



School Social Work Association of America Resolution Statement

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK AND COMMON CORE: ALIGNING PRACTICE WITH NATIONAL STANDARDS

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As part of the school team, school social workers share the goal of ensuring that all students receive a high-quality education (Piffner, 2013). School Social Workers work with students and their families to address personal, family, and societal issues that create obstacles for learning. The recent adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by more than 45 states and territories creates a new national landscape for public education. It also provides a strong foundation for school social workers in our mission to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for all students.

Common Core State Standards: Background and Rationale

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have been implemented with the promise that they will better prepare students for college and career readiness in order to become full participants in the global marketplace (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The CCSS are primarily a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Furthermore, the standards include work by educators and researchers to provide a clear and consistent framework for educating students. Students are expected to have specific knowledge and skills in English/Language Arts and Math as measured by benchmarks at the end of each grade level in order to be fully prepared for college or a career. The CCSS are evidence-based, aligned with college and career expectations, rigorous, and built upon the strengths of current state standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Other standards in development as of this writing include science, social science, and history.

Aligning Practice with Common Core

School districts nationwide are implementing the English/Language Arts and Math Common Core Standards. Within the English/Language Arts Standards is a strand that specifically targets the unique work that School Social Workers do with students. This strand, Speaking and Listening, is the ideal strand for the work that School Social Workers do each day. Within this strand, students are expected to develop effective communication and interpersonal skills, skills that School Social Workers teach students on a daily basis (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

Beginning in kindergarten and throughout their academic career, students will be expected to participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners, including following basic rules of communication (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). As students progress through school, they are expected to master the following skills: 1) ask and answer questions regarding a discussion topic; 2) initiate, engage in, and contribute to collaborative discussions one-to-one, in groups, and with partners; 3) utilize

multiple sources of information to assert their opinions, challenge others', and resolve conflicts; and 4) interpret information presented in various formats and analyze main ideas of a discussion communication (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). School Social Workers play an integral role in the development of these skills for students since they have expertise in teaching students social skills, including social communication skills.

SSWAA National Practice Model and Common Core:

According to the National Practice Model (Frey, Alvarez, Dupper, Sabatino, Lindsey, et al, 2013), School Social Workers are charged with three primary responsibilities:

- 1) Provide evidence-based education, behavior, and mental health services
 - Specifically, School Social Workers teach students social-emotional skills (that is, interpersonal and communication skills) to support positive academic and behavioral outcomes. This responsibility aligns almost seamlessly with the goals of the Speaking and Listening strand described above.
- 2) Promote a school climate and culture conducive to student learning and teaching excellence
 - School Social Workers collaborate with school staff to create an optimal environment for student learning, one where students can take academic risks that can lead to further development of college and career readiness skills.
- 3) Maximize access to school-based and community-based resources
 - School Social Workers can assist students and their families, who need more specialized assistance that cannot be provided within the context of the school day, by linking them to community resources to further support the development of interpersonal and conflict resolution skills.

School Social Workers play an important role in supporting students in school and in creating school climates that foster positive academic and behavioral outcomes. School social workers should seek to align their interventions with CCSS, finding linkages that help all stakeholders recognize how school social work services complement and support the implementation of these standards.

Context of Common Core:

SSWAA recognizes the extensive support for Common Core from 30 national parent, teacher, administrator, and advocacy organizations, including the American Federation of Teachers and the Council for Exceptional Children, but also understands that the introduction and implementation of CCSS has created rifts within educational and political communities. SSWAA commits to following the guidelines set forth by CCSS in each state and territory that has adopted them, while continuing to support school social workers in the seven states that have voted not to adopt them. This resolution is not a political statement, but rather an acknowledgement of this new initiative's importance. In its essence, this is a resolution affirming continued collaboration to support children, youth and families across the nation.

Approved by the SSWAA Board of Directors and Delegate Assembly on July 12, 2015
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