

ASCA State of the Profession – District Directors Summary of Findings

June 2021

Methodology: The survey was distributed via email using the Qualtrics platform to 395 school counseling district directors and supervisors. The survey drew 139 respondents for a confidence level of 95% +/- 6.7.

Respondents’ job roles: Nearly nine in 10 respondents are directors/coordinators/supervisors at the district level. Only these respondents were invited to continue to complete the survey, which was targeted specifically to district-level leaders.

Job role	Percentage
Director/coordinator/supervisor (district level)	89.2%
Director/coordinator/supervisor (building level)	2.9%
School counselor	2.9%
College/university faculty	2.2%
Graduate student	0.0%
Other	2.9%

School counselors in the district: The largest percentage of respondents (37%) report there are 50 or fewer school counselors in their district. Nearly one quarter (23%) have 51-100 school counselors in the district, 27% have 101-200, 5% have 201-300 and 9% have more than 300. Respondents indicate their districts employ an average of 10 people non-clerical roles to support school counseling.

School counselors in the district	Percentage
0-50	37.1%
51-100	22.5%
101-200	27.0%
201-300	4.5%
More than 300	9.0%

District characteristics: More than 80% of respondents' districts are public, noncharter, while 14% are combination public charter/noncharter and 3% are public, charter only. Half of respondents' districts are in suburban areas (51%), one third are in urban areas and 13% are in rural areas. Respondents represent a wide range of district sizes. About 15% report enrollments of 6,000 or fewer students, 16% have 6,001-15,000, 22% have 25,001-50,000, 18% have 50,001-100,000 and 13% serve more than 100,000 students.

School type	Percentage
Public, noncharter	81.8%
Public, noncharter and charter	13.6%
Public, charter only	3.4%
Private/independent/parochial	0.0%
Virtual (in a regular school year)	0.0%
Other	1.1%

Location type	Percentage
Urban	33.0%
Suburban	51.1%
Rural	12.5%

Student enrollment	Percentage
1-1,000 students	0.0%
1,001-3,000 students	2.3%
3,001-6,000 students	12.5%
6,001-10,000 students	8.0%
10,001-15,000 students	8.0%
15,001-25,000 students	17.0%
25,001-50,000 students	21.6%
50,001-100,000 students	18.2%
More than 100,000. Please specify:	12.5%

Free/reduced lunch and English language learners: About one third of district directors indicate that 45% or fewer of students receive free/reduced rate lunch, 22% say 46-60%, 21% say 61-75%, and 24% say 75% or more. About one third of district directors indicate that 15% or fewer of their students are English language learners, 29% say 16-30%, 21% 31-45%, and 14% say 46%-plus.

Students receiving free/reduced rate lunch	Percentage	English-language learners	Percentage
0%-15% of students	6.9%	0-15%	32.2%
16%-30%	12.6%	16-30%	28.7%
31%-45%	12.6%	31-45%	20.7%
46%-60%	21.8%	46-60%	6.9%
61%-75%	20.7%	61-75%	5.7%
More than 75%	24.1%	More than 75%	1.1%
Unsure	1.1%	Unsure	4.6%

Average student-to-school-counselor ratios: Overall, 29% of district directors report that school counselors in their districts serve 350 or fewer students each, followed by 351-450 students (28%), 451-550 students (32%) and 551 or more students (11%).

Average number of students served by school counselors in district	Percentage
150 or fewer students	0.0%
151-250 students	3.4%
251-350 students	25.8%
351-450 students	28.1%
451-550 students	31.5%
551-650 students	5.6%
651-750 students	2.2%
751-850 students	1.1%
851-950 students	0.0%
951-1,050 students	0.0%
More than 1,050 students	2.2%

Day-to-day challenges: Majorities of respondents indicate they are most challenged by ensuring administrators understand the school counselor role (73%), closing opportunity and achievement gaps (67%), managing high caseloads (67%), being assigned inappropriate duties (64%) and creating systemic change in their buildings.

Extremely challenging/Challenging	Percentage
Ensuring administrators understand the school counselor role	72.7%
Closing opportunity and achievement gaps	67.4%
Managing high caseload/number of students	67.0%
Being assigned inappropriate duties	63.9%
Addressing racism and bias through practices/pedagogy/curriculum in the school counseling program	57.3%
Creating systemic change in their buildings	54.8%
Accessing adequate school and community mental health resources for referrals to students and parents	50.0%
Implementing a school counseling program based on the ASCA National Model	46.4%
Providing short-term counseling to support students' mental health needs	42.1%
Finding time for professional development	41.0%
Addressing school/district policies that result in institutional discrimination	39.6%
Writing measurable goals	39.0%
Receiving appropriate supervision/performance appraisal	38.9%
Collecting and analyzing student data	35.8%
Writing lesson plans	35.8%
Responding to students in crisis	29.5%
Serving as a leader in the school	25.6%
Having access to students	25.3%
Providing appropriate advocacy for student success	22.2%
Participating in professional development appropriate to school counseling	18.1%
Communicating their belief that all students can succeed	11.7%
Other issue(s):	66.7%

Addressing racism and bias: Respondents indicate school counselors are addressing racism and bias in schools in a number of ways, such as providing individual counseling (64%), providing classroom lessons (53%) and using data to identify students who should be included in most rigorous coursework (53%).

Roles in addressing racism and bias	Percentage
Providing individual counseling	63.5%
Providing classroom lessons	53.1%
Using data to identify students who should be included in most rigorous coursework	53.1%
Identifying ways for school counselors to help with disproportionality at their school sites	46.9%
Reviewing disproportionality with school counselors	42.7%
Monitoring student behavior (in person) and chats (virtual) to identify racist behavior or speech	31.3%
Reviewing disproportionality with administrators	31.3%
Providing small-group counseling	30.2%
Providing in-service training for school staff	29.2%
Identifying and advocating to revise or remove policies that disproportionately affect students of color	28.1%
Providing parent information, education or outreach	21.9%
Other issue or comment	18.8%
No actions taken	9.4%

Supporting and promoting DEI: Respondents have taken a number of steps to support diversity, equity, and inclusion, including requiring DEI training for all faculty (42%), creating positions for DEI specialists (39%), incorporating DEI into the student curriculum (31%) and more.

Actions taken	Percentage
Required diversity, equity and inclusion training for all faculty	41.7%
Created positions for diversity, equity and inclusion specialists	38.5%
Incorporated diversity, equity and inclusion in student curriculum	31.3%
Changed policies and procedures for students	29.2%
Changed policies for faculty	14.6%
Eliminated/modified school resource officer position(s)	14.6%
Other	28.1%
No actions taken	17.7%

Social and emotional learning focus: Respondents (86%) expect to exert more focus on social and emotional learning over the next 12 months. Another 14% expect to spend about the same amount of time/emphasis.

Change in next 12 months	Percentage
Expect to spend more time on SEL.	85.9%
Expect to spend about the same time/emphasis on SEL.	14.1%
Expect to spend less time/emphasis on SEL.	0.0%

Crisis planning: Overall, 84% of district directors are part of a crisis planning and response team for natural disasters, school violence, suicide risk assessment and other crises. Respondents added comments such as “I serve as the lead for the crisis response team,” “I am able to collaborate and provide input during the development and implementation planning stages for the district’s crisis manual,” “coordinate implementation of anonymous reporting system,” etc. Among those who aren’t part of a crisis planning team, comments include “has slowly been taken over by the mental health directors that have been hired,” “another department coordinates this,” “our student services department coordinates those tasks” and “this is handled at each school site,” among other comments.

Involved in crisis planning	Percentage
Yes	83.5%
No	16.5%

About school counseling programs: Asked about school counseling programs in respondents' districts, 81% say their programs incorporate data-informed decision-making, followed by include developmentally appropriate instruction focused on the mindsets and behaviors all students need (80%), result in improved student achievement, attendance and discipline (77%), are based on the ASCA National Model (75%), are delivered to all students systematically (71%) and close achievement and opportunity gaps (69%).

Asked which stakeholders most influence the school counseling program in particular schools in the districts, respondents point to several roles, including their own role as well as administrators and school counselors in the building.

School counseling programs...	Strongly agree/Agree
incorporate data-informed decision making	80.8%
include developmentally appropriate instruction focused on the mindsets and behaviors all students need for postsecondary readiness and success	79.8%
result in improved student achievement, attendance and discipline	77.4%
are based on the ASCA National Model	74.5%
are delivered to all students systematically	71.0%
close achievement and opportunity gaps	69.1%

Influence on a particular school's school counseling program	To a great extent	To some extent	Very little	Not at all
District director for school counseling	40.4%	46.8%	10.6%	2.1%
School counselors in the building, including supervisor	47.3%	45.2%	6.5%	1.1%
Administrator (principal, vice principal, etc.)	52.7%	34.4%	12.9%	0.0%
Other:	66.7%	8.3%	0.0%	25.0%

RAMP status: Nearly 30% of district directors say their schools have a current RAMP designation. Among them, an average of 12% of respondents’ elementary schools hold the RAMP (Recognized ASCA Model Program) designation, 11% of middle schools and 21% of high schools.

Schools with RAMP	Percentage
Yes, schools have current RAMP designation	28.0%
Have received RAMP in the past but no current designations	9.7%
Have never received RAMP	62.4%

Type of schools with RAMP	Average Percentage
Percent of elementary schools	12.0
Percent of middle schools	11.4
Percent of high schools	20.6
Other school type	30.3

Understanding of the school counselor role: District directors are most likely to say school counselors in their districts best understand the role of school counselors (91% say they understand to a great extent or adequately), followed by students (47%), district staff (37%), teachers/school staff (31%) and administrators (31%).

Stakeholders	To a great extent/ Adequately
School counselors in your district	90.6%
Students	47.4%
District staff	36.5%
Teachers/school staff	31.3%
Administrators	31.3%
Parents/families	23.7%
State-level legislators/policymakers/decision-makers	20.0%
School board members	17.7%
General public	5.2%

Professional development interests: District directors indicate they are most interested in receiving professional development in the following areas: mental health (94% extremely interested/interested); diversity, equity and inclusion (86%); social/emotional development (86%); anti-racism practices (82%); data collection and analysis (82%); legal and ethical issues (82%); leadership (82%); and other issues.

	Extremely interested/Interested
Mental health	94.0%
Diversity, equity and inclusion	86.4%
Social/emotional development	86.1%
Anti-racism practices	82.1%
Data collection and analysis	82.1%
Legal and ethical issues	82.1%
Leadership	82.0%
LGBTQ issues	78.6%
Crisis/trauma/violence	76.5%
Advocacy	73.5%
ASCA National Model	73.3%
Self-injury and suicide	71.1%
Academic achievement/success	67.4%
Group counseling	67.0%
Transitions	64.2%
Career development	62.7%
RAMP (Recognized ASCA Model Program)	62.6%
School counseling technology	62.6%
Disabilities/special needs	58.5%
Substance use/abuse	57.1%
Postsecondary education	56.1%
Grief and death	56.0%
Virtual school counseling	52.5%
Urban school counseling	50.7%
Bullying/conflict resolution	47.6%
Classroom management	36.1%
Rural school counseling	16.1%

Respondent demographics: Respondents are largely female (90%), while 7% are male, one percent are nonbinary/third gender and two percent prefer not to say. In terms of race/ethnicity, 66% of respondents are white, 18% are Black/African American, and 3% are Latinx. Ninety percent of respondents are heterosexual. About 15% of respondents are younger than 40, 47% are 41-50, 26% are 51-60 and 9% are 61-plus.

	Percentage
Female	89.8%
Male	6.8%
Nonbinary/third gender	1.1%
Prefer not to say	2.3%

	Percentage
30 or younger	0.0%
31-40	14.8%
41-50	46.6%
51-60	26.1%
61-70	9.1%
71-plus	0.0%
Prefer not to say	3.4%

	Percentage
White	65.9%
Black or African American	18.2%
Latinx	3.4%
Two or more races	2.3%
Asian	1.1%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific island	1.1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0%
Prefer not to say	8.0%

	Percentage
Heterosexual or straight	89.7%
Gay or lesbian	3.4%
Bisexual	1.1%
Prefer not to say	5.7%
Different identity	0.0%

Respondents' education: Nearly 60 percent of respondents have a master's degree in school counseling, 19% have a master's degree in another discipline and 20% have doctorate degrees. Nearly two thirds hold the NCC certification, while 32% have the NBCT and 5% are NCSC holders.

Highest level of education	Percentage
Bachelor's degree	1.1%
Master's degree in school counseling	59.1%
Master's degree in other discipline. Please specify:	19.3%
Doctorate degree in school counseling or school counseling supervision and training	3.4%
Doctorate degree in other discipline. Please specify:	17.0%

Certifications	Percentage
NCSC	5.3%
NCC	63.2%
NBCT	31.6%

Respondents' experience: Six percent of district directors have 10 or fewer years of experience in education, while 14% have 11-15 years of experience, 15% have 16-20 years of experience, and two thirds have more than 20 years of experience in the education field. In school counseling, 6% have two years or less experience, 5% have 3-5 years of experience, 9% have 6-10 years, 25% have 11-15 years, 31% have 16-20 years and 25% have more than 20 years.

Years of experience in education	Percentage
0-2	0.0%
3-5	0.0%
6-10	5.7%
11-15	13.6%
16-20	14.8%
20+	65.9%

Years of experience in school counseling	Percentage
0-2	5.7%
3-5	4.5%
6-10	9.1%
11-15	25.0%
16-20	30.7%
20+	25.0%