaningful relationships with students, parents, and the community while providing a relevant and rigorous curriculum in facilities that advance teaching and learning.” As a leadership role the school district states their goal is to create a positive school environment in order for students to achieve science standards, 21st century learning communities, standardize mathematical practice, expository reading and writing courses. Their aim is for all students to meet high academic, career, and personal/ social standards. Furthermore, the goal is to develop an approach that will look at the whole child to support social emotional needs and maintain a positive behavior intervention. For example, Response to Intervention: Behavior system is presented in Doty Middle School starting with universal intervention which will present the goal to all students across all settings. In the classroom, teachers display visual boards of growth mindset to create an encouraging environment. However, a behavior

hierarchy is also existing as a class/school wide set of rules. Next, targeted intervention from the behavior system would look at at-risk students which may be suspended according to the disciplinary hierarchy.

Social Justice, Advocacy, Collaboration, Leadership, and Systemic Change

Doty Middle School counselors do not follow strategies of social justice directly. However, the school counselor I interviewed has an open-door policy which means any student is welcomed to meet with her. According to Mrs. Redfox, **strengths of a school counselor** must be able to obtain characteristics such as empathetic, good listener, honest and trustworthy to be able to promote equity and participate in student success. In order to present leadership and systemic change as a school district, their goal is to create a positive school culture for students to achieve, and meet generation science standards, 21st century learning communities, standardize mathematical practice, expository reading and writing **courses**. Furthermore, developing an approach that looks at the whole child to be able to support social emotional needs to maintain a positive behavior method. To provide such support Doty will practice and educate **students** about character counts. For example, presenting citizenship, kindness, and wellness week for all students to participate. Also, Mrs. Redfox was able to create clubs to improve students' well-being. For example, she created Power Up clubs which offers an educational and experimental approach to improving decision making, developing coping resources and increasing self- esteem for girls and she also created a club for boys which offers an educational and fun approach to building self- esteem, coping with the pressures of middle school and developing a positive mindset.

Management and Accountability

The school counselor, teachers and school personnel may use many types of data in order to evaluate the effectiveness and direction of students' future. Test scores such as CAASPP, English Language Arts, Math, Emotional Behavior charts, ASI and Benchmark test are used in order to place students in classrooms where they have a greater opportunity to become successful. The Downey school district also uses a database called PLC to determine each grade level progress to guarantee educators follow the agreement plan. From each grade level, teachers meet with one another to discuss grade level progress. Also, to ensure school counselors are performing effectively, the school principal sets up meetings with counselors at the end of year to discuss what is working and what is not working. The use of school data is to be able to monitor student progress, identify students with behavior impairments, identify barriers to learning, understand factors affecting student behavior to ensure access and equity for all students.

School Counseling Core Curriculum

Mrs. Redfox creates lesson plans or follows up with students when initiating a group counseling session. For example, she develops a group counseling session to work with students who have experience with conflict issues with peers, grief or students who may be struggling academically. In order to obtain successful group counseling, school counselors must make sure counselees will be successful with this type of therapy. However, group therapy is a great way for counselees to be able to connect with other students who may be experiencing similar problems.

Consultation and Collaboration

Counselors are an important part of a collaborative team in advancing academic

mission of the school. For example, collaborating with colleagues during IEPs and 504 plans to provide social emotional learning curriculum or training to improve the school

outcome. Yet, it may be difficult to collaborate with stakeholders if everyone is not on the same page as Mrs. Redfox experienced. She mentions when she first started as a school counselor, she went in thinking she would be allowed to start projects, and everyone would be on board. However, school counselors who work with administration may experience difficulty due to disagreements. Furthermore, it is also important to collaborate with teachers to ensure student success by providing effective and appropriate strategies for teachers struggling with certain students, helping teachers address students with personal or sensitive problems or even to support teachers' curriculum. Mrs. Redfox used teachers as resources in order to get a sense of what the students' needs and wants are in order to place students in classrooms where they have a greater opportunity to be successful. In Doty Middle School parents are invited to participate in PTA meetings to discuss the decision making process of the school. Also, Doty Middle School collaborates with communities such as mental health facilities to bring awareness and teach students.

Academic Development

School counselors should be integral team members in promoting students' academic development and be part of the educational reform initiatives to improve student outcomes at the systemic and student level. For their overall academic performance, Doty Middle School is performing at a below average in English Language Arts and in Mathematics. Doty Middle School may use a similar Response to

Intervention on Academic Systems: for universal intervention all students attend classroom instruction. By closing the academic gap, the middle school provides academic support by offering tutoring sessions. However, the students get to decide whether they want to attend or not which is a great way to promote self-advocacy.

Targeted intervention for at risk students would be referred to group counseling, which the school counselors use standard protocol intervention and monitor progress. Also, Doty Middle School offers Saturday academic academy for at-risk students. Intensive individual intervention will be looking at academic support from parents. If a student is failing 3+ classes, then the school counselor will set up a meeting with the parents. If a student is failing 4+ classes, then retention is highly suggested.

Doty Middle School academic engagement is ranked at below average on chronic absenteeism. In the Downey School District website online information about absentee policy is present for all students, staff and parents. During my interview with Mrs. Redfox, the topic on chronic absenteeism was not identified. However, as a future school counselor, tier 2 could be for students' missing 10 percent or more days. School staff members should meet with the student and family to develop a plan for overcoming barriers to regulate attendance. Tier 3, for students missing 20 percent or more days, school staff members should collaborate with the community to offer support for students facing the greatest challenges to getting to school.

College and Career Readiness

Interviewing the school counselor at Doty Middle School, we did not converse on topics such as college or career readiness. However, I do not doubt they have a plan in place to prepare all their students. As a future school counselor, it is best to start

building ideas about going to college. Maybe planning a trip to visit universities/ colleges around the area would be great exposure. We can also provide career day and have guest speakers. Also, another fun idea would be if students were able to interview their teachers about college and have a discussion about their experiences. At the middle school level, we can start including parents of what is to be expected at the high school level and mention A-G requirements.

Prevention/Auxiliary Programming

The Downey school district developed an approach that looks at the whole child in order to support social emotional and maintain a positive behavior intervention. In order for students to have a better understanding all Downey schools will participate in character counts. For example, proving citizenship, kindness, and wellness week. Also, Mrs. Redfox was able to create clubs to ensure well-being for all students. For example, she created Power Up which offers an educational and experimental approach to improving decision making, developing coping resources and increasing self-esteem for girls. She also created a club for boys which offers an educational and fun approach to building self- esteem, coping with the pressures of middle school and developing a positive mindset. Additionally, Mrs. Redfox **assists** students who may experience conflict with other peers, grief, or **students** who may be struggling academically. When a behavior **issue** arises the dean of the school will use the Doty Middle School Disciplinary Hierarchy to punish students for their acts. The Doty Middle School Disciplinary Hierarchy will look at the incident a student caused and follow the punishment that goes **along** with it. For example, if a student was in trouble for disruptive behavior the 1st offense the student will be in a 2-hour detention center and parents will be notified, 2nd offence will be Saturday school and contacting parents. 3rd offence suspension and parents will be contacted.

Helping Students with Exceptionalities

The school counselor I interviewed worked to help students in her caseload with exceptionalities. Therefore, she did attend IEP meetings. However, Doty Middle School students with disabilities are 20% chronically absent as a result academic performance is severely affected. It is important to work with parents/guardians to identify the root cause of absenteeism and the necessary steps to help assist families. For example, connecting with community partners if the barriers may be due to lack of clothing, transportation, housing or mental health treatment. The school district should make sure modifications and accommodations are put into play to ensure classroom and behavioral support for students and help them stay on track academically and stay in school. Also, as a future school counselor one should make sure extracurricular and out-of- school time programs are accessible to students with disabilities.