



The College Board National Office for School
Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA)

School Counseling in Michigan

A College Board 2011 National
Survey of School Counselors
State Brief

**A Brief for the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center's
National Office for School Counselor Advocacy
by Civic Enterprises with Hart Research**

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The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center and the National Office for School Counselor Advocacy are grateful for the generous support provided by the Kresge Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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America is facing a high school and college completion crisis. The most recent data reveal the important linkage of a strong college and career readiness agenda in secondary school to later college enrollment and completion. One in four public high school students and 65 percent of students of color fail to graduate from high school with their peers.¹ During high school, many students do not have the resources they need to succeed in college, including access to college preparatory courses. This is particularly true in schools serving populations with traditionally low college enrollment rates: less than a third of high schools serving the most Hispanic and African American students offer calculus and only 40 percent offer physics.² Of all students who do complete high school, only a quarter (28 percent) complete an associate degree within three years and only half (57 percent) complete a bachelor's degree within six years.³

As a nation, we are falling far short of the College Board's goal of increasing the proportion of 25- to 34-year-olds with an associate degree or higher to 55 percent by 2025, with less than half (41.1 percent) with such a degree as of 2009.⁴ In order to support students in college and career success, and to regain our status in having the highest college attainment rates in the world, we must use all of the tools in our education toolkit — including our nation's counselors. School counselors are uniquely positioned to support student success due to their ability to understand the entire picture of individual students — their family circumstances, social and emotional development, academic progress and other issues related to their success in school.⁵ They also have the ability to follow students over time, unlike teachers who have them for just one year and are often focused only on their academic progress in a single subject.⁶ Research indicates that a counselor's unique role coordinating expectations, academics and support systems across secondary and postsecondary programs helps to improve academic readiness and persistence for students.⁷

Michigan, like the nation, is facing a high school and college completion crisis. This brief, *School Counseling in Michigan*, focuses on the unique challenges and opportunities facing school counselors in the Wolverine State. It is a supplement to the 2011 National Survey of School Counselors: Counseling at a Crossroads report commissioned by the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy. The findings are based on one of the largest surveys of school counselors: a nationally representative sample of more than 5,300 middle school and high school counselors. The survey revealed deep concerns within the profession and shed light on opportunities to better utilize these valuable leaders in America's schools.

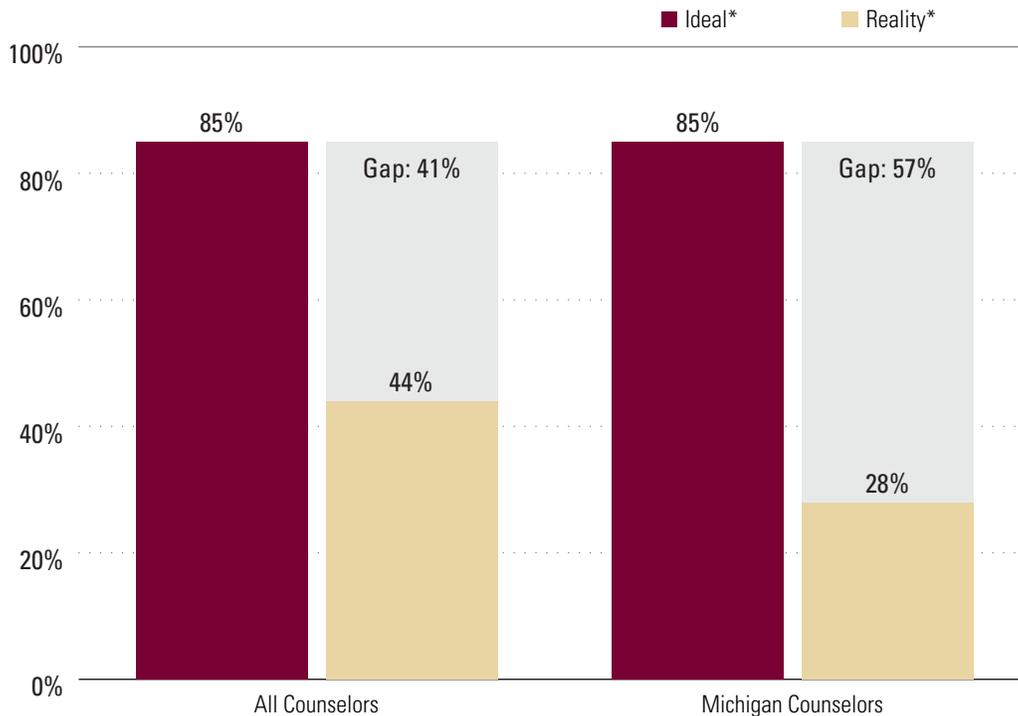
Key Finding: School counselors in Michigan believe that the mission of schools should be preparing students for college and careers and helping students stay in school through graduation, but few see this as a reality in their schools.

Like their peers around the country, Michigan counselors report a large gap between the ideal mission of schools and the reality. Counselors in Michigan and nationally do not see college completion and career readiness as the mission of their schools being a reality (24 percent in Michigan, compared to 30 percent nationally, rate their schools as a 9 or 10 on a zero-to-10 scale). More than eight in 10 Michigan counselors (82 percent) believe it should be the mission of their schools, resulting in a 58-point gap. This gap is slightly larger than the national trend, which has a 55-point gap (85 percent ideal, compared to 30 percent reality).

Counselors in Michigan report a larger gap than counselors nationally between the ideal mission of the school counseling profession and its reality. When asked to reflect on the ideal and the reality for the mission of the school counseling profession to make students college and career ready, Michigan counselors expressed a larger gap (47 points) than counselors nationally (38 points). Fewer counselors from Michigan (38 percent) see ensuring that students are college and career ready when they graduate from high school is the mission of counselors in their schools as a reality, compared to counselors nationally (46 percent).

Michigan's counselors not only face more challenges in ensuring that students are college and career ready, they also struggle to get students to make it to graduation. Fewer than three in 10 Michigan counselors (28 percent), reported by a rating of 9 or 10 on a zero-to-10 scale, say that “to address student problems so students stay in school through graduation” fits the reality for counselors in their schools, compared to 44 percent nationally (see Figure 1). This amounts to a gap of 57 percent between the ideal and the reality for Michigan's school counselors, compared to the national gap of 41 percent.

Figure 1: Counselors in Michigan See Greater Gaps in Addressing Student Problems So Students Stay in School Through Graduation

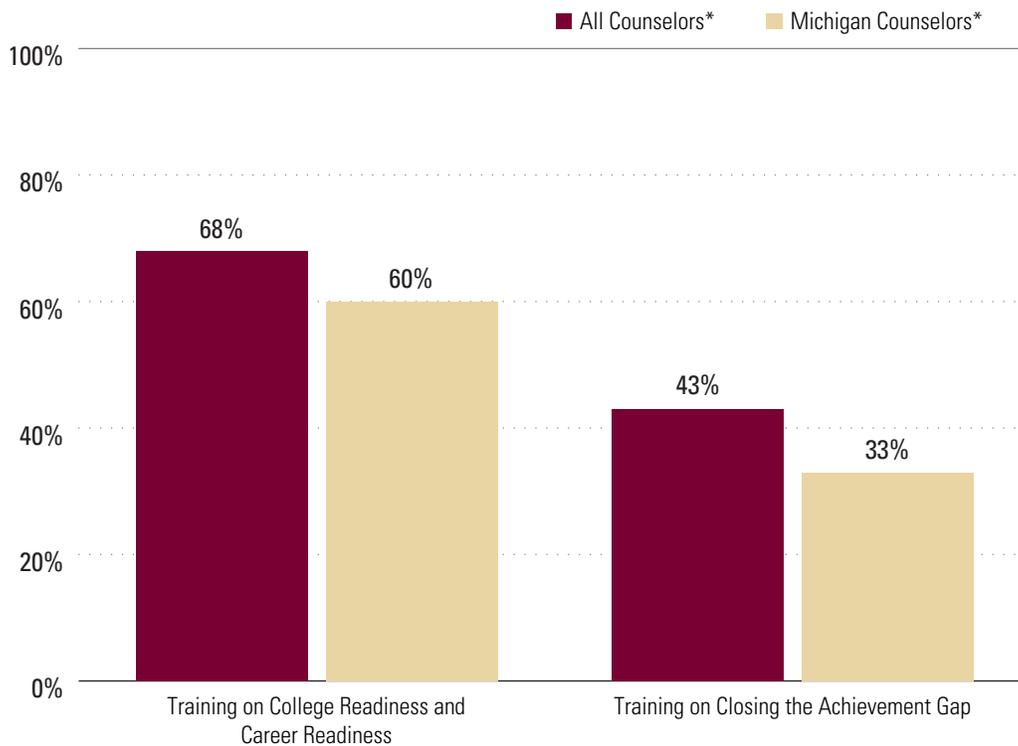


*Counselors rating “To address student problems so students stay in school through graduation” as a 9 or 10 for the School Counselor’s Mission in the Ideal and in Reality in Their Schools.

School Counselors in Michigan Desire Increased Training

School counselors in Michigan report that their training inadequately prepared them for their jobs, that they desire increased training and that their training rates lag behind those of their counterparts nationally. This combination may indicate the need to refine preservice and in-service training requirements for school counselors. In Michigan, proposed amendments to certification and licensure of school counselors, which increase training requirements in targeted areas (R 390.1303-1306), may better serve counselors and their students. Nearly one-fourth of counselors in Michigan report that they do not feel their training adequately prepared them for their jobs (24 percent, versus 28 percent nationally, with a mean rating in Michigan of 6.8 on a 10-point scale, where 10 means the training perfectly prepared them for their jobs). Many counselors in Michigan have received supplemental training since beginning their careers but at lower rates than counselors overall. For example, 60 percent of counselors in Michigan, compared to 68 percent nationally, report receiving training on college and career readiness (see Figure 2). Only one-third of counselors in Michigan (33 percent, compared to 43 percent nationally) report having received training on closing the achievement gap. Overall, a majority of counselors report a desire to spend more time on professional development or in-service training (56 percent of counselors in Michigan and 54 percent of counselors nationwide).

Figure 2: Counselors in Michigan Report Lower Levels of In-Service Training and Professional Development



*Responses to “Which of the following topics have you received training in since beginning your career as a counselor?”

Key Finding: School counselors in Michigan are more likely to believe that their schools take advantage of their ability to establish a relationship of trust with their students but are less likely to say their schools take advantage of other important attributes.

The connection counselors are able to forge with students is a special priority for counselors in Michigan, and they believe their schools recognize their ability. The counselors rated the ability to “establish relationships of trust with students and to be another adult to talk to when they are in situations of conflict” as the highest of five suggestions for the unique role of counselors. Three in four (75 percent) counselors in Michigan chose this suggestion as one of the most important for achieving the goal of an education system in which all students are college and career ready by the end of 12th grade, compared to 65 percent of counselors nationally. Counselors in Michigan rate their schools slightly higher when asked if their schools take advantage of this unique role (8.5 in Michigan, compared to 8.3 nationally, as a mean score on a 10-point scale).

Like their peers across the country, counselors in Michigan believe their ability to act as student advocates is important, but they are less likely to say their schools take advantage of it. Seventy-two percent of Michigan counselors believe their ability to “work proactively as student advocates and actively intervene to create pathways and support to ensure that all students have opportunities to achieve their postsecondary

goals” is important, compared to 74 percent nationally. However, counselors in Michigan rate their schools lower on average (7.1) than counselors nationally (7.6) in terms of how well their schools take advantage of this ability.

Key Finding: School counselors in Michigan believe some reforms are needed in the education system. They also support certain accountability measures of counselor effectiveness and key elements of a framework for advancing college and career readiness.

School counselors in Michigan are less likely to support a major overhaul of the education system but show similar levels of support for specific educational reforms proposals. In order to improve student success, 55 percent of all counselors and 50 percent of counselors in Michigan say that major changes or a complete overhaul of the education system is needed. More than six in 10 counselors in Michigan support specific reforms such as collecting and disseminating data on the success rates of high school graduates (62 percent, compared to 65 percent nationally). A smaller proportion, but still a majority, also support the creation of measures of accountability and incentives for counselors (55 percent in Michigan, compared to 61 percent nationally).

Like counselors across the country, Michigan counselors see certain measures of accountability as fair or appropriate. Counselors in Michigan are most likely to view transcript audits of graduation readiness as a fair and appropriate way to assess the effectiveness of school counselors. On a zero-to-10 scale on which a 10 means the measure is completely fair and appropriate, 61 percent of Michigan counselors rate transcript audits of graduation readiness as a 6 or higher, compared to 62 percent nationally. However, fewer Michigan counselors rate using high school graduation rates (50 percent, compared to 57 percent nationally) or dropout rates (29 percent, compared to 37 percent nationally) as a 6 or higher.

Similar to counselors across the country, counselors in Michigan endorse a college and career readiness agenda. Counselors were asked to assess the College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy’s “Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling,” a counseling system that focuses on ensuring that all students are college and career ready when they graduate from the 12th grade. Nearly all counselors can see themselves committing to this approach (93 percent of all counselors and 92 percent of counselors in Michigan rated this a 6 or higher on a 10-point scale).

Michigan counselors are less likely to think that their schools are successful in this regard or that they have the resources necessary to accomplish each component. Although 30 percent of counselors nationally believe their schools are extremely successful (giving a rating of 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale) at connecting college and career to academic preparations and aspirations, only 24 percent of Michigan counselors agreed. Only 21 percent of Michigan counselors thought their schools were successful at ensuring that families had an early understanding of the academic process, compared to 30 percent nationally. Counselors in Michigan are also less likely to believe that it’s possible to accomplish each component in their schools, with only 19 percent saying the statement “you have the administration support, and the resources needed, to be successful in each of these items” is completely true, compared to 27 percent nationally.

Next Steps

The Michigan high school and college completion crisis comes at tremendous costs — to individuals, communities and the nation. School counselors are supportive of a college and career readiness agenda and have indicated a desire to be leaders in supporting their students' success. School counselors are highly valuable professionals in Michigan's education system, but they are also among the least strategically deployed. This is a loss, especially given the fact that school counselors are uniquely positioned, in ways that many educators are not, to have a complete picture of the dreams, hopes, life circumstances, challenges and needs of their students. Counselors have both a holistic view of the students in their schools and the opportunity to provide targeted supports to keep these students on track for success, year after year.⁸ Now is the time to support school counselors in their efforts — to strengthen the Michigan education system and secure its future.

Notes

1. Balfanz, Robert, et al., *Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic, Annual Update 2012* (Washington, D.C. and Baltimore: Civic Enterprises and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University, March 2012). Available at http://www.civicerprises.net/reports/Building-A-Grad-Nation-Report-2012_Full_v1.pdf
2. The Transformed Civil Rights Data Collection. Office of Civil Rights. U.S. Department of Education. March 12, 2012.
3. National Center for Education Statistics. (2009). "Table 331: Graduation Rates of First-Time Postsecondary Students Who Started as Full-Time Degree-Seeking Students." U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_331.asp?referrer=report. in *The State of School Counseling in American: Literature and Landscape Review*. Civic Enterprises for the College Board. November 2011. Available at http://www.civicerprises.net/reports/school_counselors_literature_and_landscape_review.pdf.
4. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2000–2009.
5. Bridgeland, John and Mary Bruce, *2011 National Survey of School Counselors: Counseling at a Crossroads* (New York: Civic Enterprises with Hart Research for the College Board, 2011). Available at http://civicerprises.net/reports/counseling_at_a_crossroads.pdf
6. Bridgeland, John and Mary Bruce, *2011 National Survey of School Counselors: Counseling at a Crossroads* (New York: Civic Enterprises with Hart Research for the College Board, 2011). Available at http://civicerprises.net/reports/counseling_at_a_crossroads.pdf
7. *The State of School Counseling in American: Literature and Landscape Review*. Civic Enterprises for the College Board. November 2011. Available at http://www.civicerprises.net/reports/school_counselors_literature_and_landscape_review.pdf.
8. Bridgeland, John and Mary Bruce, *2011 National Survey of School Counselors: Counseling at a Crossroads* (New York: Civic Enterprises with Hart Research for the College Board, 2011). Available at http://civicerprises.net/reports/counseling_at_a_crossroads.pdf



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