

PACES: A Model of Student Well-Being

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Abstract

School counselors design, deliver, and evaluate comprehensive, developmental school counseling programs that are focused on enhancing student development and success. A model of student well-being, known as PACES, is defined and described that consists of five distinct and interactive domains: physical, affective, cognitive, economic, and social. Suggestions are offered regarding how the PACES model can be used to enrich the delivery of school counseling programs.

Keywords: student well-being, school counseling programs

PACES: A Model of Student Well-Being

The National Education Association (NEA) holds as a part of its mission to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world (National Education Association [NEA], 2006b). NEA's mission emphasizes a goal that students will succeed in the world of *their* future. The first principle of NEA's code of ethics stipulates that an educator strives to help each student realize his or her potential as a worthy and effective member of society (NEA, 2006a). The ideas expressed in these principles, goals, and mission focus on the whole student, and not merely the student's academic achievement. There is an expressed interest in encouraging students' potential and their eventual success as members of our society. In spite of some resistance, national counseling associations also hold principles related to the whole student and their well-being as parts of their philosophical foundations.

The American Counseling Association (ACA) set out to unify its association of state branches and divisions around a common core set of principles (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011) in order to lay a foundation for developing a vision and definition for counseling that would encompass as many counseling professionals as possible. Thirty counseling associations and boards came together to work on this project. Twenty-nine of the delegates endorsed the seven principles that were developed. One delegate, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) declined to endorse the principles claiming that they disagreed with the idea that there is a single, common professional identity among counselors (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011). ACA followed up this initiative by next attempting to find a unifying definition of counseling that all of the delegate organizations could use.

Kaplan, Tarvydas, and Gladding (2014) described the process used to arrive at a consensus *definition* for counseling. After several iterations, ACA's definition of counseling claims: "Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals" (Kaplan, Tarvydas, & Gladding, 2014, p.368). Twenty-nine out of 31 counseling associations involved in this project endorsed the definition at the completion of the process, amounting to over 93% of the key counseling associations and boards. ASCA and the association for Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ) declined to endorse the consensus (defined as 90% agreement) definition. ASCA claimed that (a) the definition did not explain how the practice of counseling is unique among other mental health professions, and (b) there was no research to support the definition, (c) it had its own definition of school counseling that it would continue to use. CSJ claimed that the definition failed to include specific wording about multicultural competence, social justice, and advocacy (Kaplan, et al., 2014). In fact ACA did utilize a research methodology to arrive at a definition of counseling that included elements of well-being.

ACA's definition of counseling includes both mental health and wellness as aspects of life that people strive to accomplish. A rigorous Delphi method was undertaken to gather a group consensus and arrive at the definition. Many of the entries used in the Delphi study focused on wellness across the lifespan, education, and career development. It seems clear that ACA defined counseling as a relationship that promotes health and well-being rather than an intervention that simply treats illnesses and deficits. ASCA sought an independent path as the organization refined the definitions of school counseling and school counseling programs. This process began with the development of national standards of school counseling programs.

When ASCA originally developed national standards for school counseling programs, they indicated that "... school counseling programs employ strategies to enhance academics, provide career awareness, develop employment readiness, encourage self-awareness, foster interpersonal communication skills, and impart life success skills for all students" (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, p. 9). After developing national standards, ASCA authored a school counseling model that was promoted throughout the organization (ASCA, 2003).

In defining a school counseling program, ASCA determined that: "the school counseling program helps all students achieve success in school and develop into contributing members of our society" (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2005, p. 14). This original school counseling program model stipulated as part of its foundation that: "The school counseling program facilitates student development in three broad domains to promote and enhance the learning process" (ASCA, 2005, p. 32). The three broad domains that ASCA referred to are: academic development, career development, and personal/social development. These domains of student development are perceived as interrelated and are believed to have influence on each other across the lifespan. Each of the domains contain student learning competencies, which include specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

In ASCA's third edition (2012) of their school counseling program model, they shifted the principal objective of school counseling programs somewhat by more strongly emphasizing academic achievement. According to ASCA: "School counselors design and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs that promote student achievement" (p. xii). In spite of this shift, ASCA still promotes the idea that focusing on academic, career, and personal/social developmental domains is an effective means to

enhance student success. ASCA's recent revision of the original national standards are now referred to as mindsets and behaviors for student success. These mindsets and behaviors are derived principally from a report focused on the role of noncognitive factors in shaping school performance (Farrington, et al., 2012). ASCA's mindsets and behaviors are organized within a structure of academic, career, and social/emotional development (ASCA, 2014a).

It seems clear that the principal professional organizations representing education, counseling, and school counseling generally agree on the value and importance of objectives such as student success, life-long learning, career development, mental health, and wellness (ASCA, 2005, 2012, 2014a, 2014b; Kaplan et al., 2014; NEA, 2006a, 2006b). Even though ASCA has shifted focus towards academic achievement in order to align itself with national policy and initiatives, the organization continues to promote character education, prevention and intervention initiatives, noncognitive factors of student performance, student mental health, and the integration of the ASCA student competencies with other student standards from various initiatives or organizations (ASCA, 2005, 2012, 2014a, 2014b).

The ASCA National Model (2012) encourages school counselors to review student standards from other initiatives and organizations and, if appropriate, integrate these other standards and/or competencies when they complement and inform their school counseling program. ASCA (2012, p. 29) cites the Framework for the 21st Century Learning, the National Career Development Guidelines, and the Six Pillars of Character as examples of organizations with conceptual models that may complement or inform school counseling programs.

NEA, ACA, and ASCA have student outcome objectives that vary from academic achievement to becoming effective citizens who are prepared to be successful in work, life, and family. Children and adolescents grow and develop throughout the school-age years in order to prepare for adult life, to be successful – whatever that may mean to a young adult. Well-being is a construct that may provide a meaningful intersection with current professional models of the education, counseling, and school counseling fields. It supplements the academic focus now being promoted by ASCA and it includes the active and influential domains that are relevant to the lives of most, if not all, students. Well-being offers school counselors a broad and useful framework for understanding students and developing effective school counseling programs. The school counseling field can benefit from a defined and applicable model of student well-being.

PACES Model of Student Well-Being

Merriam Webster defines *well-being* as the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous (Merriam-Webster, 11th ed.) and the American Heritage Dictionary defines *wellness* as the condition of being in good physical and mental health (American Heritage Dictionary, 4th ed.). In their definition The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013) claim that there is no consensus regarding a singular definition of well-being. While there is no widespread agreement on the definition of well-being, it is typically characterized as including physical and mental health, as well as other elements or aspects of life. Many characterize it based on their own interests or products (e.g., emotional well-being, spiritual well-being, etc.). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2013) “Well-being is a positive outcome that is meaningful for people, and for many sectors of society, because it tells us that people perceive that their lives are going well.” (Well-being Concepts section, para. 1). The

CDC (2013) defines well-being as incorporating a variety of aspects including physical well-being, economic well-being, social well-being, emotional well-being, psychological well-being as well as other engaging activities and work (How is Well-Being Defined? section, para. 1). Well-being includes the economic and social circumstances of living, and consequently it embraces cultural aspects in its meaning. It extends beyond wellness to encompass concepts such as success, happiness, and satisfaction with life.

Since its inception in 1948, the World Health Organization has defined health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 1948). This definition has never been modified. It continues to serve as a unifying mission for professionals working in a wide variety of fields and initiatives. While there is no consensus regarding a definition for well-being, it seems clear that it generally characterizes success and includes concepts such as wellness, happiness, and satisfaction with life. The advantage of a broad definition is that it may apply to a variety of contexts. The disadvantage is that it may lack specificity and focus. Given these two conflictual concepts, it seems helpful to create a model of well-being that can be both useful and meaningful to the helping professions.

Numerous researchers have explored various aspects, determinants, and outcomes of well-being (Camfield & Skevington, 2008; Diener, Sapyta, & Suh, 1998; Fraillon, 2004; Pollard & Lee, 2001). While studying what has been termed “subjective well-being,” some researchers have suggested that subjective well-being is a construct that focuses on one’s happiness or satisfaction with life (Diener, Scollon, & Lucas, 2009). Even within the confines of the definition of subjective well-being, it is important for school counselors to realize that student happiness and satisfaction with life are vital determinants of student success.

Internationally, the concept of well-being has been used to describe global health, quality of life, and overall sustainability. It is closely related to life satisfaction, happiness, and quality of life. It is often used to characterize people, environments, natural resources, communities, nations, and so on. Within an educational context, it is possible to define student well-being as a student's perception of their quality of life, success, and life satisfaction.

Well-being has been *described* as consisting of wellness, happiness, and satisfaction/success, which are elements of interpersonal/intrapersonal aspects, and internal and external systems. Based upon a review of the research, we propose a model of student well-being composed of five distinct and interactive domains: physical, affective, cognitive, economic, and social (PACES). We offer the PACES model of student well-being to help school counselors enrich students' academic-career-personal/social development, and success. The PACES domains offer counselors an organizational framework that is useful in program delivery (Figure 1).

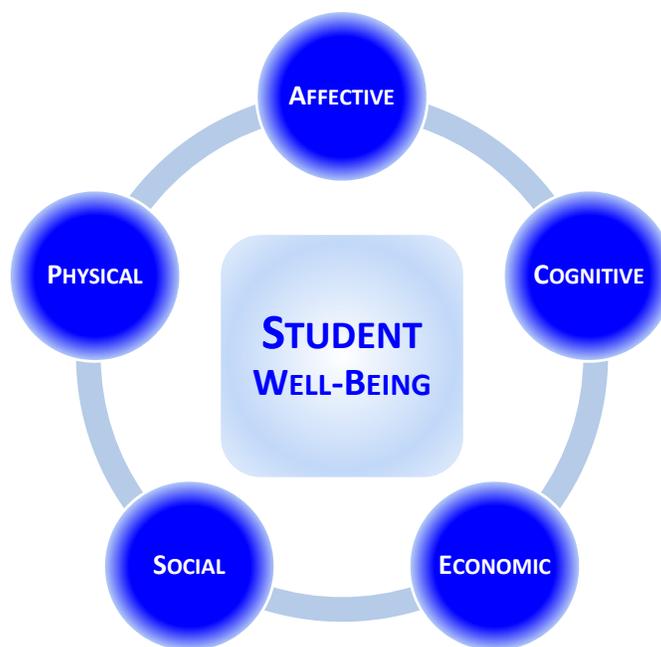


Figure 1. Interactive domains of the PACES model of student well-being

Physical

By physical domain, we refer to characteristics such as life expectancy, wellness, nutrition, disease incidence, health risk factors, maternal and child health, and access to health care. The physical domain consists of the health-related issues that directly influence a student's ability to engage the learning environment at school. The physical domains strongly affect all other domains in a student's life at home and at school.

Affective

The affective domain of student well-being characterizes those aspects involved with students' affect or feelings, such as affective perceptions, moods, intimacy, self-esteem, empowerment, self-confidence, self-efficacy, guilt, shame, anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns related to affect. The affective domain defines a student's emotional sense of self. It is strongly subjective and heavily influences other domains of student well-being.

Cognitive

The cognitive domain concerns the ability to process information effectively and the capability to use information in a rational way to grow and to solve problems. It includes attributes such as thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, creativity, spontaneity, and openness of new ways of viewing situations. The cognitive domain is often referred to as intelligence – one's ability to think and create. However, when it is defined to also include the elements of beliefs, attitudes, and self-talk, the cognitive domain extends beyond what some might characterize as academic ability.

Economic

This term refers to access to monetary and material resources such as housing, employment, occupation, income, and other dimensions of socioeconomic status. The

economic domain includes financial elements that influence the availability of resources that can influence a student's academic preparedness, social adjustment, food security, home security, academic planning, and post-secondary educational affordability.

Social

The social domain of student well-being pertains to how students function in relation to others in their environment at school, home, and other settings. The social domain often refers to characteristics such as interpersonal skills, family composition and interactions, social networks and supports, school and classroom interactions, community involvement, and social behavior – such as lifestyle, risk-taking, and striving for significance within their peer groups.

While these five domains are distinct aspects of young people's lives, we recognize that they are integrated in a fabric that embodies student well-being. We hold central the belief that student well-being influences and is influenced by families, social groups, schools, and communities.

Enriching School Counseling Programs With Student Well-Being

School counseling programs originated as a part of the comprehensive guidance and counseling programs movement of the 1970's (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). The program concept was transformational in the history of school counseling – it shifted the profession from the idea that counseling was collection of services ancillary to other programs to the idea the school counseling was a program in and of itself that had a definition, purpose, and outcomes. School counselors began to see their roles as being a professional counselor who implements a comprehensive and developmental school counseling program. The program is comprehensive in that it provides a wide variety of activities and services that include counseling, consultation, assessment, teaching

classroom guidance lessons, referral, and other program-related activities. It is developmental in that the program focuses on developmentally appropriate activities that promote student success and student development (i.e., academic development, career development, and personal/social development) (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).

The ASCA (2012) model of school counseling was strongly influenced by the Missouri model of school counseling first proposed by Starr and Gysbers (1998). The Missouri model has continued to be refined and is still in use today (Gysbers, Stanley, Kosteck-Bunch, Magnuson, & Starr, 2011). Most program models of school counseling are student development oriented and are focused on academic, career, and personal/social developmental domains. School counseling models are typically delivered through four components or types of activities: school guidance curriculum (classroom or small group presentations), individual student planning (student learning plans), responsive services (individual and group counseling, referrals), and system support (counseling program management, evaluation, professional development, outreach). Guidance curriculum, individual student planning, and responsive services involve working with students directly and it is through these three delivery mechanisms that the PACES model of can assist school counselors the most. We offer the following recommendations regarding the value of integrating the PACES model into school counseling programs.

Physical Domain

The physical domain includes various health-related aspects of student well-being. Nutrition, health impairments or proficiencies, exercise and fitness, access to health care, and other physiological considerations will affect student academic, career, and personal/social development. Healthy students may be more ready or prepared to

learn and engage in academics. School counselors may be well advised to determine if their counselee has recently seen a medical professional or if they have had a recent physical. Moderate to severe physical impairments may diminish students focus and/or interest in academic performance. In working with students, school counselors can check with health enhancement or physical education teachers regarding exercise and fitness levels. Counselors can check school records for any references to physical ailments. They may also check with a school nurse regarding any medications that the student may be taking.

The physical domain may influence the formation of career aspirations of students. Students may over- or under-emphasize aspects of their physical domain as they explore or plan their career paths. School counselors may include physical traits as a part of student learning plans and career planning, which might encourage students to be realistic regarding how their physical features may or may not affect their academic and career plans. Counselors may incorporate physical qualities as an element in guidance curriculum lessons that are focused on career development.

Student personal/social development may be enhanced or impeded by health-related circumstances. Students may feel that their physical appearance or attractiveness is a significant determinant in their personal and/or their social lives. Personal development may be significantly influenced by physical disabilities or ailments. Asthma, prostheses, anemia, and various diseases that result in physical ailments are just a few concerns that may directly or indirectly attributable to physical domain. Students may believe that the quality and quantity of their social relationships are influenced by their physical qualities. It is likely that the physical domain is the area most likely overlooked by counselors in general. As a profession, we tend to perceive

that the reasons people seek or are referred to counseling are due to psychologically based concerns. Consequently, we may tend to neglect physical explanations or their contributions to understanding presenting issues.

Affective Domain

The affective domain concerns various feeling-related aspects that may influence student well-being. Mood, feelings, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and other various affective characteristics will likely affect students' academic, career, and personal/social development. In general, most school counselors are prone to focus on student affect during counseling sessions. Counselors often help students explore how they feel about themselves and others. Students' academic development can be influenced by how they feel about themselves, others, or school. School counselors can learn about a student's affect in relation to academics from the students themselves, teachers, and from parents or guardians. Counselors may use student learning plans with students as they chart their academic schedules and school objectives. Student learning plans (SLP) document students' interests, needs, supports, academic plans (including secondary and post-secondary), transition and career plans, as well as other learning experiences both in and out of school. Academic development occurs over time and requires effort and growth. Students' affect influences effort and growth as they address the challenges of school work.

The affect domain may influence career development among students as they explore and plan for their careers. Counselors can help students understand that during the school aged years students can choose from a wide variety of career possibilities. Some of the paths may require additional school and some may not. School counselors may utilize SLPs or individual career plans with students that might encourage students

to explore how they feel when considering different career paths. Confidence, a sense of empowerment, and self-esteem all influence what students believe is possible.

Personal/social development is clearly influenced by the affect domain.

Counselors can help students explore how they feel about themselves, family, friends, and school. Some students may be challenged by various affective-related disorders such as eating disorders, depression, alcohol and other drug (AOD) abuse, negative self-image, school phobia, or anxiety disorders. School counselors may develop guidance curriculum lessons and counseling groups specifically targeting elements of the affective domain in order to help students learn effective strategies.

Cognitive Domain

The cognitive domain concerns a student's ability to process information, the capability to use information to solve problems, and includes attributes such as self-talk, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and creativity. Many mental health diagnoses are rooted in the cognitive domain. It seems clear that the "thinking-processing-attitude" domain may influence academic, career, and personal/social development. Academic achievement is closely tied to a student's cognitive skills and abilities. School counselors may work with students in individual counseling or in classroom guidance presentations to assist them in application of their cognitive skills (e.g., critical thinking or problem-solving strategies). Counselors may work with students with various learning disabilities or on 504 plans. School counselors may administer learning style inventories that assist students in better understanding their learning styles and how strongly they may favor visual, auditory, or kinesthetic modes of learning. Counselors may develop comprehensive guidance curriculum lessons or units that teach students effective

learning and study skills. SLPs can be vital portfolios where counselors help students as they begin to plan and map their academic and career paths.

Cognitive skills and abilities may have an influence on the career development. For example, some students may begin to believe that they are not “smart enough” for some career paths or they may develop unsuitable attitudes regarding non-traditional career paths. When counselors stretch beyond the generally accepted concept of cognitive skills by helping students understand their attitudes, beliefs, and self-talk, spontaneity, and creativity they broaden a student’s understanding of themselves and their capabilities to achieve academically while charting a career path.

Personal/social development can be influenced by the cognitive domain considering that a student’s thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs shape relationships. Students affect and behavior may be strongly influenced by their thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs about themselves and others. School counselors may focus on adaptive and maladaptive cognitive perceptions in counseling (individual and group) and consultation. Counselors may design and facilitate counseling groups, specifically focused on cognitive-related topics such as self-confidence, healthy or useful attitudes, creative thinking, and problem-solving skills in social settings. Counselors may develop guidance curriculum lessons that focus on enhancing self-talk, attitudes toward self and others, tolerance, and strategies designed to promote a healthy social culture within the school.

Economic Domain

The economic domain concerns a student’s socioeconomic status and their access to resources. These elements are generally related to family resources and may include housing, access to food, income, and savings. These economic aspects may influence academic, career, and personal/social development. Both poverty and

affluence may create unique challenges and opportunities for students. They may not have access to appropriate or sufficient food and nutrition to such an extent that it affects their academic performance. School counselors may assist students and/or their families in finding resources necessary to meet the nutritional needs of students. Students from affluent families may have unrealistic ideas about resources and future access to resources that could impede their development and progress. Counselors may work with students and their families to find scholarships or other financial resources for students interested in pursuing post-secondary educational opportunities. Counselors may need to promote a school culture that believes in the idea that all students can pursue post-secondary education regardless of family economics.

Limited or scarce economic resources may negatively affect students' career development. School counselors may need to develop guidance curriculum lessons or units that teach strategies for pursuing careers of choice regardless of socioeconomic status. It is important for students to be aware that career pathways are not determined by family or community socioeconomic status.

Personal/social development may also be influenced by the economic domain of students and their families. Encouragement or discouragement about future educational opportunities, entitlement, hope or lack of hope about the future, aspiration or apathy about possibilities in life are just a few possible characteristics that be related to socioeconomic status and access to resources. School counselors may design guidance curriculum lessons or counseling groups that address socioeconomic status and strategies available to students to improve their social relationships. Counselors can promote a school culture that is more tolerant of socioeconomic diversity.

Social Domain

The social domain concerns how students interact with others in various settings. Interpersonal skills, family composition and atmosphere, social networks and supports, as well as school interactions all likely affect students' academic, career, and personal/social development. Striving to belong in a social peer group, risk-taking, social networking, and striving for a sense of empowerment among peers are just a few social aspects that may influence academic development. School counselors may work with students to encourage them to work together on schoolwork.

The research of Horn, Chen, and Adelman (1998) found several social-related factors that encouraged at-risk students to stay in school and even go on the post-secondary education included: parental involvement in school-related discussions, high parental expectations for educational attainment, association with peers who plan to attend college, and participation in college preparation and outreach activities. Other research reports on the value of social skills in students' mental health and the means by which schools can provide social skills training (Bergeron, Nolan, Dai, & White, 2013; Ross, Shochet, & Bellair, 2010). All of these research-based factors are socially derived from family, friends, and school. Much of the child and adolescent experience is socially oriented. When counselors: involve parents in the development and implementation of student learning plans; conduct parent education workshops that may focus on educational expectations, planning for post-secondary opportunities, and career planning; design counseling groups focused on academic performance and career planning, they utilize elements of the social domain to increase student success. These types of approaches can be described as data-driven strategies.

Career development may be influenced by many of these same characteristics of the social domain. Many students may seek career paths that come from discussions with family and friends. School counselors may create guidance curriculum lessons that ask students to discuss various career pathways with other students in the classroom setting or with family members. Students may be asked to interview other students, immediate family or extended family members in order to navigate their own career path.

Personal/social development is obviously influenced by aspects of the social domain. Child and adolescents strive to fit in to belong within a social structure. When they were infants, their survival depended upon a social structure. School counselors understand this need for students to have social and meaningful lives as they grow and develop. Counselors and teachers use small group and classroom groups to teach a variety of social skills. Students may be affected by bullying, peer pressure, school phobia, or other socially-related challenges. Counselors may use guidance curriculum lessons or longer units, counseling (individual or group), and student planning to enhance students' healthy personal/social development. Schools provide the best setting for young people to learn and refine the skills necessary to engage their worlds. Counselors can help students learn effective skills that will promote healthy social competence in students.

Summary

School counselors are responsible to design, develop, implement, and evaluate school counseling programs. A common objective for many of these types of programs is to enhance student development and success. In the 2015, the U.S. Department of Education reported that U.S. high school graduation rates had risen to 81% for the

2012-13 school year, a new high for America's schools. School counseling programs promote the academic, career, and personal/social development for all students, not merely for some of the students. It is also important to emphasize the student development domains (academic, career, personal/social) influence each other such that improvement or decline in one or two of the development domains will affect the remaining domain/s. Counselors deliver their programs directly to students through guidance curriculum, student planning, and responsive services. The PACES model of student well-being provides a holistic framework, which helps counselors design programs and delivery mechanisms that include multiple domains of student life.

The concept of a school guidance curriculum has a long history going back to at least the early twentieth century (Davis, 1914). Currently, most school counseling program models contain a guidance curriculum. Building on the learning domains in Bloom's taxonomy (1956), a guidance curriculum is intended to impart the knowledge (cognitive), attitudes (affective), and skills (psychomotor) necessary for students to experience success. Guidance curriculum is typically focused on enhancing the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students. The PACES model can help counselors as they design and develop lesson plans that seek to enhance students' academic, career, and personal/social development. The model may help to guide counselors' selection of topics or modes of presentation.

Individual student planning consists of school counselors helping students establish personal goals and develop future plans. School counselors coordinate activities that help all students plan, monitor, and manage their own learning as well as meet objectives in the areas of academic, career, and personal/social development. Counselors may use SLPs to compile and coordinate student planning for future

educational and career pathways. The PACES model may encourage counselors to consider multiple dimensions as they help students establish goals and make plans. There can be social, physical, or even economic factors that counselors might consider as they design and implement student learning plans.

School counselors also deliver their programs through responsive services that are intended to meet the immediate needs of students through counseling, consultation, and referral. The PACES model may help school counselors extend both breadth and depth in their responsive services. For example, counselors may structure more of the individual and group counseling around the constructs of family, friends, and school as central themes to be explored to various depths depending on the presenting issue/s. Integrating the PACES model may also result in counselors referring students or their families more to financial planners, nutritionists, or physicians.

Student well-being is a construct that is larger than academic achievement alone. We offer that student well-being as a student's perception of their quality of life, success, and life satisfaction. The PACES model of student well-being serves to guide and influence the content and delivery of school counseling programs. We offer that putting a program "through its PACES" augments its delivery and scope. School counselors strive every day to enhance student development and success and the PACES model of student well-being is a useful framework for designing and implementing programs.

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