

IOWA SCHOOL COUNSELORS and College and Career Readiness

A study of school counselors' roles,
responsibilities, and practices to prepare Iowa
students for their future as reported by school
counselors and administrators.





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This report comes at an important time in the success of the Iowa Governor's **STEM Council** and the emerging **Future Ready Iowa Alliance**.

We applaud Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds' leadership in both efforts. Improved college and career readiness is critical to Iowa's future and will take a focused team effort that will succeed only if all assets are utilized to their fullest capabilities. Iowa school counselors are ready to play a significant role to help Iowa's students become college and career ready.

The key findings of this report make us aware that principals and school counselors see college and career readiness preparation as an important function of school counselors. Disparities between desired practices and current reality often occur because the school counselor's role is not well defined. The Iowa School Counselor Association (ISCA) looks forward to addressing and finding solutions to these disparities and making college and career readiness curriculum a priority for all K-12 students in Iowa.

ISCA would like to express great appreciation to Des Moines Area Community College and Heartland Area Education Agency for their support of this study. Additionally, ISCA would like to thank Lead Researcher Erin Lane and Researchers Matthew Beck and Laura Gallo for conducting the study; David Ford for coordinating the project; Matthew Steele, Little Village Creative Services, for his graphic design work; and the following individuals for their additional contributions throughout the project: Robert J. Denson, President, Des Moines Area Community College; Meredith Dohmen, Director of Scholarships, Bright Foundation.



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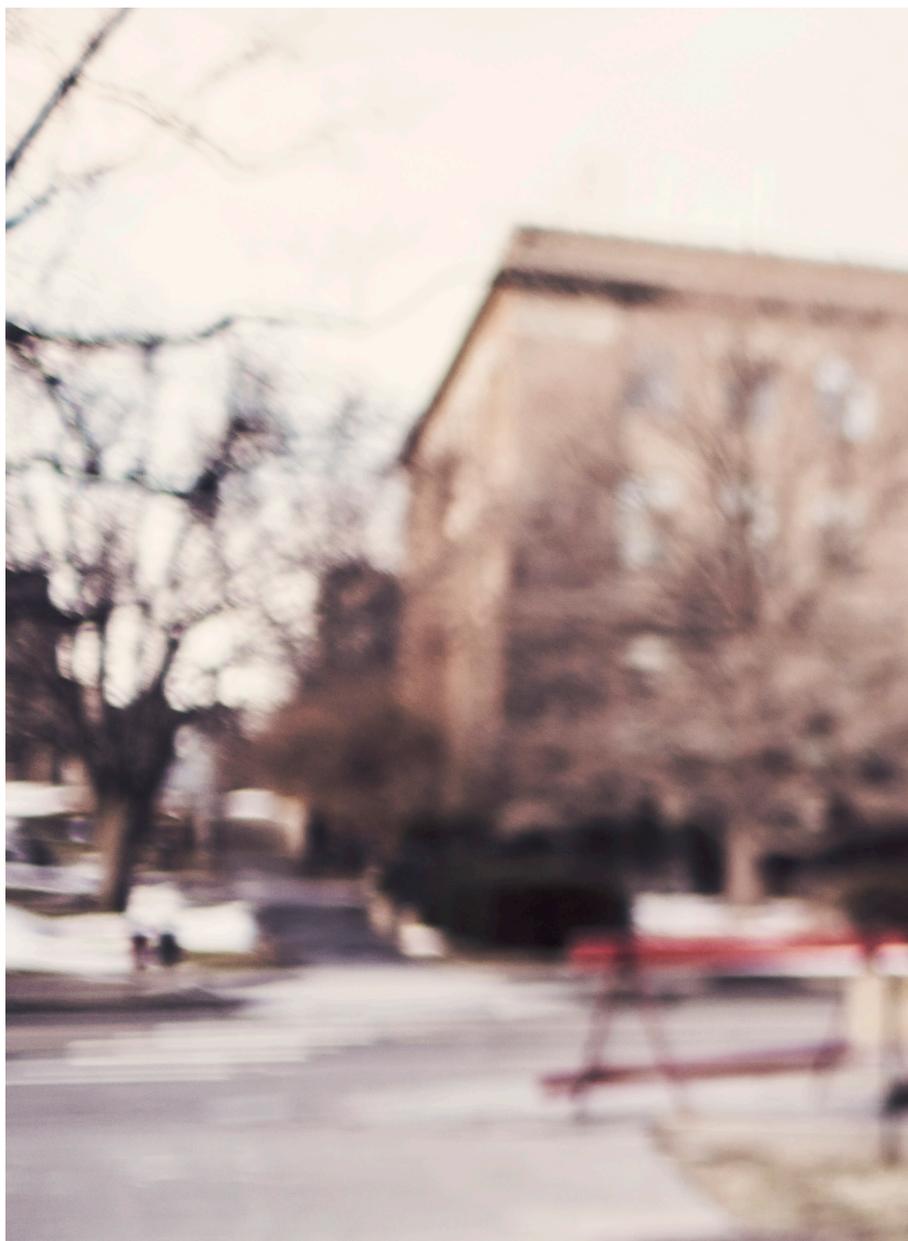


PURPOSE OF SURVEY

The college and career readiness of youth in the United States has recently become an area of increased emphasis for the country.

First Lady Michelle Obama's Reach Higher Initiative created a coordinated effort between educators, school counselors, and policy makers to prepare and encourage all students to complete an education past their high school diploma. The State of Iowa, through Future Ready Iowa, created a statewide alliance of educators, business executives, elected officials, and policy makers to work toward at least 70% of all Iowans in the workforce completing training and education beyond high school by 2025. This committee is a function of the Future Ready Iowa Initiative sponsored by the Iowa Governor's Office whose aim is to better align Iowa's education, workforce and economic development (Future Ready Iowa, 2016).

According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), school counselors are vital to prepare PK-12 students to be academically, socially, and emotionally ready for college and career (ASCA, 2012). However, national surveys have shown that there is a significant discrepancy between what school counselors are being trained to do in their Master's degree programs versus what they are usually assigned to do in their school districts (The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, 2011, 2012). Additionally, Iowa ranks 26th nationally in student-to-counselor ratio in Iowa (423:1), with 70% more students than recommended by the American School Counselor Association (no greater than



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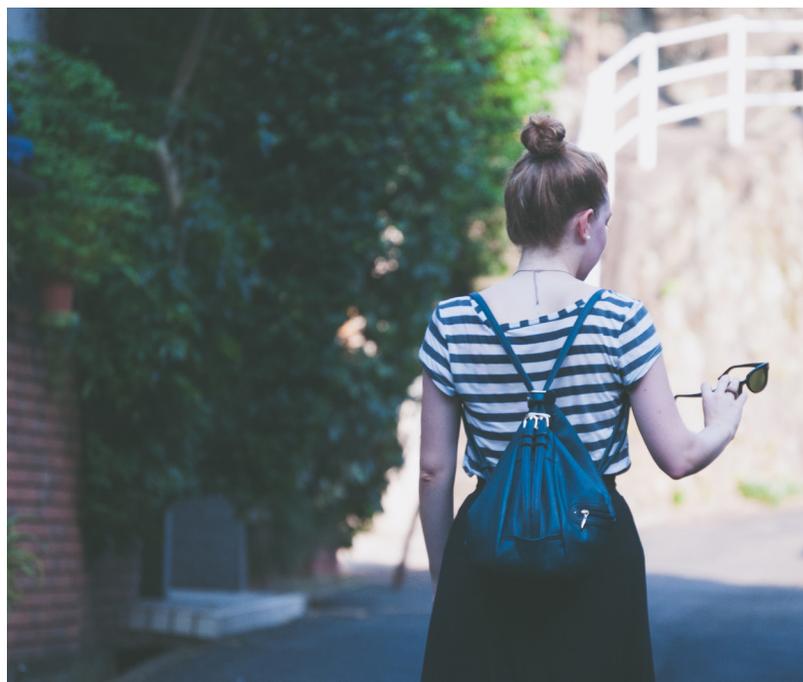
250:1). Finally, superintendents and principals are not provided with training or professional development on how to effectively utilize the skills of their school counselors. This directly impacts the ability of school counselors to adequately advise PK-12 students on their college and career options.

Though national surveys have been conducted about the role and function of school counselors, there is no current empirical data from education stakeholders in Iowa that speaks to the role of school counselors in college and career readiness. Iowa ranks first in the nation for high school graduation rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) which is extremely admirable; however, in the past five years, an average of 70% of Iowa's high school graduates enroll in



PURPOSE OF SURVEY

any postsecondary program (U.S. Census, 2010-2013; Iowa Department of Education, 2016). In the most recent data from the Iowa Department of Education (2016), approximately 43% of Iowa high school graduates completed a postsecondary program. Iowa ranks 13th in percent of population earning at least an associate's degree and 26th in percent of population earning at least a bachelor's degree, resulting in significant percentages of the population with a high school diploma but no additional postsecondary credential, and a greater degree of educational attainment attrition than expected, given the high rate of high school graduation. To put this in perspective with other states, while Iowa leads the nation in high school graduation rates, when combined with data from the Lumina Foundation's Stronger Nation report (2016), Iowa ranks 38th when examining the difference between the percentage of high school graduates and the percentage of Iowa students completing a baccalaureate program. What this means practically is that Iowa schools and school counselors are doing well with supporting students in their quest to graduate from high school and may need additional training or supports to prepare students to successfully complete their postsecondary education. This gap can impact the educational success of the state, and more significantly impact the state's economic and workforce development future and should be systematically addressed. Given their expertise and training in college and career preparation, school counselors should be at the forefront of any intervention in the educational setting.



This lack of postsecondary completion is of utmost importance given the prevalence of STEM jobs in Iowa for which we currently lack appropriately trained workers (Iowa Workforce Development, 2015). Based on their training and role definition, school counselors are in an ideal position to support students in early preparation for and knowledge of in-demand STEM careers in elementary school, acquiring foundational skills during their middle and high school education, and providing other supports to help students on the way to a postsecondary institution. The increase in STEM interest and achievement by PK-12 students resulting from the work of the Iowa Governor's STEM Council and connections made through the

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STEM Council's Working Group on Engaging School Counselors are essential to fulfilling the demand for STEM workers in Iowa in the hopes of regaining Iowa's leadership in education and industry. School counselors should be on the forefront of working to increase STEM interest considering their extensive training in career development, but at this time are not being fully utilized in this capacity in most schools (The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, 2011, 2012).



To better gain a comprehensive understanding of the gap in preparation and practice of school counselors and further the work of the Governor's STEM Council, the Iowa School Counselor Association (ISCA) commissioned this study to explore practice and perception of school counselors and stakeholders through a collaboration with and support from Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) and Heartland Area Education Agency. The survey assessed awareness among educational stakeholders, namely school counselors and administrators, regarding the role of school counselors in preparing Iowa's PK-12 students to make quality college and career decisions. Additionally, it examines the extent to which school counselors are performing the roles for which they have been trained, as well as identified any gaps between current practice and the ideal role, as articulated by ASCA and the Iowa Framework for School Counseling, which is aligned to the ASCA Model.

In order to best explore these topics, a survey was designed that asked school counselors and administrators at the school and district levels to describe current college and career readiness practices in their school or district. Additionally, the survey included separate sections to be completed by school counselors and administrators to gauge their current practice as well as their perceived ideal roles. The ISCA Board of Directors vetted the final survey design. Following revisions, the survey was then distributed to stakeholder groups in the spring of 2016 via an electronic survey platform.

The results shared below represent a view of current college and career readiness practices occurring in Iowa schools. They are presented first through the overarching research questions used to design the survey, then as a list of Key Findings that may be of interest to other stakeholder groups. It is hoped these results will inform future policy, training, and practice regarding the school counselor's role in helping Iowa's PK-12 students explore their college and career goals and to support the work of the Governor's STEM Council and the Future Ready Iowa Alliance.

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

The survey was sent to ISCA members across Iowa in April 2016 via email. In May 2016, it was sent via email to district and school level administrators throughout Iowa. Participants were sent a link to complete the survey. Of those opening the survey link, 463 participants agreed to take the survey and 11 opened the survey but declined to participate. After discarding responses for those who failed to adequately complete the survey, 438 surveys were used for analysis (96.4% of those who agreed to take the survey).

The majority of the 438 participants were school counselors (63%); followed by school building administrators (21%); and school district administrators (15%). Over one-third (38%) of the participants came from high school settings; 58% were employed in a small town or rural setting. The participants' years of experience were fairly balanced between 1-5 years (42%) and 6-11+ years (58%), respectively. In 220 (52%) of participants' schools, 1/3-2/3 of student populations qualified for free or reduced lunch.

The largest percentage (36%) of school counselors and administrators (building and district) reported that 21-40% of their students are attending a 2-year college after high school graduation. 34% of those responding indicated that 21-40% of their students are attending a 4-year college. However, nearly 30% of the school counselors and administrators (building and district) responded "unknown" to the percent of their students attending college (either a 2-year or a 4-year). On this survey, school counselors reported an approximate caseload in the range of 120 to 1400 students. For a comprehensive breakdown of the participant and school demographics, please refer to Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Participant and School Demographics	School Counselors	School Building Administrators	School District Administrators	Overall
Gender				
Male	40 (14.49%)	57 (62.64%)	52 (73.24%)	149 (34.02%)
Female	234 (84.78%)	33 (36.26%)	19 (26.76%)	286 (65.3%)
Other	0	1 (1.10%)	0	1 (0.23%)
Prefer Not To Respond	2	0	0	2 (0.46%)
Current Role	276 (63%)	91 (21%)	71 (16%)	438
Level of Current Role				
Elementary	84 (32.18%)	25 (28.09%)	4 (5.71%)	113 (26.9%)
Middle School/Junior High	41 (15.71%)	13 (14.61%)	2 (2.86%)	56 (13.33%)
High School	110 (42.15%)	44 (49.44%)	4 (5.71%)	158 (37.62%)
K-12 Position	26 (9.96%)	3 (3.37%)	2 (5.71%)	31 (7.38%)
District	0	4 (4.49%)	58 (82.86%)	62 (14.76%)
Setting of School/District				
Urban	51 (19.47%)	7 (7.87%)	7 (10%)	65 (15.44%)
Suburban	46 (17.56%)	13 (14.61%)	12 (17.14%)	71 (16.86%)
Small Town/Rural	165 (62.98%)	69 (77.53%)	51 (72.86%)	285 (67.7%)
Years Experience Current Role				
1-2 Years	48 (18.32%)	18 (20.22%)	15 (21.43%)	81 (19.24%)
3-5 Years	57 (21.76%)	22 (24.72%)	18 (25.71%)	97 (23.04%)
6-10 Years	64 (24.43%)	26 (29.21%)	19 (27.14%)	109 (25.89%)
11+ Years	93 (35.5%)	23 (25.84%)	18 (25.71%)	134 (31.83%)
Percent of Free/Reduced Lunch				
0-30%	76 (29.01%)	32 (35.96%)	18 (25.71%)	126 (29.93%)
31-60%	131 (50%)	49 (55.06%)	40 (57.14%)	220 (52.26%)
61+%	44 (16.79%)	8 (8.99%)	12 (17.14%)	64 (15.2%)
Unknown	11 (4.2%)	0	0	11 (2.61%)
Percent of Students Attending 2-year College After High School Graduation				
0-20%	13 (5.08%)	5 (5.81%)	11 (16.18%)	29 (7.07%)
21-40%	72 (28.13%)	41 (47.67%)	36 (52.94%)	149 (36.34%)
41-60%	74 (28.91%)	12 (13.95%)	9 (13.24%)	95 (23.17%)
61-80%	7 (2.73%)	5 (5.81%)	3 (4.41%)	15 (3.66%)
81-100%	3 (1.17%)	0	1 (1.47%)	4 (.98%)
Unknown	87 (33.98%)	23 (26.74%)	8 (11.76%)	118 (28.78%)
Percent of Students Attending 4-year College After High School Graduation				
0-20%	16 (6.25%)	10 (11.63%)	7 (10.14%)	33 (8.03%)
21-40%	82 (32.03%)	30 (34.88%)	26 (37.68%)	138 (33.58%)
41-60%	53 (20.70%)	17 (19.77%)	18 (26.09%)	88 (21.41%)
61-80%	15 (5.86%)	6 (6.98%)	8 (11.59%)	29 (7.06%)
81-100%	5 (1.95%)	0	3 (4.35%)	8 (1.95%)
Unknown	85 (32.20%)	23 (26.74%)	7 (10.14%)	115 (27.98%)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Three research questions guided the development of the survey. These questions were intended to provide an overarching view of the perceptions of administrators and schools counselors with regards to the role of the school counselor and their function in the college and career readiness preparation of their students. The questions are:

- 1. How do stakeholders define the school counselor's role in college and career readiness?**
- 2. What is the stakeholder's perception of the role and function of a school counselor?**
- 3. How do stakeholders compare the relationships between school counselors' current function and their formal standards for practice?**

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: HOW DO STAKEHOLDERS DEFINE THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR'S ROLE IN COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS?

The first research question sought to explore how school counselors and administrators view the school counselor's role in college and career readiness based on preference and on practical job functions. The survey asked participants to define what general activities school counselors currently conduct in the domain of college and career readiness based on the perspectives of both school counselors and administrators. Participants were asked to check any of 14 possible school counselor roles and responsibilities that they perceived applied to college and career readiness. These roles and responsibilities were obtained from the ASCA National Model (2012, p. 45) list of appropriate and inappropriate school counseling activities. The following 14 activities, representing both appropriate and inappropriate activities according to ASCA, were listed in the survey:



TABLE 2: SCHOOL COUNSELOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

(A=appropriate role; I=inappropriate role as defined by ASCA)

Academic planning for college & career readiness (i.e. four-year plan) (A)	Career assessments (A)
Career exploration and selection processes (A)	Class scheduling (I)
College affordability planning (A)	College exploration and selection processes (A)
College/career admission processes (A)	Coordinating standardized testing (I)
Data entry and maintenance of student records (i.e. transcript requests, inputting standardized test scores) (I)	Providing enrichment activities (i.e. job shadowing, work opportunities, summer workshops, providing mentors) (A)
Increasing postsecondary and career self-efficacy and supports (I)	Transition from high school graduation to postsecondary activities (A)
Use data to identify inequities in college and career placement (i.e. first-generation, students in poverty, under-represented students) (A)	College entrance assessment interpretation (i.e. ACT, SAT, PSAT, ASPIRE) (A)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Then respondents were to use that same list to rank the top five roles of a school counselor as related to the college and career readiness process in their school. Additionally, the research question aimed to explore what, if any, college and career readiness programming is currently being performed in schools, in what formats (individual, small group, or classroom lessons completed by the school counselor), and with what frequency.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: WHAT IS THE STAKEHOLDER'S PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF A SCHOOL COUNSELOR?

While the first research question was specific to the college and career readiness role of school counselors, prior anecdotal evidence has suggested that school counselors do not allocate or prioritize time for college and career readiness work in actual practice. This may be due to supervisor expectations, role confusion, lack of support staff completing non-counseling tasks, or other barriers. The purpose of the second research question was to explore how school counselors are spending their time in comparison to other duties (both school counseling and non-school counseling related).



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RESEARCH QUESTION 3: HOW DO STAKEHOLDERS COMPARE THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL COUNSELORS' CURRENT FUNCTION AND THEIR FORMAL STANDARDS FOR PRACTICE?

The third research question sought to further clarify what stakeholders perceived as the actual amount of time the school counselor spent in each domain of a comprehensive school counseling program (i.e., academic, personal/social, college/career, non-school counseling) versus how they would prefer the school counselors spend their time. The

results of this research question show comparisons of the percentage of time school counselors and administrators would each prefer school counselors spend in each domain. The results in this section are disaggregated by stakeholder group and it is important to note the similarities in both the current practice and preferred practice of both groups.



KEY FINDINGS

KEY FINDING 1: COUNSELORS REPORT CAREER AND POSTSECONDARY PLANNING IS AN IMPORTANT ROLE AND FUNCTION OF SCHOOL COUNSELING

First, the survey sought to explore whether school counselors were willing and able to engage in college and career readiness programming as a primary function of their job. Survey results showed that 93% of participating school counselors share that they “agree” or “strongly agree” that they have interest in working with students on college and career readiness activities. Additionally, school counselors report that they agree or strongly agree that they have the training and knowledge to administer career planning activities (93%) and postsecondary planning activities (86%). Finally, 93% of school counselors shared that they would also be open to learning more about possible career and postsecondary training that would help them more effectively implement services and interventions.

These data reveal that the vast majority of school counselors not only have the interest and training to provide college and career readiness services to their students, but they are also willing to complete future professional development in order to learn new strategies. Specifically, it should be noted that participating school counselors felt that they needed more training in postsecondary planning activities. This may reflect the rapid rate in which postsecondary options are changing.

KEY FINDING 2: SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS AGREE ON MOST SCHOOL COUNSELOR FUNCTIONS, DIFFER ON CLASS SCHEDULING RESPONSIBILITIES

Regarding particular career and postsecondary activities in which school counselors should be engaged, administrators most frequently chose academic planning for college and career readiness as the main role of school counselors (n=113). However, the next frequently chosen role was to administer class scheduling (n=102). This is contrary to the appropriate counselor roles as defined by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). These two responses were closely followed by college exploration and selection (n=100) and career exploration and selection (n=93). **NOTE:** *Examining how best to redistribute non-counselor tasks such as class scheduling is explored further in the implications section of this report.*

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School counselors, on the other hand, most frequently ranked career exploration and selection process (n=195) as a role they should perform in relation to college and career readiness of students. Academic planning for college and career readiness was a close second in frequency (n=191), followed by the college exploration and selection process (n=180) and helping students understand the college/career admissions process (n=176). Clearly the high frequency of school counselors noting these activities as important shows their significance in the college and career readiness process. While these were the most frequently chosen activities, it is important to note that with the exception of data entry/records maintenance and coordinating standardized tests, all of the 14 roles listed in Table 2 were frequently selected as important school counselor roles in the college and career readiness process (range n=195-121). Of particular interest, the role identified as ‘using data to identify inequities in college and career placement’, an ASCA-defined appropriate role, was the least frequent in that range. This indicates more education needs to be conducted with regards to the school counselor’s role in advocacy and addressing equity needs for college and career readiness.

KEY FINDING 3: SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS SHARE RANKING OF IMPORTANT ROLES FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

The survey showed a positive relationship between school counselors and administrators on the ranking of important roles. Administrators most frequently ranked the following four roles as highest importance: 1) academic planning for college and career readiness (n=102); 2) class scheduling (n=79); 3) career exploration and selection process (n=71); 4) college exploration and selection process (n=70). The administrative rankings were almost evenly distributed among the remaining roles and responsibilities. School counselors were also consistent in their top ranking responses for importance, with the exception of the ranking of ‘class scheduling’. School counselors most frequently ranked academic planning for college and career readiness (n=174) in their top five. This was followed by career (n=138) and college (n=111) exploration and selection process. However, class scheduling (n=93) was fourth in frequency of top roles, closely followed by college and career admission processes (n=91).

KEY FINDINGS

KEY FINDING 4: CLASS SCHEDULING A BARRIER TO ALLOCATING TIME FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ACTIVITIES

It is important to note that administrators listed class scheduling as the second most frequently chosen role and second in order of importance; however, school counselors ranked this fourth in both number of counselors viewing this as a significant college and career readiness role as well as in the ranking of those roles in importance. Comments from participants indicated this may be attributed to the lack of dedicated support staff with these defined roles. It is recommended that this particular role be more qualitatively explored to determine more conclusively why this was placed in such high importance given its decreased role in the ASCA National Model and to identify how schools practically distinguish between academic planning and scheduling.

KEY FINDING 5: PERCEPTION OF THE DELIVERY OF CAREER AND POSTSECONDARY PLANNING ACTIVITIES VARIES AMONG SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

While other key findings addressed the most important career and postsecondary activities performed by school counselors, the following results indicate how participants perceive those lessons are being delivered to students. The responses are broken down by participant group identifying the percent of respondents in each group who indicated delivery was occurring in that mode in their school or district. Participants were asked to indicate all delivery methods of lessons or sessions that occurred in their school.

In career delivery methods, both school counselor and administrators acknowledge that a great deal of programming is being delivered through classroom lessons; however, school counselors are indicating that they are performing much more of their programming through individual sessions than is perceived by administrators. Additionally, administrators indicated more often that school-wide programming was occurring than was confirmed by school counselors. This may be indicative of administrators not being aware of what is happening in individual counseling sessions, but are more actively engaged in participation, or even planning, of school-wide events. School counselors also indicated a great deal of 'other' types of activities they plan for students including working with local university and college representatives and planning job shadows and internships for students, which may not fall into any of the survey-defined categories.

With regard to postsecondary activities, administrators and school counselors have a relatively similar understanding of how these get delivered. The major discrepancy is that school counselors indicated more of their programming was conducted in the classroom and less in small groups than was noted by administrators.

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CHART 1 A

Administrators believe school counselors deliver career programming through the following methods:

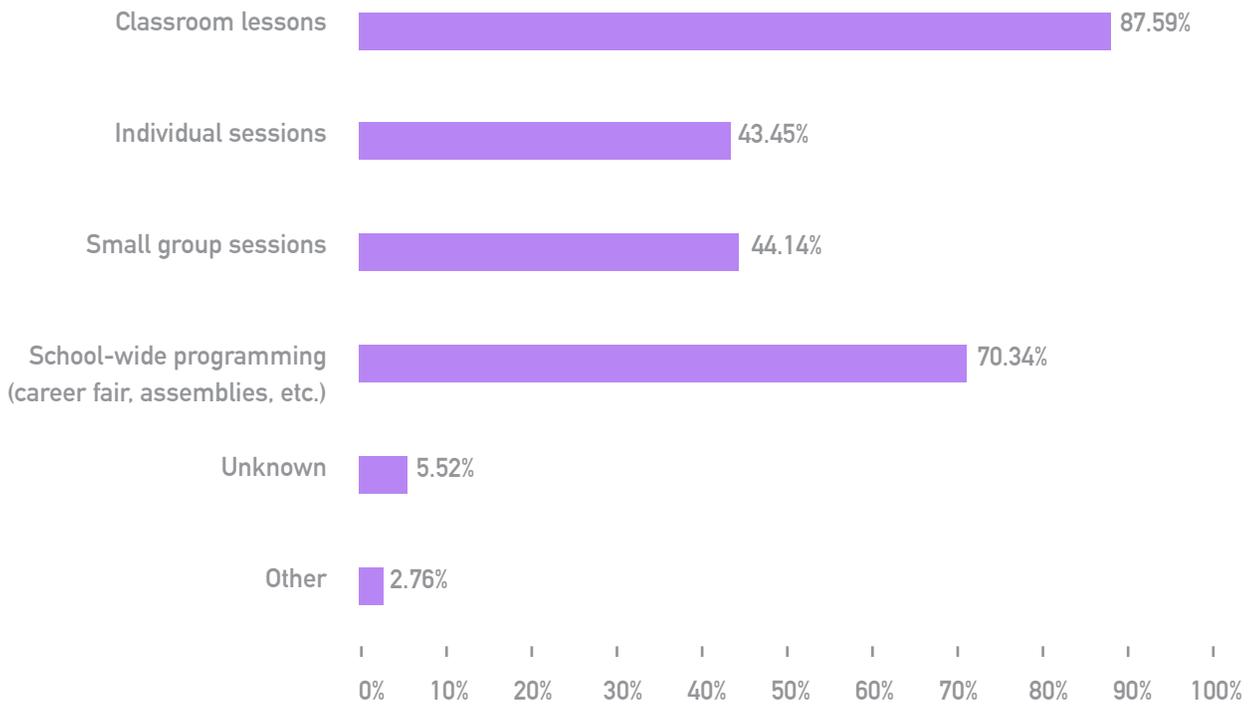
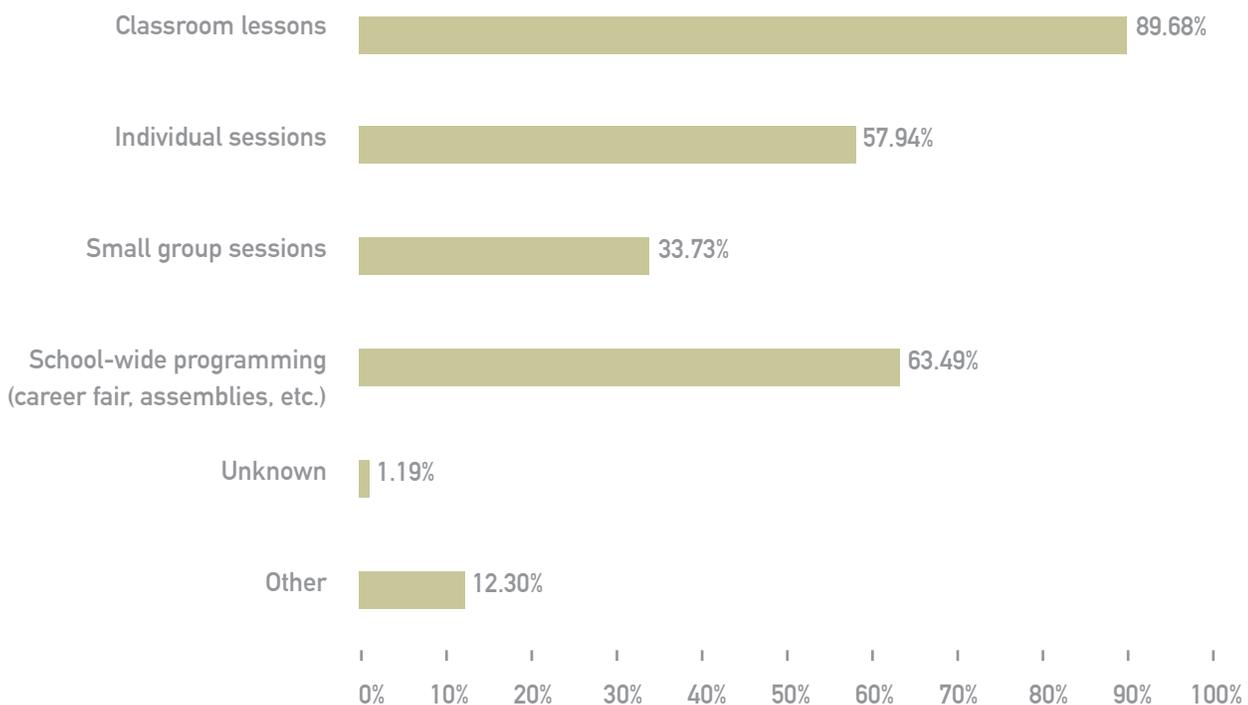


CHART 1 B

School counselors report delivering career programming through the following methods:



KEY FINDINGS

CHART 2 A

Administrators believe school counselors deliver postsecondary programming through the following methods:

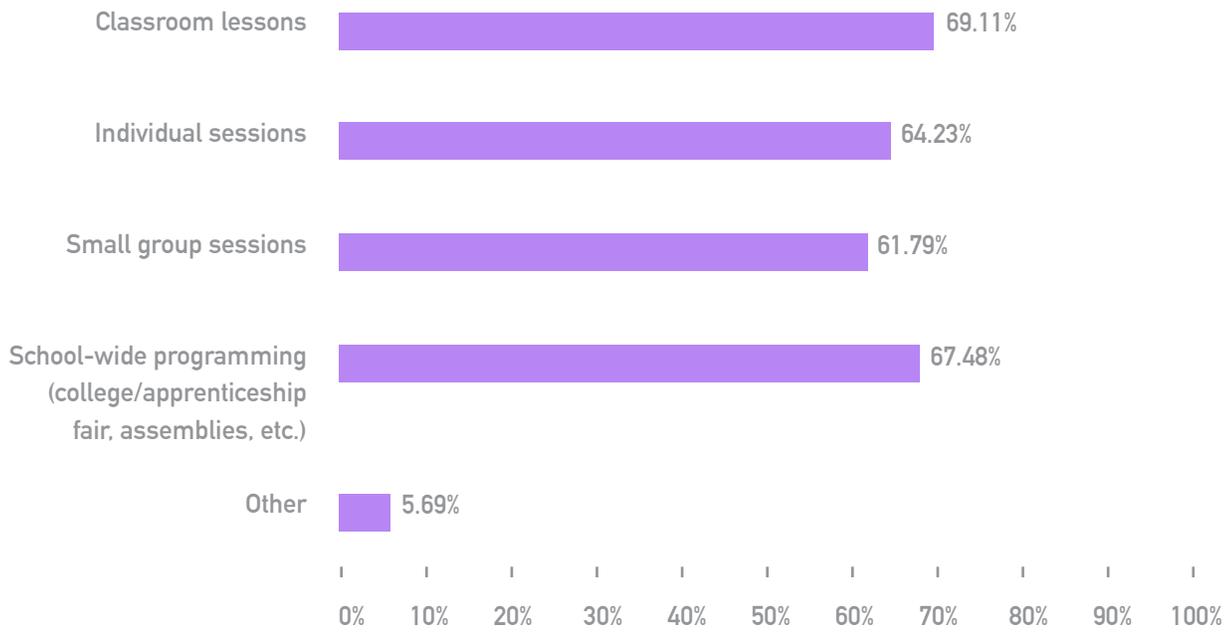
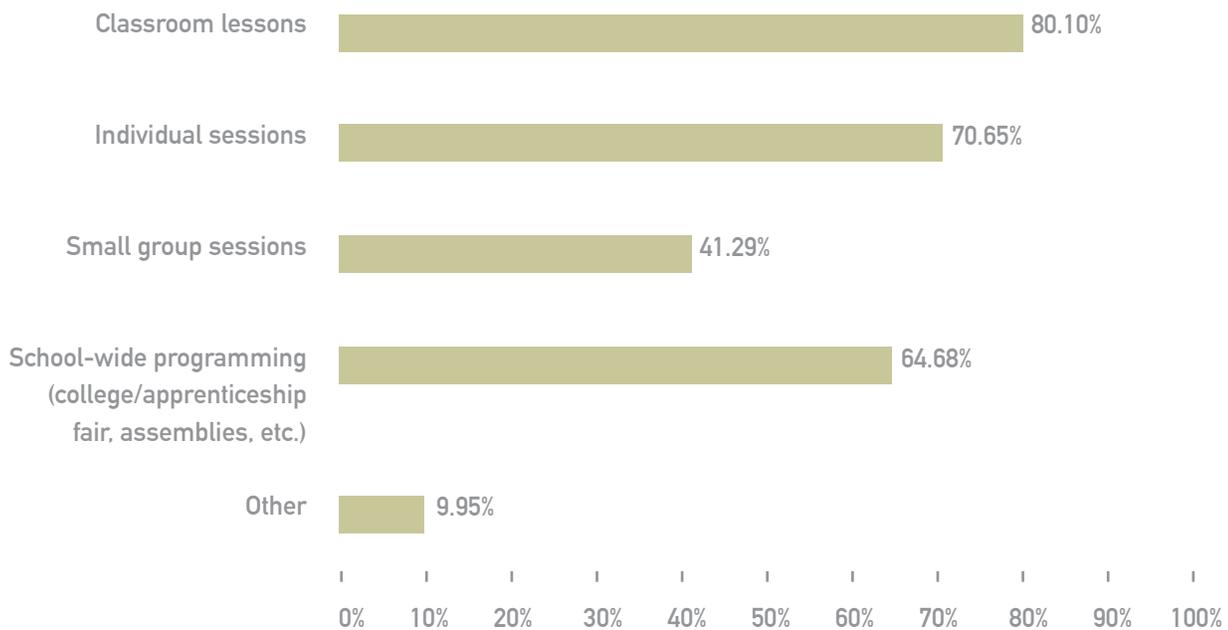


CHART 2 B

School counselors report delivering postsecondary programming through the following methods:



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KEY FINDING 6: SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS SHARE PERCEPTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF POSTSECONDARY LESSONS OR SESSIONS PROVIDED

In order to gain an understanding of how often school counselors are engaging in career and postsecondary programming, the survey asked participants to indicate, on average, how many college and/or career lessons were delivered to every student in their school per year. Charts 3A and 3B, followed by Charts 4A and 4B below represent the percentage of participants, broken down by role, who indicated each range of lesson or session options.



KEY FINDINGS

CHART 3 A

Administrators believe school counselors deliver yearly career programming to each student the following number of times:

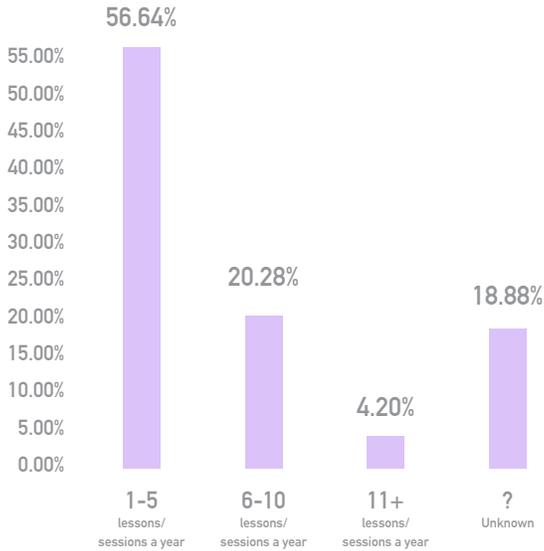


CHART 3 B

School counselors report delivering yearly career programming to each student the following number of times:

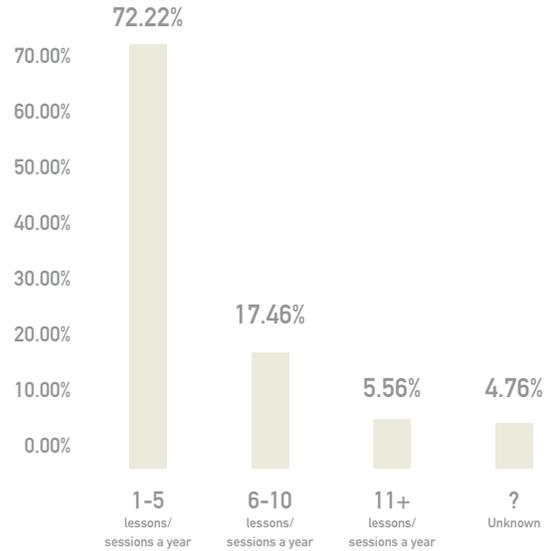


CHART 4 A

Administrators believe school counselors deliver yearly postsecondary programming to each student the following number of times:

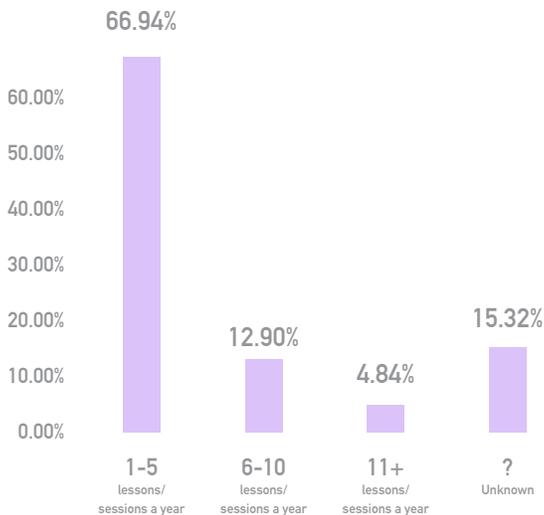
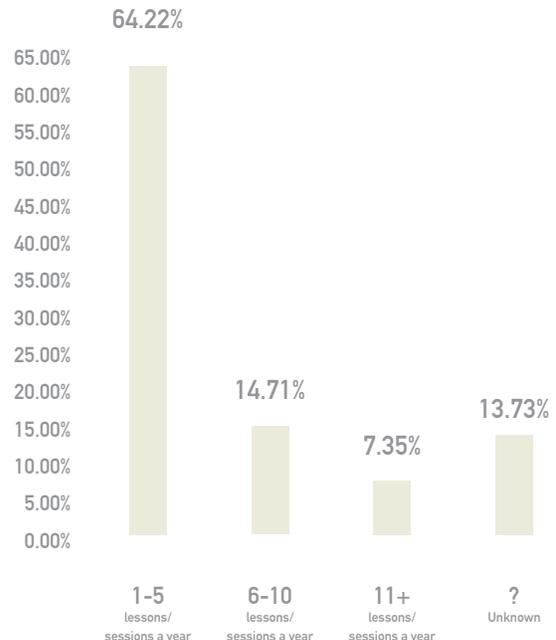


CHART 4 B

School counselors report delivering yearly postsecondary programming to each student the following number of times:



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These findings indicate that while school counselors and administrators have similar perceptions of the number of postsecondary lessons or sessions being provided to each student, they seem to diverge in their understanding of how many career lessons are being shared with each student per year. Greater communication between administrators and school counselors as to curriculum coverage may help to alleviate this discrepancy.

KEY FINDING 7: SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS SHARE PERCEPTIONS OF THE TYPES OF CAREER AND POSTSECONDARY ACTIVITIES BEING PROVIDED

Participants were asked to report the career development and postsecondary exploration and planning activities that were currently occurring in their schools. Administrators and school counselors shared that the top three modes of delivery of *career exploration and planning activities* were: classroom lessons (89%), school wide programming (i.e., career fair, assemblies, etc.; 66%), and individual sessions (53%). Participants also shared specific examples of programming recently completed in their schools, including:

- Grade level activities and speakers
- Career day
- Career learning link
- Career awareness field trips/career lunches
- Advisory Groups

Similarly, when asked how postsecondary exploration and planning activities were delivered in their schools, school counselors and administrators state that the top three options for delivery of services were classroom lessons (76%), individual sessions (68%), and school wide programming (i.e., college apprenticeships/fairs, assemblies, etc.; 66%). Specific activities mentioned by participants were:

- College and career planning night
- College readiness presentation
- Classes offered through community college
- Collaboration with outside agencies and colleges

KEY FINDINGS

It is clear that Iowa school counselors currently perform many career and postsecondary activities in their schools and districts, from individual planning to classroom lessons to school-wide programming. School counselors and administrators see career and postsecondary planning as an important role and function of the school counselor. School counselors also feel adequately prepared to take on this role, and are open to increased professional development options to aid in their programming. When ranking the importance of career and postsecondary planning activities, school counselors and administrators were consistent in their order; however, qualitative analysis needs to be completed to better understand the role that both school counselors and administrators perceive scheduling classes has in the college and career readiness process.

KEY FINDING 8: SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS SHARE PERCEPTIONS OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF TIME IN ACADEMIC, CAREER, AND SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL PROGRAMMING; DIFFER ON THE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT IN NON-COUNSELING RELATED TASKS

Administrators very accurately matched school counselors in reporting of perceived time school counselors spent in each of the three ASCA domains (academic, career, and social/emotional development), as well as non-school counseling related activities. Charts 5 and 6 show the side-by-side comparisons of how administrators compared to school counselors perceive their school counselors spend their time as well as how both groups would prefer the school counselor's time was spent.. The participants were asked to estimate the percentage of time, out of 100%, that school counselors spend in each domain and in non-counseling activities and were then asked to share the percentage of time desired.

CHART 5

ADMIN - Percent of time School Counselors spend on ACADEMICS



SCHL COUNSELOR - Percent of time School Counselors spend on ACADEMICS



ADMIN - Percent of time School Counselors spend on CAREER



SCHL COUNSELOR - Percent of time School Counselors spend on CAREER



ADMIN - Percent of time School Counselors spend on PERSONAL/SOCIAL



SCHL COUNSELOR - Percent of time School Counselors spend on PERSONAL/SOCIAL



ADMIN - Percent of time School Counselors spend on NON-SC TASKS



SCHL COUNSELOR - Percent of time School Counselors spend on NON-SC TASKS



KEY FINDINGS

Administrators and school counselors have a similar perceived understanding of the time allocation that currently exists for counselors (see Chart 6). The primary difference is the amount of time school counselors perceive they are spending on non-school counselor related tasks (16.82%) versus the perception of administrators on non-school counselor tasks (10.1%), a significant amount of valuable time spent away from important counseling activities.

One solution for rectifying this discrepancy would be for school counselors to share their time-task analyses with their administrator to give them a better understanding of how their time is being allocated in an effort to reduce non-counseling related tasks. These analyses would show time spent in direct vs. indirect services, curriculum, responsive services, individual student planning, and additional system supports.

Another important conclusion is that both administrators and school counselors indicated that counselors are currently spending significantly less time (17.09% and 17.6% respectively) in activities related to the career domain when compared to the other two domain areas (academics and personal/social). Given the results shown in response to the first research question, we know that both school counselors and administrators see activities in the career domain as essential to the role of the school counselor. The good news is that school counselors feel adequately prepared to lead these activities. Further research may need to be done to explore why school counselors are not spending as much time on activities in the career domain.

CHART 6

ADMIN - Preferred percent of time School Counselors spend on academics



SCHL COUNSELORS - Preferred percent of time School Counselors spend on academics



ADMIN - Preferred percent of time School Counselors spend on career



SCHL COUNSELORS - Preferred percent of time School Counselors spend on career



ADMIN - Preferred percent of time School Counselors spend on personal/social



SCHL COUNSELORS - Preferred percent of time School Counselors spend on personal/social



ADMIN - Preferred percent of time School Counselors spend on non-sc tasks



SCHL COUNSELORS - Preferred percent of time School Counselors spend on non-sc tasks

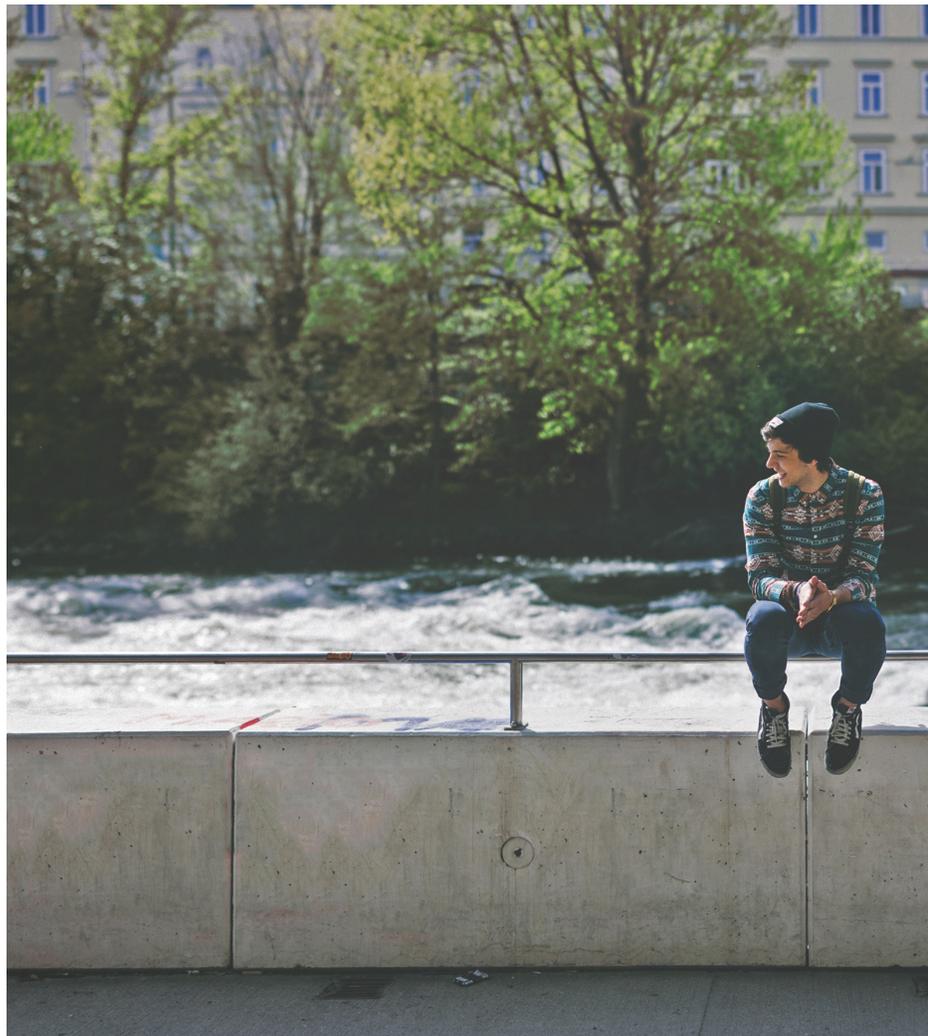


KEY FINDINGS

School counselors and administrators agree that there needs to be a more equitable amount of time spent in the three domain areas: academic, career, and personal/social. Both groups prefer a slight increase in the amount of time spent in the academic domain, as well as a slight decrease in the amount of time school counselors spend on personal/social concerns. School counselors desire a 9% increase on time spent in the career domain, which includes all postsecondary and career activities, whereas the administrators desire a 6% increase in time allotment. There is a large decrease in the amount of time school counselors prefer to spend on non-school counselor related tasks (-12%). While administrators only showed they preferred a -5% decrease in time on non-school counselor related tasks, it should be noted they also did not perceive school counselors using much of their current time allotment for these activities.

Clearly, there is a desire on the part of both the administrators and school counselors for the role of school counselors to shift in a direction toward an equal distribution of their time among all three domain areas. However, it is unclear through the results of this survey, why, if both parties are more or less in agreement, this preferred distribution is not occurring.

One possible remedy is that school counselors and administrators be more intentional about communicating their desired roles and responsibilities. From the survey, only 27% of school administrators shared they had a significant familiarity with the American School Counselor Association National Model, the foundational guide outlining the school counselor's role and programming structure, and 40% of administrators indicated they had no familiarity with the Model. In



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addition, this gap could be addressed through administrator or evaluator training on the appropriate evaluation of school counselors and counseling programs which would include both national standards and school counselor competencies. Both of these barriers could be easily corrected and will be further discussed in the implications section of this report.

Similarly, it is interesting that school counselors and administrators feel that school counselors should be investing any of their time in non-school counselor related tasks (4.76% and 4.96% respectively). It would be helpful to understand what non-school counselor related tasks administrators and school counselors perceive as important to their role to better understand their desire to continue the preference that school counselors spend up to 5% of their time on unrelated tasks. These may possibly include fair-share responsibilities or activities not be essential to their job (e.g., lunch duty, hall duty) but perceived as important in building relationships or observing school culture.

Specific to college and career readiness, administrators prefer less of a percentage of time to be spent in college and career preparation (23%) than school counselors (27%); however, that percentage of time is still significantly more than their current perceived practice (administrators: 17%; school counselors: 18%). This agreed upon discrepancy in the percentage of time allotted suggests further exploration on the state or local level is needed to determine why more time is not allocated for school counselors to spend in college and career readiness activities..



While the research questions guided the creation of the survey and serve as the framework of this report, other noteworthy findings emerged from deeper analysis of the results. Three main findings were noted that highlight the overall state of college and career readiness in Iowa. Specifically, these covered 1) the comparison of perceived and preferred college and career readiness practice; 2) the importance of administrator and school counselor communication; and 3) the perceived resources and importance of college and career readiness.

KEY FINDING 9: SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS AGREE ON THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN THE AMOUNT OF ACTUAL TIME SPENT VERSUS THE AMOUNT OF PREFERRED TIME SPENT ON COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS PROGRAMMING, DIFFER ON TIME ALLOCATED TO NON-COUNSELING RELATED TASKS

As reported in the findings of the first research question, administrators and school counselors have similar perceptions about the current amount of time being spent on college and career readiness. Administrators felt that school counselors spent on average 17.09% of their time on college and career readiness. Comparatively, school counselor perceived that they spent 17.6% of their time with college and career activities. This was significantly lower than the time both groups felt that school counselors spent in other domain areas.

ADMIN - Percent of time School Counselors spend on career



SCHL COUNSELOR - Percent of time School Counselors spend on career



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When examining their preferred breakdown of time spent in each domain, school counselors and administrators both felt that more time needed to shift toward college and career activities. The graphics below show a significant preferred increase of time spent in this domain of 6.29% and 9.3% of time for administrators and school counselors respectively. This is compared to only a slight increase in academics from actual to preferred and a slight decrease in time spent in personal/social.

ADMIN - Preferred percent of time School Counselors spend on career



SCHL COUNSELOR - Preferred percent of time School Counselors spend on career



KEY FINDING 10: SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS AGREE THAT MORE COLLEGE AND CAREER PROGRAMMING SHOULD OCCUR AT ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION

While both administrators and school counselors acknowledge college and career programming currently occurs in schools, both groups see a need for more time to be allocated to school counselors for college and career readiness programming with their students. Given that understanding, it was interesting to see a breakdown of the current practices of career and postsecondary programming at each grade level group as reported by administrators and school counselors participating in the survey. Charts 7A and 7B show the percentage of respondents that indicated career activities and postsecondary planning activities are occurring at each grade level group.

CHART 7 A

Career planning happens at the following levels (as reported by participant groups):

ADMINISTRATORS - Perceived career activities happening in grade level

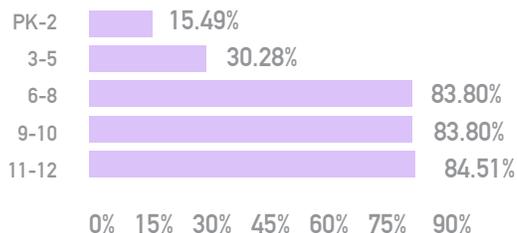
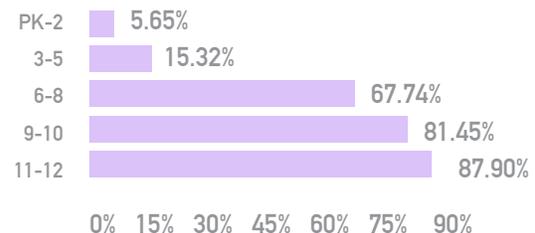


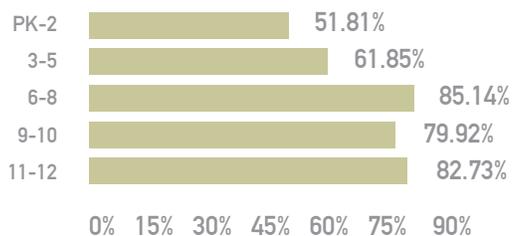
CHART 7 B

Postsecondary exploration and planning happens at the following levels (as reported by participant groups):

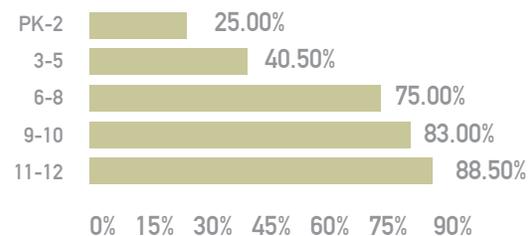
ADMINISTRATORS - Perceived post-secondary activities occurring by grade level



SCHL COUNSELORS - Perceived career activities happening in grade level



SCHL COUNSELORS - Perceived post-secondary activities occurring by grade level



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These findings indicate school counselors perceive they are conducting career and postsecondary activities at the elementary level much more than is recognized by administrators (33% vs. 7%). One possible remedy for this discrepancy may be a regular meeting between school counselors and administrators to review curriculum, examine pertinent data, and discuss student outcomes, as well as other school and district priorities. The survey noted that when administrators were asked if they had regularly scheduled meetings with their school counselor(s), only 39% responded affirmatively. Of those administrators who responded affirmatively, the majority met with their school counselors once a week (34%) or once a month (29%). While it is encouraging to see that 39% of the administrators have committed to regularly scheduled meetings with their school counselors, it is important to understand that this also means that 61% of building administrators in Iowa who responded to the survey do not have regularly scheduled meetings with their school counselor(s). This lack of regularly scheduled communication may lead to a breakdown in understanding of roles and practices between school counselors and administrators regarding many issues, including career and college readiness practices.

Another interesting insight from these graphs is neither postsecondary nor career planning was reported by administrators or school counselors as occurring with 100% of the students at the junior or senior high school level (grades 6-12). Iowa Code 279.61 includes requirements for career planning for all students in grades 8 through 12. (Iowa Department of Education, 2016). This may be a factor of lack of time or resources to ensure that school counselors are able to conduct career and postsecondary planning at the junior high and high school levels for all students. Current Iowa student-to-school counselor ratios of 423:1 may limit the amount of time available for school counselors to effectively address college and career readiness with all students. More thorough analysis will need to be completed to explore why school counselors and administrators are not all indicating that career and postsecondary planning is occurring at the 8th – 12th grade levels as well as to examine the impact of high student-to-counselor ratios on student outcomes.

KEY FINDING 11: SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS AGREE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DELIVERING COLLEGE AND CAREER PROGRAMMING, DIFFER IN THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW PROGRAMMING IS BEING DELIVERED

When asked whether they agreed with the statement “career planning is an important aspect of a student’s education,” 99% of administrators and school counselors agreed or strongly agreed. Clearly, career education is an area that these educators feel is essential to the preparation of students in the K-12 setting.

When asked whether they agreed with the statement “enough time is spent on career planning in the school’s counseling program,” 35% of administrators and school counselors disagreed and 51% agreed, however, only 11% strongly agreed. While the majority of participants felt that the current time allotment devoted to career preparation was adequate, the results also show that they feel more can be done to increase the career activities for Iowa students.



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When asked if they agreed with the statement “there are adequate resources for college/career readiness,” 43% of administrators and school counselors disagreed and 40% agreed. Though the responses were almost split between those who agreed and those who disagreed, almost 10% of additional respondents indicated that they strongly disagreed there were adequate resources devoted to college and career readiness. No respondents strongly agreed there were adequate resources. Future research should explore this construct to determine what resources are needed to support college and career readiness efforts.

While administrators and school counselors agree on the importance of increasing career and postsecondary counseling conducted by the school counselors, it is clear that the specifics of delivery are not understood by both parties. School counselors should be more intentional about sharing the ways in which they are currently serving students as well as other possible

programs or activities they would like to implement. Additionally, with limited resources, both school counselors and administrators need to have frequent and open conversations about what college and career readiness activities are working and what else could be added or adapted to better serve all students. It is important to remember that college and career readiness can and should be a collaborative effort.



THEMES FROM WRITTEN COMMENTS

In the final survey question, participants were given the opportunity to provide an open-ended response that would provide deeper understanding about college and career planning in their school or district. Using the written comments from that question, the following themes were found within the responses: Collaborations, Non-Counseling Task Interference, and Time and Resources. These three themes are described below and quotes have been selected from the respondents to exemplify the meaning behind the theme.

COLLABORATIONS

Respondents felt that college and career planning often involved more than just the school counselor interacting with the students.

Of note, principals and teachers were included in the planning either through their own volition or through an intentional college and career program delivered in advisory or homeroom. Networking with college and community college representatives, such as Career Academy Coordinators, was also mentioned several times. Finally, a small handful of schools acknowledged that they have College and Career Coordinators on staff in the district to aid in the college and career process for the students.

These collaborations, however, had varied degrees of success. Some respondents mentioned that it was wonderful to have the principal and other teachers assisting. One respondent talked about it being a school/community responsibility. Additionally, some of the respondents talked about how helpful it was to have the Career Academy Coordinators from their local community college assist with finding internships and jobs shadows for all students.

“The Middle School/High School Principal is completely part of the planning process and meets with students.”

Some comments spoke to the teachers being reluctant and/or unable to provide career and college planning information to students within their homeroom classes or advisory period. Some reported that teachers did not follow-through or ask questions, and another reported that teachers did not feel prepared to lead this discussion with students. Still others reported that teachers were reluctant to let school counselors into their classes to lead the discussions. Finally, respondents reflected that both the Career Academy Coordinators, hired by the

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community college, and the College and Career Coordinators, hired by the district, have not always been an effective solution to aid the students or the school counselors with the task of college and career planning.

“The teachers are also helping but they don’t always know everything.”

School counselors can and should delegate some college and career readiness activities, however, they must ensure that these are being conducted with fidelity. Using pre-post surveys or conducting periodic surveys with students involved in specific programs are two ways to gain feedback and learn about the effectiveness of teachers and other staff conducting programs. Once the data is in hand, school counselors may be better able to remedy any specific concerns.

NON-COUNSELING TASK INTERFERENCE

School counselors report that the clerical and administrative tasks they are required to perform often interfere with their ability to spend time on college and career planning with students.

In particular, participants reported the following tasks of concern: building the master schedule, data entry, lunch supervision, database maintenance, standardized testing coordinator, handling transcript requests, and teaching courses. Some respondents wrote about the benefits of having an assistant to cover the more clerical tasks, leaving the school counselor to have time to complete the programming and assessments they were trained to do. One veteran school counselor respondent noted that this type of work has increased significantly in the past 25 years.

“I find my job requiring me to do more and more administrative tasks, leaving less time for the role I was trained for...”

School counselors need to advocate for their professional roles. Conducting accurate time-task analyses and reviewing these with their administrator is one way to show how much of the school counselor’s time is being spent on tasks that are unrelated to their master’s level training.

THEMES FROM WRITTEN COMMENTS

TIME AND RESOURCES

Respondents repeatedly reported that while they feel that college and career planning is important to students, they feel that there is not enough time and too few resources to effectively implement these programs.

In particular, several respondents spoke of prohibitive caseloads. Others indicated that resources or funding for electronic resources for high school and postsecondary planning tools would be helpful as well.

“Financial support and time to implement are the critical factors that prohibit proper implementation.”

“Counselors have too many students on their caseloads and cannot keep up.”

Communication and advocacy are essential to increasing the amount of time that school counselors can spend on college and career programming. School counselors must use data to show administrators, school board members, and even legislators the success of the current programming as well as share what could be possible with more resources. Being able to present a well-articulated proposal and plan of action and the added benefits associated with the changes is essential to rectify the discrepancy between the preferred programming opportunities for their students and what currently exists.

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FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Of all the key findings

from this survey, a notable few have the greatest potential to impact college and career readiness of Iowa's K-12 students. First, school counselors and administrators both see the importance in providing college and career readiness services to their students. Second, they also agree that school counselors should have this role as a significant part of their responsibilities in the school. Third, school counselors feel that they have been trained in both college and career readiness strategies, though they would like more professional development to focus on trends in this area as well as changes in financial aid and funding college and career options. Lastly, time and resource allocation remains a barrier due to high student-to-counselor ratios, lack of communication between school counselors and administrators, and incongruent expectations of school counselor time allocated to college and career readiness activities.

Further exploration needs to be completed in three key areas. First, stakeholders need to better understand the rationale behind school counselors and administrators linking class scheduling to college and career readiness, including more clearly defining "class scheduling." Second, barriers need to be addressed as to school counselors providing college and career preparation, especially given the survey data that shows a less than 100% response rate by school counselors about providing lessons at all grades, including high school. Finally, further qualitative analysis needs to be conducted in order to address barriers to achieving the administrative and school counselor agreement in preferred time allocation.

The results of this survey have great implications for future school counselor practice in college and career readiness activities. Building upon the interest and enthusiasm that school counselors voiced to continue their learning about college and career readiness, the State of Iowa, school districts, school counselors, administrators, and state organizations can all play an instrumental and collaborative role in transforming how Iowa students are prepared for college and career. Collectively, the following three strategies aim to help Iowa education stakeholders develop conversations, improve training, and contribute to college and career readiness reform throughout the state.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

ENHANCE THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR-ADMINISTRATOR PARTNERSHIP

- Facilitate role induction for school counselors and administrators that prepares all students for college and career
- School counselors and administrators should meet regularly to review data and develop college and career readiness programs and curriculum initiatives
- Conduct time/task analyses; identify/discuss barriers that inhibit college and career readiness tasks
- Advocate for job descriptions that include appropriate roles and delivery services with college and career readiness – including clearly defining the purpose behind school counselors conducting non-school counselor related tasks, and have evaluation models that accurately reflected the roles and responsibilities of school counselors.
- Conduct a school counselor time/task analysis and identify/discuss barriers that inhibit college and career readiness tasks with administrators

INCREASE COLLEGE AND CAREER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop statewide professional development for school counselors and administrators that focuses on data-informed college and career readiness programming including the school counselor's role
- Provide training support to existing school counselors and administrators that reflect their unique geographic needs
- Partner with university training programs to help bring college and career readiness to the pre-service training for both school counselors and school administrators

UTILIZE DATA TO DRIVE COLLEGE AND CAREER DECISION MAKING

- Examine the impact of student-to-school counselor ratios on student outcomes
- Analyze school and student data to identify inequities in college and career development and student outcomes
- Facilitate audits of graduation rates, student access to courses, college application rates, college matriculation rates, and college completion rates
- Gather process, perception, and outcome data to determine effectiveness of college and career interventions
- Share results and leverage support with educational stakeholders

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Career counseling encompasses academic and personal/social counseling. School counselors cannot help students achieve success in their future without understanding student strengths and challenges in the present.

While school counselors were asked to differentiate time allotments for the sake of this survey, it is important to note that when school counselors talk with students about their future plans, they are also addressing present situations to help students determine the best path for success, and that often it is impossible to differentiate where one domain stops and another begins. Future study should examine this phenomenon as well as time spent on direct/indirect services to students and non-counseling related tasks.

To conclude, the following were some quotes of interest from school counselor respondents. They speak to the importance that school counselors see in completing college and career planning with their students:

“My favorite part of being a school counselor is talking with students about their future!!!”

“I wish I could devote more of my time to this aspect of my job.”

“It is the future of these students and we cannot afford to NOT spend time on it!!!!”

