1. Review school data to identify academic gaps by demographic categories such as race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status or grade level. Consider issues that are creating barriers to student achievement. By reviewing school data and school data over time you may see patterns that pose a concern. Have the office referrals for incidences of bullying changed or increased? Do the behavior referrals indicate an increase in student self-harm? How are these issues affecting achievement, attendance or school safety/behavior?

2. Connect your program goals to student achievement, attendance or safety/behavior data. School counseling interventions are aimed at reducing the barriers impeding student achievement.

3. Connect your school counseling program goals to the school improvement plan. Here is an example of how your might align your program goal to the school improvement plan in the same way a teacher does. The school counselor uses school counseling interventions to address the issues that are barriers to achievement.

School improvement plan goal: By June 2016, at least 50 percent of seventh-grade students on the Math Watch List will pass the state math test at a proficient level.

Teacher's instructional goal: By June 2016 the seventh-grade students on the Voyager team with D/F grades will improve their math grade by one letter grade.

School counselor's program goal: By June 2016, 75 percent of seventh-grade students on the Math Watch List will pass the state math test.

School counseling strategies: Individual and small-group counseling (goal-setting, motivation strategies, academic support), parent/teacher conferences, consultation with teachers, mentor program, incentives.

4. Identify who will receive interventions. Once you have identified the focus for your SMART goal (e.g., poor attendance, GPA, discipline problems) consider what specific group of students will receive the interventions. Consider identifying a targeted group of students rather than an entire class, grade or the school population. Write your SMART goal by identifying the baseline data used to identify the group of students and when that baseline data will be collected (e.g., seventh-graders with more than one D/F grade at the end of the first marking period; K–3 students with six or more absences in the first month of school; ninth-graders with three or more discipline reports in the first quarter).

5. Consider the SMART goal acronym categories:

Specific: Focus on a specific domain; a specific data point; achievement, attendance or behavior; and a specific group.

Measurable: Identify the data you'll use to evaluate effectiveness of the interventions (e.g., achievement data, such as grades, state tests, GPA, graduation; attendance data, such as days absent, days tardy; or behavior/safety data, such as discipline data, PBIS, report card marks.)

Attainable: Set a target that is a stretch for the school counseling team to achieve but still attainable (e.g., third-grade students who missed 10 days of school in the first marking period will increase attendance during the last two marking periods by five days.)

Results-oriented: The goal is always written to identify the outcome data that measure attainment. It is also important to collect, analyze and report outcome, process and perception data. Outcome data show achievement, attendance or safety/behavior changes. Perception data show attainment of competencies, change in attitudes and beliefs. Process data is the number of participants.)

Time-bound: Typically SMART goals are written to be achieved in one school year.

6. Use a SMART goal statement format such as this one: By (end date) identified students (state specifically how the students are identified) will (increase/decrease) (outcome data you're measuring) by (how much). For example: *By June 2016, sixth-grade students with one or more failing grade in core classes first semester will pass all core classes. Or, by June 2016, 90 percent of ninth-graders with three or more discipline referrals during the first month of school will decrease referrals to none in the last marking period.*

7. Complete an action plan to consider how you will accomplish your goal. Planning action steps at the beginning of the process is critical to the success of your goal. Begin by identifying the data points you will need to meet targets and measure the effectiveness of your interventions. What is the baseline outcome data? What perception data will you collect? And how will you choose the identified student group?

The other advantage of an action plan is to take the opportunity to think about a timeline. When will you identify the students? Choose interventions? Create surveys? Collect perception data? Deliver the intervention? See "The ASCA National Model, third edition" for closing-the-gap action plan templates.

8. Collect perception data using a survey. Use needs assessment or pre-test perception data to plan the intervention, which creates a baseline of students' beliefs, attitudes and competencies. Use post-test perception data to evaluate changes in beliefs, attitudes and competencies. There are various types of surveys used to collect perception data.

Pre-test and post-test: Given before and after an intervention to determine knowledge gained or to measure a change in perspective.

Needs assessment: Given to students or stakeholders to gather their perception, beliefs, about a specific issue.

Program/activity evaluation: Given after an intervention or activity to gather participants' opinions about the value of the intervention or activity.

9. Complete the SMART goal process. The final steps of accomplishing a SMART goal involve data analysis, reflection and sharing results with stakeholders. These critical steps ensure successful completion of the SMART goal process.

Data analysis: At the end of the school year (or the end target date) collect the post-intervention perception and outcome data, analyze the data and create documents to share the results with stakeholders.

Compare the outcome data, GPA, by putting the average first- and last-quarter GPAs into a spreadsheet. Use the chart function of your computer to create charts. Then calculate the percent change:

Put the perception data, the pre-and post-intervention data into a chart too.

10. The final step in the process of completing a SMART goal is to share the results with stakeholders. You can use the ASCA closing-the-gap results report to share results. Consider supplementing the results report with additional charts providing details of the perception and outcome data. Or use a simple format to share the results of the SMART goal process such as a DATA report, illustrated in the book "Making DATA Work." SC

Carol Kaffenberger, Ph.D., is adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University and the co-author of "Making DATA Work." She can be reached at *ckaffenb@gmail.com*. Mark Kuranz is ASCA director of professional development and can be reached at *mkuranz@schoolcounselor.org*.