

University of Nevada, Reno

**The Effectiveness of Innovative Counselor-led Academic Program (ICLAP) on
Student Academic Performance**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Counseling and Educational Psychology

by

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Abstract

This study evaluated whether Innovative Counselor-led Academic Program (ICLAP) could improve student academic performance. ICLAP was a classroom guidance curriculum designed by the researcher to address the gap in the literature for a school counselor-led classroom guidance curriculum that targeted academic performance. ICLAP consisted of five lessons that first identified specific behaviors related to academic performance at a specific school and then guided students through a process of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development. The curriculum was linked to thirteen ASCA student competencies (ASCA, 2005). The Leader-Detractor (L-D) scale (Carkhuff, 1968) was central to ICLAP as a tool for school counselors to teach and measure the learning of the skills. The research design was a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test comparison. Dependent variables included: grades, student self-assessment ratings on the L-D scale, teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale, and School Social Behavior Scale-II (Merrell, 2002) scores. Seventy-nine first year high school students participated in the five-week ICLAP curriculum and twenty-nine students participated in an active comparison group. The comparison group received an alternative curriculum focused on ASCA career competencies. For the intervention group, student self-assessed L-D ratings, teacher rated L-D scores, and SSBS-II scores improved at post-test. Grades did not improve. There were no changes measured in the comparison group for grades or SSBS-II scores. It was concluded that students increased their academic performance as a result of participation in ICLAP. While more research was warranted, it was suggested that ICLAP could be an important contribution for school counselors seeking to demonstrate their effectiveness to stakeholders.

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Introduction: Chapter One

Rationale

When high school students struggle in school and academically under-perform, it can be discouraging for them as well as for their families, teachers, and other educators in the school (Davidson, 2009). Often times in schools where low student academic performance is widespread, students are frustrated because the academic expectations are vague and often contradictory (Hastings & Bham, 2003). Teachers in those schools often have low levels of self-efficacy and feel like it is one against thirty, thirty-five...or more, and students are not engaged in their own learning process. When these conditions exist on a large scale, it can set the stage for high teacher turnover and long-term student under-achievement (Bandura, 1995; Bidell, 2010).

Students depend on adult educators to create and maintain a structured learning environment and the establishment of academic expectations (Zimmerman & Schunk, 1989). It is not possible to teach clear academic expectations, set academic goals for students, and assess academic performance when schools and teachers have not first defined minimum academic expectations. The combination of vague academic expectations with low student performance can result in negative and disruptive behaviors that can perpetuate instability in the classroom and inhibit learning.

The Continuum of School Expectations and Student Academic Performance

In the professional experience of the researcher, every school lies somewhere on a continuum of how their students are performing academically. High academic performance is achieved when students master the learning of curricular standards and skills through observable behavior and assessments. On one end of the continuum is a

high-achieving school that intentionally developed clear, simple, and attainable expectations for students (Barber & Schluterman, 2008). These academic expectations are discussed in classrooms regularly, posted on school walls, and communicated to families. Examples of minimum academic expectations can include behaviors related either directly or indirectly to academic performance and criteria such as: the rate of assignment completion, classroom participation, school and class attendance, bringing appropriate school supplies, and how students interact with others. Schools can choose from those criteria or others depending on the needs and goals of the school. For example, in a school that has a major problem with attendance, it would be important that one of the clearly defined expectations relate to showing up to class and school on time.

In schools where students are academically successful, there is a system in place that holds school members accountable to the minimum expectations. Students take pride when they engage in behaviors that exceed the minimum expectations and contribute extra. They receive recognition for going above and beyond minimum expectations. It is possible that students in this environment will strive to become leaders who exceed minimum expectations and take the next step of helping other students be more successful. The climate in a school with high academic performance motivates and encourages academic, personal, and social growth (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Day-Vines & Terriquez, 2008). Teachers, school counselors, and administrators in the school serve as role models who enforce expectations with care, consistency, and fairness. High scores on standardized tests, grades, and other measurements can be outcomes that may indicate high academic performance.

On the other end of the continuum are schools characterized by low student

academic achievement. The expectations in those schools are not clearly defined for students and it is difficult for students and teachers to know whether expectations are adequately met. Moreover, unlike the student leaders in the academically high-achieving schools, students may be more likely to detract other students from their learning potential (Stage & Quiroz, 1997). This detractor behavior can include any disruptive behavior in class that prevents other students from being actively engaged in learning.

Low academic performance can lead to a high student dropout rate and teacher turnover (Ayers, Dohrn, & Ayers, 2001). Excessive teacher turnover can contribute to the distrust and low confidence students place in their educational environment. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future estimated that the teacher dropout rate costs the nation over \$7 billion dollars a year (Carroll, 2007). This drains financial resources of school districts, diminishes teacher quality, and undermines efforts to increase student academic performance.

The Role of the School Counselor

School counselors can have an instrumental role in improving student academic performance, both indirectly and directly. When school counselors participate on committees that contribute to school-wide procedures and policies for students, they are in a position to indirectly change the culture of the school and promote positive academic performance. Specifically, school counselors can serve on committees that focus on behavioral interventions, discipline procedures, crisis management, attendance policy, and, of course, defining academic and behavioral expectations. The knowledge and specialized training of the school counselor can provide committees with a unique

perspective on the needs of students to promote academic well-being (Militello, Carey, Dimmitt, Lee & Schweid, 2009; Moyer, 2011).

Research on school attrition has indicated that when school counselors work directly with students, the student dropout rate can be reduced and academic performance improved (Wirth-Bond, Coyne, & Adams, 1991). According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), direct services should include: implementing classroom guidance curricula, running student groups, and working with high-need students on an individual basis. More students were academically successful and graduated when those methods of direct student contact were implemented successfully (Praport, 1993).

In order for school counselors to have an impact on student academic performance, it is important that they are provided the opportunity to incorporate the direct services outlined by ASCA. When school counselors spend their time on non-counseling related tasks, or if their caseloads are excessively large, their impact on student academic performance is diminished (Kuhl, 1998; Rye & Sparks, 1999). Examples of non-counselor-related tasks that do not fit into the role of the school counselor were defined by ASCA and included: coordinating standardized testing (receiving, counting and shipping large quantities of test booklets, answer sheets, and creating the testing schedule for students and staff), substituting for absent teachers (with little or no time to prepare meaningful guidance lessons), standing out on lunch and/or bus duties (and therefore denying the lunchtime as an opportunity for students to meet with school counselors in a confidential setting), data entry for registration, or creating the master course schedule (ASCA, 2005; Moyer, 2011). It is important that school

counselors play a role which directly impacts student performance rather than spending the majority of their time on clerical tasks unrelated to student performance.

Introduction of a National Model for School Counselors

The role and responsibilities of school counselors has been marked by inconsistency and non-counselor related responsibilities at many schools (Lieberman, 2004; Zalaquett, 2005). In an effort to address the issue of under-utilization of school counselors, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) published the comprehensive ASCA National Model for school counselors in 2003. The standards were revised and updated in 2005 (ASCA, 2005). This model included standards for how school counselors should spend their time and the responsibilities they should be given. In addition to those counselor standards, the National Model outlined competencies that students should learn as a result of the interventions facilitated by counselors. The competencies focused on three content areas: career exploration and awareness, personal/social well-being, and academic performance. All of this provided a framework for comprehensive school counseling programs and a template for how school counselors could best be utilized to have the most influence on student academic performance.

The ASCA counselor standards and accompanying student competencies that clarified, or in many cases redefined, the role of the school counselor were not met with immediate acceptance and excitement. The introduction of the ASCA National Model signaled a major paradigm shift for many schools across the country. The former paradigms of how teachers and school administrators related to and utilized school counselors, how families and the community perceived the role of school counselors, the

student-counselor relationship, and where administrators allocated non-counselor related tasks were all challenged (Moyer, 2011).

Administrators who may have relied on school counselors for administrative or clerical duties needed to find other personnel to fulfill those duties if the new ASCA National Model was adopted. This required other, already overwhelmed, staff to assume those duties or, alternatively, the hiring of additional staff. Neither option was typically viable under limited budgets. Thus, many administrators viewed the notion that school counselors should spend their time according to the national standards as unnecessary or unrealistic. Even some school counselors had become comfortable and competent in non-counselor related tasks and were resistant to the new set of ASCA standards (Dahir, Burnham & Stone, 2009).

In contrast, other school administrators and school counselors viewed the ASCA standards as a long overdue opportunity to improve student performance and enhance the learning experience at their school (Dahir, 2004). The schools that aligned with the ASCA National Model at the highest levels became known as Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) schools (ASCA, 2005). These RAMP schools created comprehensive school counseling programs that honed in on the academic, personal, social, and career needs of students.

Comprehensive school counseling programs that aligned with ASCA standards became models for schools and school districts around the country. School counselors in these schools delivered high quality, research-based individual counseling, group counseling, classroom guidance, and support services that were integral components to student academic performance (Sink & Stroh, 2003).

In accordance with the ASCA National Model, school counselors should play a leading role in the process of identifying and defining clear and specific academic expectations for students. They should be a school leader in supporting students to assess current levels of academic performance, set new performance goals, and develop academic plans to help them meet these goals (Bidell, 2010; Demanchick, Rangan, & Douthit, 2006).

The Problem

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) developed a set of national standards for school counselors and accompanying competencies for students to learn as part of the National Model. The value and potential impact of this development on students and the school counseling profession could not be understated; it had the potential for school counselors across the nation to transition away from non-counselor related tasks to responsibilities that had a direct impact on student performance.

In order to adopt the standards of the ASCA National Model with the highest level of professional integrity and likelihood of long-term success, school counselors needed to have research-based curricula that specifically targeted the standards. As to be discussed in chapter two, there were several curricular options for school counselors to align with career and personal/social student competencies. There was a gap in the literature for research-based curricula designed to target academic competencies and increase academic performance.

The absence of effective, research-based curricula options aimed to increase academic performance made it difficult for school counselors to reap the benefits of aligning with the ASCA National Model. These benefits included the ability to provide

evidence to stakeholders that school counselors could improve academic performance, the reduction of non-counselor related tasks, and an increase in the time spent providing direct services to students.

School Counselors were often left to their own devices to create lessons and curricula if they wanted to meet ASCA standards and deliver student competencies. However, it has been noted that even well-intentioned school counselors implemented disjointed or poorly designed classroom guidance lessons (Myrick, 1987). Moreover, studies on classroom guidance programs in the past have been criticized for low standards of methodological rigor (Baskin & Hess, 1980; Strein, 1988). The premise that thousands of school counselors should individually take the time to design and implement their own classroom guidance curricula was not a sustainable course of action for the profession.

A more viable long-term solution for school counselors to make the shift towards meeting national standards aimed to improve student academic performance was to choose curricula that have already been created and demonstrated to be effective. There was an increased demand for effective classroom guidance programs and research that measured how school counselors could impact student learning (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brown, 1999; Gysbers, 2003, Prout & Prout, 1998; Whiston, 2002; Whiston & Sexton, 1998). If the current study provided evidence that participation in ICLAP increased student academic performance, it would provide a major step forward in addressing the void in the literature and offer a much needed curriculum for school counselors to adopt.

Background and Development of ICLAP

The researcher was a counselor at the middle school, high school, and college levels. In those roles, teachers frequently requested an intervention for their particularly low-performing classes that had not responded to traditional teacher modifications and interventions. The researcher created several lessons and interventions to facilitate and increase academic performance in those classes. The ICLAP curriculum was a compilation of the content and lessons that were most effective in changing academic behavior according to anecdotal evidence and feedback from teachers.

Adult educators and parents often encouraged students to do better in school. What was often missing from that encouragement were clear parameters of what “better” meant and exactly what behaviors were needed to meet that expectation. The premise of ICLAP was that students generally wanted to be academically successful in school and that most students could improve their current level of performance. Based on years of anecdotal evidence, students were likely to improve when: academic expectations were clearly defined for them; they understood how to assess their current level of performance in regards to meeting those expectations; they set new performance goals that were achievable; and they created a plan with support of the school counselor that included very specific behaviors to reach those goals.

In the current study, an initial step prior to implementing ICLAP was for school counselors and teachers to identify and define four to five academic behaviors expected to meet minimum expectations. In the researcher’s experience, the process of helping teachers identify behaviors for students to become minimally academically successful was instrumental to success. The process ensured that teachers and students had a

common understanding of academic expectations. The next step in ICLAP was for school counselors to use those expectations as guidelines to teach five weekly lessons.

Thus, the lessons used the Leader-Detractor scale to teach the skills of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development (appendix A provides a detailed account of the activities used to teach those skills). As will be discussed in chapter two, those skills were identified as skills that academically successful students possessed and were long-term predictors of student academic performance (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994; Hattie, Biggs & Purdie, 1996; Scheel & Gonzalez, 2007; Wentzel, 1991; Luck & Webb, 2009). Additionally, self-assessment, goal setting, and program development were incorporated into ICLAP because these skills aligned with the ASCA academic and personal/social student competencies (ASCA, 2005).

The Leader-Detractor scale (L-D) (Carkhuff, 1968) was a tool frequently used by the author in classrooms to measure academic progress. There was compelling anecdotal feedback from teachers, students, and school counselors that the use of the scale was effective and simple to incorporate. Teachers contacted the researcher years after using the L-D scale for copies of the scale and other ICLAP materials to incorporate in future classes. Thus, the L-D scale became an integral component of ICLAP to teach the skills and measure changes in academic performance.

The scale derived from the work of social scientist Carkhuff who primarily used the scale as a rating tool for students in counselor education programs (Carkhuff, 1972; Carkhuff, 2003). Carkhuff operationally defined the following terms: Leader,

Contributor, Participant, Observer, and Detractor (Carkhuff, 1969). These were the same terms used in ICLAP.

Below is an explanation of the performance levels of the L-D scale and the numerical rating that corresponds to each level. At each level, an example of possible student behavior is provided. A student who exhibited the behaviors in the example would likely be rated at that level on the L-D scale. In the researcher's experience, when a teacher defined academic expectations prior to using the L-D scale, assignment completion was often selected as one of the minimum academic expectations to be rated. For illustrative purposes, the example behavior below is based on the expectation that each student arrive to class with their assignment completed.

On the middle of the L-D scale, and quantified by a rating of three, is the **participant** level. Behaviors of someone performing at this level would meet the minimum expectations. For instance, if the assignment required students to make a ten-minute presentation and write an accompanying paper of at least two pages, participant-level behaviors would meet those basic expectations exactly.

One step down from the participant, and quantified by a rating of four, is the **observer** level. Behaviors of someone performing at this level would do less than the minimum expectations. Student behaviors at the observer level could include presenting for only five minutes (instead of the ten expected) and/or not writing the paper.

Another step down, at the lowest level of performance on the L-D scale, is the **detractor** level. This level is quantified by a rating of five. Behaviors of someone at the detractor level would do less than the minimum expectations and detract others from meeting expectations. Student behaviors at the detractor level could include a

presentation of five minutes (instead of the ten expected), and/or not writing the paper, and also making jokes that distracted another student's presentation. Such detracting behaviors would interfere with classroom learning and hurt morale.

One level up from the participant, and quantified by a rating of two, is the **contributor**. Behaviors of someone at the contributor level would meet minimum expectations and contribute something extra. Student behaviors at this level would meet the expectations, including the ten-minute presentation and the two page paper. Additionally, that student would contribute more than expected such as inviting a guest speaker as part of their presentation.

Finally, a step above the contributor, and the highest level of performance on the L-D scale, is the **leader**. This step is quantified by a one. Behaviors of someone at the leader level would meet minimum expectations, contribute extra, and help someone else be successful. Student behaviors at the leader level could include completing the ten-minute presentation, writing more than a two-page paper, and helping a peer rehearse for that student's presentation.

When the researcher used the L-D as part of ICLAP in the past, it was explained to students that lower scores are better (i.e. a rating of number one is most desirable). Students would learn to self-assess their own behavior on the scale and teachers would rate students on the scale as well. The researcher would then guide the students through the process of setting a new goal. For example, if a student rated themselves initially at level four (detractor) in the class, their goal may be to perform at level 3 (participant) the following week. The next skill taught in ICLAP, program development, involved

creating a plan with very specific behaviors that the students could follow to reach that new goal.

In summary, ICLAP and the use of the L-D scale were developed in response to teachers who needed assistance with classes that were academically underperforming. The ICLAP curriculum focused on skills that were identified by ASCA in the national standards as essential for academic success. Prior to this study, ICLAP had a track record of positive teacher feedback that the guidance curriculum improved academic performance in even the lowest performing classes.

Significance of the Study

Increase Academic Performance: The Role of the School Counselor

It was important that school counselors provided data to demonstrate how they could improve student academic performance. When school counselors used data to demonstrate a direct link between their work and student improvement, it helped more students graduate from high school prepared for career and college. Moreover, when school counselors across the country maximized their training and skills, the profession of school counseling could continue to evolve in a positive direction.

The 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) held educators, including school counselors, accountable for taking an active role in closing the achievement gap (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Leading researchers and practitioners in the school counseling profession advocated for school counselors to play an instrumental role in this educational movement (Gysbers, 2004; Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Paisley & Hayes, 2003).

Most recently, assessments were introduced in schools to measure the learning of the Common Core State Standards. These Common Core Standards and assessments were designed to measure student college readiness in the areas of language arts and mathematics. While there was little or no input from school counselors in the creation of those standards, there was an obligation for school counselors to take a leading role in the implementation (Eagle, 2013). Either directly or indirectly, Common Core Standards and NCLB policies set the stage for school counselors to demonstrate how they could improve student academic performance.

Address the Gap in the Literature

ASCA introduced student competencies for school counselors to teach that were correlated with long-term academic success (ASCA, 2005). School counselors needed research based curricula available to them in order to meet the professional standards and demonstrate that students in schools were learning the ASCA student competencies. If ICLAP yielded positive results, school counselors across the country would have an easy-to-use, research based curriculum that aligned with thirteen of the ASCA student competencies. ICLAP would contribute to closing the gap in the literature for a curriculum aimed at increasing academic performance.

Reduction of Non-Counseling Related Tasks

When school counselors demonstrated the effectiveness of their interventions through data, school administrators were more inclined to safeguard the school counselor's time and remove non-counselor related duties (Luck & Webb, 2009). For school counselor programs advocating for the transition from a role consisting of non-counselor related tasks to one that adopts the ASCA national framework, ICLAP could

provide the leverage to make the transition more feasible. In schools that have already made the shift aligning with the ASCA National Model, incorporating ICLAP could strengthen that resolve and make the possibility of becoming a dignified Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) more attainable. If successful, ICLAP will be an essential driving force in advocacy efforts for school counselors to spend more time directly increasing student academic performance.

ICLAP as a Culturally Competent Program

In 2005, the high school dropout rate in the United States was 6% for Caucasian students, 10.4% for African American students and 22.4% for Hispanic/Latino students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Similarly, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported a gap in academic performance between Caucasian students and minority students. Asian American and Caucasian students scored nearly 10 points above average on the eighth grade reading test while the scores for African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American students were approximately 20 points below average (NCES, 2011).

Addressing the disparity of academic performance among students of different ethnicities aligned with ASCA's expectation that "school counselors promote student success by closing the existing achievement gap whenever found among students of color, poor students or underachieving students and their more advantaged peers" (ASCA, p.24). ICLAP was designed to be effective with diverse student populations.

A main premise of ICLAP was that all students do not automatically know and understand the expectations of the school system, how to behave positively in a classroom environment, or the behaviors needed to succeed academically. Addressing

those assumptions explicitly could be especially important for minority students whose primary language was not English. It could also be important for students whose parents may have attended schools outside the U.S. or had little or no formal education. Rather than simply telling students they should do better in school, ICLAP used the L-D scale to simplify expectations and performance in a way that could be easily understood.

The curriculum operationally defined expectations for students and helped them create action plans with small, sequential steps for improvement. While it may initially appear elementary, the notion of defining academic expectations of performance with a measurable straight forward tool like the L-D scale could be instrumental to ensure all students have equal opportunity for academic success.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the efficacy of ICLAP as a tool to improve student academic performance. ICLAP was developed to provide school counselors with an evidence-based curriculum that facilitated the process of defining behaviors related to academic success in their classroom. It assessed current levels of academic performance, set new academic performance goals, and developed plans to help them meet these goals. The ICLAP curriculum used classroom guidance lessons designed by the author that incorporated the L-D scale to teach the following ASCA student competencies: 1. self-assessment; 2. goal-setting; and 3. program development.

Main Research Question and Related Questions

There were four questions related to the main research question: “Can the Innovative Counselor-led Academic Program (ICLAP) positively impact student academic performance”? After participation in ICLAP:

1. Will student grades improve?
2. Will student self-assessment ratings on the L-D scale improve?
3. Will teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale improve?
4. Will student scores on the SSBS-II improve?

Definition of Terms

This section provides a list of terms frequently used in this study to examine ICLAP and the effect on academic performance:

- Contributor: This rating on the L-D scale refers to the level of performance below the leader and above the participant. A contributor does what is expected, plus extra.
- Classroom guidance curriculum: A delivery system consisting of lessons that school counselors can use to teach skills that align with ASCA student competencies. This delivery system involves the school counselor coordinating with a teacher(s) to provide guidance to a classroom of students.
- Detractor: This rating on the L-D scale refers to the lowest level of performance. A detractor does less than what is expected and detracts someone else.
- ICLAP: Innovative Counselor-led Academic Program refers to the curriculum designed by the author and used in treatment group for the current study.
- Leader: This rating on the L-D scale refers to the highest level of performance. A leader does what is expected, plus extra, and helps others be successful.
- Leader-Detractor Scale: The performance tool used in ICLAP by school counselors to help teachers and students assess and increase levels of academic performance.

- Observer: This rating on the L-D scale refers to the level of performance below participant and above detractor. An observer does less than what is expected.
- Participant: This rating on the L-D scale refers to the baseline level of performance on the L-D scale. The participant does only what is expected.
- Program development: This stage in ICLAP involved the process of simplifying, or operationalizing, the behaviors required in order to accomplish academic performance goals. The finished product involved observable, measurable, and sequential steps to a goal.
- Student academic performance: Student performance was defined by the following dependent variables: pre-post student scores on the SSBS-II, pre-post scores on the L-D scale and pre-post grades.

A Review of the Literature: Chapter Two

Overview

A primary objective of this study and literature review was to determine whether participation in Innovative Counselor-led Academic Program (ICLAP), a school counselor-led classroom guidance intervention, could increase student academic performance. In the relatively young field of school counseling, the notion that increasing student academic performance was in the scope of the school counselor job description was a fairly new concept. The majority of research related to school counseling interventions focused on personal, social, and career domains (Barna & Prott, 2011). Consequently, the amount of methodologically sound research that examined the effect of school counselor-led classroom guidance curricula on student academic performance was limited and relatively recent.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) brought student academic performance to the forefront, however, and there was an immediate need for research in this area. ASCA identified skills, known as student academic competencies, that school counselors were responsible for teaching in their interventions (ASCA, 2005). The student competencies established by ASCA were skills linked to long-term academic success (Sink, 2005). Eight of those academic skills, along with four ASCA-identified personal/social skills, were taught in ICLAP (Appendix B).

There were a variety of delivery models school counselors could choose from to teach ASCA competencies. These options included working with students individually, in small groups, and in a classroom setting. ICLAP utilized the classroom guidance delivery method in which a school counselor facilitated the instruction of a curriculum

designed around key competencies. Essentially, that entailed collaboration between school counselors and teachers in which the school counselor made scheduled visits into the classroom to deliver content. According to ASCA, a primary role of a school counselor was to provide a direct service, in classrooms, via a core curriculum. The core curriculum in this study, ICLAP, was developed by the author in accordance with ASCA parameters:

“... (A) curriculum consists of structured lessons designed to assist students attain the desired competencies and to provide all students with the knowledge, attitudes and skills appropriate for their developmental level. The school counseling core curriculum is delivered throughout the school’s overall curriculum and is systematically presented by school counselors in collaboration with other professional educators in K-12 classroom and group activities.” (ASCA, 2013)

It was the aspiration of this researcher that future school counselors would incorporate ICLAP as part of their school’s general curriculum to synergistically improve school-wide academic performance. As explained later in this chapter, school counselors needed more research-based classroom guidance curricula options in order to ensure that students had the knowledge and skills to be academically successful. While essential academic skills were identified and built into ASCA competencies, the missing component for school counselors was a solid classroom guidance curriculum to deliver those competencies. This chapter was designed to examine the most relevant research regarding school counselor-led classroom guidance and academic performance. Moreover, it describes how key findings from that relevant research were incorporated into ICLAP to ensure solid methodology.

The chapter consists of seven sections. The first section provides a brief history of the relationship between the school counseling profession and student academic

performance. The second section describes the original studies that investigated Student Success Skills (SSS), research most closely related to ICLAP that connected school counseling with academic performance. The third section reviews the scope of subsequent research surrounding the SSS curriculum. Section four offers a critical analysis of the gaps and shortcomings of the research and details implications for the current study in the areas of delivery method, participants, and design of ICLAP. The need for research that includes proximal dependent variables and how the L-D scale and SSBS-II could address that gap is examined in section five. The final two sections include a summary and conclusions from the literature review.

The Relationship between School Counseling and Academic Performance

Measuring the effect that school counselors can have on student academic performance was not always a priority for the profession; the original focus of pioneering school counselors was career guidance. Since the initial role of school counselors was to support students in the area of career development, academic and mental health student issues were not included in the scope of school counselor's duties (Doll & Cummings, 2008). As the profession evolved, school counseling services expanded; academic, social, and emotional issues were added to the scope of the school counselor role. This evolution proved to be a challenge for the profession and the effectiveness of school counseling programs have varied widely. Key challenges experienced by school counselors included ambiguous job descriptions, heavy amounts of non-counseling related responsibilities, and unreasonably large caseloads (Kuhl, 1998; Rye & Sparks, 1999). As a result, not all students received the benefits of school counseling services.

Often, the counselor's time and services were primarily allocated to students in crisis, while the general students received little or no attention (Schlossberg, 2001).

In the 1980's and 1990's, there was a new emphasis on creating a broad, comprehensive, and developmental approach that was school-wide and targeted all students (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Radd, 1998). This new approach included more planning of interventions that were directly or indirectly related to enhancing student academic performance. The objective of this broad and comprehensive new service was preventive in nature as opposed to reactive (Lukach, 1998). School counselor interventions were expanded to target not only the students failing academically, but also the students that exhibited early signs of declining performance. These behaviors included inconsistent attendance, tardiness, low grades, and decreased interest in school. Research during that time reflected the new perspective that school counseling was a support service designed to meet the mission of the school and increase general student performance (Hackney, 1990; Lee 1993, Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). An efficient way to address the needs of more students was to use classroom guidance to deliver content. New research on classroom guidance emerged with some key studies that demonstrated the effectiveness of that delivery model (Gerler & Anderson, 1986; Gerler, Drew, & Mohr, 1990; Gerler, Kinney, & Anderson, 1985; Guerrero, Walker, & Langlois, 1987).

Perhaps the most influential early research on classroom guidance involved a curriculum called *Succeeding in School* (Gerler, et al, 1990; Gerler et al, 1985; Lee, 1993). Gerler and Anderson (1986) first published positive results with *Succeeding in School* and that were later replicated (Lee, 1993). Dependent variables in the *Succeeding*

in School studies included pre-post scores on the Elementary Guidance Behavior Rating Scale (EGBRS) and self-ratings on the Attitude Toward School Instrument.

These early studies established important groundwork in connecting school counselor-led classroom guidance with student academic performance. They also left gaps for future research to address. For instance, there was no reliability and validity data available for the EGBRS or the Attitude Toward School Instrument. Also, even though comparison groups were used, those groups did not receive an alternative intervention or any attention from the school counselor. As indicated in the discussions of the studies, the possibility that attention from the school counselor alone accounted for positive outcomes in the treatment groups (i.e. the Hawthorne Effect) could not be eliminated (Gerler et al, 1985).

Leaders in the field continued to promote the role of the school counselor as instrumental partners who supported the mission of the school and facilitated student academic success (Johnson & Johnson, 1991; Myrick, 2003). Even so, the need for outcome-based research that targeted the general student population, and not a select high-need cohort group, persisted. At the start of the new millennium, there were indicators that the need for increased accountability for educators, including school counselors was on the rise, especially as related to demonstrating improvements in academic performance (Fairchild, 1993; Fairchild, 1994; and Otwell & Mullis 1997). When Whiston and Sexton conducted their review of the school counselor outcome research in 1998, they confirmed the need for more methodologically sound outcome studies. A follow-up study to that review revealed that evidence linking school counseling to student performance remained a challenge for the profession (Whiston,

2002). Not only was there a lack of methodologically sound and replicated research, the irony existed that, even though most of the research was conducted in schools, many of the programs were not led by school counselors. Prout & Prout (1998) reported in their meta-analysis that school psychologists and other mental health professionals facilitated many of the counseling programs.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the publication of the ASCA standards in 2003 solidified the need for school counselors to document how they impacted the academic lives of students. Those developments crystalized the need for educational programs implemented in schools to have "demonstrated records of success" through empirical research prior to being implemented (Mooney, Denny, & Gunter, 2004, p. 240). Leaders in the field responded with a renewed emphasis on the theoretical and practical applications of comprehensive, developmental, and outcome-based school counseling interventions (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000, 2002, 2006; Myrick, 2002). Specifically, there was a paradigm shift from a service-driven model to one that intentionally delivered developmentally appropriate programs with outcomes tied to academic measures (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Stone & Dahir, 2006). In 2005, student academic performance as an outcome measure of school counseling was identified as the number one issue faced by the school counseling profession (Dimmitt, Carey, McGannon, & Henningson, 2005).

In 2006, this author worked as a high school counselor and was interested in creating an alignment between ASCA standards and the school counseling program at that high school. As part of the process, a review of the literature was conducted to examine the relationship between school counselor-led classroom guidance curricula and

student academic performance. Leaders in the field, Brigman and Campbell, faculty members at Florida Atlantic University, broke new ground with a curriculum called Student Success Skills (SSS) (Brigman & Campbell, 2005; Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman & Campbell, 2001). In 2003, Brigman and Campbell published the first study using the SSS curriculum in Professional School Counseling (Brigman & Campbell, 2003). In the literature review, the SSS studies stood out as a landmark endeavor; it included the most solid methodology that linked school counselors with increased student academic performance.

Several years later, after the completion of coursework in the Ph.D. program, the author revisited that line of research. There was an anticipation of finding new research and different curriculum options for school counselors seeking to implement research-based, school counselor-led classroom guidance to increase student academic performance. While there was a myriad of new research, the primary curriculum used in the research was the same SSS Curriculum used in the Brigman and Campbell studies (Brigman & Campbell, 2005; Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman & Campbell, 2001). Since the initial SSS studies, that curriculum had been replicated and tested in a variety of settings and populations. The scope, applications and replication of positive results using the SSS curriculum were impressive. Subsequently, it remained the benchmark work linking the school counselor's ability to increase student performance.

At the time of this writing, approximately 9,000 school counselors and teachers had implemented classroom guidance and small group interventions using the SSS curriculum in the United States and other countries. Over a million students in the United States and thirteen other countries used the SSS model to improve academic

performance (Villares, et al., 2011). The National Panel for Evidence-Based School Counseling recognized the SSS curriculum for demonstrating evidence of effectiveness and replication (Carey, Dimmitt, Hatch, Lapan, & Whiston, 2008). A meta-analysis of five studies focusing on the SSS curriculum had an overall effect size of .41 for math and .17 for reading (Villares, Frain, Brigman, Webb & Peluso, 2010). Those effect sizes were considered to be well above average when compared to other educational interventions (Hill, Bloom, Black, and Lipsey, 2008).

A main focus of this literature review was research related to the SSS curriculum since it remained the benchmark research and was most closely related to the current study. While ICLAP was distinctly different from SSS in content, instruction, and procedures, both curricula taught three skills in common: self-assessment, goal setting, and program development. A premise of the author was that if school counselors increased academic performance as a result of those skills being taught in SSS, then ICLAP had the potential to increase student performance without the shortcomings associated with SSS.

There were several topics considered in selecting relevant literature for inclusion in the current study: (a) studies that examined the impact of self-assessment, goal-setting, and program development as part of a school counseling intervention on student academic performance, (b) studies that examined the effectiveness of different modes of delivering that skill-set to students (namely small group or classroom guidance), (c) studies that examined the effectiveness of the SSS curriculum in a variety of settings and with diverse student populations, and (d) studies that evaluated the effectiveness of Carkhuff's training concepts on student performance.

Presentation of studies that examined the impact of self-assessment, goal-setting, and program development as part of a school counseling intervention on academic performance was important since those were central to ICLAP. Studies that determined the effectiveness of different delivery methods were important since they provided support for the classroom guidance delivery method used in ICLAP. Research that examined the effectiveness of the SSS curriculum in a variety of settings and with unique student populations was included since it indicated that teaching self-assessment, goal setting, and program development was beneficial across schools and diverse student populations. Finally, studies that evaluated the effectiveness of the training concepts and L-D Scale developed by Carkhuff provided a research-based context for ICLAP and inclusion of the L-D Scale.

Examination of the Student Success Skills (SSS) Curriculum

Brigman and Campbell (2003) combined the delivery methods of school-counselor-led classroom guidance with small group work to implement SSS for students in fifth, sixth, eighth, and ninth grades. The goal was to demonstrate a positive impact on academic performance and student success behavior.

The SSS curriculum was designed to be led by school counselors (Brigman & Campbell, 2001). Brigman, Campbell, and Webb constructed an SSS manual after the success of the original study that detailed every component of the curriculum for interested school counselors (Brigman, Campbell & Webb, 2004). At the time of this writing, the curriculum and related resources were available for school counselors online at www.studentsuccessskills.com.

The content of the SSS curriculum was based on a plethora of research designed to determine specific cognitive, attitudes, and classroom climates that led to long-term student success (Hattie, Biggs & Purdie, 1996; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994). Based on that review of the literature, specific cognitive, social, and self-management skills were chosen as core components of the SSS curriculum. Cognitive skills included goal setting, progress monitoring, and memory. Social skills included interpersonal skills, problem solving, listening, and teamwork. Self-management skills included managing attention, motivation, and anger.

ICLAP was unique from SSS and honed in on cognitive skills to determine, with more specificity, the effect of teaching one specific skill-set on student performance. ICLAP focused on the skill-set of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development. This was an important departure from the SSS curriculum that encompassed a wide array of cognitive, social, and self-management skills. As discussed later in this chapter, it was unknown which of the myriad of skills taught in SSS were linked to an increase in academic performance.

Procedures in SSS research were generally robust and comprehensive. The classroom guidance component included eight weekly classroom visits from the school counselor. Each session was approximately forty-five minutes in length. Four booster classroom guidance sessions were added after the initial eight weeks. In addition to delivering SSS content in the classrooms, school counselors facilitated eight weekly group counseling sessions for a select group of students. Students in these small groups were selected from the classes that received the classroom guidance and were identified

as needing additional attention outside of the classroom guidance (Brigman & Campbell, 2005; Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman & Campbell, 2001).

In the original studies, the Norm Referenced Test (NRT) Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in reading and math were used to measure academic performance. The School Social Behavior Scales (SSBS) was used to collect pre-post data in the treatment groups. The current study on ICLAP utilized the latest edition of the SSBS, known as the SSBS-II.

The SSS studies had positive results as measured by the FCAT and the SSBS (Brigman & Campbell, 2005; Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman & Campbell, 2001). When the results of those studies were considered together, 82% of students had a significant improvement in math and 61% improved significantly in reading compared to their scores a year prior. On the SSBS-II, the average amount of improvement in student success behaviors was 22 percentile points from pre-post teacher ratings in the treatment groups (Villares, et al., 2011). There were no SSBS-II data collected from the comparison group. The authors concluded that the school-counselor-led classroom guidance and the SSS were central to the positive outcomes.

In addition to establishing benchmark research for linking a school counselor-led classroom guidance curriculum to improved academic performance, the relationships and partnerships behind the scenes of the SSS studies provided an exemplary model of collaboration between a school district and a university counselor education program. The impetus of the first SSS study was a result of a unique partnership between the school district's coordinator of school counseling and faculty at Florida Atlantic University to pursue a grant. The mission of the collaboration and the grant application

was to demonstrate the effectiveness of school counselors on academic achievement and student behavior in local schools.

The collaboration between the school counseling coordinator and the university faculty began after the coordinator requested funds from the school board to hire clerical assistants in the schools (Brigman & Campbell, 2005; Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman & Campbell, 2001). The goal of hiring these clerical assistants was to relieve the school counselors from non-counselor related responsibilities. The school board, as a pre-condition to approving the additional funding and clerical assistance for the school counselors, requested data that showed school counseling services positively impacted student academic performance.

Confronted with a gap in the research on school counseling and academic performance, and unable to provide the required data to the school board, the school counseling coordinator collaborated with Brigman and Campbell to conduct original research. Ultimately, their research using the SSS curriculum provided the data needed to fund new clerical assistant positions. The inability of the school counselor coordinator to provide data to the school board prior to the SSS research underscored the gap in the literature that existed in 2003 and, based on the author's literature review, still existed in 2015.

A Review of Subsequent Research on the SSS Curriculum

The scope and influence of a study can either be magnified or diminished by subsequent related research. In the case of the SSS curriculum, numerous studies have promulgated the value of that school counselor-led intervention. After the original study by Brigman and Campbell (2003), those same authors replicated their results in 2005

(Brigman & Campbell, 2005). In 2007, Brigman partnered with other researchers and replicated positive results using similar populations and methodology (Brigman & Webb, 2007). In all of those studies, math and reading scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) for students who participated in the SSS program were significantly higher than scores of inactive comparison groups. SSBS-II scores also increased in the treatment groups (control group data was not collected).

Lemberger and Clemens (2012) adopted the SSS curriculum and used only the small group delivery model, without the classroom guidance component. The goal was to determine the relationship between the small group delivery of the SSS curriculum on feelings of connectedness and self-regulatory constructs using a group of inner-city African American elementary students. This study was significant because it did not rely on standardized test scores to measure change in academic performance, but rather the hypothesized intermediary benefits of connectedness and self-regulation related to academic performance (Lemberger & Clemens, 2012).

The dependent variables in the Lemberger and Clemens study (2012) were proximal measures, not distal measures such as grades or standardized test scores. To measure student-reported connectedness and metacognitive change, the researchers chose the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (CASSS), the Junior Meta-Cognition Awareness Inventory (Jr. MAI), and the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF). Those instruments were designed to measure specific changes in behaviors and the learning of skills taught in the small groups. While not indicated in the study, those measurements focused on student skills and knowledge very similar to the competencies established by ASCA (ASCA, 2005). Since the specific skills and

behaviors in the SSS curriculum were demonstrated in the research to produce long-term academic performance (Hattie, Biggs & Purdie, 1996; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Brigman & Campbell, 2003), it was postulated that positive results on those instruments would likely lead to an increase in student academic performance. When compared to control groups that received no intervention, students in the treatment group felt more supported from their school $F(1,98)=4.15, p=.04$) and had increased their metacognitive skills $F(1,98)=23.63, \geq .01$). The use of proximal instruments and positive findings provided support for the proximal instruments used in ICLAP (SSBS-II and L-D Scale) to measure student learning of skills tied to academic performance.

Additionally, the Lemberger and Clemens (2012) study was important since it provided evidence of the versatility of the SSS curriculum with a different student population (African American, inner-city, low-achieving students) than the participants chosen based on low standardized test scores in other SSS studies. For the purposes of the current study, those results provided support for the notion that the skills of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development taught in ICLAP were beneficial for diverse socioeconomic populations.

Two limitations of the Lemberger and Clemens (2012) study were noted by the author. First, graduate counseling interns, not certified school counselors, led the curriculum to the small groups. This is a limitation since it is unknown if results would have differed if certified school counselors were used. ICLAP was led by nationally certified school counselors to reduce the possibility that the skill level of the personnel facilitating the curriculum was a confounding variable.

Another limitation in the Lemberger and Clemens (2012) study was the decision to use only the lowest achieving students within an already specific population (African American and inner-city) instead of students with a wide breadth of academic ability. Based on the author's professional experience in schools, the lowest achieving students tended to receive a larger percentage of school services than the general student population. Thus, the possibility that other interventions in the school, also aimed at those students, could have impacted the results could not be dismissed. The current study aimed to include students with a wide variety of skill levels and be more representative of the general student population. While that study had positive results delivering the SSS curriculum via small groups, an important question was whether only using classroom guidance delivery (without the small groups) would yield positive results. ICLAP only used classroom guidance in order to maximize efficiency and to help answer that question.

One study supported the possibility that student academic performance could be increased by classroom guidance alone (Leon, Villares, Brigman, Webb & Peluso, 2011). The research provided support for the notion that classroom guidance, without supplemental small group work, may be equally effective and more efficient. The study translated the SSS curriculum into Spanish. Spanish-speaking students in grades four and five were assigned to participate in eight weekly, forty-five minute classroom guidance lessons. The students were not chosen randomly, but were selected based on their enrollment in English for Language Learners (ELL) courses and student response regarding their language spoken at home. Bilingual school counselors led the classroom guidance lessons. Scores increased for the treatment group on the FCAT with an effect

size (ES) of .37. The results were compared to a control group of similar student demographics that received no intervention.

The above research supported the importance of teaching the skills of self-assessment, goal-setting, and program development incorporated in ICLAP and, in combination with the Lemberger and Clemens (2012) study, illustrated that student academic growth across cultural lines was promising. Furthermore, it addressed the question raised by Lemberger and Clemens (2012) as to the effectiveness of relying solely on classroom guidance as the method of delivery. Unfortunately, it also continued a trend set by the original SSS studies of using a control group that was unaware of the study and received no attention. Thus, in each of the studies examining the SSS curriculum, the Hawthorne Effect could not be eliminated. The study also did not attempt to measure the learning of the specific skills taught in the SSS curriculum, but relied solely on standardized test scores, a distal measurement.

Another study using the SSS curriculum focused on elementary students (Luck & Webb, 2009). Luck, a school counselor in Florida, was one of the school counselors who received training and delivered the SSS curriculum in the original study (Brigman & Campbell, 2003). The study added value to the current study since it continued the trend of examining the effect of the school counselors teaching the skill-set of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development to unique student populations. Prior to this study, with the exception of the Lemberger and Clemens (2012), the majority of students exposed to the SSS curriculum were middle school and high school-aged students. In this case, the versatility and usefulness of the skills were applied to elementary-aged students. The authors referred to charts to demonstrate that the mean FCAT scores in

reading and math were higher in the treatment groups than the district average, although no statistics were provided.

Villares, Frain, Brigman, Webb, and Peluso (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of the research that examined the connection between school counselors and student academic achievement as measured by standardized test scores. The research selected in that meta-analysis included the major studies on the SSS curriculum reviewed in this chapter, with the exception of Luck & Webb (2009) (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman & Webb, 2007; Cambell & Brigman, 2005; Leon, Villares, Brigman, Webb, & Peluso, 2011, Webb et al., 2005). Cumulatively, the meta-analysis involved 1,279 students in grades 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9; 50 school counselors; and 39 schools. Standardized math and reading scores were used as dependent variables in each of those studies. The overall effect size for math was .41 and .17 for reading.

This meta-analysis was important to include in the review of the literature for three reasons. First, it presented evidence that school counseling interventions designed to increase student academic achievement were effective. Secondly, it highlighted the promising results associated with school counselors teaching a curriculum that included the core skills found in ICLAP: self-assessment, goal-setting, and program development. Finally, it added support that studies pertaining to the SSS curriculum were the leading and most influential research in this area at the time of this writing.

It was important to note that in the quest for research linking a school counselor-led intervention to student academic performance, the researchers of the meta-analysis considered only one study that used a curriculum other than SSS (Villares et al., 2012). The study was conducted by Carns and Carns (1991) and utilized classroom guidance to

deliver an original curriculum developed by those researchers. It was considered, but not selected in the meta-analysis because it did not utilize a comparison group, a pre-requisite of the selection criteria.

The Carns and Carns (1991) study, however, was presented in this literature review for several reasons. First, it was the pioneer study involving a partnership between school counselors and a university counselor training program that examined the link between school counselor-led classroom guidance and academic achievement. A. Carns was a high school counselor and M. Carns was an assistant professor at Southwest Texas State University. Secondly, like the SSS curriculum, the content of the classroom guidance curriculum focused on cognitive and metacognitive skills with the goals of increasing self-efficacy, awareness of metacognitive skills, and learning strategies (Carns & Carns, 1991).

Even though the effect size was not provided, it was reported that all student post-test scores were higher than the pre-test scores on the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). While not at the same caliber of methodological rigor as the SSS studies reviewed in this chapter, there was an important distinction in regards to participant selection. The students in the Carns & Carns (1991) study were not pre-screened; rather they were students who were scheduled into that particular classroom as a result of school-wide registration and scheduling procedures. This was the same selection procedure used in the current study. There were no data to indicate that this group of students was representative of the general student population. However, it was theoretically more generalizable than the student groups in the SSS studies that screened out average and high achieving students by only using low-achieving students.

It should also be noted that the classroom guidance curriculum used in the Carns and Carns study (1991) was implemented by one of those authors. A potential conflict of interest exists when the primary researcher is also the school counselor facilitating the classroom guidance. The current study avoids this potential conflict of interest by using school counselors other than the researcher to implement ICLAP. The decision to use school counselors other than the authors of a study was a procedural precedent set by Brigman & Campbell (2003) that future SSS research adopted.

In the current study, ICLAP was administered to students with a variety of ability levels and this represented a departure from other research in the field. The SSS studies randomly selected students from a group that was not representative of the general population. Only students who performed at or below average on standardized tests (i.e. the lowest achieving students) were chosen. The Carns & Carns (1991) study was the only study in this area to suggest that students of all levels should receive and could benefit from school counselor-led classroom guidance.

Implications of the Research for ICLAP

An examination of the benchmark research in the field was the initial step for this review. The purpose was to gain a solid understanding of how researchers implemented school counselor-led curricula that demonstrated marked improvement in student academic performance. Next, a critical analysis of what worked well and what areas could be improved was required. The purpose of this section was to provide that critical analysis and explain how information garnered from that analysis was incorporated into the design of ICLAP. The analysis examined all components of research and emphasized the following: choice of delivery method for the curriculum, selection of participants, and

the design of curriculum. Implications related to dependent variables will be reviewed in section five.

Delivery Method

The Lemberger and Clemens (2012) and Leon et al (2011) studies were significant because only one delivery method was used to implement the SSS curriculum and had positive results. In addition to the benefit of isolating and determining the effects of a single delivery method, the reliance of a single method decreased disruption to traditional school curriculum time. Based on the ten years of experience as middle and high school counselor, the author recognized that traditional curriculum time was highly safeguarded by teachers and school administration. For a school counselor to effectively implement a school counseling curriculum while minimizing the impact on the traditional school day was in the best interest of all stakeholders.

ICLAP was strategically designed to use only one delivery method, classroom guidance, to efficiently reach many students and minimally disrupt traditional curriculum time. A major shortcoming of the SSS curriculum is that the classroom guidance and small group model required a large amount of time and labor from everyone involved. If school counselors could increase student academic performance using only the classroom guidance delivery option in ICLAP, it would be less taxing on school counselors, teachers, parents, and school administration.

In a study that examined the effectiveness of school counseling programs, Sink and Stroh (2003) endorsed the use of classroom guidance as a single delivery model to teach students how to succeed in school. ICLAP adhered to the premise that classroom guidance could be an effective and efficient method of teaching ASCA student

competencies (ASCA, 2005). If ICLAP yielded positive results by only using one model of delivery, it could become an attractive choice for school counselors that sought an efficient and effective curriculum (Lemberger & Clemens, 2012; Carns & Carns, 1991 & Leon et al, 2011). Subsequently, teachers would be more likely to invite school counselors into their classrooms because the value of traditional curriculum time was respected.

Participants

The participants in the original SSS studies consisted of students from grades five through nine that scored in the 25th and 50th percentile on the FCAT (Brigman & Campbell, 2005; Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman & Campbell, 2001). This specific population was targeted since those authors considered them to be in a “gray” area of student ability that were perceived to receive a low amount of services compared to students who scored below or above those percentiles.

While the intention may have been to focus on students who were perceived to need the most support, the choice to use students of average or lower than average test scores could have created additional confounding variables. Perhaps that student population was more primed to increase test scores than their higher-scoring peers who were already performing at or near their potential. If that were the case, the positive results may not have been transferable to the general population. ICLAP did not target a specific group, but rather aimed to include students from a wide variety of abilities in an effort to more closely represent the general student population. The goal of this inclusion was to determine if the curriculum was effective across various ability levels and thus more generalizable to the general student population. Also, the possibility existed that

students in the study with high skill levels would provide modeling and encouragement for students at lower skill levels. The choice to select students from the general student population aligned with ASCA recommendations that all students have access to school counseling services (<http://schoolcounselor.org/parents-public>).

The benchmark research on the SSS curriculum (Brigman & Campbell, 2005; Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman & Campbell, 2001) collected pre-post test data from comparison groups as recommended by the literature (Whiston, 2002). The comparison groups were matched for ethnicity, geographic proximity, and socioeconomic data. However, the comparison groups did not receive any intervention or attention from school counselors. Thus, the Hawthorne Effect could not be dismissed and may have impacted the results. The Report of the National Panel for Evidence-based School Counseling Panel Report made a similar observation and noted that the SSS studies:

“...used untreated control groups, meaning that they did not include active comparison groups with alternatives treatments. As a result, it is impossible to determine the potential impact of attention or a placebo effect on the outcome measures.” (Carey et al., p.9, 2008).

The current study addressed the methodological criticism above and used an active comparison group. The comparison group received an equal number of visits and time from the school counselor and also participated in classroom guidance lessons. The content of those lessons aligned with ASCA student career competencies, as opposed to the academic competencies of ICLAP taught in the treatment group (see Appendix E). In accordance to recommendations on research in this area (Carey et al., 2008; Brigman & Campbell, 2003), the current study included pre-post scores on the SSBS-II for both the treatment and comparison group.

Curriculum

The skills taught in SSS were based on research that sought to identify skills that were essential to long-term student academic success in school; skills that distinguished students who were successful from those who struggled and failed (Hattie, Biggs, & Purdie, 1996; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). The SSS curriculum and ICLAP were both founded upon research related to how students learned best (Wang et al., 1994), on the most successful educational interventions on learning (Hattie et al., 1996), and on instructional practices that had the most impact on learning (Hattie et al., 1996). While that supporting research for ICLAP was shared by the SSS curriculum, there were several important distinctions between the curricula that addressed gaps in the research.

One important distinction in curriculum content between SSS and ICLAP was that the latter focused on one set of related skills (self-assessment, goal-setting, and program development) as opposed to a wide spectrum of academic, personal, and social skills. By separating and focusing on these cognitive skills, ICLAP aimed to more accurately assess the value of these specific skills. While students had been shown to benefit from the SSS curriculum, based on the author's experience coordinating school counselor programs, it was unlikely that average school counselors could practically implement a curriculum as labor and time intensive as SSS; it required large amounts teacher curriculum time in order to implement and covered so many areas. School counselors needed to know which specific skills increased academic performance and be able to teach them in a way that valued traditional curriculum time.

Three additional major distinctions exist between SSS and ICLAP: classroom guidance was the sole method of delivery; the curriculum followed training guidelines from Carkhuff; and the L-D scale was used to teach and measure the learning of those skills. In contrast, most research on SSS relied on a combination of classroom guidance and small group work; utilized instructional components of an instructional model based on Ask, Tell, Show, Do Feedback method; and relied on standardized test scores to measure student academic achievement. (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Wang et al., 2004).

The content of ICLAP was unique in that it centered on what Carkhuff called technology. He used this term to explain his unique training sequence of first operationally defining complex terms, then setting goals that involved a step-by-step, systematic process to measure progress (Baumgarten & Roffers, 2003). In alignment with Carkhuff's concept of technology, ICLAP involved the self-assessment of students' current knowledge and skill levels, helped them set new performance goals, programmed learning activities, and monitored their progress on the L-D scale (Baumgarten & Roffers, 2003).

An increase in pre-post scores on the SSBS-II and/or the L-D scale would indicate increased student learning of those skills; skills that aligned with ASCA competencies and were linked to long-term student academic success. In ICLAP, students were given a systematic, step-by-step process that operationalized, or defined in measurable steps, how to meet and exceed academic expectations and therefore increase academic performance. The L-D scale was used consistently throughout the curriculum. It was taught to the students as a tool for how to define academic expectations, set new performance goals, and was used by the students and teachers to measure their progress in the class. A

further examination of the L-D scale and its role in ICLAP is provided in the following section.

Examination of Dependent Variables

A gap in the literature existed where proximal measures were used to study the impact of school counselor-led classroom guidance interventions on student academic performance. ASCA identified skills that students needed to be successful in school and labeled them student competencies (ASCA, 2005). Several of these ASCA student competencies were learning outcomes in ICLAP that focused on cognitive skills (see Appendix B). The SSBS-II and the L-D scale were proximal instruments intended to measure the learning of these student competencies. The author believed it was imperative that school counselors embraced these student competencies and designed research that measured the learning of them. There was a heavy reliance on distal measures in nearly all the related research prior to the current study. The most common distal measure was scores on standardized test. The author anticipated that if the current study had positive results it could encourage a shift in future research to include at least both proximal and distal measures.

A 2007 review of school counselor associations and web sites of departments of education in the United States concluded there were little or no specific professional development to support the implementation of the ASCA National Model and student competencies (ASCA, 2007). The author suspected that the trend in the research of relying on distal measures was a leading factor behind the lack of enthusiasm exhibited by school counselor programs to adopt the ASCA standards and student competencies. Unlike distal measures such as standardized test scores, there was not an established

precedent of using ASCA student competencies as dependent variables in the literature. If there were more quality research that used these competencies as dependent measures, the author believed it could lead to: an increase in the number of school counseling programs that adopted the ASCA standards; an increased likelihood that ASCA student competencies were incorporated into school counselor interventions; and an expansion of research that used ASCA student competencies to measure student academic achievement.

There were additional reasons for the lack of school counselor programs that embraced ASCA standards and competencies. Those included a lack of available counselor training of the standards, low self-efficacy among school counselors to do so, and the continued lack of consistency regarding the role of the school counselor position (ASCA, 2007; Dahir, 2004, & Dahir et al, 2009). To further complicate the matter was a perception on the part of some school counselors that learning and teaching a new set of competencies was simply more work on top of an already overwhelming workload. Many school counselors indicated that they were too overwhelmed by crisis intervention, administrative directives, and non-counseling duties to adopt ASCA standards (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009; Chandler, Burnham, & Dahir, 2008). If the current study and ICLAP had positive results, it could become a simple model for school counselors interested in aligning their school counseling program with the ASCA national standards and a rationale for releasing them from non-counselor duties.

Distal & Proximal Measures

This section is intended to explain, in the context of the current literature review, the value of both distal and proximal measurements in the current study and the need for more proximal outcomes in future research. The author agreed with leading researchers in the field that it was “critical for school counselors to show that what they do makes a difference” (Villares et al, 2012, p.6). Arguably, the optimal way to measure that difference was through the demonstrated student learning of the ASCA student competencies (Sink, 2005). Higher scores on standardized tests, while they could have been an indirect result of school counselor efforts, were not sufficient in themselves to show learning of the skills.

When schools implemented school-wide changes aimed at increasing student academic performance, the specific impact of school counseling interventions risked becoming hidden and vague. This can create a situation in contradiction to the intended goal of promoting the unique impact of school counseling interventions. The current study used SSBS-II ratings and L-D scores to hone in on the skills learned as a direct result of ICLAP; the goal was to quantify the quality and amount of student behaviors that demonstrated the learning and use of the skills taught. While grades were also included in this study as a distal measure, they were supplementary to the main goal of determining whether students were learning ASCA competencies after they participated in ICLAP.

The author believed that the choice of dependent variables was a major area of concern in the most prominent research related to academic success (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman et al., 2007; Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Webb et al., 2005;

Lemberger & Clemens, 2012; Leon et al, 2011; Luck & Webb, 2009). Specifically, those studies relied on standardized scores from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). In nearly all of the studies, student reading and math scores on the FCAT were the only pre and post data collected from both the treatment and control groups. The primary drawback on relying on those scores alone was that they did not measure the specific impact of the guidance curriculum, but rather served as a general measure of student performance. As a distal measure, standardized test scores reflected the myriad of factors encompassed in a school environment implemented to increase standardized test scores. Those variables can include tutoring, extra practice, faculty and staff turnover, and curricular modifications (Webb et al., 2005).

Another limitation of the reliance on FCAT scores as the main dependent variable was that replication of results was not possible outside of the state of Florida. The SSS studies were conducted in Florida and the results might not have been generalizable to students across the country since only students in Florida took the FCAT (Villares, 2012). The dependent variables in the current study did not have known geographic limitations and had the potential to be used by school counselors in any location.

The timing of the data collection for the FCAT raises other questions about this distal dependent variable. Since the FCAT was only administered to students on an annual basis, when a study reported a change in FCAT scores, it measured a change over the course of an entire year. This timeframe of twelve months was well outside the timeframe of the eight weeks used to implement the SSS curriculum. The possibility that the results of the FCAT were influenced by any number of educational variables in the yearly academic lives of students could not be eliminated. Moreover, the social,

emotional, academic, and physiological maturation of the students that likely occurred over that year could have impacted the data. In summary, while the SSS intervention may have influenced an increase of FCAT scores, the possibility that scores were also impacted by other services offered to students that year, or changes in the students themselves over the course of a year, were beyond researcher control and important compounding variables to examine.

While it seemed logical to associate school counselor interventions with a rise in standardized test scores, this author contended that this was not a sustainable practice. It was unlikely standardized test scores in a school or school district would increase indefinitely. If that proved to be true and test scores eventually flattened or declined due to factors outside the control of the school counselor, it would create a precarious situation for counselors that relied on those scores as evidence of professional effectiveness.

Research supported the author's argument that test scores alone were not an adequate way to measure the impact of an intervention (Nelson, McMahan, & Torres, 2012; Blazer & Miami-Dade County Public Schools, R, 2011). At least one study suggested that too much emphasis on student scores on the FCAT was negatively related to test scores when compared to a student-centered approach (Peabody, 2011). Factors that have been shown to cause fluctuations on the FCAT scores included severe storms in Florida (Baggerly, & Ferretti, 2008) and even state, local, and school district political issues (McMahon, 2011).

In order to accurately measure the impact of school counseling interventions and minimize the effects of extraneous variables, dependent variables should measure

precisely what was taught (Brown & Trusty, 2005). The first limitation noted in the meta-analysis of research linking school counseling to student academic achievement was the decision to measure distal outcomes (standardized test scores) instead of the direct learning of the cognitive, social, and self-management skills taught by the school counselors (Villares et al., 2012). If a school counseling intervention was not focused on teaching math and reading, then it seemed odd that the same research would measure success by math and reading scores. By solely relying on standardized test scores and not collecting data on the cognitive, social, and other developmental skills being learned at the same time, the profession undervalued the significance of the ASCA student competencies; competencies that have already been linked to long-term school success (Sink, 2005).

Even researchers close to the SSS curriculum viewed the reliance on standardized test scores with caution. Brown and Trusty (2005, p.6) “urged more investigation on the proximal outcomes tied to strategic interventions that target academic achievement”. The Report of the National Panel for Evidence-based School Counseling specifically examined the SSS curriculum (Carey et al., 2008) and recommended more research on the proximal outcomes. If the current study and ICLAP had positive results via proximal and distal measures, it would provide needed diversity to the evidence supporting school counselor-led classroom guidance interventions. Ultimately, the ability to demonstrate effectiveness through diverse measures of success could offer school counselors and the profession a more impactful and sustainable future in schools.

The Leader-Detractor Scale as a Proximal Dependent Variable

The current study employed decades of research related to Carkhuff and his skill-based training. The L-D scale used in ICLAP was derived from the empathy rating scale developed by Carkhuff and Truax in the late 1960's (Carkhuff, 1969; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967). This scale was used extensively in the training of counselors and other professionals that required training in human relations (Carkhuff, 2003; Carkhuff, 1985; Hill & King, 1976; Gormally & Hill, 1974; Carkhuff & Berenson, 1977).

In studies that used the L-D scale to train counselors, procedures were drawn from Carkhuff's human technology components (Anderson, 1989, Carkhuff, 1983; Roffers, Cooper, & Sultanoff, 1988). The first step of the training included operationally defining empathy for the counseling students. Then, the five-point empathy rating scale was explained to students. High performing counselors in training would be fully connected with clients at the high end of the scale (a score higher than three) while lower scores consisted of behaviors that showed little or no connection with the client (a score lower than three). Essentially, the five-point empathy scale served as a tool to measure current levels of performance and set goals for improvement. The levels of the empathy scale were as follows (Carkhuff, 1969; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967):

- 5- A significant addition to the helpee's expressed feeling and meaning
- 4
- 3- An interchangeable response with the helpee's expressed feeling
- 2
- 1- Significant detraction from the helpee's expressed feeling

When this scale was used with graduate-level students to enhance their skill acquisition, retention, and ability to transfer skills to applied settings, it was reported to

have engaged the students intellectually, emotionally, behaviorally, and interpersonally (Carkhuff, 1985; Baumgarten & Roffers, 2003). This aligned with the author's experience and anecdotal benefits of using the scale to increase student's learning of ASCA competencies in middle and high schools.

In an interview with Landers, who trained under Carkhuff in the 1970's, the author was able to gain valuable insight into the premise of the Carkhuff training model and the most recent version of the L-D scale (Landers, 2007). Landers later documented the successes of Carkhuff's training concepts and the L-D scale (Landers, 1983). Under the supervision of Berenson, Landers worked as a school counselor to implement a career guidance program throughout inner city schools of Pontiac, Michigan. There have been many versions of the empathy rating scale that led to the most recent version known as the L-D scale. ICLAP used the identical version that Landers used in Pontiac and again later at the college level to measure student academic performance (Landers, 2006; Landers, unpublished)(See Appendix C).

Landers used the L-D scale to measure academic and athletic performance of college-level athletes at Saint Michael's College in Vermont. Faculty mentors for the Division II student-athletes on the men's ice hockey team followed Carkhuff's technology training components and increased student performance on the ice and in the classroom (Landers, 2006; Landers, unpublished). After operationally defining expectations on the ice and in the classroom, student-athletes worked with the mentors to assess current levels of performance (self-assessment), set new goals, and develop a step-by-step plan (program development) to reach those goals. The L-D scale was used to measure student performance at each stage of this process. In a similar format used in

ICLAP, the students self-assessed their contribution to the team and their academics on the L-D scale as leaders, contributors, participants, observers, or detractors. When compared to four men's and four women's athletic teams on campus, only the ice hockey team had significantly increased their academic grade point average that year (Landers, unpublished).

As a former school counselor and counseling department chair, the author has heard many frustrated adults, both parents and faculty, tell students to do better in school. Rather than telling students to do better in school, the Carkhuff instructional model offers an easy way for students to understand precisely how to do better. The author had nearly ten years of experience using the concepts and components of ICLAP as part of school counseling interventions with a high level of anecdotal success. The curriculum of ICLAP was designed in a similar fashion to previous research on the L-D scale and Carkhuff's technology training components (Landers, 2006; Landers, unpublished; Anderson, 1989; Carkhuff, 1983; Roffers, Cooper, & Sultanoff, 1988).

Specifically, ICLAP involved school counselors guiding students through the following process: teach students the L-D scale by relating it to personal non-academic activities of students (sports, musical instruments, theatre, etc.); define academic expectations in short and simple behaviors; operationalize these expectations to the L-D scale (i.e. how would a Leader, Contributor, Participant, Observer, Detractor behave in relation to those expectations?); self-assess current level of performance on the L-D scale; set specific goals on the L-D scale; define steps to reach these goals; perform follow-up self-assessment of performance using L-D scale; and re-evaluate goals/plans as needed.

The School Social Behavior Scales-II (SSBS-II) as a Proximal Dependent Variable

According to Whiston & Sexton (1998), in research related to improving student academic performance, approximately 43% of studies used standardized instruments that had been used successfully in previous studies while approximately 30% used instruments created by the authors. When Brigman & Campbell (2003) set out to determine whether students learned the skills in the SSS curriculum, they chose the SSBS since it was designed to measure student learning of the same core skills taught in the SSS curriculum (Brigman & Campbell, 2003). After another review of available instruments, the SSBS was chosen again for the replication study in 2005 (Webb, Brigman & Campbell, 2005).

The SSBS-II was the most recent version of the scale and was selected for the current study for the same reasons it was chosen in the benchmark literature; it measured student behavior related to the cognitive skills identified as essential to student academic performance (Whiston & Sexton, 1998). In the Report of the National Panel for Evidence-Based School Counseling, the panel concluded that the SSBS “meets rigorous psychometric standards for reliability and validity” (Carey, Dimmitt, Hatch, Lapan, & Whiston, p. 8, (2008). That same report reiterated the argument of the author that these scores were vital to demonstrate that students learned the skills (ASCA student competencies) and must be collected from the comparison groups (not just the treatment group as in all of the SSS research). In the comments related to the measurement of the SSS studies, the panel stated in the report:

“Specifically, the convincing linkage between process and results data was missing as the studies lacked the perception data (i.e. impact of SSS on knowledge, attitudes, skills learned through the SSS process) that may have

contributed to the increases in FCAT. Additionally, the achievement-related data (i.e. actual improvement in students' actual academic skills, social skills and self-management skills) was not measured against a control group....Consequently, the logical links between the nature of the SSS intervention and the constructs measured by the SSBS are neither obvious nor explicitly linked to their impact on student achievement data, specifically their performance on the FCAT. We strongly recommend that future studies of the SSS include measures that reflect the specific constructs targeted by the SSS interventions (e.g. cognitive/meta-cognitive skills, social skills and self-management skills) so that the impact of SS on these outcomes and the relationships between changes on these variables...can be ascertained" (Carey, Dimmitt, Hatch, Lapan, & Whiston, p.9, (2008).

The above passage is important since it provided further support for the current study to collect pre-post SSBS-II scores from both groups in order to measure proximal outcomes. Moreover, the passage points to the importance of aligning ICLAP with the ASCA student competencies since these have been directly linked to student academic success.

The current study utilized the SSBS-II due to the meaningful data it gathered on specific student school behavior. The combination of SSBS-II scores, class grades, and scores on the L-D scale had the potential to provide a variety of meaningful measures to determine the effect of ICLAP on academic performance. In order to minimize the possibility that other school services or confounding variables in the lives of students significantly affected scores, pre and post data were collected a week prior to the start of the intervention and a week after the completion of the study. Thus, the time span between pre and post data collection was measured in weeks, as opposed to the year-long timeframe needed for the FCAT or other annual standardized tests.

The School Social Behavior Scales (SSBS) was published by Assessment-Intervention Resources in 1998 and revised as the SSBS-II in 2002 (Merrell, 2002). In a review in the *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment* (Alfonso, Rentz, Orlovsky, & Ramos, 2007), it was reported that the SSBS-II was normed with 2,280 individuals and

accounted for age, gender, school setting, community and geographic region, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and special education status. That same research indicated that reliability was high; Cronbach's coefficient alpha and Spearman-Brown split-half reliability resulted in coefficients ranged from .96 to .98. The researchers were equally satisfied with the validity of the SSBS-II and concluded that "it was a useful and competitive tool among the ever-growing number of rating scales in psychology and education" (p. 90).

Summation of Literature Review Findings

The positive impact that the SSS studies had on the profession of school counseling and academic performance was significant. However, as explained in this chapter, there were many shortcomings with the SSS curriculum and related research. The current study introduced ICLAP and offered an alternative to the SSS curriculum for school counselors seeking a simple school counselor-led classroom guidance curriculum focused on improving academic performance.

The most well-documented and replicated classroom guidance curriculum on student academic performance, SSS, left gaps in the literature. A major example involved the content of the SSS curriculum. That curriculum was so broad that it was difficult to determine which skills were the essential factors that increased student academic performance. SSS incorporated goal setting, progress monitoring, memory skills, listening, teamwork, building a caring supportive climate, cognitive and memory skills, managing stress and test anxiety, and building healthy optimism and self-efficacy (Villares et al., 2011). ICLAP honed in on a single, synergistic skill-set: self-assessment, goal-setting and program development. This focus helped clarify the effects of teaching

those skills while minimizing the disruption to traditional classroom curriculum time. In the author's experience, the willingness of teachers to allow counselors to use classroom time to teach guidance curriculum was a common hurdle. The current study anticipated adding support for the effectiveness of classroom guidance, without supplemental small group work, in order to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in school settings.

In order to summarize how the current study employed knowledge gained from the literature review to address gaps in the literature, the following is a complete list of the unique contributions this study offered: original content and instructional components of ICLAP; focus on the skill-set of self-assessment, goal-setting, and program development; mixed academic ability of participants (students were not selected nor deselected based on academic status); combination of distal and proximal dependent variables (L-D scores, SSBS-II scores, grades); use of an active comparison group with an alternative curriculum; pre-post test data from a comparison group; choice to use only the classroom guidance delivery model; and the direct linking of lessons in ICLAP to ASCA student competencies. Each of those components were included to strategically address deficiencies related to the most well-documented research linking school counselor-led classroom guidance interventions to student academic performance (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman et al., 2007; Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Webb et al., 2005; Lemberger & Clemens, 2012; Leon et al, 2011; Luck & Webb, 2009).

If the current study had positive results, it could provide motivation for school counselor programs to align with ASCA national standards. Other possible outcomes included: increased teacher enthusiasm for counselors to implement ICLAP in their classrooms, a school-wide perception that ICLAP made significant progress closing the

achievement gap, increased support from school district administration, and more support for appropriate school counselor duties. Luck & Webb (2009) noted several positive occurrences after the positive results of their study. The administration became more protective of school counselor time and the coordination of the standardized testing, lunchroom duty, and bus duty were eliminated from their responsibilities. Administrators became more supportive of school counselors spending time in classrooms, facilitating groups, and other school-counseling related activities. Brigman and Campbell (2003) noted that, in the aftermath of their study, a new guidance data specialist position was funded to assist with the clerical aspects that previously overwhelmed the school counselors. Like the SSS studies, an aim of the current study was to ultimately reduce non-counseling related tasks while increasing a focus on creating a comprehensive school counseling program with greater appreciation and respect for contributions of the school counselor (Luck & Webb, 2009).

Conclusions

In conclusion, the research surrounding the SSS curriculum was a pivotal step in providing early evidence that school counselors can improve student academic achievement via classroom guidance instruction. It provided school counselors with a curriculum that produced positive results and had been replicated with thousands of students from across the country. The research also left opportunities for further examination of the link between school counselors and student academic performance that the current study aimed to address.

The following conclusions were suggested based on an analysis of the reviewed literature:

1. School counselor-led interventions that included self-assessment, goal setting, and program development as part of the curriculum were strongly linked to improved student academic performance. This supported the notion that those related skills taught in ICLAP could positively impact student performance.

2. The SSS curriculum was implemented and shown to increase student academic achievement when only one delivery method was utilized. This gave support for the classroom guidance delivery method in the current study.

3. The SSS curriculum had been shown to be effective with students of various age groups and cultural subgroups. This gave support that the current study could be effective for a wide variety of student populations.

4. The research had relied heavily on the use of distal dependent variables, especially standardized test scores, to measure the impact of school counseling interventions on academic performance. It was important that future research offered both distal and proximal evidence linking school counselor interventions to increases in student performance. The current study used a combination of proximal measures and distal measures.

5. The L-D scale and concepts developed by Carkhuff had positive results in the areas of counselor training and college student academic/athletic performance. This suggested that the incorporation of the L-D scale both as a learning tool in ICLAP and as a proximal dependent variable to measure learning of skills could lead to an increase in student performance.

6. The school counseling profession was in need of a modern approach that linked a school counselor-led curriculum to improved student academic performance.

This modern approach needed to employ the strengths of benchmark research surrounding SSS while addressing shortcomings of that research.

As the profession of school counseling continued to grow and meet the national demands of No Child Left Behind, the Common Core state standards, and the professional standards of ASCA, it was important that school counselors had more than one research-supported curriculum to improve student performance. ICLAP honed in on key components of the SSS curriculum, and was unique in a myriad of fundamental ways that addressed gaps in the literature. The current study was needed to fill the gap of providing school counselors with a curriculum that was specifically focused on skills shown to be essential in student academic performance, easy to implement, and minimized the time students were removed from the traditional school curriculum.

In the original study on the SSS curriculum, Brigman Campbell (2003) set out to answer the question, “do school counselor conducted group counseling and classroom guidance—which focused on cognitive, social, and self-management skills—have a positive impact on student achievement and school success behaviors”? The current study aimed to target gaps in the research and provide support for ICLAP, a school-counselor-led intervention designed to positively impact student achievement.

Based on a review of the literature, it was clear that the current study was needed for the profession to move forward and meet the academic needs of students. It had the potential to provide school counselors with valuable data to more adequately respond to teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and students who needed to understand how school counseling impacted student achievement. The current study

aimed to answer the following research question: “Can the Innovative Counselor-led Academic Program (ICLAP) positively impact student academic performance”?

Research Methodology: Chapter Three

Summary

There was an increased need for school counselors to demonstrate how their direct contact with students could improve academic performance. ASCA established standards and student competencies for school counselors to promote long-term student success and develop comprehensive counseling programs (ASCA, 2005). There was a gap in the literature for practical, school counselor-led classroom guidance curricula for school counselors to deliver ASCA academic competencies. Targeting that gap in the literature, the goal of this study was to examine the effects of a classroom guidance curriculum developed by the author, ICLAP, on student academic performance.

ICLAP was designed to operationally define academic performance into basic expectations for students and then facilitate improved performance through a process of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development. The L-D scale was a central component to ICLAP and served as a tool for students and teachers to measure performance. The purpose of the current study was to answer the main research question and four related questions. First, “can the Innovative Counselor-led Academic Program (ICLAP) positively impact student academic performance”? Also, after participation in ICLAP:

1. Will student grades improve?
2. Will student self-assessment ratings on the L-D scale improve?
3. Will teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale improve?
4. Will student scores on the SSBS-II improve?

Participants

One hundred and eight first-year high school students in the ninth grade participated in the study. It was not possible for the researcher to randomly assign students to classrooms. Consequently, participants in the study were not randomly assigned to groups, but rather were assigned by the course registration and scheduling procedures of the school. Participants were students in class sections of either Health or English. The subjects of Health and English were chosen because they were considered typical classes that all first-year students needed to complete. Two English classes and one health class were assigned as the treatment group. The second section of Health was assigned the comparison group.

Treatment Group

The treatment group participated in ICLAP and consisted of three classrooms of first-year high school students. The students received a forty-five minute lesson from a school counselor on a weekly basis for five weeks as per the ICLAP curriculum (see Appendix A). The total number of students that participated in ICLAP (treatment group) was seventy-nine. The goals of ICLAP were to improve academic performance by teaching the ASCA student competencies of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development (see Appendix A)(ASCA, 2004).

Comparison Group

The comparison group was a classroom of twenty-nine students that participated in a classroom guidance curriculum different from ICLAP. The group received a forty-five minute lesson from a school counselor on a weekly basis for five weeks. This guidance curriculum addressed ASCA career competencies that were distinctly different

from and unrelated to the academic competencies taught in ICLAP (see Appendices D,E). The skills of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development were not taught in the career curriculum. The career-based curriculum was selected because it aligned with ASCA career competencies (not academic competencies) and was adopted by a school counseling program in a neighboring school district.

Instruments

Leader-Detractor Scale

The instruments used in this study included the Leader-Detractor (L-D) scale (Carkhuff, 1968) and the School Social Behavior Scales, Second Edition (SSBS-II) (Merrell, 2002). As a former school counselor, the researcher had a history of collaborating with teachers and school counselors using the L-D scale to increase student academic performance with much anecdotal success. Many of those educators reported that their students were more focused in class, completed more assignments, and exhibited more positive behaviors in class after using the L-D scale.

The L-D scale incorporated the work of social scientist, Carkhuff, and the concepts of Leader, Contributor, Participant, Observer, and Detractor marked steps on the scale. Each of those terms provided operationally defined levels of performance and served as an easy-to-understand method of assessment (see Appendix C). Aside from the current study, research that linked the L-D Scale to academic performance was limited. The studies that existed had an increase in the grade point averages of college-level student athletes (Landers, unpublished; Landers, 2006).

An increase in post L-D scale ratings from student self-assessment and/or teacher ratings of students in the current study would suggest increased performance. Such an

increase would signify that participants had successfully self-assessed where they began academically in the class, set new academic goals, and created and successfully followed a program to reach those goals. Those observable behaviors of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development were tied to ASCA competencies and linked to long-term academic success (Sink, 2005).

As discussed in chapter two, the L-D scale was designed to adapt to different training situations and expectations. The criteria for the performance levels of Leader, Contributor, Participant, Observer, and Detractor were designed to remain constant. However, educators could select behaviors and expectations to be measured on the scale. In the current study, the expectations were determined during the facilitator training by the facilitators of the study since they had the best understanding of the academic demands in their school.

Specifically, it was determined that “Participant” behaviors/expectations included: 1. being seated before the bell rings; 2. having a writing implement and notebook visible on the desk; 3. showing that the homework was completed (written or verbal); and, 4. raising a hand at least once during class. Thus, a student that exhibits those four expectations would be academically on track. On the L-D scale, a student with those behaviors would be rated at the Participant level of performance. The Participant level is defined on the L-D scale as “does what is expected” (see Appendix C). Students with behaviors that are less than the minimum expectations or more than the minimum were rated higher or lower on the L-D scale, respectively.

While the adaptability to use the L-D in a wide variety of situations made the L-D scale unique and appealing, validity and reliability data for the L-D were limited and

had mixed results (Gormally & Hill, 1974). Since the L-D scale could be adapted to meet the expectations of different settings, it was suggested that other, related and more standardized instruments be used in conjunction with the L-D scale to measure changes in participant behavior (Gormally & Hill, 1974). The current study adhered to that recommendation and incorporated the widely-recognized SSBS-II.

School Social Behavior Scales-II

The School Social Behavior Scales, Second Edition (SSBS-II)(Merrell, 2002), had been used successfully to measure the effectiveness of other classroom guidance programs in several studies (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman & Webb, 2007; Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Webb, Brigman & Campbell, 2005). It was reviewed in the *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment* (Alfonso, Rentz, Orlovsky & Ramos, 2007) and received positive marks for measuring the effects of educational interventions.

The SSBS-II has two main scales: the Social Competence Scale (scale A) and the Antisocial Behavior Scale (scale B). Together, the two main scales were designed to measure social competency and antisocial behavior of individuals between the ages of five to eighteen in the school setting. Both of the main scales were designed to be completed by educators, including teachers, counselors, and other school personnel. It was important that raters were knowledgeable about the student's behavior at school prior to assessment (Merrell, 2002).

The SSBS-II Handbook recommended that researchers choose one main scale or use both of the main scales depending on the research goals (Merrell, 2002). In the current study, only Scale "A", the SSBS-II Social Competency scale was used. The Antisocial Behavior scale was not used since the focus of the current study was on

behaviors associated with school academic performance and not identifying students with anti-social personality tendencies.

The SSBS-II Social Competency scale had three subscales: Peer relations, Self-Management, and Academic Behavior. In combination, the Social Competency total (main scale plus the three subscales) was designed for teachers and educators to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions (Merrell, 2002). Teacher score sheets in the treatment and comparison groups were scored to calculate the Social Competency total and the three subscale totals for each student, pre and post. There was a total of sixty-four items on a five-point Likert-type scale. The teachers reported that each administration of the SSBS-II took approximately two to three minutes to complete per student. That time was consistent with other raters (Merrell, 2002). Teachers followed the same procedure for pre-test and post-test scores.

The SSBS-II was norm sampled using 2,280 individuals stratified by age, sex, school setting, community and geographic region, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and special education status. Cronbach's coefficient alpha and Spearman-Brown split-half reliability ranged from .96 to .98 in the normative sample. Test-retest reliability coefficients for the Social Competence Scale and Antisocial Behavior scales were .83 and .60 (Alfonso, Rentz, Orlovsky & Ramos, 2007).

Research Design

This study was quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design to investigate if the participation in ICLAP, a counselor-led classroom academic guidance intervention, improved student academic performance. The independent variable was participation in the ICLAP curriculum. The treatment group (three classrooms of seventy-nine students)

participated in ICLAP. Four dependent variables were used to measure student academic performance in the treatment group: 1. pre-post student grades; 2. pre-post student self-assessed ratings on the L-D scale; 3. pre-post teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale; and 4. pre-post student scores on the SSBS-II (see Table 1).

The comparison group (one classroom of twenty-nine students) participated in a career guidance curriculum during the same five-week period that the treatment group participated in ICLAP. Two dependent variables were used to measure academic performance in the comparison group: 1. pre-post grades and 2. pre-post SSBS-II scores. The comparison group received the same amount of attention from school counselors. Pre-post data on the comparison group was collected to help determine if any events outside the study, such as a school-wide change or intervention, had an effect on overall student academic performance at school. An additional purpose of the comparison group was to reduce the likelihood that the Hawthorne Effect (attention from school counselors) was a confounding variable.

Table 1

Dependent Variables by Group.

Dependent Variables	Treatment Group	Comparison Group
Student Grades	Yes	Yes
Leader-Detractor Scale (student-rated)	Yes	No
Leader-Detractor Scale (teacher-rated)	Yes	No
School Social Behavior Scales-II	Yes	Yes

Grades for each group were collected the week prior to the study (pre) and again the week after the study (post). Unlike the L-D scale and the SSBS-II, grades were not intended to measure the learning of the skills taught in ICLAP, but rather served as a distal dependent measure. As a distal variable, grades were collected as a general measure of academic performance. This procedure to use a distal measure followed a precedent established by previous research (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Brigman et al., 2007; Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Webb et al., 2005; Lemberger & Clemens, 2012; Leon et al, 2011; Luck & Webb, 2009).

Procedures

Facilitators

Two teachers and two nationally certified school counselors had instrumental roles in the study; the counselors visited classrooms to deliver lessons while the teachers reinforced concepts with the students in between classroom visits. The two Health classes were taught by one teacher and the two English classes were taught by the second teacher. Each school counselor was assigned two classes each. This assignment was determined at the facilitator training prior to implementing the study and was based on teacher/counselor daily schedules.

One school counselor taught ICLAP (five weekly lessons of forty-five minutes each) in a Health class and also in an English class. The other school counselor taught ICLAP in the second English class and the career guidance curriculum in the second Health class (comparison group). The mixed combinations of two counselors, two teachers, and two school subjects were intended to decrease the potential variable that

specific traits of a particular teacher, specific traits of a particular counselor, or the particular subject of the classroom influenced outcomes.

Facilitator Training

It was suggested that formal training and an opportunity to discuss logistics with school personnel be implemented prior to conducting a classroom guidance curriculum in a school-setting (Schlossberg, 2001). The researcher provided a four-hour training for the counselors and the teachers in August, two days prior to the start of the school year (see Appendix F). This training was designed to ensure facilitators were comfortable with ICLAP, the SSBS-II scoring sheets, the L-D scale, and the career guidance curriculum.

The counselor portion of the training included: a detailed overview of the study and directions for collecting data, abbreviated demonstrations of the lessons by the researcher (for ICLAP and the career curriculum), and the dissemination of materials. Materials included: an L-D scale classroom performance chart to post in each of the treatment classrooms, copies of all student handouts, pre-post L-D rating sheets, pre-post SSBS-II score sheets, and grade sheets. The main goals of the counselor portion of the training were to ensure that counselors understand ICLAP, data collection procedures, and had an opportunity to ask questions as needed.

Facilitator Supervision

The researcher resided in a different state during the course of the study. Supervision of the facilitators included weekly contact with the teachers and counselors via e-mail, phone, and interactive online video throughout the study. One of the counselors in the study was the chair of the counseling department and was responsible

for collecting materials and mailing them to the researcher. This counselor and the researcher communicated frequently until the study was completed. This consistent contact was maintained to ensure that the study was conducted with integrity and as designed.

Implementation of ICLAP and Alternative Career Curriculum

Prior to implementing the study and collecting data, permission to proceed was granted by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nevada, Reno (IRB). The study was approved by IRB at the University of Nevada, Reno, and was granted “exempt” status on the basis that classroom visits from school counselors implementing a classroom guidance curriculum was an intervention not outside of normal procedures students could expect to experience at the high school level. Written permission from the principal to conduct the study at their high school site was also obtained. The researcher also contacted the Institutional Review Board for the school district to notify them of the study and provide contact information for the researcher.

All students who participated were assigned a study ID number by the counselors. Those study ID numbers were used in all documents and communications with the researcher. Only the teachers and counselors had access to identifiable student information in order to protect confidentiality. There school name was not used in the study in order to protect the anonymity of the school(s).

In accordance with the conditions prescribed by IRB, the school counselors distributed an information sheet to students the week after the study was completed (see Appendix G). The information sheet was written in English. A note on the first line of the sheet offered information in Spanish for Spanish-speaking families. The school

secretary was trained to give information and answer questions in Spanish about the study. She was able to forward calls to the researcher when needed or requested (the researcher was bilingual). The information sheet explained that students had participated in a classroom guidance curriculum that taught self-assessment, goal setting, and program development. It also explained that anonymous results were collected and provided contact information for the researcher.

The ICLAP curriculum included five guidance lessons and was designed to be implemented by a school counselor in a classroom environment (see Appendix C). Each lesson was approximately forty-five minutes in length and incorporated lecture, handouts, visual aids, individual, and peer collaboration. Additionally, as part of the ICLAP curriculum, an L-D class performance chart was posted at the front of the classroom (see Appendix H). Small magnets were used to represent individual students in the class and showed the weekly progress of the class as a whole on the L-D scale. This served as a graphic representation only and there was no identifying information on the small magnets.

The desired effect of ICLAP was for students to demonstrate learning of those skills via observable classroom behavior and increase their academic performance in the class. Participants were eliminated from the study if they were absent for more than one of the classroom guidance visits, withdrew from the class or school, or were added to the class after the study began. Counselors started implementation of ICLAP in the final week of the first quarter and made a total of five visits to complete the implementation of the ICLAP curriculum.

Similarly, the comparison group received the first counselor visit and lesson during the final week of the first quarter. Each lesson was approximately forty-five minutes in length and incorporated lecture, handouts, visual aids, individual, and peer collaboration. The content of each lesson focused on skills identified by ASCA to help students identify their career skills and conduct career searches based on their skills. After the study was completed, the comparison group was offered the opportunity to receive the ICLAP curriculum at a date to be determined by the teacher and the school counselors.

Data Collection

Grades

Pre and post grades were collected from the treatment and comparison groups. The pre-grade was the exact letter grade in the teacher's gradebook for each student, the week prior to the study. The post-grade was the exact letter grade in the teacher's gradebook for each student, the week after the study. The school counselors collected the pre-grades for all students in the treatment and comparison groups using a data collection sheet that was given to the teachers (see Appendix I). The data collection sheet for pre-scores was printed on different color paper than the data collection log for the post-scores so that they were clearly distinguishable from one another. The pre-data collection sheets were mailed by the school counselor to the researcher prior to counselors visiting groups. Post-data collection sheets were mailed the week after the study. Separate mailing procedures for pre-data and post-data documents ensured a clean separation of materials at the school site.

Student Self-Assessment Ratings on the L-D Scale

The first lesson in ICLAP focused on teaching students about the L-D scale and how it could be used to measure performance for various activities. After academic expectations of that class were defined for students (i.e. the minimum behaviors needed to be successful academically) they were asked to rate their current level of performance in that class. These initial self-assessments were logged on the L-D scale handout (see Appendix C) and served as the student self-assessed pre-ratings. At the final lesson of ICLAP, after students participated in lessons on self-assessment, goal-setting, and program development, students rated themselves a final time. These final ratings served as the post-ratings. These data were collected only for the treatment group.

Teacher Ratings of Students on the L-D Scale

The teachers were trained on the L-D scale during the facilitator training. Using the same data collection sheets as they did to record the pre-post grades, teachers recorded each student's behavior on the L-D scale for that class. Pre-teacher L-D ratings were recorded and mailed to the researcher a week prior to the start of the study. Post teacher L-D ratings were recorded by teachers and mailed the week after the study was completed, approximately six weeks later. These data were only collected for the treatment group only.

Scores on the SSBS-II

Teachers in both the comparison and treatment groups were familiarized with the SSBS-II scale scoring sheets at the facilitator training. The pre-scores were recorded and mailed to the researcher the week prior to the start of the study. The post-scores were recorded and mailed to the researcher the week after the last counselor visit,

approximately six weeks later. These data were collected for the treatment and comparison groups.

Data Analysis

The following dependent variables were measured to determine if student academic performance in the treatment group had improved at post-test: pre-post student grades, pre-post student self-ratings on the L-D scale, pre-post teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale, and pre-post scores on the SSBS-II. All data was analyzed using SPSS. Prior to running statistical tests, raw data was screened for missing data points. For inferential analysis on the data for the treatment group, one-way tests were used and the alpha was set to equal .025. Inferential analysis on the data for the comparison group used two-way tests and the alpha was set to equal .05.

Grades

Grades were obtained from the treatment and comparison groups. A one-way Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test was used to compare pre and post rankings in the treatment group to answer the research question: “after participation in ICLAP, will student grades improve?” This non-parametric test has been recommended for comparing pre-post rankings with dependent samples and an ordinal variable such as grades (Siegel & Castellan, 1988). The null hypothesis was that the median of the population of differences from pre to post was zero. The research hypothesis for the treatment group was that post grades would improve after participation in ICLAP.

The goal for the comparison group was to determine if there was a significant change between pre and post grades (there was no directional prediction). Therefore, a two-way Wilcoxon Matched-Paris Signed-Ranks Test was used to compare pre and post

grades in that group to determine if there was a difference. The null hypothesis was that the median of the population of differences from pre to post was zero.

Leader-Detractor Scale Ratings

Ratings on the L-D scale were obtained from the treatment group and were considered ordinal data. A one-way Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test was used for both the teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale and the student self-assessed ratings on the L-D scale. This test was used to answer the following two research questions: “after participation in ICLAP, will student self-assessment ratings on the L-D scale improve?” and “after participation in ICLAP, will teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale improve”? The null hypothesis was that the median of the population of differences from pre to post was zero. The research hypothesis was that student self-assessed ratings and teacher ratings on the L-D scale would improve after participation in ICLAP.

SSBS-II Scores

SSBS-II scores were obtained from the treatment and comparison groups and included the Social Competency total and the three subscales (Peer Relations, Academic Behavior, and Self-Management). A one-way Paired Samples T-test was used to compare pre and post scores to answer the research question: “after participation in ICLAP, will student scores on the SSBS-II improve”?

The null hypothesis was that the mean difference in pre-post scores on the SSBS-II was zero after participation in ICLAP. The research hypothesis was that SSBS-II scores one would improve after participation in ICLAP.

The goal for the comparison group was to determine if there was a significant change between pre and post SSBS-II scores (there was no directional prediction). Therefore, a two-way test was used to analyze data in the comparison group. The null hypothesis stated that there was no difference in SSBS-II scores for the comparison group after participating in the alternative curriculum.

Conclusions

A goal of the study was to provide school counselors with a classroom guidance curriculum that was directly tied to ASCA competency standards and that increased academic performance. Seventy-nine students participated in ICLAP, a curriculum that focused on the improving academic performance through teaching the skills of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development. The dependent variables included: grades, student self-assessed L-D ratings, teachers ratings of students on the L-D scales, and SSBS-II scores. If the study yielded improved academic performance on any of the dependent variables, it would provide evidence to support the main research hypothesis that participation in ICLAP can improve academic performance.

Analysis and Results: Chapter Four

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine whether students that participated in ICLAP increased academic performance. An active comparison group was used to reduce the influence of confounding variables, including the Hawthorne Effect and the possibility that other school-wide interventions could have impacted the results. Pre-post scores on the SSBS-II and class grades were collected from treatment and comparison groups. Pre-post student self-assessed ratings on the L-D scale and teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale were only collected from the treatment group. There were four related questions to the main research question: “Can the Innovative Counselor-led Academic Program (ICLAP) positively impact student academic performance”? After participation in ICLAP:

1. Will student grades improve?
2. Will student self-assessment ratings on the L-D scale improve?
3. Will teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale improve?
4. Will student scores on the SSBS-II improve?

Participant Data

One hundred and eight students from a medium size public high school participated in the study. All students were first-year students classified in the ninth grade. The students were assigned into regular English and Health classes by the annual scheduling and registration procedures of the high school. The treatment group included students from one of the Health classes and two English classes. The comparison group was students in the second health class. Rosters for all four classes were non-

overlapping; students participated in only one group. Descriptive information on the composition of the groups is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive information for treatment and comparison groups.

	Treatment	Comparison	Total
Males	44	17	61
Females	35	12	47
<i>N</i>	79	29	108

Ten participants were eliminated from the study due to missing data and because they withdrew from school. Data for one-hundred and eight students were analyzed in the final results. The total number of students that participated in ICLAP was seventy-nine and the total number of students in the comparison group was twenty-nine.

Research question one: After participation in ICLAP, will student grades improve?

Grades for each group were collected the week prior to the study (pre) and again the week after the study (post). A one-way Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test was used to compare pre and post grades for each group. Grades were coded in SPSS as follows: 1 represented a grade of “A”; 2 represented a grade of “B”; 3 represented a grade of “C”; 4 represented a grade of “D”; and 5 represented a grade of “F”. Thus, numerically lower post scores would indicate an improvement in grades. Table 3 presents the results for the pre and post grades of the treatment group.

Table 3

Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test on pre-post grades for treatment group.

	<i>N</i>	SUM	MDN RANK	MN RANK	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)
Post Grade	79		2.0	2.3		
Pre Grade	79		2.0	1.72		
Neg. Ranks	37 ^a	733				
Pos. Ranks	2 ^b	47				
Ties	40 ^c					
					5.00	.001

a. Pregrade < Postgrade

b. Pregrade > Postgrade

c. Pregrade = Postgrade

The one-way Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test results were used to test the null hypothesis that the median of the population of differences was zero. There was a significant difference in student grades after participating in ICLAP, although in the opposite direction than the one-tailed research question ($z = 5.00, p < .001$). Even though the median grade of 2.0, or a grade of “C”, was the same both pre and post, only two grade rankings improved at post-test. There were thirty-seven instances of lower grades at post-test. Forty rankings were the same from pre-test to post-test. In addition to the rankings that had a decrease in grades at post-test, the mean grade ranking decreased from a pre-grade of 1.72 (approximately equivalent to a high “B”) to a post-grade of 2.3 (approximately equivalent to a low “C”). The results did not have a significant change in the predicted direction and the null hypothesis was not rejected.

In the comparison group, a two-way Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test was used to test whether there was a significant change in grades before and after receiving the alternative guidance curriculum. The results showed no significant difference ($z = 1.134$, $p = .257$). The median grade of 2.0, or a grade of “C”, was the same both before and after receiving the alternative guidance curriculum. There were three instances of increased grades at post-test, one instance of a lower grade at post-test, and twenty-five grades that remained unchanged. The null hypothesis that the median of the population of differences was zero was not rejected.

Research question two: After participation in ICLAP, will student self-assessment ratings on the L-D scale improve?

As part of the ICLAP curriculum, students in the treatment group were introduced to the L-D scale through lecture and learning activities. Students self-assessed their performance in the class on the L-D scale at each of the five counselor visits. The first self-assessment, on the first counselor visit, was used as the pre self-assessed L-D rating. The final self-assessment, on the last counselor visit in week five, was used as the post self-assessed L-D rating.

L-D scale ratings were coded in SPSS as follows: 1 represented behaviors at the “leader” level and the highest level of performance; 2 represented behaviors at the “contributor” level of performance; 3 represented behaviors at the “participant” level of performance; 4 represented behaviors at the “observer” level of performance; and 5 represented behaviors at the “detractor” level of performance, the lowest level of performance on the L-D scale. Thus, a decrease in median ratings from pre to post would indicate an improvement in the level of performance on the L-D scale. A Wilcoxon

Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test was used to compare pre and post student self-ratings (Table 4).

Table 4

Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test on pre-post student self-assessed L-D scores for treatment group.

	<i>N</i>	SUM RANKS	MD RANK	MN RANK	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)
Post L-D	79		2.0	2.22		
Pre L-D	79		3.0	2.85		
Neg. Ranks	7 ^a	122.5				
Pos. Ranks	38 ^b	912.50				
Ties	34 ^c					
					4.61	.001

a. Student self-assessed PRE LD < Student self-assessed POST LD

b. Student self-assessed PRE LD > Student self-assessed POST LD

c. Student self-assessed PRE LD = Student self-assessed POST LD

Students rated their behavior higher on the L-D scale after participation in ICLAP using a one-way Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test ($z = 4.61, p < .001$). The z test of the obtained $T^-(122.5)$ yielded a z of 4.61 ($n = 45$) when corrected for ties and was less than $T_{crit}(343)$. An effect size was calculated using Kendall's w ($w = .270$). This was a medium effect size.

The median rank for student self-ratings on the L-D scale was lower at post-test. Lower rankings represented higher performance on the L-D scale. Specifically, the median rank prior to participation in ICLAP was 3.0, a "participant" level on the L-D

scale and the median rank after participation in ICLAP was 2.0, a “contributor” level, and one performance step above “participant” on the L-D scale.

There were thirty-eight instances of increased self-assessed performance on the L-D scale at post-test, as indicated by positive ranks. There were seven instances of decreased self-assessed performance on the L-D scale at post-test, as indicated by negative ranks. Finally, there were thirty-four instances of the student self-ratings that remained unchanged from pre to post. These data provided support to reject the null hypothesis, that the median of the population of differences from pre to post was zero. Since the L-D scale was unique to the treatment group as a component of ICLAP, L-D scale data was not collected from the comparison group.

Research question three: After participation in ICLAP, will teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale improve?

The two teachers in the study were trained on the L-D scale during facilitator training provided by the researcher prior to the study. Teachers rated each student on the L-D scale the week prior to counselor visits (pre), and again the week after the final counselor classroom visit (post). There were approximately six weeks in between the collection of pre and post teacher L-D ratings.

A Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test was used to test the pre-post teacher L-D ratings. A lower median for post scores would indicate an improvement in the level of performance (Table 5).

Table 5

Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test on pre-post teacher ratings on L-D scale for treatment group.

	<i>N</i>	SUM	MDN RANK	MN RANK	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)
Post L-D	79		2.00	2.39		
Pre L-D	79		3.00	3.14		
Neg. Ranks	4 ^a	92				
Pos. Ranks	45 ^b	1133				
Ties	30 ^c					
					5.41	.001

a. TeacherpreLD < TeacherpstLD

b. TeacherpreLD > TeacherpstLD

c. TeacherpreLD = TeacherpstLD

Teachers rated students higher on the L-D scale after participation in ICLAP using a one-way Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test ($z = 5.41, p < .001$). The z test of the obtained $T^-(92)$ yielded a z of 5.41 ($n = 49$) when corrected for ties and was less than $T_{crit}(415)$. An effect size was calculated using Kendall's w ($w = .434$). This was a medium effect size.

The median rank for students that participated in ICLAP decreased after participation in ICLAP, indicating an improvement in performance on the L-D scale as rated by teachers. Specifically, the median teacher L-D rating for students prior to the study was 3.0, or a “participant” level of performance on the L-D scale. The median rating after the study was a 2.0, or a “contributor” level of performance on the L-D scale. The “contributor” level is a step higher than “participant” on the L-D scale.

There were forty-five instances of increased student performance on the L-D scale at post-test, as indicated by the positive ranks. There were four instances of decreased student performance on the L-D scale at post-test, as indicated by the negative ranks. Thirty teacher ratings that remained unchanged from pre to post. These data provided support to reject the null hypothesis that the median of the population of differences was zero. Since the L-D scale was unique to the treatment group as a component of ICLAP, teacher-rated L-D scale data was not collected from the comparison group.

Research question four: After participation in ICLAP, will student scores on the SSBS-II improve?

Scores on the SSBS-II were obtained from the treatment and the comparison groups. Teachers were introduced to the SSBS-II during the facilitator training provided by the researcher prior to the study. Teachers assessed students the week prior to the start of the study for the pre-scores. This date was approximately one-quarter into the school year in order to ensure that teachers had sufficient knowledge of student behaviors. The post-scores were completed by the teachers in the week after the final counselor visit. There was approximately a six-week interval between the pre and post assessments. The data included scores for the Social Competency total as well as the three subscales. The pre and post raw scores were analyzed using a Paired Samples *t*-test.

The results for the treatment group did not have significant improvement in post scores on any of the three subscales of the SSBS-II: Peer Relations, $t(78) = .148, p = .441$; Academic Behavior $t(78) = 2.83, p = .006$; and Self-Management/Compliance $t(78) = .34, p = .367$. Results for the overall combined scale, Social Competency total, showed a significant improvement in scores. Higher post scores on the SSBS-II signified

improved performance. The results for the Social Competency total for the treatment group are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Paired Samples t-Test on SSBS-II, Social Competency total, for treatment group.

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)
Post-SSBS-II	79	126.82	23.75			
Pre-SSBS-II	79	113.72	19.92			
				6.79	78	.001

Means and standard deviations were calculated for both pre-test and post-test scores for Social Competency total main scale ($M = 113.72$, $SD = 19.92$; $M = 126.82$, $SD = 23.75$, respectively). The Paired Samples t -tests had a significant increase in post SSBS-II scores, $t(6.79) > t_{crit}(1.99)$, $p < .001$. An effect size was calculated using Cohen's d ($d = .60$). This was a medium effect size. These data provided support to reject the null hypothesis that the mean difference in pre and post scores on the SSBS-II after participation in ICLAP was zero.

In the comparison group, a two-way Paired Samples t -test was conducted to test whether there were significant differences in SSBS-II scores before and after students participated in the alternative guidance curriculum. No significant differences were found in scores on the SSBS-II scales from pre-test to post-test: Social Competency total, $t(28) = .502$, $p = .620$; Peer Relations, $t(28) = 1.267$, $p = .216$; Academic Behavior $t(28) = 1.32$, $p = .197$; and Self-Management, $t(28) = 1.730$, $p = .095$. The null hypothesis that

there was no difference in SSBS-II scores for the comparison group after participating in the alternative curriculum was not rejected.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations: Chapter Five

Summary

There was an immediate need for school counselors to show that their work made a difference in the academic lives of students. The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2001), the establishment of national standards for school counselors (ASCA, 2005), and the introduction of the Common Core State Standards (Eagle, 2013) called for school interventions and programs to have supporting data of their effectiveness. This was an opportunity for school counselors to employ ASCA national standards and implement classroom guidance curricula designed to improve academic performance.

While research was available for school counselors seeking curricula that focused on career and/or social needs of students, a review of the literature revealed a need for curricula related to academic performance. Only one major option was available for school counselors seeking a classroom guidance curriculum that they could incorporate in their school to improve academic performance, Student Success Skills (SSS) (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Webb et al., 2005). There were several major drawbacks associated with the SSS and another option was needed for school counselors. Below is a brief outline of those issues; chapter two provides an in-depth examination.

One issue was absence of an active comparison group in any of the research surrounding SSS. Another drawback was that participants in the SSS studies were screened to only include students with below average standardized test scores. Results were based on the distal measure of math and reading standardized test scores rather than the measurement of skills taught in the curriculum (reading and math skills were not taught). The issues with the curriculum design included: the content was so broad and covered so many components

that it was unclear which skills made an impact; it was not linked directly to ASCA national standards; and it required students to miss a large amount of traditional classroom time in order to participate in the eight weeks of classroom guidance and small group counseling. The current study was designed to address each of the above issues and provide school counselors with an easy-to-implement classroom guidance curriculum.

The purpose of this study was to introduce Innovative Counselor-led Academic Program (ICLAP), a five-week classroom guidance curriculum designed by the researcher to increase academic performance. School counselors facilitated ICLAP lessons and guided students through the process of self-assessing their current level of academic performance, setting new academic goals, and developing a program to achieve those goals (see Appendix A). Thus, ICLAP focused on the skills of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development to increase academic performance. As explained in chapter two, these three skills had been identified in the research as skills that academically successful students possessed. Additionally, ICLAP was tied to thirteen ASCA national standards (see Appendix B).

The Leader-Detractor (L-D) scale developed by Carkhuff (1968) was a five-point scale used in ICLAP as a tool to teach the skills of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development in the treatment group (see Appendix C). Specifically, over the course of five weeks, counselors shared with students the minimum behavior expectations established by their teachers for the class. Students were taught how to use the L-D scale to self-assess to what extent their behavior met those expectations. The students set new performance goals based on the L-D scale and designed a program to reach those goals. For the purpose of this study, the minimum behavior academic expectations, or “Participant” performance on the L-D scale included: 1. being seated before the bell rings; 2. having a writing implement

and notebook visible on the desk; 3. showing that the homework was completed (written or verbal); and 4. raising a hand at least once during class.

Data was collected from an active comparison group of twenty-nine students. This group received the same amount of school counselor time and attention as did the treatment group. This procedure was implemented to address the possibility that positive results in the treatment group resulted from the Hawthorne Effect. The curriculum taught in the comparison group focused on ASCA career standards, not specifically promoting academic standards (see Appendix E). An additional purpose of collecting data from the comparison group was to determine if factors outside of the study such as school-wide academic interventions or other changes may have influenced student performance school-wide during the time of the study. After the study was completed, the facilitators provided brief, informal feedback verbally to the researcher. This feedback was not formally documented. It is shared in this chapter as supplemental information as it may be useful for future research.

The following discussion section will provide a summary of the analyses of the four research questions and the main research question that guided this study. Next, the limitations of the study will be outlined. Implications and recommendations for future research are presented next. This chapter will close with a summary of the conclusions.

Discussion

There were four questions related to the main research question: “Can the Innovative Counselor-led Academic Program (ICLAP) positively impact student academic performance”? After participation in ICLAP:

1. Will student grades improve?

2. Will student self-assessment ratings on the L-D scale improve?
3. Will teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale improve?
4. Will student scores on the SSBS-II improve?

Research Question One

Grades for participants in the treatment and comparison group were collected a week prior to the study and again the week after the study. A one-way Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test did not have an increase in grades at post-test for treatment group. Grades remained unchanged in the comparison group after a two-way Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test.

If positive changes in grades had been found in the treatment group, it would have been another indication that ICLAP was successful, yet an indirect indicator of success. As discussed in chapter two, grades were the only distal dependent variable used in the study. As such, there were several possible explanations for why grades were the only dependent variable not to show a significant improvement.

First, as a general measure of academic performance, the possibility existed that grades were not sensitive enough to measure the learning of the specific skills taught in ICLAP. The insignificant results may have been more representative of a limitation of grades as a dependent variable that did not detect possible improvements of a short-term intervention. Thus, it was possible that grades did not measure the learning of new skills over the course of five weeks. The researcher suspects that similar results would have occurred with standardized test scores, a common dependent distal variable used in previous research.

Additionally, grades may have been influenced by factors beyond the control of the study. For example, if a student was missing a major assignment, their grade could have been very low as a result of only that assignment. When the assignment is submitted and graded at a future date, the grade will then increase suddenly. In such a case, the timing of when pre and post grades were collected would become a major factor and influenced by any major pending assignments. Similarly, grades were commonly determined by the weight of certain assessments over the course of the quarter, semester, and year. For example, in some classes the final exam or final project may comprise fifty percent of the overall grade. If grade changes were measured prior to that final project, the actual grade could be misleading or inaccurate since fifty percent of the actual grade would be pending.

Grades were measured in the current study in order to follow the precedent established by earlier research that relied only on distal measures. As discussed in chapter two, the researcher believed that relying on distal measures was not a sustainable measurement for assessing the success of school counselor interventions. The results of this study supported that argument. In this instance, had only distal measures been used, improvements in student learning would have been obscured without the additional use of proximal measures. Based on the results and review of the literature, this researcher suggests that future studies with ICLAP and other classroom guidance curricula aimed to increase grades should consider collecting grades over a longer period of time and/or as a percentage of assignments due at time of data collection.

In general, researchers should carefully weigh the benefits of including grades as a dependent variable and whether it would be more beneficial to use only proximal

measures. At best, grades may be valuable to collect as supplemental data to proximal measures such as the L-D scale or other instruments intended to measure the learning of specific skills. Relying on grades, standardized test scores, or other distal measures may lead to stakeholders such as students, parents, and school board members drawing false or incomplete conclusions about the effectiveness of an intervention.

Research Question Two

Students in the treatment group self-assessed their performance during the first lesson of ICLAP and again during the final lesson. Improved ratings at post-test were found using a one-way Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test. Specifically, the median rank at pre-test was a level three, or a Participant level of performance on the L-D scale. A Participant rating meant that students perceived themselves as meeting the minimum academic expectations. At post-test, the median student self-assessment increased to a level two, or a Contributor level of performance on the L-D scale. A Contributor rating meant that students perceived themselves as meeting minimum expectations and contributing extra in class.

This provided evidence that after participating in the five weeks of ICLAP and using the L-D scale to measure, set goals, and develop a plan for improvement, students perceived an improvement in their academic performance. It was not common practice in the literature to use student self-assessments as a dependent variable. Procedures in ICLAP were designed to help students become more aware of their own behavior through self-assessment. Therefore, collecting pre-post assessments of their own behavior on the L-D scale offered insight into whether students learned the self-assessment, goal setting,

and program development skills taught in ICLAP. Increased student self-assessed scores at post-test suggested that the teaching and learning of those skills was successful.

Self-assessment scores in this study gave students a unique voice. Teachers and counselors in the study reported that this introspective process motivated students more than only feedback from the adults. Rather than relying exclusively on dependent variables that measured how adults perceived their behavior, self-assessed student ratings provided information directly from the students about how they perceived their own learning and progress in ICLAP. The combination of increased teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale combined with increased student self-assessment ratings was an indication that both parties observed a similar progression of improved academic performance.

Participation in ICLAP included structured opportunities for students to discuss and compare perceptions of their behavior with those of the teachers. These opportunities for students to receive frequent feedback from their teacher occurred through verbal and short writing assignments. These assignments initiated conversations between teachers and students about student behaviors that may not have otherwise occurred. The L-D scale served as a reference for student academic performance and common ground in those communications. According to informal feedback from teachers and students, the following topics were particularly constructive in those discussions: discrepancies between teacher and student ratings; agreements in teacher and student ratings; opportunities for teachers to encourage and support students in reaching their goals; and mutual identification of specific behaviors to be modified.

Research Question Three

Teachers rated students in the treatment group on the L-D scale prior to ICLAP and again afterwards. A one-way Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test showed a significant increase in ratings at post-test. Specifically, the median rank at pre-test was a level three, or a Participant level of performance on the L-D scale. A Participant rating meant that students were meeting minimum expectations established by the teachers in the study. At post-test, the median teacher ranking increased to a level two, or a Contributor level of performance on the L-D scale. A Contributor rating meant that students were meeting minimum expectations and exceeded those minimum expectations by contributing extra.

At the end of the study, teachers reported that students were making an extra effort to get to class early, raise their hand more than once during class, and even do more than the minimum requirements on assignments so that they could reach their higher goals on the L-D scale. Teachers and school counselors reported that morale in the treatment group was high and there was a group effort and positive attitude towards the goal of bringing up the L-D performance level of the class as a whole.

It was also reported that after the study, the teachers planned to implement their own reward system for continued class improvement. Such rewards included “no homework Friday”, “donut day”, and other similar events if the class reached certain milestones on the L-D scale. There was also talk between the teachers and students of the classes in the treatment group to set up a friendly competition. The researcher advised teachers and counselors to be particularly attentive to students who may not “buy in” or may have barriers to improvement. Students who emerged as not improving may

benefit from additional levels of attention, an additional intervention, and/or family involvement.

Research Question Four

Teachers scored students in the treatment and comparison group on the SSBS-II one week prior to the study and the week after the study. Social Competency total scores increased significantly at post-test using a one-way Paired Samples *t*-test. There was no significant increase in the subscales of Peer Relations, Self –Management, and Academic Behavior. While improvements in any of the subscales had the potential to illuminate additional information about the effects of ICLAP, significant results for the Social Competency total was most valuable. This main scale incorporated aspects of all of the subscales and was an important overall indication that participation in ICLAP resulted in an increase of academic behaviors.

A two-way Paired Samples *t*-test had no change in pre-post scores on any of the SSBS-II scales for the comparison group. This provided evidence that any school-wide interventions or changes that may have taken place in the school during the time of the study did not significantly impact academic performance in the general student population. If SSBS-II scores had increased in the treatment and comparison groups, the conclusion that the increase for the treatment group occurred as a direct result of ICLAP would have been difficult to verify. Also, had scores increased in both groups, the possibility would have existed that the attention from a school counselor by itself was a factor in the improved scores (Hawthorne Effect).

It is recommended that future studies using ICLAP and the SSBS-II follow the procedures and collect scores for the Social Competency total as well as the subscales,

both in treatment and comparison groups. When determining whether to use the SSBS-II or not, it should be noted that the scoring procedures for the researcher as well as for the teachers in the study were time intensive.

Teachers reported that scoring for the SSBS-II took approximately two to three minutes per student. Since teachers rated each student twice (once at pre-test and again at post-test), that was a total of up to six minutes per student. While that may not appear overwhelming, when that time was multiplied by thirty students, it equated to approximately three hours of teacher time per class. Since each of the two teachers in the study had two classes, that meant each teacher was required to commit up to six hours of total time to rate each student in their two classes. Scoring for the SSBS-II took the researcher and four assistants approximately forty hours to compute the score sheets, code the data, and enter into SPSS. Thus, researchers should weigh the benefits of SSBS-II results against the time commitment that may be incurred to administer and score.

If both SSBS-II scores and L-D ratings cannot be collected due to time limitations, the researcher recommends choosing the L-D scale for several reasons. First, although more research is warranted, the results of this study suggested a sufficient level of test validity between the SSBS-II and the L-D scale in that they both detected an increase in observable academic behavior. Secondly, based on feedback from the teachers and counselors in the study, the L-D scale may be more likely to be adopted after the study to continue monitoring academic performance. Additionally, teachers reported that rating student behavior on the L-D scale took substantially less time (less than a minute per student) and was much easier to implement than the SSBS-II.

Main Research Question

As indicated in chapter three, an increase in at least one of the dependent variables was sufficient to demonstrate increased academic performance for students who participated in ICLAP. Three of the four dependent variables had significant improvements at post-test, and this made a strong case that participation in ICLAP resulted in increased student academic performance. This conclusion was strengthened by the consistency of results between the student self-assessed ratings and teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale; both concluded that student academic behavior increased. The improvement in SSBS-II scores suggested test validity between the L-D scale and the SSBS-II; both measures yielded an increase in behaviors related to academic success. The unchanged SSBS-II scores in the comparison group after receiving an alternative curriculum provided additional evidence that it was the participation in ICLAP curriculum resulted in improved academic performance.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results from this study. First, other than sex, additional demographic data for participants was unavailable to the researcher. To ensure student anonymity, it was requested by the school that no additional student information be collected. It was possible that there was a more or less than typical special education status, ethnicity, federal lunch participation, or other factors in the treatment or comparison group. It was unknown whether those factors or other demographic differences influenced results. The use of three classes for the treatment group was employed in order to select a population most representative of the normal student population. Also, the choice to use Health and English subjects was

strategic in the sense of being as inclusive of all students as possible since those were subjects all students took their first year.

A second limitation was that the participants were ninth grade students from one high school in Nevada. If ICLAP is implemented in different geographical areas and grade levels, it will add to reliability and validity of the program. Future research should be done to verify that positive results can be replicated with students of different grade levels. The researcher believes this curriculum is developmentally appropriate for students in grades seven through twelve. Counselors are encouraged to adjust the specifics in the lessons to meet the needs of the students in their schools.

The assignment of the students in the treatment and comparison groups could also be considered a limitation. All students were derived from existing classroom sections. Those students were placed into classes by school staff per the protocol and procedures of the registration and scheduling process. Ideally, groups would have been randomly selected to reduce the possibility of homogeneity. However, a classroom of randomly assigned students is very difficult to obtain in most school settings.

Similarly, the teachers for the study were not chosen randomly. Rather, teachers were selected on their willingness to volunteer the use of their classroom and instructional time. It is possible that teachers who are more open to school counselors facilitating guidance lessons in their classrooms are also more open to other creative ways of teaching. Therefore, they may be more prone to exposing students to a level of instruction different and unique from teachers who would not invite counselors into their classroom. Alternatively, teachers who are more likely to invite school counselors into their classroom may already be struggling and be more open to the assistance of a school

counselor. In either case, the initial attitude of the teachers who volunteered may not reflect that of the general teacher population.

Student transiency exists in most schools and created another limitation for this study. New students were added to the classes during the study. While data was not collected from any new students who entered after the study began, the possibility that new students changed the group dynamics in the classroom and had an impact on student behaviors existed. Similarly, ten participants withdrew from school or classes during the study. This attrition resulted in a loss of data for each withdrawn student and made post-test data unattainable for those participants. The possibility that these particular students could have changed the results cannot be eliminated.

Finally, it should be considered that in any school setting, students were exposed to any number of individual, group or class interventions over the course of the five-week period. Thus, it is possible that ICLAP was not the only academic/behavioral program or service to impact student performance. If students were exposed to additional academic/behavioral programs, results may not exclusively stem from ICLAP. Results from the comparison group in this study did not provide evidence that students were influenced by other interventions, although the possibility cannot be eliminated entirely.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

School counselors interested in implementing the ICLAP curriculum in their school will likely appreciate the simplicity of the L-D scale and easy incorporation of lessons. Informal feedback from the school counselors in the study suggested that students enjoyed the lessons and appeared motivated by the L-D scale. The teachers and counselors commented that students especially liked the class performance chart. Several

students stated that it was fun to see a visual of how the class was improving. After the study was completed, the counselors collected the class L-D performance charts from the classrooms. Upon realizing that the charts were gone, both of the teachers in the study went to the counseling office and requested them back for continued use. They intended to continue using both the L-D scale and the charts for the remainder of the school year. Thus, it is strongly suggested that the class performance charts be used. Future research that examines the relational components that occurs in ICLAP between teachers, students, and school counselors is also recommended.

Prior to implementing ICLAP, it is essential that teachers, school counselors, and possibly the school administration collaborate to establish four to five minimum behavioral academic expectations for students. One of the advantages of ICLAP and the L-D scale is that it can be adapted to meet the needs and academic expectations of different schools. The process of defining clear expectations for students was very helpful for the teachers and counselors in the current study. As discussed in chapter one, if teachers have not clearly defined minimum expectations for their students and refer to them consistently, then students are not clear what it means to do well in school. Implementing ICLAP without first establishing these basic expectations would not allow students to appropriately assess themselves on the L-D scale.

Once expectations have been established and ICLAP is underway, school counselors should identify students who are participating in lessons and not progressing. Such students can be identified if either or both the self-assessed L-D ratings and teacher L-D ratings start low and do not improve after five weeks of ICLAP. Individual counseling and group counseling interventions should be considered for those students.

The goals of those interventions should be to identify and address any personal, social, medical, academic, or other barriers to academic performance.

The counselors and teachers in the study reported that they intended to use teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale and student self-ratings for upcoming teacher-family conferences. The use of L-D ratings, both from the student and the teacher, should be very useful when counselors, teachers, students, and families meet for conferences to discuss progress in school. Contrary to grades and standardized test scores that provide general information, L-D ratings can inform families about specific behaviors in class. Armed with such specifics, the academic team will be able to make more informed decisions when creating an intervention plan. The student self-assessment ratings, goals, and program to reach their goals are artifacts students should have after participating in ICLAP. Those artifacts could be shared and discussed at the meeting and used as starting points for improving performance and employing other interventions. Artifacts could offer all parties an easy way to identify student academic strengths and also areas for improvement. Thus, the family, student, classmates, and teachers could have a common way to understand the academic expectations and utilize the L-D scale to measure progress.

Improvements in student academic performance as a result of ICLAP should be documented by the school counseling department and shared with all stakeholders. It is essential that students, families, school administration, school board members, and taxpayers understand what school counselors are doing to improve academic performance. An overview of ICLAP, the skills taught, and the results could be published in school publications and local newspapers, presented at school board

meetings, discussed at family-student conferences, and presented at school events such as open houses.

The documentation and presentation of ICLAP and its effect on academic performance could be essential in building a case for school counseling departments seeking to fully align with ASCA national standards. Such documentation could also be leverage when advocating for a shift in school counselor responsibilities. Specifically, it could provide support for school counselors to spend more of their time on interventions related to ASCA standards and less on non-counselor related tasks. When school counselors spend more time directly impacting the academic lives of students by implementing classroom guidance curriculum such as ICLAP and less time subbing for classes, coordinating testing procedures, standing out on bus duty, or creating the school class schedule, all stakeholders benefit.

Use of a Comparison Group

Many changes occur over the course of a school year that affect student performance. There can be fluctuations in student and teacher motivation depending on the time of the school year. Also, schools are constantly making changes to staffing, curriculum, scheduling, and other academic variables in an effort to increase academic performance. The use of a comparison group is warranted to detect the likelihood that variables outside of the study such as fluctuations in motivation or other changes in the school affected results. The use of the comparison group was an important component in the current study to monitor extraneous variables and to conclude that the participation in ICLAP improved L-D scores and SSBS-II scores. It is recommended that future research incorporate the use of a comparison group.

Distal and Proximal Measures

This study provided support for the argument raised in chapter two regarding proximal and distal measures. School counselors should be cautious in deciding whether to use standardized test scores or grades to demonstrate effectiveness of their programs. These, and other distal measures, are general indicators of performance. There are so many factors that enter into standardized test scores and grades; it is a gamble to conclude that an improvement is a direct result of one school counselor intervention. At best, distal measures should be used as a supplemental measure when proximal measures such as the L-D scale or SSBS-II are available to directly measure the behaviors of what is being taught by school counselors. It does not seem logical to continue the trend of relying on standardized test scores for math and reading when school counseling interventions do not target math skills or reading skills.

In an era marked by school reform and a myriad of student interventions, school counselors should resist the temptation to jump on board of a rise in grades or standardized test scores. Rather, school counselors should use instruments like the L-D scale and the SSBS-II that measure specific behaviors that reflect the skills taught in the classroom guidance.

ICLAP to Increase Academic Performance School-Wide

The possibility that ICLAP could be effective at increasing academic performance at the school level, for all students, should be investigated. In a similar fashion to the current study, the teachers, counselors, and administration would first define 4-5 minimum expectations for all students. Then, each classroom in the school could monitor the performance of the class using the L-D scale. In addition to classroom

performance charts in each classroom, there could be charts posted in the hallways comparing grade levels, classrooms, or by teacher. A logical next step would be for the administration to offer incentives for students. For example, there could be a “no-homework” Friday if 90% of the students were assessed as “contributors” for a week. Or, to encourage even higher levels of school-wide performance, a unique reward could be announced such as the principal to dye their hair green if a certain percent of students become leaders. At that level of expectation, teachers and administrators would be on the lookout for behaviors that exceed minimum expectations and help other students. The possibility for this process to create a safe, bully-free, healthy, and positive school climate is strong. Students in the school would know exactly what is expected of them academically (the minimum expectations), understand how to assess their current level of performance, set new academic goals based on the L-D scale, and develop plans with specific steps to reach those goals.

The entire process of implementing ICLAP at the school level would be facilitated by school counselors. School counselors would be instrumental in: creating minimum academic expectations, teaching the L-D scale to students and staff, and implementing visits to classrooms to use the lessons in ICLAP of self-assessment, goal setting, and program development.

Through a school-wide ICLAP intervention, low-performing students could more easily be identified. School counselors could play a role in identifying those students and providing individualized interventions for those at-risk students. This would include groups for students performing at the Observer level, and perhaps individual counseling for students at the Detractor level.

It would be essential to involve all stakeholders to implement ICLAP school-wide and adopt the L-D scale as a school-wide measure of performance. Students, their families, school board members, and community member support would be essential for long-term, sustainable academic improvement. As a result of school-wide implementation of ICLAP and long-term adoption of the L-D scale, students in that school would become proficient in self-assessing their academic performance, setting higher academic performance goals, and developing a plan to reach those goals. School counselors and other school personnel would foster that growth and provide support for struggling students. On a long-term basis, student grades and standardized test scores may become an important indicator of school-wide success. The standardized test scores and grades would be distal measures to show that the role of school counselors is vital to the academic lives of students.

Conclusions

This study provides some evidence that participation in Innovative Counselor-led Academic Program (ICLAP) can improve student academic performance. Both the L-D scale and the SSBS-II were proximal measures that examined specific behaviors related to academic success; they measured the learning of the content of ICLAP through observable behavior. Teacher ratings of students on the L-D scale and student self-assessed ratings on the L-D scale improved after participation in ICLAP. Teachers rated students higher on the SSBS-II after participating in the five week curriculum. In an active comparison group that received an alternative curriculum, SSBS-II scores and grades had no difference at post-test during the same five-week period.

The introduction of ICLAP and the positive results from this study represent progress towards addressing the gap in the literature for a school counselor-led classroom guidance curriculum linked to ASCA academic standards. While future research is warranted to replicate these findings, results indicated ICLAP offers school counselors an improved option for a classroom guidance curriculum that targets academic performance. During a time of increased accountability for educators to demonstrate that their work with students is making a difference, ICLAP spotlights the key role school counselors can play to increase student success.

The ease of implementation, minimal disruption to traditional classroom time, positive feedback from participants, and increased performance on three dependent variables makes ICLAP a unique and promising program for school counselors and their students. Rather than simply telling students to do better in school, ICLAP provides a structured opportunity for school counselors and other school personnel to clearly identify and define their academic expectations for students. Students benefit from a clear understanding of what it means to do well in school. The use of the L-D scale is a simple way for students to collaborate with their teachers and school counselors to self-assess their performance, set new academic goals, and design a program to reach those goals. The notion that ICLAP could be expanded to a school-wide level and reach all students in a school, or even in a school district, is an exciting prospect for schools seeking to align with ASCA national standards and elevate the level of learning for all students.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Lessons that Comprise ICLAP Curriculum

Lesson 1: Self-Assessment

Materials: Leader-Detractor Handout & sticky notes

Objectives:

1. Introduce and explain purpose of L-D scale (to improve performance).
2. Provide students with the “minimum expectations” in the class as established by teacher.
3. Students self-assess on L-D scale for that week, including current grade in the class and submit their L-D Scale handout. (scores and grades from this class meeting will serve as the pre-scores)

Instructional Components:

1. Class Activity:

- **Present Leader-Detractor PowerPoint introducing L-D scale.**
- **Pass out one sticky note per student. Students write some things they do or roles they play outside of school (sports, band, volunteer, church goer, etc.). Counselor collects and puts sticky notes on the board.**
- **Class and counselor choose 2 or 3 student activities to use as examples. Come up with minimum expectations, then specific behaviors at each level of performance on the L-D Scale for examples.**

2. Individual Activity:

- **Distribute Leader-Detractor Scale handout.**
- **Review and ask students to write minimum expectations of the class on their handout. Students work individually to assess their current level of performance and answer questions on the handout (i.e. “up to this point, what level have you performed in this class since the start of the school year”).**

3. Pair work:

- **In pairs, each student discusses their self-assessment with a partner. Partner provides feedback from the perspective of a classmate. Student strengths, supportive people and barriers should be discussed.**

- **TIME PERMITTING: Switch to new Pairs**

4. Collect Leader-Detractor self-assessment for the day (“how would you rate your performance since the last counselor visit?”)

- Decorate magnets (optional)

Lesson 2: Goal Setting & Program Development

Materials: Leader-Detractor Handout, “Steps to Success” handout, Leader-

Detractor Class Performance Board, bread, peanut butter, jelly, knife & bread

Objectives:

1. Introduce concept of “class performance”.
2. Understand the importance of goal setting.
3. Understand the importance of breaking down steps to reaching goals into specific steps.
4. Complete “Steps to Success” handout.

Instructional Components:

- 1. Review L-D scale with students. Option to use PowerPoint again.**
- 2. Class activity:**
 - **Present class Leader-Detractor Performance Board with data from week 1. Open up for comments and discussions about initial class performance.**
- 3. Individual activity:**
 - **Ask students to pull out scrape paper and write down steps to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. STOP writing after 1 minute.**
- 4. Class activity:**
 - **A student volunteer collects papers and reads them to counselor. Counselor attempts to make a sandwich based on directions and exaggerates missing steps (this could also be done by an outgoing student if planned ahead!). Students realize the importance of being specific with steps.**
- 5. Class activity:**
 - **To class: “What are some SPECIFIC steps (behaviors) that might bring you to a higher level in this class?” Counselor writes responses on board.**
- 6. Pairs activity:**

- **Handout “Steps to Success” handout. In PAIRS with as much detail as possible, each student completes a goal setting worksheet. Students should reference steps from #5.**
- 7. Collect “Steps to Success” handout.**
 - 8. Handout and collect Leader-Detractor self-assessment for the day (“how would you rate your performance since the last counselor visit?”)**
-

Lesson 3: Review/Revise Goals and Plan

Materials: Leader-Detractor Handout, “Steps to Success” handouts turned in from last class, lined paper

Objectives:

1. Review class chart with current data (includes student self-assessments from the first two meetings, teacher-assessed scores of students from the first two meetings and class averages).
2. Review “Steps to Success” handout from last week.
3. Student obtain current grades and chart them.
4. Students self-assess on L-D scale for that week, including current grade in the class and submit their L-D Scale handout.

Instructional Components:

- 1. Class Activity:**
 - **Ask class for observations and discussion of updated class performance chart.**
- 2. Pair activity:**
 - **Hand out “Steps to Success” from last class. Pair up and review “Steps to Success”. Students discuss progress and make adjustments as needed. Adjustments should be made in a different color pen/pencil to count towards participation.**
- 3. Individual Writing Activity:**
 - **“Write short essay to the teacher about your personal goal setting process and progress towards that goal. Include how you have used your strengths, your supportive people, steps you have taken, and things you**

still need to do. The essay should include your original L-D rating and your goal L-D rating. This should be approximately one page in length.

- Handout and collect Leader-Detractor self-assessment for the day (“how would you rate your performance since the last counselor visit?”)

Steps To Success!

What specific steps will “up” your performance in this class?

Name: _____
Date: _____

FINISH!

Performance Goal:
Leader
Contributor
Participant

Date to reach goal: _____

Perf. Step #6

Perf. Step #5

Perf. Step #5

Perf. Step #6

Common step

START!

Grade Step #1

Grade Step #2

Grade Step #5

Grade Step #5

Grade Step #2

Grade Step #6

FINISH!

Grade Goal:
A B C D

Date to reach goal: _____

START!

Starting Performance:
Contributor
Observer
Participant
Detractor

My personal strength; that will help me reach my goal;:

- _____
- _____
- _____

4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Possible barriers or things that might get in my way of reaching my goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Things that I will do to make sure those barriers don't get in my way of reaching my goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

People in my life who will support me in reaching my goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Lesson 4: Check-in and Review

Materials: Completed essays from last class with teacher comments, Leader-Detractor handout, and lined paper.

Objectives:

1. Present class chart with current data (includes student self-assessments from the first three meetings, teacher-assessed scores of students from the first three meetings and class averages).
2. Review teacher feedback from letters. Review and adjust goals. Share out.
3. Students create an L-D Scale for another person and situation.

Instructional Components:

1. Class Activity:

- **Group analysis, observations, and discussion of updated class chart.**

2. Individual Activity:

- **Hand back essays to the teacher and students review teacher comments.**

3. Individual Writing Activity:

- **“Think about someone important in your life-- someone you care about. Then, think about the things that person does or the role they play in your life. Choose either a thing they do or the role they play in your life and how they could use the L-D scale to improve. On your paper, create 4-5 minimum expectations, and an L-D scale for that person”.**
- **Your finished paper should include: list of minimum expectations, an L-D scale that shows those expectations at each level, and at least a paragraph describing how you chose this person and their new L-D scale.**

4. Homework: Share the L-D scale you created for the person you care about with that person (this could be in-person sharing, over the phone, text photo, etc.).

5. Handout and collect Leader-Detractor self-assessment for the day (“how would you rate your performance since the last counselor visit?”)

Lesson 5: Review & Closure

Materials: Leader-Detractor Handout & “Study Letter”.

Objectives:

1. Present class chart with current data (includes student self-assessments from the first four meetings, teacher-assessed scores of students from the first four meetings and class averages). Discussion.
2. Students discuss the L-D scale they created in class 4 and the subsequent discussion with person for whom it was created.
2. Administer and collect SSB-II (to obtain post-test scores).
3. Administer and collect researcher constructed post-survey.
4. Closing comments and questions.

Instructional components:

6. Class Activity:

- **Group analysis, observations, analysis and discussion of updated class chart.**

7. Pairs Activity:

- **In pairs, students share with a partner about the L-D scale they created in class 4 and how the person responded when presented with it. If they did not complete assignment, “how would that person respond when you share it”?**
- **Students switch to new pairs! One minute per partner.**
- **Switch again?**

8. Class Activity:

- **Students are invited to share any observations, comments or their experiences with the class.**

9. Handout and collect Leader-Detractor self-assessment for the day (“how would you rate your performance since the last counselor visit?”)

10. Debrief about the study. Collect informal thoughts and observations from students about your visits. (Have a student copy down feedback?). Hand out “Study letter” to students.

Appendix B

ASCA Student Standards and Competencies Targeted in ICLAP

Domain: Academic Development

A:A1.5 Identify attitudes and behaviors that lead to successful learning

A:A3.1 Take responsibility for their actions

A:B1.7 Become a self-directed and independent learner

A:B2.1 Establish challenging academic goals in elementary, middle/jr high and high school

A:B2.2 Use assessment results in educational planning

A:B2.4 Apply knowledge of aptitudes and interests to goal setting

A:B2.5 Use problem-solving and decision-making skills to assess progress toward educational goals

A:B2.6 Understand the relationship between classroom performance and success in school

Domain: Personal/Social Domain

PS:A1.6 Distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior

PS:A1.10 Identify personal strengths and assets

PS:B1.9 Identify long- and short-term goals

PS:B1.10 Identify alternative ways of achieving goals

PS:B1.12 Develop an action plan to set and achieve realistic goals

Appendix C

Leader-Detractor Scale Handout

Leader-Detractor Performance Scale

- 1. **LEADER:** Does what is expected + Does Extra + Helps others be successful
- 2. **CONTRIBUTER:** Does what is expected + Does Extra
- 3. **PARTICIPANT:** Does what is expected
- 4. **OBSERVER:** Does less than expected
- 5. **DETRACTOR:** Does less than what is expected + Detracts someone else

Today's Date	Performance for today	Teacher Signature	Agree?	Teacher Comments
__/__/__	_____	_____	Y/N	_____
__/__/__	_____	_____	Y/N	_____
__/__/__	_____	_____	Y/N	_____
__/__/__	_____	_____	Y/N	_____
__/__/__	_____	_____	Y/N	_____
__/__/__	_____	_____	Y/N	_____
__/__/__	_____	_____	Y/N	_____

What does it take to be a Participant in this class (i.e. what are the expectations)?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What are some things I could do differently to increase my performance?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Appendix D

Career Guidance Curriculum for Comparison Group

Alternative Career Lessons

LESSON #1: Career Exploration

Students complete online searches and handout in preparation for their presentation:

<http://www.lyon.k12.nv.us/education/page/download.php?fileinfo=TGVzc29uXzMxXy1fU3R1ZGVudC1MZWRfQ2FyZWVvYX0F3YXJlbnVzc2oucGRmOjo6L3d3dzEwL3NjaG9vbHMvbnYvbHlvc29uXzE5eS9pbWFnZXMvYXR0YWN0LzEwMDYvMjMzXzEwMDZfYXR0YWN0XzEyOTQucGRm>

Guidelines for presentation:

<http://www.lyon.k12.nv.us/education/page/download.php?fileinfo=TGVzc29uXzMwLF8zMV9iYW5kb3V0XzEucGRmOjo6L3d3dzEwL3NjaG9vbHMvbnYvbHlvc29uXzE5eS9pbWFnZXMvYXR0YWN0LzEwMDYvMTcwXzEwMDZfYXR0YWN0XzEzNDYucGRm>

LESSON #2: Finish Career Exploration Searches and Practice Presentations in Groups**LESSON #3: Student Presentations & Feedback****LESSON #4: Resume Building**

<http://www.lyon.k12.nv.us/education/page/download.php?fileinfo=TGVzc29uXzI5Xy1fUmVzdW1lX0J1aWxkaW5nai5wZGY6Ojovd3d3MTAvc2Nob29scy9udi9seW9uY291bnR5L2ltYWdlcy9hdHRhY2gvMTAwNi8yMzNfMTAwNi9hdHRhY2hfMTI5Mi5wZGY>

LESSON #5: Personal Finance & Responsibility

<http://www.lyon.k12.nv.us/education/page/download.php?fileinfo=TGVzc29uXzM5Xy1fUGVyc29uYWxfRmluYW5hY2VfUmVzcG9uc2lsYml0eWoucGRmOjo6L3d3dzEwL3NjaG9vbHMvbnYvbHlvc29uXzE5eS9pbWFnZXMvYXR0YWN0LzEwMDYvMjMzXzEwMDZfYXR0YWN0XzEyOTUucGRm>

HANDOUTS:

1. <http://www.lyon.k12.nv.us/education/page/download.php?fileinfo=TGVzc29uXzM5X0hhbmRvdXRfMS5wZGY6Ojovd3d3MTAvc2Nob29scy9udi9seW9uY291bnR5L2ltYWdlcy9hdHRhY2gvMTAwNi8xNzBfMTAwNi9hdHRhY2hfMTM0Ny5wZGY>
2. <http://www.lyon.k12.nv.us/education/page/download.php?fileinfo=TGVzc29uXzM5X0hhbmRvdXRfMi5wZGY6Ojovd3d3MTAvc2Nob29scy9udi9seW9uY291bnR5L2ltYWdlcy9hdHRhY2gvMTAwNi8xNzBfMTAwNi9hdHRhY2hfMTM0OC5wZGY>
3. <http://www.lyon.k12.nv.us/education/page/download.php?fileinfo=TGVzc29uXzM5X0hhbmRvdXRfMy5wZGY6Ojovd3d3MTAvc2Nob29scy9udi9seW9uY291bnR5L2ltYWdlcy9hdHRhY2gvMTAwNi8xNzBfMTAwNi9hdHRhY2hfMTM0OS5wZGY>

Appendix E

ASCA Student Standards & Competencies for Career Curriculum

Domain: Career Development

- C:A1.1 Develop skills to locate, evaluate and interpret career information
- C:A1.2 Learn about the variety of traditional and nontraditional occupations
- C:A2.1 Acquire employability skills such as working on a team, problem solving,
and organizational skills
- C:A2.6 Learn how to write a resume
- C:A2.8 Understand the importance of responsibility, dependability, punctuality,
integrity and effort in the workplace
- C:B1.3 Demonstrate knowledge of the career-planning process
- C:B1.6 Learn to use the internet to access career-planning information
- C:C2.3 Learn to work cooperatively with others as a team member

Appendix F

Outline of Topics for Facilitator Training

Educator Training Agenda-August 2014

Teachers: English Teacher & Health Teacher

Counselors: School Counselor #1 & School Counselor #2

- I. Welcome!!
- II. Introduction to the Study
 - a. PowerPoint with discussion and questions
- III. Overview of Lessons & Study Procedures (hand out materials)
 - a. Folder 1 (self-assessment):
 - b. Folder 2 (goal setting/program development):
 - c. Folder 3 (review/revise goals & programs):
 - d. Folder 4 (helping others set goals):
 - e. Folder 5 (Tying it all together):
- IV. Collecting Pre-Post data: The SSBS-II scores, L-D Scale ratings (from students and teachers), and grades
- V. Logistics
 - a. When?_____ Where?_____
 - b. Assignment of Teacher/Counselor pairs:

Counselors Only:

- I. In-depth review of all lessons
- II. In-depth review of Career Curriculum
- III. Procedures for collecting data and mailing to researcher

NOTES TO SELF:

Appendix G

Study Information Sheet

Information Sheet

****Si Ud. prefiere comunicar en español sobre este carta de información, por favor llama a Veronica, la secretaria en la escuela a las 775-851-5656****

Introduction: Recently, school counselors at Damonte Ranch High School made visits to classrooms and taught five lessons. These lessons were part of a research study conducted by Craig Farnum, a doctoral student at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Purpose: This study was designed to examine a curriculum of school guidance lessons to teach academic skills and increase student academic performance. Classes received either lessons focused on academic skills or career skills.

Procedures: This study consisted of school counselors teaching a total of five, 45-minute lessons over the course of five weeks. These lessons were either focused on career development or academic success. The content of all lessons aligned with national school counselor standards developed by the American School Counselor Association.

Discomforts and Risks: This study posed no greater than minimal risk of harm.

Benefits: Students who participated in the lessons had the potential to increase academic skills or career skills.

Statement of Anonymity: This study did not gather any form of identifying information and therefore was completely anonymous.

Right to ask questions and contact information: You are welcome to ask questions of the researcher at any time by emailing craigfarnum@hotmail.com. You may also call 775-303-6192. There is an office that provides oversight called the Office of Human Research Protection at the University of Nevada, Reno. You may call them if you have any concerns on the conduct of the study at 775-327-2367.

Appendix H

Examples of Class L-D Performance Chart

LAST VISIT	WEEK #				
	1	2	3	4	5
LEADER	0	1	2	5	8
CONTRIBUTOR	5	6	10	10	7
PARTICIPANT	9	10	9	8	4
OBSERVER	5	6	4	2	1
DETRACTOR	6	1	0	0	0

LAST VISIT	WEEK #				
	1	2	3	4	5
LEADER	1	1	1	1	5
CONTRIBUTOR	6	7	8	5	7
PARTICIPANT	17	17	19	21	18
OBSERVER	3	4	4	5	0
DETRACTOR	2	0	0	0	0

LAST VISIT	WEEK #				
	1	2	3	4	5
LEADER	1	0	0	2	7
CONTRIBUTOR	5	10	12	14	10
PARTICIPANT	11	13	12	7	9
OBSERVER	7	3	3	2	1
DETRACTOR	5	0	1	1	0

