American School Counselor Association

REFERENCES

MAKING THE GRADE: THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC ENABLERS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM

Elementary school counselors can support academic achievement by connecting their comprehensive programs to increasing academic competence. One valuable framework focuses on academic enablers, which are identified as interpersonal skills, motivation, engagement, and study skills (DiPerna, 2004). In this article, the authors (a) discuss the essential role of elementary school counselors in supporting student achievement, (b) provide an overview of the academic enablers' framework, and (c) offer practical recommendations for implementing this framework.

tudent academic achievement measured by course grades and standardized test scores remains the primary outcome measure of education (Allen, 2005; Duckworth, Tsukayama, & Quinn, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Students who demonstrate higher levels of academic competence are in better positions to be successful on achievement assessments. Academic competence is a multidimensional construct that integrates core abilities (e.g., reading and writing) as well as problem solving, attending skills, and participatory behaviors such as asking questions (DiPerna, 1997; DiPerna & Elliott, 1999). Although grades and test scores receive substantial discourse in the literature for their contributions as outcome measures, there is evidence to suggest that specific attitudes, behaviors, and skills function as academic enablers so that students can make the most of their learning experience (DiPerna, 2004; Kayler & Sherman, 2009). Academic enablers, when explicitly taught to students, positively influence students' academic competence, which can strengthen performance on traditional achievement outcome measures (Demaray & Jenkins, 2011; DiPerna, Volpe, & Elliott, 2005).

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Academic enablers are defined as the "attitudes and behaviors that allow a student to participate in, and ultimately benefit from, academic instruction in the classroom" (DiPerna & Elliott, 2002, p. 294) and include study skills, motivation, engagement, and interpersonal skills. However, research demonstrates that academic enablers are rarely taught in the classroom (Zimmerman, 1998). This is problematic because, according to a survey of 401 teachers, students who are academi-

to academic achievement. Explicitly connecting the school counseling program to specific student competencies can be a powerful strategy for showcasing the significant contributions professional school counselors make to the educational success stories of students. Therefore, it is vital that school counselors fully understand the relationships among the constructs of academic enablers, academic competence, and academic achievement so that they can have a demonstrated im-

likely to drop out of school (Shannon, Bylsma, & Washington Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2006).

To fully support academic achievement, school counselors need a program delivery strategy that incorporates academic enablers and academic competence. Furthermore, this strategy should help to define the elementary school counselor's role by bridging a critical practice gap between program service delivery and increased academic competence that leads to student achievement. Therefore, the purpose of this article is (a) to discuss the essential role of the elementary school counselor in supporting student achievement, (b) to provide an overview of the academic enablers framework, and (c) to offer practical recommendations for elementary school counselors on how to implement a strategy based on the academic enablers framework that will help to demonstrate a stronger connection between the program delivery system and increased student academic competence and ultimately student achievement.

> ACADEMIC ENABLERS... INCLUDE STUDY SKILLS, MOTIVATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS. HOWEVER, RESEARCH DEMONSTRATES THAT ACADEMIC ENABLERS ARE RARELY TAUGHT IN THE CLASSROOM.

cally at-risk often come to school with deficits in these areas (Elliott, DiPerna, Mroch, & Lang, 2004). Professional school counselors with specialized training in student development can apply their expertise to teach students enabling skills as part of a comprehensive program delivery system.

School counselors are under increased pressure to be accountable by demonstrating meaningful contributions to student academic achievement (Dahir, 2004; Dahir & Stone, 2003, Dahir & Stone, 2011; Isaacs, 2003). This is complicated by a continued lack of understanding by many administrators and teachers for the appropriate role of the school counselor in supporting academic achievement (Lieberman, 2004; Zalaquett, 2005). However, guided by the *ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs* (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012), school counselors design, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive program built around student competencies in academic, career, and personal/social development. These developmental areas can be directly linked to academic enablers that support student academic competence, which open doors

pact on student outcomes (e.g., grades, test scores, graduation rates).

This undertaking is especially critical in the early school years because researchers have uncovered key factors that, if left unaddressed, can significantly hinder students' success in school and life. These difficulties include aggression (Barthelemy & Lounsbury, 2009), stress (Goodman, Miller, & West-Olatunji, 2011), hyperactivity (Saudino & Plomin, 2007), and depression (Herman, Lambert, Reinke, & Ialongo, 2008). Herman and colleagues (2008) studied the capacity of academic competence in a population of African American first graders ($N = 474$) to predict depressive symptoms with the same sample in seventh grade. The results indicated that lower levels of academic competence led to decreased perceived control of educational outcomes, which predicted increased levels of depressive symptoms in middle school students. In other words, low levels of academic skills in the elementary years were a significant risk factor for depression in later years, especially for girls. Perhaps most concerning is the notion that students who struggle in the first few years of school are significantly more

ROLE OF THE ELEMENTARY COUNSELOR IN SUPPORTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

School counseling programs are built on a philosophy of reaching all students by expecting every student to achieve high academic standards through a rigorous educational curriculum and to be college and career ready. School counselors are called on to play a meaningful role in cultivating college and career readiness (College Board, 2011; Dockery, 2010; Education Trust, 2011) through services focusing on students' self-awareness and knowledge, interpersonal skills, skills

to be a lifelong learner, career information and exploration, goal setting, and decision making (ASCA, 2004). Research supports a positive connection between career development and academic achievement through increased school engagement, improved student transitions, and equity issues of enhanced opportunities for all students (Schenck, Anctil, Smith, & Dahir, 2012). This preparation begins in elementary school.

School counselors take a leadership role in closing the achievement gap by ensuring equity and access for all students (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). This is accomplished by removing barriers to learning and by providing specific interventions to address the achievement gap in low income students, students of color, and students with disabilities (Ed Trust, 2012). Issues of equity and social justice begin in elementary school.

Regarding program delivery, elementary school counselors rate academic development and personal/social development interventions as equally important components in a comprehensive school counseling program. Barna and Brott (2011) surveyed 212 elementary counselors to find out which interventions targeting academic and personal/social development were essential for supporting academic achievement. Participants rated both types of development as critically important for promoting student achievement, and they implemented personal/social development interventions slightly more than academic interventions. These interventions, particularly at the elementary level, include group counseling and classroom guidance lessons that address areas related to personal/social growth, such as friendships and getting along with others, as well as academic behaviors, such as homework completion and test taking strategies (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009; Magolis, McCabe, & Abler, 2004).

Schools counselors, as vital contributors to student educational success, must persistently answer the call to

demonstrate measurable contributions to student achievement (Dahir & Stone, 2003; Dahir & Stone, 2011; Gysbers, 2004; Isaacs, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Lapan, 2001; Otwell & Mullis, 1997; Paisley & Hayes, 2003). Implementing and evaluating a comprehensive school counseling

program that is balanced between academic, personal/social, and career domains is essential for supporting academic achievement (ASCA, 2012).

In practice, elementary school counselors deliver intentional services that integrate these student development domains as a holistic strategy to challenge students who are excelling, support students who are maintaining, and remediate students with specific learning barriers. However, counselors continue to struggle with how to link these services to achievement outcomes (Studer, Diambra, Breckner, & Heidel, 2011). Academic enablers may provide the framework with measurable attitudes and behaviors that can connect school counseling services to increased student competence leading to academic achievement.

OVERVIEW OF ACADEMIC ENABLERS FRAMEWORK

The central tenet of the academic enablers' framework is that what is learned in school (i.e., academic competence) is made up of both academic and non-academic skills. Strong academic skills, such as prior achievement, have been determined to have the largest effects on future achieve-

ment (Reynolds & Walberg, 1991). A review of school learning theories indicates that aptitude, ability, intelligence, and previous achievement significantly contribute to learning even when academic enablers are taken into consideration (Keith, 2002). However, academic skill proficiency is not

> EXPLICITLY CONNECTING THE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM TO SPECIFIC STUDENT COMPETENCIES CAN BE A POWERFUL STRATEGY FOR SHOWCASING THE CONTRIBUTIONS PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELORS MAKE.

enough to ensure all students are successful or competent in school (DiPerna & Elliot, 2002; Langberg, Epstein, Becker, Girio-Herrera, & Vaughn, 2012). After accounting for academic skills, four areas have been identified as enablers to academic competence, namely (a) study skills, (b) motivation, (c) engagement, and (d) interpersonal skills (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002; Greenwood, 1991; Malecki & Elliott, 2002; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, Swanson, & Reiser, 2008; Wentzel, 1993). These academic enablers are "critical tools for learning" (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002, p. 350) and, when explicitly taught to all students, can have a positive impact on academic achievement outcomes (Elliott et al,, 2004).

Most of the research has focused on the relationship each of the four areas has to academic achievement (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002; Greenwood, 1991; Lucio, Hunt, & Bornovalova, 2012, Malecki & Elliott, 2002; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Wentzel, 1993). For example, DiPerna, Volpe, and Elliott (2005) proposed several models to determine the pattern and influence of each of the four academic enablers on the math grades of students in kindergarten through sixth grade. Results of structural equation modeling indicated that prior achievement and interpersonal skills influenced motivation, and motivation influenced

TABLE 1 **EXAMPLES OF ALIGNMENT BETWEEN ACADEMIC ENABLERS AND ASCA STUDENT STANDARDS**

Developmental Domain	Standard	Behavioral Indicator
Study Skills		
Academic Development	A:A2.1	Apply time management and task management skills
	A:B1.3	Apply the study skills necessary for academic success at each level
Personal/Social Development	PS:C1.7	Apply effective problem solving and decision-making skills to make safe and healthy choices
	PS:C1.10	Learn techniques for managing stress and conflict
Career Development	C:A2.1	Acquire employability skills such as working on a team, problem-solving and organizational skills
	C:A2.9	Utilize time- and task-management skills
Motivation		
Academic Development	A:A2.2	Demonstrate how effort and persistence positively affect learning
	A:B1.7	Become a self-directed and independent learner
Personal/Social Development	PS:B1.9	Identify long- and short-term goals
	PS:B1.10	Identify alternative ways of achieving goals
Career Development	C:A1.8	Pursue and develop competency in areas of interest
	C:A2.2	Apply job readiness skills to seek employment opportunities
Engagement		
Academic Development	A:A1.2	Display a positive interest in learning
	A:A2.3	Use communication skills to know when and how to ask for help when needed
Personal/Social Development	PS:B1.5	Demonstrate when, where, and how to seek help for solving problems and making decisions
	PS:C1.6	Identify resource people in the school and community, and know how to seek their help
Career Development	C:A2.7	Develop a positive attitude toward work and learning
	C:C1.4	Understand that the changing workplace requires lifelong learning and acquiring new skills
Interpersonal Skills		
Academic Development	A:A3.1	Take responsibility for their actions
	A:A3.2	Demonstrate the ability to work independently, as well as the ability to work cooperatively with other students
Personal/Social Development	PS:A1.5	Identify and express feelings
	PS:A2.7	Know that communication involves speaking, listening and nonverbal behavior
Career Development	C:A1.4	Learn how to interact and work cooperatively in teams
	C:A2.5	Learn how to respect individual uniqueness in the workplace

study skills and engagement. Efforts to determine the combined effect of academic enablers include research by DiPerna, Volpe, and Elliott (2001), who explored the impact of academic enablers on student achievement by proposing a model linking classroom instruction, academic enablers, and academic skills to elementary students' language arts grades. The authors found that prior achievement and interpersonal skills have a direct influence on motivation, which in turn effects achievement as evidenced by improved language arts grades.

Because academic competence is more than just skill mastery, the academic enablers' framework is a valuable guide to elementary school counselors' efforts in strengthening student achievement through increased academic competence. First, each of the four areas of academic enablers can be easily aligned with the student behavioral indicators identified by the ASCA Student Standards (ASCA, 2004). Table 1 provides examples of this alignment. Second, enablers are skills, attitudes, and behaviors that can be explicitly taught, modeled, and reinforced by elementary school counselors who possess knowledge and training in student development. Third, and most important, the academic enablers' framework provides a unique avenue for assisting elementary school counselors in making a strong argument for comprehensive programming to promote academic competence that supports student achievement.

Reviews of the academic enablers' literature exist for interested readers (e.g., DiPerna, 2006; DiPerna & Elliott, 2002). The following sections contain selected information and research to increase elementary school counselors' awareness of the importance and interactions between specific academic enablers as well as how each contributes to academic competence.

Study Skills
Students who understand and can apply study skills (e.g., homework completion, organization, how to

study) are in a better position to make the most of their learning. Associated with a range of cognitive skills and processes, study skills include the ability to acquire, record, organize, and apply educational information (Devine, 1987; Hoover & Patton, 1995). Specific study skills have been shown to be effective for boosting academic achievement.

Homework completion has been shown to contribute uniquely to student grades even after controlling for socioeconomic status, race, and gender (Bempechat, Li, Neier, Gillis, & Holloway, 2011; Lucio et al., 2012). Furthermore, studies with students experiencing reduced academic performance have revealed they often understand the importance of organizational skills but fail to use these skills on a regular basis (Wong, 1994). Mastering these skills in the elementary school grades is important so that, as expectations for independent and textbook study increase in later years, students are in a position to apply these critical learning tools (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002).

> ## LOW LEVELS OF ACADEMIC SKILLS IN THE ELEMENTARY YEARS WERE A SIGNIFICANT RISK FACTOR FOR DEPRESSION IN LATER YEARS, ESPECIALLY FOR GIRLS.

Because even capable students can lack effective approaches for studying, school counselors are in a position to help students identify and improve these skills (Kayler & Sherman, 2009; Margolis, McCabe, & Alber, 2004; Rowell & Hong, 2002).

Motivation
Motivation as it relates to academic competence comprises several interrelated constructs that include students' behaviors, goals, attributions, and beliefs about intelligence, success, failure, effort, and ability (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Seifert, 2004). Contemporary views on motivation embrace a more situational perspective that is dependent upon the expectation or task (Linnenbrink & Pintrich,

2002). Motivation is often used as a barometer for school adjustment (Roeser & Eccles, 1998) or to explain students' activity choice, engagement, persistence, and performance (Meece, Anderman, & Anderman, 2006). The relationship between motivation and academic achievement is often highlighted through relationships with other variables, such as engagement in coursework (Keith & Cool, 1992), self-efficacy (Scheel & Gonzalez, 2007), and goal orientation (Wolters, 2004).

Notably, the type of motivation students adopt for pursuing school-related goals has a significant impact on their future academic performance (Anderman, Anderman, & Griesinger, 1999; Bandura, 1997; Guay, Marsh, & Boivin, 2003; Stevenson & Newman, 1986). Researchers on self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985) have identified a continuum ranging from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2006). Extrinsic motivation is defined by behaviors that are connected to some type of external reward, such as teacher praise or high grades (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). In contrast, intrinsic motivation is identified by behaviors that are performed for their inherent enjoyment and satisfaction, such as completing homework because it is interesting or fun (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Recent studies substantiate a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic achievement. Areepattamannil, Freeman, and Klinger (2011) studied the differences in the motivational orientation (i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic) between Indian adolescent immigrants living in Canada ($N = 355$) and Indian adolescents living in their native country ($N = 363$). Using stepwise regression analysis, the researchers found that intrinsic

motivation had a statistically significant effect on the overall grade point averages for both groups ($R^2 = .26$, F_{change} (4, 350) = 31.53, $p < .001$). In another study, Bryan, Glynn, and Kittleson (2011) used a mixed method design (i.e., interviews, questionnaires) to determine the role of intrinsic motivation in high school students' drive to learn science in introductory courses ($N = 910$). The results indicated that intrinsic motivation was related to both final grades in current science courses and the intent to enroll in future advanced placement science courses. Finally, Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (2001) pointed out that students who possess higher levels of intrinsic motivation are more likely to remain in school.

task management (e.g., paying attention), and can be influenced by teaching, social interactions, and the classroom environment (Greenwood, Horton, & Utley, 2002). Engagement can be understood as the "affective (e.g., likes school), behavioral (e.g., finishing homework), and cognitive (e.g., self-efficacy, motivation) investments that a child makes in school at both the classroom and school-wide level" (Perdue, Manzeske, & Estell, 2009, p. 1084). In particular, positive support from peers is linked to higher levels of school engagement (Shin, Daly, & Vera, 2007), while friendship discord is associated with disengagement (Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996). The results of a large study ($N = 1,364$) by Purdue,

Interpersonal Skills

It is difficult to deny the influence interpersonal skills have on academic competence. Even in elementary school, teachers report that cooperation and self-control are imperative to classroom productivity (Meier, DiPerna, & Oster, 2006). According to Elliott, Malecki, and Demarary (2001), "learning, playing, and working today almost always require, and in many cases feature, social interactions among people" (p. 19). In fact, Blair (2002) has suggested that interpersonal skills make significant contributions to student achievement even when controlling for intelligence. According to social cognitive theorists, this may be because learning is social before it becomes internalized by the individual (Vygotsky, 1978). Interpersonal skills can include a wide range of social and emotional factors to include teacher-student relationships (Valiente et al., 2008), peer acceptance, (Trentascosta & Izard, 2007), social skills (Webb, Brigman, & Campbell, 2005), and social responsibility (Wentzel, 1991a, 1991b). Likewise, prosocial student characteristics that have been found to be mediating variables that positively impacted achievement include both the ability to elicit positive interactions and feedback from teachers and peers (Wentzel, 1999) and higher social skills and self-concept (Ray & Elliott, 2006).

Empirical support for the relationship between aspects of interpersonal skills and students' ability to be successful in the classroom is strong (Fleming et al., 2005; Parker et al., 2004; Petrides, Frederickson, & Furnham, 2004; Wentzel, 1991b). For example, the results of a study with secondary students ($N = 264$) found that the teacher-child relationship and social competence mediated the relationship between effortful control (i.e., the ability to control behavior in the classroom) and grades, indicating that a student's ability to maintain positive relationships in the classroom indirectly impacted his or her achievement (Valiente et al., 2008). Wentzel (1991a) demonstrated that, after

ISSUES OF EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE BEGIN IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

How students understand their motivational orientation plays a significant role in their ability to engage in and apply learning strategies (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). School counselors support motivation by (a) helping all students discover strengths and interests that can be aligned with educational goals and (b) underscoring the relationship between meaningful engagement in current coursework and future career opportunities (Scheel & Gonzales, 2007). Furthermore, school counselors can increase motivation by monitoring the health of the school climate. For example, results from one study found that African American adolescents were more likely to have positive motivation towards school if the school climate was marked by frequent intergroup interactions, fair treatment, and respect for all races (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas, 2003).

Engagement

School engagement is a developmental process that includes a collection of student behaviors, such as academic responding (e.g., reading aloud) and

Manzeske, and Estell (2009) found that higher academic achievement and positive social skills (i.e., peer friendship quality, support) in third grade contributed to increased levels of school engagement in fifth grade. This study also found that boys, students from families with lower incomes, and students who participated in overtly aggressive behaviors had lower levels of engagement in fifth grade.

Beginning in elementary school, students who are unwilling or unable to engage in the learning process can suffer severe consequences, such as dropping out of school (Princiotta, Reyna, & National Governors Association, 2009). Students who feel disconnected from the school community may lower their expectations of graduation and lack academic plans beyond high school (Bidell & Deacon, 2010). Elementary school counselors who focus on increasing student participation in school, especially through the integration of interpersonal skills, can provide a protective skill set for students who may be in danger of leaving school in later years.

controlling for IQ, gender, ethnicity, school absences, and family structure, socially responsible behavior (i.e., the degree to which students adhere to social rules and role expectations) almost entirely mediated the relationship between grades and other aspects of social competence (i.e., self-regulatory processes). A study on achievement-promoting interpersonal characteristics, such as attention regulation, commitment to school, and social and problem solving skills, displayed the strongest associations with increased academic achievement as evidenced by standardized tests and grades (Fleming et al., 2005). Finally, research on a group counseling program facilitated by school counselors aimed at improving the academic and social competence of elementary and middle school students found that 85% of students in the treatment group improved their math scores in a state standardized test by an average of 27 points (Webb et al., 2005).

In contrast, disruptive classroom behaviors, such as acting impulsively, defying authority, arguing with peers, and/or failing to comply with school rules, interrupt instruction and student learning (Bidell & Deacon, 2010; Powell & Newgent, 2008; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). Such inappropriate behaviors are occurring in school classrooms with growing frequency, resulting in increased disciplinary referrals and lowered academic achievement (Lambert, Cartledge, & Heward, 2006), particularly when these activities begin in elementary school (Vitaro, Brendgen, Larosse, & Trembaly, 2005). It is clear that, as part of a comprehensive school counseling program, elementary counselors' efforts to develop and foster interpersonal skills in students would be a worthwhile endeavor not only to promote healthy social and emotional competence but also to support academic competence. Within this effort, school counselors have a responsibility to create a culturally sensitive climate where respect for differing cultural social norms is expected.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Research has demonstrated that the strength of students' academic enabler skills can enhance or hinder academic competence. Elliot, DiPerna, Mroch, and Lang (2004) found that "at-risk" students (i.e., students receiving free and reduced lunch) and males in grades K – 12 were rated by their teachers as possessing lower levels of academic enablers than their peers. Furthermore, research has indicated that teachers do not have adequate time to provide specific instruction on academic enablers (Zimmerman, 1998). However, school counselors, by nature of their training in student development, can bridge this gap by providing encouragement and explicit instruction in these areas (DiPerna, 2006; DiPerna & Elliott, 2002). The academic enablers' framework is a simple yet powerful tool elementary school counselors can use to link their programs with students' academic competence with an ultimate goal of increasing academic achievement through improved test scores, grades, and graduation rates. This section will detail specific examples for how elementary school counselors can (a) determine the degree of intervention needed, (b) incorporate strategies for teaching academic enablers, (c) utilize accountability tools to demonstrate positive changes in student development, and (d) influence constructive systemic change with educational partners.

Because prior academic achievement is the strongest predictor of future achievement (DiPerna, 2006), school counselors are encouraged to first assess any student academic skills deficiencies. One way to accomplish this is through the review of academic records, interpretation of previous test scores, and examination of course grades to determine patterns of academic strengths and weaknesses (DiPerna, 2006). Parents and teachers can be interviewed to gain a deeper perspective on a student's difficulties. After the severity of academic skill deficits has been determined, the next step is assessing the presence of academic enablers and identifying possible relationships between shortcomings and academic performance (DiPerna, Volpe, & Elliott, 2001). One useful, reliable, and cost-effective tool for assessing academic enablers is the Academic Competence Evaluation Scales (ACES; DiPerna & Elliot, 2000). The ACES instrument is a user-friendly method for teachers and students to assess the attitudes, skills, and behaviors contributing to academic competence, which is reported on two scales (academic skills, academic enablers). Internal consistencies for the teacher report range from .94 to .99 (median .97) and test-retest reliability ranges from .88 to .97 (2- to 3-week interval). Reliability for the academic enablers subscales (*interpersonal skills, engagement, motivation, study skills*) ranges from .83 to .96 (DiPerna & Elliott, 2000).

After making a careful evaluation, school counselors can target their interventions to accommodate varying levels of deficit. Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTII; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006) allows school counselors the flexibility to deliver universal programs for all students, to target interventions for students at

> ## THE CENTRAL TENET OF THE ACADEMIC ENABLERS' FRAMEWORK IS THAT WHAT IS LEARNED IN SCHOOL IS MADE UP OF BOTH ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC SKILLS.

risk, and to offer one-on-one interventions for students who are in crisis. In practice, RTII and the academic enablers' framework complement one another to ensure students receive the services they need to be successful in school. After examining data gathered from key stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, teachers), achievement outcomes (e.g., test scores, grades), and academic enablers (e.g., ACES), an elementary school counselor may discover a group of students are in need of a supplemental intervention to improve their math skills for an upcoming standardized test. This information then can be used to create a weekly, standards-aligned (e.g., ASCA Student Standards, state standards), 30-45 minute small group counseling unit addressing deficits in academic enablers that includes (a) creating a test preparation study plan (*study skills*), (b) understanding the connection between homework completion and increased exam scores (*engagement*), (c) learning how to collaborate with peers to enhance test preparation (*interpersonal skills*), and (d) appreciating the

livery (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). First, interventions should be *sequenced* in a thoughtfully coordinated approach so that skills can be learned in a meaningful way. Practically speaking, a school counselor would not ask students to role play strategies for resolving a classroom dispute without first teaching the steps to effective conflict resolution. Next, interventions should be *active* so that students have ample time to practice new behaviors (Durlak et al., 2010). Interactive activities (e.g., art, movement, group discussion, multimedia) are not only effective for skill retention but also match the developmental level of elementary students. Third, interventions should be *focused* to include adequate time and resources for the development of academic enablers to occur. Due to excessive demands placed on school counselors' time, they must take precautions to guard against pressures to rush through or cancel lessons. One helpful tool is the development and distribution of monthly calendars that list classroom guidance lessons, group sessions, and

strate the correct way to perform an enabling skill. When school counselors break down enabler skills into simple, manageable steps and accompany each with explicit instruction, students are able to understand and adopt specific skills as a viable learning strategy. Furthermore, watching the school counselor complete each skill accurately and hearing praise for their own successful attempts will strengthen students' self efficacy and determination. For example, the school counselor might role play with a group of students the process for appropriately approaching their teachers for help on an assignment (*engagement*).

Because students often learn better by performing a skill (Durek, 1997; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001), providing ample opportunities to practice or *imitate* enabling skills will increase the chances of behavior acquisition. Utilizing an instructional technique called *scaffolding* (Vygotsky, 1978) can help students bridge the gap between dependence on the counselor to perform the enabling skill and the ability to complete the task by themselves. According to Van de Pol, Volman, and Beishuizen (2010), scaffolding refers to "the temporary support provided for the completion of a task that learners otherwise might not be able to complete" (p. 272). Common scaffolding techniques include breaking the task down into developmentally manageable parts, prompting students to think through the task out loud, working with peers, using intentional prompting, and praising students when they are successful. Then, as students become more competent, counselors purposefully reduce their level of involvement. An example of scaffolding might be when a school counselor works individually with a struggling student to develop the necessary skills to cooperate with peers (interpersonal skills) to complete an academic task. At first, the elementary school counselor might be present in the classroom for a selected period of time during group work to coach and reinforce appropriate behaviors. As the number of successful peer interac-

SCHOOL COUNSELORS CAN INCREASE MOTIVATION BY MONITORING THE HEALTH OF THE SCHOOL CLIMATE.

value of working towards a long-term goal (*motivation*). This type of service delivery aligns with the ASCA (2008) position statement addressing the school counselor's role in RTII to analyze "academic and behavioral data to identify struggling students" and to "design and implement plans to address the needs of struggling students" (p. 1). Furthermore, recent research has demonstrated that students benefit academically and personally when elementary school counselors assume a leadership role on RTII teams (Ryan, Kaffenberger, Carroll, & Gleason, 2011).

Regardless of the type of intervention chosen, the acronym S.A.F.E. (sequenced, active, focused, explicit) reminds school counselors of important features in quality program de-

programs for educational partners (ASCA, 2012). Finally, interventions should be *explicit* by targeting specific skills. Before beginning any activity, school counselors should clearly state (a) what will happen during the session, (b) what they expect students to learn, and (c) how they wish students to behave.

School counselors can utilize several teaching strategies in large or small group settings to reinforce academic enabler skill development. Strategies from social cognitive theory can be modified and infused into the academic enablers' framework to support the development of specific skills (Bandera, 1986; Bandera & Walters, 1963; Gettinger & Seibert, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). First, through *modeling*, elementary counselors can demon-

tions increases, the school counselor is able to transition into a more observational role

When students are able to perform enabling skills on their own, they have demonstrated *self control*. At this level, the school counselor's role is to encourage students to seek out real situations in which to practice the skill. For example, after a classroom guidance lesson on organization (*study skill*), the school counselor might challenge students to think about other areas of their lives that they can put in order (e.g., desk, locker) that would enhance their academic performance. To extend learning, students can be asked to report on their successes and challenges during subsequent lessons. Peer tutoring is another way to prolong learning by providing students more time to practice enabling skills with a classmate who can offer immediate positive feedback. Research has shown this strategy not only increases ownership of learning but also has a moderate to large impact on key educational outcomes (i.e., course grades), especially for students with disabilities (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013; Okilwa & Shelby 2010). Once students are able to adapt the skill to different learning situations, they are considered able to *self-regulate* enabling strategies. When students reach these milestones, the school counselor can provide encouragement (e.g., praise, rewards) and continue to monitor students' progress.

No matter which enabling skill is being addressed, it is vital that elementary school counselors demonstrate that their efforts are making a difference with students' academic competence. Even more important is clearly linking these differences to changes in academic achievement measures. Applying results data is an extremely powerful method for making a connection between interventions focusing on academic enablers, academic competence, and, ultimately, academic achievement (Brott, 2006). Outcome data describe the impact of interventions on key academic achievement measures, such as grades, attendance, and test scores (Kaffenberger & Young, 2009; Pennsylvania

School Counselors Association, 2011). For example, when elementary school counselors conduct small groups designed to improve participants' study skills (*academic enabler*), results data can be used to describe the relationship between skills learned and positive improvement in grades (i.e., academic achievement measure).

STUDENTS BENEFIT ACADEMICALLY AND PERSONALLY WHEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS ASSUME A LEADERSHIP ROLE ON RTII TEAMS.

Once school counselors establish a positive connection between the mastery of academic enabling skills, students' academic competence, and achievement performance, sharing the results with both their students and the larger school community is imperative (Brott, 2006). For example, during a session with students on social skills, school counselors can provide examples of the relationship between asking for help (*engagement*) and increased academic competence. Likewise, using electronic formats (e.g., departmental websites) or print media (e.g., newsletters), school counselors can promote their successes as well as reinforce the necessity of having comprehensive school counseling programs to support student achievement. Results reports, such as the GRIP (Goals, Results, Impact Statements, Program Implications; Brott, 2006) and DATA (Design, Analyze, Track, Announce; Kaffenberger, & Young, 2009), help school counselors organize and present information in a concise, meaningful way to key stakeholders.

School counselors also can offer programs targeting academic enablers to key educational partners, such as parents or teachers. Teachers, in particular, play a significant role in cultivating a learning environment that is academically challenging and allows for social and emotional growth (Wentzel, 2003). As one example, school counselors can advocate for

time during staff meetings or in-service trainings to discuss practical strategies for increasing classroom-appropriate interpersonal skills. Research has shown that parents of students who are academically at-risk perceive teacher-student interactions as barriers (e.g., blame students for misbehavior, lack of classroom discipline) but lack

knowledge of how to address these barriers (Griffin & Galassi, 2010). School counselors can educate and provide support for both teachers and families on the importance of forming partnerships based on respect and communication to help students, especially those from culturally diverse backgrounds, understand differing social expectations, particularly those connected to academic achievement such as participation in extracurricular activities (Szu-Yin, 2011). Critical features of these partnerships include (a) parental leadership from all groups represented within the school, (b) understanding of nontraditional social interactions, and (c) programs that integrate the specific needs of the community with school expectations (Dotson-Blake, 2010). For example, families can be invited to evening workshops or to PTA meetings with a focus on strategies for effective communication with school staff (*interpersonal skills*), steps to motivate their children to complete homework (*motivation*), and how to locate school resources (*engagement*). Such an event applies a strengths-based perspective, which is particularly important in being culturally responsive, as studies have shown that cultural variables, such as racial pride, are connected to grade achievement in students of color, especially those living in low income neighborhoods (Byrd & Chavous, 2009). Parents and/or guardians can

be encouraged to share information, successes, and challenges as ways to increase positive collaboration among families and school counselors as they partner together to support student achievement. Finally, considering that many times, school counselors have not benefited from professional development specific to their roles in the school (Dahir et al., 2009), school counselors with success facilitating interventions that feature academic enablers can present workshops for their colleagues at national, state, and local conferences.

CONCLUSION

The academic enablers framework can be applied to support the role of elementary school counselors in helping students make the most of their educational experience. First, the framework provides a model for how program delivery can include interventions targeting academic skills as important variables for strengthening academic competence and ultimately student achievement. Second, specific enablers can be linked to student standards to demonstrate a connection between school counseling program intervention strategies and the mastery of skills that promote academic competence. Since recent research has demonstrated that elementary school counselors possess internal motivation to implement interventions that are best for their programs (Barna & Brott, 2012), it is reasonable to assume these strategies would be a welcomed addition to the many responsive services planned. The authors have shared practical recommendations and specific examples to increase the possibility that these enabling skills be incorporated into existing school counseling programs.

Although research on academic enablers is plentiful, additional studies are needed to explore the relationships between school counseling program delivery that highlights academic enablers, increased academic competence, and improvement on student achievement outcome measures. In particular, studies that examine the impact of specific enablers on measures of academic competence and academic achievement will greatly increase an understanding of how these skills, attitudes, and behaviors can be most efficiently implemented to support student learning. Ultimately, elementary school counseling programs need to be seen as significant contributors to student achievement. Academic enablers provide school counselors with a concrete, practical framework in providing responsive services to students, parents, and teachers to increase student academic competence that supports student achievement.

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