

1 Introduction

Scenario 1

Sonia was delighted to be hired by Elm School District as its first elementary school counselor. Fresh from her graduate program, she was excited to implement all she had learned about comprehensive school counseling programs. She arrived at her school on Orientation Day to find she had no office or supplies, and no one, including her principal, knew why she was there. She spent the entire first quarter of the school year building relationships with faculty and staff and offering to hold groups for children on topics she gleaned from conversations with her colleagues.

By December, she felt she was making some headway to being accepted in her school by adults, and the students with whom she had interacted loved her and greeted her enthusiastically in the halls and cafeteria. However, she felt overwhelmed facing an uphill battle to gain access to students, fielding continually increasing noncounseling duties assigned by her principal and still having to "build" a program. She felt her principal was not listening, or did not believe anything Sonia said about the need for children to have the benefit of a school counseling curriculum. Sonia did not know how to get started and hoped her second year would be better.

Scenario 2

Sonia came to the Elm School District to be the first elementary counselor in the district fresh from her graduate program with an understanding of a research-backed, educational construct-based school counseling program. She approached her principal, Dr. Smith, with a folder she had prepared that included construct-based student standards, the research behind them and a plan for how she would implement her program in each grade. Dr. Smith was impressed by Sonia's enthusiasm about making a difference for all the children in the elementary school and the research behind her approach. Although unsure of the need for such a program, the principal gave Sonia a chance to prove herself. She introduced her to the faculty and staff with the directive to give her access to students for full class and small group instruction.

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Sonia spent the first quarter building relationships with her colleagues and helping them sort through some of the issues students were presenting by offering classroom or small group instruction on those topics. By the end of the second quarter, she had gained the trust of many teachers who offered her access to their students for classroom lessons. At the end of the school year, Sonia made a PowerPoint presentation to her principal and faculty demonstrating with data the impact she had made that year with students. Sonia's program was deemed a success, and she spent the next few years building a complete program and gaining the trust of even the most recalcitrant teachers.

Reflections

Having research to describe the potential of constructs on students' learning is a powerful tool counselors can use to convince administrators that the school counseling program deserves a chance. Backing the argument up with data demonstrating the positive impact on students should seal the deal. Sometimes enthusiasm and knowledge just aren't enough.



PURPOSE OF BOOK

Research provides data that can be used in decision-making processes related to school counseling programs and school counselor practice. It helps determine what works and does not work and suggests the ramifications of pursuing one path over another. The purpose of this book is to articulate a Construct-Based Approach (CBA) to school counseling that encompasses rigorous school counseling student standards, challenging learning opportunities delivered through a standards-based curriculum, and assessments that help determine student proficiency and achievement in relation to the counseling standards.

The CBA is anchored in more than 50 years of research related to student learning and development. Research was reviewed to identify educational constructs within the purview of school counseling that have the greatest potential for school counselors impacting student lives in positive ways.

The book began as a dialog about school counseling student standards and what research findings from education and the social sciences would identify as critical areas of student growth and development that could be effectively addressed by school counseling programs. This evolved into a closer examination of the processes involved in establishing research-based student standards. From this exploration emerged two powerful perspectives that can significantly impact the way school counseling programs are designed, delivered and evaluated: “construct-based” and “results-based.”

Construct-Based Perspective

Educational constructs focus on various aspects of human thinking and behavior that are critical to student development, achievement and success. Although there are many constructs that could be used, four have been selected for the foundation of a construct-based approach to school counseling: a) motivation, b) self-direction, c) self-knowledge and d) relationships.

These have been selected because researchers have demonstrated that they are critical areas in student development in which school counselors can have a significant impact and because they are strongly linked to learning and achievement. Focusing on these four constructs potentially enables school counselors to more fully support students' academic achievement, guide their preparation for future success through educational and career planning, and help them cope with barriers to their learning.

Results-Based Perspective

A results-based perspective clearly defines what students are expected to know and demonstrate as a consequence of the school counseling program. There are two primary types of student results: standards and competencies. Standard statements define what students should know and do by the time they graduate from high school. In addition, students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in achieving developmentally appropriate competencies along the K–12 learning continuum. Student progress toward and achievement of the competencies and standards are monitored and assessed. School counseling is a results-based program because its primary focus is on achieving results that make a difference in student lives.

A challenging curriculum is developed based on the constructs and results students are expected to achieve. A results-based approach contains core curriculum activities to be delivered to all students. Core curriculum provides three types of opportunities: a) opportunities to learn what is being taught, b) opportunities to apply what they are learning in authentic contexts and c) opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do as a result of their learning. The school counseling curriculum is the primary vehicle for delivering a standards-based program wherein all students strive to achieve the same standards of excellence and can be uniformly assessed in terms of their progress toward the standards.

Book + Tools

This book (*Achieving Excellence in School Counseling through Motivation, Self-Direction, Self-Knowledge and Relationships*) provides the research base and conceptual foundation for a CBA. The *CBA Toolkit* (hereafter Toolkit) provides a set of simple tools to help you design, deliver and evaluate your CBA program.

The role of school counselors is to help students develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and habits of mind that enable them to profit maximally from their instructional opportunities and experiences. This book uses well-researched constructs that have been demonstrated to play a significant role in student growth and development.

The premise of this book is that by focusing primarily on these four constructs to build a construct-based approach to school counseling programs, students will become better learners and higher achievers. This can be accomplished through school counselors helping students think about how they think, learn about how they learn, and consider how their thinking and behavior patterns influence and have consequences in their lives.

This effort to reframe the discussion about school counseling student standards and how to help students achieve meaningful results is a journey of exploration into possibility and potential. We invite you to share this journey with us.

HOW BOOK CHAPTERS ARE ORGANIZED

Each chapter consists of three parts. Part 1 begins with two scenarios that help establish actual situations in which the chapter content would be relevant. Part 2 contains the body of the chapter. Part 3 is a “Construction Zone,” which delineates what you can expect to learn and do by using the Toolkit tools associated with each chapter.

BOOK CHAPTER DESCRIPTIONS

Chapter 1 (“Introduction”) describes the book’s purpose and provides an overview of chapters and of the *CBA Toolkit*, a set of tools for designing, delivering and evaluating CBA programs.

Chapter 2 (“A Simple Language Set”) provides key terminology and a conceptual framework for discussing the role of research-based constructs in establishing school counseling student standards and competencies in K–12 school counseling programs. A simple language set for discussing construct, results and standards-based school counseling program is offered.

Chapter 3 (“Research-Based Constructs”) reviews the research regarding educational and social science constructs that are highly relevant to the school counselor’s role. Four constructs have been selected as the foundation of a CBA: motivation, self-direction, self-knowledge and relationships. Although there are other constructs or terms that could be used, it was concluded that these four represented the most significant potential for helping school counselors respond to students’ needs.

Chapter 4 (“Relevant Contexts for K–12 School Counseling Programs”) discusses the importance of “context” in developing standard and competency statements. Core contexts addressed include academic support, student planning (individual learning plans), college and career readiness, personal growth, and social interaction.

Chapter 5 (“Student Results: Standards and Competencies”) provides potential standard and competency statements for a CBA. Twelve standard statements are proposed, three statements for each of the four constructs. Sample competency statements aligned with the standards are also provided.

Chapter 6 (“Role of Curriculum in a CBA”) focuses on a rigorous school counseling curriculum that supports students becoming highly motivated and self-directed learners, who know about themselves and are engaged in meaningful relationships. Developing and delivering quality learning opportunities that enable students to achieve the standards are discussed.

Chapter 7 (“Assessing Student Proficiency and Achievement in a CBA”) describes the essential components of the student assessment process and how to determine student progress toward, and achievement of, the CBA student standards. Assessments embedded in curriculum activities and at end of level are described, and sample assessment instruments are provided. Suggestions on how to report data on student progress on report cards are also included.

Chapter 8 (“CBA Program Implementation: Focus on Planning”) describes a complete planning cycle for school counseling that includes goal setting and action planning. Four types of plans essential to a CBA are strategic plans, annual implementation plans, counselor-supervisor agreements and school counselors’ personal plans for achieving results during the school year.

Chapter 9 (“CBA Program Implementation: Focus on Delivery”) examines some key operation requirements for establishing an effective support system for the successful delivery of a CBA program: roles and accountabilities, policies and protocols, fluid communication, data management and professional development.

Chapter 10 (“CBA Program Implementation: Focus on Evaluation”) discusses central concepts in evaluating the efficacy and impact of a CBA on student achievement and school improvement.

Chapter 11 (“CBA’s Contribution to School Improvement Initiatives”) explores ways in which a CBA can a) contribute to national school counseling efforts (ASCA National Model, evidence-based school counseling practice), b) support the implementation of national initiatives for redefining knowledge and skill requirements (Common Core, Partnership for 21st Century Skills) and c) find significant common ground with school-based

intervention systems (Response to Intervention, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and Early-Warning Systems).

Chapter 12 (“Power and Potential”) describes the promise and benefits of a CBA to the future of school counseling and education reform.

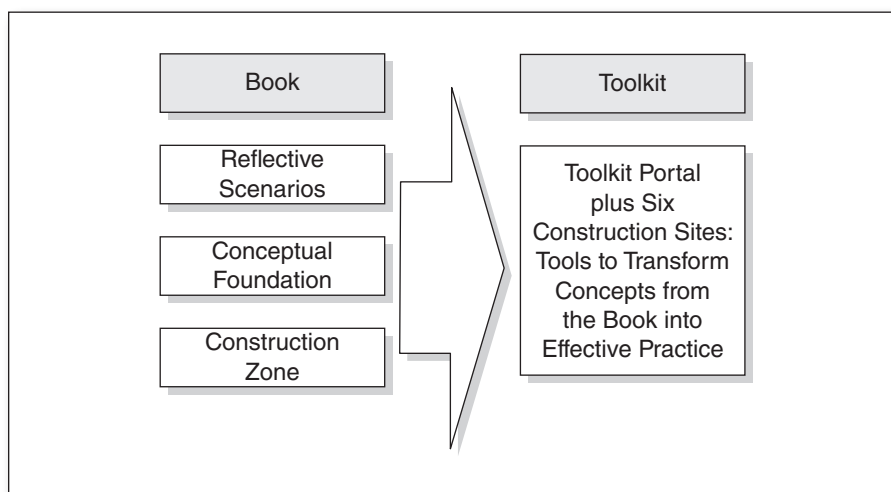
FROM CONCEPT TO PRACTICE

The CBA has both a conceptual foundation, which is presented in this book, and a set of tools (*CBA Toolkit*) for implementing a CBA. In order to provide the concepts and point to relevant tools, the chapters in the book are all organized in three main sections. Two scenarios begin the chapter to help contextualize the chapter’s content. These are followed by the main body of the chapter, which provides the conceptual underpinnings for a CBA. The third section is a Construction Zone at the end of each chapter that specifies what you can expect to learn and do by using the *CBA Toolkit*. Figure 1.1 shows what is provided in the book and the *CBA Toolkit*.

CBA TOOLKIT COMPONENTS

The *CBA Toolkit* helps school counselors design and implement a construct-based approach in their K–12 school counseling programs. It assists counselors in setting rigorous standards for student excellence, delivering and managing the CBA program, and evaluating its impact on student achievement and school improvement.

Figure 1.1 From Concept to Practice

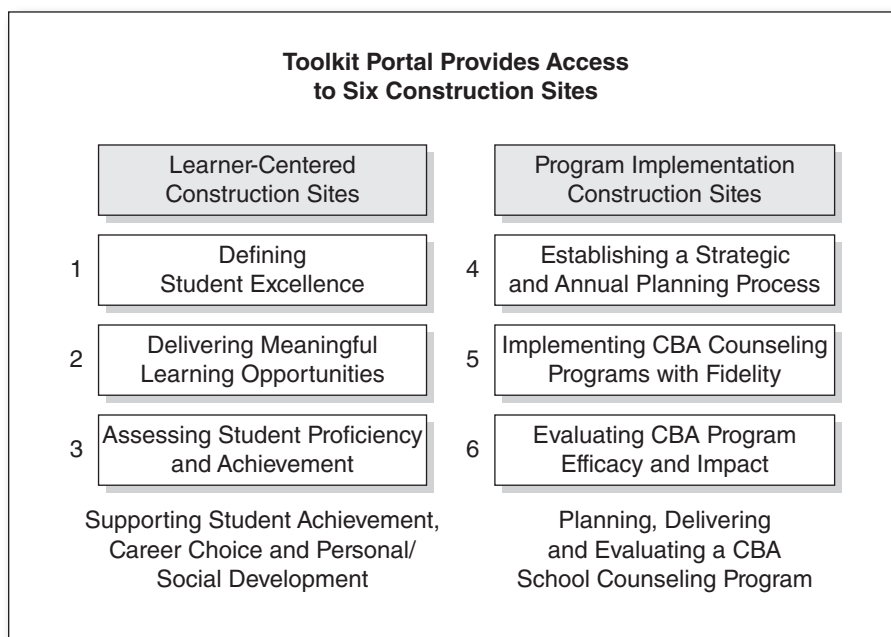


The *CBA Toolkit* is a companion to *Achieving Excellence in School Counseling through Motivation, Self-Direction, Self-Knowledge and Relationships*. The book provides a conceptual framework for the CBA that is grounded in research and demonstrates the power and potential of a CBA to school counseling programs. Whereas the book focuses on the conceptual framing of a CBA (student standards, curriculum, student assessments), the Toolkit focuses on the operational requirements for establishing and sustaining a CBA (program design, delivery and evaluation). Figure 1.2 displays the *CBA Toolkit* Portal and six Construction Sites.

Learner-Centered Construction Sites focus on building the content of a CBA program (knowledge and skill requirements, curriculum, assessments). The Program Implementation Construction Sites focus on designing, planning, implementing and evaluating the program.

The *CBA Toolkit* is a set of planning, delivery and evaluation tools capable of establishing sustainable processes (e.g., strategic, annual and personal planning processes) and producing products (e.g., Curriculum Framework for School Counseling describing the programmatic approach to supporting students). Likewise, it is recommended that an operational guide be produced (Administrative Handbook for School Counseling) that describes critical areas that must be addressed to successfully implement a CBA school counseling program.

Figure 1.2 *CBA Toolkit* Portal

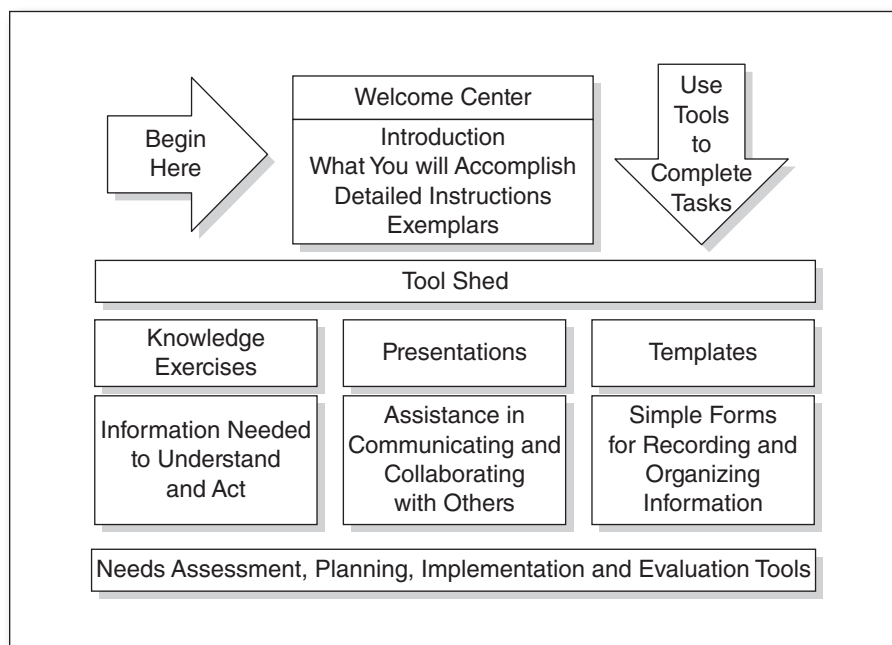


The *CBA Toolkit* can help school counselors introduce a CBA program in their schools and/or districts by helping them define student excellence, develop a challenging curriculum and assess student progress toward the school counseling student standards. The *CBA Toolkit* is a comprehensive implementation plan for districts wanting to implement a construct-based approach to school counseling. The CBA has great potential for helping students with their meta-cognitive skill development, learning how to reflect on their learning experiences and improving their thinking and behavioral processes.

CONSTRUCTION SITE COMPONENTS

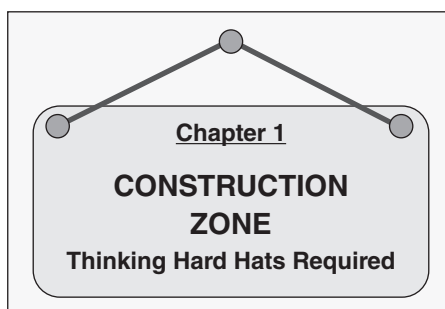
The *CBA Toolkit* consists of seven work sites (a Portal and six Construction Sites). These sites are the building blocks of a CBA. All seven sites are organized in the same way (see Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3 Construction Site Contents



The Toolkit provides the tools to implement the CBA program described in this book. The following chart shows which construction sites (CS) are used with each chapter.

Chapter	Chapter Title	Sites
1	“Introduction”	Portal
2	“A Simple Language Set”	Portal
3	“Research-Based Constructs”	CS1
4	“Relevant Contexts for K–12 School Counseling Programs”	CS1
5	“Student Results: Standards and Competencies”	CS1
6	“Role of Curriculum in a CBA”	CS2
7	“Assessing Student Proficiency and Achievement in a CBA”	CS3
8	“CBA Program Implementation: Focus on Planning”	CS4
9	“CBA Program Implementation: Focus on Delivery”	CS5
10	“CBA Program Implementation: Focus on Evaluation”	CS6
11	“CBA’s Contribution to School Improvement Initiatives”	CS4
12	“Power and Potential”	N/A



The tools located in the Portal section of the *CBA Toolkit* can be used in conjunction with Chapter 1. Some readers may wish to read the entire book first before starting on the Toolkit. Others may prefer to begin exploring the Toolkit from the very beginning. In that case, go to the *CBA Toolkit*, enter the Portal and follow the instructions provided at the Portal Welcome Center.

The Navigation Guide provides instructions for considering and promoting the key terms that define a CBA. Two presentations provide an overview of the Toolkit and a summary of the foundational principles of a CBA school counseling program.

The *CBA Toolkit* consists of seven work sites (a Portal and six Construction Sites). Access to the tools is through the Toolkit Portal, where you will learn about the purpose of the Toolkit, how it is organized and the results you can expect to accomplish by using the tools. All sites contain three types of tools:

- Knowledge exercises, which provide information you will need to understand and successfully complete critical tasks.
- Presentations to present a high-level overview of each site’s main focus and which can be used to communicate with others regarding a CBA.
- Templates that are broadly defined as tools requiring data and/or decision making (e.g., data input templates, checklists).

The intent of the *CBA Toolkit* is to help you develop a construct-based approach to school counseling for your district and integrate it into your counseling program. At the Toolkit Portal Welcome Center you will receive a Navigation Guide that shows how easy it is to navigate among all the sites and individual tools. The guide contains an annotated index of all tools in the Toolkit along with a brief description of each tool and the filenames of all the files.

CONNECTING CHAPTER 1 TO THE TOOLKIT PORTAL

What you can expect to learn and do:

- ✓ Conduct a needs assessment on the readiness of your school counseling program to implement a CBA.
- ✓ Understand the purpose of the *CBA Toolkit* and how it is organized.
- ✓ Describe how a CBA can increase the capacity of school counselors to make a difference in student lives.
- ✓ Describe the benefits of developing and integrating a CBA in your school counseling program.
- ✓ Develop an initial plan for completing all Toolkit activities.

Looking forward to working with you at the CBA Toolkit Portal!