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## **A Review of the Major School Counseling Policy Studies in the United States: 2000-2014**

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A REVIEW OF THE MAJOR SCHOOL COUNSELING  
POLICY STUDIES IN THE UNITED STATES:  
2000-2014

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The American Counseling Association has provided valuable help disseminating this document in the interests of supporting the development of school counseling policy research and of providing advocates and policy-makers with valuable information and perspectives about the practice of counseling in schools. The actual views expressed in this policy review do not necessarily reflect those of ACA.

Drs. Carey and Martin are entirely responsible for the interpretation of the results and the conclusions of this policy research review.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The purpose of this paper is to present a review of the major policy studies concerning school counseling in the United States that were disseminated between 2000 and 2014. In all, we located 37 documents that were *disseminated* between 2000 and 2014 and that were either intentionally written with a focus on policy implications or were frequently used to attempt to influence policy decision-making. The review is organized by types of policy studies: Literature Reviews, Survey Research, Statewide Evaluations of School Counseling Programs, State Evaluations of School Counseling Practice, Existing Database Investigations of School Counseling, Research Identifying Elements of Exemplary Practice, Studies of Evaluation Capacity and Practices in School Counseling.

The results of several of the reviewed studies raise the question as to whether the role of the school counselor in high school and the range of duties associated with this role has become overly broad. Studies suggest that counselors cannot adequately focus their work on improving students' academic achievement and promoting college access partly because of this impossibly broad role.

Research on student outcomes associated with the implementation of the Comprehensive Developmental Guidance (CDG) approach (including the American School Counselor Association National Model) in schools has established that benefits to students can be expected if a CDG approach is implemented. Benefits to students can be expected to occur in high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. Policy favoring CDG implementation is warranted.

Lower student-to-counselor ratios were consistently found to be associated with higher attendance rates, higher college application rates, lower discipline rates and (for

elementary students) enhanced academic achievement. Government policies reducing these ratios (especially in states with particularly high ratios) would be expected to result in enhanced benefits to students. However, it is still unclear whether reducing ratios is the most cost-effective way to achieve policy objectives. Future policy research should use a cost-benefits approach to identify the most effective staffing patterns needed to achieve critical policy objectives in school counseling.

While research clearly documents the benefits and student outcomes associated with fully implemented programs, school counseling research to date has paid little attention to the effectiveness of actual practices that school counselors employ (McGannon, Carey, & Dimmitt, 2004; Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Eder, 2011). More rigorous research and development is needed before school counselors can identify the interventions, curricula, and practices that result in the best student outcomes. Federal policy should promote this rigorous research on effective school counseling practices. In addition, investments are needed in creating mechanisms to better inform practitioners about research findings.

Although the primary responsibility for facilitation and oversight of school counseling occurs at the state level, very little information is available on efficient ways in which states can promote effective practice. Most state departments of education do not have adequate mechanisms in place to support the widespread implementation of the endorsed state school counseling models or the adoption of effective practices. State policy should focus on building the capacity of state departments of education to promote effective counseling in schools.

Almost all of the policy research reviewed above focuses on high school counseling. Additional studies need to be conducted on elementary and middle school counseling to: clarify policy objectives related to practice; identify the most important foci for practice, determine the most effective models for planning, organizing and directing practice; and identify effective activities and interventions. The ongoing federal Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program (ESSCP) grant could be redesigned to help address this need for research.

School counseling has great potential to contribute to the public good by improving educational outcomes for students. Additional policy research to answer key questions noted above and changes in federal and state educational policy related to school counseling are needed to fully actualize this potential.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION & POLICY STUDIES IN SCHOOL COUNSELING**

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The purpose of this article is to present a review of the major policy studies concerning school counseling in the United States that were disseminated between 2000 and 2014. This review was conducted to examine the current relationships between public education policy and school counseling practice in the US, to determine what is known and not known, and to identify policy studies that need to be conducted to investigate unresolved policy-related questions.

The government has legitimate interests in encouraging, supporting, and regulating the practice of school-based counseling to the extent to which school counseling contributes to the public good. Government enacts laws and policies and creates institutions and agencies to promote its legitimate interests. Decision-makers in government need accurate information to guide policy objectives and to determine whether their actions in shaping school-based counseling are leading to intended benefits. Policy research provides decision-makers with information that supports effective action.

Educational research is conducted and disseminated with three possible audiences in mind: practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers. Educational research seeks to generate knowledge that leads to improved practice and to investigate which variables are associated with effective practice. Educational research is also conducted to educate and inform policy-makers charged with making decisions about whether or not to promote and support various educational approaches, programs, and activities through policy and law. Furthermore, educational research that was originally intended to inform practitioners and researchers can be “repurposed” if it is intentionally re-examined from the policy

perspective. For example, a body of practitioner-focused research can be critically reviewed to identify its implications for educational policy (e.g. Borders & Drury, 1992). Policy studies included in the present article therefore include research originally intended to support policy-making and reviews of research that have policy implications.

Herr (2001a, 2001b) and Gysbers (2001) noted that throughout its history, the practice of school counseling has been dramatically shaped by public policy that was directly intended to influence school counseling practice (e.g. The National Defense Education Act), or by policy that had an indirect influence on school counseling practice through changes instituted in public education (e.g. federal laws governing public education reform) within which school counseling is situated. Federal legislation that directly influenced the practice of school counseling includes: the National Defense Education Act of 1958, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984, and the School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (Herr, 2001 a; Gysbers, 2001). Collectively, these acts were intended to encourage more students to pursue higher education and advanced careers in science and technology, to enable non-college bound students to receive appropriate vocational guidance in schools, and to facilitate transitions between K-12 schooling and work or a career. Judging only from these major federal acts, it could be concluded that federal policy goals related to school-based counseling are primarily focused on the promotion of students' vocational or career development and college placement (with a special focus on science and technology careers) to promote the economic development and security of the nation.

The most significant recent indirect public policy effect on the practice of school counseling is the No Child Let Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007). This act attempted to create dramatic reform in U.S. public education through the

encouragement of the adoption of a standards-based model for public education. To qualify for federal block grants, states were required to reform their public education systems by incorporating critical features of standards-based education such as: comprehensive state curriculum frameworks; frequent standardized testing of students based on these frameworks; high stakes testing based on these frameworks; identification of underperforming schools based on their capacity to promote increased achievement in all student groups; and, explicit sanctions for underperforming schools, educators, and students. NCLB did not attempt to explicitly reform school counseling practice but, in fact, resulted in dramatic changes in school counseling that were seen as necessary to adapt the profession to a standards-based educational environment. Manifestation of these changes included the American School Counselors Association's (ASCA) creation of a set of national student learning standards for school counseling (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) and a national model for school counseling programs (ASCA, 2003). A school counseling model and set of learning standards were intentional initiatives of the national professional association to accommodate school counseling practice to standards-based education. The ASCA National Model (2003) placed much more of a focus on students' K-12 academic achievement than on their successful transition to college or work under the assumption that this change was necessary for the successful incorporation of school counseling into a standards-based public education environment. It should be noted that that the changes advocated by ASCA to help the profession prosper in standards-based educational environments (i.e. increased focus on academic achievement) are not perfectly aligned with the longstanding federal policy focus on postsecondary placement.

In 2009, the Obama administration created the Race to the Top (RTTT) Competition. RTTT awards large education grants to states that implement education reforms targeted

at: using standards and assessment to prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace, using educational data more effectively, enhancing the effectiveness of teachers and principals, and turning around low-achieving schools. Despite RTTT's focus on college and workplace transitions, only one state (Massachusetts) thus far has included school counseling reform as a RTTT strategy.

In 2014, Michelle Obama launched the Reach Higher Initiative. It is difficult at this early stage to evaluate its approaches or to speculate about its impact. It is interesting to note that this initiative is consistent with past federal policy initiatives that see improving school counseling as a way to promote students' access transitions to postsecondary education.

The present review reflects an analysis of policy studies during a critically important period of change for the school counseling profession in the U.S. In the decade after 2000, standards-based education emerged as the dominant model for public education. The school counseling profession in the U.S. underwent dramatic changes as it adapted to this new model. These adaptations reflected a reconceptualization of the goals of school counseling, the activities of school counselors, and how school counseling activities are organized and managed within public schools. Focusing the review on this time period should make evident the types of policy-related changes that have occurred as the influence of standards-based education has grown in the U.S.

To identify articles for inclusion, we reviewed the peer-reviewed Professional School Counseling journal to identify research and research reviews that were explicitly directed in whole or in part to policy-makers. In addition, we consulted the websites of various organizations (e.g., the College Board's National Office for School Counselor

Advocacy) and national and state professional associations concerned with school counselor advocacy (e.g., ASCA; National Association for College Admissions Counseling, state school counseling associations) to locate studies that were either conducted to influence public policy or that were being used by the organizations in policy advocacy contexts. We also consulted the reference sections of each of these documents to identify additional articles. In all, we located 37 documents disseminated between 2000 and 2014 that were either intentionally written with a focus on policy implications or frequently used to attempt to influence policy decision-making. The review is organized by types of policy studies: Literature Reviews, Survey Research, Statewide Evaluations of School Counseling Programs, State Evaluations of School Counseling Practice, Existing Database Investigations of School Counseling, Research Identifying Elements of Exemplary Practice, Studies of Evaluation Capacity and Practices in School Counseling.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEWS**

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Literature reviews provide insight into effective practice and hence are useful in shaping public policy intended to promote effective practice. Between 2000 and 2014, four important literature reviews were conducted with significant implications for public policy related to school-based counseling.

### **1. HUGHES AND KARP (2004)**

With funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Hughes and Karp (2004) reviewed research related to career guidance interventions typically implemented by school counselors to establish the efficacy of these interventions. They noted that the No Child Left

Behind Act's (2001) emphasis on evidence-based practice in schools was the impetus for their review. The authors identified two meta-analytic reviews from the mid-1980s and 50 research articles conducted since that time. From these sources, they identified the most methodologically rigorous studies that shed light on the question of whether there was evidence that career guidance programs influenced students' academic and vocational achievement.

Hughes and Karp (2004) concluded that while many studies established a link between a range of career development interventions and vocational and academic outcomes, more research was needed before definitive conclusions could be drawn. They suggested that additional research was especially needed to: identify the outcomes of comprehensive developmental school counseling programs; determine the persistence of the effects of career development interventions on vocational and academic outcomes; and investigate the outcomes of promising, "authentic" interventions more thoroughly.

## **2. MCGANNON, CAREY AND DIMMITT (2005)**

McGannon, Carey, and Dimmitt (2005) completed a comprehensive review of 20 years of school counseling outcome research to determine the extent to which school counseling practice met NCLB (2001) requirements for the use of scientific research-based practices in schools. The authors determined that while research existed that demonstrated that each component of school counseling practice (e.g. individual counseling, group counseling, preventive/developmental curriculum; consultation) could achieve positive student outcomes, there was insufficient research information to draw inferences about the most effective modes of practice related to any component of practice. They indicated that this situation resulted from the fact that the field of school counseling has produced few

research studies and a dearth of studies with strong research designs. Furthermore, the authors noted that because the school counseling field lacked systematic mechanisms for connecting practitioners to research findings, it could not be reasonably expected that practice would align with research. They suggested that the emerging Centers related to research in school counseling take up the work of generating school-counseling research and of connecting practitioners with research findings to achieve the NCLB-related policy objectives related to research-based practice.

### **3. WHISTON, TAI, RAHARDJA, AND EDER (2011)**

Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, and Eder (2011) conducted a meta-analytic review of school counseling outcome research studies conducted between 1980 and 2004. Studies were located through well-documented extensive search procedures to ensure that all relevant studies were identified. Both interventions and outcomes were coded by type. The first meta-analysis was based on all 118 studies (regardless of their level of methodological rigor) where effect sizes could be computed. Overall, school counseling activities produced an average effect size of .30. In general, activities related to guidance curriculum and responsive services produced the highest effect sizes (.35) while activities associated with individual planning (.26) and program evaluation (.19) produced somewhat lower effect sizes. School counseling interventions proved to have the greatest impact on behavioral outcomes (.41) with lesser effects on affective (.23) and cognitive outcomes (.19). School counseling interventions were found to be especially effective in increasing students' problem-solving abilities (.91) and decreasing discipline problems (.86). Finally, school counseling interventions proved to have small but statistically significant average effect sizes related to student's GPA (.15) and standardized achievement test scores (.16).

Whiston et al. (2011) offered several important recommendations. First, while it can be concluded that school counseling interventions in general produce their expected benefits for students, additional outcome research on school counseling activities is needed. The authors suggest further research on comprehensive programs and on standardized interventions, research employing more rigorous designs, and research examining persistence of effects.

#### **4. CIVIC ENTERPRISES (2011)**

Finally, Civic Enterprises (2011) with the sponsorship and support of the College Board, published a landscape review of the school counseling literature to develop a general understanding of the roles of school counselors in middle and high schools, and “to determine where and how counselors can be better leveraged in education reform” (p.6). The review references over 300 articles from diverse sources including conceptual articles, research articles, reports, and position papers. It is unclear how articles were selected, and most were not critically evaluated. Rather than being considered an analytic review, the Civic Enterprise paper is best considered as a very impressionistic examination of the role and work of school counselors.

Civic Enterprises (2011) concluded that despite their good intentions, school counselors in general fail to make substantive contributions to students’ academic achievement because their roles are too broad and ill defined which allows for the inclusion of many functions unrelated to students’ academic achievement and college readiness. The report stated:

“Despite the good intentions of many of these professionals, research suggests that little alignment exists among counselor training, work assignments and school goals. Instead, there seems to be consistent misalignment between the counseling field and the education system.” (p. 6).

To explain this “misalignment,” Civic Enterprises noted that most university based school counselor preparation programs do not focus on college readiness counseling, data use, or accountability, resulting in many school counselors being unprepared to contribute fully to students’ academic achievement. The report concludes that for school counselors to be more effectively deployed in the interests of educational reform, a focusing of the role of school counselors on activities aligned with academic achievements related to systemic change of schools is needed. In addition, an alignment of university-based counselor preparation programs with this refocused role is necessary.

## SUMMARY

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All four of these review articles were linked to federal educational policy reflected in NCLB (2001). Specifically, they focused on issues related to the use of research-based interventions in school counseling practice, the effects of school counseling activities on academic outcomes, and the role of school counselors in educational reform. The two analytic review articles, Hughes and Karp (2004) and McGannon et al. (2005) reached similar conclusions, namely that while evidence exists for the effectiveness of some interventions, more rigorous research is needed before school counseling practice can be considered to be based on scientific research. Whiston et al.’s (2011) meta-analytic review arrived at similar conclusions as the two analytic reviews, but indicated with better precision that school counseling activities are more likely to produce significant changes in certain student outcomes (e.g., reduced disciplinary problems and increased problem-solving-skills) than in other student outcomes (e.g., increased standardized test scores and GPA). It could be argued that school counseling lacks effective interventions to “move” measures more directly related to cognitive learning and achievement. It could also be argued that school counseling is more closely linked with issues associated with motivation,

disengagement, and problem-solving (with increases in cognitive learning being an indirect, rather than direct effect, of this work). Further study of this issue is warranted since it has direct bearing on the formulation of the role of school counselors in promoting student success.

Although the Civic Enterprise (2011) review references a large number of sources, it is difficult to conclude that the authors conducted an objective review of the literature. Given the unspecified criteria for inclusion of sources and the lack of critical analysis of sources that were reviewed it is difficult to determine whether the conclusions of the report follow from the literature or whether the literature was selected to substantiate predetermined conclusions. Consequently, it is best considered as a policy position paper (rather than an analytic review), which cites literature to support the positions for which it is advocating. However, the report's suggestions that the role of the school counselor needs to be more focused and that training needs to be better aligned with this role, are convincing, provocative, and worthy of consideration.

### **CHAPTER THREE: SURVEY RESEARCH**

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Between 2000 and 2013 the results of three major national surveys related to public policy concerning school counseling in the United States were reported. In addition, the National Association College Admission Counseling published the results of its yearly Counseling Trends Survey (see NACAC, 2011) each year from 2004 through 2013. Finally, Martin, Carey, and DeCoster (2009) reported the results of a national survey of state departments of education to determine the level of implementation of state school counseling models.

## **1. THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS (2003)**

The National Center for Educational Statistics (2003) of the U.S. Department of Education conducted a national survey of public high schools in 2002 that included information on school counseling programs, activities, and staffing. This study was a follow-up of a similar survey conducted in 1984. The purpose of the research was to provide basic descriptive information on school counseling in U.S. public high schools.

Surveys were mailed to a nationally representative, stratified sample of 1,001 public high schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia with a request to have a lead guidance counselor or another staff member who was responsible for providing guidance services at the school complete the survey. A 94% response rate was obtained and data have been weighted to yield national estimates.

In 2002, about 49,500 guidance staff (counselors and paraprofessionals) was employed in public high schools in the United States. Ninety percent of guidance counselors were employed full-time, and ninety-four percent were certified or licensed in their state. Overall, a ratio of 315 students for every full time school counselor was noted (which reflected 284 students for every school counselor including full- and part-time counselors). Interestingly, most respondents reported that professional development training was available from district or state sources in a wide range of areas.

In terms of time spent by guidance staff, most emphasis was placed on activities related to scheduling of high school courses; postsecondary admission and selection; and student attendance, discipline and personal problems. Relatively little emphasis was reported on student's job placement and immediate employability. Non-guidance activities (e.g., hall/lunch duty, bus duty) were reported to occupy relatively little time. Eighty-eight

percent of schools reported that 10 or less percent of guidance staff time was spent on non-guidance tasks.

When asked about specific activities associated with the school counseling program, almost all schools reported using: college catalogs, individual counseling sessions, computerized career information sources, testing and test interpretation for career planning purposes, and non-computerized career information sources. A great number of programs offered: occupational information units in subject-matter courses, exploratory work experience programs, career days/nights, vocationally-oriented assemblies and speakers in class, job-site tours, tours of postsecondary institutions, job shadowing, group guidance/counseling sessions, and training in job seeking skills.

The guidance program activity in which students participated most often was individual counseling sessions (as was also the case in the 1984 survey). Between 1984 and 2002, there was a significant increase in the percentage of students who participated in occupational information units in subject-matter courses, exploratory work experience programs, job-site tours, job shadowing, and the use of computerized career information sources.

Of the four program goals examined in the 2002 survey, helping students with their academic achievement was the most emphasized goal of high school guidance programs (48%). Somewhat fewer schools reported that the most emphasized goal of their guidance programs was assisting students in planning and preparing for postsecondary schooling (26%) or supporting students with personal growth and development (17%). Only 8% of schools reported that the most emphasized goal of their school counseling programs was helping students plan and prepare for their work roles after high school. As compared to

1984, the percentage of public high schools that indicated that supporting students with their academic achievement was the most emphasized school counseling program goal increased significantly from 35% to 48%.

## **2. SINK AND YILLIK-DOWNER (2001)**

Sink and Yillik-Downer (2001) reported the results of a nationwide survey based on data from 11 states engaged in implementation of a Comprehensive Developmental Guidance (CDG) model. A sample of 1425 practicing school counselors were surveyed about their concerns regarding a CDG model using the author-constructed Perceptions of Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Inventory (PCGCI). A 78% return rate was achieved. Participants represented elementary, middle, and high school levels and worked in districts that were planning/designing, implementing, or evaluating CDG. The PCGCI was designed to measure school counselors' concerns about CDG in three dimensions (i.e., Collaboration, Tasks, and Impact).

Results indicated that counselors whose districts were in the planning/designing stage of CDG implementation expressed greater concerns about CDG than counselors whose districts were in the Implementation or Evaluation stages. Results also revealed that high school counselors were particularly concerned about the manageability of tasks required of them in a CDG model school counseling program. Finally, school counselors' task concerns proved to be a strong predictor of their level of involvement in implementing the CDG program, suggesting that counselors will be reluctant to embrace this model unless fears about being overwhelmed with new work can be assuaged.

### 3. PUBLIC AGENDA (2010)

With funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Public Agenda (2010) reported the results of a telephone survey of a national sample of 614 adults in the U.S. who were 22-to-30-years-old and who had completed at least some postsecondary education. Survey items measured participants' experiences with high school guidance counselors and satisfaction with services related to college readiness counseling. Sampling procedures were enacted to achieve a representative sample from which valid interpretation could be drawn for White, African-American, and Hispanic participants. Interviews were conducted via both landline and cellular telephones. Three overarching findings were reported related to high school counseling. First, most participants give their high school guidance counselors "fair" or "poor" ratings regarding their helpfulness with choosing and applying to a college. Delaying going to college and making poor choices about higher education were identified consequences of not receiving adequate counseling and practical advice in high school. Finally, in terms of supporting students' college aspirations, teachers were viewed as more helpful than high school counselors.

The report concluded that:

"...Based on the responses here, the high school guidance system is another factor that educators and policymakers need to look at. When it comes to facilitating students' transition from high school to college or work, the current system is seriously under-serving those it is intended to help. For the profession itself, the intense criticism young adults have for their guidance counselors may be hard to absorb, especially given the absurdly high student-counselor ratios in many public schools and the nerve-racking juggling act that counselors often have to perform. (Public Agenda, 2010; p.14).

While the Public Agenda (2010) report drew attention to dissatisfaction with the availability and quality of college counseling provided by high school counselors, it did not

attempt to determine the underlying reasons for this dissatisfaction or to make specific practice or policy recommendations to remedy this situation.

#### **4. COLLEGE BOARD'S NATIONAL OFFICE FOR SCHOOL COUNSELOR ADVOCACY (2011)**

In 2011, the College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA, 2011) published a national survey of 5,308 school counselors (1327 middle school counselors and 3,981 high school counselors). The online interview survey was conducted to understand how counselors viewed their roles, how they spent their time, and how they viewed measures of accountability and education policies and practices related to their roles within the educational system. NOSCA stated that "we hoped to learn what challenges they face and what solutions might be found to better leverage the extraordinary resource that school counselors represent" (NOSCA, 2011; p. 4). Neither initial sampling procedures nor refusal to participate rates are clearly presented in the report. These results can be considered to present the views of a large number of practicing school counselors but not to be necessarily representative of the population of school counselors. It is possible that potential respondents more aligned with NOSCA's college readiness agenda would be more likely to contribute data to the survey.

Very large differences were discovered between school counselors' views of ideal versus actual goals of public education. For example, when asked what should be the most important goals of public schools in the U.S., the majority of counselors (88% and 85% respectively) stated it was "to ensure that all students, regardless of background, have equal access to a high-quality education" and "to ensure that all students complete the 12th grade ready to succeed in college and careers." However, only a minority of school counselors (38% and 30% respectively) indicated that these two goals are actually among the top goals

of public schooling. Fifty-five percent of respondents indicated they believed significant changes are needed in schools, with 9% stating that a complete overhaul of public education is needed. Ninety-nine percent of respondents agree with the statement that counselors should advocate within their schools to increase students' access to rigorous academic preparation and college and career-readiness counseling.

Significant differences were also noted between participants' views of the ideal versus actual mission of school counselors. For example, the vast majority of respondents indicated that the mission of school counselors in the schools in which they work should include: advocating for all students (92%); inspiring students to reach their potential and to achieve their goals (92%); addressing student problems so that all graduate high school (85%); ensuring that all students earn high school diplomas and are ready to succeed (84%); and, helping students mature/develop skills for adult world (83%). Far fewer respondents (54%, 49%, 44%, 46%, and 33% respectively) reported that these five activities are actually part of the mission of school counselors in their schools. The majority of counselors indicated a desire to spend more time on activities related to improving student achievement and school success. Although the majority of respondents (78%) reported having a Master's degree, only a small minority (16%) indicated that they felt very well trained for their jobs and a sizable group (28%) indicated that their training did not prepare them well for their job.

In terms of indicating support for reforms that would contribute to their ability to serve students, an overwhelming majority of counselors indicated a need for additional support, time, and empowerment from leadership to give students what they need for college (95%), a reduction in school counselors' administrative tasks (92%), and smaller school counselors caseloads (90%).

Regarding NOSCA's college and career readiness agenda (i.e., the National Office for School Counselor Advocacy's Eight Components of a counseling system that focuses on ensuring that all students graduate from the 12th grade college and career ready), the majority (58%-72%) of the school counselors were in favor of each of the components, but far fewer counselors rated their school as being successful in terms of implementing the components. The majority of the sample also supported possible accountability measures upon which performance assessments of counselors could be based, including transcript audits of graduation readiness (62%); students' completion of college-preparatory course sequence (61%); students' access to advanced classes/tests (60%); high school graduation rates (57%); and college application rates (57%).

Based on the survey results, NOSCA (2011) suggested the following state policy recommendations: align university-based counselor education with the actual knowledge and skills needed to perform well as a school counselor; redefine state school counselor certification and licensing requirements to include competency in college and career readiness counseling; and, mandate and enforce maximum school counselor caseloads. In addition, a number of national educational policy recommendations were forwarded: involve school counselors when formulating national education reform agendas; create and implement school counselors accountability measures to assess their contributions to student success; continue strategic philanthropic investments in the school counseling profession; connect federal legislation, especially the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, with school counseling reforms initiatives to ensure that students are college and career ready; and expand research initiatives focused on determining the efficacy of different school counseling practices.

## **5. THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNSELING (2011)**

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) surveyed high school counseling programs regarding staffing and practices and also about college counseling activities each year between 2003 and 2012. The 2011 NACAC report contains the results of the latest openly distributed summary of results. In 2010, 10,000 secondary schools (public and private) were surveyed. Results must be interpreted with caution since only an 18% response rate was achieved. Results indicated that the average student-to-counselor ratio in responding public schools was 285:1. Counselors in public high school schools indicated that “helping students with their academic achievement ” was their school counseling department’s top priority goal, while counselors in private schools indicated that “helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary education” was the department’s most important goal. Relatedly, counselors in public schools reported spending 23% of their time on college counseling, while their counterparts in private high schools reported spending 55% of their time on college counseling. Finally, the most frequent activities related to counseling were reported to be individual meetings with students to discuss postsecondary admission options and hosting college representatives at the high school. Even with relatively favorable caseloads, school counselors in public high schools spend relatively little time on college counseling and tend to use individual interviews as the major mode of practice.

## **6. MARTIN, CAREY, AND DECOSTER (2009)**

Martin, Carey, and DeCoster (2009) reported the results of a national study of the implementation of state school counseling models. The development of a state model for counseling in public schools by a state government agency (typically a state department of

education) is a popular strategy to improve the practice of school counseling. Martin, et al. (2009) conducted telephone interviews with government personnel and professional association leaders, supplemented by the analyses of official documents and websites to determine the status of state-level school counseling models in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The authors gathered data on nine features (e.g., the existence of a written model, legislation associated with the model, professional development supporting implementation, an evaluation system to monitor model implementation) associated with model implementation to determine the extent to which states were actually committed to and involved in model implementation.

While the majority of states (44) had developed written models, a great deal of variation existed concerning levels of implementation. Findings indicated that 17 states had well implemented models of school counseling; 24 states were making progress in model implementation, and 10 states were in the beginning stages of model implementation. It was fairly common for states' written models to incorporate features of the ASCA National Model (2005) and to offer professional development to support model implementation. It was fairly uncommon for states to create school counselor licensure requirements that included knowledge and skills needed for model implementation or to establish an evaluation system to monitor model implementation. While there was widespread interest across state government agencies in developing a state model aligned with the ASCA National Model (2005), many states lacked the implementation features needed to ensure that the state model positively influenced school practices.

## SUMMARY

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In many ways these surveys reflect different epochs of educational policy in the U.S. Sink and Yillik-Downer (2001) and the NCEES (2002) survey both reflect school counseling program organization and practices before school counseling began adapting to standards-based educational reform. Sink and Yillik-Downer (2001) noted that school counselors had strong reservations about the number of additional tasks they would need to assume if they were to adopt a comprehensive-developmental model of practice. Given the added role demands and complexities associated with adopting the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005) it would be expected that these reservations would be heightened as the profession shifted from a CDG program to the ASCA National Model as the standard for program organization and management.

In general there was great consistency between the 2002 NCEES report and the previous 1985 survey results. One notable change, related to a shift to standards-based education, was that by 2002 the percentage of public high schools that indicated that helping students with their academic achievement was the most emphasized school counseling program goal had increased significantly from 35% (in 1985) to 48%. This shift probably reflects standards-based education's emphasis on academic achievement, as measured by standardized achievement test scores, as the ultimate goal for public schools. Interestingly, the NCEES report presents rather favorable data on both student-to-counselor ratios and for the amount of time counselors spend on non-counseling tasks. High student-to-counselor ratios are often cited in the professional literature as reasons behind performance problems for school counseling programs.

The Public Agenda (2010) and NOSCA (2011) studies were both conducted during a time when national education policy was influenced by the Obama administration's focus on college enrollment and college success as major goals for K-12 public education. The former study quantified present levels of dissatisfaction with the availability and quality of school counselors' advising and counseling regarding the college application and planning processes. The latter study identified directions for changes in practice and specific policy recommendations. Given the unclear nature of the sampling procedures and the choice of content for the survey, it is possible that the NOSCA (2011) results are skewed in the direction of the previously determined college counseling-focused school counseling reform agenda of NOSCA and its parent organization the CollegeBoard.

The annual NACAC survey suffers from low response rates and must be interpreted with caution. Survey results (e.g., NACAC, 2011) do suggest however that even with favorable caseloads, school counselors in public high schools spend relatively little time on college counseling and tend to use individual interviews as the major mode for delivering student services. These results suggest that the work of U.S. high school counselors may be misaligned with both current national public policy objectives and with consumer demand.

Martin, Carey, and DeCoster (2009) indicate that the adoption of a state model based upon the ASCA National Model was a popular state department of education strategy to improve school counseling services and enhance the position of school counseling within K-12 education. However this study also indicated that few states could be characterized as having made the educational policy, structural, and regulatory changes to actually promote full implementation of the Model.

## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

### **EVALUATIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS**

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Since 2000, ten studies in the U.S. have examined the relationships between school counseling program characteristics (including staffing ratios) and student outcomes and benefits.

#### **1. LAPAN, GYSBERS, AND PETROSKI (2001)**

Lapan, Gysbers, and Petroski (2001) examined the relationships between the level of implementation of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs and outcomes related to school safety and success as reported by a statewide sample of 7th grade students and 7th grade teachers in Missouri. Between 1992 and 1996, as part of the Missouri School Improvement Program, students and teachers completed surveys regarding their perceptions of the school environment and quality of education. The teacher survey contained items that reflected their perceptions of level of implementation of aspects of a comprehensive developmental guidance program. Data from 22,601 students and 4,868 teachers from a total of 184 schools were included in the analyses. In addition, school-level demographic data (e.g., enrollment figures, percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch) were also included. Hierarchical linear modeling was used to allow the researchers to study the relationship between the teacher-reported level of comprehensive developmental guidance program implementation and the student-reported and teacher-reported outcomes while taking into account both student-level and school-level variables that may affect outcomes. After controlling for differences in socioeconomic status and enrollment among schools, the researchers found that in schools with more fully implemented comprehensive guidance programs, students reported feeling safer, having

better relationships with their teachers, being more satisfied with the education they were receiving in their school, having greater awareness of the relevance and importance of education for their future, and earning higher grades. This study suggests that more fully implemented comprehensive guidance programs at the middle school level may be associated with a range of benefits for students. The exclusive use of self-reported data to measure benefits and outcomes was, however, a limitation.

## **2. SINK AND STROH (2003)**

Using a causal comparative research design to determine whether comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCP) in elementary schools were related to higher academic achievement test scores, Sink and Stroh (2003) collected data from 150 randomly selected public elementary schools in Washington State. Of the original 150 schools selected for the study, 67 schools were classified as CSCP schools and 83 were labeled as non-CSCP schools, based on the results of a telephone survey the researchers developed to measure comprehensive school counseling program implementation. In subsequent analyses, a subgroup of high implementing schools was used. This subgroup evidenced five or more years of experience implementing comprehensive school counseling programs.

In addition to data on program implementation, data were collected on school counselor demographic characteristics, student academic achievement (through scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills [ITBS] and Washington Assessment of Student Learning [WASL]). Multivariate analyses of covariance were used to examine the relationships between program implementation and student academic achievement. To control for demographic differences among schools, these analyses included each school's percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch as a covariate. Sink and Stroh (2003) found that

while the overall difference between implementing and non-implementing schools was small, the longer students were enrolled in high implementation CSCP schools, the more likely they were to have significantly higher test scores (as measured by Grade 3 ITBS Vocabulary, Comprehension, Reading, and Mathematics, and Grade 4 WASL Listening, Reading, Writing, and Mathematics tests) than students in the non-implementing schools. These results suggest that, regardless of socioeconomic level, children who remain in the same school for multiple years with a well-implemented comprehensive school counseling program will have higher achievement test scores than students who attend schools without such a counseling program. While the improvement of standardized achievement scores is an important goal, many other important outcomes (e.g., increased attendance, improved discipline, safer school climate, greater career aspirations) were not included in this study.

### **3. SINK, AKOS, TURNBULL, AND MVUDUDU (2008)**

Sink, Akos, Turnbull, and Mvududu (2008) used a similar approach to Sink and Stroh (2003) to examine the relationships between comprehensive school counseling program implementation and student academic achievement in middle schools in Washington State. Counselors from a randomly selected group of 187 middle schools were surveyed to determine the level of implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program in their schools and the counselors' demographic characteristics. School demographic data (e.g., the proportion of students eligible for free or reduced lunch and/or for special education services), student demographic data (e.g., gender, ethnicity, number of years a student was enrolled in the school building), and achievement test scores (e.g., Iowa Test of Basic Skills and Washington Assessment of Student Learning scores) were also collected from participating middle schools. Based upon criteria used previously (i.e., Sink &

Stroh, 2003) a subgroup of “high-implementation CSCP” schools was identified.

Multivariate analyses of covariance were used to study the relationships between program implementation and student achievement using demographic variables as covariates to control for differences among schools.

Sink et al. (2008) found that while only minimal differences in student achievement were noted between implementing and non-implementing schools, the high implementation schools did outperform non-implementing schools on Grade 6 ITBS language, math, and core total scores and on Grade 7 reading and math WASL scores. Since inclusion in the high implementation group was largely based on the length of time that a comprehensive school counseling program had been implemented in a school, these results suggest that program implementation may be associated with some gains in student achievement. The use of a single type of outcome measure (i.e., student standardized test scores) limited a more comprehensive analysis of the broad range of critical student outcomes potentially impacted by more fully implemented comprehensive counseling programs.

#### **4-5. CAREY, HARRINGTON, MARTIN, AND STEVENSON (2012) AND CLEMENS, CAREY, AND HARRINGTON (2010)**

In 2012, a special issue of *Professional School Counseling* was published that reported the results of statewide evaluation studies in six states (Utah, Nebraska, Missouri, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin). This research reflected the collaborative work of the Ronald H. Fredrickson Center for School Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation, university-based researchers, state directors of guidance, and state school counselor associations (Lapan, 2012). Carey, Harrington, Martin and Stevenson (2012)

studied the associations between a wide range of student outcomes and the level of implementation of the ASCA National Model for programs organization and student-to-counselor staffing ratios in Utah high schools. Counselors from every public high school in Utah were invited to complete the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS) (Clemens, Carey & Harrington, 2010) in an online format. The SCPIS was designed to measure the level of implementation of the ASCA National Model. Data were also collected from state departments of education databases on a wide range of student educational outcomes (e.g., graduation rates, discipline rates, attendance rates, ACT completion rates, achievement test scores, and Perkins program completion) and on student-to-counselor ratios. From these databases, the researcher also collected information on school demographic variables that are known to influence student outcomes (e.g., percentage of low-income students in the school, yearly per pupil expenditures of the school). Researchers were therefore able to determine if ASCA National Model implementation and school counselor staffing ratios were associated with improved student outcomes after controlling for differences between schools on demographic factors known to influence these outcomes. Stepwise hierarchical linear regression was used to analyze the data. In the stepwise linear regression, demographic variables (e.g., per pupil expenditures, percentage of low-income students in the district) that predict a given student outcome measure (e.g., attendance rate) were entered first into the model. Then, SCPIS scores or student-to-counselor ratios were entered into the model to determine if these characteristics accounted for additional variability in the student outcome measure over and above that related to demographic characteristics. Thus it was possible to identify if the level of National Model implementation and student-to-counselor ratios was related to enhanced student outcomes after controlling for differences in school-level demographic characteristics.

Carey et al. (2012) found that the level of implementation of the ASCA National Model was associated with increased reading proficiency and math proficiency (measured by the state achievement test), increased ACT scores, and an increase in the percentage of students who chose to take the ACT test. More favorable student-to-counselor ratios were associated with higher attendance rates and lower discipline rates. In schools with more complete ASCA National Model implementation, students showed higher academic achievement. In addition, ASCA National Model implementation was associated with more students taking a standardized test required for college admission and with students performing better on this test. School counselor ratios were associated with lower discipline rates and higher rates of attendance.

Carey, Harrington, Martin, and Hoffman (2012) used the same methods to study the relationships between student outcomes and ASCA National Model implementation and student-to-counselor ratios in rural high schools in Nebraska. The researchers found that, after controlling for differences among schools, the level of implementation of an ASCA National Model delivery system was associated with increases in attendance rates, decreases in discipline rates, and decreases in suspension rates.

#### **6. LAPAN, GYSBERS, STANLEY, AND PIERCE (2012)**

Employing a similar methodology, Lapan, Gysbers, Stanley, and Pierce (2012) studied the relationships between student-to-counselor ratios and four measures of student academic achievement-related behavior (graduation rates, discipline incidents, attendance, and ACT Composite scores) in Missouri high schools. After controlling for differences among schools, more favorable student-to-counselor ratios were associated with increases in the graduation rate and decreases in the number of disciplinary incidents. In follow-up

analyses of high poverty schools, both the graduation and attendance rates proved to be significantly higher in high schools that met the ASCA-recommended ratio of 250 students per counselor.

### **7. LAPAN, WHITMAN, AND ALEMAN (2012)**

Lapan, Whitman, and Aleman (2012) used regression and multiple regression procedures to examine the relationships between academic-achievement-related variables (e.g., graduation rates, attendance rates, suspension rates, and discipline incidents) and school counseling activities (College and Career Readiness and Responsive Services) and student-to-counselor ratios in Connecticut high schools. Counselor self-report data obtained via a survey were used to measure program activities. State databases were used to obtain data on ratios and student outcomes. Controlling for differences among schools, Lapan et al. (2012) found that a higher level of counselor-reported focus on College and Career Readiness was associated with fewer student discipline incidents and decreased rates of suspension. Likewise, more favorable student-to-counselor ratios were associated with reduced student suspension rates.

### **8. DIMMITT AND WILKERSON (2012)**

Dimmitt and Wilkerson (2012) used data from a state database containing information from annual counselor, student, and parent surveys to describe the current level of implementation of different school counseling activities and to examine the correlations between different school counseling activities and a range of student outcomes in high schools across Rhode Island. Results indicated that most school counseling programs were organized according to a comprehensive developmental framework and school counselors were engaged in activities related to all five state domains (academic

development, career development, personal/social development, accountability/data use, and parent involvement). The level of delivery of each of the five classes of activities (as reported by counselors) was found to correlate significantly with one or more of the following benefits: students' sense of belonging, student reports of hassles with other students, students' hassles with teachers, students being teased/bullied, attendance, students getting suspended, and parent's perceptions of the level of school's responsiveness to their concerns. These results were based on simple correlations. Attempts were not made to control statistically for differences among schools that could account for these observed correlations. Finally, Dimmitt et al. (2012) found that high poverty schools were found to have lower frequencies of these benefit-related school counseling activities.

#### **9. BURKARD, GILLEN, MARTINEZ, AND SKYTTE (2012)**

Finally, Burkard, Gillen, Martinez, and Skytte (2012) used school counselor surveys combined with state school performance data to study the level of implementation of different components of comprehensive developmental guidance and the relationship between the implementation of these different components on student academic outcomes in Wisconsin high schools. They found that Comprehensive Developmental Guidance (CDG) was implemented both poorly and unevenly across the state. In addition, their results indicate that among the CDG program components (Individual Planning, Responsive Services, Management, Evaluation, Guidance Curriculum, and Foundation), evaluation was most poorly implemented. Correlations between these program components and student outcomes indicated that more complete implementation of most components was found to be associated with increased attendance rates, higher graduation rates, and decreased grade retention rates. Likewise, more complete implementation was associated with decreased truancy and suspension rates. It was not evident that different components of the

program were more strongly associated with different outcomes. These results were based on simple correlations. Attempts were not made to control statistically for differences among schools that could account for these observed correlations.

Carey and Dimmitt (2012) evaluated these studies and summarized the policy-related recommendation based on the collective results. Based upon the associations of school counseling models and components to beneficial student learning-related outcomes, the authors recommended that policy makers in state governments in the U.S. consider: mandating ASCA National Model implementation; mandating student-to-school counselor ratios in high schools to improve student outcomes; and creating state policies that ensure equitable school counseling program access for all students.

#### **10. WILKERSON, PÉRUSSE, AND HUGHES (2013)**

Wilkerson, Pérusse, and Hughes (2013) reported the results of a quasi-experimental study that compared characteristic of 75 RAMP schools (elementary, middle, and high schools) in Indiana with a matched group of schools from the same state. The American School Counselors Association (ASCA) reviewed applications from school counseling programs wanting to be considered a “Recognized ASCA Model Program.” To qualify, programs submit detailed information documenting their implementation of the ASCA National Model. Consequently, RAMP schools can reasonably be considered as having an ASCA National Model school counseling program in place. RAMP and non-RAMP schools were compared on passing rates on standardized state assessments of English/ Language Arts and Mathematics. Comparisons across groups indicated that RAMP elementary schools had significantly higher English Language Arts and Mathematics proficiency rates than their

non-RAMP counterparts. No differences between RAMP and non-Ramp schools at the middle school or high school were observed.

## SUMMARY

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Each of these evaluation studies reflects the adaptation of the school counseling profession to education reform movements and to changes in the educational policy landscape in the U.S. In the 1990s, most states enacted education reform laws based on standards-based education. Standards-based education is an approach to school reform that is characterized by a sharp focus of students' academic achievement (as opposed to foci such as personal development, career development, citizenship development, social development), the use of standardized assessments to measure achievement, and the application of sanctions to "underperforming" students, schools, and school districts (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007). In 2001, the U.S. federal government passed the No Child Left Behind Act, which encouraged states to implement and strengthen standards-based systems for education reform. The ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005) was developed as a way to modernize comprehensive developmental guidance and to make it consistent with the principles and approaches of standards-based educational reform. This modernization included a more distinct focus on students' academic achievement, the use of data-based decision-making practices, and a strong emphasis on evaluation and accountability.

The present studies reflect the need to examine the effectiveness of school counseling program and practices after this fundamental change in the educational policy climate. This need is reflected in both the research questions and the choice of the variables included for study. These studies examine the effects of implementing the ASCA National Model (or its parent, the comprehensive developmental guidance model) and the effects of

more favorable student-to-counselor ratios on academic achievement (e.g., standardized achievement test scores), student engagement (e.g., graduation and attendance rates), and other variables related to comportment and participation in school (e.g., discipline, truancy, and suspension rates). In general, these studies indicate that the effects of school counseling are more directly related to student engagement and comportment than to actual academic achievement. They also suggest that both how the program is organized and how richly it is staffed are associated with better student outcomes in terms of engagement and comportment. School counseling can reasonably be expected to have an indirect effect on student achievement through its impact on enhancing student engagement and comportment.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **STATE EVALUATIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELING PRACTICE**

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The school counseling literature contains several examples of state legislatures sponsoring studies or evaluations aimed at answering questions related to school counseling programs, practices, perceptions, and resources. The findings and recommendations of these reports are significant because they provide insight into the priorities of educational systems, demonstrate the variability of school counseling practice within different contexts, and help to illuminate the processes involved in localized policy decision-making. The following review highlights the most significant examples that have been conducted and disseminated between 2000 and 2014.

#### **1. CALIFORNIA**

In 2001, the California Assembly passed a bill (AB 722) that required the California Department of Education (CDE) to conduct a study of pupil support services and programs

(including school counseling programs) in California's public schools. This study was completed in the summer of 2003.

The CDE consulted with 22 representatives from state professional associations, higher education, state leadership, and parent/student organizations to generate a Survey of Pupil Support Services. Due to the large size of California, the survey was distributed to a stratified sample of 255 school districts. Supplemental data were also collected from online versions of the survey adapted for parents, teachers, and school board members. In addition, 12 focus groups were held throughout the state.

Sixty-three percent of the districts (161 school districts) responded to the survey, with district superintendents or senior administrators being the primary respondents. The online survey generated responses from 130 parents, 125 teachers, 19 school board members, and 17 students. The focus groups included 140 support service specialists, 81 students, 15 parents, 9 administrators, and 1 school board member.

The study found that 84% of the districts indicated that they "needed more" of the 22 support services listed in the survey. The most commonly cited needed services were: "providing school-wide prevention and intervention strategies and counseling services; providing psychological counseling for individuals, groups and families; and identifying and providing intervention strategies for children and their families, including counseling, case management, and crisis intervention" (p. 18).

Over 70% of the districts rated existing student support services as effective or highly effective, but indicated that services could be more effective with increased personnel. The three most effective services were: "addressing school policies and procedures that inhibit student success regarding students' needs; conducting psycho-

educational assessments for the purposes of identifying special needs; and providing services that enhance academic performance” (p. 21).

Student-to-counselor ratios were investigated within the study. The ratio of the surveyed districts was 871:1 (the actual California average was much higher since 306 districts were not included in the study because they did not provide student support services). “Adequate ratios” to deliver effective student support services were determined by the study results to be 834:1 for elementary schools, 461:1 for middle schools and junior high schools, and 364:1 for high schools. Despite the conclusion that these ratios were considered as adequate, there was consensus among the survey respondents and the focus group data that much lower student-to-counselor ratios were desirable.

The districts’ participants were also asked how they assess the quality of student support services. Results indicated that most districts used both standardized and informal means of assessment. Student outcomes related to attendance, behavior, and academic achievement were the primary measures of student support services quality, but high school and unified districts also focused on graduation rates, completion of university entrance requirements, enrollment in Advanced Placement courses, and college entrance examinations. Nearly all of the districts indicated that they evaluated student support services by tracking the services provided and then measuring them against the resulting student outcomes.

The hiring and retention of credentialed, non-credentialed, and contracted student support services personnel was also investigated. Study results show that 84% of the student support services personnel were employed by directly by districts. The overwhelming rationale for hiring non-credentialed or contracted personnel was due to a

lack of district funding. The challenges associated with recruiting credentialed personnel included district budget constraints or lack of qualified applicants; retention challenges included inadequate salaries, disparities between job expectations and job reality, and lack of career advancement.

This comprehensive examination of student support services in California was important because it highlighted the serious deficiencies in student support services. A major finding of this report is that very high student-to-counselor ratios resulted in students not being able to access services perceived to be beneficial.

The report allowed educators, administrators, and elected state representatives to holistically view the status of student support services in California and to make informed policy decisions. For example, largely based on the AB 722 findings discussed above, the California legislature passed the Middle and High School Supplemental Counseling Program (AB 1802) in 2006 that provided categorical funding of \$200 million for an additional 2,500 school counselors. Unfortunately, due to the severe national recession, the California legislature suspended most categorical funds in 2008 for five years in an effort to balance general school funding.

## **2. TEXAS**

The state of Texas has also conducted statewide policy studies related to school-based counseling. The Texas Comptroller was tasked with investigating concerns raised by the state's legislature regarding how school counselors use their time and issues related to counselor-to-student ratios to ensure that all students had access to quality school counseling services (Rylander, 2002). The study was initiated after consulting with school counselor professional associations and counselor educators to develop a weeklong task

analysis survey. The task analysis survey was sent to 9,940 school counselors out of which 4,040 school counselors responded (40.7 % response rate).

The findings indicated that on average school counselors in Texas spent nearly 40% of their time on non-counseling duties (e.g., lunch duty, test coordinating, discipline). School counselors indicated that test coordination duties had the greatest negative impact upon their ability to deliver more comprehensive programming and that they could be more effective if these duties were assigned to other educators. The average counselor-to-student ratio was 1:423 (which represented a slight decrease over the previous five years).

The Texas report included a requirement that each district adopt a policy regarding the proper use of counselor time that could be evaluated within the Texas Education Associations' District Effectiveness and Compliance visits. Furthermore, the report suggested requiring grant-funded counselors (240 in total across the state) to complete annual timesheets as part of the grant evaluation process.

### **3. UTAH**

Finally, the state of Utah represents the most robust and sustained example of state policy studies that support decision-making. Since the 1990s, the state legislature has commissioned independent evaluations of school counseling pilot programs and state authorized school counseling programs. Because this review is primarily focused on recent work, we will only briefly mention past efforts and focus on the most recent evaluations.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Utah Office of Education began a pilot comprehensive school counseling program with eleven volunteer schools. Program data were collected and used to lobby the Utah legislature to implement the program statewide in 1993 (Utah State Office of Education, 2002). For the purposes of oversight and

accountability, the Utah legislature commissioned several studies to evaluate the implementation and quality of the school counseling programming. These evaluations (Kimball & Gardner, 1995; Nelson & Gardner, 1998; Nelson, Gardner & Fox, 1998; Gardner, Nelson & Fox, 1999), conducted by the Institute of Behavioral Research in Creativity (IBRC), helped to establish program credibility, secure increased funding, and lower the student-to-counselor ratios.

Seven years later, the IBRC completed their latest and most sophisticated school counseling evaluation (Nelson, Fox, Haslam, & Gardner, 2007). The content and procedures built upon their prior work and incorporated knowledge gained from conducting evaluations within local school districts. The design was consistent with the 1998 evaluation protocols (Nelson, Gardner, & Fox) that used interest group surveys and available student outcome data (e.g., IOWA Basic Skills Test, ACT). Because of the similar design, there were several items that remained consistent across the evaluations and allowed the researchers to analyze the 2006 data longitudinally. Participants were sampled from 175 schools and consisted of 436 counselors, 384 administrators, 5,061 teachers, 14,265 students, 7,806 parents and represented a total survey response rate of 84%. Given the large numbers of participants it is significant that all interest groups surveyed reported very high levels of satisfaction with or impact of (80% to 90%) most aspects of Utah Comprehensive Developmental Guidance and Counseling (UCDGC) program. For example:

- 82% of eighth grade students and 89% of eleventh grade students felt safe in school;
- 74% of eighth grades students and 83% of eleventh grade students felt comfortable going to the counseling center;
- 96% of eighth grade principals and 96% of eleventh grade principals indicated that staff members understood and supported the comprehensive guidance program.

Other evaluation indicators within the student ACT and IOWA basic skills tests results revealed significant positive differences between high CDG implementing schools when compared to low implementing schools.

## **SUMMARY**

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These examples provide important insights into the relationships that state governments have with school counseling. It would seem that most states have very little involvement in the actual oversight or funding of the implementation of school counseling practices or models (Martin, et al., 2009). Within the three states that commissioned policy studies related to school counseling, however, there was a general recognition that school counselors provide an important service to students and educational systems. In the case of California, (AB 722 Report, 2003) the evaluation concluded that support services were regarded as largely effective, yet more services were needed to meet the needs of students and families. The evaluation also concluded that students' access to quality services was hampered by unmanageably high counselor-to-student ratios.

Counselor use of time was similarly investigated in Texas (Rylander, 2002). That evaluation recommended that districts develop policies to promote counselors spending more time on direct student services and less time on mundane or administrative activities. Representing a much higher level of governmental involvement in school counseling, the state of Utah developed an evaluation system to oversee its investments in the implementation of the Utah Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program. This sustained evaluation resulted in a marked increase in funding for program implementation and program expectations over a fairly short period of time.

As artifacts alone, these policy evaluations offer a unique window into regional conditions. While states shared several similar issues and needs, there were also significant differences among the states in terms of school counseling resources and practices. These differences reveal the challenges of describing school counseling as a national entity. While there is evidence of national trends, for example states adopting or adapting the CDG Model, states differ dramatically in economic, political, demographic, and geographical conditions.

These differences are evident in ways in which states organize their educational systems. Some states maintain administrative authority as a means of centralizing and mandating educational decisions, while other states leave most educational decisions to the governance of local school districts. These different systems and contexts help to explain the variability witnessed within this section and function as a good reminder to think of U.S. school counseling policy as largely state-specific.

Finally, it is important to note the large discrepancy between the estimates of school counselors' time spent on non-counseling duties. The Texas study (Ryander, 2002) found that 40% of counselor time was spent on non-counseling duties while the previously reviewed national survey (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003) found that fewer than 85% of schools reported that less than 10% of counselor time was spent on non-counseling duties. While these data may reflect genuine regional differences, it is equally likely that they indicate differences in survey instruments and methods. This observation underscores the importance of developing a more standardized way of measuring school counselor time use.

## **CHAPTER SIX: EXISTING DATABASE INVESTIGATIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELING PRACTICE**

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Since 2000, six studies have investigated the effectiveness of school counseling using existing databases. Four of these studies used large national databases. Two used smaller local databases.

### **1. BRYAN, MOORE-THOMAS, DAY-VINES, AND HOLCOMB-MCCOY (2011)**

Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, and Holcomb-McCoy (2011) used data from the Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS) of 2002 (Ingels, Pratt Rogers, Siegel, & Stutts, 2004) to investigate how students' contact with high school guidance counselors is related to college application rates. The ELS is a longitudinal study of a large representative sample of 10th graders in U.S. public school that began in 2002. Data from this study can be used to investigate students' transitions from high school to college and then to the world of work. The dependent variable was the number of colleges to which students applied (0, 1, or 2 or more) in their senior year of high school. Predictor variables included school counseling related variables (whether or not a student had contact with a counselor in 10th and 12th grade; the number of counselors available for students) and other variables related to student demographic characteristics, educational aspirations, and parental involvement. Multiple regression procedures were performed to estimate the relationships between the school counseling related variables and college application (controlling statistically for the effects of the other independent variables).

Student counselor contact was significantly associated with application to college. Students who saw their counselor by 10th grade were twice as likely to apply to one college

and 3.5 times as likely to apply to two or more colleges as students who had not had contact. Students who reported having contact with their counselor in 12th grade (but not in 10th grade) also showed higher odds of applying to college, but not as high as when contact was initiated in 10th grade. Finally, the number of counselors available in a school had a positive impact on students applying to two or more schools. Posthoc analyses found that the generally positive effect of school counselor contact on college application varied across students' racial/ethnic groups in complex ways. For example, Black students who did not see the counselor at all had significantly lower rates of applying to college than students who saw their counselor from 10th grade on. These results suggest that in general, access to and contact with school counselor has a positive effect on students' applying to college. However, it also seems that the college counseling approaches used by school counselors may not be effective with all groups of students.

## **2. BELASCO (2013)**

Belasco (2013) used data from the ELS of 2002 (Ingels, Pratt Rogers, Siegel, & Stutts, 2004) to study the relationships between high school students' contact with their school counselor and application to college and the extent to which these contacts with the counselor are more or less beneficial depending on students' socioeconomic level. The dependent variable was students' college enrollment status (not enrolled, enrolled in a 2-year college, enrolled in a 4-year college) in the years after they graduated from high school. The major independent variables were students' reports of contacts with their counselor (whether or not a student had contact with a counselor in 10th and 12th grade) and students' socioeconomic status. Additional data on student demographic and school characteristics were also used in the analyses to control for factors other than counselor contact that affect college going rates. Data were analyzed using coarsened exact matching

followed by multinomial logistic regression to identify significant student- and school-level predictors of two-year and four-year college enrollment. Belasco (2013) found that (after controlling for other variables related to college enrollment) counselor contacts were positively associated with students' college enrollment. This effect was particularly strong for enrollment at four-year institutions. Results also demonstrated that the influence of school counselor contacts on college enrollment was most beneficial for low socioeconomic status.

### **3. ENGBERG AND GILBERT (2013)**

Engberg and Gilbert (2013) examined the relationships between high school counseling practices and resources and students' college going rates. The researchers used data from the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs, 2009), a federally-funded, nationally representative, longitudinal study that surveyed students beginning in the ninth grade with additional data collected as students transitioned to postsecondary education and the workforce. The HSLs database included surveys collected from the lead counselor in participating high schools that describe school counseling program practices and resources. Data from 940 high schools were included in this study with 70% of the schools being public schools. Ordinary Least Squares hierarchical regression was used to statistically equate schools on demographic variables (e.g., school size) known to be related to college going rates and to then estimate the relationships between various counseling practices and resources and students' college going rates. After controlling for these demographic variables, Engberg and Gilbert (2013) found that college-going rate was positively associated with both the amount of time counselors spent on college-counseling and with smaller student caseloads. Three school counseling program practices were found to be positively associated with college going rates: offering financial aid information and

assistance; participating in college fairs; and, facilitating college connections by offering courses at four-year colleges or organizing visits to colleges.

#### **4. HURWITZ AND HOWELL (2013)**

Researchers at the College Board Advocacy and Policy Center (Hurwitz & Howell, 2013) used data from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) to study the effect of adding an additional high school counselor on students' four-year college-going rates in 12 states that had state education policies specifying a maximum student-to-counselor ratio. The authors used a regression discontinuity design to contrast the outcomes of high schools whose student-to-counselor ratios fell just above or just below the state-mandated maximum to estimate the impact of adding an additional counselor (to reach mandated ratios). Based on these contrasts, Hurwitz and Howell (2013) estimated that adding an additional counselor would produce a 10 percent increase in students' four-year college-going rates.

#### **5. CARRELL AND CARRELL (2006)**

Carrell and Carrell (2006) examined the relationship between student-to-counselor ratios and discipline incidents over a four-year period in 23 elementary schools in a large school district in Florida. Within these elementary schools, student-to-counselor ratios fluctuated because of student interns (i.e., Masters-level students finishing their training in school counseling). Changes in discipline incidents were observed between semesters when the schools had two counselors (i.e., a full-time counselor plus an intern) and when they had only one counselor. Carrell and Carrell estimated a series of fixed effects models using disciplinary incidents (occurrence and reoccurrence) as the dependent variable and the student-to-counselor ratio as the independent variable. Linear regression was used to

estimate the discipline incidence rate if the schools were staffed at the ratio (250:1) recommended by the American School Counselor's Association.

Carrell and Carrell (2006) estimated that reducing the staffing ratio from the current value of 544 students per counselor to the recommended 250 students per counselor would result in a 25.5% decrease in the probability of a disciplinary recurrence in a year. Furthermore, they estimated that reducing the current ratio to the recommended ratio would result in a 59.1% decrease in the mean number of students with a first time disciplinary occurrence each year—reflecting between 257 to 984 fewer students per year being involved in at least one disciplinary incident. Finally, the researchers estimated the annual yearly additional cost of these benefits to the district as being approximately \$1.52 million or \$113 per student.

## **7. CARRELL AND HOEKSTRA (2011)**

Carrell and Hoekstra (2011) used the same data set and method as above (Carrell & Carrell, 2006) to estimate the impact on academic achievement of adding an additional counselor to each elementary school as measured by state test scores. The researchers concluded that the addition of a counselor would increase students' achievement by 0.84 percentile points, or 3% of a standard deviation. They noted (based on comparisons to other studies) that the impact of hiring one additional counselor would be approximately the same as that of increasing the quality of every teacher in the school by 0.3 standard deviations. Furthermore, they noted that the impact of hiring an additional counselor would be expected to be approximately twice as effective in raising achievement as hiring an additional marginal teacher to reduce class size.

## SUMMARY

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The focus on evaluating the impact of school counselor contacts on college application rates reflects an evolution of federal education policy. In 2009, the Obama administration created the Race to the Top (RTT) program, a \$4.35 billion fund created under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. RTT created large education grants that states could apply for to support innovative education reform initiatives. Both the Act itself and the RTT program emphasized the need to increase numbers of U.S. students graduating from college to support the nation's economic development. At roughly the same time, the College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy initiated an aggressive campaign promoting an increased focus on college readiness counseling in American high schools (see National Office for School Counselor Advocacy, 2010). College-going rates became more salient as focus for school counseling stimulating more research into the impact of high school counseling on college application and attendance.

The results of all four studies conducted since 2000 using national databases are consistent in finding that the availability of and contact with a high school counselor is strongly related to students' college application rates. One study suggests that low socioeconomic students are more strongly affected by high school counselor contact. Another study suggests that students from all racial/ethnic groups may not experience the same benefit. One study suggests that school counseling activities particularly effective in promoting college applications included: offering financial aid information and assistance; participating in college fairs; and facilitating students' college connections prior to graduation.

Two studies which used a district database indicated that reducing the student-to-school counselor ratio (at least in schools where the current ratio approaches 500:1) would be expected to result in practically significant reductions in discipline incidents and increases in student achievement. Furthermore, the effects on achievement of adding one additional school counselor would be expected to be equal to that of an expensive professional development program for all teachers in the school and to be twice that of hiring an additional teacher to reduce class size in the school.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: RESEARCH IDENTIFYING ELEMENTS OF EXEMPLARY PRACTICE**

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Three U. S. research efforts between 2000 and 2014 studied positive exemplars in districts or schools to identify effective school counseling practice.

### **1. FITCH AND MARSHALL (2004)**

Fitch and Marshall (2004) examined the importance accorded to different facets of the school counselor role and function by a group of diverse counselors working in Kentucky schools that showed high achievement versus low achievement on the reading and math sections of the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. The authors found that counselors in high achieving schools reported spending more time on:

- 1) program management, evaluation, and research;
- 2) coordination or “influencing systems more than individuals”;
- 3) tasks related to adhering to professional standards (e.g., aligning programs to state and national standards).

Fitch and Marshall's sample included diverse types of schools, however they did not attempt to control (by matching or by the use of covariates) for the level of resources available to schools. It may also be that their results reflect differences in district resources more than differences in performance. Greater resources in wealthy districts may allow school counseling programs to focus more on professional standards and issues.

## **2. LAPAN AND HARRINGTON (2008)**

Lapan and Harrington (2008) studied the 12 Touch Program implemented in Chicago public schools. This program was designed to promote a college-going climate by ensuring that middle school students experienced 12 key experiences related to college planning and successful transition to high school. In this program, school counselors create a working alliance with each student to help them feel that they belong in their schools. They hold meetings with students and their parents/guardians, run summer enrollment meetings for the student and their families, and provide each 9th grade student an Advisory Support Period that lasts for at least 10 weeks. School counselors help students' transition to high school by helping them to plan four years of high school coursework, orienting them to postsecondary college options, and communicating the expectation that students will attend college after graduating from high school.

Lapan and Harrington (2008) found that high school seniors are much more likely to apply to multiple colleges if they had attended schools in which the 12 Touch Program was more fully implemented. For every three additional counselor "touches" (e.g., program components) that students experienced, the authors found a 6% increase in the rates that they applied to three or more colleges in their senior year. Interaction with an organized

school counseling transition program focused on college attendance can positively influence college application rates.

### **3. ADVOCACY, MILITELLO, ET AL. (2009) AND MILITELLO, SCHWEID, AND CAREY (2011)**

In a study funded by the College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy, Militello, et al. (2009) and Militello, Schweid, and Carey (2011) identified the exemplary practices of 18 high schools that received recognition for college preparation and placement in 2004 and 2005. These schools had received an "Inspiration Award" from the College Board in recognition of their ability to achieve high rates of students attending college despite the fact that the demographic characteristics of the student populations would predict otherwise. Through in-depth interviews with key personnel at each of the high schools, the researchers generated a set of 10 domains that characterize the work of the school counselor that seem to be related to improved student enrollment in post-secondary institutions.

Militello et al. (2009) indicated that in these Inspiration schools, school counselors:

- 1) *Showed effective program management practices.*
- 2) *Maintained external partnerships that add resources and social capital.*
- 3) *Were leaders in the school.*
- 4) *Showed effective college-focused interventions with low-income students.*
- 5) *Helped establish an achievement-oriented school climate.*
- 6) *Implemented effective parent academic and financial outreach programs.*
- 7) *Thought systemically and used multi-level interventions.*
- 8) *Used school data effectively.*
- 9) *Facilitated the development and implementation of inclusive school policies.*
- 10) *Routinized mundane aspects of the job or offload nonessential activities to free up time for innovative practice.*

In addition, Militello, Schweid, and Carey (2011) indicated that educators in the Inspiration schools used a “collaboration-based” rather than a “role-based” approach to handling problems and issues related to students’ college transitions. They indicated that in traditional schools each participant (i.e., counselors, teachers, students, parents, and administrators) was viewed as being responsible for some aspect of the college transition process. If any participant failed to perform their role-related tasks the transition process was compromised. In contrast, the authors suggested that the Inspiration Schools operated in a collaborative mode. The necessary tasks related to students’ transitions were handled in creative ways based upon which participant was best positioned to address them. For example, completing the FASFA form to apply for financial aid in traditional schools is expected to fall within the role of parents. In Inspiration Schools, however, creative approaches to getting the FAFSA task completed were elaborate. For example, in one school a math teacher incorporated completing the FAFSA into students’ lessons. The authors suggested that “collaboration-based” work resulted in creative ways to compensate for the challenges presented to the college transition process by family poverty.

## **SUMMARY**

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Fitch and Marshall (2004) found that the primary differences between school counselors’ work in high achieving and low achieving schools were in areas outside direct services to students. Counselors in high performing schools spent more time on program development, coordination, and aligning activities with professional standards. While these results are intriguing, failure to control for possible preexisting differences between groups makes definitive conclusions impossible.

In many ways, these results are similar to those of Militello, et al. (2009) and Militello, Schweid, and Carey (2011) who used qualitative interviews and case studies of school counselor practices evident in high schools that excelled in promoting college transitions for low SES students. Nine out of the 10 practices the authors identified related to practices outside the realm of direct services to students (e.g., effective management practices, external partnerships, systemic thinking, influencing school policy). In addition effective collaboration was identified as a hallmark of Inspiration schools. It may be that practices associated with the effective design, planning, management evaluation of the school counseling program, and the coordination of program activities with educators and parents are essential elements for effective practice.

In this vein, Lapan & Harrington (2008) demonstrated that a well-designed and implemented school counseling intervention, the 12 Touch Program, had a strong positive effect on college application rates in inner city youth.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: EVALUATION PRACTICES AND CAPACITIES**

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There is a well-documented history of resistance and/or misunderstanding concerning program evaluation within the U.S. school counseling profession. Despite frequent and urgent calls to bolster evaluation training, resources, and practices and the emphasis on evaluation in the ASCA National Model, program evaluation remains an area in need of serious attention. Since 2000, a small number of policy studies have examined questions related to the improvement of school counselors to engage in evaluation of their work.

## **1. TREVISAN (2000)**

Trevisan (2000) examined the program evaluation expectations within state school counselor licensing requirements across the country. Documents specifying state licensing requirements for school counselors were collected from all 50 states. A content analysis was then conducted comparing state requirements to the evaluation competencies proposed by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Professions (CACREP), an accrediting body for university-based school counselor training programs. The study found that only 19 states actually required some proficiency in evaluation as part of school counseling licensure requirements. Only two states explicitly aligned with CACREP program evaluation standards. Two additional states met the CACREP standard equivalent without specifically naming CACREP. Ultimately, Trevisan (2000) concluded that the evaluation requirements of the majority of states were not, "sufficiently defined within the certification documentation to assure students receive proper training to develop and evaluate Comprehensive Developmental Counseling and Guidance [CDCG] programs" (p. 86).

## **2. TREVISAN (2002)**

Subsequently, Trevisan (2002) investigated evaluation within the school counseling profession through an analysis of the school counseling evaluation literature from 1972-2001, using Milstein and Cotton's (2000) evaluation capacity framework as a conceptual framework. Trevisan found that the school counseling profession was underdeveloped across all aspects of the framework. Furthermore, Trevisan warned that this lack of a professional evaluation infrastructure could greatly undermine the widespread adoption of

CDG programs in schools given that CDG programs assume that school counselors have a relatively high level of sophistication in evaluation practices.

### **3. MARTIN AND CAREY (2012)**

Given the general lack of evaluation in school counseling programs, Martin and Carey (2012) explored how state departments of education in two exemplary states (as identified by Martin, Carey and DeCoster, 2009) promoted school counselors' capacity to engage in evaluation. An in-depth, qualitative, cross case analysis methodology showed that the Utah and Missouri departments of education developed very different yet effective approaches to building evaluation capacity of school counselors. These approaches were related to how the states differed in terms of local control versus the centralized control of educational policy and decision-making. For example, they found that the Utah Department of Education clearly defined its role as an authority, while the Missouri Department of Education defined its role as a support for practitioners.

These findings reinforced the notion that effective policy and practices to promote evaluation is dependent on the policy context of the state. The observation that both approaches were successful in promoting school counselors' acquisition of relatively high levels of evaluation competence calls into question the appropriateness of "one-size-fits-all" policy approaches.

### **SUMMARY**

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Several important conclusions are evident. Program evaluation is not well represented in credentialing and training (Trevisan, 2000). The school counseling profession has a long way to go in building school counseling evaluation capacity throughout the field (Trevisan, 2002). Well conceived, sustained, and intentional state

initiatives are needed in order to support effective evaluation capacity building in the field of school counseling (Martin & Carey, 2012).

## **CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

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### **1. SCHOOL COUNSELOR ROLES AND ACTIVITIES**

The results of several of the studies reviewed above raise the question as to whether the role of the school counselor in high school and the range of duties associated with this role has become overly broad. Civic Enterprise's (2011) landscape review suggested that this role is comprised of a very wide range of duties. They suggest that counselors cannot adequately focus their work on improving students' academic achievement and promoting college access partly because of this impossibly broad role.

The results of the high school survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2003) are consistent with this conclusion. School counselors' time was spread across four major goals (i.e., improving academic achievement, facilitating planning for postsecondary schooling, helping students with personal growth and development issues, and helping students plan for work immediately after high school) and across a wide range of activities associated with these issues. It would appear that high school counselors are doing so many things that they cannot do much of any one thing. This sense of being overwhelmed is reflected in Sink and Yillik-Downer's (2001) findings that indicated many counselors were reluctant to adopt a CDG model because of the concern that additional responsibilities would just increase their already overburdened workload.

If the role and tasks of high school counseling are indeed impossibly broad, several possible courses of action are possible. First, the role could be narrowed through intentional job redesign to focus on the most essential aspects of direct service. This would require the establishment of a more focused role description and the alignment of both university training and school-based performance evaluation with this focused role. Civic Enterprises (2011) recommends this solution. Past attempts at job redesign have advocated for a sharp reduction in the focus on mental health counseling with a concomitant increase in focus on improving students' academic achievement (Martin, 2002). This recommendation is consistent with recommendations from the American School Counseling Association that has developed a national model for school counseling programs that sees improved academic achievement as the most important outcome for school counseling programs (Martin & Carey 2014).

Second, the role could be left broad and counselor time could be redirected from non-guidance activities to the most essential direct service activities. Ryander's (2002) study of school counselor activities put forward this recommendation. Here the question is how this redirected activity could indeed be focused on the delivery of the most essential direct service activities and whether enough time could be freed up to make a difference for students.

Third, the role could be left broad and counselors could free up time to devote to the most essential direct service activities. For example, both the National Center for Educational Statistics (2003) and the NACAC (2011) studies noted that the individual interview was the most frequent mode of service delivery in high schools. Utilizing more efficient methods of service delivery could free up time for increased attention to the most essential direct service areas. Again, the question is how this change could indeed be

focused on the delivery of the most essential direct service activities and whether enough time could be freed up to make a difference for students.

Fourth, the role could be left broad and programs could be more richly staffed with professional counselors. Several studies recommended establishing more favorable student-to-counselor ratios as a strategy for improving outcomes (e.g., California Department of Education, 2003; Carrell and Hoekstra, 2011; NOSCA 2011). Adding counselors could increase the time devoted to the most essential direct service areas.

Fifth, the role of school counselors could be left broad and programs could be more richly staffed by the addition of paraprofessionals. Several states have introduced paraprofessional “coaches” into high schools to focus on promoting graduation or college enrollment. These paraprofessionals have functioned independently of the school counseling program. Intentionally designing and evaluating school counseling programs staffed with a mix of professional and paraprofessional staff could be a cost-effective way to increase the amount of counselor time spent on the most essential direct service areas. Some preliminary thinking on how these programs might be organized and staffed has already been developed (see Agramovich, Hoskins, & Bartlett, 2010).

Finally, the overall role could be left broad and school counselor specializations could be created within high school-level counseling. Specialists would have the knowledge and training necessary to focus on different aspects of the comprehensive role. School districts could hire a combination of specialists to fit the needs of the district. This solution is not based on the notion that there are aspects of the broad school counselor role that can be universally classified as essential. Rather, it is consistent with the belief that different districts would rightly consider various aspects of the broad role as being essential for their

context. Many professions create specializations when the scope of knowledge and skill required for effective practice exceeds the capacities of any one person. Perhaps the school counseling profession is at this point. The program goals created by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2003) survey may serve as a blueprint for high school-level specializations: mental health and wellness counseling; academic performance counseling; and postsecondary transitions counseling (focusing on both work and education).

Several of the previous options may suggest that we now know the most essential foci for high school counseling direct service activities. In fact, this issue is not settled. The ASCA National Model suggests that improving academic achievement is the most salient outcome for school counseling programs (Martin and Carey, 2014). NOSCA (2010) suggests that improving college access is the most salient outcome. As noted above, the foci of federal programs targeted directly at improving high school counseling practice would suggest that federal policy goals related to school-based counseling at the high school level are primarily focused on the promotion of students' vocational development, career development, and college placement. The Public Agenda (2010) report highlighted the opinions of high school graduates that college counseling was both a highly desired service and a service that was not adequately delivered. However, this cannot be taken as evidence that college counseling is the most essential school counseling service. Consumer demand for or satisfaction with other services has not yet been assessed.

Furthermore, the notion that a unitary focus for the entire profession is possible or desirable is highly questionable. It seems more likely that the importance of different foci will vary depending on the context of the school. Students in large, diverse, inner city high schools small, affluent, suburban high schools, and remote rural high schools are likely to need a different "cocktail" of services. This fact argues against the appropriateness of policy

solutions focusing on a wholesale redesign of the job of school counseling and argues for solutions that help schools hire and/or develop school counselors who have the right mix of skills for the needs of their particular students.

## **2. MODELS FOR ORGANIZING AND MANAGING SCHOOL-BASED COUNSELING**

Research on the student outcomes associated with the implementation of Comprehensive Developmental Guidance approach (including the ASCA National Model) in schools has established that benefits to students can be expected if a CDG approach is implemented. Benefits to students can be expected to occur in high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. Policy favoring CDG implementation is warranted.

It should be noted, however, that the most robust effects of CDG/ASCA National Model implementation on student behavior are in the areas of increased attendance, increase graduation rates, decreased discipline rates and decreased suspension rates. Findings related to increased academic achievement scores are less robust (especially at the high school level). It could very well be that school counseling programs can be reasonably expected to enhance students' engagement and motivation and decrease disengagement and misbehavior—exerting an important but indirect effect on actual achievement measures.

While it is clear that organizing school counseling as Comprehensive Developmental Counseling (CDG) programs is associated with enhanced benefits to students, it is still unclear whether CDG is the best approach to organizing services. Future policy research should examine the levels of student benefits when school counseling activities are organized by a CDG model versus other possible models (e.g., a Positive Behavioral Supports model). Similarly, it is unclear whether the additional components of the ASCA

National Model result in enhanced benefits to students. Finally, while facilitating the implementation of CDG models, it is established that it is not sufficient for a state to have a model without investing in professional development to drive model implementation. Furthermore, most states with an endorsed model lack the capacity to promote model implementation in school districts. Subsequent policy research is needed to establish the most effective ways that government can promote model implementation in schools. There is a suggestion that Utah's approach which focuses on enhancing local evaluation capacity and utilizing periodic statewide evaluations is an effective approach to promoting CDG adoption in districts.

### **3. PERSONNEL AND STAFFING**

The critical issue examined by policy research in regards to personnel and staffing is the impact of student-counselor ratios on the level of student benefits that accrue to students. Lower student-to-counselor ratios were consistently found to be associated with higher attendance rates, higher college application rates, lower discipline rates, and (for elementary students) enhanced academic achievement. Government policies reducing these ratios (especially in states with particularly high ratios) would be expected to result in enhanced benefits to students.

It is still unclear whether reducing ratios is the most cost-effective way to achieve policy objectives. For example, if the major policy objective for high school counseling is increasing college going rates it must be considered that public school counselors presently spend relatively little time on activities associated with this objective and work primarily in relatively inefficient modalities (i.e., one-on-one counseling) when attending to this objective. Adding counselors would therefore be expected to have relatively little impact

compared to strategies such as hiring paraprofessional “coaches” whose whole position is focused on promoting college going. Model school counseling programs seem fixated on relying on full-time Masters-level counselors to staff the program rather than considering how a combination of professional and paraprofessional staff might more efficiently deliver effective services to students and parents. Future policy research should use a cost-benefits approach to identify the most effective staffing patterns needed to achieve critical policy objectives in school counseling. Recently, Astramovich, Hoskins, and Bartlett, (2010) proposed an organizational model for school counseling that relies on a combination of professional and paraprofessional staff. An evaluation of student benefits achieved under this model (in comparison to traditional staffing patterns) would be very important. In addition, the recent recession has made it necessary for many school counseling programs to rely on a combination of professional-paraprofessional staffing of the school counseling programs. The examination of effective ways that job responsibilities are delineated in such programs and an analysis of the potential efficiency of such program in producing student benefits are clearly warranted.

#### **4. EFFECTIVE PRACTICES**

The ASCA National Model (2012) and CDG are ‘frameworks’ rather than fully articulated programs. These frameworks allow for school counselors to choose the practices, interventions, and curricula most appropriate for their given circumstances. It is not uncommon to see schools within the same district selecting very different practices to meet similar goals. While the prior section clearly documents the benefits and student outcomes associated with fully implemented frameworks, school counseling research to date has paid little attention to the effectiveness of the actual practices that school counselors employ (McGannon, Carey, & Dimmitt, 2004; Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Eder,

2011). More rigorous research and development is needed before school counselors can identify the interventions, curricula, and practices that result in the best student outcomes. Federal policy should promote this rigorous research on effective school counseling practices.

In addition, investments are needed in creating mechanisms to better inform practitioners about research findings. While research centers and professional associations can help disseminate information on effective practices, government support and direction is needed to scale up research dissemination.

## **5. STATE POLICY PROMOTING SCHOOL COUNSELING PRACTICE**

Even though the primary responsibility for facilitation and oversight of school counseling is at the state level, very little information is available of effective ways that states can promote effective practice. The findings of Martin, DeCoster, and Carey (2009) suggest that most state departments of education do not have adequate mechanisms in place to support the widespread implementation of the endorsed state models. Very few states have engaged in comprehensive evaluations of school counseling practice. Trevesian (2000) indicated that in general state departments of education licensure requirements for school counselors in the area of evaluation do not require sufficient levels of competence to support the implementation of effective comprehensive developmental programs. State departments of education should attempt to align licensing requirements with models of practice and to develop context-specific plans and approaches to improve school counseling programs. A comprehensive evaluation of the state of practice would be an important first step in the generation of these plans.

## 6. ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELING

Almost all of the policy research reviewed above focuses on high school counseling. Additional work needs to be done with respect to elementary and middle school counseling to: clarify policy objectives related to practice; identify the most important foci for practice, identify the for planning, organizing and directing practice; and identify the effective activities and interventions. The ongoing federal Elementary and Secondary Demonstration Grant program could be redesigned to help address these issues.

### SUMMARY

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School counseling has great potential to contribute to the public good by improving the educational outcomes for students. School counseling seems especially important in promoting student engagement, pro-social behavior, attendance, and postsecondary transitions. At present, the range of foci for school counseling practice in high schools is broad and includes: academic achievement, postsecondary educational transitions, work transitions, and mental health promotion. Counselors are spread thinly across this range of foci. In addition, it would appear that high school counselors often are asked to commit sizeable amounts of time to non-professional activities and often work in inefficient ways. In many states, high student-to-counselor ratios preclude effective work.

We suggest that policy efforts be directed towards improving ratios and efficiency. We also suggest that policy efforts be directed towards encouraging the development and evaluation of innovations in practice that have the promise to improve students' access to important services. Such potential innovations would include the development of specializations within high school counseling and the development and evaluation of school counseling model programs that utilize mixed professional and paraprofessional staffing.

We furthermore suggest that policy efforts be focused on promoting the implementation of CDG-based models and on research on the effectiveness of alternative ways (e.g, PBIS) to organize and coordinate school counseling services and on the effectiveness of specific activities and practices. In addition, we suggest that each state department of education in the U.S. engage in comprehensive evaluations of the state of school counseling practice as a first step in developing a comprehensive plan for promoting effective practice that fits with its educational policy context.

Finally, we suggest additional attention be placed at both the federal and state levels on the development of policy objectives for elementary and middle school counseling. Such clear objectives are a necessary first step in the formulation of sound policy to guide and support the implementation of effective program at these levels.

**TABLE ONE: LITERATURE REVIEWS**

<b>Literature Reviews</b>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Hughes and Karp (2004)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> Do school-based career development interventions produce vocational and academic outcomes?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Analytic review</p> <p><b>Sources of data:</b> Literature</p> <p><b>Level; location:</b> Elementary, Middle, and High School: National</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> School-based career development can affect vocational and academic outcomes. More rigorous research is needed.</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> McGannon, Carey, &amp; Dimmitt (2005)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> To what extent does school counseling practice meet NCLB standards for being based on scientific research?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Analytic review</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Literature</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> Elementary, Middle, and High School: National</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> School-based counseling activities and interventions can lead to improved student outcomes. More rigorous research is needed.</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, &amp; Eder (2011)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> How effective are school counseling activities and interventions?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Meta-analytic review</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Literature</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> Elementary, Middle, and High School: National</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> In general, school counseling interventions are effective. More rigorous research is needed.</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Civic Enterprises (2011)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> What are the current roles of school counselors in middle and high schools and how can counselors be utilized to help produce education reform?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Landscaping Review</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Literature</p>

**Level; Location:** Middle and High School: National

**Major Findings:** The current role of the school counselor is too broad and unfocused. The role should be focused on activities related to student achievement and school improvement. University-based training programs should be aligned with this refocused role.

**TABLE TWO: SURVEY RESEARCH**

Survey Research
<p><b>Reference:</b> National Center for Educational Statistics (2003)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> What are the basic characteristics of school counseling in U.S. public high schools in terms of program characteristics, activities, and staffing? What major changes in these characteristics have occurred since the last NCES survey (1985)?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Survey</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Survey adapted from 1985 version and completed by a nationally representative, stratified sample of 1,001 public high schools (94% response rate) in the 50 states and the D.C.</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> High School: National</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> A ratio of 315 students for every full-time school counselor was noted. Most counselor time was spent on activities related to scheduling of high school courses; postsecondary admission and selection; and student attendance, discipline, and personal problems. Non-guidance activities were reported to occupy relatively little time. Students participated most often in individual counseling sessions (as was also the case in the 1985 survey). Helping students with their academic achievement in high school was the most emphasized program goal. This goal increased significantly in importance in comparison to 1985 results.</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Sink and Downer (2001)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> What is the nature of school counselors' concerns about implementing Comprehensive Developmental Guidance programs in their school districts?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Survey</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Perceptions of Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Inventory completed by nationwide sample of 1,425 school counselors (78% response rate) in 11 states that were engaged in the CDG model implementation.</p>

**Level; Location:** Elementary, Middle, and High School; 11 States from all regions of the U.S.

**Major Findings:** Counselors whose districts were in the planning/designing stage of CDG implementation had the greatest concerns. High school counselors were particularly concerned about the manageability of the tasks that would be required of them. School counselors' task concerns proved to be a strong predictor of their level of involvement in implementing the CDG program.

**Reference:** Public Agenda (2010)

**Major Questions:** What is the level of satisfaction of recent college attendees with their high school college counseling services?

**Method:** Telephone survey

**Sources of Data:** Author constructed a telephone survey completed by a national sample (614) of recent college attendees.

**Level; Location:** High School: National.

**Major Findings:** Most participants gave their high school guidance counselors fair or poor ratings. Delaying going to college and making more poor choices about higher education were predictable consequences of inadequate counseling and advising in high school. Teachers were viewed as more helpful than high school counselors.

**Reference:** National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA, 2011)

**Major Questions:** How do counselors view their roles? How do they spend their time? How do they view measures of accountability and education policies and practices related to their roles within the educational system?

**Method:** Survey

**Sources of Data:** Author-constructed online survey completed by a national sample (5,308) of middle and high school counselors.

**Level; Location:** High School and Middle School: National

**Major Findings:** Large differences exist between school counselors' views of the ideal and real goals of public education, and between their views of the ideal and real missions of school counselors. To improve student outcomes, respondents endorsed empowerment of school leadership and reducing counselors' administrative tasks and caseloads. The majority of respondents endorsed NOSCA's Eight Components of a college counseling system but far fewer counselors rated their school as being successful in these components. The majority also supported possible accountability measures for counselors including: transcript audits of graduation readiness, students' completion of college-preparatory

course sequence, students' access to advanced classes/tests, high school graduation rates, and college application rates.

**Reference:** National Association for College Admission Counseling (2011)

**Major Questions:** What are current staffing ratios in high schools? What college counseling activities do counselors engage in?

**Method:** Survey

**Sources of Data:** NACAC's annual Counseling trends Survey

**Level; Location:** High School (Public and private): National

**Major Findings:** Even with relatively favorable caseloads (285:1), school counselors in public high schools spend relatively little time on college counseling and tend to use individual interview as the major mode of practice.

**Reference:** Martin, Carey, & DeCoster (2009)

**Major Questions:** What is the status of state-level school counseling models in the United States?

**Method:** Structured telephone interviews; document analysis

**Sources of Data:** State directors of school counseling, websites, documents

**Level; Location:** All Levels: National

**Major Findings:** While the majority of states (44) had official school counseling models, there is a great deal of variation concerning levels of implementation. Seventeen states had well implemented models; 24 were progressing; and 10 were beginning. While there was widespread interest across state government agencies in developing a state model aligned with the ASCA (2005) National Model, many states lacked the implementation features needed to ensure the state model actually influences school practices.

**TABLE THREE: EVALUATIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS**

Evaluations of School Counseling Programs
<p><b>Reference:</b> Lapan, Gysbers, and Petroski (2001)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> Is the implementation of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs related to school safety and success as reported by a statewide sample of 7th grade students?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Hierarchical linear modeling</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Teacher and student self-report questionnaires from state database; school demographic information from state database.</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> 7th Grade; Missouri</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> Comprehensive guidance programs were related to students' reports of feeling safe, having better relationships with their teachers, being more satisfied with the education they were receiving in their school, having greater awareness of the relevance and importance of education for their future, and earning higher grades.</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Sink and Stroh (2003)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> Do elementary schools with comprehensive school counseling programs produce higher academic achievement?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Causal comparative</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Counselor questionnaire; state database</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> Elementary school; Washington State</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> The longer students were enrolled in high implementation CSCP schools, the more likely they were to have significantly higher achievement test scores.</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Sink, Akos, Turnbull, and Mvududu (2008)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> Do middle schools with comprehensive school counseling programs produce higher academic achievement?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Causal comparative</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Counselor questionnaire; state database</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> Middle school; Washington State</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> While only minimal differences in student achievement were noted</p>

between implementing and non-implementing schools, the high implementation schools outperformed non-implementing schools on Grade 6 language and math tests and on Grade 7 reading and math tests.

**Reference:** Carey, Harrington, Martin and Stevenson (2012)

**Major Questions:** What student outcomes are associated with the level of implementation of an ASCA National Model school counseling program and with more favorable student-to-counselor staffing ratios?

**Method:** Stepwise hierarchical linear regression

**Sources of Data:** SCPIS; state database

**Level; Location:** High school, Utah

**Major Findings:** The level of ASCA National Model implementation was associated with increased reading and math proficiency; increased ACT scores, and increased percentages of students who chose to take the ACT. More favorable student-to-counselor ratios were associated with higher attendance rates and lower discipline rates.

**Reference:** Carey, Harrington, Martin, and Hoffman (2012)

**Major Questions:** What student outcomes are associated with the level of implementation of an ASCA National Model school counseling program and with more favorable student to counselor staffing ratios?

**Method:** Stepwise hierarchical linear regression

**Sources of Data:** SCPIS, state database

**Level; Location:** Rural high schools; Nebraska

**Major Findings:** The level of implementation of an ASCA National Model delivery system was associated with increases in attendance rates, decreases in discipline rates, and decreases in suspension rates.

**Reference:** Lapan, Gysbers, Stanley and Pierce (2012)

**Major Questions:** What is the relationship between student to counselor ratios and students' academic achievement and school-related behavior?

**Method:** Multiple regression

**Sources of Data:** State database

**Level; Location:** High School; Missouri

**Major Findings:** More favorable ratios were associated with increases in graduation rates and decreases in disciplinary incidents. In high poverty schools, both the graduation and attendance rates proved to be significantly higher in high schools that met the ASCA-recommended ratio of 250 students per counselor.

**Reference:** Lapan, Whitman, and Aleman (2012)

**Major Questions:** What are the relationships between academic-achievement-related variables and school counseling activities and student to counselor ratios?

**Method:** Multiple regression

**Sources of Data:** Counselor questionnaire; state database

**Level; Location:** High School; Connecticut

**Major Findings:** Counselor focus on College and Career Readiness was associated with fewer discipline incidents and decreased suspension rates. More favorable ratios were associated with reduced student suspension rates.

**Reference:** Dimmitt and Wilkerson (2012)

**Major Questions:** What is the relationship between school counseling activities and a range of student outcomes?

**Method:** Correlation

**Sources of Data:** Counselor, Student and Parent questionnaires from state database

**Level; Location:** High school; Rhode Island

**Major Findings:** School counselor activities were associated with one or more of the following benefits: students' sense of belonging, student reports of hassles with other students, students' hassles with teachers, students being teased/bullied, attendance, students getting suspended, and parent's perceptions of the level of the school's responsiveness to their concerns.

**Reference:** Burkard, Gillen, Martinez, and Skytte (2012)

**Major Questions:** How is the level of implementation of different components of Comprehensive Developmental Guidance programs related to student academic outcomes?

**Method:** Correlation

**Sources of Data:** Counselor questionnaire; state database

**Level; Location:** High school; Wisconsin

**Major Findings:** More complete implementation of most CDG components were found to be associated with increased attendance rates, higher graduation rates, and decreased grade retention rates. More complete implementation was associated with decreased truancy and suspension rates.

**Reference:** Wilkerson, Pérusse, and Hughes (2013)

**Major Questions:** Do schools with well-implemented ASCA National Model programs produce higher levels of student achievement in comparison to matched control schools?

**Method:** Quasi-experimental

**Sources of Data:** ASCA; state database.

**Level; Location:** Elementary, Middle and High Schools; Indiana

**Major Findings:** RAMP elementary schools had significantly higher English Language Arts and Mathematics proficiency rates than non-RAMP counterparts. No differences were noted at the middle school or high school levels.

**TABLE FOUR: STATE EVALUATIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELING PRACTICE**

<b>State Evaluations of School Counseling Practice</b>
<p><b>Reference:</b> California Office of Education (2003)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> What is the status of 'Pupil Personnel Services' in California schools?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Survey, interviews, focus groups</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> District representatives, support personnel, teachers, parents</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> 161 California school districts</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> The report determined adequate ratios to be 834:1 for elementary schools, 461:1 for middle schools and junior high schools, and 364:1 for high schools. Districts and participants viewed pupil support services as effective, but agreed that they needed more services. Economic limitations were found to be the biggest barrier to increased pupil personnel services implementation.</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Rylander (2002)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> How do Texas school counselors spend their time? What are current student-to-counselor ratios?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Survey (week long time/task tracking).</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Surveys sent to 9, 940 school counselors with 4, 040 responses (40.7 % response rate)</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> Texas school counselors</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> On average, school counselors spent nearly 40% of their time on non-counseling duties (e.g., lunch duty, test coordinating, discipline, etc.). The average counselor-to-student ratio was 1:423 (a slight decrease over the prior 5 years)</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Nelson, Fox, Haslam, &amp; Gardner (2007)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> How effective is the Utah Comprehensive School Counseling Program?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Multiple stakeholder surveys, selective 'external' student measures</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Self-report surveys of counselors, administrators, teachers, parents, and students (N= 27,952); Iowa Basic and Educational Development test; Act profiles and scores</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> 175 Utah Middle and High Schools</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> Marked improvement in Comprehensive Guidance (CG) program</p>

implementation over nine years, general agreement that comprehensive guidance has contributed to student achievements and career planning; CG extends activities to all students (not just those labeled at risk); CG & SEOP facilitated parent involvement in middle and high school; CG encouraged students to take more rigorous courses and fewer students described their programs of study as 'general' when compared to prior evaluations; higher implementing schools showed improved achievement and career outcomes than lower-implementing schools. Note: This was a culminating study of a 13-year evaluation process (study compared same items over 9 year period).

**TABLE FIVE: EXISTING DATABASE INVESTIGATIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELING**

<b>Existing Database Investigations of School Counseling</b>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, and Holcomb-McCoy (2011).</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> Are students' contacts with high school guidance counselors related to college application rates?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Multiple regression</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> High school: National</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> In general, both school counselor contact and number of available school counselors were positively related to college application rates. Counselor contact and students race, ethnicity interacted in complex ways.</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Engberg &amp; Gilbert (2013)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> What are the relationships between high school counseling practices/resources and students' college going rates?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Ordinary least squares hierarchical regression</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> High School Longitudinal Study of 2009</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> High school: National</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> College-going rate was positively associated with both the amount of time counselors spent on college counseling and with smaller student caseloads. College-going rates were associated with: offering financial aid information and assistance; participating in college fairs; and facilitating college connections by offering courses at four-year colleges or organizing visits to colleges.</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Belasco (2013)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> What are the relationships between high school students' contact with their school counselor and application to college? Are contacts with the counselor more or less beneficial depending on students' socioeconomic level?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Coarsened exact matching followed by multinomial logistic regression</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> High school: National</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> Counselor contacts were positively associated with students' college enrollment. Contacts were most beneficial for low socioeconomic status students.</p>

**Reference:** Hurwitz and Howell (2013)

**Major Questions:** What is the estimated effect of adding an additional high school counselor on students' four-year college-going rates?

**Method:** Regression discontinuity

**Sources of Data:** National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)

**Level; Location:** High School: 12 states with mandated ratios

**Major Findings:** Adding additional counselor would be expected to produce a 10% increase in students' four-year college-going rates.

**Reference:** Carrell and Carrell (2006)

**Major Questions:** What are the estimated reductions in discipline incidents that would result from reducing the student-to-counselor ratio to 250:1? What is the cost associated with this benefit?

**Method:** Linear regression

**Sources of Data:** School district database.

**Level; Location:** Elementary school: 23 schools in one Florida district.

**Major Findings:** Estimated reducing the staffing ratio to 250 students per counselor would result in a 25.5 percent decrease in the probability of a disciplinary recurrence in a year. Reducing the current ratio would result in a 59.1 percent decrease in the mean number of students with a first time disciplinary occurrence each year.

**Reference:** Carrell and Hoekstra (2011)

**Major Questions:** What is the estimated effect of hiring an additional counselor on student achievement? How does this effect compare to other ways to boost student achievement?

**Method:** Linear regression

**Sources of Data:** School district database

**Level; Location:** Elementary school: 23 schools in one Florida district

**Major Findings:** The addition of a counselor would increase students' achievement by 0.84 percentile points, or 3 percent of a standard deviation. The effect is equivalent to costly teacher professional development and more effective than reducing class size by hiring an additional teacher.

**TABLE SIX: RESEARCH IDENTIFYING ELEMENTS OF EXEMPLARY PRACTICE**

<b>Research Identifying Elements of Exemplary Practice</b>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Fitch and Marshall (2004)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> How do school counselors from high-achieving and low-achieving schools differ in the role-related tasks they emphasize?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Quasi-experimental study</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Surveys of school counselors</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> Elementary, middle and high school: One state</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> Counselors in high achieving schools emphasized: 1) program management, evaluation, and research, 2) coordination, and 3) use of professional standards</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Lapan and Harrington (2008)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> Does the 12 Touch Program increase college application rates in inner city schools?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Correlational</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Analysis of institutional data</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> Middle and high school: Chicago</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> Students from schools in which the 12 Touch Program was more fully implemented showed higher application rates to multiple colleges.</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Millitello et al. (2009)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> What exemplary practices characterize the work of school counselors in schools that have won a national award for achieving high college going rates with low SES students?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Qualitative</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Structured interviews</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> High schools: 18 Inspiration Award Winners</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> Ten exemplary practices were identified.</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Militello, Schweid, &amp; Carey (2011)</p>

**Major Questions:** What exemplary practices characterize the work of school counselors in schools that have won a national award for achieving high college going rates with low SES students?

**Method:** Qualitative

**Sources of Data:** Structured interviews and Case Studies

**Level; Location:** High Schools: Inspiration Award Winners: 18 interviews; 5 case studies

**Major Findings:** Ten exemplary practices were identified. Schools showed high levels of problem- focused collaboration rather than rigid role-based coordination.

**TABLE SEVEN: EVALUATION CAPACITY AND POLICY STUDIES**

<b>Evaluation Capacity and Policy Studies</b>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Trevisan (2000)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> How many states require program evaluation for school guidance and counseling certification? What is the nature and scope of the program evaluation requirements? Do the requirements match the school counselor program evaluation standards recommended by CACREP? Are the program evaluation requirements sufficiently defined to assure students receive proper training to develop and maintain CDCG programs?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Telephone inquiries and document review</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> National association of state directors of teacher education and certification (NASDTEC) manual and contact information</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> State level; national</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> Most states (38%) specify some type of training in evaluation for school counselor certification. Only two states aligned with CACREP program evaluation standards and two other states met a CACREP equivalent without specifically naming CACREP. The other 15 states with an evaluation requirement were not "sufficiently defined within the certification documentation to assure students receive proper training to develop and evaluate CDCG programs" (86).</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Trevisan &amp; Hubert (2001)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> What are the "lessons learned" from implementing a long-term program evaluation support process within a large district school counseling program?</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Report; reflective analysis</p> <p><b>Sources of Data:</b> Researcher/district collaboration</p> <p><b>Level; Location:</b> District; Washington state</p> <p><b>Major Findings:</b> Four broad lessons learned: 1. Provide evaluation in-service training; 2. Enhance buy-in from district stakeholders; 3. Identify strong leadership; 4. Adopt a long-term approach</p>
<p><b>Reference:</b> Trevisan (2002)</p> <p><b>Major Questions:</b> What are the factors that impact evaluation capacity within school</p>

counseling (paying particular attention to factors linked to the development or support of CDGC programs)?

**Method:** Literature review

**Sources of Data:** Academic articles

**Level; Location:** National

**Major Findings:** The literature review concludes with 5 recommendations for enhancing school counseling evaluation capacity and creating a supportive evaluation infrastructure.

**Reference:** Martin & Carey (2012)

**Major Questions:** How do exemplary states approach CDSC program evaluation? What strategies and practices do these states use to evaluate their programs? What lessons can be learned from these states about establishing program evaluation systems?

**Method:** Qualitative cross-case analysis

**Sources of Data:** Document review; counselor questionnaire; field notes; in-depth interviews; small group interviews

**Level; Location:** Utah; Missouri

**Major Findings:** Cases established two different, but equally successful approaches to building evaluation capacity. Missouri created wide-ranging resources, training and award systems to enhance practitioners' familiarity and use of evaluation. Utah provided incentive funds that required high levels of evaluation documentation and practitioner participation. Both cases were governed by contextual factors (i.e., barriers and assets).

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