

## **Why Middle School Counselors**

(Adapted ASCA 2012)

Today's young people are living in an exciting time, with an increasingly diverse society, new technologies, and expanding opportunities. To help ensure that they are prepared to become the next generation of parents, workers, leaders, and citizens, every student needs support, guidance, and opportunities during adolescence, a time of rapid growth and change. Early adolescents face unique and diverse challenges, both personally and developmentally, that have an impact on academic achievement.

### **Middle School Students' Developmental Needs**

Middle school is an exciting, yet challenging time for students, their parents and teachers. During this passage from childhood to adolescence, middle school students are characterized by a need to explore a variety of interests, connecting their learning in the classroom to its practical application in life and work; high levels of activity coupled with frequent fatigue due to rapid growth; a search for their own unique identity as they begin turning more frequently to peers rather than parents for ideas and affirmation; extreme sensitivity to the comments from others; and heavy reliance on friends to provide comfort, understanding and approval.

### **Meeting the Challenge**

Middle school counselors are professional educators with a mental health perspective who understand and respond to the challenges presented by today's diverse student population. Middle school counselors do not work in isolation; rather they are integral to the total educational program. They provide proactive leadership that engages all stakeholders in the delivery of programs and services to help students achieve success in school. Professional school counselors align with the school's mission to support the academic achievement of all students as they prepare for the ever-changing world of the 21st century. This mission is accomplished through the design, development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive, developmental and systematic school counseling program. The professional middle school counselor holds a master's degree and required state certification in school counseling. Maintaining certification includes on-going professional development to stay current with education reform and challenges facing today's students. Professional association membership is encouraged as it enhances the school counselor's knowledge and effectiveness.