

SCHOOL NURSE ADMINISTRATORS LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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CHAPTER 1

USING SCOPE OF PRACTICE AND STANDARDS AS A FRAMEWORK FOR NURSING ADMINISTRATION IN SCHOOLS

SUSAN G. PRAEGER

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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INTRODUCTION

School nurses are accountable for functioning within the scope of nursing practice as defined by state regulating bodies and within the scope of school nursing as defined by the professional organization. They are also accountable for meeting the standards of school nursing practice. These standards are accessible in a joint publication of the American Nurses Association (ANA) and the National Association of School Nurses (NASN): *School Nursing: Scope & Standards of Practice* (ANA/NASN, 2011). However, the leadership and management of school nursing in educational settings require more than meeting the standards of being a school nurse. Recognition of the vital role in administering health services or nursing programs in schools carries the added responsibility of the nurse in the role of administrator. Consequently, school nurse administrators need to consider the scope of the role of administrator as well as the scope of the role of school nurse when planning, implementing, and evaluating their position. The standards to which they are held accountable also include the standards expected of all nurse administrators with consideration for the specialty practice. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the unique role expectations for school nurse administrators based on professional standards, regulatory standards, and leadership standards in schools.

The ANA (2010a) has advanced the practice of nursing by overseeing the publication of the scope and standards of nursing for all professional nurses. In addition, the ANA has helped to promulgate, publish, and promote a description of the scope of most nursing specialty areas and their specific standards (ANA, 2010b). The process involved in promulgating these standards includes a thorough, deliberate, and time-consuming discussion among individuals who practice in the specialty area representing the specialists in the field. Feedback from specialists is invited, revisions are made, and consensus is sought so that the entire specialty of the profession is able to clearly and agreeably state what can be expected of individuals practicing in the nursing specialty. Scope and standards documents clarify that standards are authoritative statements that come from the professions themselves. This differs from a document that summarizes the laws, rules, or regulations that are promulgated by legislative bodies, which would have had input from the profession but were not exclusively written by the profession. Professional nursing standards inform the public of what can be expected of individuals in the specialty. One can think of them as the minimum expectations for practice. Standards influence laws, rules, regulations, job descriptions, educational programs, and criteria for professional evaluation, and they serve as criteria for determining accountability in legal decisions (ANA, 2010a, 2010b).

SCOPE OF NURSING ADMINISTRATION

In 2004–2005 the NASN charged a task force with exploring the development of standards for school nurse administrators. The consensus of the task force was that separate standards for school nurse administrators were not needed. Subsequently, the ANA published the revised text titled *Nursing Administration: Scope & Standards of Practice* (ANA, 2009), describing the scope of nursing administration and the standards that are expected of nursing administrators employed in all nursing specialties in a variety of settings. School nurse administrators who practice within the context of the educational system are accountable to these 2009 ANA nursing administration standards as well as the school nursing standards.

This chapter includes a review of ANA's scope and standards of nursing administration as a framework for understanding and defining leadership and management theories and practices in schools, the resources unique to the role, staffing and personnel issues, and professional development roles. Unique school health business practices often regulated by federal,

state, and local educational laws and the role of leadership in the school setting and in the school nursing profession are described later in this text.

The ANA nursing administration text (2009) follows a presentation similar to the scope and standards of other specialties, including *School Nursing: Scope & Standards of Practice* (ANA/NASN, 2011) and is similar to the format published in ANA's *Nursing: Scope & Standards* (2010a) addressing nursing practice in all settings. Starting with a description of the scope, the standards of practice (assessment; identification of issues, problems, or trends; outcomes identification; planning; implementation; and evaluation) and the standards of professional performance (quality of practice, education, professional practice evaluation, collegiality, collaboration, ethics, research, resource utilization, leadership, and advocacy) are then described. The scope and standards of school nursing and nursing administration are basically similar in structure, although the content indicating expectations and competencies is unique and specific to the role of leader in the school health arena (versus the role of a health care provider of a school nurse). Structural differences between the standards of nursing administration and school nursing practice are evident between the two documents. For instance, school nurses are expected to diagnose relevant problems, whereas the nurse administrator “analyzes the assessment data to determine issues, problems or trends” (ANA, 2009, p. 26).

According to the ANA, administrators are “representatives of their profession and advocates for nursing and health care systems that provide excellence in care and improve health, patient safety, and quality” while using “creativity, leadership skills and strategies” to support others (ANA, 2009, p. 2). The school nurse administrator represents school nurses and advocates for school health services focusing on students and their families, staff, schools, and communities.

Nursing administrators are important to organizations because they are charged with dealing with issues at all levels of an organization: consumers (students and their families, staff, programs, school, community), health care delivery, staff organization, district policy, employee relations, resource acquisition and utilization, and staff development. “Nurse administrators help define the values of the organization...; foster collaboration, communication, and goal-setting; and strive for excellence among and across the continuum of care and the populations they work with or affect” (ANA, 2009, p. 4). It is clear from this statement that school nurse administrators not only should directly supervise school nurses but also need to interact with all facets of the school system in order to be effective.

Administrative success is often measured through external evaluations. “Employee satisfaction, successful recruitment and retention efforts, quality outcomes, and elevation of the image of nursing practice are metrics often used to determine the success of the nurse administrator” (ANA, 2009, p. 5). In the school environment, being able to demonstrate the value of school health services in relation to the educational achievement of students is essential and could be a key performance evaluation criterion.

Nurse administrators need to be well prepared and “project a shared vision for the future” (ANA, 2009, p. 2). According to the ANA, “Broadly defined, the nurse administrator is a registered nurse who orchestrates and influences the work of others in a defined environment” (ANA, 2009, p. 3). Regardless of the specific role, several themes are inherent in all administrative roles: “advocacy, leadership, shared vision, knowledge of business practices and processes, mentorship, and dedication to the profession” (ANA, 2009, p. 3). Other characteristics used by the ANA to describe nurse administrators include “broad-level thinking” and “nimble” (ANA, 2009, p. 3). “The goals of the nurse administrator’s efforts are a quality product focused on safety and the requisite infrastructures that seek to meet the expectations of the nursing profession, the consumer, and society.... However, even as corporate [substitute “school”] employees, administrators must act as registered nurses first by upholding the values of nursing and advocating for those values to the utmost extent possible” (ANA, 2009, p. 3). Subsequent chapters in this text describe the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities that are unique to each of these themes when applied to leadership and management of nursing in the school setting.

According to the ANA (2009), all administrators share an understanding of the knowledge, skills, and values needed to implement the following frameworks for practice: nursing process, culture of quality and safety, appreciative inquiry, organizational development resources, mentoring, emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, servant leadership, and five model components of Magnet recognition programs (Transformational Leadership; Structural Empowerment; Exemplary Professional Practice; New Knowledge, Initiatives, and Improvement; and Empirical Quality Results). Defining leadership within the context of the school nurse administrator role needs to address the major frameworks that influence nurse administrators. School nurse administrators may have a variety of titles (director, team leader, supervisor, etc.), be located in a variety of settings (boards of education, Departments of Education, school health offices, Departments of Health, etc.), or have a variety of responsibilities (organization-wide, program- or project-

focused, district-wide or building-specific, etc.), but they all share a common commitment to leading and managing the safe delivery of health care services in day or residential school settings that are publicly or privately funded.

Nursing administrator qualifications require appropriate education with a graduate-level degree in a relevant field of nursing management, policy, or administration and professional certification in nursing administration, management, or other applicable specialties (ANA, 2009). A nurse administrator who achieves certification in school nursing serves as a role model and demonstrates to staff a commitment to lifelong learning, professional development, and expertise. The broad range of knowledge, skills, and abilities that provides the foundation for successful nursing leadership and management is outlined in Table 1-1; the knowledge, skills, and abilities can be linked to the expectations for performance found in the standards for nursing administrators and the respective competencies that guide and direct practice. In order to adequately prepare nurses to function in the role of school nurse administrator, educational programs must review their curricular offerings to ensure consumers that they are offering the needed components for successful practice. While there are a number of graduate-level programs in nursing focusing on nursing administration and the role of the nurse as leader and manager, there are few graduate programs that include a focus on the role of the school nurse as it relates to leadership and management. Consequently, nurse educators need to provide structured and formal learning opportunities that allow students of school nursing administration to examine their role within the context of the educational setting as well as the health arena.

TABLE 1-1. REPRESENTATIVE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES OF NURSE ADMINISTRATORS.

KNOWLEDGE OF:

Care management systems	Management systems, processes, and analysis
Change management	Management theory
Clinical practice guidelines, standards of care, and best practices	Marketing initiatives
Consumer health care issues	Nursing research and other scholarly activities
Cultural diversity	Organizational behavior and development
Data management	Patient and employee safety regulations
Emergency planning and response	Performance improvement
Environmental health principles	Practice innovation
Fiscal management and financial outcomes	Professional nursing practice
Health and public policy	Professional practice environment
Health care economics	Standards of clinical nursing practice
Healthcare evaluation and outcome measures	Systems of patient safety
Information technology trends	Trends in business practices
Laws, regulations, and ethics	

SKILLS IN:

Budgeting and monetary management	Interpersonal, interdisciplinary, inter- and intra organizational communication
Coaching and mentorship	Measurement of patient needs, outcomes, nursing workload
Conflict negotiations and resolution	Mitigation of anxiety and hostile situations
Conversation facilitation, including difficult conversations	Networking
Correcting poor performance	Recognition and improvement of personal failings
Customer service	Self-management, observation, and analysis
Empowerment	Social competence
Engaging and translating realities	Strategies visioning and planning
Evaluating care and employee performance	Teambuilding
Evidence-based and shared decision-making	Technical competence
Goal setting	

ABILITIES TO:

Adapt with flexibility to situations, personalities, and tasks	Demonstrate passion and commitment to professional life
Appreciate balance between personal and professional life	Exhibit tolerance for cultural diversity and individual work style
Be forward-looking and forward-thinking	Exhibit trustworthiness, honesty, integrity
Be self-observant	Inspire and motivate others
Commit to excellence	Integrate ethical principles within practice
Dedicate oneself to learning for self and others	

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