

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

In 1996, the Office of Guidance and Counseling Services, under the leadership of Dr. Thelma T. Daley, published *The Essential Guidance Program, PreK-12*. The manual was developed to parallel the work being completed by the Division of Curriculum and Instruction of Baltimore County Public Schools, *The Essential Curriculum*. The offices within this division were charged by the Superintendent to present the core curriculum taught to children in our school system. The Office of Guidance and Counseling developed a manual detailing the ways that school counseling services support the educational mission of schools.

The *Essential Guidance Program, Pre-K – 12* was based on the three Maryland State goals for school counseling programs:

- School success for all students
- Decision making and career development
- Intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills.

In addition to describing how school counseling was an essential component of all students' school experiences, the book also provided a rich resource of classroom lesson plans which were organized under the three state school counseling goals and disaggregated by instructional level (elementary, middle, and high).

## Current Historical Influences

Since that time, there have been a number of significant events in the school counseling profession and in Baltimore County Public Schools that argue for a revision of elements of *The Essential Guidance Program*.

In 1997 The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) published the *National Standards for School Counseling Programs*. The National Standards identified three domains that defined the parameters for all school counseling programs:

- Academic Development
- Career Development
- Personal and Social Development.

Two systemwide documents were developed in BCPS that have direct implications for the delivery of school counseling services – *The Blueprint for Progress: Realizing the Vision* and *The Master Plan*. These documents identify a number performance goals, performance indicators, and key strategies that serve as a map for this system to realize its educational mission. Included in these documents are a number of counselor-related initiatives that are to be incorporated into school counseling program plans.

School counselors are to develop an annual school counseling program plan based on national, state, and local standards and written in response to assessed student needs. This guide has been developed to provide a resource for school counselors as they assess student needs, create a

school counseling program plan to address those needs, and evaluate the impact of their services in terms of student competencies.

## **Equity**

An comprehensive school counseling program is a clear statement of commitment to the development of all students. Recent Federal legislation, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, identified categories of students whose needs must be addressed in educational planning and for which schools are to be accountable. Counselors are working to ensure equity in services to all students through the development a program plan based on “School Counseling Non-Negotiables”. Teams of school counselors worked with school counseling supervisors to identify non-negotiable services that school counselors guarantee will be provided to all students at specific grades and at specific levels in students’ educational experiences. These non-negotiables are general statements about what should be taking place in school counseling programs. Non-negotiables serve to assure all stakeholders of a continuity of experiences and targeted learnings. The non-negotiables are also expected to serve as a basic template for school counseling program plans.

## **Resource Materials**

The *Revised Essential School Counseling Program Guide (2005)* brings together a number of resources that have been developed since the first publication of this document in 1996.

The resources that are to be found within this document address a number of core school counseling functions:

- School counseling program planning
  - Non-Negotiables – consistent services that will be provided by school counselors to all students at each level of their school experience
  - New School Counseling Program Planning grids including sections for the ASCA *National Standards* and the *Blueprint for Progress*
  - Revised student indicators
  - New sample needs assessments
  - New program evaluation section with samples
- Classroom Guidance Lesson Plans (K-12) based on Differentiated Instruction
- Small Group Counseling Designs
- Staff Development Activities

The materials are designed to assert the professional school counselor in the planning, implementation, delivery and assessment of a needs-based comprehensive school counseling program for all students.