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ASCA Releases Updated Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio Data

Ratio improves to 376:1 from 385:1 since last data collection

ALEXANDRIA, VA – New data indicates the student-to-school-counselor ratio continues to narrow – reaching its lowest margin since ASCA began tracking ratios in 1986. According to the data, the national student-to-school-counselor ratio was 376:1 in 2023–2024, compared with 385:1 the previous school year, representing a 2% improvement year over year. With this new ratio, approximately 1,086,643 more students had access to a school counselor in the 2023–2024 school year compared with the previous school year.

ASCA calculates student-to-school-counselor ratios using data from the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics state nonfiscal public elementary/secondary education survey. The department recently released the 2023–2024 data. Although the national average has decreased, it’s still significantly higher than ASCA’s recommended ratio of 250 students per school counselor.

Other key findings in the latest data:

- Idaho is the most-improved state, lowering the state’s student-to-school-counselor ratio from 481:1 to 391:1 for an improvement of 23%.
- Most states saw modest improvements, including the District of Columbia (8%), California (5%), Georgia (5%), Indiana (5%), Nebraska (5%),

Oregon (5%), Connecticut (4%), Michigan (4%), New Hampshire (4%), Pennsylvania (4%) and Rhode Island (4%). A few states experienced small decreases, including Florida (-2%), Louisiana (-1%), Maine (-1%), Ohio (-1%), Texas (-1%) and West Virginia (-1%).

National ratios are higher in elementary/middle schools (grades pre-K–8) and lower in high schools (grades 9-12), based on estimates using the NCES data. Because not all states report counts for elementary/middle vs. secondary school counselors, it's not possible to calculate exact ratios by grade level. However, calculating by only the states that report elementary/middle school counselors and secondary school counselors separately (35 states), we are able to calculate ranges of 178:1 to 326:1 for high school counselors and 581:1 to 702:1 for elementary/middle school counselors (National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>).

Since 1965, ASCA has recommended a student-to-school-counselor ratio of 250:1. Several research studies (schoolcounselor.org/effectiveness) have found that smaller ratios support increases in standardized test performance, attendance, GPA and graduation rates, as well as decreased disciplinary infractions. Additional studies have shown lower ratios also increase the likelihood of students having conversations with school counselors regarding college-going and postsecondary plans.

“Ensuring every student has access to a school counselor must remain a national priority,” said Jill Cook, CAE, ASCA executive director. “We are encouraged by the improvement in the national ratio. As the data shows, even a small change has a dramatic impact on the number of students served—those young people who are tomorrow’s leaders and families and game changers. School counselors play a pivotal role in helping these students succeed in school and in life.”

The full ratio data, including state-level ratios, is available on the ASCA website, schoolcounselor.org/roles. Previous year reports are available upon request.

About the American School Counselor Association

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is a nonprofit, professional organization based in Alexandria, Va. ASCA promotes student success by expanding the image and influence of school counseling through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change. ASCA helps school counselors guide their students toward academic achievement, career planning and social/emotional development to help today's students become tomorrow's productive, contributing members of society. Founded in 1952, ASCA has a network of 51 state and territory associations and a membership of approximately 43,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information about the American School Counselor Association, visit schoolcounselor.org.