

“Develop Learning Opportunities” Overview

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Introduction to “Develop Learning Opportunities”

Role of Curriculum in a CBA

Competency-based learning opportunities are a primary component of a learner-centered CBA.



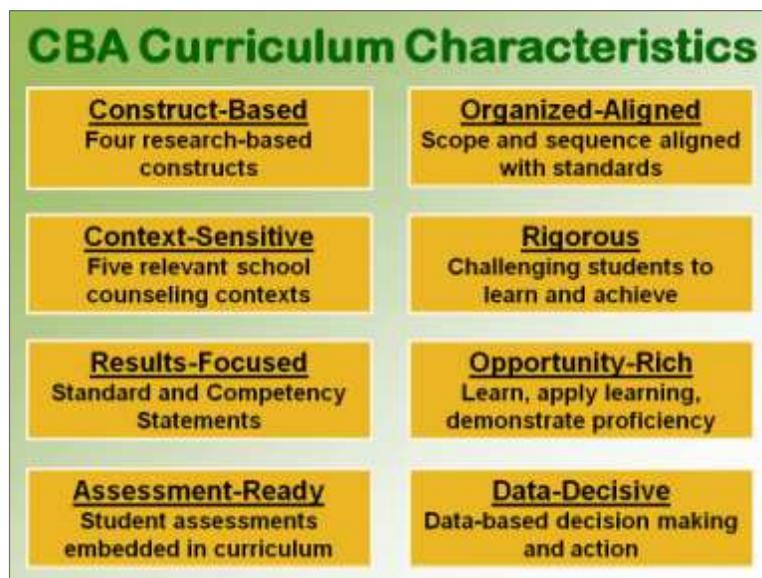
These opportunities enable school counselors to teach students what is expected of them in a CBA school counseling program and how to work toward and achieve the CBA student standards. Although learning opportunities can take many forms, the main focus of this section is on developing a core curriculum that is the primary vehicle for delivering a CBA to students. By

core we mean those activities which we believe so strongly are essential to students achieving the CBA standards that they need to be delivered to all students. The content of the core curriculum is related to the CBA research-based constructs and sub-constructs. The primary delivery modes for a CBA curriculum are whole class and group activities.

The CBA curriculum is well articulated in Chapter 6 of our Book, *Achieving Excellence in School Counseling through Motivation, Self-Direction, Self-Knowledge and Relationships*, and in Construction Site 2 of our *CBA Toolkit*. This section of the Website is not intended to replicate these resources, but to focus more on the specific steps needed to develop a construct-based curriculum that incorporates your existing curriculum activities and helps you add other activities to more fully align with the CBA constructs and sub-constructs. In addition, some new and updated tools will be provided in the Website to assist you in your efforts.

Essential Characteristics of a CBA Curriculum

The graphic below identifies eight essential characteristics of a CBA curriculum. When developing a curriculum, it is important to ensure that each of these characteristics is evident in the structure and content of the curriculum activities.



Construct-Based

A CBA is grounded in four research-based constructs and associated sub-constructs. The CBA curriculum provides students with opportunities to become proficient in each other these areas. Results (learning targets) that we expect students to achieve, therefore, must be related to these four constructs. This does not mean that other results are necessarily excluded from the curriculum, only that the core activities at minimum, should address all CBA constructs and sub-constructs. In other words, curriculum activities should be developed for the following areas:



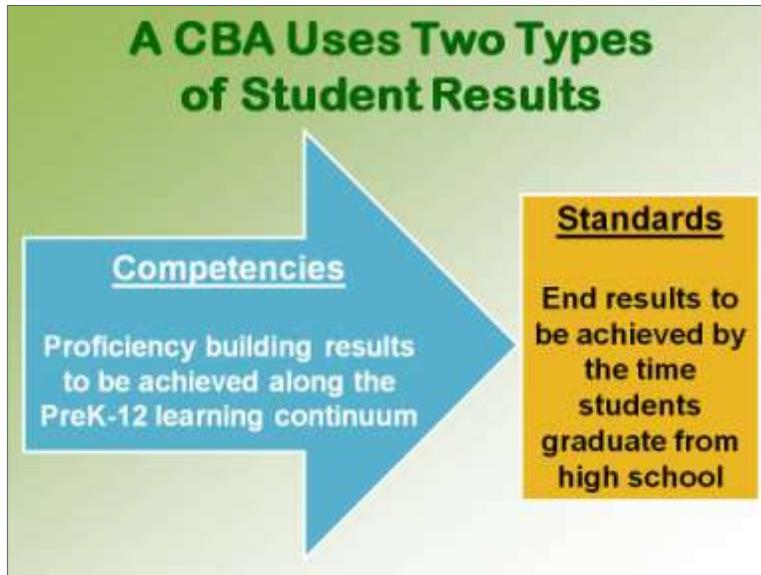
CBA curriculum activities answer the question: what knowledge, skills and attitudes, behaviors and habits of mind do students need to learn in order for them to achieve the CBA student results of becoming highly motivated, self-directed learners who are knowledgeable about themselves, engaged in meaningful relationships and developing as contributing members to our society and the well-being of our world?

All CBA curriculum activities identify results (standards and competencies) students are expected to achieve through participating in the school counseling program. The result statements are informed by what research has demonstrated to be strongly related to student achievement and well-being, student learning needs assessed at the local level, and the experiences and insights of the school counselors interacting with the students.

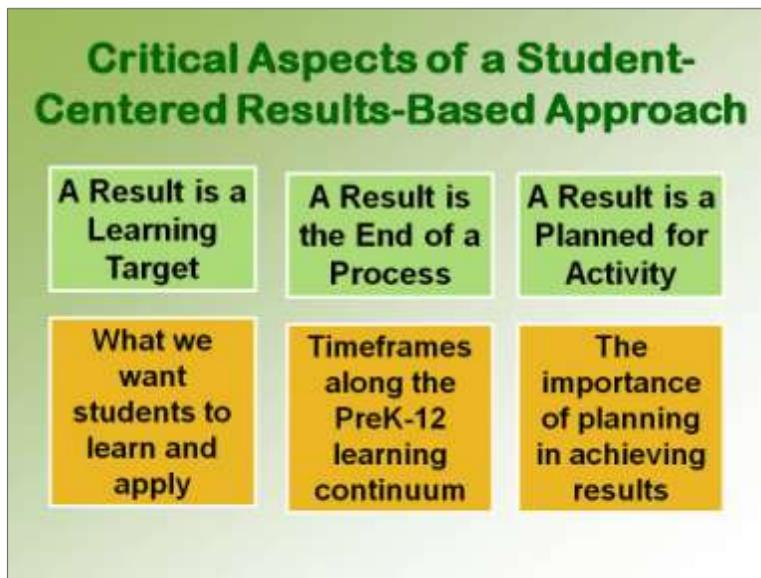
The activities deliver opportunities for students to learn about the results and how to achieve them, practice applying what they are learning in authentic contexts, and demonstrate their proficiency in (mastery of) what they are expected to learn. Students are expected to acquire relevant knowledge, develop skills appropriate to their educational and career goals, and learn to embrace the attitudes, behaviors and habits of mind that lead to their success in school and life.

Results-Focused

Student results are what we expect students to achieve through participation in the counseling program. In a CBA, student results are articulated as standard and competency statement. Standard statements are end-results that students are expected to achieve by the time they graduate from high school. Competency statements are proficiency-building. Achieving a competency means that students are progressing toward fulfilling specific aspects of what is required to finally achieve the CBA student standards.



Collectively, CBA curriculum activities are intended to enable students to achieve the CBA standards. All competency statements are aligned with one or more CBA student standards. They can be viewed as critical aspects of a student-centered results-based approach.



The core competency statements serve as the learning targets for individual CBA counseling activities. The range of competency statements in a CBA curriculum should reflect what students need to do to demonstrate that they have achieved the CBA student standards. A student result can also be viewed as the end of a process, the outcomes students have achieved within specified periods of time. For example, a process can be defined as broadly as the entire K-12 school counseling program, or the end of a level or grade, or as simply the end of a single curriculum activity. Finally, it is important to understand the CBA curriculum as planned for activities. The curriculum should never be designed or delivered in a haphazard manner. Rather, it must be developed and delivered in a cogent and intentional fashion.

Context-Sensitive

As we learned in the section on “A CBA is Results-Based, standard and competency statements become meaningful when they are related to relevant school counseling contexts in which all students participate. A CBA focuses on five contexts: a) academic support, b) student planning, c) college and career readiness, d) personal growth and e) social interaction. CBA curriculum activities, therefore, should focus on what is required for students to become proficient in each of the constructs and sub-constructs in relation to these five areas. Again, use of these five contexts do not exclude other contexts from being identified and reference, only that in a CBA these five need to be effectively addressed.

Assessment-Ready

One of the most important components of a successfully delivered curriculum is having the ability to determine how students are progressing toward or have achieved the specific learning targets associated with the activity. To accomplish requires that each curriculum activity has student assessments embedded in it. This does not mean that the assessments have to be used every time the activity is delivered, but that we need to demonstrate that the activity is capable of producing information about student progress that can be used to provide meaningful feedback to students and their parents/guardians. Being able to demonstrate that an activity has embedded assessments helps to promote the rigor and legitimacy of the counseling curriculum to others.

Organized-Aligned

A CBA curriculum clearly identifies the individual activities which comprise the overall curriculum, especially the core activities designed to be delivered to all students. This is accomplished by producing a CBA scope and sequence which identifies at least all core curriculum activities and when and to whom they are delivered. All activities identified in the scope and sequence must be aligned with the CBA students standards and contribute to students achieving the standards by the time they graduate from high school.

Rigorous

CBA curriculum activities must be challenging. They need to engage students in successfully completing the activities, achieving the competency statements and finally achieving the CBA student standards by achieving at their highest potential. School counselors help students learn how to learn, plan for their future success and cope with growing up and succeeding in school. These can be daunting goals to achieve and the CBA curriculum should inspire students to do their very best at becoming proficient learners, developing realistic and sustainable plans for their future, and developing as mature and responsible individuals.

Opportunity-Rich

CBA curriculum activities should be rich in opportunities. Three types of opportunities should be evident in the design and content of the curriculum: a) the opportunity to learn what it is we feel is essential to their success, b) the opportunity to apply and practice what they are learning in authentic contexts and transferring this ability from one context to others, and c) the opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency and mastery of what they are expected to learn to others.

Data-Decisive

The CBA curriculum must produce meaningful data that can be used to determine students’ progress, proficiency and achievement. It also needs to produce data that can be used to evaluate the impact of having delivered the CBA curriculum and develop plans for improving it. The results of these assessments are reported and distributed to those who need them to make informed educational decisions that maximize students’ learning potential, improves their learning outcomes, and improves the quality of the school counseling program and counselor practice. This section will address embedding student assessments in CBA curriculum activities. The next section, “Develop Student Assessments” will discuss additional ways to ensure a comprehensive approach to assessing student progress, proficiency and achievement.

School Counseling is Comparable to Content Areas

Comprehensive school counseling programs are as important as content area programs (e.g., math, ELA, science). CBA learning opportunities are comparable to content areas courses in that they have clearly-define standards, employ rigorous learning opportunities and assess their students. Content area courses emphasize developing students’ cognitive abilities and focus on concepts, facts and issues related to their respective disciplines. School counseling learning opportunities emphasize students’ metacognitive, social-emotional and executive function development. These foci enable students to learn how to learn, plan for their future success and cope with the challenges of growing up and being successful in life.



It is essential in developing and delivering a CBA to recognize the centrality of the school counseling curriculum. This is the content (knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, habits of mind) that student need to become proficient learners and fully benefit from their educational experiences. The CBA curriculum is an integrated set of planned interventions designed to provide students with the learning opportunities they need to acquire this knowledge, develop the skills and embrace the attributes that will enable them to achieve and succeed.

It is the CBA curriculum that enables counselors to go beyond a purely responsive mode that primarily responds to individuals’ problems to a programmatic approach that delivers to students

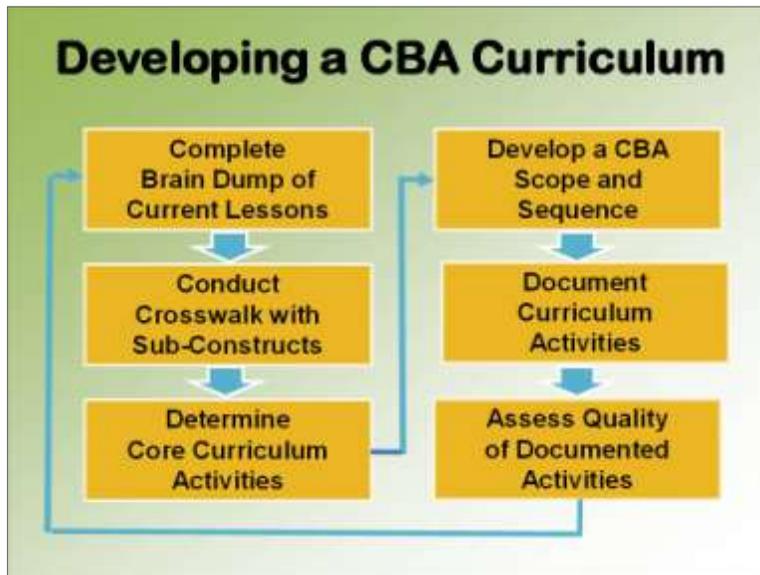
what they need to enrich their learning experiences, achieve at their highest levels and fulfill their aspirations and dreams

Steps Involved in Developing a CBA Curriculum

Six Basic Steps

A fully developed CBA curriculum, one that identifies and documents at least all of the core curriculum activities, is a major multi-year effort. This section will describe the steps involved in developing a delivery-ready CBA curriculum. Discussion regarding what to do with the curriculum you develop is addressed in the “Deliver a CBA” module (see the link in the Navigation Pane at the top of this webpage).

We have already looked at the defining characteristics of a CBA curriculum that should be evident in every curriculum activity. Completing the six steps identified in the graphic below will help you start with your current school counseling curriculum activities and build an integrated curriculum program based on the CBA’s constructs and sub-constructs.



Templates to help you generate and document relevant information are provided for the six steps. A “pdf” version of instructions are provided, as well as a MS Word “docx” template you can use to input and organize your information.

It is recommended that you review all six steps to gain a general understanding of how the templates can help you. Then, see the “Links to Documentation Templates” section following Step 6 to access the “pdf” and “docx” files.

Step 1: Conduct Brain Dump

As noted above, the two primary delivery modes for a CBA curriculum are whole class and group activities. It is likely that all school counseling programs have at least some curriculum activities delivered in these two modes. The first step in developing a CBA curriculum is to identify what activities you are currently delivering or have plans to deliver.

A “Brain Dump” template is provided to help you identify and document your current school counseling curriculum activities. As a counseling department, you will be asked to document all activities that you consider to be essential to your work. Not all activities that you identify, however, will be curriculum activities. The Brain Dump exercise provides a way to distinguish between curriculum activities (which are documented using a CBA documentation template) and non-curricular activities (which are documented using a policies and protocols template discussed in the “Deliver a CBA” module).

Once you have completed the brain dump, you will be able to sort the file into two groups: a) curriculum activities and b) non-curricular activities. This template will also be used in Steps 2 and 3.

Step 2: Conduct a Crosswalk with Sub-Constructs

Core Curriculum Activities are aligned with the CBA constructs and sub-constructs. The next step is to determine which of your current and planned curriculum activities are aligned with the CBA constructs and sub-constructs. This will help establish the extent to which you are already delivering lessons related to a CBA and where there are gaps that need to be filled.

Step 3: Determine Core Curriculum Activities

The “Brain Dump” template is also used to determine and document additional curriculum activities that will need to be developed to fully align curriculum activities with all CBA constructs and sub-constructs. To arrive at a final list of CBA-aligned curriculum activities will take time to evolve, with many revisions along the way. Do not expect to produce a final list at the very beginning of this process. This exercise is intended to identify and document as much as can be initially determined.

Step 4: Develop a CBA Scope and Sequence

The next step is to take all the CBA-aligned curriculum activities you have identified in the “Brain Dump” exercise and organize them into a developmentally-appropriate scope and sequence that specifies when (e.g., month, quarter) and to whom (e.g., grade) the activities will be delivered. A “CBA Scope and Sequence” template is provided to assist you in your efforts.

The scope and sequence can be used to display the comprehensive programmatic approach of your school counseling program and used to guide and ensure the delivery of all core CBA curriculum activities.

It is important to demonstrate that the activities listed in the scope and sequence are aligned with the CBA student standards. A “CBA Curriculum Alignment” template is provided for this purpose. This template can be completed now or once you have documented the activities in your CBA scope and sequence.

Step 5: Document CBA Curriculum Activities

At minimum, all curriculum activities listed in the scope and sequence should be documented. This is another multi-year process that evolves and is revised over time. Documenting curriculum activities helps ensure high quality lessons to be delivered because the documentation process requires more in-depth consideration of what needs to be done. Documented activities

also serve the important function of demonstrating to those outside the counseling department that the curriculum is rigorous and helps students learn how to become proficient learners by focusing on relevant knowledge, appropriate skills and embracing critical personal attributes that lead to achievement and success.

Step 6: Assess Quality of Documented Activities

Following completion of each documented curriculum activity, it is important to assess the quality of the activity to self-reflection and feedback from your colleagues. A “Quality Documentation Assessment Tool” is provided to assist you in your efforts.

It is recommended that all documented activities be assembled by level (elementary, middle, high) and made available online and/or print to the school community.

Links to Curriculum Development Templates

Links to the “Instructions” and “Templates” associated with the “Develop Learning Opportunities” section of the “Develop a CBA” module are provided below and in the “Free Resources” Module. They are organized according to the “Steps Involved in Developing a CBA Curriculum” described above.

[NOTE: The following hyperlinks will not work once the “pdf” version of this webpage has been downloaded. To access the Templates and Instructions, logon to the CBA Website. The quickest way is to go to the “Free Resources” module, click on “Templates and Instructions” in the Sidebar, and then click on the desired link.]

Steps 1-3

[Brain Dump Instructions \(pdf\)](#)

[Brain Dump Template \(docx\)](#)

Step 4

[Scope and Sequence Instructions \(pdf\)](#)

[Scope and Sequence Template \(docx\)](#)

[Curriculum Alignment Tool Instructions \(pdf\)](#)

[Curriculum Alignment Tool Template \(docx\)](#)

Step 5

[Curriculum Activity Documentation Instructions \(pdf\)](#)

[Curriculum Activity Documentation Template \(docx\)](#)

Step 6

[Quality Documentation Assessment Tool Instructions \(pdf\)](#)

[Quality Documentation Assessment Tool Template \(docx\)](#)