

EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL COUNSELING

Research on School Counseling Effectiveness

School counselors provide counseling programs in three critical areas: academic, personal/social, and career. Their services and programs help students resolve emotional, social or behavioral problems and help them develop a clearer focus or sense of direction. Effective counseling programs are important to the school climate and a crucial element in improving student achievement.

School counselors, like all educational professionals, are increasingly being required to demonstrate evidence of effective practice. This brochure provides a collection of sources that address the effectiveness of school counseling and other student support services, including their contribution to the personal and academic success of students.

(This list represents a summary of research on school counseling effectiveness. For more in depth information and further use, consult the original documents.)

- Based on its research, the Institute of Medicine has concluded that mental health and psychological services were essential for many students to achieve academically, and recommended that such services be considered mainstream, and not optional. (1)
- According to the U.S. Department of Education, the current U.S. average student/counselor ratio is 476:1. (2) According to the American Counseling Association, the maximum recommended student/counselor ratio is 250:1. (1) The ratio is more than 1,000:1 in some schools. (2)
- A 2006 study of an evidence-based program showed that lower student-to-counselor ratios decreased both the recurrence of student disciplinary problems and the number of students involved in a disciplinary incident. (3)

School Counselors and Student Achievement

- Several studies found that elementary guidance activities have a positive influence on elementary students' academic achievement. (4)
- School counseling interventions have reported success for helping students reduce test anxiety. (5)
- School counselors in collaborative efforts can implement both systemic and programmatic changes in schools and communities to prevent students from dropping out of school. (6)
- Studies on high school attrition indicate that preventive counseling, occurring before students are in crisis, reduces the risk of these students dropping out later. (7)
- Counseling decreases classroom disturbances. Counseling services support teachers in the classroom and enable teachers to provide quality instruction designed to assist students in achieving high standards. Students in schools that provide counseling services indicated that their classes were less likely to be interrupted by other students, and that their peers behaved better in school. (8)
- A study of Missouri high schools shows that schools with more fully implemented model guidance programs had students who were more likely to report that (a) they had earned higher grades, (b) their education was better preparing them for the future, (c) their school made more career and college information available to them, and (d) their school had a more positive climate (greater feelings of belonging and safety at school, classes less likely to be interrupted, peers behaving better). After removing the variables of school enrollment size, socioeconomic status, and percentage of minority students in attendance, positive program effects were identifiable. Results highlight the important roles school counselors play in promoting the central educational




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goals of their schools and support a comprehensive guidance program focus for university counseling faculty who train school counselors. (9)

- One study found that high school counselors influenced their students' future plans by encouraging them to have high expectations. A high proportion of 10th and 12th grade students who were surveyed perceived that their counselor expected them to attend college, regardless of their racial background. High school students' own educational expectations for themselves increased over time. (10)
- In studies on the effects of a small group counseling approach for failing elementary school students, 83 percent of participating students showed improvement in grades. (11)
- A study done in Gwinnett County, Georgia shows that school counselors impact students' academic performance and can increase the on-task, productive behavior of students and reduce disruptive behaviors. The Behavior Rating Checklist indicated statistically significant decreases in disruptive behaviors and significant increases in productive, on-task behaviors for both the third grade and the fifth grade students tested. Language arts progress was statistically significant for both grade levels as well. (12)

School Counselors and Personal/Social Development

- School counselors, due to their training, experience and accessibility are considered to be the best equipped school-based professionals to develop and implement both prevention and intervention programs for youth at risk. (13)
- Children who are experiencing family problems report being helped by school counselors. (14)
- School counselors help connect the family as a whole to the educational process. (15)
- School counselors have proven effective in preventing students from committing

suicide. The most effective prevention programs start with younger students and portray suicide as a mental health problem, not a dramatic way of ending a life. It is essential that counselors involve the parents of troubled students in the counseling process. (16)

- School counseling programs have significant influence on discipline problems. Baker and Gerler reported that students who participated in a school counseling program had significantly less inappropriate behaviors and more positive attitudes toward school than those students who did not participate in the program. Another study reported that group counseling provided by school counselors significantly decreased participants' aggressive and hostile behaviors. (17)
- Health and mental health care services can play an important role in violence prevention at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary), including preventing problem behaviors from developing; identifying and serving specific, at-risk populations; and reducing the deleterious effects of violence on victims and witnesses. (18)
- Research indicates that school counselors are effective in teaching social skills. (19)
- Students who have access to counseling programs reported being more positive and having greater feelings of belonging and safety in their schools. (20)

School Counselors and Career Development

- School counselors are very effective in assisting children in the area of career development. (21)
- Counselors are effective in assisting high school students with college choices. (22)

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