

Student Excellence Articulated as Results

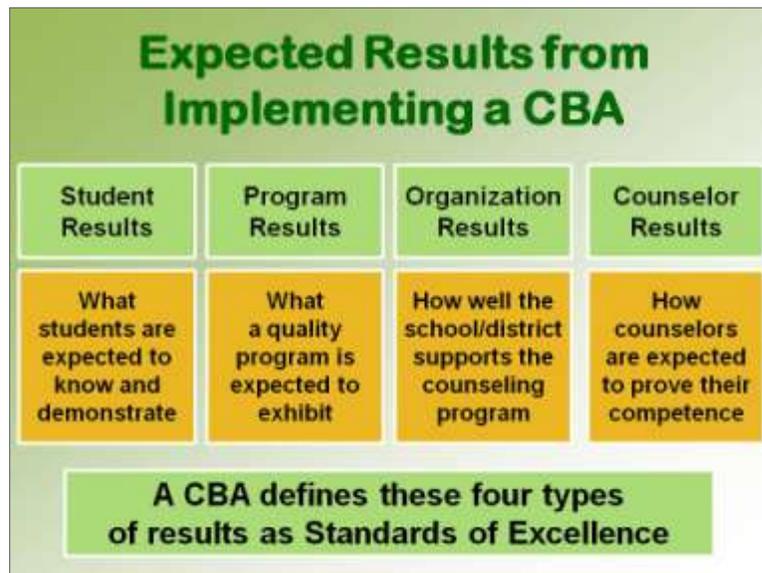
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A CBA is Results-Based

Standards of Excellence are Results to be Achieved

Our book is entitled *Achieving Excellence in School Counseling through Motivation, Self-Direction, Self-Knowledge and Relationships*. The primary result that we want to achieve through the delivery of a comprehensive CBA school counseling program is to achieve excellence. The verb “excel” points to our capacity to go beyond minimum expectations in learning and life. Excellence is equated with achieving at our highest potential.



A central feature of the CBA is clearly defining excellence. A CBA focuses on three primary types of standards of excellence as illustrated in the graphic below. These three types of results all contribute to understanding what a results-based approach means to the professional school counseling profession.

- **Student Results.** A results-based approach to school counseling begins with clearly-defined results. Student results are what we want students to know and demonstrate as a result of their participation in the school counseling programs. These results can be general (e.g., CBA Student Standards) or specific (e.g., competency statements/learning targets for individual school counseling curriculum activities).
- **Program Results.** School counseling program results define what we expect to accomplish in the design, delivery and evaluation of the program. For example, does the program have a scope and sequence for curriculum activities that deliver meaningful learning opportunities for students to learn what we expect of them? Is a comprehensive school counseling program delivered to all students? Is student progress toward CBA Student Standards monitored, assessed and reported? Does the school have an effective parent engagement program? Are the results of evaluating the efficacy and impact of the program used to improve it?
- **Counselor Results.** School counselors are professionals. As such, they are accountable for meeting the requirements for being a professional school counselor. It is important for these requirements to be clearly defined so that counselors know what is expected of them, and for school counselor performance evaluations to be fair and evaluate counselors based on their role and job responsibilities.

The CBA Website will initially address student results because they are the most important result to be achieved through school counseling programs and counselor practice. Over time we will also address program results and professional school counselor results as excellence in these areas strongly influence our ability to help students achieve at their highest potential.

Excellence in School Counseling

The phrase “student excellence” represents attainment of CBA student standards and competencies. Excellence means that students are exceeding expectations as defined by minimum standards, demonstrating a mastery of relevant knowledge and appropriate skills, and consistently applying and transferring their learning from one context to others.

An excellent definition of a results-based approach to school counseling is provided by Drs. Clarence and Sharon Johnson who articulated this approach in their work and writing. According to them, a results-based approach to school counseling is “designed to guarantee that all students acquire the competencies to become successful in school and to make a successful transition from school to higher education, to employment or to a combination of higher education and work.” (Johnson & Johnson)

This definition reflects the essential mission of a CBA. We like this definition for four reasons. First, it underscores the work of school counselors as a guarantee. Second, school counseling programs are for all students. Third, it focuses on school counselors supporting student achievement through the development of critical competencies. Fourth, it focuses on the role of

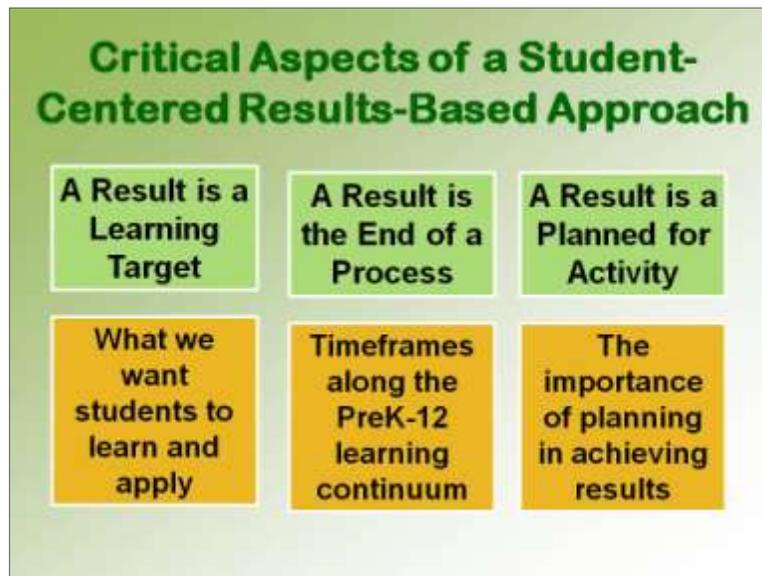
school counselors in preparing students for and helping them successfully transition between high school and the postsecondary world.

School counseling programs are for every student and it is the responsibility of schools and school counselors to deliver a comprehensive program to all students. This distinguishes school counselors from other support personnel (e.g., social workers, school psychologists) who address subsets of the student population in need of their services. School counseling can be defined in terms of its comprehensive programmatic approach as opposed to programs that target specific individuals and groups within the overall student population.

The term “result” is the critical focus of school counseling programs. A results-based approach is a set of principles, strategies and procedures designed to help students learn how to learn, plan for their future success and cope with the challenges of growing up and being prepared to enter and benefit from educational and career opportunities in the postsecondary world. The meaning of the term result and its relevance to school counseling programs can be understood by three important aspects of being results-focused.

Three Critical Aspects of a Results-Based Approach

The notion of result in school counseling environment can be defined by viewing results from three perspectives.



A Result is a Learning Target

Archery is a useful metaphor for understanding the learning process. Hitting a specified target involves an archer (student) who masters the use of tools (bow and arrow). The archer learns and applies relevant knowledge about required steps for hitting the target (e.g., positioning the arrow on the bow, drawing the bow, taking aim adjusting for factors influencing the flight of the arrow, releasing the arrow and hitting the target). The archer becomes skilled (proficient) in consistently hitting the center of the target through practice. Learning is a process that requires knowledge and how to apply it, and ongoing preparation to master the process in order to achieve excellence in their performance.

The tools we give students to learn consist of helping them acquire relevant knowledge, develop skills that are appropriate for successfully completing the desired learning outcomes, and encouraging them to develop attitudes, behaviors and habits of mind that lead to success. We provide learning opportunities that teach students what is expected of them through their participation in the school counseling program, and assessing their progress toward the desired results. Just as a master archer will guide students in perfecting their archery skills, school counselors guide their students in perfecting their learning processes.

A student's education is filled with a variety of learning experiences, each experience having one or multiple learning targets to be achieved. School counselors must clearly define the targets they expect students to achieve in the counseling program, and guide them in their efforts to prepare, take aim and hit the center of the target.

A CBA school counseling program identifies three broad categories of learning targets that collectively represent the results we want students to achieve:

- **Acquire Knowledge.** School counselors provide students with relevant knowledge that they need to learn and apply. It is the responsibility of school counselors to know what knowledge students need to acquire in order to achieve the CBA student standards and competencies, and to ensure that this knowledge is provided to them in meaningful ways so they can acquire it and successfully apply it in a variety of authentic contexts.
- **Develop Skills.** Skill is the ability to do. Students develop skills by applying the knowledge they are learning in authentic contexts, and being able to transfer their skills from one context to others. There are many types of skills students need to develop (e.g., cognitive skills, metacognitive skills, motor skills, problem solving skills). School counseling programs help students develop competencies that render them skillful individuals. Well-developed skills help students succeed in school and prepare for and benefit from educational and career opportunities that lead to success in later life.
- **Embrace Attitudes, Behaviors and Habits of Mind.** In addition to acquiring knowledge and developing skills, it is essential that students embrace attitudes, behaviors and habits of mind that lead to success. How students think and act can be a significant factor in their ability to realize their potential and life's goals. The section on "A CBA is Research-Based" provides evidence of how attitudes, behavior and habits of mind affect students' learning, emotions and behavior.

School counselors are responsible for identifying the knowledge, skills and attitudes students need to achieve at higher levels and be successful in life. The success of the school counseling program depends on the ability of school counselors to know these things and how to get students to learn and embody them in their daily lives.

A Result is the End of a Process

A result can also be viewed as the end of a process. When we teach students, we establish what we expect them to achieve (learning targets), how we are going to help them achieve the results, and a timeframe within which we expect them to demonstrate proficiency in what we have expected them to learn. Achieving results, therefore, is a process that has a beginning, middle and end.

Processes in the school counseling program can be of varying lengths, from short-term to long-term. We identify four main processes (timeframes) for the PreK-12 learning continuum, all of which have expected results attached to them.

- PreK-12 Counseling Program. The longest process includes the complete learning continuum from the time students are first exposed to the counseling program through graduation from high school. The results students are expected to achieve in this process are articulated as the CBA Student Standards which students are expected to achieve by the time they graduate. Student standards will be discussed in more detail later in this section.
- End of Level. These results are what students are expected to achieve by the end of the main divisions of the PreK-12 continuum: PreK-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12). These ranges may vary depending on how schools define their elementary, middle and high school levels. School counselors at each level are expected to define what students are expected to know and demonstrate as a result of participating in the school counseling program and be able to assess student progress by the end of each level.
- End of Grade. These define results to be achieved by the conclusion of individual grades (e.g., grade 4, grade 11). In any school year, school counselors should be able to articulate what their students are expected to achieve in each grade.
- End of Activity. These results are generally the shortest processes and are typically associated with a school counseling curriculum activity, or organized learning opportunity, which can be delivered in a 30-50 minute range. Results can also be defined for small group activities or one-on-one student-counselor interactions.

The results defined for End of Level, End of Grade and End of Activity should be aligned with (help students achieve) the CBA Student Standards which they are expected to achieve by the time they graduate.

A Result is a Planned for Outcome

This is a critical aspect of a results-based approach. A result is not simply what you end up with at the end of a process. A result is something that needs to be planned for. It must be clearly articulated and thought through so as to maximize the potential for student learning.

Before the process even begins, the results to be achieved need to be articulated. As with any journey, if you do not know where you are going, arriving at your destination is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Knowing where you want to end up will make it much easier to get there. It will also benefit your students when they know what is expected of them and what they can expect from you.

Once you have determined your destination, plan your journey. So before beginning the process, map out the routes you are going to take, what you expect your students to know and do along each route, and establish the timeframe within which you want to reach your destination.

One last thing before you get started, determine how you will know you are successfully implementing your plan and when you have arrived at your destination. Make sure you have built in indicators along the way to confirm you are on the right roads and making process according to your timetable. This will enable you to take corrective action along the way if you veer off course and get lost.

The road to achieving results is much more enjoyable and fulfilling for you and your students when you develop a cogent plan before you begin your journey. Another critical element on this journey is to also have your students develop their own plans for reaching the destination, or hitting the learning target.

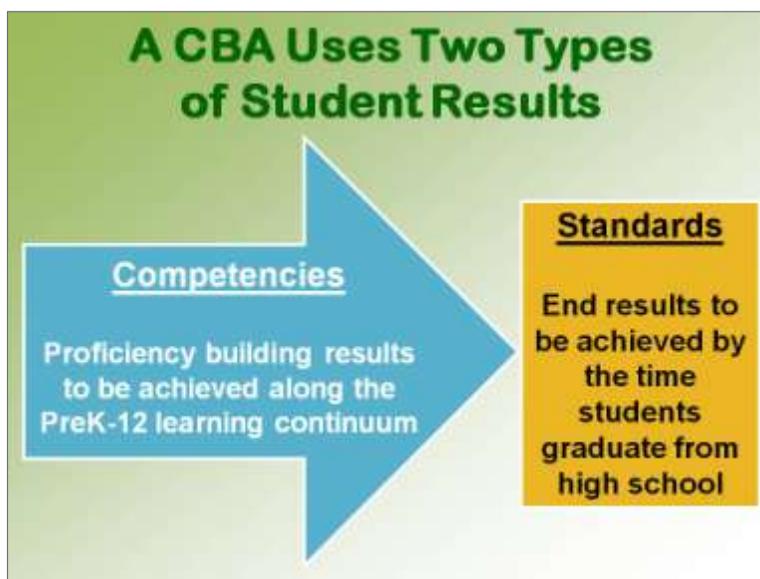
We have discussed results as learning targets, as the end of multiple processes and the need for you and your students to develop cogent plans for successfully hitting your targets and arriving at your destination, thereby achieving your expected results. We have stressed the importance of knowing how you will know you are successful before embarking on the journey.

Perhaps the most important question school counselors can ask of themselves as they help students achieve their learning targets is: “How are students different as a result of the school counseling program? (Johnson and Johnson) This question should continuously be on the minds of every school counselor, indeed, every educator. Our purpose is to help students achieve and succeed and we accomplish this by doing things that will make a difference in their lives. For every activity we involve students in, we should have a sense of what that difference can be, and be observant enough to recognize if and when that difference is evident in student lives.

How CBA Student Results are Defined

Two Types of Student Results

Our focus now is shifting from general characteristics of a results-based approach to a focus on student results. The first important thing to know is that there are primarily two types of student results in a CBA: standards and competencies.



Standards are “End-Results” that students are expected to achieve by the time they graduate from high school. CBA student standards are articulated only for the end of the PreK-12 learning continuum. The reason for this is that the standards movement in education ended up using the word “standards” in so many different ways that it rendered the term ambiguous and confusing. For our purpose, the term “standard” is only used to articulate what students are expected to achieve by the end of the school counseling program when they graduate.

All other student results are called “Proficiency-Building Results” which help build student competence and contribute to students’ ability to achieve the CBA student standards. Competency statements are aligned with the standard statements and, can be found all along the PreK-12 learning continuum, typically at the end of the various learning processes described above.

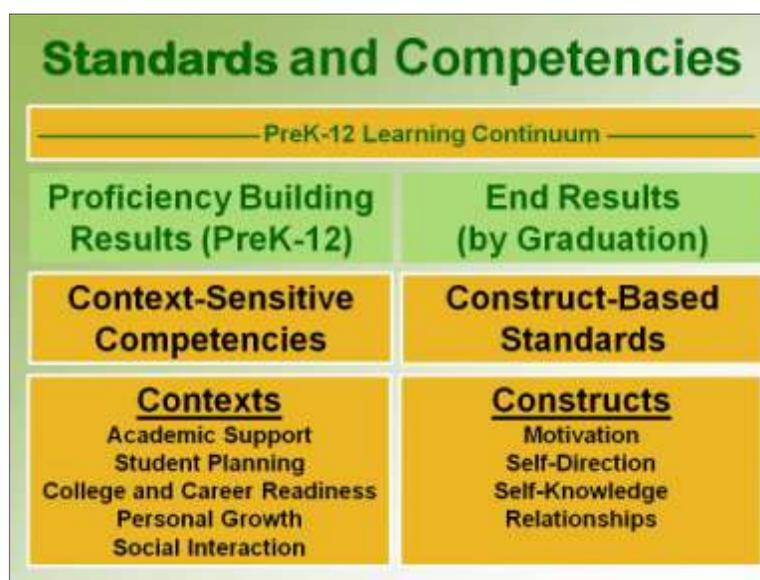
Standard statements, in and of themselves, are not measurable. They are too general. Competency statements add specificity to the standard statements and are articulated in measurable terms. In this way, student progress toward specific learning targets in the short-term and student standards in the long-term can be assessed, individual learning plans adjusted and corrective action taken to improve each student’s learning potential, pathways and outcomes.

Standard and competency statements define what students are expected to achieve through participation in the school counseling program. They form the foundation of the “Student Results” component of a CBA.

Student Results are Informed by Research

End results (standards) and proficiency-building results (competencies) define student excellence along the entire PreK-12 learning continuum for school-counseling program related activities and interactions among students and counselors. The content of the standard and competency statements are informed by the research discussed in the “A CBA is Research-Based” section of this website, and in our *Achieving Excellence* book and CBA Toolkit.

The research-base suggests that we define the results we expect students to achieve based on four constructs and their associated sub-constructs, and on relevant school counseling contexts in which all students participate. The graphic below displays the four research-based constructs which form the foundation of a CBA. CBA student standards are developed for each of the constructs. The graphic also displays the CBA’s five relevant school counseling contexts. Context-sensitive competency statements are developed to define specific learning outcomes we expect students to achieve.



See the section on “A CBA is Research-Based” for a discussion on the meaning and importance of the constructs and sub-constructs to student learning. See the section on “Develop Learning Opportunities” for a discussion on how the relevant school counseling contexts, in conjunction with the constructs and sub-constructs, are used to develop meaningful and measurable competency statements, and are used as the primary learning targets students are expected to achieve by participating in the CBA school counseling curriculum.

CBA Student Standards

Standard Statements are Based on CBA Constructs

The CBA applies research results to determine the primary foci of comprehensive school counseling programs. This means that the design, delivery and evaluation of a CBA uses the four constructs as primary filters for defining student excellence as articulated in its standard and competency statements. The constructs were chosen because research has demonstrated that they are strongly linked to student achievement and well-being and are well within the purview of school counseling programs and counselor practice. To refresh your memory, the importance of the constructs is described below:

- **Motivation:** The forces that compel action and direct the behavior of individuals. Helping students develop ways to understand their personal motivational structures and to motivate their own behavior is critically important in helping them achieve in school and succeed in life.
- **Self-Direction:** There are two basic activities that help students understand this construct: Goal Setting and Activity Planning. Through interactions with the counseling programs all students are encouraged to identify their own life directions, make academic choices consistent with these directions, and connect their classroom learning to their life goals.
- **Self-Knowledge:** The understanding people have about their own abilities, values, preferences and skills that are a necessary precondition for effective self-regulation. Acquiring essential self-knowledge and learning to be self-directed are important and desirable goals for all students and should be a focus for the work of all school counselors.
- **Relationships:** Research indicates that there is a strong link between social competence and academic achievement. School counseling programs help students understand and build relationships from basic respect of others to working for a more equitable and just society.

Twelve standard statements, three for each of the four constructs, have been developed for the CBA. The standards were written to reflect student abilities, competencies, capabilities and skills that: a) have been established by research in educational and developmental psychology to be strongly related to students’ academic achievement and later success in life, and b) are acquired or perfected through experience and learning. We chose lines of research connected to student competencies that were primarily within the purview of counselors—academic, personal/social and career development.

Collectively, the 12 CBA Student Standards and all aligned competency statements along the PreK-12 learning continuum constitute what we expect students to know and demonstrate as a result of participating in the CBA school counseling program. Students can be said to have

fulfilled the CBA school counseling program requirements by demonstrating proficiency in mastering these competencies and achieving these standards.

CBA Student Standards

The twelve CBA student standards are listed below. These are the end results we expect students to achieve by the time they graduate from high school.

As a result of the CBA school counseling program, students are expected to know and demonstrate the following by the time they graduate from high school.

Motivation

- Describe how their own motivation structure and patterns affect their current and future lives.
- Articulate a positive vision of their future that motivates present behavior.
- Consistently apply effective self-motivational techniques.

Self-Direction

- Assess the factors responsible for their academic success and challenges and adjust their behavior accordingly.
- Demonstrate the self-direction, initiative and skills necessary for achievement and success.
- Maintain focus despite stress, anxiety and set-backs.

Self-Knowledge

- Describe how their unique characteristics impact their current and future lives.
- Demonstrate how their skills and talents contribute to their success.
- Discuss how their values and interests inform their decisions and actions.

Relationships

- Engage in collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships to promote individual and group success.
- Assess when they need help from others and seek assistance.
- Demonstrate fairness, respect and equity in relationships with others.

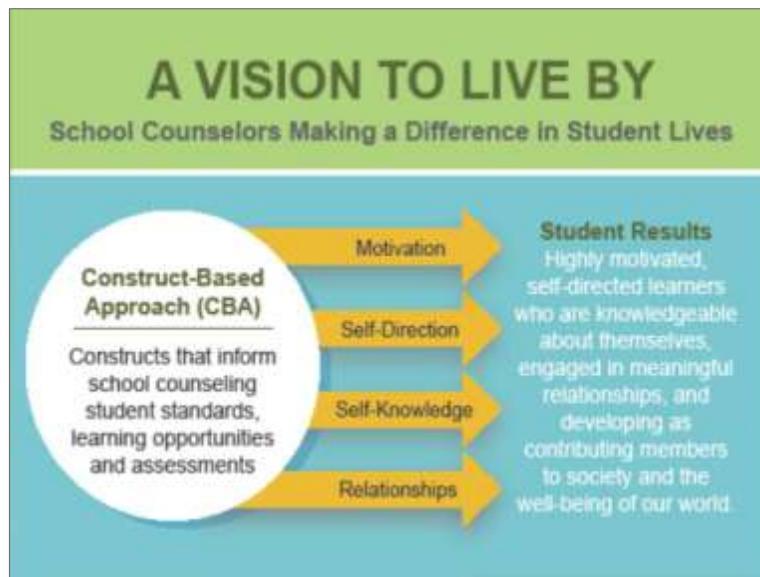
Take a moment and reflect on each of these standard statements and envision how helping your students achieve these standards will improve their capacity to learn and increase their learning outcomes. Some essential questions that school counselors need to continually ask of themselves in a results-based school counseling are:

- How will achieving these results make a difference in my students' lives?
- What will that difference be?

- How will I know that my students are achieving these results?
- If I have students who are not achieving these results, what can I do to help them?
- These are essential questions we can ask when using a results-based approach³¹

A Vision To Live By

A construct-based approach (CBA) to the design, delivery and evaluation of comprehensive school counseling programs is research-based (four constructs strongly linked to student achievement and well-being) and results-based (standards and competency students are expected to achieve). Carefully examining these areas and how they affect student learning has inspired “A Vision To Live By” which articulates the power and potential of a CBA for making a difference in students’ lives.



Accountable for Results

School counselors and educators are accountable for achieving positive student results. This requires establishing rigorous standards and competencies, delivering challenging school counseling learning opportunities, and assessing students’ progress and achievement. Professional school counselors must be able to demonstrate that their performance is making a difference in students’ lives, and on the quality of the school counseling program and school community.

School counselors, along with all members of the school community, must hold themselves accountable for their actions and the results they are expected to achieve in order to improve learner outcomes. Being a professional school counselor means being accountable for producing positive student results because we know that by achieving them students will mature as responsible individuals who are personally fulfilled and eager to contribute to the well-being of society and our world.