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Sustaining Professional School Counseling Through Viable Accountability Practices

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This article focuses on the key issues of school counselor accountability and the promotion of student learning. The authors contend that without data-driven practices required by comprehensive school counseling programs, American and Asia Pacific school counselors' credibility with the public will remain equivocal. To make the case, the educational and school counseling context for accountability is first discussed. Second, they explore the various definitional and professional issues related to accountability. Third, the major benefits of having an accountability system in place are summarized. Finally, the research is reviewed examining counselors' accountability attitudes and actions. Implications for practice are briefly elucidated.

Keywords: school counseling; accountability; data-driving practices

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Many nations' school systems now employ school counselors or guidance-related personnel to assist students to meet their immediate needs as well as their personal-social, academic, and career goals. Excluding the long list of "other duties as assigned," counselors at least in American schools should first and foremost coordinate and collaborate with other personnel to implement, manage, and evaluate their school's comprehensive guidance and counseling program (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012a). Correspondingly, school counseling scholars in various countries outside the United States (U.S.) recommend that counselors working from a well-designed whole-school, programmatic, or systems-oriented model help facilitate a positive and healthy learning environment; consult with families, other educators, and external resources; conduct individual and group counseling; deliver developmentally appropriate guidance curricula; assist with programs (e.g., anti-bullying prevention and intervention); collect and analyze data to improve services, and so on (e.g., Aluede, Imonikhe, & Afen-Akpaida, 2007; Barnes et al., 2012; Lam & Hui, 2010; Watts & Dent, 2006; Yeo, Tan, & Neihart, 2012). Successfully executing these sample programmatic responsibilities is challenging enough for well-trained staff who work in proactive schools and in the best of economic and political times. Nevertheless, professionalism demands a serious effort toward actualizing these roles and functions (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Miller, Taha, & Jensen, 2013).

Reversing slight funding gains made to schools during the W. Clinton and G. W. Bush presidential eras (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), the massive economic downturn over the past half-decade or so has left most public American school district leaders in an unenviable position. With substantially fewer resources, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K–12) schools are strongly encouraged to graduate a higher percentage of students, increase the number of students attending college or university, strengthen high school graduation requirements, improve student test scores, close the

achievement among ethnic groups, create more stringent teacher assessments, and so on (e.g., National Governors Association, 2012; Ushomirsky, Hall, & Haycock, 2011)

To compound the burden placed on schools, as a way to balance their budgets, district leaders have resorted to gradually eliminating staff, faculty, and administrative positions and increasing class sizes. In fact, about 84% of the U.S. school districts reported funding cuts for the 2011–2012 school year (Rentner & Kober, 2012, p. 1). This trend of lower state funding for public schools has continued into the 2013–2014 academic year (Leachman & Mai, 2013). In this situation, the number of teachers and administrators in financially strapped districts are gradually diminishing. School counselors and other guidance staff also find their job security to be tenuous. Nationwide, data collected by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics suggest that the number of school counselors continue to decline (approximately 2,729, or 3%, positions were lost between 2008–2009 [*N* = 107,808; see American Counseling Association, 2011] and 2010–2011 [*N* = 105,079; see ASCA, 2012b] school years). Moreover, student-to-school counselor caseload ratios in American elementary and secondary schools on average remain very high (for 2010–2011, mean ratio 471 to 1) (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), well above the recommended 250-to-1 ratio (ASCA, 2012a). Many school counselors also face a reduction in FTE (Full Time Equivalency) from 1.0 (100%) to 0.8 (80% contract) or even to 0.5 (essentially a half-time contract). Current statistics are yet to be documented, but the likelihood of a better student-to-counselor ratio in the future is low. Unreasonable as the task may be, even those counselors with less than 1.0 contract are still expected to be effective in their work with students and their families as well as with other building educators.

Further complicating the situation, emerging in the 1990s, the "results-based" movement in American schools has placed, and perhaps rightly so, counselors' performances under scrutiny (S. Johnson, Johnson, & Downs, 2006; Johnston, 2011). Within this difficult climate, school

counselors, to improve their situation, must first advocate for themselves through political, social, and economic channels. Second, to enhance their position in the eyes of policymakers, funding sources, and school administrators, school counselors need to earnestly inspect and refine their practices, documenting at a minimum positive student outcomes. Research questions such as these need to be answered: What and how are school counseling practices effective and with whom? How do school counselors document their value to key stakeholders? How do they contribute to important broader school outcomes? Because advocacy issues are sufficiently addressed in the school counseling literature, this article extends the current discussion on school counselor accountability.

Essentially, we contend that school counselor viability and the profession's sustainability are, to some extent, dependent on the demonstration of positive learning outcomes and reporting them in an effective manner. If school counselors desire to be viewed as indispensable to the educational enterprise, and thus maintain their positions and enhance their professional standing, daily practices must be examined. Those services and activities which are ineffective must be abandoned and those which promote student learning must be refined and implemented. The tacit belief held by many dedicated practitioners — that is, school counselors need only to care about children, be well-intentioned, and work hard, and success will follow — is simply indefensible (Dimmitt, 2009; Erford, 2011; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). In brief, school counselors must be far more accountable for the school-based work. Moreover, accountability practices cannot be merely viewed as a means toward an end; rather they must become a staple school counseling function, an end in itself. Before addressing this issue in more depth, we overview the history of school counseling in the U.S. and current trends in the profession.

U.S. School Counseling in Context

Briefly, school counseling emerged as a nascent profession at the turn of the 20th century when Frank Parsons (1854–1908), along with his

colleagues, established various institutions such as Boston's Bureau of Vocational Guidance dedicated to assisting young people with the transition from school to work (Gysbers, 2010). Subsequently, Wrenn's (1962) book, *The Counselor in a Changing World*, was an important impetus to enhance high school counseling, suggesting to counselors that they should attend not only to the vocational needs of students but also to their personal and social issues. In 1952, ASCA was founded as an international nonprofit organization to assist school counselors to enhance their professional identity and support their work.

The history of the profession continued in fits and starts until the mid-1990s, when counselors became more "professionalized," and increasingly more central to the educational enterprise in general and influential to schools in particular (Gysbers, 2010; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Thompson, 2012). By early 2000s school counselors were largely working in all levels of education (elementary, middle, high schools, college) and operating from a developmental and prevention orientation, one that is programmatic in nature (i.e., comprehensive school counseling program [CSCP]). Within this context, students are viewed from social ecological perspective (i.e., their sub-systems such as peers, family, community, etc.). CSCPs are now the standard framework to guide the delivery of school counseling services (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). Recently, the ASCA (2012a) National Model has become the operational template for states and school districts to fashion their school counseling programs on and one of the key elements is school counselor accountability. Other major roles of all school counselors are: individual and group counseling; consultation with school personnel and external resources; facilitating classroom guidance lessons related to educational, personal-social, and career developmental domains; and coordination of program activities and services (Thompson, 2012).

Accountability

Today, as teachers, administrators, and schools face increased performance evaluation, so too school counseling professionals are

asked to demonstrate their effectiveness. In fact, "[a]ccountability and evaluation of the school counseling program are absolute necessities" (Hatch & Bowers, 2004, p. 19). In this section, accountability in a school counseling programmatic context is defined and various pertinent issues are explored.

Definition

There are numerous ways accountability is characterized across a variety of disciplines including the school counseling profession. Fortunately, most perspectives overlap sufficiently that the broad description recently offered by the framers of the ASCA (2012a) National Model is appropriate for our purposes. This systemic blueprint for state and locally designed CSCPs suggest that accountability relates to the documentation in measurable terms of school counseling program effectiveness. In doing so, school counselors are better able to answer the fundamental accountability question, "How are students different as a result of the school counseling program?" (ASCA, 2012a, p. 99). Although not synonymous concepts, accountability practices are often involved in the evaluation of educational programs (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).

Professionalism

The impetus for instituting accountability practices reaches beyond the need to maintain one's job (Dimmitt, 2009; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). They are required by state legislation and professional standards for ethical practice. ASCA (2012a) enumerated multiple school counselor performance standards, including those related to accountability. Similarly, the *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (ASCA, 2010) state that in-service school counselors "[a]ssess the effectiveness of their program in having an impact on students' academic, career and personal/social development through accountability measures especially examining efforts to close achievement, opportunity and attainment

gaps" (Section A.9, para. g). Furthermore, the *Ethical Standards* informs the work of university-level counselor educators. They must, in the training of preservice school counselors, "[e]nsure the school counseling practicum and internship have specific, measurable service delivery, foundation, management and accountability systems" (ASCA, 2010, Section F.3, para. c). The ethical code of the American Counseling Association (2005) also stresses the need for counselor accountability.

Advantages

There are many benefits to collecting, analyzing, and reporting on accountability data. In addition to knowing they are in compliance with state law and national counseling ethical standards, school counselors can publicly exhibit the ways in which their services and practices positively impact students in particular and the school in general (Fairchild & Zins, 1986; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). Further, the use of ongoing analysis of quantitative and qualitative evaluation data enables school counselors to improve the effectiveness and impact of their program while enhancing professional development (Astramovich, Coker, & Hoskins, 2005; Fairchild & Zins, 1986). A fairly recent qualitative study conducted in Northern Ireland provided some support for this conclusion. Practitioner reflections indicated that the evaluation process itself was challenging but not without considerable benefits for professional recognition, self-reflection, and practice development (Tracey, McElearney, Adamson, & Shevlin, 2009).

From a programmatic standpoint, accountability and evaluation ensure that one's CSCP is meeting the needs of the students and other key stakeholders (Brott, 2006; Erford, 2011; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). The audit of a CSCP further allows for school counselors to identify missing or underutilized elements, as well as current and future concerns as a means of guiding program improvements (Sink, 2009). By identifying observable outcomes of their program and interventions, school counselors are able to monitor changes in students' behavior,

academic performance, and personal and social growth (Astramovich et al., 2005).

For students who require more intensive support — those individuals functioning at tier 2 or 3 of a Response to Intervention model (Ryan, Kaffenberger, & Carroll, 2011), the use of accountability measures provides documentation of the effectiveness of related school counseling interventions (Astramovich et al., 2005; Fairchild & Zins, 1986). Data collection and analysis of these interventions aggregate information on the extent to which school counselor-led activities and services are positively impacting students, and can also help identify barriers to student success (Astramovich et al., 2005). Most importantly perhaps, accountability measures can help determine whether students are learning and demonstrating essential life-development skills that will eventually translate into productive and thriving adulthoods (Sink, 2009).

School counselors as professionals also benefit from the use of accountability measures (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). By analyzing programmatic and intervention services, school counselors can identify their own strengths and weaknesses as a means of furthering professional development (Fairchild & Zins, 1986). Isaacs (2003) indicated that through data collection and analysis, school counselors assume more responsibility for their professional destinies, and possess meaningful information on which to base professional behavior and to evaluate professional performance. School counselors who maintain professional best practices, including data and results-driven program implementation, management, and evaluation, place themselves in a valued leadership role within their school community (Sink, 2009).

Current State of Affairs

The calls for school counseling accountability were voiced as far back as the 1920s (Boyer, 1920; Gysbers, 2004, 2010; Young & Kaffenberger, 2011) and have surfaced consistently thereafter (e.g., Baker, 1981; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). In fact, since the 1990s, accountability concerns are regularly at the forefront of school counseling professional

discussion (e.g., Dahir & Stone, 2009; Isaacs, 2003; L. S. Johnson, 2000; Stone & Dahir, 2011). As stated previously, although the significance of accountability is clearly stated in the ASCA (2012a) National Model along with numerous professional publications, school counselors struggle to implement accountability in their own practice.

On balance, accountability and efficacy research conducted largely by non-school investigators shows positive results, suggesting that certain school counseling practices can contribute, for example, to student well-being and mental health, social skills and career development, and academic outcomes at the individual, school, and the programmatic levels (e.g., see for reviews, Martin & Carey, 2012; McGannon, Carey, & Dimmitt, 2005; Whiston & Quinby, 2009). However, large-scale and well-publicized survey studies (e.g., J. Johnson & Rochkind, 2010) and reports (e.g., Civic Enterprises & College Board, 2011), while not directly focusing on accountability issues, point to worrisome longitudinal trends in high school student outcome data.

Another indication of gaps in school counselor accountability, the 2010 *Can I Get a Little Advice Here?* report (J. Johnson & Rochkind, 2010) funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, suggested that high school counselors are not altogether effective in guiding graduating high school students to meaningful postsecondary opportunities. The researchers of this nationwide study, which garnered substantial coverage in the mainstream media, analyzed responses of 614 young adults, aged 22 through 30, who had taken at least some college coursework (J. Johnson & Rochkind, 2010). Drawing from focus groups in five cities, this report describes these individuals' perspectives on college selection, higher education, and college completion. Some of the most disconcerting findings were often repeated in the national media and criticized by the ASCA. For example, 48% of the respondents reported that they felt like "just another face in the crowd" in dealing with their guidance counselor. Around 60% of the sample rated their high school guidance counselors fair or poor when helping them to explore career option. Some 62% rated their counselors as fair or poor with assisting them to obtain financial aid and scholarship monies to pay

for college. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents assigned their school counselors fair or poor ratings in regard to helping them select a college to attend. In short, the 2010 study by J. Johnson & Rochkind painted an alarming picture of school counselors' work with former 12th-graders and their lack of producing accountability evidence. Suppose these counselors had used post-graduation survey data much earlier to improve student perceptions, perhaps these respondents and current graduates might be more laudatory rather than so indicting.

Earlier, a large study of 1,279 practicing school counselors and counseling program directors was conducted, reinforcing the notion that these professionals see data-focused activities as less essential than perhaps other functions involved with the implementation of a CSCP (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008). Using the School Counseling Program Component Scale (SCPCS) as an outcome measure, survey questions related to "monitoring and evaluating trends" received the lowest ratings of importance with the highest standard deviations. Additionally, the importance of using school data to identify achievement gaps ($M = 2.10$, $SD = 1.08$), monitor students' academic development ($M = 2.17$, $SD = 1.04$), and monitor students' personal/social development ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 1.05$) were the lowest rated items on a scale of 1 = *very important* to 5 = *not important*. After factor analyzing the SCPCS, "Use of Data for Accountability" and "Use of Data for Program Planning" items emerged as a factor. Not surprisingly, both items received lower importance ratings ($M = 1.91$, $SD = .79$; $M = 2.17$, $SD = .83$, respectively) than those items representing "Mission, Goals, and Competencies" and "Administrator Support" (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008). In brief, this study was not aimed at understanding accountability-related practices of these professionals; however, an extrapolation from the findings indicates that these activities were rated as relatively important but not a top CSCP priority.

From the other research on school counselors' own views of accountability, two of the most discussed barriers include: (a) lack of knowledge, skills, and appropriate training; and (b) fears of how evaluation data would be used. Some investigators report that school

counselors appear to lack confidence in their level of preparation to effectively implement accountability activities (Astramovich et al., 2005; Myrick, 2003). For example, in one study of 28 school counselors who participated in a training on evaluation, 92.9% (n = 26) of participants expressed a willingness to conduct evaluation; however only 46.4% (n = 13) felt that they understood the process of implementing an evaluation compared to 35.7% (n = 10) who were *uncertain/neutral*, and 17.9% (n = 5) who *disagreed* (Astramovich et al., 2005). Further, Astramovich et al. (2005) indicated that 75% (n = 21) reported the need for additional training in accountability measures. Similarly, other school counselors conveyed a difficulty in creating and validating measures that show impact on student achievement when they largely deal with student attitudes, behaviors, and relationships (Myrick, 2003).

School counselors need to evaluate their own practice to determine their effectiveness, and in turn, confront their weaknesses as way to improve their skill set. Understandably, many school counselors report that the accountability process can be worrisome (Myrick, 2003). Some feel very uncomfortable with having to read through negative feedback, fearful how any evaluation information will be received and used by external reviewers. They were also concerned about who would be granted access to the results (Astramovich et al., 2005). Other counselors hoping to maintain a position of school leadership may reframe unsuccessful intervention results as a personal threat against their competence level. While easier said than done, rather than be overly concerned about negative results, school counselors should use any outcome data as an empowering motivation to attempt new interventions and refine those practices that do not work well.

Other commentators' on this issue suggest that school counselors seem to operate in a "flight-or-fight" mode, only using accountability measures where they were knowledgeable and when the collected information best fit their own needs. In order for school counselors to remain viable over time, they must establish accountability practices not only for the benefit of their programs and students, but for the benefit of their professional identities. As Fairchild and Zins (1986) and Isaacs

(2003) reiterated, accountability is not solely for effective CSCP deployment, but also for the professional growth of the school counselors.

Finally, on a hopeful note, Young and Kaffenberger (2011) studied the self-reported accountability practices of counselors (N = 113) who work in well-established and nationally recognized CSCPs. In summarizing their findings, approximately 83% of the surveyed school counselors were using data to inform program decisions, 91% of the participants increased their use of data practices, and 84% suggested that, since attaining national recognition for their programmatic work, they preserved their motivation to use data-driven practices. As a whole, most "[p]articipants reported a clear understanding and consistent use of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and continued to use data after seeing the power of data-driven decision making" (p. 73). Briefly then, this study's findings show that many CSCP school counselors believe they can use accountability data relatively well, particularly if they are operating within a well-defined and efficient program.

To reiterate these researchers' (Astramovich et al., 2005; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Myrick, 2003) conclusions, contemporary school counselors, to be truly considered responsible professionals, must adhere more closely to the unequivocal stipulations of the profession's ethical codes (ASCA, 2010) and best practices guidelines (ASCA, 2012a), generating viable accountability data that will drive their daily practices.

Strategies

Summarizing the input of multiple school counseling educators past and present (e.g., Brown & Trusty, 2005; Gysbers, 2004), Sink (2009) indicated that accountability must be shown in at least these three ways. School counselors in collaboration with other relevant personnel evaluate (1) the composition, configuration, organization, and implementation of their CSCPs (CSCP audits); (2) their own work and the activities of other educators who are responsible for CSCP implementation (personnel

appraisals); and (3) the level the program impacts student learning, the school, and the community (results evaluations). Correspondingly, the ASCA (2012a) National Model, following the lead of Gysbers and Henderson (2012), delineated accountability in terms of school counseling program audits, results assessments, and school counselor performance evaluations. School profile data, action plans, student attendance and disciplinary records, and "time and task" assessments, and the like, provide the school counseling program leaders with the information needed to evaluate the impact on student progress (ASCA, 2012a). Though rigorous research designs are unnecessary at the school counselor level, all interventions, classroom guidance, counseling practices, and so forth should be examined whenever possible using pre-posttest data. Adding a comparison group would be helpful as well. Action research designs are also appropriate for school counseling accountability (Rowell, 2006; Whiston, 1996). As previously mentioned, analysis of school, classroom, teacher, and student and family data should yield key findings on what worked and what practices were ineffective. Meaningful results also help to ascertain what should be changed or improved and perhaps, even how to make these modifications.

Resource Considerations

Anecdotal evidence and formal survey research suggest that school counselors frequently complain that they do not have the training or the skill set to adequately fulfill the accountability challenge. Certainly, this perception appears to be widespread and there is some merit to these assertions. Many veteran counselors (e.g., 20+ years of experience) went through graduate school counseling programs that perhaps failed to emphasize the need for data collection, analysis, and reporting. Evaluation skills may not have been directly taught and any required research courses were only tangentially relevant to the accountability needs of current day. Some salient resources were available but not entirely accessible by the practitioner once on-the-job and not distributed in what might be called user-friendly "packaging." Whether

an accountability literacy gap remains especially with more recently hired school counselors is unknown. We suspect that the current graduate-level accountability training is far more specific and at least students educated within reputable university programs (e.g., those which are nationally accredited) within the past five years have gained sufficient research tools to accomplish the task.

Although school counselors perhaps a decade ago had a legitimate excuse to avoid taking serious stock of their practices, the situation has dramatically changed in recent years. In addition to graduate-level training, a host of publications, professional conferences, Websites, data collection and analysis tools, and in vivo materials are readily accessible to the busy practitioner. Most data usage texts and accountability tools are written in clear and easy-to-follow language. Real-world accountability activities and simulations exist in abundance as well. To fully catalogue these options extends far beyond the scope of this article; however, counselors can begin by perusing the sample resources presented in Table 1.

Concluding Remarks

At the same time American school counselors appear to ignore or

Table 1: Sample Resources of School Counselor Accountability

Resource	URL
Center for School Counseling Outcome Research & Evaluation	http://www.umass.edu/schoolcounseling/surveys-for-program-evaluation-and-review.php
The Center for Excellence in School Counseling and Leadership	http://www.cescal.org/resourceFinder.cfm
EZAnalyze & TimeTracker Beta (accountability software)	http://www.ezanalyze.com/
School Counselor Accountability: A MEASURE of Student Success	http://www.prenhall.com/stone/resources.html
Washington Framework for Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling	http://www.cgcpframework.org/?page_id=379

downplay the need for accountability in their daily practices; extant research provides some evidence that school counselors are implementing a variety of effective practices. Regrettably, the conclusions derived from this research base, as reviewed in the Civic Enterprises and College Board (2011) report, remain equivocal in regard to (a) how fully counselors have implemented changes to their accountability practices and (b) how wide-ranging the knowledge of the data-driven counseling movement and its principles are among school leaders. The report also suggests that school counseling accountability and data-driven decision-making practices are still in an early phase of implementation.

As we have attempted to explain:

> school counselors tend to be thoughtful and well-meaning individuals who work hard to serve the best interests of their students. However, the body of information on school counseling consistently shows a field that struggles with role definition and efficacy and that is inconsistently integrated into the larger education reform agenda. (Civic Enterprises & College Board, 2011, p. 35)

To recap, we maintain that school counselor accountability is not only associated with professional sustainability, but also with best practice (Loesch & Ritchie, 2009). Admittedly, hard evidence is almost non-existent as to whether school counselors who practice accountability measures are less susceptible to job reductions or in actuality they are more effective in the long term. However, common sense as well as an emerging survey database and anecdotal reports indicate that counselors are in a better position to defend their value to schools if they have quality "efficacy" data to support their work.

Further school counselor accountability-related research is obviously needed. We advise that replication studies be conducted using more rigorous designs and follow-up investigations redouble their efforts to explore accountability topics that are less well-understood such as:

1. school counselor preparation issues — e.g., sample research questions:

- Are programs nationwide effectively training preservice counselors to collect, analyze, report, and use accountability data?
- What topics are emphasized in the training and which ones are missing?
- How are students practicing this data skill set on their school-based internships?

2. longitudinal effects of data-driven practices
   - Are there noticeable differences in data-driven practices between new and veteran school counselors? If so, what are they?
   - Are certain groups of school counselors (new vs. veteran; elementary vs. secondary school; urban, rural, or suburban) more effective in implementing accountability and data-driven practices than others?
   - Over time, how are schoolchildren and youth demonstrating better educational, psychosocial, and career outcomes because of the school counselor implementation of accountability practices?
3. cross-cultural considerations
   - Do school counselor accountability practices vary for diverse groups of students and, if so, in what ways?
   - How effective are they for students of color or students with special needs?
4. implications for policy-making
   - How are accountability practices elucidated in district and school policy?
5. contextual and developmental differences among elementary, middle, and high school students
   - How do school contextual and environmental differences affect accountability practices?
   - Are more affluent school districts and schools in comparison with lower socioeconomic status more likely to have effective accountability practices in place?

- How developmentally sensitive are accountability practices?

6. school leadership attitudes toward school counselor accountability
   - How are administrators supporting changes in school counselor accountability practices?
   - How are school counselors being evaluated for their data-driven practices?

Finally, practitioners need to contribute to the accountability literature using "simple" data collection designs such as action research and publishing their results in regional, state, and national publications (see Sink, 2012, for assistance in this regard).

Given differential priorities and the multifaceted variables influencing the profession internationally, direct implications of the article to the development of an effective and results-driven school counseling system in Hong Kong or more broadly within the Asia Pacific region are challenging to assert. However, because comprehensive guidance and counseling programs (whole school guidance program) has been implemented in various Hong Kong schools, school counselor accountability for student outcomes and program evaluation remain essential features (Yuen et al., 2010). Previously, this issue was, in part, explored by Romano, Goh, and Wahl (2005) particularly as it applied to the Asia Pacific region. Similar to the recommendations advanced in this article, Romano et al. suggested, for example, that systemic programs developed in Asia Pacific countries should require school counselors to engage in program evaluation and research studies to support the efficacy of their work. When school counselors are evidence-based and accountable, they further reinforce the value of school counseling to improve student academic achievement and well-being.

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