



The Education Trust



REACH HIGHER



AMERICAN
SCHOOL
COUNSELOR
ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY
2019

REACHHIGHER.ORG • EDTRUST.ORG
SCHOOLCOUNSELOR.ORG

School Counselors Matter

School counselors are just one part — but an important part — of a system that ensures students have excellent educational experiences.

As part of a school support team, school counselors provide critical social-emotional and academic supports. Through a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes success and achievement for all students, school counselors can help set students on a path for postsecondary success.

In particular, students of color and students from low-income families benefit from having more access to school counselors. For example, [Black students are more likely than](#) their White peers to identify their school counselor as the person who had the most influence on their thinking about postsecondary education. And research [links](#) the student-to-school-counselor ratios that meet the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommendation in high-poverty schools to better academic outcomes for students, such as improved attendance, fewer disciplinary incidents, and higher graduation rates.

Simply put: There are not enough school counselors in the U.S.

The [ASCA recommends](#) that schools maintain a ratio of 250 students per school counselor, and that school counselors spend at least 80 percent of their time working directly with or indirectly for students.

- **Across all schools, the average student-to-school-counselor ratio is [464 to 1](#).**

What's more, nearly 1 in 5 students — about 8 million children — do not have access to a counselor in their school at all, and nearly 3 million of those students do not even have access to other school support staff, such as school psychologists or social workers.

- **Across high schools, the average student-to-school-counselor ratio is 311 students to 1.**

Only 1 in 5 high school students is enrolled in a school where there is a sufficient amount of school counselors. This means there are 11 million high school students who are enrolled in a school without enough school counselors.

Too often, school counselors are not available to students of color and students from low-income families.

Students of color and students from low-income families have been overlooked and underserved for far too long. If anything, they deserve *more* access to school counselors than their peers — not the same, and certainly not less. And yet, the schools serving the most students of color or the most students from low-income families are shortchanged when it comes to school counselors.

- **Across all schools**, 38 states are shortchanging either their students of color, students from low-income families, or both.
- **Across high schools**, a school counselor who serves predominantly students of color has to serve 34 more students every year than a school counselor who serves fewer students of color, and 27 states are shortchanging either their students of color, students from low-income families, or both.

38 states are shortchanging either their students of color or students from low-income families, or both.



The Education Trust



REACH HIGHER



AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY 2019

REACHHIGHER.ORG • EDTRUST.ORG SCHOOLCOUNSELOR.ORG

Figure 1: Statewide High School Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio and Access for Students of Color

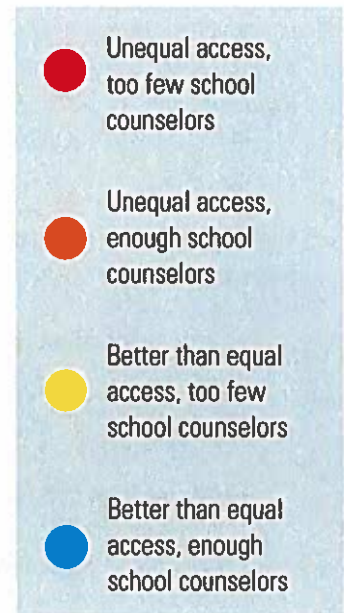
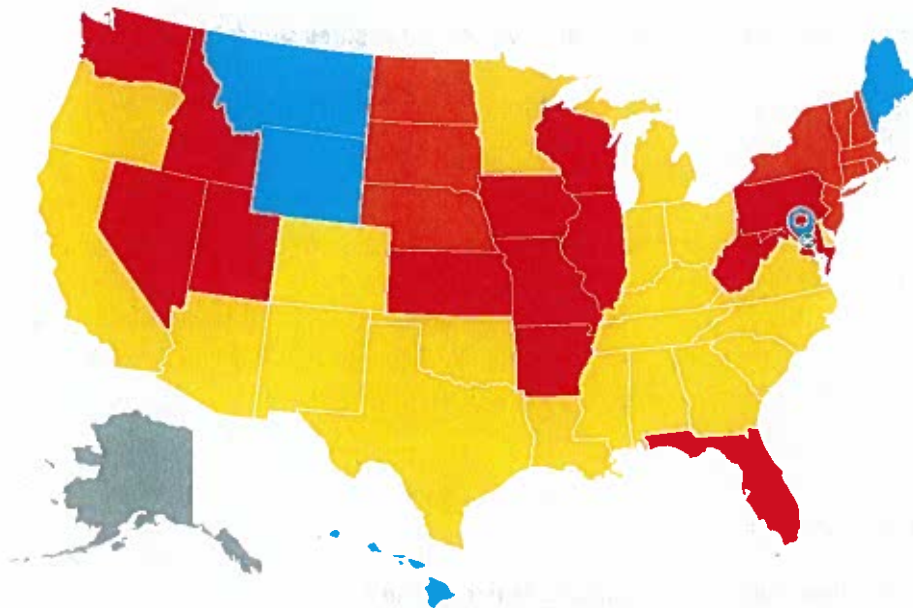
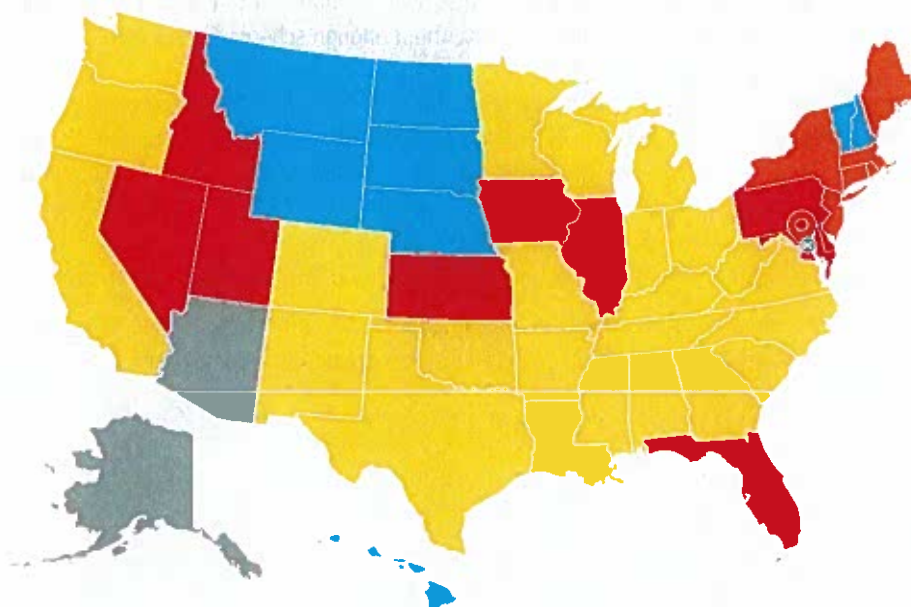


Figure 2: Statewide High School Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio and Access for Students from Low-Income Families



Source: The Education Trust analysis of data from the [2015–16 Civil Rights Data Collection](#) and the [2015–16 Common Core of Data](#).



The Education Trust



REACH HIGHER
Complete your education. Own your future.



AMERICAN
SCHOOL
COUNSELOR
ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY
2019

REACHHIGHER.ORG • EDTRUST.ORG
SCHOOLCOUNSELOR.ORG

These data paint a clear picture: In too many states, students — especially students of color and students from low-income families — do not have meaningful access to counselors.

School counselors can play a critical role in ensuring that students get opportunities to have safe, enriching experiences in and out of school, and in helping prepare students for postsecondary success — all in ways that meet their individual needs. But it's difficult to do that meaningfully if school counselors are responsible for supporting unmanageable numbers of students.

What Advocates Can Do

Here are some questions that education leaders and advocates should ask about how school counselors are being incorporated into plans for improving opportunity and outcomes for all students — especially for students of color and students from low-income families:

If adequacy is a problem in your state or district:

- Is there a [set requirement](#) for the number of school counselors per school or per number of students? If so, are the requirements being met? If not, what is the strategy for ensuring that there is an adequate number of high-quality school counselors in each school?
- Are there particular districts across the state where the problem is most pronounced? If so, what can be done to support those districts to place more school counselors in schools?
- What, if any, funding can be leveraged in the short term to address the most severe shortage areas? In the long term?
- How is the state or district ensuring there is a pipeline of school counselors? How does that strategy include partnerships with colleges and universities to appropriately train new school counselors?

If equity is a problem in your state or district:

- What are the policies or procedures for allocating school counselors across districts or schools, and why is the distribution of school counselors inequitable?
- What is the strategy for providing more school counselors in high-need schools?



Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio 2021–2022



The American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 250-to-1.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey, 2021-22 v.1a. <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/>
 Note: Data for Nevada school counselors was not available. 2020-21 data is used here.

IMPACT OF SCHOOL-COUNSELOR-TO-STUDENT RATIOS ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

Study shows impact of school counselor ratios on student outcomes.



WHAT ARE THE FINDINGS?

A school-counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250 has a significant effect on student attendance, SAT mathematics, SAT writing and SAT verbal scores.

In Indiana, the average school-counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250 resulted in:

- 0.3% higher attendance (i.e. every day in a school of 1,000 students, three more students attend class than otherwise).
- 18 points higher SAT mathematics scores.
- 19 points higher SAT verbal scores.
- 16 points higher SAT writing scores.



Students in districts with elementary school counselors have improved performance outcomes versus districts without.

Connecticut school districts report

- Schools with K-12 school counselors:
 - ▶ 69.4% report graduation rates greater than 90 percent.
- Schools without elementary school counselors:
 - ▶ 45.8% report graduation rates greater than 90 percent.
 - ▶ Approximately 72% of school districts provide no comprehensive school counseling services to students in grades K-5.



Lower-performing schools/schools in lower-socioeconomic-status communities maintain higher caseloads than higher-performing schools.

In Connecticut:

- High-performing schools average school-counselor-to-student ratio: High school = 1:182 Middle school = 1:211
- Low-performing schools average school-counselor-to-student ratio: High school = 1:285 Middle school = 1:891



WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

- 1** Lowering ratios allows school counselors to effectively deliver a comprehensive school counseling program to better meet students' academic, career and social/emotional needs
- 2** Socioeconomic status and community resources have an impact on school counselors' ability to effectively deliver comprehensive school counseling programs.
- 3** School-counselor-to-student ratios may be optimal at 1:250, but grade level and socioeconomic factors of a district require close consideration.

Read the full report: www.schoolcounselor.org/effectiveness

SOURCE: ASCA grant-funded research of school counselor ratios and student outcomes in three states (Indiana, Connecticut, and New York).

RESEARCHERS: Jennifer L. Parzych, Ph.D., Southern Connecticut State University; Peg Donohue, Ph.D., Central Connecticut State University; Amy Gaesser, Ph.D., The College at Brockport, SUNY; Ming Ming Chiu, Ph.D., The Education University of Hong Kong

