Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Ethics & Behavior

ISSN: 1050-8422 (Print) 1532-7019 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/hebh20

Student-to-school counselor ratios: understanding the history and ethics behind professional staffing recommendations and realities in the United States

Carleton H. Brown & David Knight

To cite this article: Carleton H. Brown & David Knight (2025) Student-to-school counselor ratios: understanding the history and ethics behind professional staffing recommendations and realities in the United States, Ethics & Behavior, 35:3, 221-239, DOI: 10.1080/10508422.2024.2342520

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2024.2342520

ETHICS & BEHAVIOR
2025, VOL. 35, NO. 3, 221–239
https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2024.2342520

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Student-to-school counselor ratios: understanding the history and ethics behind professional staffing recommendations and realities in the United States

Carleton H. Brown[a] and David Knight[b]

[a]Counseling, Special Education and Educational Psychology Department, The University of Texas at El Paso; [b]Educational Policy, Organization, and Leadership Department, University of Washington

ABSTRACT

This manuscript explores the argument for lower student-to-school counselor ratios in U.S. public education. Drawing upon a comprehensive historical review and existing research, we establish the integral role of school counselors and the notable benefits of reduced student-to-counselor ratios. Our analysis of national data exposes marked disparities across states and districts, with the most underfunded often serving higher percentages of low-income students and students of color. This situation raises significant ethical concerns, prompting a call for conscientious policy reform and targeted investment. Informed by emerging best practices, we propose recommendations for enhancing counselor staffing and ultimately student outcomes. This ethical argument underscores the need for proactive actions and provides a basis for future research to further delineate the impact of school counselor ratios on educational equity and student success.

KEYWORDS

School counselor ratios; educational equity; student success; school policy

INTRODUCTION

In the increasingly complex educational landscape, the role of school counselors has become more crucial than ever. As professional and certified staff members, school districts often aim to hire one or more school counselors per site, but budget constraints sometimes drive up the student-to-school counselor ratio (the number of students to which each school counselor is assigned). Unfortunately, this causes districts to fill the gap in student-to-school counselor ratios with differently trained personnel, resulting in good-hearted but less research-based approaches to student well-being; for example, the recent Texas Senate Bill (SB 763) allows school districts to hire unlicensed chaplains to perform duties of school counselors (Texas, 2021). This exemplifies the ethical imperative for policymakers and their constituents to understand the history of school counselors' work, the research on the optimal number of school counselors in schools, and why school counselors are uniquely qualified to deliver comprehensive school counseling programs that positively impact student outcomes. In this paper, our purpose is to inform system leaders, community stakeholders, and state and federal policymakers about both the history of counseling in public schools and their role in contributing to student academic and socioemotional development.

First, we provide a history of the role of school counselors in U.S. schools, and emerging models of best practices for school counselor. Then, we synthesize research on the impact of counselors on students, noting that extant research provides strong evidence for reducing student-to-school counselor ratios so that each counselor is assigned fewer students; however, the literature has not pinpointed an optimal ratio, and a single value that is effective in all contexts is unlikely to emerge. In section three and

CONTACT Carleton H. Brown chbrown@utep.edu Counseling, Special Education, and Educational Psychology Department, The University of Texas at El Paso, 500 West University Avenue, El Paso, TX 79968

four, we present a landscape analysis and results of student-to-school counselor ratios across states over time, drawing on data from the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics. Finally, we conclude by considering the ethical implications of the findings and providing recommendations for practitioners and policymakers, as well as directions for future research.

Context behind the ratio

This section addresses the evolution of perspectives on counselor activities and the development of various models that have emerged in response. By examining this focus of the debate, we can better understand the rationale behind the ratio which highlights the profession's emphasis on comprehensive school counseling programs ("framework[s] with a specific configuration of planned, sequenced, and coordinated guidance and counseling activities and services-based of student, school, and community needs and resources, designed to serve all students and their parents or guardians in a local school district."- Gysbers & Henderson, 2012, p.62) and the unique qualifications of school counselors in delivering positive student outcomes. Sweeney (1964) surveyed a representative sample of Ohio secondary school counselors and principals to measure perceptions of counselor activities and attributes. Using statistical analysis, Sweeney found that counselors placed greater importance than building administrators on spending time with students individually and on professional responsibilities. The researcher also concluded that school counselors needed to advocate for clear, defined priorities and objectives for their counseling activities, rather than allowing their administrators to dictate their roles and functions. Furthermore, Sweeney asserted that counselors should contemplate the areas in which they could best contribute, such as curriculum development and the promotion of the school program. Lastly, the results suggested that counselors should be able to demonstrate how their activities are effective and separate from those of other staff members. Sweeney's (1964) study represents an early attempt to understand the most productive roles and responsibilities for school counselors, through the lens of active school counselors and administrators.

Role clarity for school counselors was needed in part because of a lack of a broader professional organization to provide a specific description. By 1966, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) had detailed that the school counselor's role centered around the following common activities: consulting, counseling, and coordinating (ASCA, 1974, as cited in; Hutchinson et al., 1986); however, the debate on school counselor activities and the appropriate staffing ratios, continued into the next decade. By the 1970s, practitioners and researchers had increasingly begun to share their experiences regarding the student-to-school counselor ratio and the importance of connecting this ratio to school counseling activities. For instance, Rash (1970) detailed his year of experience in the role of a school counselor. He agreed with the sentiment of the time, that school counselors need either more time or a lower student-counselor ratio to adequately perform their responsibilities. He also explained his ideal to meet each counselee before the start of the school year to better plan his counseling activities and optimize his time with his counselees during the upcoming school year. Biggers (1971) also argued that although a low counselor-student ratio is beneficial, focusing solely on the ratio as an indication of counselor effectiveness is shortsighted. According to Biggers, the time a school counselor spends on counselor responsibilities is equally important. Thus, when school counselors have additional responsibilities beyond meeting one-on-one with students, even staffing ratios based on full-time equivalent figures, such as those presented in the current study, may underestimate the amount of time each school counselor can have with each student. Hays (1972) further argued for the determination of means by which school counselors may be held accountable. The author further stipulated that accountability measures should consider the counseling activities within an overall school counseling program. This program would include ethical guidelines, the definition of program objectives aligned with the goals of the school, and a management component that prioritizes critical counseling activities beyond merely providing guidance. Additionally, the program would include an evaluation component that encourages school counselors to continuously and systematically share student data with relevant stakeholders.

Research during the 1980s helped further clarify school counselor roles related to school accountability as the standard-based reform movement gained momentum in the U.S (Schneider & Berkshire, 2020). In 1986, Hutchinson et al. examined the function of school counselors in public schools in Indiana. School counselors were asked to rank actual and ideal school counseling activities. This study highlighted the need for a consistent definition of the school counseling function, necessitating further studies. In addition, Fairchild and Zins (1986) conducted a national survey of school counselors. They found that counselors who were not involved in accountability activities identified the lack of information regarding the methods of obtaining accountability information as a barrier to their engagement with such activities. The authors asserted that accountability methods should be an important part of school counselor programs. In 1988, Gysbers and Henderson's pivotal publication, *Developing and Managing Your School Guidance Program*, helped to galvanize a movement of school counselors focusing on programming that centered around developmentally appropriate school counseling activities or tasks, such as ASCA's notion of coordinating, consulting, and counseling in 1966 (ASCA, 1974). This movement eventually led authors in the mid-1990s to recognize that a new type of school counselor was needed to meet the growing developmental needs of students in a rapidly changing society. This would include changing school counseling preparation as well as practitioner models (Hayes et al., 1996).

By the early 2000s, several school counselor practitioner developmental models were created, built on decades of work on national and state standards as well as the commonly identified school counseling activities of coordinating, consulting, and counseling. State and national models described specific components of school counselor roles, to provide greater clarity for schools and practitioners. For instance, the ASCA National Model Workbook: A Framework for School Counseling Programs, was released in 2003 with a focus on four components of a comprehensive school counseling program: foundation, delivery, management, and accountability (ASCA, 2005). The delivery system component highlighted the following areas: guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and systems support. Evolving in specificity but retaining the intent of the original framework and delivery areas, a fourth edition of the ASCA model was released in 2019. This edition's essential components are to define, manage, deliver, and assess. The delivery section is divided into direct student services (i.e., instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling) and indirect student services (i.e., consultation, collaboration, and referrals). The ASCA model is intended for school counselors working at or below the recommended student-to-school-counselor ratio of 250:1 (ASCA, 2019). Additional school counselor models include those developed for practitioners working in specific states. For example, in 2004, the Texas School Counselor Association updated and revised its state standards for school counselors and developed *A Model Comprehensive, Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program*. The Texas model's primary components include professional responsibilities, program implementation cycle, foundation, delivery, and program curriculum. Similar to the ASCA model's intentions, the Texas model's delivery section highlights the following areas: guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and systems support. By 2018, five editions of the Texas model had been developed. Based on the research of Martin et al. (2009), the 2018 Texas model satisfies the criteria of an established model (e.g., model evaluation, leadership, supportive legislation, etc.). The Texas model is intended for school counselors who are working with an approximate student-to-school counselor ratio of 350:1 (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2018).

By the late 2000s, researchers had identified as many as 44 U.S. states with myriad and well-developed school counseling program models (Martin et al., 2009). This proliferation of models reflects the ongoing efforts to address the debate over student-to-school counselor ratios and the importance of connecting these ratios to school counseling activities. Although these models present delineate processes for providing effective counseling services, researchers have found that school counselors continue to have challenges in implementing services due to constraints outside of their control. Over time several studies have confirmed these challenges including district financial restraints (Graham, 2015; Khan, 2017; Lattanzio, 2013) as well as stakeholders (e.g., principals and

teachers) viewing school counselors in inappropriate roles, administrative or clerical in nature such as disciplinarian, record keeper, or testing coordinator (e.g., Hansen, 1967; Hart & Prince, 1970; Lieberman, 2004; Rippee et al., 1965; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Toporek et al., 2009). For instance, Goodman-Scott et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study to explore elementary school counselor advocacy efforts related to their position and role. The researchers' findings made clear that budget cuts often prioritize cutting school counseling programs due to "how little they [elected officials] know, too, about schools and actually what goes on in schools" (p. 6). Furthermore, schools without optimal elementary school counseling programs due to budget restraints, had clear issues meeting the needs of students especially students from low-income families. Participants made clear that counseling services without such constraints and within a well-established model (e.g., ASCA model) particularly in the early years help to buffer student issues and concerns that may become chronic in later grades. Also, Savitz-Romer et al. (2021) conducted a mixed method study to explore school counselor's work experience during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers surveyed a national representative sample of 3000 rural and urban counselors via national and state counseling listservs and a MDR Education nation-wide database. The researchers examined more than 2000 open-ended responses. Their initial findings prompted the researchers to conduct an additional focus group with over 40 of the counselors. Altogether, the findings of the study illuminated counselors' frustration in being expected to individually figure out their roles during the pandemic (i.e. lack of support), little to no access to counselor-focused professional training, time-constraints, and other restrictions keeping the counselors from conducting appropriate counseling services (e.g., individual and group counseling) due to added administrative duties (e.g., overseeing Chromebooks, serving as teacher substitutes, secretarial work). The findings support the continued need for role clarification and a supportive work environment for the school counselor not only during traditional time but particularly during crisis situations.

About the ratio

Because of differing preferences for lower tax rates or greater educational and social services, and perhaps in part due to a lack of shared understanding of the role of school counselors, policymakers disagree over how many school counselors schools should hire per student. The debate over student-to-school counselor ratios has been an ongoing, central issue in the field of school counseling for decades. This section provides an overview of the historical context of this debate.

In 1955, Hoyt brought into question the optimal student-to-school counselor ratio. He observed that, at the time, there had "never been an experimental investigation" to provide clarity on a reasonable student-to-school-counselor ratio (p. 86). Therefore, Hoyt, who also worked as a school counselor, developed a conceptual framework for school systems to consider when determining their student-to-school-counselor ratio. His theory rests on three basic assumptions: a) a school counselor must have adequate training, including a master's degree in school counseling, b) the school counselor and his or her program is actively supported by teachers and administrators, and c) the school counseling program must be organized and considered part of a normally functioning school system. Once these three assumptions are met, Hoyt argued for the need to identify the primary functions of the school counselor, as well as how much time they could reasonably spend on each function. Finally, Hoyt stipulated that school counselors should be required to spend at least half of their time in direct interaction with students. Hoyt provided this framework to help school systems estimate a reasonable student-to-school counselor ratio, especially for high schools.

Using Hoyt's (1955) conceptual framework, Hollis and Isaacson (1962) surveyed a small sample of 39 junior and high school counselors, primarily from Indiana high schools. Their results supported Hoyt's suggestion that evaluating counselors' direct and indirect activities and the time allotted to such activities would help to determine a reasonable student-to-school counselor ratio. Further, the results indicated that school counselors agreed that at least 50% of their time should be devoted to direct counseling services and that less time should be spent on indirect tasks, particularly testing (i.e.,

a reduction from 40% to 10%). Around that time, Conant (1959) published an influential book with a recommendation that schools maintain one full-time school counselor for every 250 students, a recommendation that gained prominence as a benchmark for the field's primary professional organization, the American School Counselor's Association (Nicola, 2023). In addition, D. Brown and Hathaway (1969) evaluated the student-to-school counselor ratio in elementary schools, finding that a school or district's decision about the number of counselors to hire per student was impacted by the needs of students, parents, teachers, and other staff.

In consideration of the impact of the student-to-school counselor ratio on a school counselor's ability to allocate more time to students, Armor (1969) highlighted a critical concern within the school counseling profession regarding the number and distribution of counselors. He defined a full-time counselor (or full-time equivalent) as someone officially assigned to 26 hours or more a week of guidance counseling, while a part-time counselor was one spending 6 to 25 hours a week on these activities; those spending less time were not considered counselors (Armor, 1969). Based on U.S. Office of Education data, Armor estimated that there were nearly 30,000 full-time equivalent school counselors (comprising 23,220 full-time and 18,360 part-time counselors) working in U.S. schools at that time, signifying the increasing institutionalization of the counselor role. He argued for a greater presence of counselors in more densely populated areas and suggested examining counselor concentration using a metric like the student-counselor ratio (Armor, 1969). As many counselors did not adhere to the conventional 40-hour workweek, the ratio was calculated for each counselor by dividing the number of students they served by the fraction of their time officially spent in guidance. This calculation revealed a national average of 631 students per counselor, which greatly exceeded the recommended range of 200 to 250 students per counselor (Armor, 1969). Armor also noted that a primary complaint among school counselors was their inability to allocate sufficient time to students who genuinely needed their help.

During the 1970s and 1980s, only limited empirical work was conducted to examine the impacts of reducing student-to-school counselor ratios. In 1988, Boser et al. tested whether school counselors provide more effective services when working with a lower student-to-school counselor ratio. The study surveyed students (1,663), parents (1,075), and school staff (320) across all grades in Tennessee. Using Mann-Whitney statistical methodology, the researchers analyzed schools with simple student-counselor ratios ranging from 600:1 to 1,000:1. Overall, the findings revealed that students and school stakeholders perceived the services provided by elementary school counselors as critical. However, the value of these services was determined by counselor availability to each school member. Thus, with higher student-to-counselor ratios, fewer students can experience counselor services.

During the 1990s, Fox and Swickert observed that many states were experiencing a significant decline in the number of school counselors, contrary to a steady increase in student needs. For instance, in Michigan, the decline resulted in student-counselor ratios increasing from 576:1 in the early 1990s to 709:1 by the mid to late 1990s. Simultaneously, the expansion of students' needs led to an increase in training requirements to become a professional school counselor as cited in Hobson et al. (2000).

The debate regarding a sufficient ratio of school counselors to students continued into the 2000s. For instance, estimating that the increasing gap between school counselor and student numbers would continue well into the new millennium, members of the Michigan State Department and universities in Michigan formed a task force to create and enact a plan to increase the number of highly qualified school counselors in an attempt to optimize student-to-school counselor ratios (Hobson et al., 2000). Although this plan was an important initial step, the authors acknowledged that additional solutions were needed. Since then, state legislatures have continued to debate funding and staffing levels for school counselors and other staff.

Ratio: impact on student outcomes

By the 2000s, accrediting bodies such as the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) had codified the education of comprehensive school counseling program models in school counseling

education programs producing exceptionally qualified and skilled professional school counselors. Over the last two decades, researchers have noted and consistently demonstrated the significant role that professional school counselors play in fostering student success, particularly when operating within recommended student-to-school counselor ratios and engaging in appropriate counseling activities within a comprehensive school counseling program. For example, Lapan, Whitcomb, et al. (2012) obtained school-level data from the Connecticut Department of Education and data from a state-wide survey. They employed regression analyzes to examine data representing public high schools across the state of Connecticut ($n = 96$) to ascertain the impact of student-to-school counselor ratios on various student outcomes, such as disciplinary rates, suspension rates, graduation rates, and attendance. Their findings indicated that students receiving free or reduced-price lunch benefit from an optimal school counselor caseload of 250:1, concluding that schools with lower student-to-school counselor ratios experienced more favorable outcomes.

Lapan, Gysbers, et al. (2012) obtained data from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on more than 480 schools across the state. Findings indicated that high-poverty schools that met an optimal school counselor to student ratio of 250:1 were found to have more effectiveness in benefiting student success than high-poverty schools that embraced higher counselor to student ratios.

Hurwitz and Howell (2014) retrieved data from the National Center for Education Statistic's Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), ultimately selecting 12 states to analyze optimal high school student-to-school counselor ratios. These states held ratio thresholds ranging from 499:1 to 250:1. Using regression discontinuity design, the researchers found that an added high school counselor would have a positive impact on students' 4-year college-going rates, supporting an optimal range between 113:1 to 250:1.

Reback (2010) examined student-to-school counselor ratios using data from school report cards made available by the Alabama Department of Education, and information from the National Center for Education Statistics yearly Common Core Data. His finding showed support for the ASCA recommended ratio of 250:1. Reback (2010) and Hurwitz and Howell (2014) used regression discontinuity designs to analyze the influence of student-to-school counselor ratios on student outcomes. While Hurwitz and Howell found that additional high school counselors increased four-year college attendance rates, Reback's study showed a positive influence on student behavior outcomes, particularly at the elementary level. These two studies are of particular importance because of their "causal identification strategy" (Angrist & Pischke, 2009), in which the effects of lower student-to-school counselor ratios are isolated from other potential confounding factors, such as student poverty or other educational resources.

Further Carey, Harrington, Martin, Hoffman, et al. (2012) collected state-wide data from the Nebraska State Department of Education including more than 270 Nebraska high schools, and Carey, Harrington, Martin, Hoffman, et al. (2012) collected state-wide data from the Utah State Office of Education including more than 144 Utah public high schools. Carey, Harrington, Martin, Hoffman, et al. (2012) and Carey, Harrington, Martin, Stevenson, et al. (2012) employed hierarchical linear regression to explore the relationships between school counseling program characteristics, such as student-to-school counselor ratios (in support of ASCA recommended 250:1 ratio), implementation of the ASCA National Model (including time spent on school counseling activities), and student outcomes. Their findings suggest that favorable student-to-school counselor ratios and adherence to the ASCA National Model are associated with positive student outcomes, including lower discipline rates, higher attendance, and better academic performance.

Goodman-Scott et al. (2018) analyzed data from the National Center for Education Statistics High School Longitudinal Study including variables related to more than 5800 high school students attending schools with ratios of 250:1 or below and 425:1 and above. Goodman-Scott et al. (2018) used regression models to analyze the impact of student-to-school counselor ratios on students attending Title 1 schools (i.e. schools with at least 40% of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch), finding that lower ratios (250:1 or less) significantly improved grade point averages and graduation rates. Additionally, they found that counselors' use of time, particularly time spent on career development and activities unrelated to the

appropriate role and function of a school counselor, significantly influenced students' decisions to take postsecondary courses. In 2021, Kearney et al. conducted a meta-analysis and a comprehensive systematic review of studies investigating the impact of student-to-school counselor ratios on student outcomes using a random-effects model and inclusive search approach; they concluded that investing in lower student-to-school counselor ratios would positively impact student outcomes (i.e., attendance, discipline, high school graduation, and achievement outcomes).

More recent Mulhern (2020) collected Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, National Student Clearinghouse records, and state-wide high school website archives. Mulhern was able to focus on well over 240,000 students, 600 counselors and, 140 schools. The researcher used the ASCA 250:1 ratio as a basis for the study, and discovered that several high schools had higher ratios (average of 455) than the recommended 250 student caseload. Mulhern found that hiring an additional effective counselor in the typical Massachusetts high school increased graduation and four-year college attendance rates, providing benefits particularly to lower-achievement and lower income students. Mulhern also found that students receiving counseling were more likely to graduate if the counselor resembled the race of the student.

Bryan et al. (2022) utilized High School Longitudinal Study 2009 data in assessing ratios. Out more than 15, 000 high school students and Bryan et al., landed on a national representative collection of over 23,000 students, and 944 schools. The researchers used the 250:1 ratio as a basis for the study. The found that caseloads of 250:1 allowed ratios allowed school counselors to make more points of contact with students, particularly Hispanic and Black students as well as low-income students, resulted in increased college application rates and financial aid assistance.

New studies by C. H. Brown and Knight (2023) and Donohue et al. (2022) further support the importance of maintaining lower student-to-school counselor ratios for improving student outcomes. Brown and Knight collected data from the Standard Education Data Archive, National Center for Education Statistics, and the Texas Education Agency. The researchers focused on approximately 15,522 traditional public school district-year observations in the state of Texas. The researchers' findings indicate that lower dropout rates, higher graduation rates, and improved student achievement are evident when districts who have student-counselor ratios of 350 or fewer, particularly among, low socio-economic students and students of color (e.g., Hispanic and Black) in the state of Texas. This support's the states recommended ratio of 350:1 and add credence to the national recommended ratio of 250:1. Texas districts would benefit to substantially reduce student-school counselor ratios below 330 students per counselor.

Donohue et al. collected and analyzed school level and student outcome data from six state departments of education (i.e. Arizona, Idaho, Rhode Island, Missouri, Maine, and New Hampshire). Researchers categorized schools based on the 250:1 baseline. Schools were either at or below 250:1 ratio, or above 250 threshold or without a school counselor. The researchers found that schools within each state had significant differences based on these categories. For instance, Arizona with ratios as extreme as 925:1, had only 11% of their schools met of fell below the 250:1 threshold while 69% of Rhode Island schools met or fell below the 250:1 recommended caseload. Also, their findings revealed that access to school counselors varied across demographics, and states with significant number of schools at or below the 250:1 ratio was associated with improved outcomes along several dimensions (e.g., student achievement, college entrance rates).

In summary, school counselors are integral to delivering comprehensive school counseling programs that positively impact student outcomes. When operating within recommended student-to-school counselor ratios and engaging in appropriate counseling activities, school counselors can significantly enhance students' academic performance, graduation rates, and overall well-being. These findings emphasize the importance of maintaining optimal ratios dictated by well-established school counseling program models (e.g., 250:1, 350:1) and ensuring that school counselors have the resources and support necessary to carry out their vital roles. In making specific staffing decisions, school districts have exhibited varying priorities around academic achievement, civic engagement, and student counseling needs, and staffing levels of school counselors have shifted over time, as we describe in our empirical analysis below.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Our operational theory relies on Hoyt's (1955) conceptual Framework, Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theory of ecological human development, and ASCA's 250:1 recommendation. Our study utilizes Hoyt's (1955) conceptual framework, which emphasizes the essential conditions that schools with counseling programs must meet in order to determine an appropriate workload for counselors. These conditions include the expectation that professional school counselors hold at least a master's degree, that the counseling program is endorsed by teachers and administrators, that it is an integral part of a functional school system, and that counselors dedicate at least half of their working hours to direct interaction with students.

Our inquiry is grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theory of ecological human development, which underscores the significance of environmental factors in a student's surroundings in influencing their success. This theoretical framework has been employed in previous studies examining student-to-school counselor ratios (for example, C. H. Brown & Knight, 2023). In our investigation, we specifically focus on environmental factors affecting students, including district characteristics (including federal stimulus), poverty rates, cultural elements, and student-to-school counselor ratios. Bronfenbrenner identified these domains as critical components nested within larger systems that shape student development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The National Center for Educational Statistics conducts annual surveys of all U.S. public school districts that collect information about staffing and resource levels, and well as student demographics and enrollment classifications. We use NCES's district-level Common Core of Data from 1994–95 to 2019–20 and state-level data from 1986–87 to 2021–22, which includes a total of 1,785 state-year observations and approximately 350,000 district-year observations (about 13,000 per year). District-level counselor staffing data are missing in all three years for Delaware, Georgia, Massachusetts, Montana, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Idaho, Wyoming, and West Virginia reported counselor staffing data for 2018–19, but not for 2016–17 or 2017–18 and Pennsylvania is missing counselor data for 2016–17.

We use descriptive statistics, plotting the mean student-to-school counselor ratios for each state over the period of our data window. We also examine how counselor ratios differ across districts serving the highest and lowest percentages of different student groups, including those classified as low-income and those who identify as a person of color. We define the highest-poverty school districts as the one-fifth of districts enrolling the highest percentage of low-income students, while lowest-poverty districts are the one-fifth enrolling the lowest percentage of low-income students. In making comparisons of counselor ratios across school districts within states, we adjust for differences in school districts characteristics including (a) enrollment size, (b) urbanicity, and (c) the local cost of labor (see Taylor, 2006). Specifically, we regress counselor ratios on those three district characteristics, and use predicted values to determine the mean student-to-school counselor ratios for different groups of districts. This approach provides more "apples-to-apples" comparison, allowing us to compare for example, the counselor ratio in higher-poverty schools to the counselor ratios in lower-poverty that have similar characteristics in terms of overall enrollment size, urbanicity, and local cost of labor. Our results are generally similar when we do not make these adjustments. In all cases, averages are weighted by district enrollment so that larger districts contribute more to the overall mean.

RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the average student-to-school counselor ratio across states, ranked by states with the largest number of students per counselor to the least, based on the three most recent school years of state-level data, from 2019–20 to 2021–22. As shown in Figure 1, Arizona employs the fewest counselors per

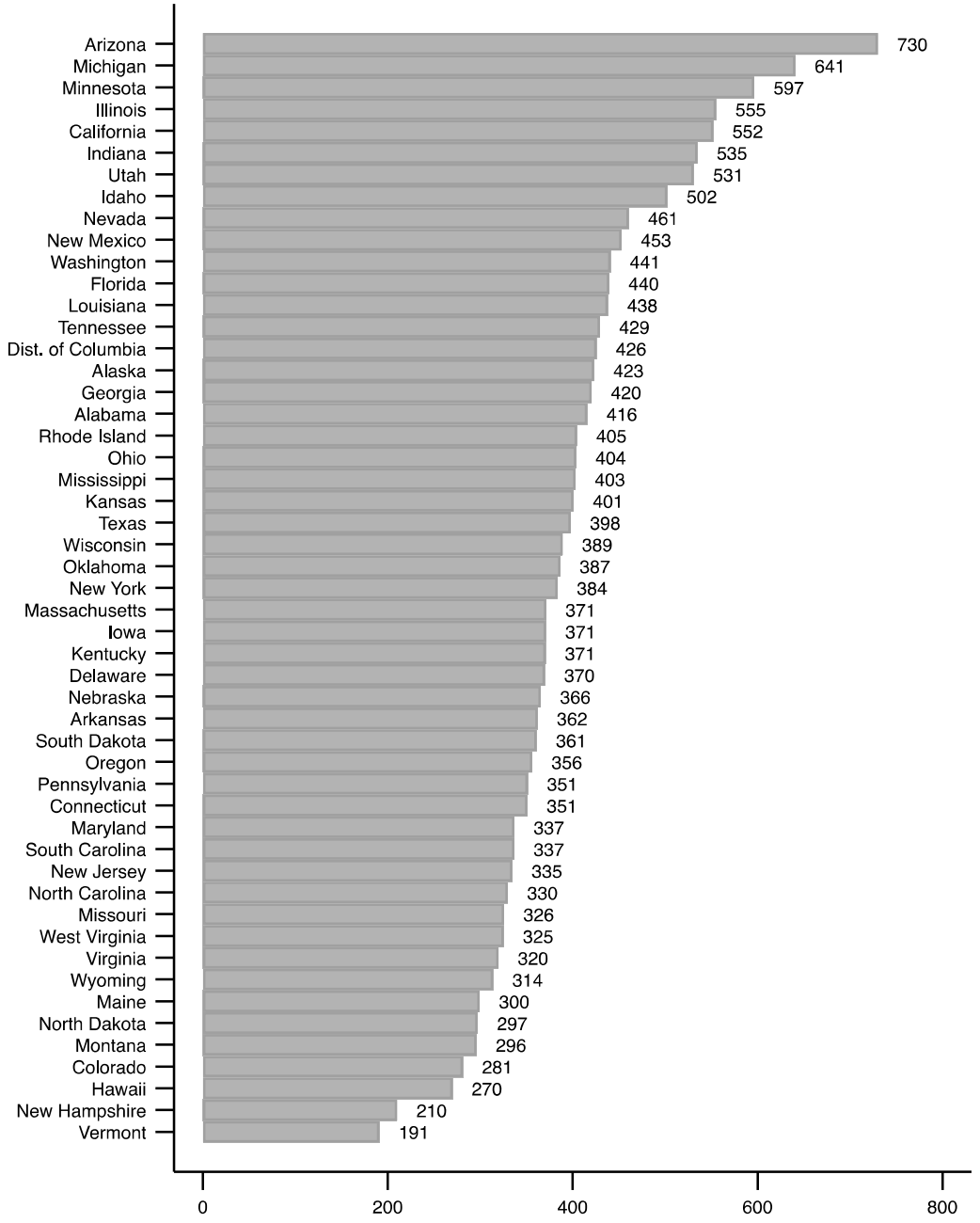

Figure 1. Statewide average student-to-school counselor ratio, 2019–20 to 2021–22.

student, with an average of 730 students for each FTE school counselor. Michigan (641), Minnesota (597), Illinois (555), and California (552) comprise the next five states. Most states maintain student-to-school counselor ratios of between 550 to about 300, and six states have student-to-school counselor ratios below 300: North Dakota, Montana, Colorado, Hawaii, New Hampshire, and Vermont. These figures reflect school years 2019–20 to 2021–22, and per-student counselor staffing levels were likely influenced by federal stimulus funds and COVID-19-related enrollment shocks. Thus, Figure 2 displays how the statewide average student-to-school counselor ratio has changed over time for each state from 1986–87 to 2021–22.

A few important patterns emerge from Figure 2. Almost every state increased school counselor staffing levels in the most recent three years when districts faced unprecedented need following the COVID-19 pandemic but gained access to significant federal stimulus funds (only New York, Indiana, and Tennessee reported higher student-to-school counselor ratios in 2018–19 than in 2021–22). But the data suggest that states had not made important investments in school counselors in earlier years. Entering the pandemic, 21 states plus the District of Columbia (D.C.) had *reduced* the number of FTE school counselors per student over the previous 10 years, before the Great Recession. This finding is consistent with studies showing that many states have not fully restored public education funding to the levels that existed before the Great Recession (Baker & DiCarlo, 2020). Nine states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Wyoming) plus Washington D.C. employed fewer school counselors per student during the COVID-19 recovery period (2021–22) than in the years before the Great Recession.

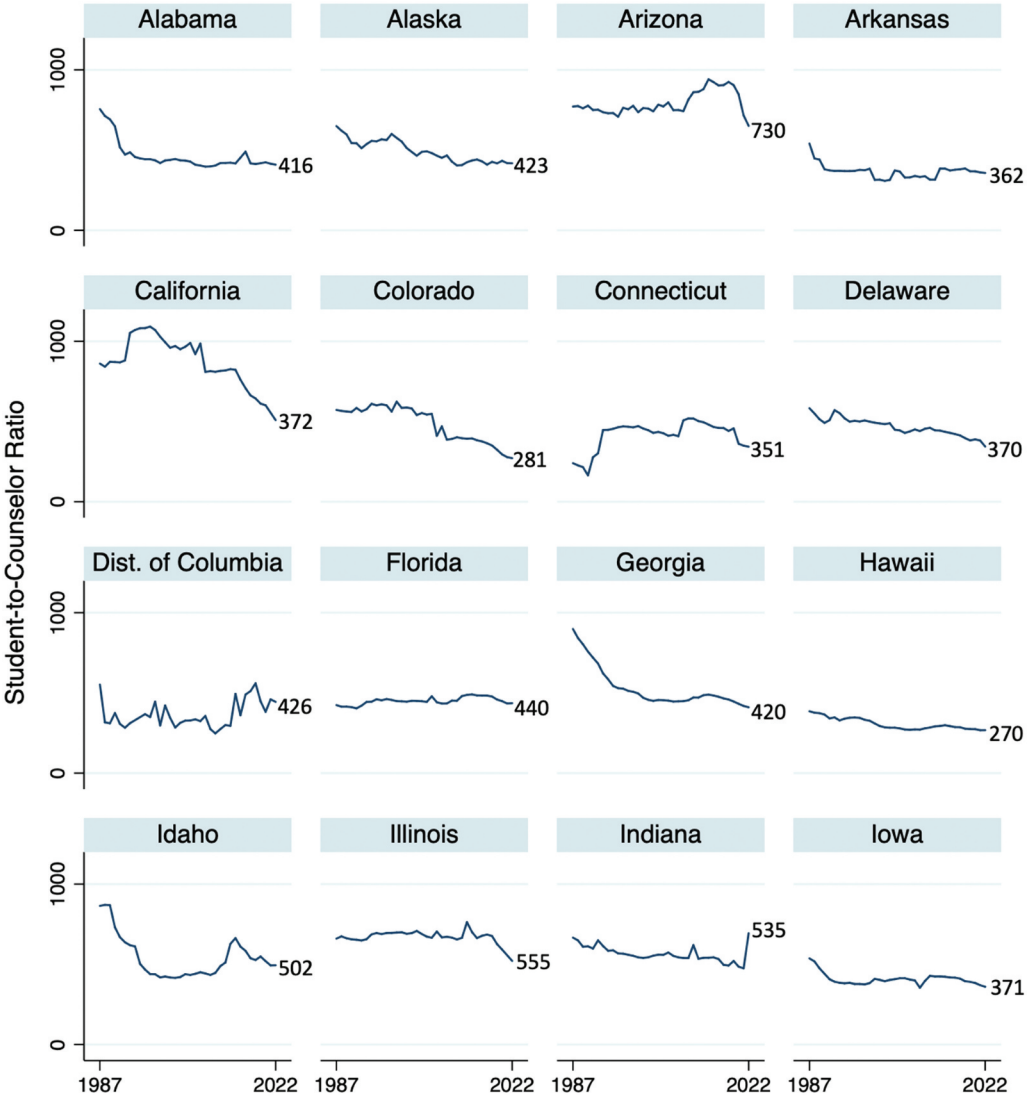

Figure 2a. (Continued).

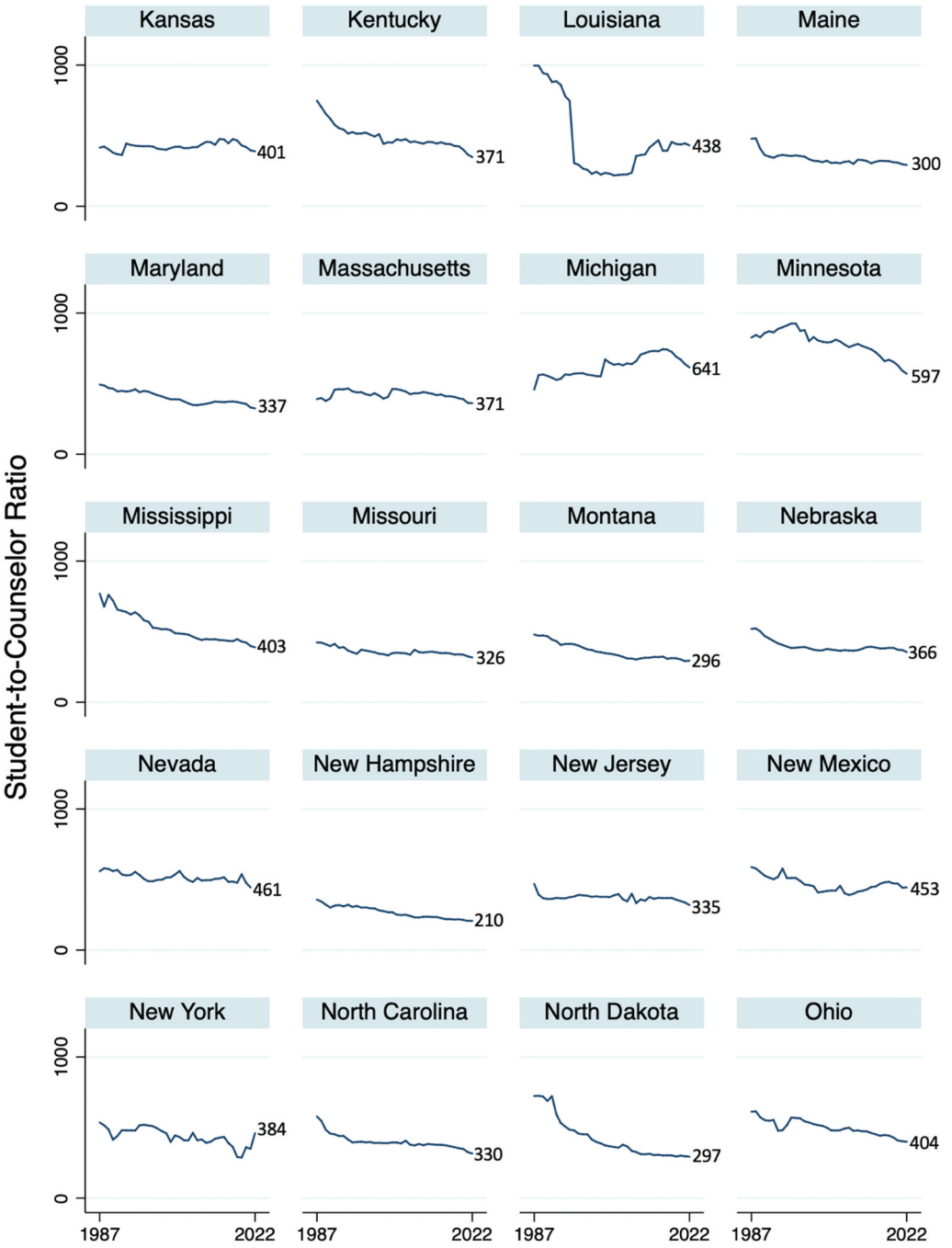

Figure 2b. (Continued).

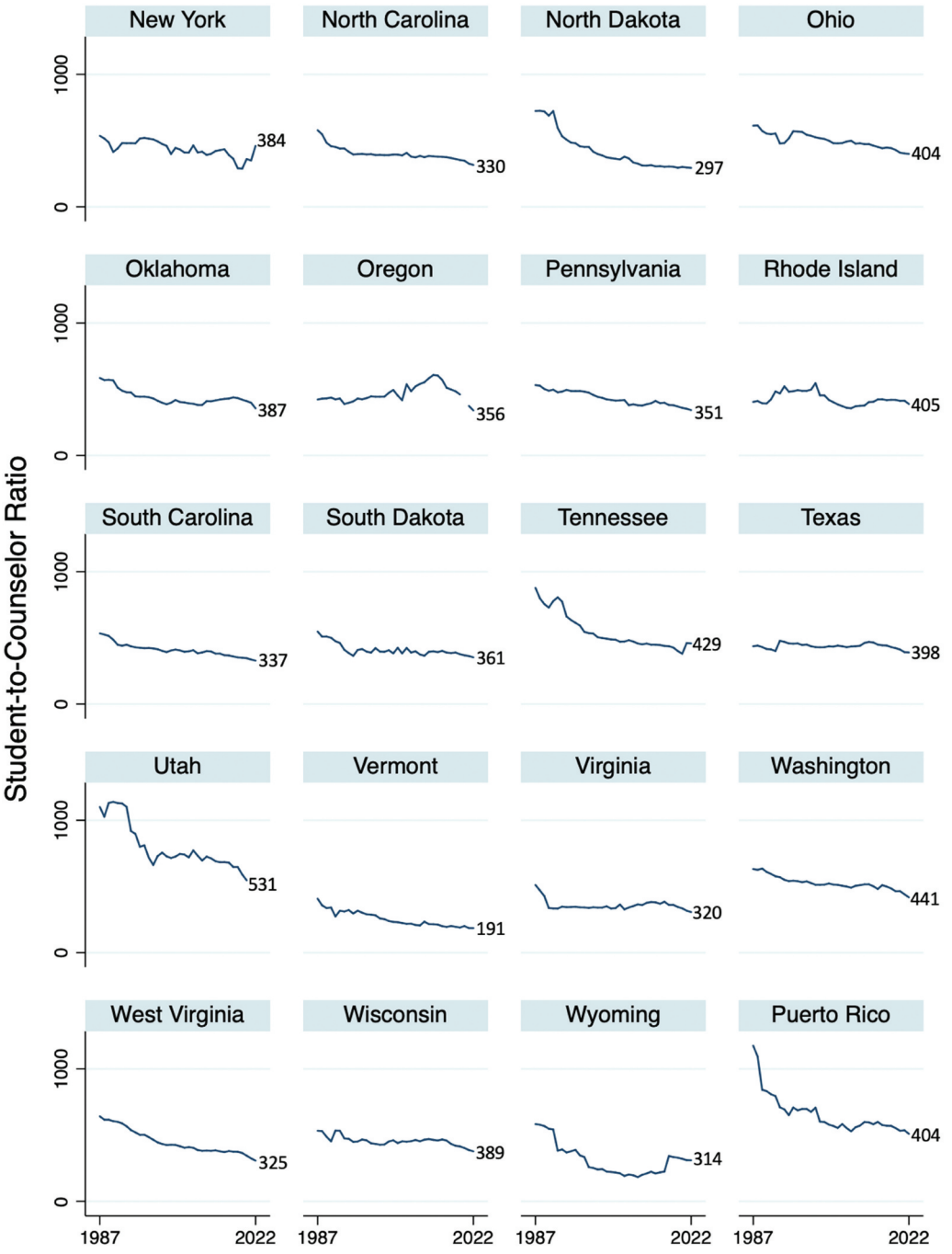

Figure 2c. Statewide average student-to-school counselor ratio, 1986–87 to 2021–22. *Note*. ata were drawn from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data (CCD) non-fiscal statewide data. In a few rare cases, states reported large increases or decreases in counselor staffing that were out of sync with adjacent years and other states, and we used district-level data to make some adjustments (please contact the corresponding author for specific details).

Some states stand out as making especially large investments in school counselors over the previous three decades. California, Utah, New York, Colorado, Minnesota, and Tennessee experienced the largest reductions in average student-to-school counselor ratios during the decade leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, and all expanded per-student counselor staffing in the three years prior.

Lastly, we document disparities in student-to-school counselor ratios across school districts in the same state. We compare school districts that serve different student populations, including students who identify as persons of color and those classified as low-income. Following prior studies (e.g., Chingos & Blagg, 2017; Knight & Mendoza, 2019), we calculate the student-to-school counselor ratio in school districts attended by the low-income as a weighted average of the statewide student-to-school counselor ratio across districts, using the district's percentage of low-income students as the weighting factor. We similarly calculate the student-to-school counselor ratio in districts attended by the non-low-income as a weighted average of the statewide student-to-school counselor ratio, using the district's percentage of non-low-income students as the weighting factor.[1] We make similar calculations for student race/ethnicity.

Figure 3 displays the average student-to-school counselor ratios in each state for low-income and non-low-income students. The number shown at the end of the bars is the average difference in student-to-school counselor ratios between these two student populations. Panel A shows states with regressive allocations, where, on average relative to non-low-income students, low-income students attend districts with more students per counselor. Panel B shows states with progressive allocations, where lower-income students attend districts with more school counselors per student. We focus on the school years 2017–18 to 2019–20, when major federal stimulus funds had not yet been invested. The figure demonstrates that (a) most states ($n = 36$) have lower per-student counselor ratios (more FTE counselors per student) in their lower-poverty school districts; and (b) no states that meet or come close to meeting the ASCA recommended ratio do so for one student population and not the other. In addition, states with the highest FTE school counselor staffing levels per student, i.e., Vermont, New Hampshire, Colorado, and Montana, all have more regressive allocations. However, 10 of the 13 states that have progressive allocations have a statewide average student-to-school counselor ratio that is lower than the national average. Conversely, the most regressive states are also those with larger ratios and fewer FTE counselors per student overall. We find similar results based on student race/ethnicity. This suggests that states investing the least in school counselors tend to especially underfund higher-poverty school districts and those serving higher percentages of students of color.

The data presented here are important for understanding nationwide school counselor staffing levels and how they differ across states and school districts. However, how counselors allocate their time and engage with students is a key consideration that goes beyond a sole focus on the student-to-school counselor ratio.

DISCUSSION

Ethical considerations

Large variation in nationwide student-counselor ratios presents a range of ethical considerations for schools to address to ensure the well-being of both students and counselors. One such concern is access to support; higher student-counselor ratios may limit students' chances to receive timely and personalized assistance, potentially exacerbating existing mental health issues or hindering academic progress (Blake, 2020). This is particularly relevant when considering educational equity, as disparities in student-counselor ratios across schools or districts can disproportionately affect under-resourced schools or students from disadvantaged backgrounds, furthering existing inequalities (C. H. Brown & Knight, 2023; Hilts et al., 2023).

[1]Prior to calculating weighted means, we use regression methods to adjust student-to-school counselor ratios based on district characteristics including size, urbanicity, and the percentage of students who are multi-language learners or enrolled in special education enrollments. This adjustment allows us to make like-for-like comparisons between districts, comparing districts that have similar characteristics (size, urbanicity, special enrollments), but that differ in the poverty rate and racial/ethnic demographics of the student population.

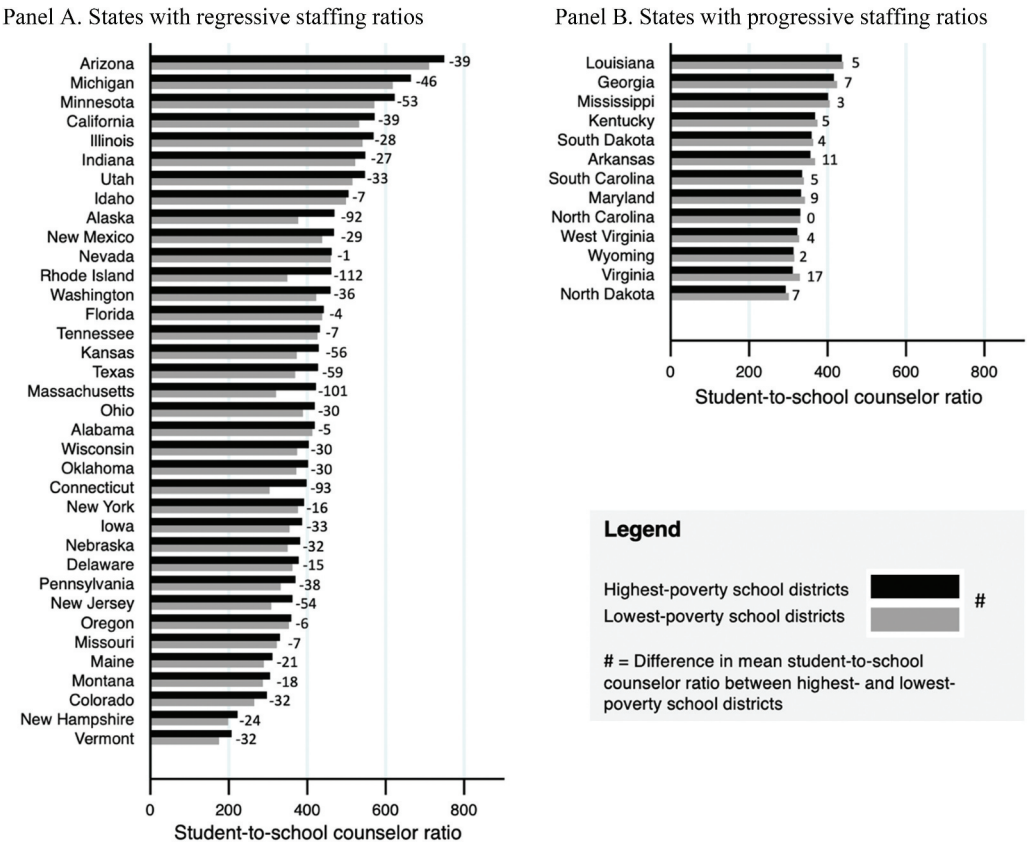

Figure 3. Average student-to-school counselor ratio across school districts enrolling the highest and lowest percentages of low-income students in each state, 2017–18 to 2019–20. *Note*. Highest-poverty school districts are the one-fifth of districts enrolling the highe st percentage of low-income students, while lowest-poverty districts are the one-fifth enrolling the lowest percentage of low-income students. We constructed similar graphs based on student race/ethnicity, available upon request. Counselor staffing ratios were adjusted for district characteristics. District-level counselor staffing data are missing in all three years for Delaware, Georgia, Massachusetts, Montana, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Idaho, Wyoming, and West Virginia reported counselor staffing data for 2018–19, but not for 2016–17 or 2017–18 and Pennsylvania is missing counselor data for 2016–17.

Another ethical consideration involves the quality of service provided by counselors. When counselors are responsible for a large number of students, the quality of their work may diminish due to time constraints and increased workload (Shi & Brown, 2020). This may pose questions about counselors' ability to uphold professional standards and adequately address the unique needs of each student. Additionally, high student-to-school counselor ratios can contribute to increased stress, burnout, and mental health challenges for counselors themselves, raising ethical concerns about their well-being and effectiveness in supporting students (Fye et al., 2022).

Confidentiality and trust are also essential components of the counselor-student relationship, and high caseloads may hinder counselors' ability to foster such connections. This raises ethical concerns, as a lack of trust can compromise the effectiveness of counseling services. Moreover, overburdened counselors may struggle to proactively identify and address students' challenges, resulting in missed opportunities for early intervention and prevention, which could have long-term consequences for students (Mullen et al., 2021).

Role conflict (or inappropriate and appropriate counselor expectations) is an important ethical consideration. Appropriate school counselor roles are clearly defined by well-established school counseling models such as the ASCA National Model. Appropriate roles include individual and small-

group counseling while inappropriate roles, data entry clerk and coordinating paperwork (ASCA, 2019; Campbell & Dahir, 1997). When engaged in inappropriate roles, school counselors struggle with having adequate time in meeting the needs of the students they serve (Savitz-Romer et al., 2021). It is imperative that administrators and supervisors understand the occupational needs of the school counselor to effectively provide school counseling services.

Finally, the ethical implications of large differences in student-counselor ratios across school contexts include the allocation of limited resources within an educational setting. Schools must balance competing priorities, such as hiring more teachers, investing in technology, or improving facilities. This can create ethical dilemmas when deciding on an optimal student-counselor ratio that ensures adequate support for students while addressing the diverse needs of a school community (Bastian et al., 2019). In states that allow districts to pass voter-approved general fund levies to increase local tax revenues, local communities similarly face ethical challenges while weighing decisions regarding their own housing affordability and property tax rates, and the funding level and services provided in their local district (Knight, Hassairi, et al., 2022). Last, state and federal legislators must determine how much funding to provide to schools; state legislators in particular determine the relative differences in per-pupil funding rates across school districts with varying degrees of needs, and these policy decisions influence the number of counselors districts can hire for a given student enrollment size.

Ratios as an ethical imperative

Schools have an ethical responsibility to prioritize students' well-being, which includes their emotional, social, and mental health. Replacing school counselors is not the solution; instead, research shows that maintaining a lower student-to-school counselor ratio is a crucial step in fulfilling this responsibility, as it ensures that students receive the individual attention and care they need to thrive both academically and personally (Goodman-Scott et al., 2018). This approach promotes equity within the educational environment, as it particularly benefits students from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who lack access to alternative support systems (Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012).

For school districts or schools with especially high student-to-school counselor ratios, reducing their student loads would enable counselors to identify and address potential issues earlier, facilitating early intervention for mental health issues, learning difficulties, or social challenges. This approach ultimately leads to better long-term outcomes for students (e.g., Reback, 2010). Furthermore, lowering the ratio allows counselors to uphold professional standards and adhere to ethical guidelines more effectively, ensuring they provide quality services without becoming overburdened (Kim & Lambie, 2018).

Emphasizing the importance of a holistic education, lowering the student-counselor ratio fosters a well-rounded educational experience that addresses not only academic achievement but also students' emotional, social, and mental development. By ensuring that counselors can provide appropriate support and guidance, schools contribute to creating a nurturing and supportive educational environment (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012).

Finally, investing in students' mental and emotional well-being can lead to broader long-term societal benefits, such as improved educational outcomes, healthier individuals, and more productive members of society. By lowering student-counselor ratios, schools demonstrate a commitment to the greater good, acknowledging the essential role that student support services play in shaping the future of our communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the ethical considerations surrounding student-counselor ratios, it is crucial for various stakeholders such as policymakers, school leaders, parents, community leaders, school counselors, and researchers to take appropriate actions. For instance, policy and school leaders should assess the current student-counselor ratios in schools and determine if adjustments are needed to ensure adequate support for students and maintain counselor well-being.

Leaders may conduct thorough assessments of student-counselor ratios in schools by collecting and analyzing relevant data. This may include quantitative metrics such as student academic performance, behavioral issues, and counselor caseloads, alongside qualitative feedback from stakeholders. Analyzing these data points will provide insights into the adequacy of current ratios and identify areas needing adjustments. Leaders may also benchmark their school's counselor-to-student ratio against professional standards or well-established counseling models, such as those recommended by the American School Counselor Association. Deviations from these standards should prompt further evaluation to ensure alignment with best practices in the field.

Policy and school leaders should also allocate sufficient resources to hire more school counselors, especially in under-resourced schools, to promote educational equity and improve access to support services. Furthermore, leaders and policymakers should work together to implement policies that prioritize mental health and well-being, including setting a maximum recommended student-counselor ratio in line with professional guidelines (e.g., the American School Counselor Association recommends a 250:1 ratio). Also, school leaders should facilitate collaboration between school counselors and other support staff (e.g., teachers, social workers) to cultivate a comprehensive support network for students. Lastly, school leaders should provide ongoing professional development opportunities for school counselors to enhance their skills and stay up-to-date with best practices.

Despite evidence of the positive impacts of maintaining low student-to-school counselor ratios, most school districts employ fewer than one full-time equivalent (FTE) counselor for every 250 students, the ratio recommended by ASCA. Differences in counselor staffing ratios across districts are driven largely by state policy, where the state's overall funding and mechanisms for distributing funds largely determine the number of counselors school districts can employ (e.g., Knight, Hassairi, et al., 2022).

Advocates, such as parents and community leaders, play a critical role in raising awareness about the importance of school counselors and the need for appropriate student-counselor ratios, and in emphasizing their impact on students' well-being and academic success. These stakeholders should advocate for increased funding for school counseling programs at the local, state, and federal levels, as well as equitable distribution of resources among schools. They should also collaborate with school boards, administrators, and policymakers to push for policies that prioritize mental health support and appropriate student-counselor ratios. Finally, these stakeholders should encourage community organizations to partner with schools in providing additional resources and support services for students and school counselors.

School counselors and researchers must engage in continuous professional development to stay current with best practices, research findings, and emerging trends in their field. Collaboration with colleagues, teachers, and administrators is essential in developing and implementing comprehensive school counseling programs that address students' academic, emotional, social, and mental health needs. Conducting research (e.g., mixed methods) on the effects of various student-counselor ratios on student outcomes, counselor well-being, experiences of counselors in high-ratio schools compared to counselors in low-ratio schools, and overall effectiveness of school counseling programs, and advocating for the importance of their profession, can contribute to evidence-based policy decisions.

Additionally, fostering a culture of self-care and support among fellow school counselors is crucial in preventing burnout and promoting well-being. By working together, researchers and counselors can create a supportive educational environment that prioritizes students' well-being and success. In addition, they can advocate for appropriate student-counselor ratios by sharing research findings, presenting at conferences, or engaging with policymakers. Finally, they should work to promote a culture of self-care and support among fellow school counselors to prevent burnout and promote well-being.

CONCLUSION

In this manuscript, we have examined the complex interplay between student-to-school counselor ratios, the evolution of school counseling activities, and the development of comprehensive counseling

program models. Through a detailed exploration of historical context and contemporary research, we have highlighted the unique qualifications of school counselors and their crucial role in promoting positive student outcomes.

Throughout the manuscript, we have seen how the ongoing debate over student-to-school counselor ratios has driven the development of models designed to optimize the effectiveness of the profession. These models, such as the ASCA National Model and the Texas Model, underscore the importance of a comprehensive and systematic approach to school counseling that encompasses a wide range of activities and responsibilities.

Moreover, the research presented in this manuscript demonstrates the tangible benefits of lowering student-to-school counselor ratios and implementing comprehensive school counseling programs. Students in schools with lower ratios and well-structured programs tend to exhibit higher academic achievement, better attendance, improved graduation rates, and fewer disciplinary issues. These findings make a compelling case for continued investment in school counselors and a commitment to the development and implementation of effective counseling programs.

As we move forward, it is essential to continue building upon the existing body of research and advocating for the unique role that school counselors play in student success. By emphasizing the importance of comprehensive counseling programs, favorable student-to-school counselor ratios, and ongoing professional development for counselors, we can ensure that our educational systems provide the support and guidance necessary for all students to thrive.

In conclusion, the evidence presented in this manuscript establishes the critical importance of school counselors and the need for continued attention to the issues surrounding student-to-school counselor ratios and counseling activities. By acknowledging and addressing these challenges, we can work together to create an educational environment that empowers every student to reach their full potential.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

REFERENCES

American School Counselor Association. (1974). The role of the secondary school counselor. *school counselor, 21*, 380–386. https://wwwjstor.org/stable/23897500

American School Counselor Association. (2005). *The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs* (2nd ed.). American School Counselor Association.

American School Counselor Association. (2019). *The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs* (4th ed.). American School Counselor Association.

Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J. S. (2009). *Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion*. Princeton University Press.

Armor, D. J. (1969). *The American school counselor*. Russell Sage.

Baker, B. D., & DiCarlo, M. (2020). *The coronavirus pandemic and K-12 education funding*. Albert Shanker Institute.

Bastian, K. C., Akos, P., Domina, T., & Griffard, M. (2019). Understanding the allocation of student support personnel in public schools. *American Educational Research Association Open*, *5*(4), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858419890322

Biggers, J. L. (1971). The counselor utilization index. *The School Counselor*, *19*(2), 120–122. jstor.org/stable/23896999.

Blake, M. K. (2020). Other duties as assigned: The ambiguous role of the high school counselor. *Sociology of Education*, *93*(4), 315–330. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040720932563

Boser, J. A., Poppen, W. A., & Thompson, C. L. (1988). Elementary school guidance program evaluation: A reflection of student-counselor ratio. *The School Counselor*, *36*(2), 125–135.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *The American Psychologist*, *32*(7), 513–531. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513

Brown, D., & Hathaway, S. (1969). Toward determining a counselor-pupil ratio for elementary schools. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, *3*(4), 276–284. jstor.org/stable/42868114.

Brown, C. H., & Knight, D. (2023). Staffing schools to support the classroom: Examining student-to-school ratios and academic student outcomes in Texas. *Professional School Counseling*, *27*(1), 2156759X2311654. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X231165497

Bryan, J., Kim, J., & Liu, C. (2022). School counseling college-going culture: Counselors' influence on students' college-going decisions. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *100*(1), 39–55. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12408

Campbell, C. A., & Dahir, C. A. (1997). *Sharing the vision: The national standards for school counseling programs*. American School Counselor Association Press.

Carey, J., & Dimmitt, C. (2012). School counseling and student outcomes: Summary of six statewide studies. *Professional School Counseling*, *16*(2), 146–153. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0001600204

Carey, J., Harrington, K., Martin, I., Hoffman, D., & Lapan, R. (2012). A statewide evaluation of the outcomes of the implementations of ASCA national model school counseling programs in rural and suburban Nebraska high schools. *Professional School Counseling*, *16*(2), 100–107. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0001600202

Carey, J., Harrington, K., Martin, I., Stevenson, D., & Lapan, R. (2012). A statewide evaluation of the outcomes of the implementations of ASCA national model school counseling programs in Utah high schools. *Professional School Counseling*, *16*(2), 89–99. https://doi.org/10.5330/PSC.n.2012-16.89

Chingos, M. M., & Blagg, K. (2017). *Do poor kids get their fair share of school funding?*. Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/90586/school_funding_brief.pdf

Conant, J. B. (1959). *The American high school today: A first report to interested citizens*. McGraw Hill.

Donohue, P., Parzych, J. L., Chiu, M. M., Goldberg, K., & Nguyen, K. (2022). The impacts of school counselor ratios on student outcomes: A multistate study. *Professional School Counseling*, *26*(1), 2156759X2211372. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x221137283

Fairchild, T. N., & Zins, J. E. (1986). Accountability practices of school counselors: A national survey. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *65*(4), 196–199. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1986.tb01313.x

Fye, H. J., Kim, Y., & Rainey, J. S. (2022). Correlates of wellness, affective distress, and burnout among school counselors. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *100*(3), 308–318. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12425

Goodman-Scott, E., Brown, E., Berger, C., & Blalock, S. (2022). Experiences with elementary school counseling advocacy. *Professional School Counseling*, *26*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X211067958

Goodman-Scott, E., Sink, C. A., Cholewa, B. E., & Burgess, M. (2018). An ecological view of school counselor ratios and student academic outcomes: A national investigation. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *96*(4), 388–398. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12221

Graham, K. A. (2015). *School counselor layoffs overturned; district to appeal. The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Retreived from http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20150708_City_school_firings_overturned.html

Gysbers, N. C., & Henderson, P. (1988). *Developing and managing your school guidance program*. American Association for Counseling and Development.

Gysbers, N. C., & Henderson, P. G. (2012). *Developing and managing your school guidance program* (5th ed.). American Counseling Association.

Hansen, J. C. (1967). Job satisfactions and job activities of school counselors. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, *45*(8), 790–794. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2164-4918.1967.tb04788.x

Hart, D. H., & Prince, D. J. (1970). Role conflict for school counselors: Training versus job demands. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, *48*(5), 374–380. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2164-4918.1970.tb03333.x

Hayes, R. L., Dagley, J. C., & Horne, A. M. (1996). Restructuring school counselor education: Work in progress. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *74*(4), 60–66. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1996.tb01883.x

Hays, D. G. (1972). Responsible freedom for the school counselor. *The School Counselor*, *20*(2), 93–102.jstor.org/stable/23897521.

Hilts, D., Liu, Y., & Guo, X. (2023). Student-to-school counselor ratios, school-level factors, and leadership practices of school counselors: A national investigation. *Professional School Counseling*, *27*(1), 2156759X2311821. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X231182135

Hobson, S. M., Fox, R. W., & Swickert, M. L. (2000). *School Counselor Shortages: A Statewide Collaborative Effort in Counselor Education*. ERIC.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED454484.pdf (ED454484.

Hollis, J., & Isaacson, L. E. (1962). How school counselors spend their time. *The School Counselor*, *9*(3), 89–95.jstor.org/stable/44782822.

Hoyt, K. B. (1955). What should be the pupil load for the school counselor? *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, *34*(2), 86–88. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2164-4918.1955.tb01298.x

Hurwitz, M., & Howell, J. (2014). Estimating causal impacts of school counselors with regression discontinuity designs. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *92*(3), 316–327. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00159.x

Hutchinson, R. L., Barrick, A. L., & Groves, M. (1986). Functions of secondary school counselors in the public schools: Ideal and actual. *The School Counselor*, *34*(2), 87–91.

Kearney, C., Akos, P., Domina, T., & Young, Z. (2021). Student-to-school counselor ratios: A meta-analytic review of the evidence. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *99*(4), 418–428. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12394

Khan, S. A. (2017). *Baltimore City schools to lay off 115 staff members WBALTV11*. Retrieved from: http://www.wbaltv.com/article/baltimore-city-schools-to-lay-off-115- staff-members/9961398

Kim, N., & Lambie, G. W. (2018). Burnout and implications for professional school counselors. *The Professional Counselor*, *8*(3), 277–294. https://doi.org/10.15241/nk.8.3.277

Knight, D. S., Hassairi, N., Candelaria, C., Sun, M., & Plecki, M. (2022). Prioritizing school finance equity during an economic downturn: Recommendations for state policymakers. *Education Finance and Policy*, *17*(1), 188–199. https://doi.org/10.1162/edfp_a_00356

Knight, D. S., & Mendoza, J. (2019). Does the measurement matter? Assessing alternate approaches to measuring state school finance equity for California's local control funding formula. *American Educational Research Association Open*, *5*(3), 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858419877424

Lapan, R. T., Gysbers, N. C., Stanley, B., Pierce, M. E., & Lapan, R. (2012). Missouri professional school counselors: Ratios matter, especially in high-poverty schools. *Professional School Counseling*, *16*(2), 108–116. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0001600207

Lapan, R. T., Whitcomb, S. A., Aleman, N. M., & Lapan, R. (2012). Connecticut professional school counselors: College and career counseling services and smaller ratios benefit students. *Professional School Counseling*, *16*(2), 117–124. https://doi.org/10.5330/PSC.n.2012-16.124

Lattanzio, V. (2013). *Nearly 4000 Philadelphia teachers, school staff losing jobs NBC10*. Retrieved from: http://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/Layoff-Notices-Looming-Over-Philadelphia-School-District-210577111.html

Lieberman, A. (2004). Confusion regarding school counselor functions: School leadership impacts role clarity. *Education*, *124*(3), 552–558.

Martin, I., Carey, J., & DeCoster, K. (2009). A national study of the current status of state school counseling models. *Professional School Counseling*, *12*(5), 378–386. https://doi.org/10.5330/PSC.n.2010-12.378

Mulhern, C. (2020). Beyond teachers: Estimating individual guidance counselors' effects on educational attainment. cmulhern.com/Counselors_Mulhern.Pdf.

Mullen, P. R., Chae, N., Backer, A., & Niles, J. (2021). School counselor burnout, job stress, and job satisfaction by student caseload. *NASSP Bulletin*, *105*(1), 25–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636521999828

Nicola, T. P. (2023). Understanding the recommended student-to-counselor ratio's persistence: An institutional theory perspective. *Journal of Education*. Advance Online Version. 002205742311823. https://doi.org/10.1177/00220574231182328

Rash, D. (1970). Know your counselees before school begins. *The School Counselor*, *18*(2), 133–35.

Reback, R. (2010). Non-instructional spending improves non-cognitive outcomes: Discontinuity evidence from a unique school counselor financing system. *Education Finance and Policy*, *5*(2), 105–137. https://doi.org/10.1162/edfp2010525201

Rippee, B. D., Hanvey, W. E., & Parker, C. A. (1965). The influence of counseling on the perception of the counselor role. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, *43*(7), 696–701. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2164-4918.1965.tb02805.x

Savitz-Romer, M., Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., Nicola, T. P., Alexander, E., & Carroll, S. (2021). When the kids are not alright: School counseling in the time of COVID-19. *American Educational Research Association Open*, *7*(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584211033600

Scarborough, J. L., & Culbreth, J. R. (2008). Examining discrepancies between actual and preferred practice of school counselors. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *86*(4), 446–459. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2008.tb00533.x

Schneider, J., & Berkshire, J. (2020). *A wolf at the schoolhouse door: The dismantling of public education and the future of school*. The New Press.

Shi, Q., & Brown, M. H. (2020). School counselors' impact on school-level academic outcomes: Caseload and Use of time. *Professional School Counseling*, *23*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X20904489

Sweeney, T. J., Jr. (1964). *The School Counselor: Activities and Attributes* [(Order No. 6501224). (302154195]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global). Retrieved from https://utep.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/school-counselor-activities-attributes/docview/302154195/se-2?accountid=7121

Taylor, L. L. (2006). Comparable wages, inflation, and school finance equity. *Education Finance and Policy*, *1*(3), 349–371. https://doi.org/10.1162/edfp.2006.1.3.349

Texas Education Agency. (2004). *A model comprehensive, developmental guidance and counseling program for Texas public schools*.

Texas Education Agency. (2018). *The Texas model for comprehensive school counseling Programs* (5th ed.). Texas Counseling Association (TCA).

Texas Senate Bill 179, 87th Legislature. (2021). Prior Session (Texas, 2021). https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/87R/billtext/pdf/SB00179F.pdf#navpanes=0

Toporek, R. L., Lewis, J. A., & Crethar, H. C. (2009). Promoting systemic change through the ACA advocacy competencies. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *87*(3), 260–268. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2009.tb00105.x