

## **Accountability System: “How Are Students Different As A Result Of The School Counseling Program?”**

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The accountability component is a critical aspect of the Iowa framework because it answers the question, “How are students different because of the school counseling program?” The only way to truly address that question is through the use of data. Accountability is rooted in data; in order for any school counseling program to be accountable, the program must be responsive to the data. Data allows us to address individual student successes and challenges as well as the successes or concerns of student subgroups; in addition, we can use data to look at the successes and challenges within our school buildings as well as within our K-12 systems and districts as-a-whole. As counselors disaggregate data, they are able to uncover equity and access issues and, as a result, design interventions to address those issues. Whether it is through standards-based classroom instruction or intentional guidance, these are the interventions that will ultimately assist us in closing the achievement gap for ALL identified students. By designing accountable school counseling programs, Iowa school counselors are continuously using data to determine program effectiveness and, ultimately – and most importantly – ensure success for all of our students.

As we use data to drive our decision-making and design our programs, Iowa school counselors must also ensure not only that program effectiveness is addressed, but that we also continuously self-evaluate. School Counselor performance is an important part of the accountability component within the Iowa framework. Like every other Iowa educator, Iowa school counselors must use the 8 Iowa Standards in the self-evaluation process; school districts and administrators must also ensure that the evaluation process for Iowa’s counselors holds us to the same high standards and performance expectations as every other educator within our state. We may assist administrators in designing performance evaluation tools that specifically address how counselors might reach those standards because it will be different than the route of the classroom educator or other special area teachers. However, it must be the Iowa standards which drive evaluation of Iowa School Counselors. By using those standards, we demonstrate that we understand the high stakes for our students – and that we are willing to do “whatever it takes” to help Iowa’s students to become college, career, and citizen ready.

So really, we are looking at two aspects of the accountability component. The first part of accountability is program effectiveness. By determining what data to collect and how to use it, designing interventions to address the challenges and gaps identified by the data, and measuring the effectiveness of those interventions, we are ensuring that our school counseling programs are accountable to the students, parents, and community members that we serve. The second part of our accountability component is school counselor performance. By using the Iowa teaching standards to assess our performance as counselors, we will ensure that our stakeholders and school communities are receiving the very best that we have to give.