



American Counseling Association

School Counselor Connection

College Readiness: Strategies for Professional School Counselors

American education in the current millennium has been challenged to address the college readiness of students preparing for a workplace that has seen a growing number of careers that require some form of postsecondary education. School counseling and professional school counselors, influenced by school counseling program models promoting academic achievement, career development and personal/social development across the K–12 experience, have a distinct role in the achievement of these objectives.

A college readiness initiative seeks to ensure that high school graduates attain and demonstrate the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies to succeed in postsecondary education and lifelong learning, achieve personal career satisfaction and success and maximize their contribution to the U.S. workforce (Burtnett, 2019).

The design and delivery of a college readiness initiative requires that school counselors engage in the following strategies:

- Include components that promote academic achievement and career development across elementary and secondary education with age and developmentally appropriate child and adolescent experiences.
- Assure that learning experiences address the proficiencies required in English and language arts, STEM and the social sciences and emphasize the importance of course selection.
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of professional counselors, teachers and other educators.
- Emphasize all forms of education that promote workplace preparation.
- Recognize self-awareness, exploration and decision-making as critical stages in the college readiness process.
- Educate students and parents regarding the components (i.e., academic achievement, admission test scores, service learning, etc.) used by postsecondary institutions in making admission decisions.
- Utilize information (human and non-human) about study options and career choices, including college fairs, career days, financial aid workshops, etc.
- Address the unique needs of diverse students, as well as those with special needs (i.e., first generation college bound, underprivileged, differently able, etc.).
- Include individual and group activities that foster an understanding of the postsecondary admission and financial aid processes and provide an understanding of college costs.
- Offer individual and group counseling that focuses on student needs during these various transitions.
- Facilitate tasks (i.e., admission testing, application preparation, essay development, etc.) that must be completed by students.
- Engage the support and participation of educational administrators, postsecondary institutions, community sponsors and others in the promotion of college readiness mission of the school.

Consider how the above might serve as a checklist for assessing the scope and content of the college readiness initiative.

— Frank Burtnett, Ed.D.