



# A Continuum of Counselors' Abilities

## Aligned with the American School Counselor Association

### Introduction

This continuum for counselors is written to ensure student success. Counselors will use the Continuum for self-assessment and will take into account district and site goals when developing District Goals or Areas of Investigation.

**The Continuum presents a holistic view of counseling.** Its organization corresponds to the following standards within the counseling program:

- Standard One: Delivery System: The way in which counselors deliver services
- Standard Two: Management System: The “when, why, whom and on what authority” of the program
- Standard Three: Accountability System: The effectiveness of the counseling program in measurable terms
- Standard Four: Professional Development: The Level of Growth in Counseling Abilities
- Standard Five: Fulfilling Professional Responsibilities

The standards are to be considered as a whole and not in any particular sequence or order. Each standard contains elements of counseling practice. They are interrelated and work together to provide a complete picture of an effective counseling program.

**The Continuum is organized to describe the five levels of development.** These levels are labeled **Unsuccessful, Beginning/Needs Improvement, Successful, Integrating/Exemplary**, and **Innovating**. Each level addresses what a counselor should know and be able to do in the different Continuum standards. The levels do not represent a chronological sequence in a counselor’s growth, but each row describes developmental levels of performance. A counselor may be at beginning/needs improvement level of practice in some places on the Continuum and at innovating levels in others, no matter how many years she/he has been in the profession.

**How to Use the Continuum:** To use the Continuum, you read across each row of descriptors from left (unsuccessful) to right (innovating) as the descriptors become more complex and sophisticated. As you move from left to right, locate the descriptor that best defines your current practice. Any practice described on the left of the Continuum is cumulative to those on the right even if not explicitly stated.

Because a counselor’s growth is developmental, one may return to an earlier level temporarily if there are changes in a counselor’s assignment, such as new school or grade level.



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**The Continuum provides a common language for setting and discussing goals for professional development within an environment of collegial support.** The Continuum is a guide for self-reflection, assessment and conversation between counselors, advisors/support providers, and administrators. It is intended to help counselors interpret their counseling and make informed decisions about their ongoing development as a professional. The Continuum serves as an entry point for counselors to identify and work toward professional goals. It is not an isolated observation instrument but is best used as one component of a comprehensive process of assessing the development of counseling practice. It is a part of a counselor's evaluation process and is appropriately used within a peer coaching relationship with a colleague or administrator.

### **Glossary of Terms:**

- **Continuum:** A document describing different levels of practice or knowledge along various stages of development.
- **Descriptors:** An individual cell or “box” corresponding to the developmental levels in the Continuum.
- **Standard:** One of the areas of professional practice that comprises the Continuum.
- **Element:** A specific sub-category within a standard.
- **Level:** The levels of counselor development that represent what a counselor should know and be able to do, e.g.:
  - **Unsuccessful:** A level of development in which the counselor is not successful in meeting the professional standard.
  - **Beginning/Needs Improvement:** A level of development in which the counselor still relies on more experienced colleagues for support but is moving toward becoming more self-directed and independent in her/his practice.
  - **Successful:** A level of development in which the counselor is able to design and implement independently, internalizes and easily applies what she/he has learned about counseling.
  - **Integrating/Exemplary:** A level of development in which the counselor is fully skilled, confident and able to integrate complex elements of instruction, curriculum and professional development into practice. The integrating counselor adapts and changes systems when needed, forms collegial relationships, engages in professional growth activities, and is often a leader among peers.
  - **Innovating:** A level of development in which the counselor is consistently innovative and creative in all areas of counseling and professional development. A leader in school, district and local community, the innovating counselor contributes to the broader education community through staff development, school-based research and reform, articles in professional journals, etc.

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### Standard One: Delivery System: The way in which counselors deliver services

	<b>UNSUCCESSFUL Practice Does Not Meet Standards</b>	<b>BEGINNING/ NEEDS IMPROVEMENT Practice Partially Meets Standards</b>	<b>SUCCESSFUL Practice Meets Standards</b>	<b>INTEGRATING/ EXEMPLARY Practice Exceeds Standards</b>	<b>INNOVATING Practice Exceeds Standards</b>
<b><u>1.1 Guidance Program:</u> Provide every student with the knowledge and skills appropriate to their developmental level.</b>	Delivers little or no information on academic, career and personal/social.	With assistance from others, participates minimally in the design and implementation of parent workshops to promote student academic, career and personal/social development.	Provides academic career and personal/social guidance through classroom instruction, group activities and parent workshops in collaboration with others.	Builds and extends the counseling program. Actively seeks additional resources for students and families to meet identified needs. Actively adds to the guidance program.	Facilitates regular opportunities for students, families and staff to design and implement guidance program.
<b><u>1.2 Individual Student Planning:</u> Coordinates ongoing systematic activities designed to assist individual students in establishing personal goals and developing future plans.</b>	Does not successfully complete all students' four year plans in a timely manner.	Completes the paperwork for the students' four year plans, but may not engage in individual conversations with the students.	Develops students' four year plans based on students' abilities, interests, skills, achievement level, and goals (personal, academic, career) and monitors the plans.	Coordinates activities that help all students plan and monitor their own learning in the areas of academic, career and personal/ social growth. Develops process to improve effectiveness student sessions.	Collaborates with staff, students and families to build student capacity to monitor and manage their individual plans.
<b><u>1.3 Responsive Services:</u> Designs activities to meet immediate needs of students through counseling, consultation, referral, peer mediation, information, or other interventions.</b>	Is unsure where to find the information for students and families in need and does not ask colleagues for assistance.	Limited development of resources to respond to immediate needs of students and families. Provides little or no guidance to students to ensure follow through on referrals.	Responds to immediate student and family needs based on thorough knowledge of cause, motivation and potential effect. Communicates to all appropriate staff in a timely manner.	Notifies the more subtle warning signs of needs and has multiple strategies with which to respond to immediate needs.	Uses multiple methods to ensure accessibility to students and families. Possesses extensive and thorough knowledge of resources to facilitate effective interactions with students and families.



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<b>1.4 System Support: Designs administrative and management activities that establish, maintain, and enhance the total counseling program.</b>	Attends very few or no department/leadership meetings. Inconsistently communicates information regarding the counseling program.	Attends and participates in some department /leadership meetings to facilitate implementation of counseling program.	Communicates with staff using a variety of methods to ensure that all members have information about the counseling program.	Provides professional development for staff as needed. Consults with staff to improve counseling services and the overall counseling program.	Provides ongoing professional development to staff. Collaborates with staff to ensure students' academic, career and personal/social success.

### Standard Two: Management System: The “when, why, whom and on what authority” of the program

<b>2.1 Program Coordination: Works with staff that provides site counseling services to effectively coordinate services to all students.</b>	Interacts primarily with site leadership for counseling and designated support staff to promote personal/social, and academic success for students.	Interacts with department chairs and other faculty to ensure student progress, appropriate placement, course alignment and to clarify course prerequisites.	Communicates and works directly with department chairs, program coordinators, clerical staff, and families to promote effective counseling services in the area of personal social, career and academic development.	Obtains additional resources from the community to expand counseling services. Seeks opportunities to communicate and coordinate with other programs on site.	Collaboratively plans and implements counseling program with site leadership and key staff throughout the school. Collaborates with families to engage their leadership in support of the counseling program.
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### Standard Two: Management System: The “when, why, whom and on what authority” of the program

	<b>UNSUCCESSFUL</b> Practice Does Not Meet Standards	<b>BEGINNING/NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</b> Practice Partially Meets Standards	<b>SUCCESSFUL</b> Practice Meets Standards	<b>INTEGRATING/EXEMPLARY</b> Practice Exceeds Standards	<b>INNOVATING</b> Practice Exceeds Standards
<b>2.2 Student Monitoring:</b> Monitors students achievement data and competency related data to ensure that all students receive what she/he needs to achieve success in school.	Minimally identifies individual student needs based on available data.	Begins to identify some group patterns based on available data. May respond to students individually without working on a systemic process to address trends.	Independently accesses a variety of data resources to monitor student success. Identifies patterns within the data for use with individuals and with groups of students to foster success in academic, career and personal/social goals.	Thoughtfully guides students in self-monitoring some aspects of their academic, career, personal/social development.	Fosters student leadership to provide support, resources and techniques for other students to learn self-monitoring skills. Establishes sustainable programs by which to monitor student success.
<b>2.3 Calendar Development:</b> Works with school leadership and other staff to develop and communicate a yearly and weekly calendar of counseling events and programs.	Contributes very little to the establishment of the counseling calendar. Attends counseling events, but does not communicate with stakeholders.	Provides some input on calendar of events and minimally participates in the planning and implementation of events. May assist in the communication and coordination of counseling events to staff.	Plans counseling events and ensures that these events are coordinated with the school calendar and in alignment with the school plan. Ensures that the program is communicated to all staff and students.	Uses a variety of methods to communicate the counseling program and events to students, families, and staff. Enhances and expands the counseling program based on identified student and family needs.	Actively works with school leadership and staff to integrate counseling events into the overall school program, regularly communicating the importance of the programs.



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### Standard Three: Accountability System: The Effectiveness of the Counseling Program in Measurable Terms

	UNSUCCESSFUL Practice Does Not Meet Standards	BEGINNING/ NEEDS IMPROVEMENT Practice Partially Meets Standards	SUCCESSFUL Practice Meets Standards	INTEGRATING/ EXEMPLARY Practice Exceeds Standards	INNOVATING Practice Exceeds Standards
<p><b>3.1 Use of Data: Develops and implements needs-driven and research-supported programs and engages in continuous program evaluation activities. Uses data to effect change within the school system and to ensure that every student receives the benefits of the counseling program.</b></p>	Identifies very few or no issues based on data analysis. Minimal discussion regarding possible interventions.	Analyzes data. Shares trends that emerge from data. When given guidance from colleagues, may work with appropriate school leadership to develop interventions.	Maintains ongoing data analysis. Initiates collaboration with staff to develop interventions and reviews results regularly.	Knows when and how to disaggregate counseling related data to ensure equity and access to the counseling program for all students. Meets with leadership and key individuals to design multiple approaches to meet identified students' needs. Responsive to the changing needs of the student population.	Collaborates with the school community to drive counseling program and school-wide change. Bases decision making on a thorough understanding of a wide variety of disaggregated data. Leads the staff in understanding various data related to counseling services.

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### Standard Four: Professional Development: The Level of Growth in Counseling Abilities

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<b>4.1 Reflection: Reflecting on practice and planning professional development</b>	Does little reflecting on elements of teaching (e.g. pacing, procedures, discipline, movement, materials, etc.). Does not make plans for own professional development.	May reflect on instructional successes and dilemmas and plans professional development to add to instructional strategies.	Reflects on the relationship of teaching practice and student learning. Plans professional development based on reflections.	Analyzes and reflects on teaching and learning based on evidence gathered regularly. Plans professional development based on reflections and other resource.	Integrates analysis and reflection into daily practice based on a wide variety of evidence in relationship to professional growth and student learning. Plans draw on a wide variety of resources to expand knowledge.
<b>4.2 Goal Setting: Establishing professional goals and pursuing opportunities to grow professionally.</b>	The only goals developed may be through the required evaluation processes. Attends required in-service trainings, but does not seek out additional opportunities to grow professionally.	May set goals considering self-assessment and other feedback. May not seek out professional development opportunities (e.g. workshops, classes, seminars, etc.)	Sets short-term professional goals based on self-assessment of effectiveness, student learning, and feedback. Seeks out opportunities for professional development.	Sets and modifies short and long-term goals considering self-assessment and feedback from a variety of sources. Actively engages in and contributes to professional development.	Contributes to professional organizations, literature, and development opportunities to extend own teaching practice and that of colleagues. Leads professional development.

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<p><b>4.3 Family Collaboration: Working with families to improve professional practice.</b></p>	<p>Minimally communicates with families at reporting periods and school events. Limited professional communication (verbal, electronic, written). Minimal adherence to the District Civility Code.</p>	<p>Shares some student progress and classroom activities. May be unaware of family backgrounds and their role in student learning.</p>	<p>Regularly communicates student progress in appropriate ways, taking into account the diversity of families. Encourages families to contribute to the classroom and school.</p>	<p>Maintains regular and responsive communication with all families. Provides opportunities for families to actively participate in the classroom and school.</p>	<p>Engages families in a variety of responsible ongoing, two-way communications in support of student success. Structures a wide range of opportunities for families to contribute to the classroom and school community.</p>
<p><b>4.4 Collegial Collaboration: Working with colleagues to improve professional practice.</b></p>	<p>Does not consistently act as a positive team member with colleagues. Limited or inappropriate communication (verbal, electronic, written). May be uncooperative with colleagues. Minimal adherence to the District Civility Code.</p>	<p>May have positive working relationships with a few colleagues and support staff. Does not collaborate with colleagues to plan curriculum, coordinate resources, or solve problems.</p>	<p>Works constructively with colleagues and support staff to improve students learning and reflect on practice. Is positive and supportive of colleagues.</p>	<p>Engages staff in dialogue and reflection to support student learning and teacher growth in responsive and appropriate ways.</p>	<p>Provides opportunities to collaborate with staff to support learning for all students. Provides leadership for contributes to the learning of other educators. Is an active leader who willingly shares ideas and skills.</p>
<p><b>4.5 Balance: Balancing professional responsibilities and maintaining motivation.</b></p>	<p>Does not have a positive attitude in the classroom (may display apathy or negativity). Does not exhibit an understanding of professional responsibilities.</p>	<p>Inconsistently demonstrates understanding of professional responsibilities.</p>	<p>Maintains a positive attitude through the year, demonstrates professional integrity, and balances professional responsibility with personal needs.</p>	<p>Maintains motivation and commitment to all students, demonstrates professional integrity, and challenges self intellectually and creatively.</p>	<p>Maintains motivation and commitment to all students and the professional community, demonstrates and models professional integrity, and challenges self intellectually and creatively throughout career.</p>



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### Standard Five: Fulfilling Professional Responsibilities

	<b>UNSUCCESSFUL Practice Does Not Meet Standards</b>	<b>BEGINNING/ NEEDS IMPROVEMENT Practice Partially Meets Standards</b>	<b>SUCCESSFUL Practice Meets Standards</b>	<b>INTEGRATING/ EXEMPLARY Practice Exceeds Standards</b>	<b>INNOVATING Practice Standards</b>
<b>5.1 Establishing and maintaining effective relationships with those contacted in the course of work</b>	Is uncooperative toward students, staff, and families. Is unconcerned about forming effective working relationships. Does not strive to work as a team member.	Inconsistently demonstrates effective working relationships with students, staff, families. Inconsistent attitude and motivation level.	Maintains a positive attitude through the year, demonstrates professional integrity, and balances professional responsibility with personal needs.	Maintains motivation and commitment to students, families, and staff. Demonstrates professional integrity, and challenges self intellectually and creatively.	A leader in the professional community, a model of professional integrity; collaborates intellectually and creatively with staff, families, community, and students.
<b>5.2 Complying with established site, district, and state regulations, rules, policies, contracts, and laws</b>	Is unfamiliar with site and district policies and regulations. Lacks initiative to find information related to rules and regulations.	Shows little interest in adhering to district or site policies. May follow some rules and procedures, but ignores others.	Complies with site and district policies and regulations. Is willing to participate in policy discussions and offers suggestions through appropriate channels for improving procedures.	Complies with all site and district policies. Takes initiative to discuss possible improvements for site and district policies, rules, regulations, and procedures.	Actively supports the adherence to site and district policies. May serve on a site or district level committee to review and revise rules, regulations, policies. Assists colleagues in following site rules and procedures.
<b>5.3 Fulfilling assigned reports and duties</b>	Fails to attend or arrives late to required meetings. Avoids assigned duties. Submits late, careless, or inaccurate reports.	Needs frequent reminders regarding meetings and other duties. Reports are sometimes late or inconsistently accurate. Rarely participates during required meetings.	Attends meetings and other assigned duties. Is dependable, prompt, and accurate in completing reports. Participates during required meetings.	Performs assigned duties at both site and district level. Takes initiative to offer additional services to students and staff. Actively participates and contributes during meetings.	An acknowledged site and district leader in performance of professional duties. Positively contributes to school and district culture by recommending improvements regarding routine duties.