

**School Counselor Evaluation Instrument Pilot Project: A School Counselor
Association, Department of Education, and University Collaboration**

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Abstract

This article describes initial efforts to pilot an evaluation instrument for school counselors. The pilot was a collaboration led by the state's school counselor association involving a state department of education (DOE), local school districts, and university faculty members. The article begins with a brief overview of historical and contextual factors relevant to the creation of the instrument and the pilot project. A summary description of the instrument is then provided that lists individual items and supplementary information distributed with the protocol. Next, preliminary results are presented. Finally, the article concludes by discussing limitations of the study, implications for practitioners, and recommendations for further research.

Keywords: school counselor evaluation; state association; department of education; collaboration; accountability; comprehensive school counseling program

School Counselor Evaluation Instrument Pilot Project: A School Counselor Association, Department of Education, and University Collaboration

There remains little debate regarding the function and importance of evaluation within a comprehensive school counseling program (CSCP), as articulated within the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) National Model (ASCA, 2012). This call for accountability spans more than just evaluating CSCP programming and interventions (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007; Erford, 2015; Maras, Coleman, Gysbers, Herman, & Stanley, 2013; Thompson, 2012); it also incorporates evaluating school counselors as well (ASCA, 2012; Kaffenberger & Young, 2013). However, despite repeated calls for school counselors to embrace and model accountable assessment and evaluation (Anderson, 1994; Sink, 2009; Struder & Sommers, 2000), there remains a scarcity of literature regarding individual school counselor evaluation. At the writing of this manuscript, an EBSCO online search with the term "school counselor evaluation" yielded nine items, of which eight discussed school counselors and/or school counseling. Of those eight articles, only two were written in the 21st century. While expansion of the search criteria produces more yield, the trend of scarcity of articles remains consistent.

One of the two articles retrieved was an interview with the director of the Education Trust's National Center for Transforming School Counseling (TSC) during 2007 (Pérusse & Colbert). The article focused on the TSC, the director's role, and the evolving role of the school counselor. The second article (Morris & Slaten, 2014) outlined a collaborative project undertaken by a multidisciplinary workgroup involving the state school counseling association, department of education, and other stakeholder

groups. Morris and Slaten (2014) describe an evaluation rubric and administration protocol for school counselor evaluation processes. The article is more than just theoretical as history, context, implementation, results, and recommendations are outlined, however no statistics from the research are presented.

One potential reason for this scarcity of research may lie in the fact that whereas CSCP evaluation practices are influenced by school site dynamics, individual school counselor evaluation can fall prey to myriad systemic influences. Similar to CSCP program evaluation, school site systemic factors (e.g., student population demographics, school counselor-student ratios, school counselor full-time-equivalent staffing, site administration) play a key role in individual school counselor evaluation. Additionally, larger macro-level systemic factors such as district policies/politics, local union regulations, and statewide legislative pressures may exert influence over individual school counselor evaluation. For school counselors already struggling to adequately implement basic program evaluation processes within their CSCP (Astramovich, Coker, & Hoskins, 2005), the prospect of tackling role evaluation may prove too daunting.

This article presents historical and statistical review of a pilot project related to an individual school counselor evaluation tool. The project was a collaboration between the state's school counselor association, a state department of education (DOE), local school districts, and university faculty members. After providing a brief historical overview of the project, the authors present statistical methods and results pertaining to the instrument. Following discussion of these results the authors present limitations of the project, recommendations for future research, and (arguably most important for the

practicing school counselors) recommendations for continuing collaborative evaluation efforts.

The authors should note espousing an ecological professional school counseling perspective (McMahon, Mason, Daluga-Guenther, & Ruiz, 2014) which recognizes the results from this research as systemic feedback framed within the time and health of the larger state system. Recognized as systemic elements, deliverables from such research (i.e., the evaluation protocol) are subject to systemic feedback. The changing landscape of state education politics seems to regularly challenge such instruments regardless of statistical merit.

History and Context

During 2012-2013, representatives of the Georgia state school counselor association (SCA) met with numerous legislators in an effort to introduce a bill that would define the role of the school counselor. Although unable to find a sponsor for the bill, SCA leadership identified several legislators supportive of the effort who suggested working with the state's department of education (DOE) to implement a counselor performance evaluation instrument which would better define the role of the school counselor. Meeting with DOE leadership later that year, SCA leaders found the state superintendent supportive of pursuing such an evaluation. However, as DOE leadership did not have adequate manpower or resources for developing such an instrument, SCA leadership inquired about developing the instrument in collaboration with the DOE. The superintendent was open to the idea and requested the instrument be aligned with the newly developed Teacher TKES evaluation as the TKES was currently in the second year of its pilot and scheduled for statewide implementation the following year.

In the summer of 2013, a committee of two elementary school counselors, two middle school counselors, two high school counselors and two district level school counseling supervisors from the southern, central and metropolitan parts of the state developed the Counselor Keys to Effectiveness System (CKES). The committee utilized the 10-item format and much of the original language from the TKES in pursuit of administrator familiarity with the instrument. Additionally, school counselor performance evaluations based on the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (2012) from around the state and nation were consulted. Selected model evaluations were chosen based on how well they reflected the role of the school counselor within a data-driven, comprehensive school counseling program, and were aligned with the ASCA National Model. Language from the ASCA National Model was incorporated into each of the 10 standards of the CKES.

In the fall of 2013, representatives from the SCA met with the superintendent and DOE leadership to share the newly created CKES and seek guidance regarding implementation of the instrument. DOE leaders involved in the TKES recommended several actions for completion prior to CKES implementation. These recommendations included: (1) facilitating a focus group to provide feedback on the instrument; (2) administering a survey to gauge practicing school counselor receptivity; and (3) piloting the instrument with administrators in various districts.

At the subsequent SCA annual conference, 25 school counselors representing various levels and regions participated in a focus group. Participants were given the opportunity to preview, ask questions and provide feedback regarding the instrument. Approximately 64 percent of group participants indicated they were evaluated using a

counselor-specific instrument. Approximately 20 percent stated they were not evaluated at all. When asked whether they believed the instrument would help define the role of the school counselor for administrators, 23 participants agreed and two stated they were unsure. Comments from the group indicated that participants liked having the CKES aligned with both the TKES and the ASCA National Model (2012). Participants also expressed concern regarding support from administrators and the impact of non-counseling duties on meeting the requirements of the instrument. Approximately one third of participants shared their belief that training for administrators and counselors on using the instrument would be critical for successful implementation. Using this and other feedback from the focus group (e.g., item wording and concepts), revisions were made and a finalized version of the CKES was completed in February 2014.

In addition to the finalized CKES instrument, SCA committee members created supporting documents and resources. These resources included conceptual definitions, links and references, contextual examples of item rating criteria, and templates based on the ASCA National Model (2012) (e.g., action plans, results reports). Once completed, the instrument and supporting documents were provided to six public schools from across the state that had volunteered to field test the instrument. Administrators and counselors involved in the field test provided feedback on the instrument via a survey in May 2014. No changes were recommended by those participating in the field test as feedback indicated the instrument was easy to use and helped to further define the role of the school counselor. In addition to the survey, field test participants were given the opportunity to provide qualitative feedback.

Representative of the positive feedback, one participant (a counselor coordinator) stated,

The evaluation appears to be an effective evaluation instrument that will 1) capture what counselors do on a daily basis and 2) provide a sense of accountability for all stakeholders. At first, it seemed overwhelming, but after looking at each standard and digesting the details under the 4 different levels, it appeared very 'cut and dry.'

With encouraging field test results, further data was sought to solidify the need for a revised instrument.

An additional survey was administered via the statewide Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education Resource Network in April 2014 reaching approximately 1,128 school counselors representing various levels from across the state. Approximately 56 percent of respondents indicated they were evaluated with a counselor-specific instrument. Approximately 61 percent of respondents reported they believed an evaluation based on the ASCA National Model (2012) would help administration better understand the school counselor role. When asked if they would want to be evaluated with an instrument which defined the role of the school counselor within the framework of a comprehensive school counseling program, 74 percent indicated "yes," 21 percent indicated "unsure," and 5 percent indicated "no."

In May 2014, SCA committee members met with the state superintendent and other DOE leaders to share the findings from the focus group, instrument field test, and interest survey. The superintendent and DOE recommended the next step of piloting the instrument. As 2014-2015 would be the first year of full implementation for the new Teacher Evaluation (TKES), many districts previously utilizing general teacher

evaluations for school counselors were going to need a specific instrument for evaluating school counselors. As a result, the decision was made to offer districts the opportunity to pilot the CKES during 2014-2015. An SCA-drafted email was sent from the state school superintendent to all district level superintendents regarding the availability of the instrument and the opportunity to pilot. Interested districts were asked to email for more information.

Participating districts were provided with guidelines for the pilot study, which helped negotiate a balance between district autonomy and research integrity. First, districts were allowed to choose one of three options for pilot implementation: (1) whole-district; (2) counselor-specific; or (3) site-specific. The whole-district implementation model required use of the CKES instrument for all counselors, at all sites within the district. The counselor-specific model allowed districts to select individual counselors from various sites across the district as long as a minimum 50% of district counselors participated. Finally, the site-specific model allowed districts to select which school sites (and subsequently, counselors at those sites) participated in the project.

Districts were asked to implement use of the CKES instrument in addition to typical evaluative practices. Ratings were scored and recorded using the CKES instrument for research purposes only and carried no evaluative impact for participating counselors' annual evaluation. At any time during the project, districts and participating counselors were allowed to withdraw from the CKES project without any adverse consequences. CKES researchers asked that any district choosing to withdraw from the project provide notification and a brief explanation. In addition to data collected from utilizing the CKES instrument, participants (i.e., school counselors and administrators)

provided both quantitative (i.e., Likert-type scale survey responses) and qualitative (i.e., open-ended questions) feedback at the end of the project.

Training for participants (both administrators and school counselors) was provided via electronic and face-to-face workshop processes. School counselors being evaluated by the CKES instrument were offered training via a workshop session at the state association's annual conference. Additionally, participating school counselors had access to the training via a webinar offered online at the state association's webpage.

Method

Sample

From the state school superintendent's invitation email, 65 sites participated comprising this convenience sampling ($N = 117$). As previously mentioned, the CKES instrument was to be used strictly for research purposes only—holding no evaluative weight. Participating school counselors' performance was assessed using both the CKES instrument and their district's current assessment instrument.

Participants represented 65 sites, from 9 districts across the state. Participating school counselors were identified as elementary level (44%), middle school level (28%), high school level (25%), and other (3%). This mirrored state-wide trends in terms of elementary level consisting of the most school counselor positions. Sample distribution across districts also mirrored state-wide trends to some extent as the majority of participants identified as working in the county with the highest number school counselor positions.

Both participating administrators and school counselors were invited to complete online perceptual surveys regarding CKES training, the CKES instrument, and the

assessment process. The administrator survey sample was $N = 24$ while the school counselor survey sample yielded $N = 40$.

Procedure

Whichever of the three options participating districts chose for CKES implementation (i.e., whole-district, counselor-specific, or site-specific), districts administered the CKES using regular evaluative processes and procedures during the 2014-15 academic year. Participants (i.e., district leadership, administrators, and school counselors) were provided with a CKES administration guide/resource. The guide was a document containing the CKES instrument in digital interactive “form” format (i.e., Adobe .pdf form) and approximately 30 pages of additional resources and templates for use by both administrators and school counselors. Specifically, supplemental resources provided included:

- Introduction and purpose statements
- Detailed explanation of each standard of the instrument providing guiding criteria for each standard’s ratings (i.e., exemplary or ineffective) and sample indicators or evidence for each standard
- Glossary of terms
- References
- CSCP curriculum crosswalk worksheet
- Classroom guidance lesson plan template
- CSCP annual site administration agreement (ASCA, 2012)
- SMART goal worksheet
- Various action plan templates (Kaffenberger & Young, 2013)
- Use of time assessment tool (ASCA, 2012)
- Various results reporting templates (Kaffenberger & Young, 2013), and
- CSCP program assessment tool (ASCA, 2012).

Completed protocols were collected and secured by the state school counselor association. Towards the end of the 2014-15 academic year participants were contacted by email inviting them to complete the online perception surveys.

Instrumentation

CKES Instrument. As previously mentioned, effort was taken to intentionally align CKES performance standards with both the established state-sponsored TKES formatting, and established components of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012). The CKES instrument is comprised of 10 performance standards which, when aggregated, yield an overall rating score. For each performance standard, the evaluator is asked to rate the school counselor using a Likert-type scale with the following range: 0 (*ineffective*), 1 (*needs development*), 2 (*proficient*), and 3 (*exemplary*). Additionally, each performance standard has an area for evaluator comments. Individual performance standard ratings are aggregated to yield a composite score. The composite score is then framed within one of four categories: exemplary (total score of 27-30 with no *needs development* or *ineffective* ratings), proficient (total score of 17-26 with no *ineffective* ratings), needs development (total score of 8-16), and ineffective (total score of 0-7). Formatting for the CKES instrument is such that the evaluator is provided with defining criteria for each performance standard as well as how each standard aligns with the ASCA National Model (see Table 1).

Table 1*CKES Performance Standards*

Standard	Definition
1. Professional Knowledge (Foundation)	The professional school counselor demonstrates an understanding of a comprehensive school counseling program by providing relevant learning experiences in the three domains: Academic achievement, career development and personal/social growth.
2. Instructional Planning (Management/Foundation)	The professional school counselor plans and develops a goal-driven, comprehensive school counseling program using curriculum and standards, resources, and data to address the needs of all students.
3. Instructional Strategies (Delivery)	The professional school counselor promotes student learning by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program by spending 80% of time in school counseling core curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and indirect student services and 20% in program planning and school support.
4. Individualized Instruction (Delivery)	The professional school counselor coordinates individual student planning and responsive services designed to meet student needs on an individual and/or small group basis.
5. Data Collection (Accountability/ Management)	The professional school counselor uses a variety of strategies and instruments to collect student data in order to guide appropriate counseling interventions and programs.
6. Data Evaluation (Accountability/ Management)	The professional school counselor evaluates student data and the effectiveness of the counseling core curriculum, small groups, and closing-the-gap data in order to assess and plan the school counseling program and shares program results with stakeholders.
7. Positive Learning Environment (Foundation)	The professional school counselor promotes a safe, positive learning environment which is inclusive of ALL students (including but not limited to race, color, religion, gender, national origin or disability) and advocates for student needs in order to reach their educational goals.
8. College & Career Readiness Environment (Delivery)	The professional school counselor creates a student-centered environment which promotes postsecondary planning and the development of soft skills.
9. Professionalism (Foundation)	The professional school counselor exhibits a commitment to professional ethics and the mission, vision and beliefs of the school counseling program and participates in professional growth opportunities.
10. Communication (Delivery/Management)	The professional school counselor communicates effectively with students, parents/guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in a way that enhances student learning and improves the comprehensive school counseling program.

Administrator CKES Perception Survey. Administrators participating in the piloting of the CKES instrument were invited to participate in an online survey measuring perceptions regarding the CKES instrument and evaluation process. The survey consisted of 33 questions utilizing forced-choice, open-response, or Likert-type scale ratings for participants' responses (see Table 2). Likert-type scale responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Table 2

Administrator CKES Perception Survey Items

Item Text	Response
1. How many years have you supervised the school counselor(s)?	Forced
2. The directions on the instrument were easy to follow.	Likert
3. The format of the instrument was easy to understand.	Likert
4. The instrument was easy to use.	Likert
5. The instrument was a reasonable length.	Likert
6. The time for administrative preparation was reasonable.	Likert
7. The terminology used in the instrument was easy to understand and follow.	Likert
8. The rating scale was fair and equitable.	Likert
9. The suggested examples of evidence were helpful in evaluating my school counselor.	Likert
10. If you disagree, which standard(s) could benefit from more specific examples	Forced
11. The suggested examples provided under each standard adequately allowed me to evaluate my school counselor.	Likert
12. Distinguishing between the exemplary and the proficient school counselor was clear.	Likert
13. This instrument is helpful in defining the role of the school counselor as outlined by the American School Counselor Association.	Likert
14. This instrument accurately reflects the role of the school counselor in my school.	Likert
15. This instrument adequately reflects the leadership role of the school counselor in my building.	Likert
16. This instrument changed or influenced my understanding of the role of the school counselor.	Likert
17. This instrument helped to clarify the direction my school counselor(s) needs to take.	Likert
18. This instrument helped open dialogue with the school counselor(s) about the role of school counselor at our school.	Likert

Item Text	Response
19. This instrument is an improvement compared to our former school counselor evaluation.	Likert
20. Which standard(s) do you feel your school counselor needs the most help understanding or implementing?	Forced
21. Which standard(s) do you feel you need the most help understanding?	Forced
22. What improvements would you recommend to this instrument?	Open
23. What training would you suggest to effectively implement this evaluate tool?	Forced
24. It was evident that my school counselor(s) spent time preparing for the evaluation.	Likert
25. My school counselor(s) understands what the role of a school counselor is as defined by the American School Counselor Association.	Likert
26. I understand what a comprehensive school counseling program is as defined by the American School Counselor Association.	Likert
27. We have a comprehensive school counseling program based on the ASCA Model at my school.	Likert
28. I support the role of school counselor within a comprehensive school counseling program.	Likert
29. I include the school counselor(s) in the development of the school's strategic plan.	Likert
30. A school counselor operating within a comprehensive school counseling program would support our school strategic plan.	Likert
31. My school counselor(s) currently impact(s) student achievement and CCRPI.	Likert
32. My counselor(s) has access to students during instructional time for classroom lessons, small groups and individual student planning.	Likert
33. My counselor(s) is/are afforded an opportunity to provide information and educate our staff on their role.	Likert

School Counselor COUN Perception Survey. Similarly, school counselors participating in the piloting of the CKES instrument were invited to participate in an online survey measuring perceptions regarding the CKES instrument and evaluation process. The survey consisted of 33 questions utilizing forced-choice, open-response, and Likert-type scale ratings for participants' responses (see Table 3). The majority of survey items were directly aligned with those on the Administrator CKES Perception Survey with minor wording changes. As with the Administration survey, Likert-type scale responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Table 3*School Counselor CKES Perception Survey Items*

Item Text	Response
1. How many years have you been a school counselor?	Forced
2. The directions on the instrument were easy to follow.	Likert
3. The format of the instrument was easy to understand.	Likert
4. The instrument was easy to use.	Likert
5. The instrument was a reasonable length.	Likert
6. The preparation time for this instrument was reasonable.	Likert
7. The terminology used in the instrument was easy to understand and follow.	Likert
8. The rating scale was fair and equitable.	Likert
9. The suggested examples of evidence provided under each standard were helpful.	Likert
10. If you disagree, which standard(s) could benefit from more specific examples	Forced
11. The suggested examples provided under each standard adequately allowed me to demonstrate my work as a school counselor.	Likert
12. The difference between the exemplary and the proficient school counselor was clear.	Likert
13. This instrument is helpful in defining the role of the school counselor as outlined by the American School Counselor Association.	Likert
14. This instrument accurately reflects my current role as a school counselor.	Likert
15. This instrument adequately reflects my leadership role in my building.	Likert
16. This instrument changed or influenced my administrator's understanding of the role of the school counselor.	Likert
17. This instrument helped to clarify the direction I need to take in my role as school counselor.	Likert
18. This instrument helped open dialogue with my administrator about my role as a school counselor at our school.	Likert
19. This instrument is an improvement compared to our former school counselor evaluation.	Likert
20. Which standard(s) do you feel you need the most help understanding or implementing?	Forced
21. Which standard(s) do you feel your administrator needs the most help understanding?	Forced
22. What improvements would you recommend to this instrument?	Open
23. What kind of training on the instrument would work best for you?	Forced
24. It was evident that my administrator spent time examining my evidence to prepare my evaluation.	Likert
25. I understand what the role of a school counselor is as defined by the American School Counselor Association.	Likert

	Item Text	Response
26.	I understand what a comprehensive school counseling program is as defined by the American School Counselor Association.	Likert
27.	We have a comprehensive school counseling program based on the ASCA Model at my school.	Likert
28.	My administrator supports the role of school counselor within a comprehensive school counseling program.	Likert
29.	My administrator includes school counselors in the development of the school's strategic plan.	Likert
30.	Operating within a comprehensive school counseling program, I can support our school strategic plan.	Likert
31.	In my role as school counselor, I currently impact(s) student achievement and CCRPI.	Likert
32.	I have access to students during instructional time for classroom lessons, small groups and individual student planning.	Likert
33.	I am afforded an opportunity to provide information and educate our staff on my role.	Likert

Analyses

Preliminary analyses consisted of descriptive statistics and reliability indices for the CKES instrument dataset. Secondary analyses included item correlational analysis. Finally, participant survey data were reviewed and summarized using descriptive statistics.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

CKES Instrument. In addition to reviewing mean, median, and mode, the normality of the distribution of scores ($N = 117$) was determined by reviewing the individual items' histograms, skewness and kurtosis statistics for individual items, and items' skewness and kurtosis statistics divided by individual standard errors (see Table 4). Initial review of items' histograms showed minimal concern. Review of items' skewness statistics indicated no items performing outside general parameters (Field,

2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). However, items #1, #3, #7, and #8 all presented kurtosis statistics warranting further analysis. This review employed the use of kurtosis statistics divided by the standard error of the statistic. The action suggested data from items #7 and #8 performed outside the expectations of a normal distribution.

Table 4
CKES Item Descriptive Statistics

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	Median	Mode	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	Min	Max
Standard 1	117	2.33	2.00	2.00	.49	.49	-1.21	1.00	3.00
Standard 2	117	2.30	2.00	2.00	.55	.05	-.57	1.00	3.00
Standard 3	117	2.37	2.00	2.00	.50	.35	-1.38	1.00	3.00
Standard 4	117	2.23	2.00	2.00	.44	.99	-.17	1.00	3.00
Standard 5	117	2.17	2.00	2.00	.50	.34	.46	1.00	3.00
Standard 6	117	2.18	2.00	2.00	.60	-.08	-.33	1.00	3.00
Standard 7	118	2.47	2.00	2.00	.50	.14	-2.02	2.00	3.00
Standard 8	117	2.35	2.00	2.00	.48	.64	-1.62	2.00	3.00
Standard 9	118	2.43	2.00	2.00	.56	-.32	-.86	1.00	3.00
Standard 10	117	2.35	2.00	2.00	.53	.10	-.91	1.00	3.00
Overall Rating	117	23.21	22.00	20.00	3.93	.32	-.66	12.00	30.00

Reliability of the CKES instrument was assessed reviewing Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach Alpha statistic for the CKES was $\alpha = 0.920$. Consideration of removal of any of the 10 individual items yielded no increase in alpha. Next, inter-item correlations between the 10 items on the CKES were reviewed (see Table 5). Correlations ranged from 0.28 to 0.82 with a mean average 0.54. The weakest correlation (0.28) was found between items #6 (data evaluation) and #9 (professionalism). The strongest correlations were found in relationships between the overall rating and individual items (i.e., $0.71 \leq r \leq 0.82$). Individual items #1, #2, and #10 demonstrated concerning correlations to the

overall rating score with $r = 0.82$. Other than these instances, item correlations were found to be within acceptable parameters (Field, 2009; Pett, Lackey, & Sullivan, 2003).

Table 5
CKES Item Correlations

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Overall Rating
Standard 1	.65*	.51*	.59*	.61*	.56*	.56*	.60*	.57*	.64*	.82*
Standard 2		.67*	.57*	.67*	.63*	.47*	.59*	.45*	.56*	.82*
Standard 3			.47*	.54*	.53*	.52*	.64*	.47*	.61*	.77*
Standard 4				.56*	.43*	.45*	.43*	.46*	.50*	.71*
Standard 5					.68*	.51*	.47*	.42*	.59*	.79*
Standard 6						.36*	.47*	.28*	.51*	.72*
Standard 7							.47*	.69*	.68*	.74*
Standard 8								.49*	.53*	.74*
Standard 9									.68*	.72*
Standard 10										.82*

Note. * denotes significant at $p < .01$

Administrator CKES Perception Survey. Of the 33 survey questions presented to participating administrators ($N = 24$) 16 specifically addressed CKES reception, use, and performance. The remaining 17 questions were divided between determining site specifics (e.g., Q1: *How many years have you supervised the school counselor(s)?*) and assessing participant awareness of comprehensive school counseling and school counselor role (e.g., Q26: *I understand what a comprehensive school counseling program is as defined by the American School Counselor Association.*). Table 6 presents descriptive statistics for the 16 CKES -related items.

All items performed similar with median and mode scores of 4.00 (“agree” on the survey Likert-type scale). Mean average scores ranged between 4.13 and 4.38 for

nearly all items with only #16 (*This instrument changed or influenced my understanding of the role of the school counselor.*) deviating from this pattern reporting a mean average score of 3.46.

School Counselor CKES Perception Survey. Similar to the administrator perception survey, participating school counselors ($N = 40$) responded to 16 questions addressing CKES reception, use, and performance with the remaining 17 dedicated to site specifics (e.g., Q1: *How many years have you been a school counselor?*) and knowledge of comprehensive school counseling and school counselor role (e.g., Q26: *I understand what a comprehensive school counseling program is as defined by the American School Counselor Association.*). Table 6 presents descriptive statistics for the 16 CKES-related items.

Table 6*CKES Perception Survey: Administrators and School Counselors*

Survey Item	Administrator Responses						School Counselor Responses					
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Median	Mode	Fav%	Unfav%	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Median	Mode	Fav%	Unfav%
2. Directions easy to follow	24	4.13	4.00	4.00	91.67%	4.17%	40	3.78	4.00	4.00	75.00%	7.50%
3. Instrument easy to understand	24	4.21	4.00	4.00	95.83%	0.00%	40	3.78	4.00	4.00	72.50%	5.00%
4. Instrument easy to use	24	4.13	4.00	4.00	91.67%	8.33%	40	3.63	4.00	4.00	65.00%	7.50%
5. Instrument reasonable length	24	4.29	4.00	4.00	100.00%	0.00%	40	3.58	4.00	4.00	67.50%	15.00%
7. Terminology easy to understand	24	4.17	4.00	4.00	91.67%	4.17%	40	3.80	4.00	4.00	80.00%	7.50%
8. Rating scale fair and equitable	24	4.38	4.00	4.00	95.83%	0.00%	40	3.78	4.00	4.00	72.50%	7.50%
9. Examples helpful	24	4.25	4.00	4.00	91.67%	4.17%	40	3.88	4.00	4.00	70.00%	5.00%
11. Examples allowed me to evaluate	24	4.25	4.00	4.00	95.83%	4.17%	40	4.43	4.00	4.00	75.00%	10.00%
12. Distinguishing exemplary and proficient was clear	24	4.21	4.00	4.00	91.67%	4.17%	40	3.65	4.00	4.00	70.00%	20.00%
13. Instrument helpful defining role of school counselor outlined by ASCA	24	4.17	4.00	4.00	87.50%	0.00%	40	4.05	4.00	4.00	82.50%	2.50%
14. Instrument reflects role of school counselor in my school	24	4.25	4.00	4.00	87.50%	0.00%	40	3.58	4.00	4.00	62.50%	17.50%
15. Instrument reflects leadership role of school counselor in my building	24	4.21	4.00	4.00	87.50%	0.00%	40	3.63	4.00	4.00	65.00%	12.50%
16. Instrument changed understanding of role of school counselor	24	3.46	4.00	4.00	58.33%	33.33%	40	3.28	3.00	3.00	37.50%	15.00%
17. Instrument helped clarify direction school counselor(s) needs to take	24	4.13	4.00	4.00	83.33%	0.00%	40	3.85	4.00	4.00	77.50%	10.00%
18. Instrument opened dialogue with school counselor(s) about role at our school	24	4.13	4.00	4.00	91.67%	4.17%	40	3.40	4.00	4.00	55.00%	20.00%
19. Instrument an improvement compared to former school counselor evaluation	24	4.21	4.00	4.00	83.33%	4.17%	40	3.40	3.00	3.00	47.50%	22.50%

Note. Range for all items was 1-5. "Fav%" reflects aggregate percentage "Agree" and "Strongly Agree." "Unfav%" reflects aggregate percentage "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree."

Data from participating school counselors presented slightly more variance than administrators. Similar to the administrator survey results, data for most items reported median and mode scores of 4.00 with mean average scores ranging from 3.58 to 3.88. Both items #16 and #19 reported median and mode scores of 3.00 with mean averages of 3.28 and 3.40 (respectively).

Discussion

CKES Instrument

Overall, the CKES instrument appeared to perform reasonably well in evaluating school counselors' performance with only two items warranting concern (i.e., items 7 and 8). The instrument demonstrated good reliability and most item correlations were within expected parameters. However, some strong correlations were observed including items 5 and 6, items 7, 9, and 10, and the summative "overall rating."

Items 5 (data collection) used the prompt, "The professional school counselor uses a variety of strategies and instruments to collect student data in order to guide appropriate counseling interventions and programs" to guide rater Likert scaling, while item 6 (data evaluation) stated, "The professional school counselor evaluates student data and the effectiveness of the counseling core curriculum, small groups, and closing-the-gap data, and shares program results with stakeholders." In the current study, the items demonstrated a correlation of $r = .68$. Both items address the use data (i.e., collection and evaluation), and that such use informs action to be taken (i.e., the phrase, "...in order to..."). Additionally, as both items fall within the ASCA National Model (2012) domains of accountability system and management system, it seems plausible these items might demonstrate overlap in their measurement of latent construct(s).

Not quite as straight-forward, item 7 strongly correlated with items 9 and 10, demonstrating values of $r = .69$ and $r = .68$ (respectively). Item 7 presented the prompt, “The professional school counselor promotes a safe, positive learning environment which is inclusive of ALL students (including but not limited to race, color, religion, gender, national origin or disability) and advocates for student needs in order to reach their educational goals.” Item 9 read, “The professional school counselor exhibits a commitment to professional ethics and the mission, vision and beliefs of the school counseling program and participates in professional growth opportunities.” Item 10 stated, “The professional school counselor communicates effectively with students, parents/guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in a way that enhances student learning and improves the comprehensive school counseling program.” While both items 7 and 9 addressed the Foundation domain of the ASCA National Model (2012), item 10 focused on the delivery system and management system. One possible factor may be the shared focus on student learning evident in the text of both items 7 and 10.

Finally, the summative item “overall rating” demonstrated the strongest correlations of all items on the CKES with values ranging from $r = .71$ to $r = .82$. This result may not be surprising considering the item was an aggregation of the other 10 items. However, two other considerations are worth noting. First, with many administrators still unfamiliar with school counselor role and responsibilities (Morris & Slaten, 2014) there may be reluctance to assess evident deficiencies resulting in inflated scores (Anderson, 1994). Second, guiding language for scoring the “overall rating” item may have unintentionally encouraged raters to reconsider previous item

ratings. Each level of performance (i.e., exemplary, proficient, needs development, and ineffective) was accompanied with guiding criteria directing rater scoring. For example, to achieve a rating of “exemplary,” participating school counselors must have received a total of 27-30 points and no “needs development” or “ineffective” scores (i.e., Likert-rating 1 or 0) on any of the 10 items. Achieving a summative rating of “proficient” carried similar criteria as well. For example, if a school counselor had accumulated 26 points but received a “needs development” (Likert-rating 1) on one of the 10 items, the rater would be required to assign a summative rating of “needs development.”

Participants’ Perceptions

Overall participating school counselors and administrators seemed pleased with the performance of the CKES evaluation instrument. Reviewing the data, Likert-responses “strongly agree” and “agree” were aggregated into the variable “Fav%” while “strongly disagree” and “disagree” were combined to form “Unfav%.” These variables reflected the percentage of favorable or unfavorable ratings excluding “neutral” responses. As a result, readers will note that for some items (see Table 6) the sum of Fav% and Unfav% will not equal 100%.

Reviewing the Fav% and Unfav% variables for each item, the majority of respondents indicated favorable perceptions of the CKES instrument and its implementation as an evaluation tool for school counselors with the exception of item 16. Additionally, for every item of the survey administrators responded more favorably than school counselors. This difference between administrator and school counselor responses ranged from 5.0 (item 13, “Instrument is helpful defining the role of the school counselor outlined by ASCA”) to 36.7 points (item 18, “Instrument opened

dialogue with school counselors about role at our school”). Recognizing the potential impact evaluation processes can have when advocating for school counselor program/role with administrators (Morris & Slaten, 2014), this trend is indeed encouraging.

On the school counselor perception survey, item 16 read, “This instrument changed or influenced my administrator’s understanding of the role of the school counselor,” while the administrator version of the prompt read, “This instrument changed or influenced my understanding of the role of the school counselor.” Item 16 demonstrated the lowest mean scores for both administrator (3.46) and school counselor (3.28) respondents. Aggregation of item rating scores on the administrator survey still yielded a majority responding favorably (58.33%). However, for participating school counselors only 37.5% reported favorable perceptions while 15.0% reported unfavorable. Overall this finding would appear to be contrary to literature suggesting that a primary function of school counselor evaluation is facilitating administrator awareness/education of the school counselor role (Anderson, 1994; Morris & Slaten, 2014; Studer & Sommers, 2000). While editing of the item wording might be utilized to provide more focus to this item, it would be beneficial to continue piloting to increase the sample prior to making changes to the protocol.

Finally, review of the highest ratings in the dataset revealed a practical focus in how respondents perceived the CKES instrument. For administrators, item 5 (Instrument reasonable length) demonstrated a Fav% value of 100% while item 8 (Rating scale fair and equitable) demonstrated a mean of 4.38. Similarly, school counselors responding to item 11 (Examples allow me to evaluate) demonstrated a

mean of 4.43 and a Fav% value of 82.5% for item 13 (Helpful defining role of school counselor outlined by ASCA). These findings suggest that among the potential themes alluded to within the survey (e.g., evaluation processes, school direction, school counselor role), the logistical aspects of the CKES instrument were found to be most favorable (ergo most important) to participants.

Limitations

A considerable limitation of this study was sampling, in terms of both procedure and size. While the convenience sampling utilized in this study facilitated the pilot process and allowed the study to mirror statewide practitioner trends (i.e., state-location and site-level), it lacked the statistical rigor of random sampling. Additionally, while the CKES participation sample size ($N = 117$) might be considered moderate to good, the administrator and school counselor perception samples sizes ($N = 24$ and $N = 40$, respectively) were both notably lower. Larger sampling of the perception groups would further validate initial findings while larger CKES participation sampling would facilitate additional statistical analyses.

Similarly, the cumulative collaborative endeavor itself was not without limitations. Most noticeably, the challenge of utilizing volunteer resources (e.g., state association leaders and members) while attempting to achieve outcomes determined by state-level policy makers proved formidable. This challenge is further elaborated momentarily after first addressing research recommendations.

Recommendations

Research

Larger sample sizes, as referenced in the limitations section, would specifically facilitate exploratory factor analysis of the CKES instrument as well as correlational analyses with both teacher and administrator versions of the instrument (i.e., TKES and LKES). An exploratory factor analysis of the CKES instrument would identify latent construct(s) and determine where individual items aligned with such construct(s). Such analysis might shed further light on some of the stronger inter-item correlations highlighted in the results section (e.g., items #1, #2, and #10). Additionally, exploratory factor analysis would yield a more complete picture of whether the CKES is measuring a single construct such as “school counselor efficacy,” or multiple constructs such as various domains of the ASCA National Model (2012).

Similar to other collaborative approaches to school counselor evaluation, created school counselor instruments have relied heavily upon pre-existing teacher and/or administrator instruments. These instruments often have political capital/momentum within the state facilitating school counseling leaders to advocate for role definition through customization of protocol items. Correlational analyses between the CKES and “original” teacher and administrator versions of the instrument would provide insight into the relationship between instruments and how much overlap may or may not be occurring. As previously mentioned in regards to exploratory factor analysis, such overlap may be quite pronounced as the result of unidimensional constructs (e.g., efficacy) or may be more minimal if instruments explicitly focus on aspects of role/position.

It may seem obvious that a primary recommendation is collaboration with the state department of education and state-level policy makers. Perhaps more instructive is to discuss the nature of such collaboration. The authors return to an ecological school counseling systems perspective (McMahon, Mason, Daluga-Guenther, & Ruiz, 2014) highlight the nature of collaboration via specific roles fulfilled by individual system agents (i.e., state department of education, state school counselor association, and university faculty). These roles include implementation, instrumentation, and awareness. The authors illustrate these roles by highlighting parallels between the current study and a similar study over twenty years ago.

Systemic Collaboration

During literature review for the current study the authors reviewed a paper presented to the American Educational Research Association (Anderson, 1994) outlining the development, piloting and implementation of a School Counselor Evaluation Program (SCEP) begun in 1989 within the same state as the current study. Though separated by over 20 years, the authors noticed numerous similarities between the two studies. Both studies illustrated systemic environments where a climate of accountability resulted in the state allocating millions of dollars towards evaluation programs and processes. Similarly, both studies used teacher and administrator instruments as templates, building/directing political momentum surrounding teacher evaluation towards school counseling. At first glance, such direct parallels may be disheartening to school counseling advocates as it would appear no progress towards effective school counselor evaluation was made within the macro-system over the

course of 20 years. However, differences between the two studies in regards to implementation, instrumentation, and awareness may suggest a more hopeful picture.

Implementation: Department of education collaboration. Despite member enthusiasm and strong volunteering, few state associations possess the resources to implement state-wide evaluation processes for school counselors. Thus an important component to successful school counselor evaluation is collaboration with the state department of education (DOE) where DOE resources are made available. These resources extend beyond finances to include communication, administrative authority, and relational capital. Additionally, DOE collaboration may provide critical framing for how evaluation data is intended to be utilized and reviewed. Using a dichotomous pass/fail grading scale, the SCEP was designed to be used as a tool to facilitate conversation between administration and school counselors as to how to direct professional growth activities (Anderson, 1994). Consequently, pilot study results indicated approximately 99% of all participating school counselors were performing at “satisfactory” level. While this statistic might seem encouraging, many state-level stakeholders found the data troubling as it did not provide as complete a picture as desired.

In contrast, the CKES evaluation was designed to provide a data picture aligned with the already approved teacher and administrator protocols. The same desire to stimulate professional growth conversations were a part of the CKES process, however resources geared towards this endeavor (e.g., descriptions of role and responsibilities, appropriate/inappropriate duties, examples of each rating level) were included as

supplementary to the CKES instrument itself. In this way the state association hoped to accomplish both goals of alignment with DOE data needs and professional advocacy.

Instrumentation: University Collaboration. In both the current study as well as the Anderson (1996) study, substantial research resources were dedicated towards instrument construction for teacher evaluation with relatively little to none provided for school counseling. Anderson (1996) shows the tenuous nature of such funding in that while school counseling initially received similar research support, when budget cuts became necessary smaller population programs were quickly eliminated to maintain larger programs (i.e., 2,000 school counselors versus 66,000 teachers). In the present study, DOE leadership (i.e., state superintendent) was supportive of the creation of a school counselor evaluation tool, but clearly articulated the lack of staff, financial monies, and research-support available. In both studies, the state school counseling association (SCA) took initiative to pursue instrument creation on their own.

SCA leadership and members provide crucial insight into the tasks, duties, expectations, and challenges facing practicing school counselors in the PK-12 arena. Such information is necessary for creating instrument items/statements that accurately reflect practitioner working environments. However, few SCAs have research staff and support services necessary for in-depth statistical analysis of created instruments. This highlights an important aspect of successful collaboration partnering university faculty can bring. University faculty can provide SCAs with staff, support, and technical assistance exploring the psychometric properties of created evaluation instruments. Where preliminary program evaluation analyses might suffice for district-level review, the continually increasing focus on accountability requires additional investigations

exploring instrument construction, validity, and reliability if SCAs are to effectively advocate at state and national levels. Even when state DOE resources are made available, university partnerships can augment those services and maintain continuity throughout fiscal fluctuations.

Awareness: School Counseling Association Collaboration. As highlighted in reviewing these paralleling studies, feedback loops perform a crucial function of ecological systems whether developing through intentional, structured activities or as spontaneous behaviors organically emerging from system members (McMahon, Mason, Daluga-Guenther, & Ruiz, 2014). Capitalizing on such feedback in order to accomplish healthy systemic development requires both awareness and memory. State school counseling associations (SCAs) can perform both of these roles thus fostering successful collaboration between all system stakeholders.

Systemic awareness might be most readily illustrated by the presence of SCA members/teams pursuing advocacy within state-level politics. SCAs are able to monitor multiple initiatives, proposals, and policies in ways which exceed dedicated SCA personnel. The resulting picture SCAs receive is systemically-framed or “scaffolded” as information is provided from the perspective of individual (i.e., SCA member) as well as from various subsystems (e.g., district, region, etc.). This affords SCAs the ability to craft responses/actions that carry the systemic “weight” of a larger system agent, while incorporating feedback from multiple members and levels within the system. Regarding school counselor evaluation, this means SCAs may be able to align with state-level initiatives (identified from individual members and sub-systems) long before receiving any official communication from state-level policy makers. In regards to school

counselor evaluation, individual SCA members may be able to encourage legislative representatives to support SCA initiatives without the presence of formally introduced bills. Similarly, in response to SCA calls for support, individual members may be able to communicate regional/district techniques and resources.

Building off of awareness, systemic memory might be considered the maintenance of a historical perspective of agents' experience within the system. Whether recent occurrence or long ago, such a perspective can be highly valuable in legislative arenas when political changes demand "new" directions departing from previous systemic initiatives regardless of their merit. Once again, SCAs afford a "scaffolded" or nested perspective as individual members retain and utilize systemic memories that intermingle and inform the SCA collective. For state associations espousing a policy governance model (Carver & Carver, 2006), this sort of nesting allows the SCA to construct, retain, and act on its own meso-level-agent memories. An example of systemic memory may be gleaned by returning again to review of the current study and Anderson (1994).

In the Anderson (1994) study, instrument preparation and development took approximately three years before piloting. Sadly, even with this development the purpose and function of the instrument did not align with policy-makers expectations or agendas. In the current study, instrument preparation took significantly less time and mirrored both teacher and administrator instruments in hopes of conveying information in the expected formats. Maintaining these memories (both individually and collectively) will help the SCA navigate continually changing state-level politics, momentum, and initiatives. Similarly, recognizing limited DOE resources, the SCA in the current study

acted quickly to volunteer SCA resources and personnel. Retaining this experience within SCA memory benefits future DOE collaboration not only in terms of logistics (e.g., instrument creation, distribution of protocols to pilot districts, state-wide communication) but also in fostering healthy dialog between agencies (e.g., points of contact made, networks established, example of “successful” collaboration to reference as collateral).

Conclusion

This study set out to create and pilot the (CKES) school counselor evaluation instrument. The project involved collaboration between the state Department of Education (DOE), the state School Counselor Association (SCA), and local university faculty. Results suggest that overall the CKES instrument functioned well and was perceived favorably by participating school counselors and administrators.

Specifically, the straight-forward logistics and practical focus of the CKES appeared to be the most valuable aspects of the instrument. Interestingly, administrators perceived the CKES even more favorably than school counselors. This garnering of administrator support is particularly encouraging considering the prevalence of administrator unfamiliarity with school counselor role, function, and training (Morris & Slaten, 2014).

The evaluation of school counselors presents a complex endeavor situated within multiple competing agendas. Creation and implementation of instruments such as the CKES depends upon healthy collaboration between system stakeholders (i.e., DOE, SCA, and university). Only when such collaboration is paired with a statistically sound instrument can meaningful gains in school counselor evaluation, accountability, and advocacy be achieved.

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