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“Define Student Excellence” Overview

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Student Excellence is Research-Based and Results-Based

The purpose of a CBA is to help students achieve at their highest potential in school and develop their capacity to succeed in educational and career pathways of their choice. To accomplish this, school counseling programs define student excellence (what we expect students to know and demonstrate as a result of the school counseling program), provide meaningful learning opportunities to help students achieve the results, and assess student progress and achievement to generate meaningful data that can guide students’ learning plans and educational experiences.

The “Define Student Excellence” section of the “Develop a CBA” module discusses two essential aspects of a CBA school counseling program:

Our understanding of student excellence is firmly grounded in and informed by what research has demonstrated to be strongly related to students’ academic achievement and well being. Research identifies what, within the purview of school counseling programs, is most effective in helping students learn how to learn, plan for their future success and cope with the many challenges of growing up, staying engaged in the learning process, experiencing a constant sense of self-purpose and well-being, and achieving at their highest potential.

The results students can be expected to achieve through participation in a comprehensive school counseling programs are articulated as standard and competency statements. These statements serve as the primary learning targets students are expected to achieve by the time they graduate

from high school (standards) and along the PreK-12 learning continuum (proficiency-building competencies).

The “Define Student Excellence” section offers a more in-depth look at the four constructs and associated sub-constructs identified in Chapter 3 of our book, *Achieving Excellence in School Counseling through Motivation, Self-Direction, Self-Knowledge and Relationships*. This section will discuss why they are fundamental to a CBA. It also examines more closely what is involved in designing and delivering a results-based school counseling program.

Role of Research in School Counseling

Research is the use of observation and systematic data collection methods to derive generalized truths about the relationships among phenomena. Typical products generated by the school counseling research community are research briefs, meta-studies and program/outcome evaluations. Research demonstrates what theories, strategies and practices are strongly related to student achievement, and defines what is required for counseling programs to be effective. A review of research yielded four constructs that are strongly related to student achievement and well-being. Each construct has associated sub-constructs which are important foci for comprehensive school counseling programs.



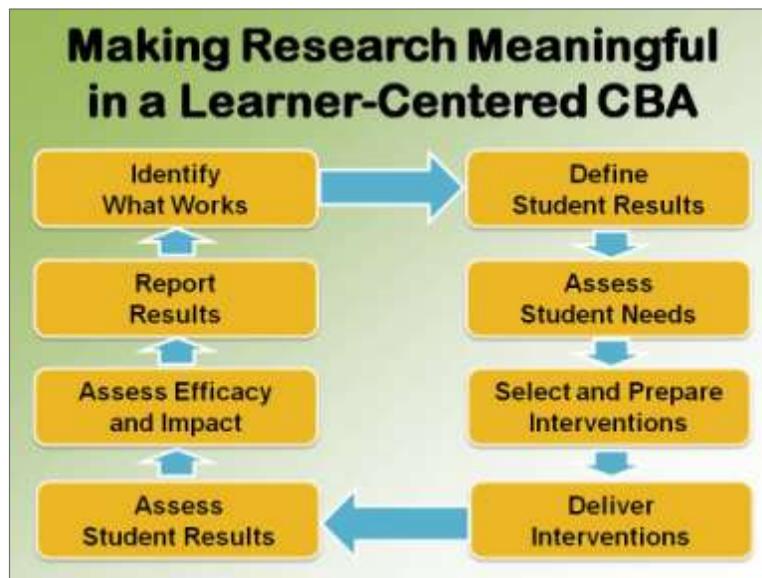
A growing body of research is demonstrating the substantive contribution of school counseling programs and counselor practice to student success. These research results, especially those related to students’ metacognitive and social-emotional development also support the efficacy and use of a construct-based approach (CBA) to school counseling.

Our discussion of research will describe the constructs and sub-constructs foundational to a CBA and why it is important for them to be a primary focus of school counseling programs. Three types of information are provided for your use: a) a brief description using narrative and graphics, b) online videos such as YouTube and Ted Talks that help explain the concepts, and c) links to websites that provide more detailed definitions of each construct and sub-construct.

Beyond these resources, you are encouraged to use search engines to find more information on topics that interest you, and/or which you want to find out how others are using these concepts in their programs and practice.

Making Research Meaningful

Research serves many purposes. We have seen how research studies have yielded the constructs and sub-constructs which form the foundation of a CBA. These constructs and sub-constructs identify critical aspects of a learner-centered school counseling program. To be truly research-based, therefore, means that how we develop, deliver and evaluate a CBA must be aligned with what research demonstrates works to impact student learning in a positive way and improve learner outcomes.



Professional school counselors, in a research-based program, are responsible for knowing what research has determine to have the greatest potential for helping students achieve the results we expect of them. To accomplish this, school counselors must make the research findings meaningful in terms of their design and delivery of the counseling program, and relevant to what is emerging in the biographies of their students.

A research-based school counseling program begins with what research has determined to be effective in helping students achieve desired results, in our case results related to the four constructs and associated sub-constructs. We then use the constructs to define the results (CBA student standards) we expect students to achieve through participation in the CBA program. We also define student competencies which add specificity to standard statements so they become measurable. The competencies become learning targets for the CBA curriculum, the primary delivery vehicle for a CBA.

In order to personalize our instruction, we need to assess the current level of student proficiency so we have an accurate picture of their level of knowledge and skill in relation to what they need to know and do to achieve what is expected of them. Student learning begins with where they are

at in relation to where we want them to be as a result of their learning experiences. With an understanding of what students are bringing to the learning event and their learning needs, it is then possible to select and prepare interventions to guide their learning. Interventions may be delivered to a whole class, groups or one-on-one in order to maximize the students’ potential for acquiring the knowledge and developing the skills they need to achieve.

Research helps us define what constitutes student achievement and also what characterizes highly effective school counseling programs. This information enables us to establish critical learning targets (expected results) for students and determine the extent of their learning resulting from participation in the school counseling program. The information also contributes significantly to our ability to determine the efficacy and impact of the counseling program.

Student Excellence Articulated as Results

A CBA is results-based. The central question to be asked in every facet of a school counseling program is: “What result(s) do we want to achieve?” All discussions begin with this question as our answer provides the context in which everything we do becomes meaningful. We need to ask this question in order to effectively plan, implement our plans and evaluate our progress and accomplishments.

Student results are articulated as standard and competency statements. Research tells us the types of programs and practices that are related to student achievement. Because of this knowledge, we are able to focus school counseling programs on prevention by developing learning opportunities that engage students in area which we know will make a difference in students’ learning and lives. Research also guides our selection and delivery of appropriate interventions to help students reinforce their strengths and provide additional support in areas in need of improvement.

Standard and competency statements provide specific learning targets for students which can significantly contribute to their academic, social-emotional, metacognitive and behavioral development. This section will discuss the benefit of articulating student excellence as standards and competencies and will provide twelve construct-based standard statements which, if students achieve them, can lead to academic and personal success and achievement at their highest potential.

The importance of clearly defining student results will become evident in the next two sections of this module: “Develop Meaningful Learning Opportunities” and “Develop Student Assessments.”

Links to “Define Student Excellence” Webpages

Links to all webpages in the “Develop a CBA” module can be accessed via the hyperlinks in the Sidebar to your left. Links to the webpages associated with the “Define Student Excellence” section appear at the top of the list. There are four sub-sections under the “Define Student Excellence” title and appear in the following order:

- Motivation Overview, followed by its five sub-constructs.
- Self-Direction Overview, followed by its five sub-constructs.

- Self-Knowledge Overview, followed by its five sub-constructs.
- Relationships Overview, followed by its four sub-constructs.

These will be followed by the other two sections in this module.

Links to all webpages subordinate to the “Develop a CBA” module will appear in the Sidebar as long as you are within the “Develop a CBA” module.

“PDF” versions of all these webpages can be accessed from within the respective webpage, and in the “Free Resources” module.