

# Hopatcong Middle School

## Guidance & Counseling Services



**GUIDING**

*Tomorrow's Dreams Today*

Prepared by: *Jaime Walker, Director of Guidance  
Danielle Manisa, School Counselor  
Chelsea Trump, School Counselor, SAC*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Preface

### Chapter 1

Guidance & Counseling Department Assignments & Contact Information -----	3
What Does the School Counselor Do? -----	4

### Chapter 2

Services & Programs-----	5 - 8
Academic Counseling	
Academic Scheduling	
Basic Skills	
Conflict Resolution	
Coordinate 504 procedures	
Divorce Group Counseling	
Grade Level Team Meetings	
Grade Reporting	
Group Counseling	
Home Instruction	
Honor Roll	
Marking Period Dates	
Personal Counseling	
Response to Intervention (RTI)	
Summer School	

### Chapter 3

Standardized Testing-----	9
NJSLA (PARCC)	

### Chapter 4

Transition From School to School -----	9
--	---

### Chapter 5

Who Are School Counselors? -----	10 - 11
The Need for School Counselors-----	12
Why Middle School Counselors? -----	13 - 14
Why a Director of Guidance? -----	15 - 16

# Preface

It is our hope to convey to all readers the multitude of jobs and responsibilities of the guidance and counseling department. Often times overlooked as a vital role in the school system, the counselor is the liaison between the school and the parents. Our children need our guidance to achieve success personally, socially, emotionally, and academically while understanding the workings of the real world. Together with the parents, teachers, and students, the counselor can continue to steer their students in the right direction for their individual needs. The philosophy of the department, district-wide, is to proactively advocate for our students with enthusiasm.

## Chapter 1

## Guidance & Counseling Staff

## Contact Information

**Hudson Maxim**  
School Counselor

**Pre-K – 1**

Lisa Schuffenhauer

[lschuffenhauer@hopatcongschools.org](mailto:lschuffenhauer@hopatcongschools.org)

973-770-8845

**Tulsa Trail**  
School Counselor

**2 – 3**

Christina Takacs

[ctakacs@hopatcongschools.org](mailto:ctakacs@hopatcongschools.org)

973-770-2162

**Durban Avenue**  
School Counselor

**4 – 5**

Melissa Kennedy

[mkenedy@hopatcongschools.org](mailto:mkenedy@hopatcongschools.org)

973-770-8966

**Middle School**  
School Counselors:

**6 – 8**

Danielle Manisa  
Chelsea Trump (SAC)

[dmanisa@hopatcongschools.org](mailto:dmanisa@hopatcongschools.org)

[ctrump@hopatcongschools.org](mailto:ctrump@hopatcongschools.org)

973-770-8871

973-770-8872

**High School**  
School Counselors:

**9 – 12**

Linda Padula  
Lisa Dunmyer

[lpadula@hopatcongschools.org](mailto:lpadula@hopatcongschools.org)

[ldunmyer@hopatcongschools.org](mailto:ldunmyer@hopatcongschools.org)

973-770-8967

973-770-8865

Crisis Counselor  
Guidance Secretary

Mary Ellen Fata  
Stacy Yanko

[mfata@hopatcongschools.org](mailto:mfata@hopatcongschools.org)

[syanko@hopatcongschools.org](mailto:syanko@hopatcongschools.org)

973-770-8991

973-770-8861

**K – 12 Director of Guidance**

**Jaime Walker**

[jwalker@hopatcongschools.org](mailto:jwalker@hopatcongschools.org)

973-770-8863

## **Chapter 1 (continued)**

### **What Does the School Counselor Do?**

Middle school counselors are responsible for assisting students with challenges they face in school or at home. These challenges include academic difficulties, friendship problems, peer pressure, anger management, etc. The counselors serve as a liaison between the parents and teachers. Counselors monitor how students are performing academically, socially, and emotionally. Specifically, the counselor is there to assist parents and students with the operations and procedures in the building, such as, operating Power School, accessing marking period grades, attendance, lunch accounts, etc. Also, counselors will guide students with organizational skills to better prepare them for high school. Both teachers and counselors meet as a team to discuss student concerns. Counselors, administration and teachers work as a cohesive unit to assist the needs of the middle school student.

If you would like to share ideas or have comments, please contact the Director of Guidance. Below is a snapshot of the Guidance programs at the middle school.

### **Services & Programs Middle School Grades 6 – 8**

Academic Counseling  
Academic Scheduling  
Basic Skills  
Conflict Resolution  
Coordinate 504 procedures  
Divorce Group Counseling  
Grade Level Team Meetings  
Grade Reporting  
Group Counseling  
Home Instruction  
Honor Roll  
Marking Period Dates  
Personal Counseling  
Response to Intervention (I&RS)  
Summer School  
Transition Program

## **Chapter 2**

## **Services & Programs**

### **Academic Counseling**

If at any time throughout the year students are struggling, counselors are there to offer support, guidance, and an academic plan to help students overcome any struggles they might be having. The counselor will usually hold a meeting with the teacher, parent, and student and create a plan to assist all parties involved. Sometimes a schedule change might be necessary but is not always recommended or necessary. Also, academic counseling can include exploration of attending a technical school and assist those making the transfer. Other helpful programs that may be suggested are After School Program and tutors, for additional academic assistance.

### **Academic Scheduling**

Academic scheduling is based upon current teacher recommendations, student performance throughout the year, and test scores. Administrators, counselors, and teachers will meet to discuss specific placements and course selections. Students' schedules will include the following courses: Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, Basis Skills, if necessary and Unified Arts classes. The team will review current and previous grades, current and previous test scores, and academic rigor of courses. All factors contribute to ensuring our students get the best placement for their needs. Each September, counselors assist students in reading schedules, locating classes and any other concerns they might have.

### **Basic Skills**

Basic Skills classes are offered in the area of Language Arts and Math to students who score partially proficient on the NJSLA (PARCC) Test (Assessment of Skills and Knowledge) which is taken annually in grades six, seven, and eight. The basic skills classes are a daily scheduled class in a student's schedule throughout the school year.

To determine if students are eligible for basic skills, the committee will look at current and previous grades, current and previous test scores, and academic rigor of courses. All factors contribute to ensuring our students get the supplemental support they need.

### **Conflict Resolution**

Students come for assistance in resolving conflicts with their peers and teachers. Counselors guide students in communication skills which include but are not limited to:

- Active Listening
- Empathy
- Anger Management
- Communicating feelings with "I" statements in place of blame

## **Coordinate 504 procedures**

The counselor may assist in developing and writing 504 Plans according to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which addresses the rights of persons with disabilities. A 504 Plan is written for a person who (1) has a mental or physical impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities (such as learning), (2) has a record of such impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such impairment. Documentation is required. Please contact the counselor for more detailed information.

## **Group Counseling**

In some instances, it may be necessary to work with students in a group setting. Often times, students are going through similar situations and gathering together to share and discuss their concerns is more effective than going through it alone. Group counseling sessions consist of discussions, unstructured, or structured learning activities. Groups typically include two to eight students working towards a common goal. Group members have the opportunity to learn and grow with one another by sharing ideas, gaining knowledge, discussing issues or problems, and setting goals for growth. Group topics vary, depending on student need.

## **Grade Reporting**

At the midpoint of each marking period, progress reports are available online. These notices indicate how well or poorly a student is progressing according to various indicators. In certain instances, the parent/guardian may be informed by phone if the student is in danger of failing. The progress and deficiency reports dates are listed on the school website. Also, report cards are available online four times during the school year. Students or parents who have questions regarding achievement have the following options for communication with teachers:

1. Email – use teacher’s first name initial and entire last name @hopatcongschools.org
2. Voicemail – call the school phone number #4, #1, enter extension
3. Power School – log onto <http://powerschool.hopatcongschools.org/> to create an account. Enter the information requested. To link your children to your account, you must enter your Access ID & Access Password, which any school can give you. The Power School Parent Portal allows parents to view their child’s lunch balance and lunch transactions for the entire school year.
4. Call or email your child’s guidance counselor to discuss any other concerns. Contact information is at the front of this manual.

*If parents do not have computer access at home, we can mail progress reports and report cards home upon written request.*

## **Grade Level Team Meetings**

Students are assigned to a specific team which is made up of all their teachers for that particular school year. Counselors attend these team meetings, usually on a weekly basis, to discuss a student in question with regards to academia, following the student’s academic progress. This is a very effective method for teachers and counselors to communicate and be directly involved with their students.

## **Home Instruction**

Students who are ill or confined to home for medical reasons for more than 10 days, are entitled to home instruction. In order to receive this instruction, a phone call must be made to the counselor requesting the service. A physician's note must be submitted which indicates the request for home instruction, a diagnosis, and an approximate length of time the student will be out of school,

Once the principal submits the instruction for board approval, the counselor will begin to gather assignments and set up tutoring. A parent/guardian or other responsible adult must be at home during the instruction period. Teachers assigned to home instruction will call the home directly to make visitation arrangements with the parent directly.

## **Honor Roll**

Middle School offers both a High Honor Roll and an Honor Roll Certificates. To qualify for a High Honor Roll Certificate, a student must achieve all A's and one B. Honor Roll certificates are earned by achieving a combination of A and B range grades. Certificates are distributed shortly after the marking period ends. Usually, a lunch celebration, provided by the parents association, occurs at the end of the school year for students who achieved High Honor Roll all marking periods.

## **Response to Intervention (RTI, formerly I&RS)**

The purpose of the RTI is to help prevent students who are performing below academic ability, from failing. The RTI process is a system that helps to identify those students, early on, who are having academic difficulty. Parent/student meetings take place with the RTI committee and a plan of action is discussed and put into place in order to prevent the student from performing below academic ability. Follow up sessions take place to monitor the students' progress.

## **Marking Period Dates**

Marking Period timelines are established each year which average in length of 45 days. There are four Marking Periods a year and dates are posted on the school website. Typically, the timelines will be:

MP 1 September – Beginning of November

MP 2 November – End of January

MP 3 February – Beginning of April

MP 4 April – June

## **Parent Meetings**

It is very important during the school year that parents be kept abreast of their child's academic progress and overall development. With this objective in mind, parents are often contacted and meetings set up to address these issues. Other issues that might be addressed include career goals and how to achieve them, teacher/student conflicts, problems with other students, and behavior problems. At the conclusion of each meeting strategies are put in place so that the meeting's objectives are addressed. If specified goals and objectives are not accomplished within a specified time frame, further meetings may be scheduled and different strategies employed.



## **Personal Counseling**

Students come to discuss problems in their relationships with peers and family members. Feelings are expressed and facts are identified. Counselors assist students in putting information into perspective and in identifying appropriate strategies for solving these problems. Resolutions lead to an improved comfort level in the classroom and outside school. Community resources are consulted when applicable. Communication with parents is included as applicable.

## **Summer School**

In order to ensure that students have multiple opportunities to be successful, we have developed a comprehensive Summer School Program for all students who fail to meet expected standards in Language Arts Literacy and/or Mathematics.

Students who fail Language Arts Literacy and/or Mathematics will be required to attend a mandatory six week Summer School Program in order to be promoted to the next grade. Failure to attend and pass summer school will result in retention in the current grade.

There will be no transportation provided, however the Board of Education provides summer school at no cost.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Standardized Testing**

#### **NJSLA (PARCC)**

All middle school students across the state of NJ are scheduled to take this exam in the spring. It is given annually to all students in grades three through eleven. This test measures a child's comprehension in language arts (reading, writing) and mathematics. Students are tested with traditional questions that require closed-end responses and questions that allow open-ended interpretations. The test is intended to indicate progress students are making in mastering the skills they need to successfully complete high school and move on to college or successful careers.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Transition from School to School**

For students transitioning in from Durban Avenue (Grade five) to the middle school, we have an orientation that takes place over the course of two day in June. The fifth grade is split into groups by their principal and then teachers accompany their students to the middle school. Students and their teachers gather in the library for introductions to the administration, school counselors and the nurse. Current sixth grade students speak about classes, the importance of the agenda and lockers to name a few areas of concern for incoming sixth grade students. Upon completion of the orientation students are encouraged to ask questions. Students are then given a tour of the building by current sixth grade students. The middle school also offers an orientation for parents / guardians of sixth grade students.

# Who Are School Counselors?



**S**chool counselors, referred to as “guidance counselors” in the past, help every student improve academic achievement, personal and social development, and career planning. School counselors in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are highly trained educators in pre K—12 settings who uphold ethical and professional standards to design, implement and manage comprehensive, developmental, results-based school counseling programs that promote and enhance student success.

## School Counselor Qualifications

School counselors are certified or licensed professionals who possess a master’s degree or higher in school counseling, or a substantial equivalent, meet the state certification/licensure standards and abide by the laws of the states in which they are employed. School counselors are required by most public school systems to successfully complete advanced-degree coursework in the following topics:

- Human growth and development
- Counseling theory
- Individual counseling
- Group counseling
- Social and cultural foundations
- Testing and assessment
- Research and program evaluation
- Professional orientation
- Career development

School counselors also are required to complete a practicum and internship supervised by a certified school counselor in a school setting.

## What Do School Counselors Do?

School counselors address the academic and developmental needs of all students, not just those in need, by collaborating with students, parents, school staff and the community. School counseling programs exhibit the following characteristics:

### Foundational mission and goals.

School counselors design, implement, and maintain guidance programs that align with the educational mission and philosophies of their schools and school districts. These programs help every student develop competencies in academic achievement, personal and social development, and career planning.

**Delivery methods.** School counselors follow a comprehensive guidance curriculum to work with students in individual, small group and classroom settings. School counselors help students create an academic plan for their education to prepare for successful careers after graduation and help students develop the necessary skills, such as organizational, time-management, and study skills. They also help students overcome obstacles that may form barriers to learning by helping students respond to issues such as divorce or death in their family, as well as developmental issues typical in childhood and adolescence.

**Program management.** School counselors manage their programs just as teachers manage their curriculum. They collaborate with administrators and other educators to ensure that the school counseling program helps fulfill the mission of the school by setting annual goals and putting mechanisms in place to facilitate the successful and effective delivery of the school

counseling program.

**Accountability.** School counselors hold their programs accountable for student achievement by monitoring student progress to ensure that the school counseling program meets its desired goals and objectives. School counselors collect, analyze and present statistics about grades, test scores, attendance and disciplinary records, and other information to make data-based and data-driven decisions about the school counseling program.

“The responsibilities of school counselors have increased tremendously over the years. School counselors are an integral part of the whole school community working to help children, teachers and other school personnel and parents. School counselors help children face challenges, tough classes, peer pressure, friendship problems, depression and more – all that can be roadblocks to future success.”

— *Angela Reformato, a school counselor in New York*

## How Do School Counselors Impact Student Achievement?

Numerous research studies show that school counselors, implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, can serve a vital role in maximizing student achievement.

A research study of Florida students in 5<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grades found that students in schools with a comprehensive guidance program scored significantly better on state’s standardized test for reading and math.

— *Does Implementing a Research-based School Counseling Curriculum Enhance Student Achievement? (Center for School Counseling Outcome Research, 2004)*

School counselors provide solutions to help curb rates of school failure and dropout by addressing broader contexts that include personal, social, emotional, and career development.

--*An Investigation of a Model of Academic Motivation for School Counseling*, M. Scheel and J. Gonzalez, *Professional School Counseling*, October 2007.

School counselors are in a key position to assist schools in their education reform mandates to reduce the achievement gap among low income and minority children.

-- *Fostering Educational Resilience and Achievement in Urban Schools Through School-Family Community Partnerships*, J. Bryan, *Professional School Counseling*, February 2005.

In working with at-risk youth, a 2004 study of middle school students in Baltimore County showed that school counselors helped increase academic achievement, raise career awareness, and improve overall student self-efficacy.

-- *Impact of Career Intervention on At-Risk Middle School Students' Career Maturity Levels, Academic Achievement, and Self-Esteem*, H.L. Legum, and C. Hoare, *Professional School Counseling*, December 2004.

School counselors, because of their unique training and responsibility, have an influential role of helping students become more engaged in the academic and social arenas within the school.

-- *The Multidimensionality of School Engagement and Math Achievement Among Racial Groups*, D. T. Sciarra, and H. J. Seirup, *Professional School Counseling*, April 2008.

The school counselor is an integral system support for the school-family-community relationship that meet the personal/social, academic, and career needs of a large number of students through collaboration, coordination, and consultation with school and community stakeholders.

-- *An Examination of School Counselor Involvement in School-Family-Community Partnerships*, J. Bryan, C. Holcomb-McCoy, *Professional School Counseling*, June 2007.



**American Counseling Association**  
5999 Stevenson Avenue  
Alexandria, Virginia 22304  
Toll Free: 800-347-6647  
Phone: 703-823-9800  
Fax: 703-823-0252  
[www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)



**American School Counselor Association**  
1101 King Street, Suite 625,  
Alexandria VA 22314  
800-306-4722  
703-683-2722  
703-683-1619 Fax  
[www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org)



**National Education Association**  
1201 16th Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC. 20036  
Phone: 202-833-4000  
Fax: 202-822-7974  
[www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

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# The Need for School Counselors

- From the American School Counselor Association

Today's school counselors are vital members of the education team. They help *all* students in the areas of academic achievement, personal/social development and career development, ensuring today's students become the productive, well-adjusted adults of tomorrow.

School counselors are an important part of the educational leadership team and provide valuable assistance to students regardless of whether they work in an elementary school or middle school, high school or beyond. See the following pages for specific information on why we have middle school counselors and a guidance director.

## Student-to-Counselor Ratios

Although ASCA recommends a 250-to-1 ratio of students to counselor, the national average is actually 467 (2007-2008 school year).

## New Jersey School Counseling Mandates

<b>Is school counseling mandated for grades K – 8?</b>	Yes *
<b>Mandated School Counselor-to-Student ratio:</b>	None
<b>Source of mandate:</b>	State Administrative Code
<b>Who funds mandate:</b>	Local school board
<b>Other:</b>	*While school counseling programs are mandated in New Jersey, there is no rule mandating that school counselors themselves be employed in schools. <a href="http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap8.pdf">http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap8.pdf</a>

# Why Middle School Counselors?

- From the American School Counselors Association

“Today’s young people are living in an exciting time, with an increasingly diverse society, new technologies, and expanding opportunities. To help ensure that they are prepared to become the next generation of parents, workers, leaders, and citizens”, every student needs support, guidance, and opportunities during adolescence, a time of rapid growth and change. Early adolescents face unique and diverse challenges, both personally and developmentally, that have an impact on academic achievement.

## **Middle School Students’ Developmental Needs**

Middle school is an exciting, yet challenging time for students, their parents and teachers. During this passage from childhood to adolescence, middle school students are characterized by a need to explore a variety of interests, connecting their learning in the classroom to its practical application in life and work; high levels of activity coupled with frequent fatigue due to rapid growth; a search for their own unique identity as they begin turning more frequently to peers rather than parents for ideas and affirmation; extreme sensitivity to the comments from others; and heavy reliance on friends to provide comfort, understanding and approval.

## **Meeting the Challenge**

Middle school counselors are professional educators with a mental health perspective who understand and respond to the challenges presented by today’s diverse student population. Middle school counselors do not work in isolation; rather they are integral to the total educational program. They provide proactive leadership that engages all stakeholders in the delivery of programs and services to help students achieve success in school. Professional school counselors align with the school’s mission to support the academic achievement of all students as they prepare for the ever-changing world of the 21st century. This mission is accomplished through the design, development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive, developmental and systematic school counseling program. The ASCA National Standards in the academic, National Model: A Framework For School Counseling Programs, with its data driven and results-based focus serves as a guide for today’s school counselor who is uniquely trained to implement this program.

## **Middle School Counselors Implement the Counseling Program by Providing:**

### *School Guidance Curriculum*

- Academic skills support
- Organizational, study and test-taking skills Education in understanding self and others
- Coping strategies
- Peer relationships and effective social skills
- Communication, problem-solving, decision-making and conflict resolution
- Career awareness, exploration and planning
- Substance abuse education
- Multicultural/diversity awareness

### *Individual Student Planning*

- Goal-setting/decision- making
- Academic planning
- Career planning
- Education in understanding of self, including strengths and weaknesses
- Transition planning

### *Responsive Services*

- Individual and small group counseling
- Individual/family/school crisis intervention
- Peer facilitation
- Consultation/collaboration
- Referrals

### *System Support*

- Professional development
- Consultation, collaboration and teaming
- Program management and operation

## **Middle School Counselors Collaborate With:**

### **Parents**

Parent information night  
Communication/networking  
Academic planning programs  
Parent and family education  
One-on-one parent conferencing  
Assessment results interpretation  
Resource referrals  
College/career exploration

### **Administrators**

School climate  
Behavioral management plans  
School-wide needs assessment  
Student data and results  
Student assistance team building  
Leadership

### **Students**

Peer education  
Peer support  
Academic support  
School climate  
Leadership development

### **Community**

Job shadowing, service learning  
Crisis interventions  
Referrals  
Parenting classes  
Support groups  
Career education

### **Teachers**

Career portfolio development  
Assistance with students' academic plans  
Classroom guidance activities on study skills, career development, etc.  
Academic support, learning style assessment and education to help students succeed academically  
Classroom career speakers  
At-risk student identification and implementation of interventions to enhance success  
Parent communication/education

## **Why Middle School Counselors?**

Middle school students are characterized by rapid physical growth, curiosity about their world and an emerging self-identity. Through a comprehensive developmental school counseling program, counselors work as a team member with school staff, parents and the community to create a caring, supportive climate and atmosphere whereby young adolescents can achieve academic success. Middle school counselors enhance the learning process and promote academic achievement. School counseling programs are essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set appropriate career goals and realize full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community. The professional middle school counselor holds a master's degree and required state certification in school counseling. Maintaining certification includes on-going professional development to stay current with education reform and challenges facing today's students. Professional association membership is encouraged as it enhances the school counselor's knowledge and effectiveness.

# Why a Director of Guidance?

- From the American School Counselors Association

Professional school counselors have a positive impact on student achievement through programs and services that are a part of a comprehensive school counseling program. The development and implementation of these programs, as outlined by “The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling” (ASCA, 2005), requires a collaborative effort among well-trained, highly competent professional school counselors. School counselor directors/coordinators provide leadership at the district and state levels to ensure:

- the employment of highly qualified school counselors
- the development, implementation and evaluation of comprehensive school counseling programs that benefit all students
- the availability of professional development, consultation and supervision relevant to school counseling
- the use of performance appraisal instruments based on the appropriate role of the professional school counselor

## Meeting The Challenge

School counselor directors/coordinators collaborate with professional school counselors to develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive school counseling programs. Comprehensive school counseling programs, aligned with school, district and state missions, promote academic achievement and success for all students as they prepare for the ever-changing world of the 21st century. The ASCA National Model® serves as a guide for today’s professional school counselor, who is uniquely trained to implement this program. Driven by student data and based on standards of academic, career and personal/social development, these programs lead to results measured by improvement in academics, attendance and behavior of all students.

School counselor directors/coordinators:

- Advocate for the needs of students, based on school and district data
- Work to eliminate barriers to access and equity to a rigorous education for all students
- Provide information about the need for a K-12 comprehensive school counseling program to school-, district- and state-level administrators, school boards and the community
- Provide leadership toward the implementation of the comprehensive school counseling program at the school, district and state levels
- Provide leadership in the process of hiring qualified, diverse professional school counselors.
- Encourage membership and involvement in professional school counselor associations
- advocate for programs and services that lead to student success and achievement with school staff members, parents, district- and state-level staff, school board members and the community
- advocate for a professional school-counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250
- advocate for professional school counselors to spend 80 percent of their time in direct services to students as defined by the ASCA National Model®
- provide individual and group supervision to school counselors in practice
- provide leadership in the evaluation process to ensure school counselor performance appraisal is aligned with the appropriate role of the professional school counselor
- ensure regularly scheduled professional development for school counselors and for the continuous improvement of the school counseling program
- collaborate in the supervision of school counseling interns/fieldwork students
  
- coordinate the integration of school counseling programs with the total educational curriculum of the school district and state
- collaborate with school staff and community members on district and state leadership teams
- encourage professional school counselors to participate in school leadership teams
- provide leadership to promote equity in policies and procedures that impact students
- Collaborate or serve as a liaison with school and community officials regarding crisis response efforts



## **Supervision of a Comprehensive School Counseling Program**

School counselor directors/coordinators have advanced training in supervision and school counseling programs. School counselor directors/coordinators provide direction to school administrators if these administrators supervise professional school counselors. School counselor directors/coordinators also provide feedback and support to professional school counselors as the school counselors develop and implement comprehensive school counseling programs.

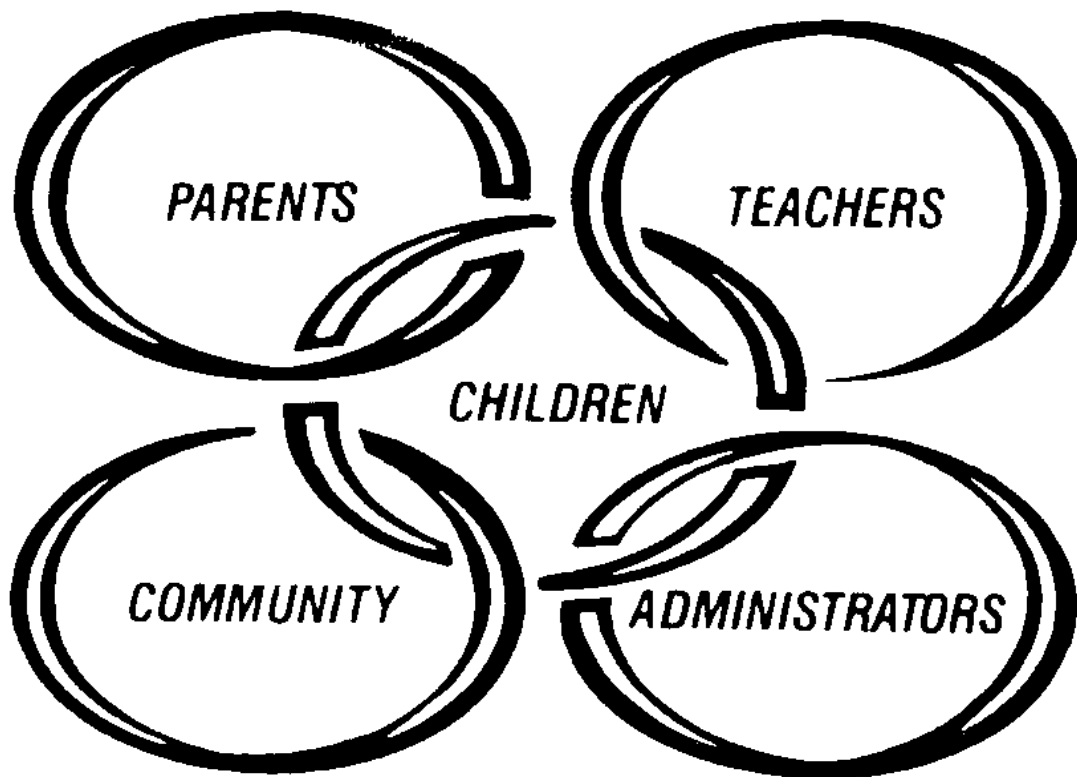
The ASCA National Model® provides in-depth information on the development of a comprehensive school counseling program. The primary responsibility of the school counselor director/coordinator in a district or state is to provide leadership and support in the development and implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program based upon the identified needs of the students in the individual school building, district or state.

### **A Credentialed and/or Licensed Professional**

Professional school counselor directors/coordinators hold a master's degree or higher in counseling or the substantial equivalent and meet licensure and credentialing requirements in school counseling as defined by each state. These degree and licensure requirements include the completion of supervised practicum and internship/fieldwork experiences. Many states require that school counselor directors/coordinators hold administrative and/or supervisory licensure in addition to school counseling licensure.

### **Why School Counseling Directors/Coordinators?**

The development and implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs requires a collaborative effort among well-trained, highly competent professional school counselors. School counselor directors/coordinators ensure that highly qualified school counselors are hired, professional development, consultation and supervision are provided and that school counselors are evaluated in relationship to the professional competencies as outlined by the ASCA National Model. School counselor directors/coordinators also provide leadership for the development and implementation of an effective comprehensive school counseling program. Their efforts include promoting or coordinating the design, delivery, evaluation and improvement of comprehensive school counseling programs in a systematic manner to improve the academics, attendance and behavior of all students.



*Hopatcong Borough Schools  
School Counseling Department*

*Please contact your school's counselor with  
any questions or concerns.*

*Thank you for your continued support of our  
students, staff, and programs.*

*Together we can make a difference!*