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[Staffing Schools to Support the Classroom: Examining the Student-School Counselor Ratios and Academic Student Outcomes in Texas](#)

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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY To examine the relationship between school-counselor-to-student ratios and students' academic and graduation outcomes in Texas. While previous studies have examined the influence of school counselors on student outcomes for some states, the state of Texas has yet to examine these factors, despite the recommendations of ASCA and the Texas School Counseling Association (TSCA) Model to maintain relatively low student-to-school-counselor ratios (e.g., 350-to-1; TEA, 2018).

HOW THE RESEARCH ADVANCES THE PROFESSION Findings showed that for Texas districts, school years in which the district employed a greater number of counselors per student (holding other factors constant) were associated with higher graduation rates, lower dropout rates, higher student achievement and lower achievement gaps. Indeed, it appeared that the more school counselors employed in a school, the better achievement across grade levels and subjects. Results suggest efforts to expand counselor staffing levels warrant further consideration in the state of Texas, similar to other states. Moreover, differences in counselor staffing levels across school districts is cause for concern in the state. This research is the first study of student-to-school-counselor ratios of its kind for the state of Texas and is a critical addition to the growing research and literature related to student-to-school counselor ratios and student outcomes.

GUIDANCE FOR PRACTICING SCHOOL COUNSELORS The study has implications for leading and working within school counseling programs. District administrators within limited counseling staff may optimize school counselor placements by targeting additional staff to schools serving higher percentage of low-income students, particularly if focused on reducing high school dropouts (as opposed to overall academic achievement or achievement gaps). For school counselors, recognizing the limitations and challenges of serving a large student caseload is important. Some school counselors may wish to focus on a subset of higher-need students, given that lower student loads are associated with greater success.

EQUITY DIMENSIONS There are clear findings that show inequity gaps in poverty, race and ethnicity. The research data shows that higher-poverty school districts – the 20% of districts serving the highest percent of low-income students – benefited from lower student-school counselor ratios during the early 2000s, but that gap largely diminished after 2010-11 when the state made large cuts to K-12 funding. When examining race and ethnicity, results indicated that over the past two decades, districts enrolling the highest percentage of students who are Black have maintained fewer school counselors per student and higher student-to-school-counselor ratios than districts enrolling the fewest number of Black students. Furthermore, districts serving predominantly Latinx students or higher proportions of Latinx students than other districts had higher student-to-school-counselor ratios for a large part of the 2000s.