



# **School Counselors Matter: Understanding the Research to Support Advocacy**

Dr. Peg Donohue  
Dr. Jennifer Parzych  
Dr. Amy Gaesser  
Kathryn Goldberg, MS  
Karena Nguyen, SC Intern CCSU

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# Introductions



**Peg Donohue, PhD**  
Program Coordinator  
School Counseling  
Program  
Central CT University



**Kathryn Goldberg, MS.**  
Associate Director of  
College & Career  
Counseling  
AF-Amistad High School  
New Haven, CT



**Jennifer Parzych, PhD**  
Program Coordinator  
School Counseling  
Program  
Southern CT University

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# AGENDA

Introduction to pathway of research to advocacy

Current landscape of ratios in the US

Overview of ratio studies completed and in progress

Challenges to data collection

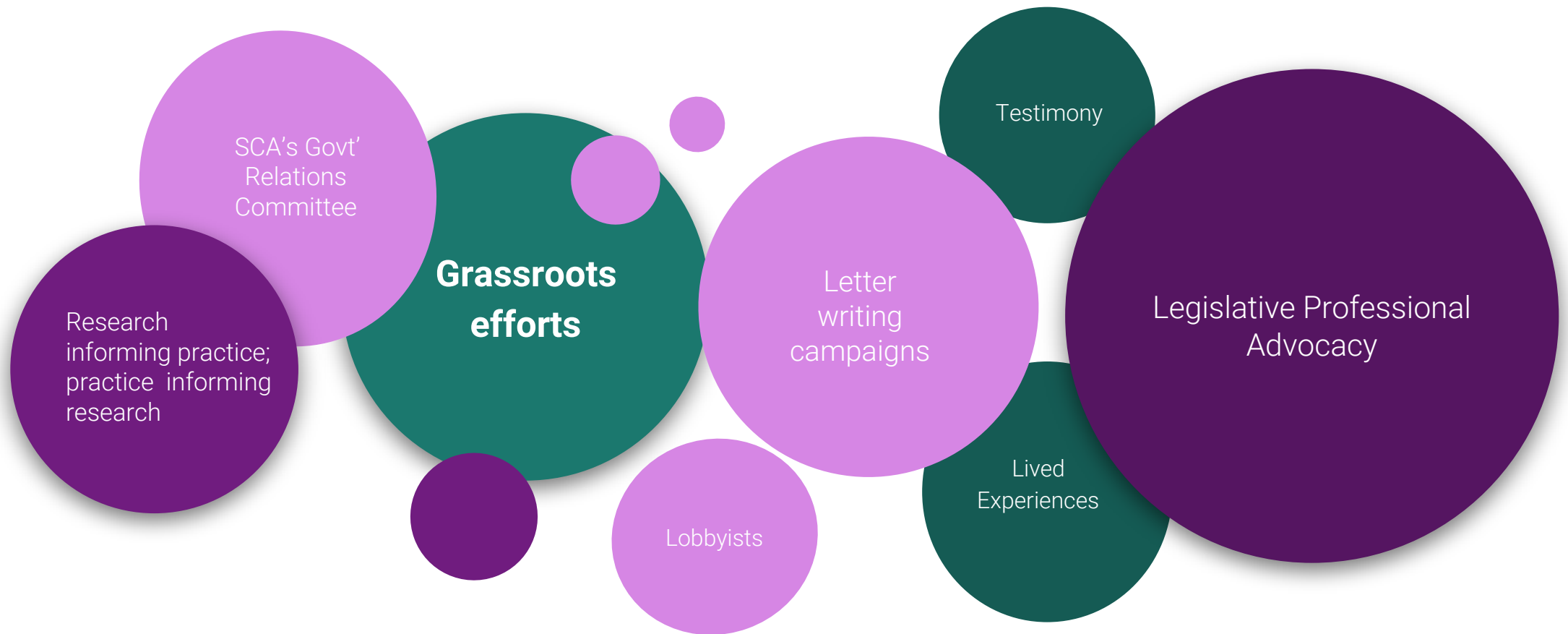
Opportunities - Research as a tool to support legislative professional advocacy

Implications for school counselors, state SCA's, and counselor educators





# Research to Advocacy



# High Ratios Are Barriers to School Counselors Effectiveness and Sustainability



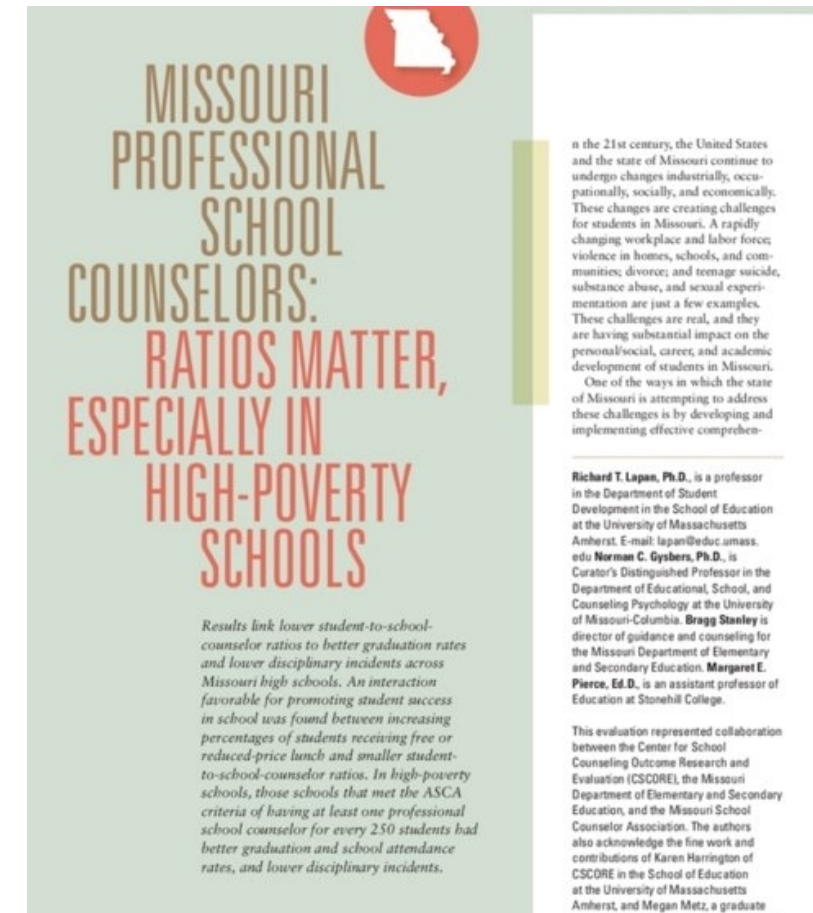
- 1. A study by Paisley and McMahon (2001) suggested that job overload, a precursor to job stress is positively related to high counselor-student caseloads.
- 2. Performing responsibilities despite largely unmanageable ratios (Glander, 2015).
- 3. The number of non-counseling activities that reduce their time spent on direct student services (e.g., Burkard, Gillen, Martinez, & Skytte, 2012; Goodman-Scott, 2015).
- 4. High SC ratios contribute to burn out. (Moyer, 2011; Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Kim & Lambie, 2018)
- 5. High SC Ratios also contribute to emotional disengagement and compassion fatigue (Goodman-Scott, 2015; Wachter, Clemens, & Lewis, 2008; Wilkerson, 2009).
- 6. Corwin, Venegas, Oliverrez, and Colyar (2004) concluded that in predominately African American schools, there are higher student- to-counselor ratios and fewer resources about college planning and preparation.

# A Social Justice Mandate

Access to highly qualified school counselors is a chief social justice concern in our field.

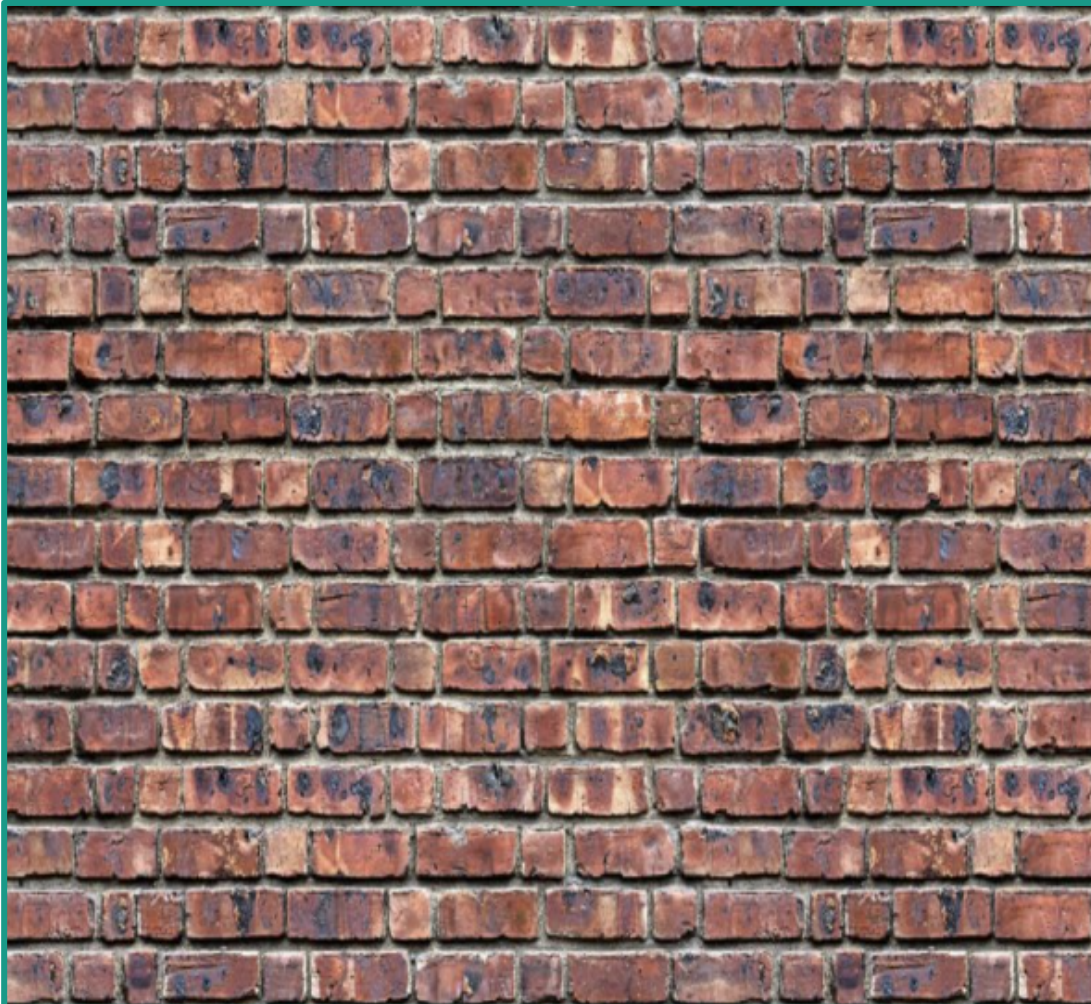
Our students who need the most support due to exposure to poverty, trauma, and a lack of educational opportunities are often in schools with the fewest school counselors.

Lapan, Gysbers, Stanley & Pierce, (2012)

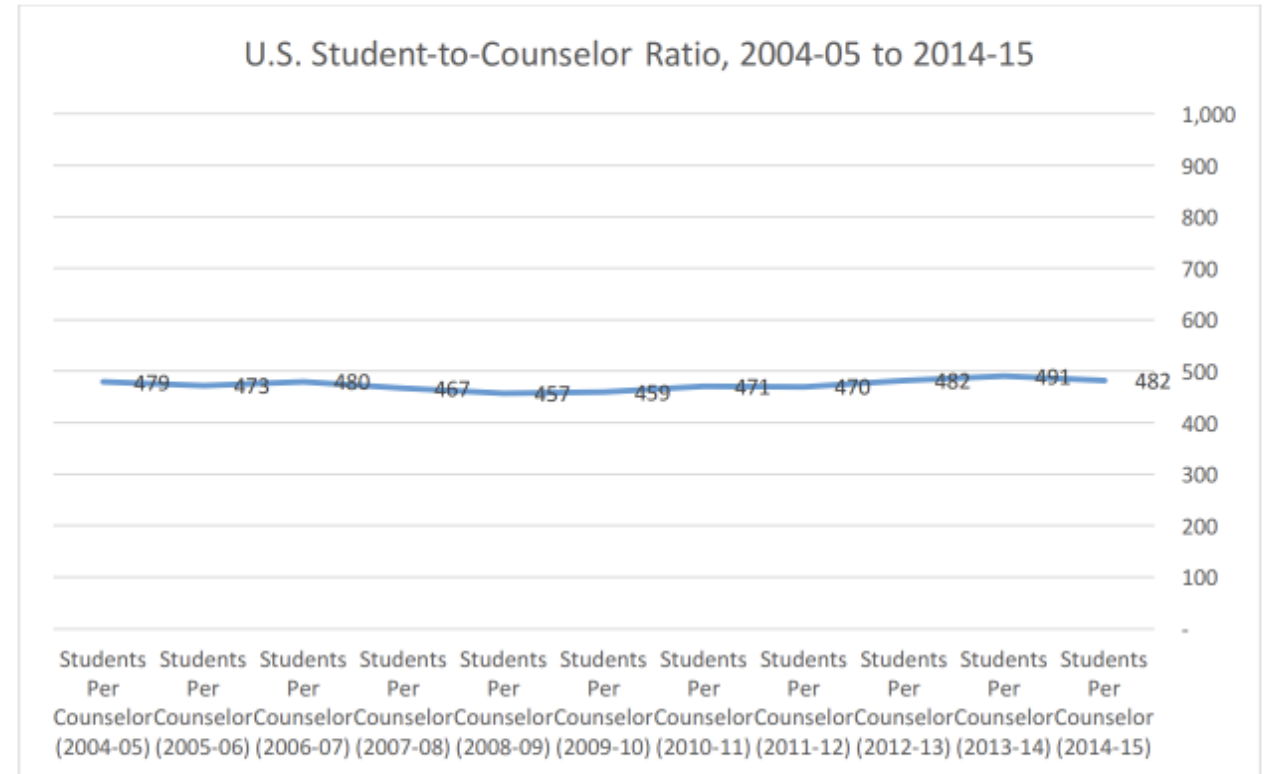




# SC Ratios = Static Issue



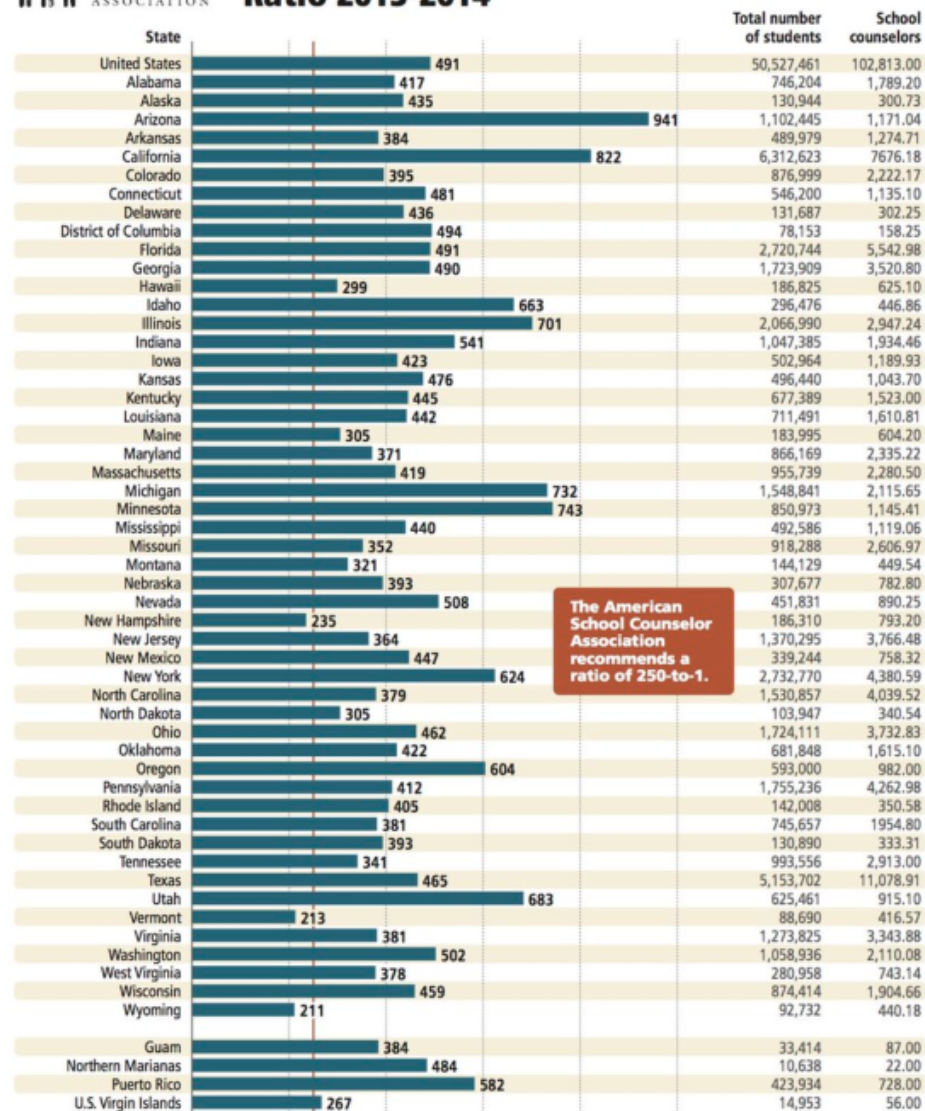
## National Student to Counselor Ratio



Percent Change Enrollment: +3%  
Percent Change in Counselors: +2%  
Percent Change in Student-to-Counselor Ratio: +1%



## Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio 2013-2014



The American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 250-to-1.

## National Average

2013-14

1:491

2018-19

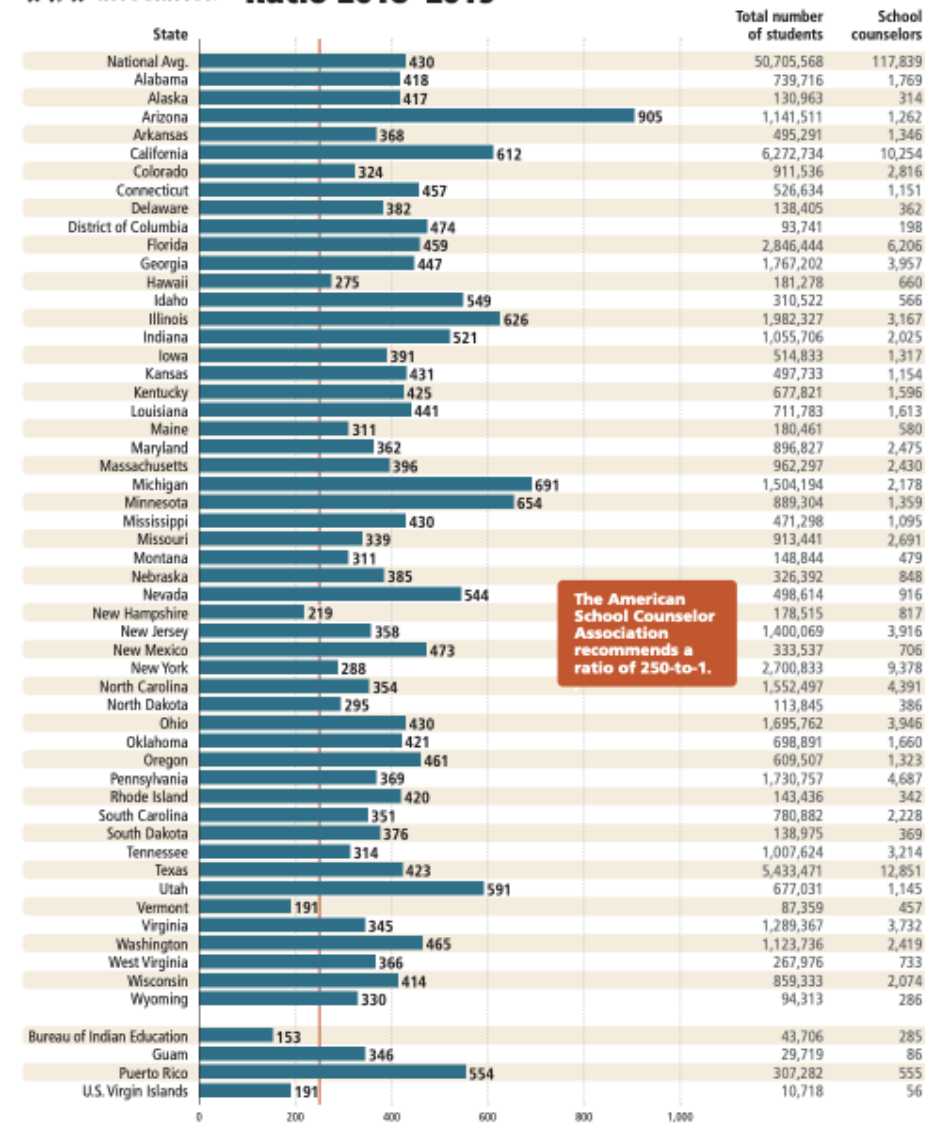
1:430

12% lower

DATA SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS, COMMON CORE OF DATA (CCD), "STATE NONPUBLIC PUBLIC ELEMENTARY/SECONDARY EDUCATION SURVEY", 2013-14 v.1a.



## Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio 2018-2019



The American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 250-to-1.

DATA SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS, COMMON CORE OF DATA (CCD), "STATE NONPUBLIC PUBLIC ELEMENTARY/SECONDARY EDUCATION SURVEY", 2018-19 v.1a.  
NOTE: RUN FOUR OWN DATAFILES BY DISTRICT AT <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/>







# Mandated School Counselors

## K-12

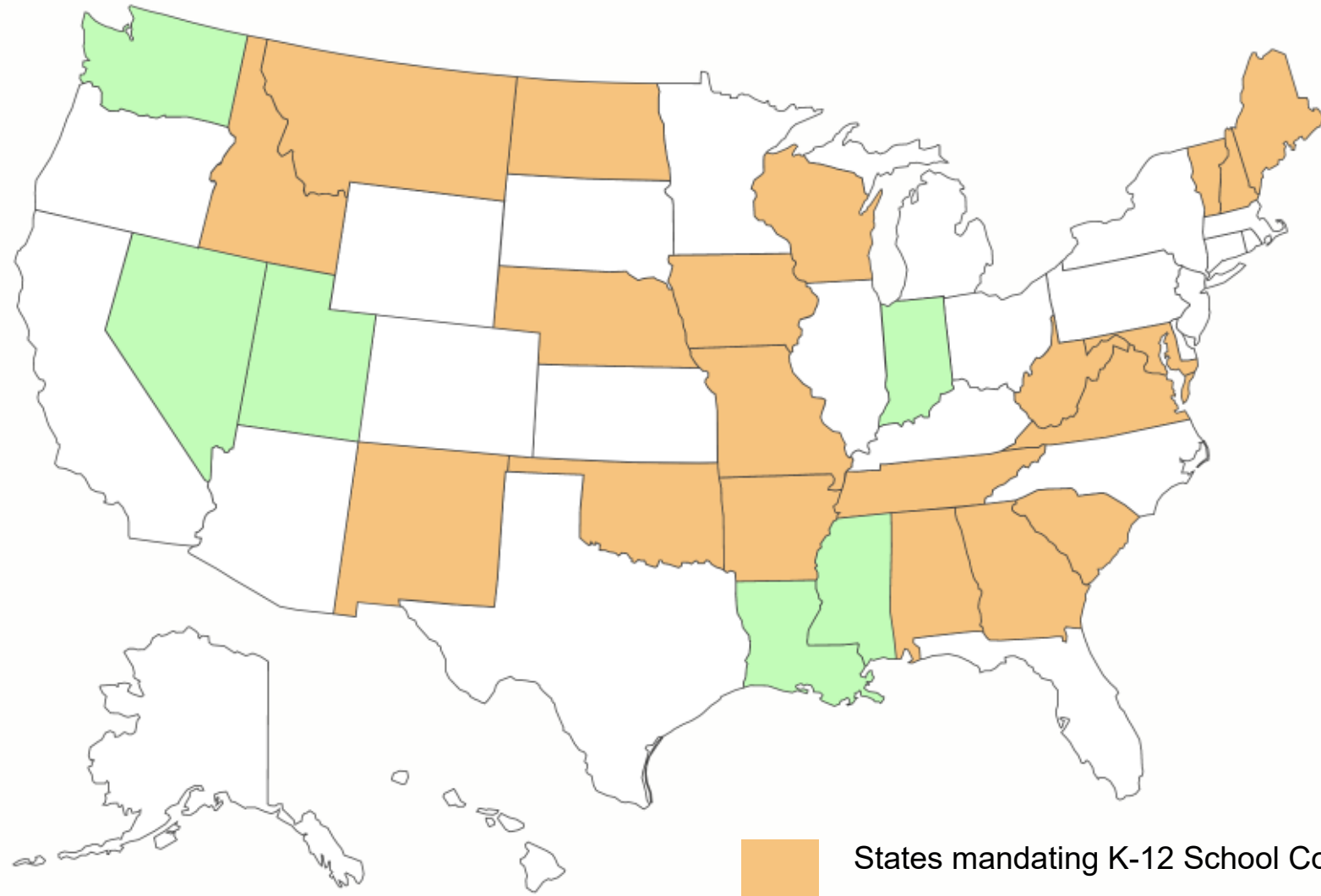
1. Alabama
2. Arkansas
3. DC
4. Georgia
5. Idaho
6. Iowa
7. Maine
8. Maryland
9. Missouri
10. Montana
11. Nebraska
12. New Hampshire
13. New Mexico
14. North Dakota
15. Oklahoma
16. South Carolina
17. Tennessee
18. Vermont
19. Virginia
20. West Virginia
21. Wisconsin



# Mandated School Counselors

9-12 Only

1. Indiana
2. Louisiana
3. Mississippi
4. Nevada
5. Utah
6. Washington



States with mandating school counselors

- States mandating K-12 School Counselors
- States mandating 9 -12 School Counselors

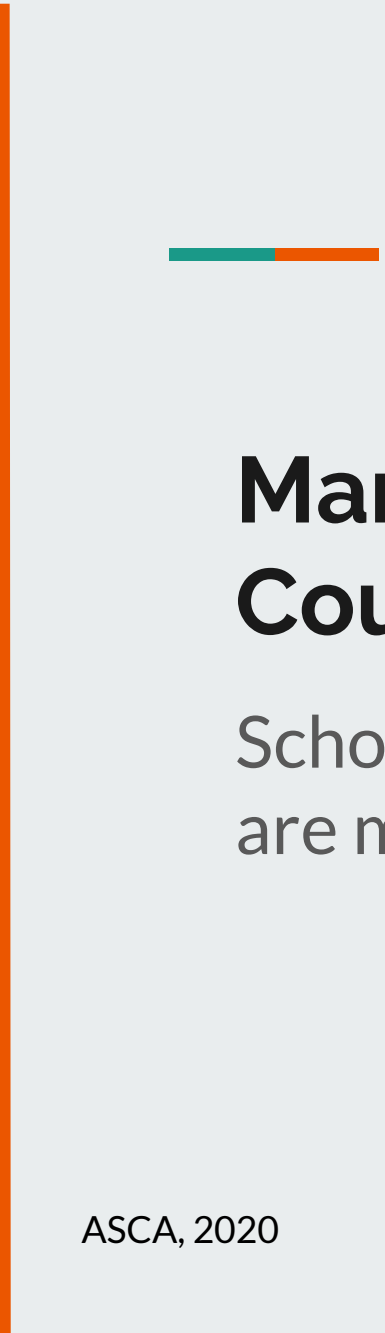


# 20 States

Or 40% of states nationwide do not have mandated school counselors

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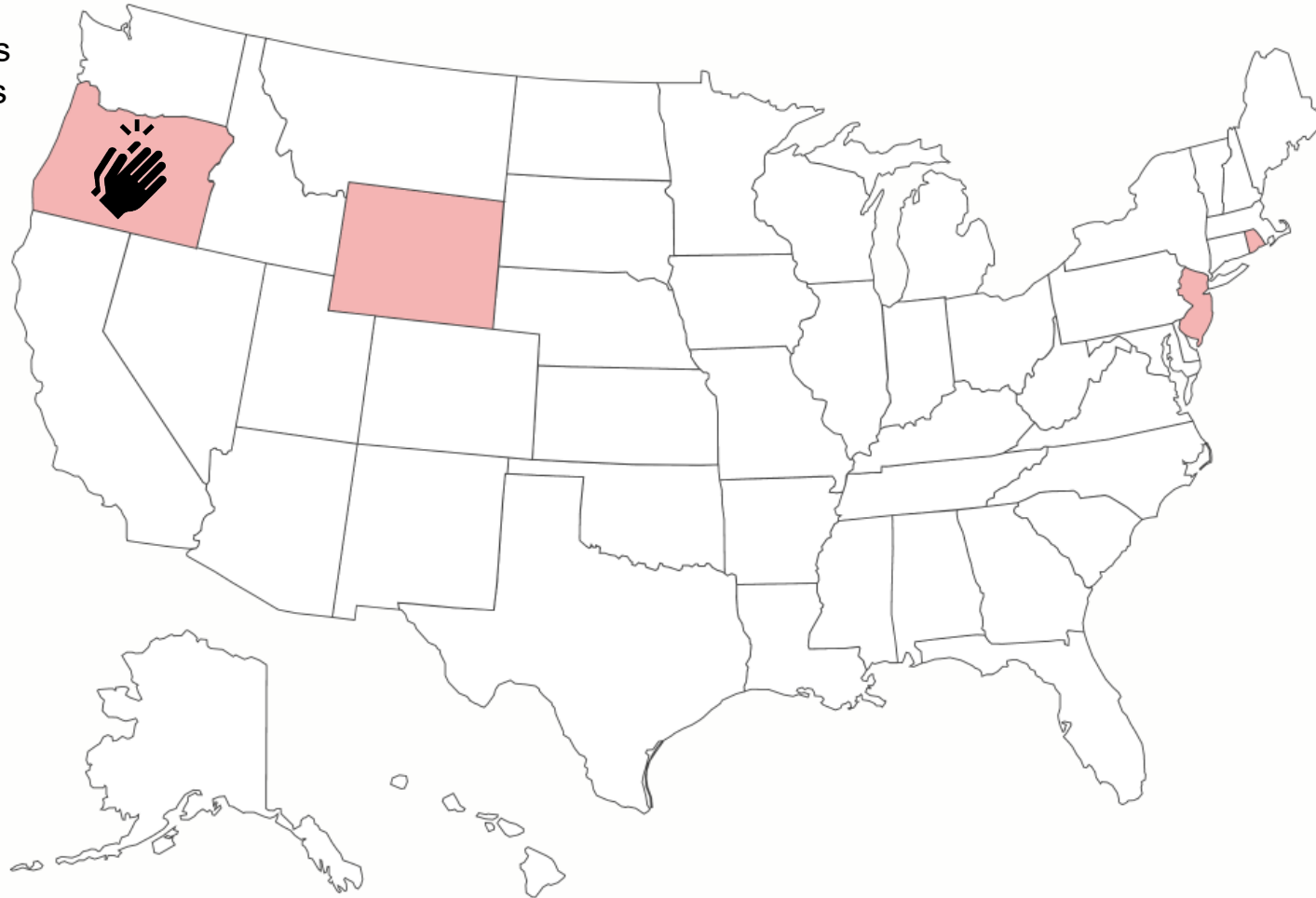
# Mandated School Counselors\*

School counseling services are mandated



- New Jersey: SC programs are mandated, but no mandates that SC's be employed in schools
- Oregon: Each school district in Oregon is mandated to maintain a comprehensive guidance and counseling plan that serves students K-12. In addition, each school district is mandated to maintain a licensed staff.
- Rhode Island: School counseling programs are mandated in K-12, but school counselors themselves are not mandated in every school
- Wyoming: Although access to guidance services are mandated, school counselors themselves are not.

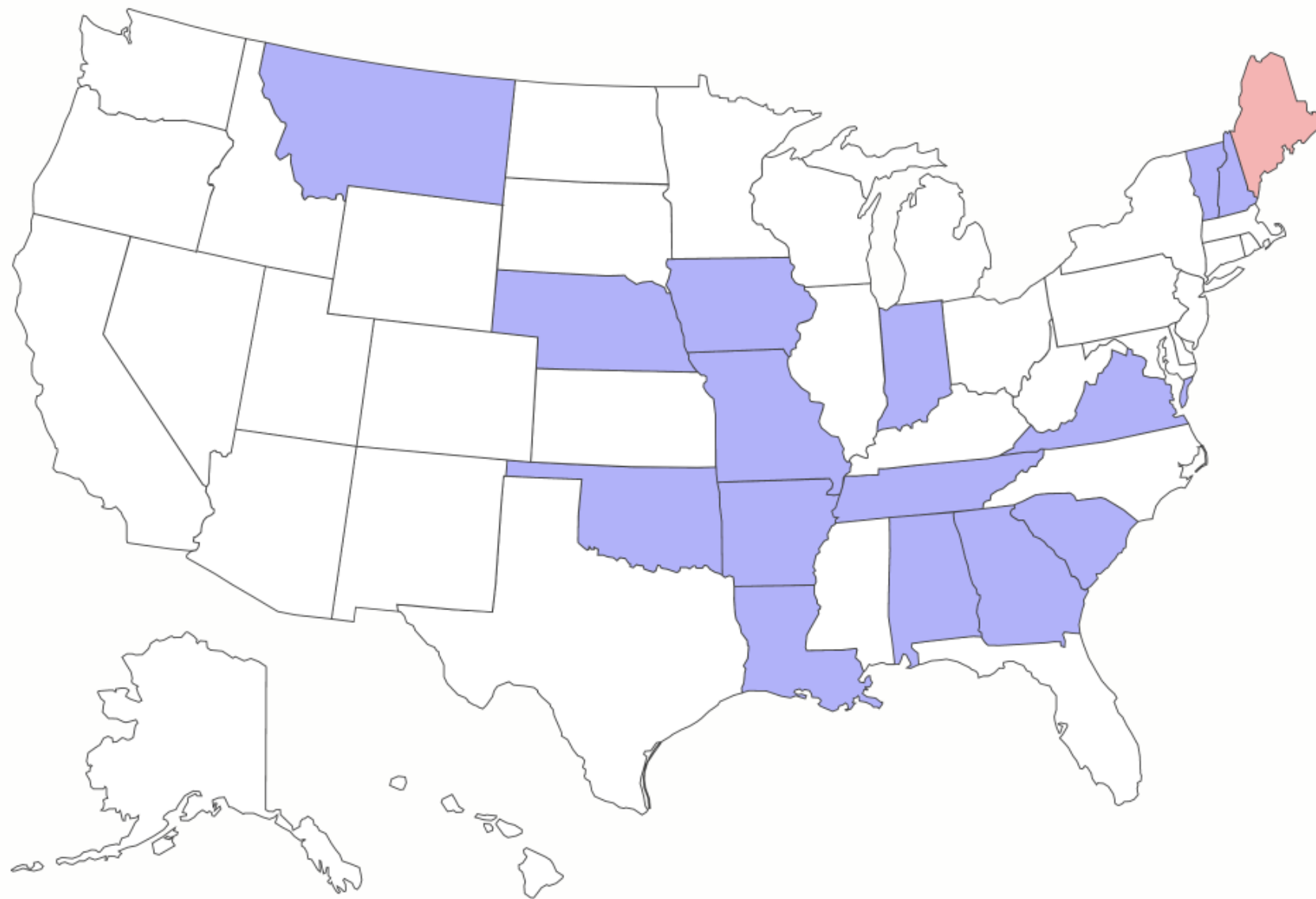
Only Oregon mandates  
both school counselors  
**and** school counseling  
programs



## States Mandating Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

# States with Mandated Ratios

1. Iowa	1:350	9. Indiana	Gr 1-6, 1:600; Gr 7-12, 1:300
2. Montana	1:400	10. South Carolina	Gr K-5, 1:800; Gr 6-12, 1:300
3. Arkansas	1:450	11. Nebraska	Gr K-5, none; Gr 6-12, 1:450
4. Georgia	1:450	12. Oklahoma	Gr K-5, none; Gr 6-12, 1:450
5. Louisiana	1:450	13. Tennessee	Gr K-6, 1:500; Gr 7-12, 1:350
6. Alabama	1:500-1:750	14. Maine	Gr K-8, 1:350; Gr 9-12, 1:250
7. Missouri	1:500	15. New Hampshire	Gr K-5, 1:500; Gr 6-12, 1:300
8. Vermont	Elementary 1:400 Secondary 1:300	16. Virginia	Elementary schools 1:500 Middle schools 1:400 High schools 1:350



## States with mandates school counselor ratios



States with mandated SC Ratios that exceed 1:250



States with mandated SC Ratios at 1:250 in at least one grade level

**70% of states do not have mandated SC  
to Student Ratios**

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# Challenges of Data Collection

- Transparency and a state's requirement to collect data does not necessarily translate into accessibility for research purposes
- Tracking and reporting of SCs vary significantly state-by-state
  - Reporting at District level is uniform, but not at School level
  - Tracking of SCs varies and some report as individual, while some report as FTE
- Role ambiguity for SCs and related mental health providers creates complexity in tracking of number of SCs
  - SCs may not be distinguished as separate from "Student Support Personnel"
  - Reporting number of SCs does not necessarily represent services provided



# SC Ratio Studies – ASCA Funded Research

- Our research questions for our school level analysis:

1. Do students in schools from states with lower average student-to-school counselor ratios outperform students in schools from higher average ratio states in academic achievement? graduation rates? college-going rates? suspension/expulsion rates? absenteeism?
2. Do these relations in #1 differ according to district socio-economic status?
3. Do students in schools with elementary school counselors outperform students in other schools in academic achievement? graduation rates? college-going rates? suspension/expulsion rates? absenteeism?ot?

- 2017 – Indiana – New York – Connecticut
- 2019 – Scaled Up to Multiple States



# Analysis

Publicly available data retrieved from NCES.gov and individual state department of education websites, in conjunction with written requests for data where not readily accessible on the dashboards.

For each state, a multivariate outcome, multilevel analysis was run on

- **academic** (i.e., state assessment passing rates in ELA, math, science, state-administered SAT/ACT),
- **behavioral** (i.e., suspensions, expulsions, absenteeism), and
- **college-going outcomes** (i.e., college entrance)

... controlling for grade level, race/ethnicity, income; and run against SCSR 1:250 and state median SCSR

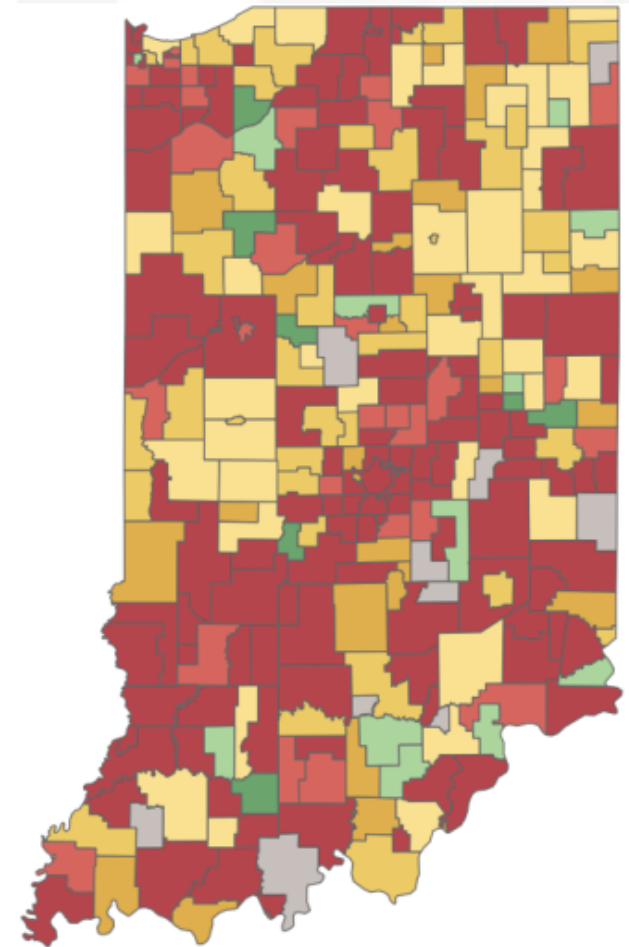
## Indiana

# Indiana Results

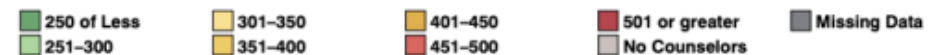
Schools with at least 1 counselor for every 250 students average

- § 0.3% higher **attendance** (e.g., every day in a school of 1000 students, 3 more students attend school than otherwise)
- § 18 points higher on their **SAT Mathematics** scores
- § 19 points higher on their **SAT Verbal** scores.
- § 16 points higher on their **SAT Writing** scores.

The impact of school counselor-to-student ratio exceeding 1:250 on **SAT Verbal** is larger in schools located within lower SES communities.



Counselor Ratio



NACAC, 2018

## Connecticut Results (Quantitative)

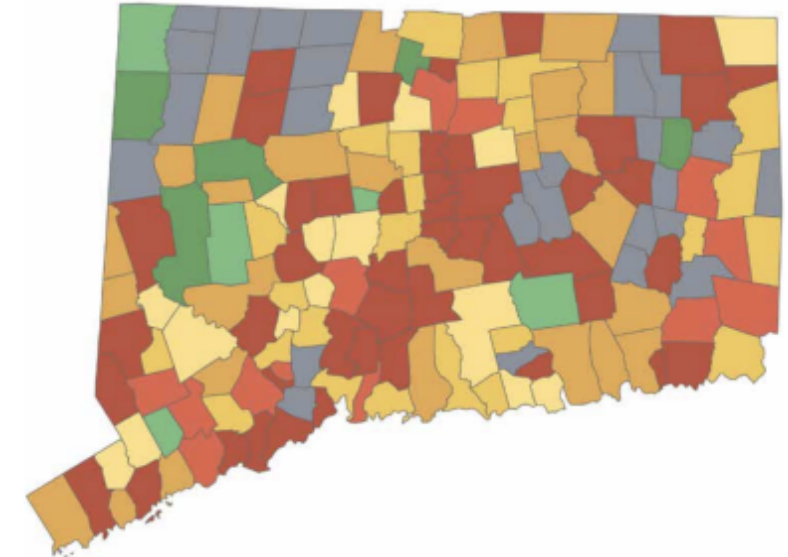
The median SCSR in a school was 1:517.

Upon initial review of the data analysis, no significant relationship between SCSRs of 1:250 or above the data's median (1:517) and student outcomes was found.

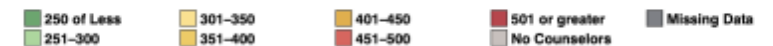
However, results did indicate a significant correlation between the ***presence (versus absence)*** of school counselors on behavioral outcomes.

In this analysis, the presence of a school counselor was significantly related with **lower expulsion rates, moderated suspension rates, and moderated chronic absenteeism rates**

### Connecticut



Counselor Ratio



NACAC, 2018





# Connecticut Results (Qualitative)

Due to unexpected findings in the quantitative analyses on Connecticut data, expand to the qualitative portion of the study. Recognized that consideration should be given for factors not readily apparent through publicly available performance indicators (e.g., mental health needs, community resources) to better understand SCSRs and student outcomes.

To identify schools for participation in the qualitative portion of the Connecticut study, school-level data from 1493 schools was collected from NCES and the CSDE was analyzed to identify higher and lower performing schools at each grade level (K-8, 9-12), and location (urban, rural, suburban).

- **Significantly higher counselor-to-student ratios exist in lower performing schools**  
(e.g., high school = 1:285, middle school = 1:891)
- **Significantly lower counselor-to-student ratios exist in higher performing schools**  
(e.g., high school = 1:182, middle school = 1:211).

- 7 Focus groups held; n = 34
- Each group was homogeneous in terms of high or low performing school identification
- Representative sample across level and setting



## Preliminary Findings

High school counselors in high poverty urban and affluent suburban communities with lower SCSRs reported substantial concerns for effectively delivering their program if their ratios were raised to the ASCA recommended 1:250.

Middle school counselors across rural and suburban communities with SCSRs greater than 1:250 participating in the focus groups reported their ability to deliver comprehensive programming to all students (i.e., curriculum supporting academic, career, social-emotional development) was significantly compromised in order to provide responsive services for the rising mental health needs of their students.

Access to mental health counselors in rural communities was reportedly challenged due to travel distance and lack of public transportation. As a result, school counselors in these settings experience themselves as the main provider of mental health services for students in need. In affluent suburban settings, it was reportedly easier for families to access community counselors; however, students are accessing these resources less purportedly due to increased time spent in extracurricular activity involvement.

# New York Results

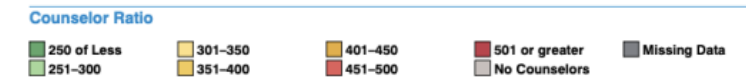
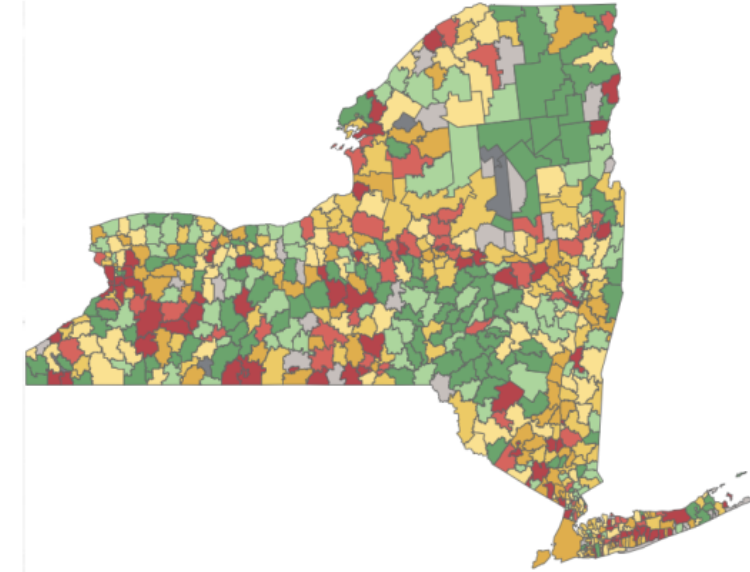
The median SCSR in a school was 1:284.

In 41% of these schools, the SCSR met or exceeded the 1:250 proportion recommended by the ASCA.

Significant findings related to SCSRs revealed: Schools with lower SCSRs have a ...

- Higher percentage of students who pass statewide assessments in English and Language Arts (ELA).
- Higher percentage of students who passed statewide assessments in mathematics
- Lower percentage of students who pass statewide assessments in science.

## New York



NACAC, 2018

# ASCA infographic

## IMPACT OF SCHOOL-COUNSELOR-TO-STUDENT RATIOS ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

Study shows impact of school counselor ratios on student outcomes.



### WHAT ARE THE FINDINGS?



**A school-counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250 has a significant effect on student attendance, SAT mathematics, SAT writing and SAT verbal scores.**

In Indiana, the average school-counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250 resulted in:

- 0.3% higher attendance (i.e. every day in a school of 1,000 students, three more students attend class than otherwise).
- 18 points higher SAT mathematics scores.
- 19 points higher SAT verbal scores.
- 16 points higher SAT writing scores.



**Students in districts with elementary school counselors have improved performance outcomes versus districts without.**

Connecticut school districts report

- Schools with K-12 school counselors:
  - ▶ 69.4% report graduation rates greater than 90 percent.
- Schools without elementary school counselors:
  - ▶ 45.8% report graduation rates greater than 90 percent.
  - ▶ Approximately 72% of school districts provide no comprehensive school counseling services to students in grades K-5.



**Lower-performing schools/schools in lower-socioeconomic-status communities maintain higher caseloads than higher-performing schools.**

In Connecticut:

- High-performing schools average school-counselor-to-student ratio:  
High school = 1:182 Middle school = 1:211
- Low-performing schools average school-counselor-to-student ratio:  
High school = 1:285 Middle school = 1:891



### WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

**1** Lowering ratios allows school counselors to effectively deliver a comprehensive school counseling program to better meet students' academic, career and social/emotional needs

**2** Socioeconomic status and community resources have an impact on school counselors' ability to effectively deliver comprehensive school counseling programs.

**3** School-counselor-to-student ratios may be optimal at 1:250, but grade level and socioeconomic factors of a district require close consideration.

- Work with national org. to ensure soundness of research on all publications

Read the full report: [www.schoolcounselor.org/effectiveness](http://www.schoolcounselor.org/effectiveness)

**SOURCE:** ASCA grant-funded research of school counselor ratios and student outcomes in three states (Indiana, Connecticut, and New York).

**RESEARCHERS:** Jennifer L. Parzych, Ph.D., Southern Connecticut State University; Peg Donohue, Ph.D., Central Connecticut State University; Amy Gaesser, Ph.D., The College at Brockport, SUNY; Ming Ming Chiu, Ph.D., The Education University of Hong Kong





# Future research, continued advocacy:

- ASCA grant-funded research continues...
  - Expanded to multiple states, representative of 'ratio-ranking spectrum'... states with lowest ratios through those with the highest
- Consideration for strengthening state regulations
  - CACREP accredited training model?
  - All MS-School Counselor programs in CT = 60 credits, CACREP accredited
  - Someone from non-CACREP accredited program in another state can be certified in CT
  - Strengthen criteria for out of state competition for jobs...
  - Counselor educators in CT advocated for more equitable internship requirements, recognizing inaccessibility for many underrepresented groups - was 1400 hours/10 months -> 1200 -> 900 -> 700/10 months!!



# Well trained SCs

- Quantity vs. quality
- Quality is important!



## ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies

(2019). ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies. Alexandria, VA: Author.

### ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies

MINDSETS	
School counselors believe:	
M 1.	Every student can learn, and every student can succeed.
M 2.	Every student should have access to and opportunity for a high-quality education.
M 3.	Every student should graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary opportunities.
M 4.	Every student should have access to a school counseling program.
M 5.	Effective school counseling is a collaborative process involving school counselors, students, families, teachers, administrators, other school staff and education stakeholders.
M 6.	School counselors are leaders in the school, district, state and nation.
M 7.	School counseling programs promote and enhance student academic, career and social/emotional outcomes.

BEHAVIORS		
School counselors demonstrate the following standards in the design, implementation and assessment of a school counseling program.		
Professional Foundation	Direct and Indirect Student Services	Planning and Assessment
B-PF 1. Apply developmental, learning, counseling and education theories	B-SS 1. Design and implement instruction aligned to ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success in large-group, classroom, small-group and individual settings	B-PA 1. Create school counseling program beliefs, vision and mission statements aligned with the school and district
B-PF 2. Demonstrate understanding of educational systems, legal issues, policies, research and trends in education	B-SS 2. Provide appraisal and advisement in large-group, classroom, small-group and individual settings	B-PA 2. Identify gaps in achievement, attendance, discipline, opportunity and resources
B-PF 3. Apply legal and ethical principles of the school counseling profession	B-SS 3. Provide short-term counseling in small-group and individual settings	B-PA 3. Develop annual student outcome goals based on student data
B-PF 4. Apply school counseling professional standards and competencies	B-SS 4. Make referrals to appropriate school and community resources	B-PA 4. Develop and implement action plans aligned with annual student outcome goals and student data
B-PF 5. Use ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success to inform the implementation of a school counseling program	B-SS 5. Consult to support student achievement and success	B-PA 5. Assess and report program results to the school community
B-PF 6. Demonstrate understanding of the impact of cultural, social and environmental influences on student success and opportunities	B-SS 6. Collaborate with families, teachers, administrators, other school staff and education stakeholders for student achievement and success	B-PA 6. Use time appropriately according to national recommendations and student/school data
B-PF 7. Demonstrate leadership through the development and implementation of a school counseling program		B-PA 7. Establish agreement with the principal and other administrators about the school counseling program
B-PF 8. Demonstrate advocacy for a school counseling program		B-PA 8. Establish and convene an advisory council for the school counseling program
B-PF 9. Create systemic change through the implementation of a school counseling program		B-PA 9. Use appropriate school counselor performance appraisal process

# Opportunities - Legislative Professional Advocacy

- Why LPA? Social justice, equity, and access...
  - The profession has a long-established history of embracing counselor advocacy to empower clients, students, and the profession (Dixon & Dew, 2012; Farrell & Minto, 2019)
  - LPA in particular has the potential to increase awareness of important issues in the profession and mobilize counselors





# Opportunities - LPA & Counselor Education

## Weaving it into the curriculum

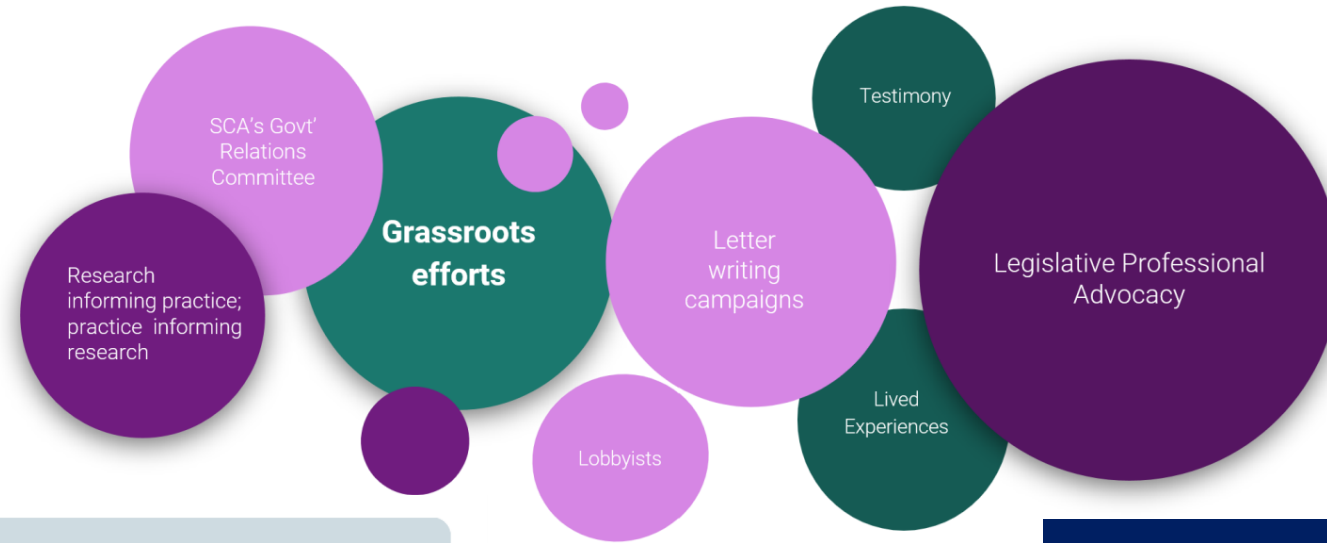
- Counselor educators are called to integrate professional advocacy throughout the curriculum (Brat, O'Hara, McGhee, & Chang, 2016; Myers, Sweeney & White, 2002).

## Moving skills to application

- Students with advocacy-related training are more likely to engage in LPA (Ramirez Stege, Brockberg, & Hoyt, 2017).
- Knowledge about the acquisition of LPA competencies and implementation of skills is limited

Pre-service counselors need help in understanding concrete and specific methods for understanding the LPA process

# CT Story



Title Change

2018:  
Public Act 18-65



Comprehensive SC  
Programs, K – 12

2019:  
Public Act 19-63



Appropriate Ratios

2021:  
House Bill (raised) 6557

Why Every School Needs  
School Counselors



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**How could this  
inform YOUR  
advocacy efforts?**

*Thank you for joining us today!*



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