

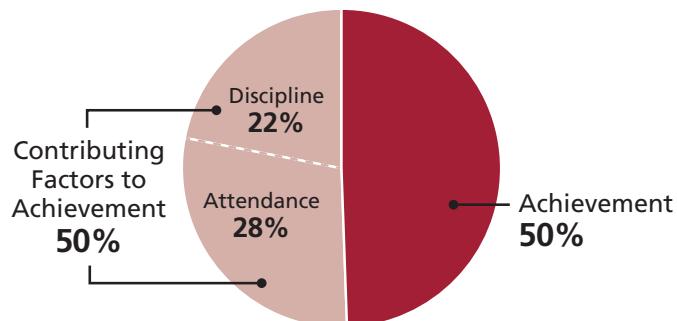
RAMP Stories: Closing the Gap

How 2025 RAMP® schools supported student success

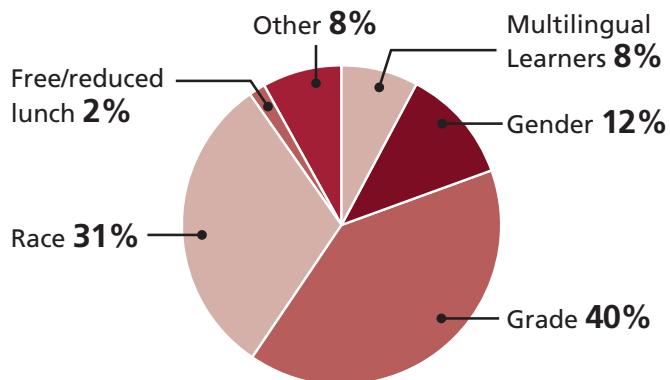
The Recognized ASCA Model Program® (RAMP®) recognizes schools committed to delivering exemplary school counseling programs aligned with the ASCA National Model®. The school counseling program focuses on the mindsets and behaviors each and every student needs for life-readiness and academic success, and a critical component is the closing-the-gap action plan and results report, which addresses differences in outcomes among student groups, including grade level, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or other factors. In their 2025 RAMP application, school counselors demonstrated how they identified a gap in student achievement or disparities in attendance or discipline – which are contributing factors to achievement – in their school's data. For example, cohorts of students earning F's in core subjects or disproportionate reports of office referrals for certain demographic groups.

While school counselors engage in essential interventions like classroom instruction, small-group counseling sessions and individual counseling, they also use data and observation to identify and address barriers to student success. School counselors in the 2025 RAMP class engaged with parents/families to improve student achievement, helped students learn to set goals, and worked with teachers, administrators and other education partners to help each and every student succeed. Using the ASCA National Model as the framework, school counselors engaged in data analysis to identify student needs, align with school improvement plans and develop interventions to meet shared goals.

Number of Closing-the-Gap Reports



Closing-the-Gap Population Targets



The 2025 RAMP class powerfully illustrates the data-informed approach school counselors take to support student achievement. By aligning strategies with student needs and schoolwide goals, school counselors not

About this Report

The 2025 RAMP schools' RAMP Stories: Closing the Gap is based on the fourth edition of the ASCA National Model®, which defines outcomes as achievement, attendance and discipline. The [fifth edition of the ASCA National Model®](#), released in summer 2025, emphasizes achievement data as the measure to show how each and every student is achieving their highest academic potential. School counselors analyze achievement data, along with contributing-factors data, to inform strategies supporting the school's goals. Contributing-factors data includes attendance rates, discipline rates, systemic barriers, and student and education partner perspectives. [Learn more about RAMP here.](#)

RAMP STORIES: CLOSING THE GAP

only empower individual success but also contribute meaningfully to the overall progress of their schools. This reaffirms the essential role school counselors play as leaders and advocates.

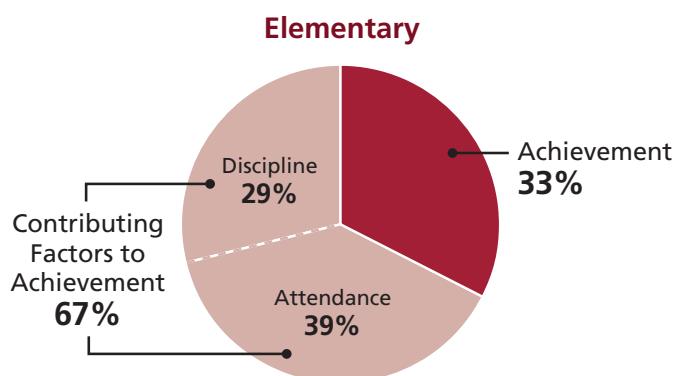


Achievement

When school counselors at one RAMP elementary school found that Black male students comprised 11% of the fourth-grade population but 33% of non-proficient scores on math proficiency tests, they set a goal to reverse that trend by fifth grade. Interventions included fifth-grade classroom lessons on academic success, small groups focused on engagement and perseverance, community assemblies connecting learning to future success, and individual counseling with weekly goal checks. They also engaged in staff professional development, a mentoring program, collaboration with fifth-grade teachers, frequent communication with families, empowering non-classroom teachers with leadership opportunities and ensuring more equitable procedures for student classroom placement. Across the school, 16% of Black students were the only one in their class. School counselors wanted to ensure that the procedures for assigning students to a classroom were not a potential point of inequity. Overall, the results showed a reduction from five to three non-proficient scores, a 40% decrease.

Increasing English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency for multilingual learners by 18%, from 40 proficient tests to 47 proficient tests, was the goal for another RAMP elementary school. “Working to support and encourage students whose first language is not English is a big job, but instilling in them that they can read and they can grow is a largely important skill to have in an elementary school setting,” according to school counselors. They formed an attendance club to improve student attendance, check-in/check-out for positive behavioral support, SEL games to reinforce English skills, social/emotional learning lessons and small groups focusing on self-esteem and growth mindset. They also collaborated with the school’s family engagement liaison to address student needs with families. Results showed a significant improvement, with proficient tests increasing to 61, a 53% increase. Students changed their attitudes and thoughts, understanding that outcomes can change with a positive mindset.

School counselors at another RAMP school discovered that two-thirds of fourth-grade students were not proficient on their state reading test, while nearly 75%



were not proficient on the math test. Additionally, 13 out of 33 fourth graders missed more than 10 school days. To recoup the learning loss, the school set a goal to reduce the number of fifth-grade students who were not proficient on the reading end-of-grade test and had 10 or more absences by 25% from 12 to 9 by the end of the school year. Interventions included a student success small group for select fifth graders and classroom lessons on time management and study skills. School counselors collaborated with fifth-grade teachers to practice specific study skills and with a social worker on attendance interventions. The results showed a 30% reduction in non-proficient reading test scores, from 10 to seven. Students learned to manage their time and practiced various study methods. Future improvements will focus on making interventions more engaging by incorporating hands-on activities instead of worksheets.

Attendance: A Contributing Factor to Achievement

At one RAMP elementary school, school counselors set a goal to reduce absences among a cohort of fifth-grade Latinx students who missed more than 20 days of school. Among the more innovative strategies was empowering students in the cohort to serve as attendance ambassadors, leading lessons on good attendance and developing leadership skills. Students also visited a local college to connect school attendance with long-term academic and career goals. School counselors held small-group sessions, daily check-ins and engaged with families through postcards, texts and calls. As a result, average absences were reduced from 29 to 18 days and students developed a sense of belonging and leadership.

Reducing the number of cumulative unexcused absences among fourth graders by 31%, from 98 to 68, was the goal at another elementary school. Interventions included an attendance incentive program, daily check-ins with the grade-level school counselor, small-group sessions and monthly attendance celebrations (such as a bike raffle for perfect attendance), as well as family engagement and referrals to the school social worker where needed.

RAMP STORIES: CLOSING THE GAP

The school has a high population of families from other countries; among the discussions with families were talks about U.S. education expectations. The school counselors exceeded their goal, reducing absences by 61%. Students learned the importance of consistent attendance and strategies to avoid being late. Future improvements include offering pre-/post-tests in both English and Spanish and increasing the frequency of group meetings to bi-weekly for more consistent support.

Improving outcomes for a group of kindergarten students who were experiencing an attendance rate lower than the overall school rate (90% vs. 92%) was the focus at a California elementary school. Among this group of new Hispanic first graders, school counselors set a goal to reduce absences from 140 to 98 by the end of the first semester (30%). As school counselors stated, “Given that, in California, kindergarten is optional for children, lawmakers may be sending a message to families that attending each day is not necessarily as important as attending when in the higher grades.” Interventions included small-group sessions on the importance of regular attendance and weekly check-ins to discuss challenges and set goals. Absences dropped 34% to 93 for the students in the group. Students learned the importance of attendance and ways to be prepared for school. The school counseling team plans to continue its commitment to improving attendance overall to support success for all students.

At another RAMP elementary school, data showed that a majority of third-grade Black and Hispanic students who missed 11-15 days of school were not proficient in reading or math, as measured by end-of-grade state tests. And 100% of third-grade Black and Hispanic students who missed 16 or more days were not proficient. These findings were disproportionate when compared with other student groups. To decrease cumulative absences, school counselors launched small groups for third-grade boys focused on positive peer relationships and community connection, held family celebrations in fall and spring, and conducted advisement and counseling to promote positive relationships. They also held bimonthly academic data reviews. The results showed a reduction in cumulative absences from 12 to seven, a 42% decrease. The impact of the interventions was significant, with students establishing expectations for positive, respectful and supportive relationships.

Discipline: A Contributing Factor to Achievement

When school counselors at one RAMP school found that a significant number of pre-K to second-grade students were receiving office discipline referrals for physical aggression, they delved deeper, finding that most incidents occurred in the classroom (34%), at recess (31%) and in the cafeteria (17%). According to school counselors, the students expressed that their physical aggression often stemmed from strong feelings unrelated to the peer they hit or pushed. Some students acted out because the peer had done something unkind to them first, while others mentioned it happened during a game at recess. Other reasons included wanting an item a peer had or needing more personal space. To interrupt this trend, school counselors held classroom lessons on assertiveness, calming strategies, problem-solving, fair play and personal space; regular check-ins for students on Tier 2 MTSS plans; and small-group sessions focused on coping and social skills. They also collaborated with teachers, engaged in family outreach, created calm-down corners in classrooms and provided a sensory hallway. The results showed a reduction in office referrals from 35 to 22, a 37% decrease.

The impact of Tier 1 classroom lessons was significant, providing students with skills to handle conflicts safely and respectfully. They plan to add a mini-unit at the start of the school year and add calm-down corners to more classrooms.

Disciplinary referrals had also become a significant issue at another elementary school, with physical aggression being the highest category. School counselors set a goal to decrease the average monthly write-ups for physical aggression among kindergarten students by 36%, from 16 to 10. Interventions included classroom lessons on emotion regulation and problem-solving, small groups for students with write-ups, minute meetings to resolve climate and specific concerns and restorative practices to repair relationships. Professional development for teachers on developmental expectations and student regulation, family support through resources and teaching, and a morning video program for students were also included. As a result, average monthly write-ups dropped from 16 to seven, a 54% decrease. Students learned to identify emotions using emojis, reading facial expressions and practicing grounding techniques. Future improvements include creating specific handouts for home after each small-group session and providing talking points and skills practice to further support students.

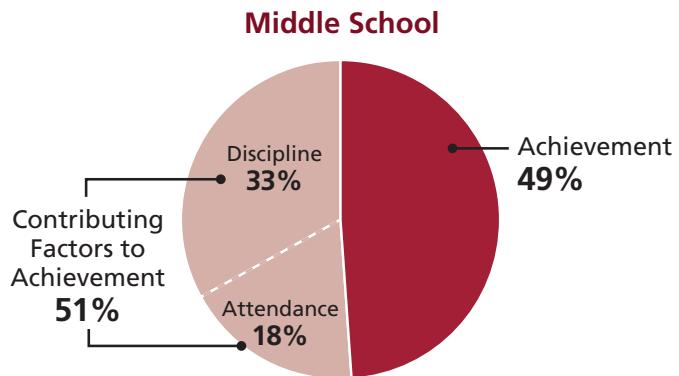


School counselors at a RAMP elementary school decreased preK-second-grade office referrals for physical aggression by 37% with Tier 1 classroom lessons and other strategies.

RAMP STORIES: CLOSING THE GAP

When physical aggression was identified as the highest discipline issue at a RAMP school, school counselors set a specific goal: decrease the number of referrals for aggression among third-grade males who had one or more referrals from 19 to 11, or 42%. The team added behavior skills groups focused on coping skills and de-escalation strategies, individual counseling for physically aggressive students and restorative chats between students involved in physically aggressive acts. They also created calm-down areas in classrooms. The results showed a reduction in discipline referrals from 19 to three, an 84% decrease. Mentors checked in with students twice a day to focus on successes and discuss problems, and school counselors established intensive small groups focusing on coping skills, respecting others and strategies for managing anger.

Addressing disruptive behaviors that lead to major disciplinary referrals was the focus for school counselors at a magnet school. School counselors set a goal to reduce major disciplinary referrals for physical aggression among third-grade Black students by 29% (from seven to five). The school implements a social/emotional learning platform across all grades, with school counselors visiting classes twice a month. Third graders identified for intervention participate in small groups using a zones of regulation curriculum to develop coping skills, emotion management and self-control. School counselors collaborate with staff and others to support students' academic and social/emotional needs, making referrals to appropriate resources when necessary. To improve interventions, the school is considering also hosting small groups outside of lunch times to minimize distractions and maximize effective teaching time.



four, an 81% reduction. Students learned to set SMART goals and identify barriers during individual counseling sessions. Future improvements include providing SMART goals and academic strategies earlier in the school year and incorporating lessons on self-confidence to support motivation and healthy habits.

A focused initiative to improve the academic performance of seventh-grade students who were struggling in core subjects was the closing-the-gap goal at another RAMP middle school. Initially, nine students had grades below 70% in two or more subjects. These students, many of whom had failed standards-of-learning tests and had low measures-of-progress scores, were targeted for interventions. "Administrators have identified the ongoing adjustment from distance learning as a significant factor impacting both students and teachers," according to school counselors. "They emphasized the critical importance of mindset – encouraging students to believe in their potential for success, while reinforcing teachers' belief in their students' capacity to develop new skills." The closing-the-gap goal was to reduce the number of students with low grades by 33%. Interventions included a mentor program, small-group sessions on study skills, individual counseling and parent-teacher conferences. Despite initial challenges, such as scheduling conflicts, the program saw significant success, reducing the number of students with low grades to two by the end of the year.

Focused on improving academic performance among students facing significant challenges in core subjects, another RAMP school sought to reduce the number of F's for seventh-grade Black male students by 39% by the end of the school year. "As school counselors, we feel there are various reasons students may be failing classes such as not seeing middle school as relevant, the behaviors of other students as distractions, and technology is often a distraction. Other reasons include a lack of representation among staff and many students lacking foundational skills to be successful academically."

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Achievement

The primary school improvement plan to increase math proficiency among seventh-grade Black and Hispanic students at a RAMP magnet school resulted in significant improvements. The school set the goal after discovering that, after the first quarter of school, 21 students were at risk of earning an F. With a goal to reduce the number by one third, from 21 to 14 by the end of the school year, school counselors engaged in weekly small-group academic skills sessions for six weeks and individual counseling every three weeks, as well as parent/teacher/school counselor conferences and community partnerships for tutoring services. As a result, the number of students with failing grades reduced to

RAMP STORIES: CLOSING THE GAP

In addition, Black males are more likely to receive suspensions therefore missing class time,” according to their RAMP application. Interventions included small-group sessions, individualized success plans, off-campus experiences and mentoring. Though school counselors decreased the F’s to some extent but not at their goal, they learned lessons to guide future plans including extending the program duration, enhancing mentor recruitment and fostering a belief in graduation and school attendance.

Attendance: A Contributing Factor to Achievement

Bridging the attendance gap between general education and special education students was the goal at one RAMP middle school. Special education students, who comprised about 40% of chronically absent students and had higher suspension rates, were the focus of targeted interventions. School counselors noted that special education students face higher rates of suspension, absenteeism and disengagement, especially among students of color and those from low-income backgrounds due to programs with limited access, lack of staff training in classroom management and insufficient understanding of disabilities and de-escalation techniques. These issues contribute to attendance inequities and negative behaviors in the classroom. They set a goal to reduce the number of chronically absent special education students by 31%, from 35 to 24, so school counselors held small-group counseling sessions, attendance lessons, one-on-one counseling and monthly data reviews, among other strategies. Initially, 35 students were invited to participate in 10 small-group sessions, family conferences, and a large-group lesson. Ultimately, 21 students participated, and the number of chronically absent special education students decreased to 24. Notable sessions addressed social/emotional issues, mental health challenges and attendance barriers.

Another RAMP middle school took significant steps to address chronic absenteeism, particularly focusing on multilingual learners. In the last school year, 61 students were chronically absent, 37 of whom were ELL students, representing 33% of the ELL population. School counselors and school social workers noted that

students lack motivation to attend school regularly and often don’t realize how many days they’ve missed. Additionally, outside responsibilities prevented them from attending consistently. The school set a goal to reduce the number of chronically absent seventh-grade ELL students by 27%. Classroom lessons; individual and small-group counseling; and collaboration with teachers, social workers and families all led to major reduction in absences, with only 11 ELL students classified as chronically absent in the 2023-2024 school year. Notable activities included creating SMART goals and engaging students in discussions about overcoming obstacles.

Discipline: A Contributing Factor to Achievement

During the first five weeks of the school year, 15 eighth-grade students at a RAMP school accumulated 53 discipline referrals. School counselors set a goal to reduce these referrals by 25%, from 53 to 40, by the end of the first semester. School counselors held small-group sessions focused on self-control and conflict resolution, individual weekly check-ins to review emotions and handling issues with peers and adults, professional development for teachers on trauma-informed practices and de-escalation and meetings with administrators to discuss policies for instructional work during suspensions. The results showed a 19% reduction, with referrals decreasing to 43. Students learned anger management strategies, identified appropriate behaviors and set specific goals with school counselors.

Students at one RAMP school engaged in an exercise to practice self-control. Students began to appreciate the value of waiting and listening, which sparked discussions about how self-control positively impacts their interactions both in school and at home.

The seventh-grade class at another RAMP school had the highest number of discipline referrals in the school, with 39 coded as “insubordination.” The goal was to reduce these referrals by 26%, from 39 to 29 by the end of the school year. Weekly SEL lessons targeting self-management skills and individual counseling throughout the year were the primary strategies school counselors employed, though they also collaborated with administration and teachers to identify students of concern and communicated with parents/guardians to address issues. As a result, referrals reduced by 59% to 16. SEL lessons helped students practice self-control through role-play scenarios, while individual check-ins focused on self-management and decision-making.

RAMP STORIES: CLOSING THE GAP

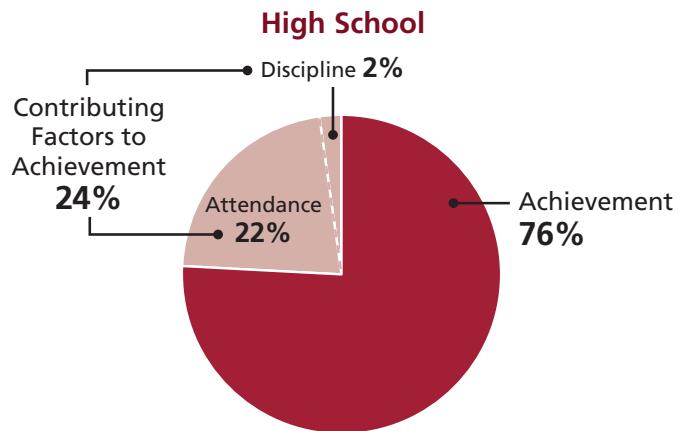
Discipline was the goal criteria at another school where sixth-grade Black students accounted for 32% of the grade's referrals and were underperforming academically. The focus group identified 15 students with four or more behavior referrals and low performance in reading and math and set a goal to reduce their cumulative referrals by 47%, from 95 to 50. Interventions included weekly small-group counseling on self-control, conflict resolution lessons, individual counseling and collaboration with parents/guardians and teachers. "One notable session, titled Taming Impulse Control, involved a structured game where students had to practice patience by waiting their turn to respond. Each student raised their hand and waited for the school counselor to call on them. This exercise not only highlighted the importance of self-control but also fostered a sense of accountability among peers. As students practiced this skill, they began to appreciate the value of waiting and listening, which sparked discussions about how self-control positively impacts their interactions both in school and at home," school counselors said. Initial results showed a reduction to 57 referrals. Notable activities included self-control games, role-playing scenarios and creating infographics linking positive behavior to academic success.

HIGH SCHOOL

Achievement

A districtwide emphasis on increasing graduation rates at one RAMP high school highlighted significant disparities, particularly among American Indian/Alaska Native students. While the district's overall graduation rate is 85% and the school's rate was 89%, the graduation rate for these students was alarmingly low, with the district at 34% and the school at just 8%. A goal was set to reduce the number of F's earned by American Indian/Alaska Native students (cohort graduating in 2027) who earned one or more F's at midterm of the first quarter by 65%, from 79 to 28, by January 2024. Interventions included individual student check-ins, small-group facilitation on overcoming barriers to learning and assistance with bus passes.

Strategies involved collaboration with the American Indian student case manager, family contact and a schoolwide protocol to support academic makeup work for students returning from absences. The baseline data showed 79 F's at midterm of the first quarter, which decreased to 48 F's by the end of the third trimester, a 39% reduction. Moving forward, school counselors plan to incorporate alternate times for small-group sessions, implementing a universal data collection method for individual check-ins and developing systemic responses, including addressing



transportation issues. The school can review attendance and addresses of incoming ninth graders and current students to provide bus passes to those at risk due to unreliable transportation before the school year starts. Additionally, a school-wide protocol can be established to prioritize and support academic makeup work for students returning after three or more days of absence.

School counselor data indicated that multilingual learners in 10th grade at another RAMP school were receiving failing grades at a significantly higher rate than non-ELL students. A goal was set to reduce the number of these students with failing grades by 22% (from nine to seven). Six weekly 30-minute small-group sessions focused on time-management, organization and study skills became the cornerstone of school counselors' plan, along with weekly individual check-ins. The initiative resulted in a 33% reduction in failing grades (from nine to six students). Students benefited from learning effective study habits and drafting professional emails. Moving forward, systemic issues must be addressed as well. According to school counselors, improving communication with families who have limited internet access or user ability is needed. Parents/guardians have expressed a need for more support in understanding their children's academics and better communication from teachers and staff. It's also important for teachers to collaborate with ELL teachers to understand and implement effective strategies for ELL students, who often need more time to process information; ELL students often feel overlooked or afraid to ask for help, impacting their comfort and confidence in class.

Attendance: A Contributing Factor to Achievement

Reviewing school data, school counselors at another RAMP high school found that 69% of multilingual learners had eight or more absences when compared with the overall school average of 51%. They set a goal to reduce the number of EL students with 8 or more absences by 47%, from 32 to 17. They implemented

RAMP STORIES: CLOSING THE GAP

regular check-ins, classroom lessons on school success and coping strategies and targeted social/emotional learning sessions. They also engaged in frequent communication with families, including ensuring documents were translated. The initiative resulted in a 59% reduction in absences, with just 13 EL students having eight or more absences. Students benefited from identifying problems, setting goals and learning about career pathways.

At another RAMP high school, an attendance improvement initiative focused on female juniors with four to six absences in the first six weeks of the school year aimed to reduce their total absences by 17% by spring. School counselors launched small groups focused on attendance, individual check-ins, parent/guardian communication and collaboration with the school's academic support center. Absences dropped 15%, but more importantly, students took action to address missing assignments and took advantage of academic support. According to school counselors, the school system removed its policy that automatically failed students who missed more than 20% of a class, assuming all parent/guardians understood the importance of attendance and school counselors took the lead in partnering with families to promote consistent attendance. However, they learned that some families did not understand, leading to poor attendance and low grades. Other factors also play a role, with students taking on additional family responsibilities and missing school for extended trips. The school counselors also are advocating for new measures to address truancy and tardiness; the current policy requires students to serve after-school detention for being late, but some students skip the entire day to avoid detention. "We could revise the tardy policy to encourage attendance rather than deter it, perhaps by

implementing a warning system or offering incentives for punctuality instead of immediate detentions."

Among students with an individual education plan (IEP), the overall attendance rate at another RAMP school dropped from 97% in 2019 to 90% in 2021. To get the attendance rate to 94%, school counselors implemented classroom lessons on success, overcoming obstacles, self-confidence and accountability; offered free tickets to school events to encourage social interaction and inclusion; incorporated activities to indirectly promote growth; held teacher discussions about students' plans; and shared lesson plans with families. Students began discussing success by interpreting their own thoughts and feelings and learned that obstacles are meant to be overcome through perspective and perseverance. Activities included visual references and role-playing to boost self-confidence and accountability.

School counselors at a RAMP high school grew the number of Hispanic/Latino students participating in Advanced Placement and dual-credit programs by 44% by initiating targeted workshops and presentations, individual meetings and more.

Discipline: A Contributing Factor to Achievement

During the first nine weeks of the school year at one RAMP school, 25 out of 32 incident reports were vape or tobacco-related, with 17 of those incidents involving 10th graders. "Administrators report they no longer deal with cigarette smoking; students are using vapes, which are much harder to detect," according

to school counselors. So the team set a goal to reduce the number of incidents by 41% by holding individual check-ins with each student to review progress and discuss coping skills, as well as introducing weekly small-group sessions to practice coping skills and educating parents/guardians on the harmful effects of vaping and how students disguise vapes. School counselors met their goal. In the future, school counselors may invite local law enforcement to participate in parent/family informational classes.

These are just some highlights from the 2025 RAMP class. Every day, school counselors at RAMP and other schools use data to identify and address gaps in opportunity and achievement, helping students connect better with their schools and the adults in them, and ensuring they receive the essential support for their success. RAMP schools have frequently reported that their plans to close these gaps are closely aligned with their school improvement plans, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between school counselors and administrators. School counselors at RAMP schools are seen as vital partners in achieving school goals.

Examples drawn from school counseling programs that earned RAMP in 2025. Learn about the winners [here](#).