

Counseling Department Implementation of the ASCA National Model

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By  
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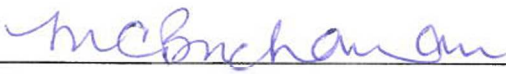
  
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## Chapter One: Introduction

### Counseling Department Implementation of the ASCA National Model

High school counselors are one of the most important resources to support students' academic success. When students enroll in high school, they are referred to the counseling office not just for a schedule of classes, but to be guided in their academic endeavors. According to the American School Counselor Association National Model, school counselors support students focusing on three domains: academic, career and personal/social development (American School Counselor Association, 2012). In several states, schools have adopted the ASCA National Model to improve the organization of the counseling department. The implementation of the ASCA National Model assists comprehensive counseling programs with the foundation, management, delivery and accountability of the counseling department functions (American School Counselor Association, 2012).

Although research shows how the ASCA National Model is effective, there are still schools in need of restructuring the counseling department by implementing features of the ASCA National Model. Due to the various roles and responsibilities along with the lack of organization there is a need to restructure the counseling department in order to meet the needs of all students. Also, there are various factors contributing to counselors feeling overwhelmed and not completing all of their counseling responsibilities.

Using the four-frame model as referred by Bolman and Deal (2013), this counseling issue mainly fits in the structural frame because at Central Valley High School (CVHS a pseudonym) the counseling department is lacking structure and clear goals to clearly meet the needs of all students; mainly, counselors are focused on helping at-risk or high achieving students. It is the

opinion of this researcher, who has served in the role of counselor for nine years that there are no clear goals to meet with all students. Those in the average range often do not receive the academic guidance they need. In addition, this issue also fits in the human resources management frame because counselors need additional resources in order to effectively help students and their families. Consequently, counselors and guidance technicians are overworked, which in some cases leads to stress (McCarthy, Van Horn Kerne, Calfa, Lambert, & Guzman, 2010).

When one does research about other counseling programs in the nation, one can find that other schools have experienced similar problems to the ones at CVHS. Among studies, Moyer (2011) mentions how large caseloads and school counselors being assigned non-counseling duties can cause school counselors to feel overwhelmed thus, this can affect students. There was also another study done for the state of Utah by Carey, Harrington, and Martin (2012) where there was an evaluation of high school counseling programs. Furthermore, in this study there was a focus on the benefits for students when implementing the ASCA National Model. This and other literature demonstrates the need for counseling departments to be restructured and implement strategies to support all students. To align with accepted best practices in the field, counseling departments need to be an efficient and successful place because this is where students, parents, and staff seek additional support (American School Counselor Association, 2005).

Given the limited time available to this researcher, further studies are needed to fully examine what is effectively working in counseling departments in general and the correlation with successful college students. In addition, minimal research attention has been directed to the

new challenges counselors have with the implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) curriculum.

By analyzing the data gathered for this case study, school officials will be able to have a better understanding of the challenges counselors encounter on a daily basis. In addition, school administrators will be able to plan interventions to support high school counselors and develop strategic plans to support their counseling department. Ultimately, school administrators can work more collaboratively with their counseling staff to ensure that all students receive the support services needed to succeed academically.

Given the situation described above, the purpose of this research study is to determine the degree by which educational leaders require a well-structured counseling department in which all students receive appropriate counseling services. This could be achieved by using features of the ASCA National Model and measuring the extent to which implementing these measures positively affects student achievement. Therefore, future administrators need to take the lead in changing what is not working to meet the needs of all students and school counselors. The research question that will be used for this study is the following: Which features of the ASCA National Model when implemented by counselors and administrators significantly improve the organization of counseling programs at the high school level? By incorporating this research question, one will be able to identify the variables that are affecting the counseling department and the impact it is having on student academic achievement. Ultimately, suggestions will be provided to improve the counseling department at CVHS.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### *Introduction*

As stated in chapter one, the role of school counselors is essential to the academic success of students (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011). However, due to various roles and responsibilities along with the lack of structural organization there is a need to restructure counseling departments to serve all pupils. Also, there are various factors contributing to counselors feeling overwhelmed and not completing all of their counseling responsibilities (Moyer, 2011). Currently, in most school districts, counselors are expected to meet with students and help them create four-year plans or ten-year plans. This expectation is different than what counselors were expected to do in the early 1900s. The progression from vocational or guidance counseling to comprehensive counseling is a significant change in perspective (Scarborough & Luke, 2008). The purpose of this research study is to explore strategies to develop a comprehensive counseling program to support students by using features of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model. Therefore, the question used for this study based on this model is the following:

- 1) Which features of the ASCA National Model when implemented by counselors and administrators significantly improve the organization of counseling programs at the high school level?

In this chapter, subtitles have been included to guide the reader. First of all, a historical overview is provided as background knowledge about how the counseling profession has evolved over time. This research is grouped into three common themes: counseling roles and responsibilities; collaboration between school counselors and administrators; and effective



counseling programs. In addition, the research has been analyzed and incorporated to demonstrate the various challenges counselors encounter on a daily basis. Connections to literature, will be summarized, and evaluated.

### *Overview of the Context of Literature Review*

It is imperative that educational leaders stay current with updated information involving counseling programs. Administrators working at the high school level need to be well aware of the needs of the counseling department because counselors can be key contributors to student academic success (American School Counselor Association, 2005; Anderson, 2010). In addition, schools as organizations are designed to support student academic achievement. As part of the same organization, the counseling office needs to implement effective activities to support all pupils. Educational leaders need to be knowledgeable on how to lead counseling departments. The literature review presented in this chapter is crucial for the implementation of well-organized and well-structured comprehensive counseling departments.

The American School Counselor Association provides a framework to develop and implement well-structured counseling programs by using the ASCA National Model. The ASCA National Model serves as a framework to be applied in school settings based on their needs (Bryan et al., 2011). This framework helps with the clarification of the role and direction of school counseling programs (Pyne, 2011). This research study is influenced by the ASCA National Model framework to develop and implement effective counseling programs. Bolman and Deal (2013) describe frames as windows and lenses capturing the idea we want to communicate. Such lenses are vital for organizations because they contribute to the overall structure of the entire school. From an administrator's view point, using the Four-Frame Model,

this study would mainly fit in the structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). By using this frame this researcher will be able to focus on gathering data that will help with the restructuring some of the components of the counseling department. This frame will also assist in creating clear goals to support students, including those in the average range. Through the lenses of the structural frame, counseling departments can be well-structured by having clear and measurable goals supporting all pupils. Also, focusing on a mission and having well-defined roles and responsibilities will lead to high level of performance (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In improving the organization of the schools, one must also think about the conceptual and theoretical frameworks when conducting a research study.

Thinking about theoretical frameworks, school counselors are viewed as leaders who advocate for all pupils, and who collaborate with other educators to implement practices to increase student learning (Janson, 2009). When analyzing several theoretical and conceptual frameworks, this researcher agrees with Janson (2009), who states that there is no single definite leadership theory or singular model leading our schools. Rather, school counselors can be equipped with information of multiple theoretical as well as conceptual leadership lenses (Janson, 2009). He also states that a larger set of approaches will give counselors the opportunity to practice leadership in new ways. However, for this study, the dominant theoretical framework will be restricted to social capital theory.

Lin (2001), states that school is the prevailing extra familial institution and, therefore, the primary source of social capital. One can use the social relationships or social networks in school, to improve a lifestyle. In schools, we have school counselors who are placed in educational settings to support students academically and behaviorally, covering all three counseling domains (American School Counselor Association, 2012). School counselors assist

students in various ways, including college counseling. Therefore, counselors can be a significant source of social capital for students, at the micro level, through interpersonal connections as they work with students (Bryan et al., 2011; Croninger & Lee, 2001). In some cases when students want to attend four-year colleges, they do not have much more support outside of their school counselor. Using social capital theory as a framework, this study will examine data to find strategies that could be implemented by school counselors to support all students. As educational leaders, counselors are seen to be an effective resource to others which is an important element when considering their leadership (Janson, 2009).

When analyzing and comparing literature, the criteria used by this researcher, was to focus on research studies in which features of the ASCA National Model have been implemented. State governments as well as national studies were incorporated in this study. Throughout the nation, other states have conducted research studies that could help improve counseling programs in California. While reviewing literature, certain common elements in quantitative, qualitative and mixed method studies were revealed. This literature review explores these elements such as collaboration among school administrators and counselors, use of data, barriers to being an effective counselor, and counselors' roles and responsibilities. This literature review excludes foreign school counseling studies because the main focus of this study as mentioned previously, confines itself to the United States, and relies on the ASCA National Model.

### ***History of School Counseling Programs***

Throughout history, the role of the school counselor has changed. The profession of vocational guidance, changed to school counselor. As the title changed, the roles and

responsibilities also changed for school counselors. In the early 1900s, the vocational guidance movement was founded and Frank Parsons, the “Father of *Guidance*,” was one of the early theorists on vocational guidance (Zunker, 2002). He contributed to the vocational movement, a three-part formulation process that consisted of studying the individual, surveying occupations, and matching the individual with the occupation. His conceptual framework became the foundation of many vocational counseling programs, such as colleges and universities initiating an interest in career guidance among the nation (Zunker, 2002). During this time vocational guidance led to the creation of the National Vocation Guidance Association (NVGA) and its evolution contributed to significant changes, such that today we recognize school counseling as a profession (Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

In the 1930s Edmund G. Williamson expanded Parson’s work, and his approach to counseling became known as directive counseling (Zunker, 2002). As also mentioned by G. W. Lambie and L. Williamson (2004), Edmund Williamson’s directive administrative approach is apparently an expectation we currently have of current school counselors. A counselor’s expectation is to generate desired student behavior, but with the least student input (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). It is interesting that in spite of changes in education, there are still certain expectations influenced from the early 1900s on how counselors should counsel students. When presenting the historical overview of counseling movements, one must mention Carl Rogers known as the “Father of *Counseling*.” His work has had a tremendous effect on the development of the counseling profession when it comes to individual counseling. He stated that counselors should provide a safe environment for their students and empathize with the client’s experience (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Before the 1950s there was limited professional preparation for school counselors, but this changed with the formation of ASCA in 1952. This organization

supported the counseling profession by providing professional development, among other resources (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). In addition to significant structured contributions, specific movements and organizations like ASCA had an influence on specific counselor roles and responsibilities.

Historically, the different legislative educational acts affected students' educational needs that directly impacted the role of counselors. Expectations of school counselors' roles have changed with time. In 1958, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act with the purpose of providing counseling services to only high school students with demonstrated higher achievement. Counselors were expected to guide them toward college. In 1964, this act also assisted with the extension of counseling services at the elementary school level to guide gifted students (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). As one reads this information, one thinks about the students who were *not* gifted and obviously not getting the support they needed to continue with higher education. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 provided funding for counseling to help career guidance programs to support disadvantaged students and students with disabilities (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). However, even then counseling services were not extended to all students. In 1975, with the Educational Act for All Handicapped Children, mandating free public education for all students, the school counselors' role changed again when working with students with special needs. For example, they were expected to collaborate during the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process (Baker & Gerler, 2004). This educational act had a major impact in the school counseling profession, adding new responsibilities to counselors requiring them to work with all children including handicapped students. In 1990, ASCA advocated a move away from *guidance* counseling, identifying the profession as *school* counseling, resulting in some professionals identifying themselves as professional school

counselors (Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Scarborough & Luke, 2008). Interestingly, analyzed literature previously mentioned does not include how information has been shared with school staff and community members regarding changes in the school counseling profession.

### ***Counselors Role and Responsibilities***

Thinking about what counselors focus should be, one reflects on counselors' roles and responsibilities. However, any ambiguity occludes the clarity of district roles and responsibilities of school counselors (Pyne, 2011). The following research study shows the relationship between the demands of school counselors and their stress levels, among other negative factors.

McCarthy, Van Horn Kerne, Calfa, Lambert, and Guzman (2010), demonstrate the negative impact on schools counselors when they are assigned responsibilities not directly related to traditional counseling duties. The study took place in Texas, with 227 participants, both female and male school counselors in private and public schools. Four research questions were examined and data were collected through surveys. In this study, it was emphasized that the requirements of completing paperwork and the sizes of caseloads were the most demanding duties of counselors. The author described how school counseling programs have evolved from a focus on vocational development to a proactive approach aligned to the schools' mission statement. Such development in counseling is mainly associated with changes in educational structure and policy (McCarthy et al., 2010).

The article also includes how the ASCA National Model lists different ways in which school counselors can fulfill their mission and collaborate with others. It also addresses the various ways in which counselors are assigned inappropriate duties such as addressing student discipline. Furthermore, this article presents mainly quantitative research on how counselors

experience stress. Findings concluded that counselors not planning to continue with their occupation the following school year stated having more stress. However, a limitation in this study is that the sample of participants was not done randomly. Another limitation was the fact that the study only took place in the state of Texas. In addition, as this research was analyzed, it was reported that there was a low response rate. A gap found in this research study, was the focus on only understanding counselor stress in three categories to attain a more comprehensive understanding. Future research for this study would be to incorporate, administrative climate as well as student characteristics (McCarthy et al., 2010). According to Baggerly and Osborn (2006), some of the factors contributing to counselors' stress are responsibilities labeled as inappropriate for school counselors, resulting in them experiencing less job satisfaction and commitment (McCarthy et al., 2010).

Anderson (2010) in *Culturally considerate school counseling: Helping without bias*, as well as Leuwerke et al. (2009), mention how there is a discrepancy between school counselors' and principals' perceptions of suitable duties of a counselor's job (Anderson, 2010; Leuwerke et al., 2009). Role inconsistencies impact the relationship between school counselors and administrators as well as faculty (Anderson, 2010). The relationship between these two professions is influenced by demands to increase student achievement, and school accountability among other factors. In fact, school counselors feel their profession is difficult when they sense lack of support from administration (Anderson, 2010). There are specific ways in which school administrators could be supportive of counseling programs. For example, exposure to the ASCA National Model can significantly impact a principal's perception of school counselors (Anderson, 2010).

### *Collaboration Between School Counselors and Administrators*

School administrators need to be more knowledgeable about the role of counselors. Sometimes professional counselors must be the educational leaders who collaborate with administration to improve the relationship. As stated by Anderson (2010), when both school counselors and administrators work together there is a decrease in discipline problems. Additionally, school counselors also need to be aware of what encourages a healthy relationship with principals. Leuwerke et al. (2009), state that administrators value counselors when they show skills such as problem solving and the ability to effect change on campus.

Williams and Wehrman (2010), address the issue of confidentiality in schools. It is evident that there is lack of clarity among educational leaders concerning the specific responsibilities related to school counseling. To clarify the role of school counselors, the ASCA and Education Trust developed the ASCA National Model and the Transforming the School Counseling Profession Initiative. Such programs were established to assist with the implementation of counseling programs. Furthermore, the article focuses on the effectiveness of implementing such programs since school counselors need to address three counseling domains: academic, career and social/personal (American School Counselor Association, 2005). Although, models have been developed to have effective counseling programs, Williams and Wehrman, (2010) mention that there is still a gap in understanding between professional school counselors and administrators. One misunderstanding between school counselors and administrators is when to disclose confidential information about students. However, in this article, administrators and counselors are encouraged to work collaboratively, resulting in an established positive working relationship. According to this article, current counseling approaches embrace a supportive understanding approach to effectively support all pupils. Furthermore, dilemmas concerning



confidentially were also analyzed, explaining that school counselors must rely on professional ethics. Finally, this article also addresses common ways in which educational leaders can address student concerns (Williams & Wehrman, 2010).

School principals often have the best intentions in collaborating with school counselors to help strengthen the students' support system. As Williams and Wehrman (2010) reported, school principals often do not know when school counselors can disclose confidential information. Both sets of professionals are working toward a common goal, which is to increase students' achievement. However, the information students share with counselors is confidential. Counselors need to follow the code of ethics and not breach confidentiality simply due to the fact that an administrator is requesting the information (American School Counselor Association, 2005; Moyer, Sullivan, & Growcock, 2012). Despite conflict of roles, professional school counselors and administrators have the obligation to work collaboratively to help students improve in various areas such as academics and personal aspirations. Furthermore, policies at the school district level can influence outcomes in this matter. Understanding each other's duties will positively impact student academic achievement.

### *Effective Counseling Programs*

When one does research about various counseling program structures in the nation, one can find that schools in other states have experienced similar problems to the ones found today in counseling departments in California. Among studies, Moyer (2011) mentions how large caseloads and school counselors being assigned non-counseling duties can cause them to feel overwhelmed, thus, affecting students. The study done in Utah by Carey, Harrington, Martin and Stevenson (2012), focused on the benefits for students when implementing the ASCA National

Model. This study included a statewide evaluation of high school counseling programs. A historical perspective on the statewide initiatives to improve school counseling was incorporated. It was reported that in mid-1990s, Utah was one of the few states where funds were dedicated to the implementation of comprehensive developmental school counseling programs. In 2008, the state school counseling model was updated to incorporate features of the ASCA National Model. Carey et al., (2012) focused on two research questions, one of them being the association between specific features of the ASCA National Model and their relationship with students' outcomes. Eighty-eight school counselors from rural, suburban and urban schools were part of this study. They completed a survey, which included descriptive and demographic items. The methodology also included a 4-point Likert Scale as participants rated the school counseling program characteristics. Additionally, this study included correlational analyses. The results indicated that several features of Utah's counseling programs were associated with student educational outcomes. This study shows that when school counseling programs are effectively implemented by differentiating their delivery system, this is linked to higher student graduation rates (Carey et al., 2012). As mentioned by Carey et al. (2012), the results of this research suggest the following:

Benefits to students are associated with the implementation of a comprehensive developmental guidance model and indicate that implementing features of the ASCA National Model is also associated with improved student outcomes. The findings support the contention that implementing an ASCA National Model program may result in tangible benefits to students. (pp. 97-98)

The research study previously presented, demonstrates the need for counseling departments to be restructured and to implement strategies to support all students. To align with

accepted best practices in the field, counseling departments need to provide efficient and effective successful services because this is where students, parents, and staff seek additional support (American School Counselor Association, 2005).

Counselors are often seen as behavioral therapists but their role has changed over time. According to Lindsey and Stephens (2011), counselors must be incorporated in school decision-making and data analysis. This involvement on behalf of school counselors has an impact in student achievement such as an increase in graduation rates. In their book, Lindsey and Stephens (2011) incorporate an overview of national counseling standards, and in addition they guide the reader to implement and evaluate comprehensive counseling programs using data. A helpful section for school counselors in this book encourages such professionals to collaborate and explore their functioning as school leaders and agents of change. In order for school administrators to make a positive impact in counseling programs these two sets of professionals must work together and implement programs that will benefit all students. School counselors are trained to develop and implement counseling programs that serve students. In addition, they have the skills to collect and analyze data to help support all students (Lindsey & Stephens, 2011).

### *Connection to the Literature*

It is clear that school counselors' roles and responsibilities have changed over time. In recent years, there is a need for school counseling programs to be comprehensive, including all students (Lindsey & Stephens, 2011). In addition to counselors' changing roles, several authors have also explored the discrepancies between the collaboration among school counselors and administrators (Williams & Wehrman, 2010). Indeed, this collaboration is essential because it has an impact on students' academic performance. The reviewed literature also explores how the

ASCA National Model is effective and supports comprehensive counseling programs. In this section, connections in the researched literature will be made in order to support this research study on which features of the ASCA National Model when implemented support counseling programs at the secondary level.

Anderson (2010) shows inconsistencies when school administrators and counselors do not work well together, emphasizing that these two groups of professionals need to engage to support student achievement. It is imperative that school administrators communicate and collaborate with school counselors to ensure that they are performing tasks that are aligned to the ASCA National Model to avoid stressing counselors. School counselors need to feel supported and perform to the best of their ability because they have an impact on students' academic achievement (Carey et al., 2012). Having educational leaders understand others' differences and expectations will encourage a positive relationship (Leuwerke et al., 2009).

Instructional leaders such as administrators need to be aware of the duties and responsibilities faced by counselors on a daily basis. By being aware, administrators can make a significant impact in counseling programs. Administrators and other educational leaders can make a difference and decrease counselors' caseloads, which is one of the factors that is affecting counseling departments. This issue was presented by McCarthy et al. (2010), as well as Anderson (2010) where it is evident that large caseloads have a negative impact on counselors. It is important that in addition to the American School Counselor Association (2005), other authors also expressed the need to decrease counselors' caseloads. Apparently, a more comprehensive counseling approach is attainable, by decreasing a counselor's caseload. It may result in meeting the needs of all pupils. Considering the ASCA National Model, when features of this model are implemented, counseling programs experience greater counselor satisfaction as well as an

increase in student achievement (Carey et al., 2012). Therefore, this current research study will be relevant to the increase of comprehensive counseling programs incorporating features of the ASCA National Model.

Professional development offered to administrators and other educators including community members on the roles and responsibilities of school counselors is lacking. This reveals another gap in the literature reviewed. Research does provide suggestions on the collaboration counselors can initiate to improve specific areas or relationships (Anderson, 2010). However, administrators at the school, district, and state level need more information on how to improve the work environment for counselors. With the implementation of new school-wide intervention programs such as the Response to Intervention (RTI) and Common Core State Standards (CCSS), staff is educated on the new responsibilities teachers have. Also, training is provided for all. However, when major educational changes affect counseling departments, who is responsible for updating teachers, and parents? A gap in the reviewed research relates to is the exploration on how the roles and responsibilities of school counselors are understood by teachers. This is an area that could be further explored by researching the impact on student achievement when school counselors and teachers collaborate.

Another gap in the reviewed literature is the fact that no studies regarding the evaluation of the implementation of the ASCA National Model were found for local schools in the local county where this study took place. Research was conducted to find out if current high school counseling programs in Southern California have restructured their program incorporating features of the ASCA National Model, but no studies were found. The literature available mainly pertains to research studies at the elementary school level. Duarte and Hatch (2015), present a research study in which counseling programs implemented features of the previously mentioned

model. A difference in such implementation is that it had a focus on violence prevention curriculum and not just elements of the ASCA National Model. Additionally, participants in this study ranged from kindergarten through fifth grade. This research study was not focused on interviewing school counselors. There is a need for school counselors to “sound their own voices” and be participants in research studies specifically in regards to their leadership roles (Janson, 2009). Therefore, the proposed research study will be beneficial for other high schools that want to incorporate features of the ASCA National Model. In the proposed research study, school counselors will be the main participants. School counselors will be able to provide their ideas for improving their work environment to benefit pupils.

### ***Conclusion***

The role of school counselors has been evolving since late 1900s and counseling programs are in need of restructuring (Pyne, 2011). Counseling departments benefit by implementing features from the ASCA National Model to improve structural organization and improve student outcomes (Carey et al., 2012). Therefore, the following question will be explored to find out new and effective ways to support school counselors: Which features of the ASCA National Model when implemented by counselors significantly improve the organization of comprehensive counseling programs at the secondary level? Furthermore, this research study will include qualitative data which will be gathered primarily by interviewing current school counselors. This information will be obtained by conducting one-on-one interviews with counselors. Participants in the proposed research study will also be instructed to complete a consent form in order to participate. The following chapter will explain in detail the various ways in which data will be collected and analyzed.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

#### ***Introduction***

The role of school counselors at the high school level is important because they support students covering three counseling domains (American School Counselor Association, 2005). At Central Valley High School (CVHS a pseudonym), there is a need to restructure programs implemented by counselors in order to meet the needs of all pupils. In addition to counselors' current job duties, in the school year 2015-2016 counselors will be expected to help create 10-year plans for all students. The purpose of this research study is to explore strategies to develop a comprehensive counseling program to serve all pupils by using features of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model. By conducting this study, this researcher will be able to identify areas for improvement and make recommendations to the counseling department on strategies that could be added to the program.

The recommendations will be based on features from the ASCA National Model. Conducting this study will benefit and support high school counselors who ultimately will have a positive impact on students (Lindsey & Stephens, 2011). In addition, administrators and counselors will be able to build stronger relationships and better understand each other's roles and responsibilities (Anderson, 2010). The research question for this study is the following: Which features of the ASCA National Model when implemented by counselors and administrators significantly improve the organization of counseling programs at the high school level?

A qualitative research method was used to identify strategies and features from the ASCA National Model that needed to be incorporated by the counseling department at CVHS. The participants selected for this section are current high school counselors at CVHS. The

selection of such participants was appropriate to answer the research question because they provided in-depth information about the tasks they performed on a daily basis. Qualitative methods were appropriate for this study because it gave counselors the opportunity to meet individually with the researcher, express how they felt about their job, and provide other relevant information. For instance, this research method benefited the researcher because as participants answered questions, the researcher was able to observe the participants' non-verbal cues.

According to Creswell (2012), this is beneficial to the research study because it adds perspective to what is being said, supporting the research study. This research study will add to existing research on the effectiveness of incorporating features of the ASCA National Model to comprehensive counseling programs at the high school level. At the outset, this chapter provides an overview of the participants, along with information about the setting in which the research took place. Secondly, a section on the instruments, procedures, and analysis is incorporated. Each subsection explains in detail, highlighting important aspects of this research study. Lastly, this methodology chapter provides concluding remarks and a preview of information in Chapter Four.

### ***Research Study Setting and Participants***

This research study took place in Southern California in CVHS primarily in the counseling office. This high school serves about 1,500 students in grades 9-12, of which 93.4% are Hispanic or Latino, predominantly Mexican-American. According to the School Accountability Report Card (SARC) published during the school year 2013-2014, 78.5% of students were enrolled in the free or reduced-price meal program, 28.4% qualified for English learner support and 10.6% received Special Education services. The school's vision is to work collaboratively as professionals and use data to drive instruction. This researcher has sensed the



feeling of community when one is around students and staff. As one walks around campus, one is greeted by members of the school community who are willing to help and guide as needed. Finally, students have a variety of clubs on campus where they can engage in school-related activities.

The counseling office is located in the main administration building, next to the principal's office and across from the assistant principals' offices. The counseling department is composed of four full-time counselors, a part-time special education counselor and a part-time intervention counselor. A full-time counseling technician and a full-time counseling technician assistant are located in the counseling office supporting counselors on a daily basis. All counselors and support staff are located in the counseling office except for the special education counselor who is located in a different office.

For this study, the participants selected included all four, full-time female counselors and the two part-time male counselors. One of the four full-time counselors who holds a Pupil Services Credential also has a Preliminary Administrative Services Credential. Another counselor who focuses on intervention earned a masters degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. The counselors' ages range from mid-20s to mid-50s. Four out of the six counselors are Caucasians. The other two counselors are Mexican-American and are fully bilingual. Three of the six counselors are new to the profession, having less than one year experience each. Two have over a decade of experience, working as school counselors, and one counselor has just under a decade of experience.

Restructuring a counseling department requires the input and leadership of counselors and administrators. Although all participants are adults, permission from administration was first

requested. Asking permission from current administrators is important because school administrators, as gatekeepers, need to be informed of activities happening on campus. Appendix A contains a copy of the gatekeeper letter, which was written to specifications recommended by Creswell (2012). After obtaining permission from the school principal, counselors who were invited to participate in this research study received consent forms. A copy of the informed consent form is included in Appendix B. Within four hours, all six school counselors had given this researcher their signed consent forms agreeing to participate in this research study. Counselors were informed that they had the option to no longer participate in the study at any time, without consequences. To minimize methodological risks, this researcher successfully completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) certification program.

Finally, this study was influenced from another research study that took place by Carey, Harrington, Martin and Stevenson (2012) where there was a statewide evaluation of high school counseling programs in Utah that also focused on the benefits for students when implementing the ASCA National Model. This study included 88 school counselors as participants. The results from this study indicated that when implementing features of the ASCA National Model, students are benefitted significantly (Carey, et al., 2012). Based on those findings this researcher decided to conduct a similar study with fewer participants, in one high school.

The small scale of this study allowed this researcher to expedite recommendations to the CVHS counseling department and school administrators. Those recommendations are beneficial because they clarify counselors' roles and responsibilities. As mentioned by Pyne, J. R. (2011), the roles and responsibilities of counselors are not always clear. Additionally, the research literature shows that students are best helped when counselors and school administrators are clear regarding each other's roles and responsibilities.

### *Instruments*

A qualitative research study, using a practical action research design, this study incorporated individual interview questions (Appendix C). The researcher has experienced the benefits and challenges of working in a counseling setting that has the vision of helping all students by incorporating the three counseling domains: academic, career and personal/social development (American School Counselor Association, 2012). While the researcher was working in the counseling department and learned through the administrative services credential program about organizational frameworks, realized there were still areas that could be restructured to benefit counselors and students. This researcher is currently a coworker of the participants in this study, and works under the supervision of the Director of Special Projects, but is not currently a school counselor.

For this research study, qualitative interviews were conducted, and the researcher asked participants twelve open-ended questions (Appendix C). In this study, six high school counselors were identified to participate and although it was a small sample, it required careful scheduling of interviews because of their work schedule. One-on-one interviews took place to collect the data. Although, the one-on-one interview is time-consuming (Creswell, 2012), it was the ideal approach in this study because participants were articulate and expressive. They also found themselves willing and comfortable to share their experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2012). School counselors felt during the interview that their ideas were essential to this study because based on the information they provided, they would be able to self-identify areas of need in their department.

The interview questions asked were composed from content provided in the Foundation, Management and Delivery sections of the ASCA National Model (American School Counselor Association, 2012). The focus on this section was because it has a greater focus on the structure part of a counseling department. The open-ended questions, listed in Appendix C, helped the researcher identify areas in which features of the ASCA National Model could be incorporated. For example, asking participants question #6: Do you have a counseling master calendar? If yes, to what degree do you rely on the counseling master calendar and monthly calendars to manage your time as well as to reflect about the goals of the counseling department? These questions identify if a master calendar was being used by participants and to what degree. Also, this helped answer the issue of a need to reorganize this school's counseling practice and align it to the ASCA National Model. According to the ASCA National Model, school counselors need to self-evaluate their counseling program and practices (American School Counselor Association, 2005). In addition, the following question #5 was asked: To what degree do you consistently self-evaluate your counseling practices?

As data was analyzed and coded, the researcher easily identified how often school counselors self-evaluated their practices. This process of collecting and evaluating data is recommended to improve certain areas of a counseling department with the goal of helping students succeed in an educational setting. Asking the following question (#10) helped identify how often school counselors and administrators collaborate: How often do you meet with administrators to plan for a comprehensive counseling program? This is a key question that needs to be considered because the ASCA National Model recommends that school counselors need to collaborate with school administrators. This was also emphasized in *Principals as partners: Counselor as collaborators* by Dahir, Burnham, Stone, and Cobb (2010). The authors

prefer that such collaboration leads to coherent and cohesive practices to the benefit of students. Lindsey and Stephens (2011), also explored the concept of the benefits in a school setting when administration and counselors work collaboratively.

### **Procedures**

During the counseling meeting, consent forms (Appendix B) were distributed; potential participants were invited to participate in the research study and they all agreed to participate. After collecting the consent forms from participants, individual meetings were scheduled. The researcher made contact with counselors by visiting their offices and calling to ask for their availability to schedule a meeting for a one-on-one interview. The meetings were scheduled according to the counselors' schedules to avoid any disruption of their work-related activities. Participants were given the choice to conduct the interviews in their offices or in a different location. Five out of six participants selected the researcher's office, which was the most convenient for the school counselors. One participant chose to have the interview session in the counseling office.

The interviews took place in a period of two days to accommodate the schedules of all six counselors. During the day of the interview, participants were warmly greeted and thanked for their participation. This step was important to ensure that a welcoming environment was provided to all participants. They were reminded that their names would not be used in the study. The purpose of using pseudonyms, was to keep their information confidential. The majority preferred to select their pseudonyms. This also helped school counselors to feel free to express their ideas without the fear of being recognized in the results. In addition, the researcher

expressed to the participants why their participation in this research study was crucial. Sharing the potential benefits for each of them and their students was emphasized.

During data collection, the researcher conducted all the interviews and gathered all the information directly from the participants. The pre-survey (Appendix G) was given to counselors before their individual interviews for this project. Once participants completed the pre-survey, they were reminded to take their time as they answered each interview question. They were notified that they had a total of 12 research questions and the total interview would not take more than 30 minutes. They were reminded that in their consent form, they also agreed to be audio recorded. The researcher's cellular phone was placed on the desk and, as a backup measure, and an audiocassette recorder was also used to record the interviews. The researcher asked the questions and while being recorded, notes were taken regarding the interviewees non-verbal cues. Attention was paid to their facial expressions, among other non-verbal expressions to get a deeper understanding. Questions were repeated as needed and, if at any point the participant had to take a break, the necessary accommodations were provided. All the steps taken to conduct the interviews were clearly identified, including how the data was collected. To reduce the opportunity of participants feeling that they were not essential or valued for this research study, the process of data collection was explained in detail.

At the end of the interview, participants were reminded that their information was going to remain confidential since pseudonyms were used and all data was going to be kept in a locked cabinet for three years and then shredded. The researcher explained to counselors that the information provided might be used to restructure some of the activities implemented by the counseling department. The data obtained might inform material presented in a professional development in which the researcher would provide feedback on which features of the ASCA

National Model could be implemented. The participants were also notified that disaggregated data was going to be shared with the administration to get their input on strategies to restructure some of the counseling activities and to develop a professional development agenda. The data served as a guide to find new and effective ways for counselors and administrators to work together to support all students. After interviews were conducted all participants were thanked for their participation.

### **Analysis**

After all data was collected, it was carefully organized to expedite analysis. The researcher set up an account with Rev.com a program used for transcription. The voice-recorded interviews were sent to Rev.com and within less than a week all individual interviews had been transcribed. The transcribed interviews were downloaded into a word document and saved in a flash drive. The transcribed interviews were transferred to a processing word document and printed, and carefully organized. All the data collected was kept in the researcher's home office. The researcher coded each interview using color-coded dots and sticky notes to identify common themes. Creswell's (2012) six steps were used to analyze, map and interpret qualitative data. One of the steps included reading the data several times, analyzing it each time to develop a deeper understanding of the information provided by the school counselors. At the beginning of the analysis, many codes were identified, but later coalesced into six themes which were further analyzed. The themes were restricted to two-to-four words such as "non-counseling duties." The researcher examined themes that identified areas that could be restructured and areas where features of the ASCA National Model could be implemented. During the data analysis process, data not directly related to the research project was disregarded. Data was viewed through organizational lenses, identifying areas in counseling that could be restructured to meet the needs

of all students. Throughout the data analysis, findings were validated through triangulation, which is the process of corroborating evidence from different participants (Creswell, 2012).

After all data had been analyzed, the researcher participated in a counseling meeting in which a counseling professional development day was planned. The collaboration with the counseling department was essential to get a clear understanding of the expectations for the professional development day. After the counseling meeting, site administration gave the researcher permission to take the lead and draft an agenda based on the findings from the counselors' interviews. Using the themes that came up during the interviews and as the research questioned was answered, this researcher developed an agenda. Within a week, this researcher reviewed the analyzed data and finalized an agenda (Appendix D). This researcher then met with two site administrators to share findings from the counselors' interviews and to finalize the agenda for the professional development. The meeting took approximately an hour and 30 minutes where ideas and findings were discussed. The researcher then organized all the materials needed for the counseling professional development day.

## **Conclusion**

This study took place in a low-socioeconomic school, where school counselors support students academically and personally. All six school counselors were selected to participate in this qualitative research study by participating in individual interviews, which consisted of 12 open-ended questions. Collected data was analyzed with the purpose of finding current views on counselors' roles and responsibilities. Although a limitation in this research study was the small sample size, this research helped identify which areas of the counseling department need to be restructured to improve the organization and effectiveness in the counseling department.



Additionally, this research study helped determine which features of the ASCA National Model could be implemented in the participants counseling department. The following question was explored to find new and effective ways to support school counselors: Which features of the ASCA National Model when implemented by counselors and administrators significantly improve the organization of counseling programs at the high school level? Lastly, Chapter Four will include detailed information about the implementation of this research study. A professional development day was implemented with the purpose of supporting high school counselors, with hopes for a positive impact on students.

## **Chapter Four: Implementation**

### ***Introduction***

Chapter Four explains in detail the planning and implementation process of a professional development day for school counselors at Central Valley High School (CVSH a pseudonym). The planning process subsection includes general information about logistics that took place to prepare for a professional development day. Following this planning section is the process on how the professional development took place. Finally, a conclusion provides a brief preview of the final chapter of this project, which includes the results and next steps of this research study.

### ***Planning Process***

After data was collected and analyzed from interviewing all high school counselors at CVSH, and data was analyzed, a professional development day for counselors was developed and implemented. During the initial stages of this project, the idea was to conduct a workshop for only new counselors; however, after conducting counseling interviews and analyzing the resulting data, planning a professional development day for all counselors was the best option. This represented an opportunity for the counselors to meet collaboratively at the end of the school year, collectively discussing current counseling practices. Simultaneously, an assistant principal was thinking of having a retreat for the counseling department, where counselors could meet off campus to plan for next school year. This researcher proposed using this time to plan counseling activities aligned with the ASCA National Model. Having the administrators and counselors independently come to the same conclusion of having a professional development day off campus, made it all more relevant for each group member. The professional development day was seen as an opportunity for school counselors to restructure some of the current counseling practices. It was then decided to have the professional development day on Wednesday, June 3, 2015.

As part of the planning process two separate meetings took place, one with school counselors and one with site administrators. The purpose of the meetings was to collaborate and plan a professional development day for the counseling team. An agenda for the professional development day was drafted by this researcher and presented to administrators. During the meeting with site administration, this researcher shared the data analysis and related findings. Included in a proposed agenda was the need to develop a master school counseling calendar, addressing concerns about counselors' roles and responsibilities, and investigate test proctoring formats. The meeting lasted approximately an hour and 30 minutes. In addition, site administrators had an additional meeting where they internally discussed the planning for the professional development day.

The last week of May 2015, the interviewed counselors gave this researcher additional recommendations on their expectations for the professional development day. One of the counselors took the lead in gathering the materials needed for the workshop. Materials included sharpies, markers, highlighters, large note pads, and sticky notes. The College and Career Technician, who supports the various counseling activities (e.g. career fair planning), also assisted by enlarging monthly calendars, which were later used during the workshop to plan events for the upcoming school year. Additionally, this researcher assisted by gathering other planning documents such as school calendars, and a list of counselors' additional roles and responsibilities.

As this researcher was analyzing data and considering features of the ASCA National Model, one of the main themes that arose was the need to create a counseling brochure, since the department did not have one. The brochure can be seen in Appendix E. Additionally, another theme that surfaced was the need to develop a master counseling calendar. Having experience in

the counseling field and knowing how long it takes to create a brochure, this researcher drafted a counseling brochure and gathered sample master calendars, along with other resources. As materials were collected, they were kept inside a rolling cart located in the researcher's office located at CVHS. Furthermore, this researcher communicated with all participating school counselors to organize a breakfast potluck.

### ***Participants***

During the methodology part of this project and during the meeting with administrators, this researcher's role at the district was described as the EL/Migrant Coordinator. However, in August 2015, this researcher will return to being part of the counseling team at CVHS. Therefore, this researcher's active role and participation in the professional development day, was imperative. For confidentiality purposes, the two administrators involved with the professional development day will be named Administrator A and Administrator B. Administrator A was the main facilitator and approached this researcher to lead several of the activities. Other participants included four school counselors, who were present throughout the day and a fifth counselor who came at a later time as counseling appointments were pending. The sixth counselor had to stay in his office to be available for students. During, the last two hours of the professional development day, the school's College and Career Technician participated in the professional development day, providing feedback on several of the counseling activities.

### ***Professional Development Day***

On Wednesday, June 3, 2015, this researcher went to CVHS at 7:00 a.m. to collect all the materials needed for the workshop. The professional development took place from 8:00 a.m.-

3:10 p.m. in one of the conference rooms at the district office. The conference room was spacious and the pictures hanging on the walls were removed, making more space available for large note pads to be posted. As one walked into the room, refreshments were placed at a table near the entrance. On another table, copies of the agenda (Appendix D), calendars, a list of counselors' responsibilities, and a handout listing school counseling roles taken from the *Counseling in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* handout were available for all participants. All participants had handouts of various calendars: a basic calendar, the district's yearly school calendar, and the school's calendar. Walking into the conference room was welcoming and the counselors present had a positive attitude. The conference room was spacious, with a large oval wood table where all participants were sitting with our handouts and planning materials. It was important to this researcher that all participants felt a sense of calm and unity upon entering the conference.

At about 8:10 a.m., as participants ate their refreshments one of the assistant principals, (Administrator A) welcomed all present and shared with the team the purpose of the professional development. Based on the information gathered from the counselors' interviews, the researcher had created an agenda with the goal of implementing features of the ASCA National Model that will support the counseling department. This researcher explained to the counseling team that because of the quality of information shared during the interviews, one day of professional development was not going to be enough to cover all important themes. Therefore, this researcher suggested having a second professional development day before the beginning of the fall 2015.

The first part of the professional development day consisted of developing a mission and vision statement for the counseling department. During the counselors' interviews, four out of five strongly agreed that the counseling department needed a mission statement for the

counseling department. An essential aspect of the foundation of a counseling department is having a vision and mission statement. Having a mission statement gives the counseling program an overall direction and vision (American School Counselor Association, 2012). Each participant was given a copy of a draft of a counseling brochure prepared by the researcher, which also included a mission and vision statement for the counseling department.

Once there was an agreement on the mission and vision statements (Appendix E), there was a rigorous discussion about the different roles and responsibilities counselors have at CVHS. This was a great opportunity for school counselors and administrators to talk about the different duties assigned to counselors. The concern arose that there needed to be more equitable division of labor. This concern was addressed in detail as the counseling master calendar was being created. Two counselors recorded on the white board the range of daily activities to support students. The activities covered the three counseling domains: academic, career, and personal/social development (American School Counselor Association, 2012). This part of the professional development day involved discussions among attendees on what duties are appropriate and inappropriate for school counselors to perform, and about what counselors do to support all students. According to Lindsey and Stephens (2011), 70% of the counselors' daily activities should be in student direct services. All participants actively participated throughout the process. The process of revising the brochure, securing the mission and vision statements, and going over the counseling domains, took about 1.5 hours. This affirmed the significance of these elements for the attendees. The discussion identified the various activities performed by school counselor, distilled this information and eventually added it to the counseling brochure, along with the counseling department vision and mission statements. After the collaboration and development of the counseling brochure, the group took a 10-15 minute break.

To ensure the agenda was being followed and to avoid getting off task, a large note pad was posted on the wall and labeled the “parking lot.” Throughout the professional development, counselors had the opportunity to place sticky notes in this area to express any concerns or ideas that were not addressed in the agenda. The items on the sticky notes will be further explored in upcoming counseling meetings or during the next professional development day. The suggestions on the “parking lot,” have been typed and can be reviewed in Appendix F.

After the break, the collaboration continued regarding the various roles and responsibilities counselors have on a daily basis. There was a discussion about what constituted counseling responsibilities. To assist with this process at least two of the counselors present had *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*, and frequently used it throughout the professional development day as a resource. Furthermore, all participants reviewed the *Counseling in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* handout, where some of the items discussed were assessing students’ records, Student Study Team and Section 504 Plan meetings. On a large white note pads, posted on the room wall, one of the administrators listed the different activities counselors perform. Counselors’ caseloads were also discussed. Five out of six counselors during the counseling interviews reported that a caseload of 250 would be ideal or more manageable. Indeed, the ASCA National Model recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of 250 (American School Counselor Association, 2012). In addition, the group discussed the role of the full-time intervention counselor for the following school year, along with other counseling changes such as the hiring of a new counselor.

To continue with the agenda and cover the master calendar, Administrator A, wrote the months of the calendar and posted them on the wall on large white note pads. Participants mentioned the various activities including parent/guardian and students workshops implemented

by school counselors on a monthly basis. As activities were being listed, participants viewed the various calendars to ensure that their planning would not interfere with other major school functions. Also, at one point a phone call was placed to contact the high school's program specialist to find the specific dates when Individual Educational Plan (IEP) meetings will take place. School counselors felt they would have their Student Success Team and Section 504 Plan meetings on a date in which the school psychologist would be available. As participants discussed the various activities, they also identified whether one counselor would have to be the point person for that activity.

Unanimously, the group decided to have lunch at a local pizza restaurant. During lunch, participants shared their summer plans, among other personal experiences. By 1:15 p.m., the professional development activities resumed. Participants were ready to finish the master calendar activity. The conference room walls were covered with large white note pads, one for each month and three additional ones with the three counseling domains. The College and Career Technician joined the team after lunch. The technician collaborates with the counselors to implement student and parents/guardians workshops, among other activities.

All participants equally participated and discussions took place on the best dates to complete specific counseling activities. On the large table, Administrator A had a large calendar where participants reviewed the various activities and items that were being added to what is now the master calendar. As items were being added to the calendar and revised, discussions continued on whether the activity was a counseling activity or not. During this time, the participants updated the *Areas of Responsibility/Point of Contact* form. Administrator A asked the school counselors to choose which activity they felt most comfortable leading, and being the points of contact for. As school counselors selected their top options, Administrator A ensured



that the activities were equally distributed. All participants then continued adding activities to the master calendar. As some details were left unfinished on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, the team decided to continue with the calendaring activity on Monday, June 8<sup>th</sup> in Administrator A's office. There were still a few agenda items, namely an activity to develop an action plan to work with freshman students to help them create a ten-year plan. Also participants need to collaborate about establishing a crisis response team at CVHS. School counselors provide immediate support to students who are experiencing, for example, mental health crises (American School Counselor Association, 2012). Therefore, as stated by one of the participants during the counseling interviews, there is a need to establish a site crisis response team. These postponed items are slated to be addressed before the fall 2015 semester begins.

Approximately at 3:00 p.m. Administrator A thanked everyone for participating in the professional development day. This researcher then delivered thank you cards which included a gift card for coffee in appreciation of their participation and contribution to this project. Once both administrators and the College and Career Technician left, this researcher gave all school counselors a post-survey (Appendix G). As counselors completed the post-survey, they returned them to the researcher. School counselors were thanked for their feedback, and as a gesture of gratitude each was given a small container of chocolate-covered almonds. After the professional development day, this researcher compared the pre-and post-surveys.

### ***Conclusion***

The professional development day, was implemented with the objective of providing school counselors the opportunity to explore current practices and to implement features of the ASCA National Model. Counselors and administrators collaborated and discussed counselors' roles and responsibilities. In Chapter Five, a discussion of the results will be incorporated along

with a description of what was learned from the implementation of this research project. There is a brief analysis of the limitations of this project and recommendations for future study.

## Chapter Five: Results and Conclusion

### *Results*

According to the stated perceptions of the study participants, the professional development day was beneficial for school counselors because they had the opportunity to collaborate with school site administrators and to plan for the following school year. Table 1 shows the participants' attitudes before and after the professional development day. The table reflects how six school counselors completed the pre-survey before the professional development day and five completed the post-survey at the end of the professional development day of June 3, 2015. The missing counselor did not participate in the professional development day, nor take the post survey, due to conflicting professional obligations. At CVHS, it is important that at least one counselor is available in case students need support services.

TABLE 1

#### Likert Scale Results

<b>Likert Scale Results (6 Pre/5 Post respondents)</b>					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
S1: I am confident that my current responsibilities are appropriate school counseling program activities.	0/0	2/0	2/0	1/3	1/2
S2: I agree with the roles and responsibilities site administration has entrusted me with because they are related to my job as a school counselor.	0/0	1/0	1/0	3/2	1/3
S3: Our counseling department has a well-developed master calendar, which I use to know what school counseling activities are scheduled as well as to meet deadlines.	2/0	2/0	0/0	1/3	1/2
S4: Our counseling department has a well-structured monthly calendar used to schedule specific activities, which is then shared with the school community.	1/0	3/0	1/2	0/2	1/1
S5: I have the tools to manage my time to meet with all my students to ensure that I spend at least 80 percent of my time in direct counseling services.	4/0	1/ 1	0/1	1/3	0/0
S6: I am confident on how to create data-driven school counseling programs to monitor students' progress.	0/0	3/0	0/3	3/2	0/0

Statement 1 refers to counselors' current roles and appropriateness to school counselor responsibilities. Table 1 shows how the respondents' attitudes changed. For this statement, "I am confident that my current responsibilities are appropriate school counseling program activities," participants responded: disagree (2), neither agree or disagree (2), agree (1) and strongly agree (1). On the post-survey, after the professional development day, all participants agreed or strongly agreed with statement one, representing a positive shift. Statement two is also related to the counselors' roles and responsibilities, but shows the connectivity with administration. Based on the responses from the post-survey, one can conclude that clearly school counselors agree with the roles and responsibilities site administration has entrusted in them. This researcher must mention that during the professional development day, school administrators worked collaboratively as school counselors' roles and responsibilities were discussed. During the methodology part of this project, there was a concern with the various tests counselors were being asked to proctor; for example, proctoring for the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) and Advanced Placement (AP) test. Indeed, coordinating and administering tests is considered an inappropriate activity for school counselors (American School Counselor Association, 2012; Lindsey, R. B., and Stephens, D. L., 2011). As a result, during the professional development day, school counselors and administrators were in agreement that school counselors will no longer proctor the AP tests.

Under the management system section of the ASCA's National Model, it is recommended that school counseling programs use master calendars of school counseling events to help with the management of the counseling department (American School Counselor Association, 2005). The interviewed counselors for this research were asked if they had a counseling master calendar, four replied stating that the counseling department at CVHS did not

have a master calendar. Counselor A did not hesitate to answer “no, we should have a master calendar.” Therefore, this theme was part of the agenda for the professional development day. Table 1 shows the need to develop a master calendar at CVHS. Analyzing the pre-survey, four out of six respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with their counseling department having a well-developed master calendar. After the professional development day, all five counselors who completed the post-survey agreed or strongly agreed with having a well-developed master calendar. This demonstrates that the professional development day was indeed helpful for school counselors. It is projected that next school year school counselors will fully implement this feature of the ASCA National Model.

Statement 4 is still aligned with the use of calendars, but incorporates the use of calendars to share with the school community. The statement asked in the post-survey is the following: “Our counseling department has a well-structured monthly calendar used to schedule specific activities, which is then shared with the school community.” According to the ASCA National Model, it is school counselors are encouraged to share the counseling calendar with the school community (American School Counselor Association, 2005). Interestingly, in this section after the post-survey two, participants selected neither agree nor disagree. It is speculated that the possible response to this statement was due to the fact that they do not know if and when they will be able to share their counseling calendar with the school community.

Statement 5: “I have the tools to manage my time to meet with all my students to ensure that I spend at least 80 percent of my time in direct counseling services” refers to counselors’ use of time. Based on analyzed data, statement 5 shows a significant change in the participants’ perception. On the pre-survey, participants responded strongly disagree (4), disagree (1) and agree (1). On the post-survey, one can see a significant positive shift in the results; only one

participant disagreed with the statement, one neither agreed nor disagreed and three participants agreed with the statement. Although during the professional development day, counselors did not work in specific time management strategies, they did work on organizing counseling activities for the following school year. There is organization of when activities will take place and more direct counseling services will be provided. In addition, after counselors worked on the *Areas of Responsibility/Point of Contact form*, there is now a balance between additional counseling duties assigned to each counselor. Administrator A did a great job at allowing counselors to volunteer for their area of preference, yet keeping a balance and ensuring that responsibilities were equality distributed among counselors.

Analyzing Table 1, focusing on statement 6, also shows a change in attitude from participants' responses. In the pre-survey, three school counselors disagreed with the following statement: "I am confident on how to create data-driven school counseling programs to monitor students' progress." Although, there was a change in their responses, as they completed the post-survey, three out of six counselors still circled the neither agree nor disagree response. This topic was not fully covered during the initial professional development day. Therefore, this researcher recommends that in the next professional development day there is a focus on the use of data-driven school counseling programs to monitor students' progress. In order to have a comprehensive school counseling model, school counselors must use data to analyze, implement and evaluate school counseling programs (Lindsey, B., & Stephens, D. L., 2011).

### ***Limitations***

A major limitation of this research project study was the small sample. The concentration was only on the school counselors from CVHS. Although all counselors participated during the

counseling interviews, they all work for the same district. A larger sample would have been ideal because this researcher could have focused on how counselors from other school districts implement features of the ASCA National Model. For example, if this researcher would have included school counselors in a larger geographic region, more counselors could have benefitted from a professional development day with the main focus of supporting counseling practices aligned to the ASCA National Model. Additionally, in having a larger number of participants, there would have been more professionals reflecting on their counseling practices and incorporating features of the ASCA National Model. Of course there are limitations to having a larger sample. For example, practice may vary depending on local environments and district policies. Additionally, scheduling individual counseling meetings with all counselors is difficult to manage and the cost would definitely be a challenge. To give an example, there is a cost for transcribing interviews, which can significantly add a financial burden since companies charge for every transcribed minute.

### *Next Steps*

Including a professional development day at the beginning of the fall semester could be beneficial as there were items on the agenda which could not be addressed on June 3, 2015; for example, addressing the need for a site crisis team. During the counseling interviews, a counselor expressed the need to establish a site-based crisis team at CVHS. In addition, during the initial professional development day, counselors placed questions or topics of concern in the “parking lot,” for future discussion. Although counselors meet with site administrators on a weekly basis, many times counselors need more than an hour to go over specific topics and plan accordingly. In future professional development days, the team could focus on selected features of the ASCA National Model. Certainly a team effort between administration and the members of the

counseling department would be ideal. As mentioned in Anderson (2010), research shows that there is a discrepancy between school counselor responsibilities and principals' perceptions of these efforts. On June 3, 2015, at least two administrators present worked with the counseling department to improve their practice. Such collaboration is crucial in order to continue restructuring specific counseling practices and implement additional features of the ASCA National Model at CVHS. Therefore, this researcher has demonstrated the need for a follow-up professional development day to evaluate and monitor the degree to what was learned in the initial professional development day is being implemented, and has been effective.

The second step in continuing to making a difference in the counseling department at CVHS would be to use an independent consultant who can help the current counseling team implement more features of the ASCA National Model. After the consultant is done working with the current counseling team, he/she can help establish a leadership team of school counselors in the larger school district who are willing to make significant changes and implement additional features of the ASCA National Model district-wide. This last step has great potential to benefit the district allowing counselors throughout the district to work together and more cohesively implement counseling activities that support all students.

### ***Conclusion***

The implementation of the professional development day provided counselors and administrators an opportunity to collaborate and plan counseling activities for the 2015-2016 school year. Each counselor who participated in this research project made a significant contribution as their input was important for the improvement of the school's counseling program. The participants in this research study answered the following research question:



Which features of the ASCA National Model when implemented by counselors and administrators significantly improve the organization of counseling programs at the high school level?

The ASCA National Model serves as an organizational framework to lead counseling programs in the United States (American School Counselor Association, 2012). The literature reviewed for this research project demonstrates the positive impact the implementation of features of the ASCA National Model on counseling programs in rural areas with a high concentration of Latino students. The results from the professional development demonstrate how a counseling department can implement features of the ASCA National Model to collaboratively have a positive impact on students. This researcher firmly believes that, increasing professional development opportunities are imperative in order for school counselors to plan effectively for the upcoming school year and improve current counseling practices. At CVHS, counselors are knowledgeable about the ASCA National Model, and with continuous support from administration, they are poised to implement effective counseling practices to serve all students.

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## Appendix A

April 21, 2015

Victoria Joleen Bragon  
CVHS School Principal  
111 6<sup>th</sup> St.  
Northridge, CA 11111 (pseudonym)

Dear Ms. Bragon,

I am currently enrolled at California State University, Channel Islands, where I am in the process of obtaining a master's degree in Educational Leadership and an Administrative Services Credential. I am writing this letter to ask for your permission to conduct a qualitative research study at Central Valley High School (pseudonym). The purpose of my study is to find information about what features of the ASCA National Model could be incorporated in the counseling department, benefiting all pupils. Additionally, this research study will benefit counselors because they will be able to express their ideas as they participate in a research study related to counseling.

If approved, I will begin my research study by asking all potential participants, current counselors, to complete a consent form, which must be signed and returned in order to participate in the research study. If a potential participant is not interested in participating, he/she will not be obligated to participate. In fact, the participants who decide to participate may withdraw their participation from the study at any time without consequences. To protect all participants in the study, pseudonyms will be used to protect them and the disclosed information.

Once participants decide to be part of this research study and submit their consent forms, I will be placing a survey in their mail box. The survey will consist of basic questions to gather information about their demographics. Via email, I will coordinate an individual interview with the participants. The individual interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will take place on campus, at a location and time selected by each participant. For your reference, attached you will find the interview questions. The interviews will be conducted whenever is convenient for the participants; this will avoid any disruptions from their current job duties. After all interviews are conducted, I will analyze the qualitative data and will provide feedback to the counseling department as well as administration.

I thank you for your time and if you have any additional questions please contact me at the information provided below. You may also contact Dr. James Martinez, professor at CSUCI and project advisor, at [james.martinez@csuci.edu](mailto:james.martinez@csuci.edu) in case you have any additional questions about this research study.

Respectfully,

Rocío Bravo Chávez  
Graduate Student at CSUCI

## Appendix B

**Qualitative Research Informed Consent**

Dear Counselor,

You have been selected to participate in a counseling research study that will take place at Central Valley High School (pseudonym). As a graduate student at California State University Channel Islands, I will be conducting a qualitative research study involving school counselors. The purpose of my study is to find what features of the ASCA National Model could be incorporated by your counseling department. Your participation in this study is beneficial to the counseling department because you have the opportunity to provide useful information that will improve current counseling practices.

I am not aware of any risks associated with this research study, but in order to protect your identity, a pseudonym will be assigned to you upon agreeing to participate. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Additionally, if you decide to participate, you may withdraw your participation from this study at any time without consequences.

Qualitative data will be collected through individual interviews. During the interview, you will be asked questions pertaining to your demographics followed by 12 open-ended questions related to your job. The interviews will take approximately 30 minutes and will take place in your office or my office, your preference. Once all data has been gathered and analyzed, the information will be shared with the counseling department and with current administrators. The data provided by the participants will be reported collectively; therefore, individually identifiable information will not be reported.

I am aware of your busy schedule and I thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this research study. Should you have any questions please contact me at the information provided below. You may also contact Dr. James Martinez, professor at CSUCI and project advisor, at [james.martinez@csuci.edu](mailto:james.martinez@csuci.edu) in case you have any additional questions about this research study.

If you would like to participate in this research study, place an X in the statement that you agree with, sign this form, and place it in my mail box on or before May 15, 2015.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Respectfully,

Rocío Bravo Chávez  
Graduate Student at CSUCI

## Appendix C

**Individual Interview: Counseling Questions**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of experience working as a school counselor: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you have a school counseling program mission statement? If so, what is the focus of this statement?
2. How often do you evaluate fair-share responsibilities identifying counseling and non-counseling responsibilities?
3. How is your job impacted, considering the number of students in your caseload and their individual needs? What would be your ideal number of students in your caseload?
4. How do you balance your time to meet the needs of students, parents, administrators, teachers and other individuals/agencies supporting students?
5. To what degree do you consistently self-evaluate your counseling practices?
6. Do you have a counseling master calendar? If yes, to what degree do you rely on the counseling master calendar and monthly calendars to manage your time as well as to reflect about the goals of the counseling office?
7. When do you design and implement action plans aligned with the school's goals?
8. How often do you measure the effectiveness of the counseling program using data to identify practices and procedures leading to the success of all pupils?
9. To what degree do you feel you are in agreement with your school administrators at the school site and at the district level?
10. How often do you meet with administrators to plan for a comprehensive counseling program?
11. How often is your school counseling program assessed?
12. What aspects of the counseling department do you think should be restructured? Why?

Appendix D

**Counseling  
Professional Development  
June 03, 2015  
8:00 am-3:10 pm**

1. Counseling Brochure
  - a. Mission and vision statements
  - b. Counseling domains
2. Roles and Responsibilities
  - a. Caseloads
  - b. Review 21<sup>st</sup> Century Model
  - c. Counseling and non-counseling responsibilities
3. Master Calendar
  - a. Yearly and monthly activities
  - b. Counseling workshops for students and parents
4. Data Analysis
5. Get Focused/Stay Focused
  - a. Develop counseling action plan
6. Crisis Team
7. Collaborate with Career Technician and Intervention Counselor
8. Post-Survey



## Appendix E

## CVHS Counseling Brochure

### Mission/Vision Statement

It is the mission of the Central Valley High School Counseling Department to support all students by increasing student achievement, preparing them for college and a career as well as earning a high school diploma.

The vision of the Counseling Department is to advocate for all students by collaborating with community agencies, educators and families to support students' academic, career, and personal/social development.

### Counseling Domains

#### Academic:

- Interpret student records and recommend appropriate student course placement
- Individual student academic planning
- Coordinate and lead Student Success Team (SST) meetings and Section 504 Plans
- Coordinate and lead parent/teacher conferences
- Provide information to pupils and parents/guardians regarding alternative placement programs
- Conduct registration and scheduling for all students
- Monitor student graduation status
- Monitor student progress reports and grades
- Provide information on academic support

#### Career/ College:

- Assist students with career exploration
- Conduct parent/guardian and student workshops on college admission and essay writing
- Provide informational sessions about financial aid, sports, college, and Dream Act
- Assist students with college, scholarship and special program recommendations
- Identify students who meet specific scholarship requirements and select candidates for specific scholarship programs

#### Personal/Social:

- Inform students and families about school and community resources
- Provide responsive services and conflict resolution
- Collaborate with teachers and parents/guardians to support students in the classroom
- Provide individual social/emotional counseling
- Provide on-site support groups for students who are having difficulties i.e. anger management, substance abuse, as well as grief and loss

### Counseling Department

The Counseling and Guidance Department consists of six counselors. Counselors are assigned students by last name and special programs. They assist students in course and program selection. Throughout a students' high school stay, they will participate in a number of activities to help make plans for their future. Students may come to the counseling office for help with registration, career decisions, and for support on how to be successful students. In addition, counselors assist students in building positive relationships with their peers, family, and staff members.

## Appendix F

## “Parking Lot”

- NCAA presentations for Athletics
- Counseling Department website
- Senior warning letters and non-grad letters
- Roles / responsibilities office staff
- Extra date of Add/Drop for registration
- ASVAB
- New Section 504 Plan process (every 3 years, etc.)
- Figure out days for IEP’s and SST’s
- Skills Adjustments
  - cutoff date
- Scheduling students
- Help w/appointments
- Academic review forms
- Data entry for course registration
- Talk to X about transferring summer school grades by July 30 onto transcript
- Group college innovate students
- Resources to meet with counselors in regards to sharing program information. How to refer? (counselor meeting/ collaboration)
- Senior Night
- 6FSF

## Appendix G

*Central Valley High School Counseling Department*  
*Likert 5 Point Agree/Disagree Scale*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please read the following statements and circle one response per question:***I am confident that my current responsibilities are appropriate school counseling program activities.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

*I agree with the roles and responsibilities site administration has entrusted me with because they are related to my job as a school counselor.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

*Our counseling department has a well-developed master calendar, which I use to know what school counseling activities are scheduled as well as to meet deadlines.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

*Our counseling department has a well-structured monthly calendar used to schedule specific activities, which is then shared with the school community.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

*I have the tools to manage my time to meet with all my students to ensure that I spend at least 80 percent of my time in direct counseling services.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

*I am confident on how to create data-driven school counseling programs to monitor students' progress.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree