

PRACTICE BRIEF

DEFINING A SCHOOL COORDINATOR

BOSTON COLLEGE CENTER FOR THRIVING CHILDREN

WHAT IS A SCHOOL COORDINATOR?

A student's experience and success in school is influenced by many factors beyond the school walls—such as nutrition, health, safety at home and in the neighborhood, and access to enriching experiences in the school and community. School coordinators are dedicated to addressing these factors as a core function of the school. They are typically responsible for facilitating the collaboration of schools, families, and community partners in support of students. Across the nation, formal and informal approaches to integrating comprehensive supports for students use coordinators; however their roles, credentials, and job functions can vary considerably.¹

Research points to the importance of having a coordinator who is:

- based at the school;
- highly integrated into the functioning of the school; and
- credentialed as a licensed school counselor, social worker, or mental health counselor. ^[i]

These criteria are linked to improving the developmental context within which children are growing and learning; creating a functioning system of student support that honors student and family privacy; and allowing schools, in partnership with community organizations, to respond well to a range of student needs. ^[ii]

WHAT DOES A SCHOOL COORDINATOR DO?

A school coordinator functions similarly to a traditional school counselor or school social worker. Frequent collaboration with teachers, administrators, families, students, and community organizations is a core function. Research has identified the elements of student support that have positive impacts on student outcomes. These elements point to the importance of school coordinators:

- Creating personalized plans that tailor supports and opportunities to each individual student's needs;²
- Developing the plan in close consultation with teachers, families, and others who know the child well;³
- Establishing a systematic way to create plans that respond to students' changing needs and circumstances;⁴
- Using data to track service utilization, inform plan revisions, understand student outcomes, and catalyze or improve whole school programs focused on the non-instructional needs of students;
- In some cases, using data to help school and municipal leaders identify and respond to gaps in services.

What does a school coordinator not do?

In order to establish positive and trusting relationships with students and families, a school coordinator does not act as a disciplinarian or regular substitute teacher. To provide support for every child in a school, coordinators frequently focus less on individual counseling with students than on connecting students with appropriate mental and behavioral health providers. Among other services and enrichment opportunities.



SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION

Structuring a coordinator role should account for the broader needs of the school and district, address union considerations, and seek alignment with the standards of professional organizations such as the American School Counselors' Association.

A typical job description for a school coordinator integrating comprehensive student supports includes the following core responsibilities:

- Support school personnel in assessing, understanding, and responding to students' social-emotional-behavioral developmental needs
- Serve as a member of any school-based team(s) addressing social-emotional learning, trauma response, school climate and culture.
- Establish and lead a Student Support team and process in the school that identifies and responds to the strengths and unique developmental needs and challenges of each and every child in the school.
- Provide direct services to students, e.g. social skills groups.
- Engage families and caregivers in understanding the ways in which academic outcomes are enhanced by serving the social / emotional and personal development needs of the child.
- Collaborate and coordinate with school and district leadership team(s) and teachers to review and monitor aggregate data on student academic performance as well as non-academic indicators, and work collaboratively to align needs with existing school programs and/or new interventions.
- Connect students to a range of prevention, early intervention, and intensive supports that address the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development of each student.
- Develop and enhance community partnerships with community agencies to meet the identified, and varying needs of students, families, and the school.
- Collect data on implementation of student support and the delivery of services.

Recommended Qualifications:

- Master's degree in School Counseling, Social Work, or Mental Health Counseling
- License in one of the following: School Counseling, Pupil Adjustment Counseling, Social Work, OR Mental Health Counseling
- Experience working in a school environment
- Ability to work collaboratively with a diverse staff, a diverse student body and families, as well as a team of professionals at the school
- Excellent oral and written communication and organization skills.
- Ability to perform and multi-task in a highly energized work environment.



¹ Center for Thriving Children. (2018). Connecting children & families to resources: A field guide. Chestnut Hill, MA.

² Anderson Moore, K., Lantos, H., Jones, R., Schindler, A., Belford, J., & Sacks, V. (2017). Making the grade: A progress report and next steps for integrated student supports (Publication No. 2017-53). Child Trends.; City Connects (2018). City Connects: Intervention and impact. Chestnut Hill, MA: Center for Thriving Children.; Communities in Schools (2010). Communities In Schools National Evaluation Five Year Summary Report. Fairfax, VA: ICF International.

³ City Connects (2018). City Connects: Intervention and impact. Chestnut Hill, MA: Center for Thriving Children.; BARR Center (2017). I3 BARR validation study impact findings: Cohorts 1 and 2. Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Research.

⁴ Adelman, H.S., & Taylor, L. (2012). Building comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches the address barriers to student learning. *Childhood Education*, 78(5), 261-268.; Walsh, M., Wasser Gish, J., Foley, C., Theodorakakis, M., & Rene, K. (2016). Policy brief: Principles of effective practice for integrated student support.

Mary E. Walsh, Ph.D. Executive Director, Kearns Professor of Urban Education & Innovative Leadership
LYNCH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



BOSTON COLLEGE
Lynch School of Education
and Human Development

MARY E. WALSH CENTER
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