

# Connecting With Your Child's School Counselor for a Successful School Year

It's that time of year again – back to school. As students across the country enter the school halls with fresh notebooks, clean backpacks and a new attitude to do their best, it's time for parents to think about their back-to-school roles as well. One way to ensure your children have a successful school year is to make a connection with their school counseling department.

The school counselor's role is to act as the first line of contact for parents and students for assistance in academic, social or personal development. The professional school counselor is a certified/licensed educator trained in school counseling with unique qualifications and skills to address all students' academic, personal/social and career development needs.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) encourages parents to proactively communicate with their child's school counselor at least three times a year to best steer their child's success. "It's important for parents to establish and maintain regular communications with the school counselor to better understand their child's challenges and address any concerns that could impede success," said Carolyn Stone, Ed.D., president of the American School Counselor Association.

"Strong in-school counseling programs contribute to overall student success," added Rich Lapan, Ph.D., professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. "Regular communications between parents and counselors can help a child tremendously."

In an effort to help busy parents communicate more effectively with their child's school counselor, ASCA is offering five "Back-to-School" tips to improve parent-counselor dialogue:

**1. Understand the expertise and responsibilities of your child's school counselor.** School counselors make a measurable impact in every student's life, assisting with academic, career and personal/social development. Professional school counselors are trained in both educating and counseling, allowing them to function as a facilitator between parents, teachers and the student in matters concerning the student's goals, abilities and any areas needing improvement. School counselors provide services not only to students in need, but to all students.

**2. Meet or contact your child's school counselor at least three times per school year.** The beginning of a school year is an excellent opportunity to initiate contact with your child's school counselor and doing so can ensure your child's positive school experience. Find out who the counselor is and what his or her experience and background are. By communicating with one another at the beginning, middle and end of the school year, parents and counselors can have a definite impact on a child's success.

**3. Discuss your child's challenges and concerns with the school counselor.** As a parent, you know your child best. However, the school counselor can help you better understand your child as a student. It's important to encourage your child's expression of needs, hopes and frustrations. School counselors are trained to help your children.

**4. Learn about your child's school and social connections from the school counselor.** When you need information or assistance, your child's school counselor can help you get in touch with the appropriate school officials; learn about school policies on behavior, attendance and dress; know the school calendar of important dates; and stay connected with the school in many other ways. The school counselor can also help you locate resources in the community when you need them.

**5. Work with the school counselor to identify resources and find solutions to problems.** If your child is having a problem at school, it is important to work with your child's school counselor to find solutions. Discuss resources available within and outside of the school, and get information on

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how such programs can benefit your child. Your school counselor can be a valuable partner in your child's education and preparation for life beyond school.

By taking advantage of all the school counseling department has to offer, you can help your child start off on the right foot – and stay there – this school year.

Parents can go to [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org) to learn more about the various roles and services of school counselors and how to work with school counselors to help their children achieve success.

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