



March 20, 2017

Dear Ms. Ellis,

The Oklahoma School Counselor Association's Board enthusiastically embraces the role of the Oklahoma School Counselor as the key person to develop ICAP (individual career academic plans) with students. As the only Oklahoma organization chartered by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the Oklahoma School Counselor Association (OSCA) is proud to fully endorse the ASCA model as the framework for how school counselors interact with students. OSCA represents approximately 500 members, and many more school counselors who are joining with us through social networking and our outreach efforts.

Clearly, based on the ASCA framework, the ASCA model posits that their education particularly prepares school counselors to work with students in three specific areas of student development: the academic, the emotional/social and the career domains. From this perspective, the school counselor is uniquely trained to help students plan their future through an Individual Career Academic Plan (ASCA, 2012). Further, the ASCA Model stipulates that through the Delivery Component, school counselors work with students to create and implement individual plans. The ASCA model further recommends a ratio of 250 students per school counselor. Finally, the ASCA model cautions that school counselors not direct the testing program in schools.

Given the financial realities in today's public schools, the OSCA Board recognizes that some of the ideals of the ASCA Model may be aspirational. Although we embrace the initiative of the ICAP and support that this is the work school counselors are educated to perform, we also want to advocate for the school counseling profession and request that administrators work to examine creative solutions in their buildings that recognize school counselors in OK have large caseloads and that the administrative role of test coordinator is a non-counseling duty which significantly limits the counselor's time to work directly with students on ICAPS. In relation to the testing programs, the primary role of the counselor should be interpretation of results to students and parents and guidance in applying those results in the development of ICAPS.

On a final note, the OSCA Board would like to point to research that supports the inclusion of school counselors in the implementation of ICAPS and through this work, will increase the number of college graduates in our state, an initiative of Governor Fallin. In a recent study, Bryan, Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines (2011) finds that the number of contacts with the school counselor specifically increases application rates of students

applying to college. Secondly, Pham & Kennan (2011) find that a one percent decrease in student counselor ratio was associated with a .4% in the odds that a highly qualified first-generation college student missed the opportunity to attend a four-year college. The authors cite “the time and energy . . . consumed by other tasks such as scheduling courses and testing students (p. 19)” correlates with school counselors being less involved in the college application process.

We thank you for reaching out to the OSCA Board in thinking through the implementation of ICAPS. We agree that the school counselor’s specific education and experience make the professional school counselor the ideal person to lead this initiative. We are also hopeful that together we can collaborate to ensure that the school counselor can prioritize this critically important initiative and ensure that non-counseling duties do not interfere with its implementation. The students of Oklahoma and their families deserve the benefit of the time and attention that a professionally trained school counselor can bring to the school. School counselors are the only professionals in the schools who are trained to do this kind of work. It makes financial and educational sense to utilize that talent, and in doing so, everyone benefits.

Sincerely,

The OSCA Board