



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

# School Counseling in Florida

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**

**John M. Bridgeland  
Mary Bruce**



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.

## THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

### **About the Kresge Foundation**

The Kresge Foundation is a \$3.1 billion private, national foundation that seeks to influence the quality of life for future generations by creating access and opportunity in underserved communities, improving the health of low-income people, supporting artistic expression, increasing college achievement, assisting in the revitalization of Detroit, and advancing methods for addressing global climate change. The foundation has seven programs: Arts and Culture, Community Development, Detroit, Education, Environment, Health, and Human Services. In 2011, the Board of Trustees approved 346 awards totaling \$170 million; \$140 million was paid out to grantees over the course of the year.

For more information, please visit [www.kresge.org](http://www.kresge.org).

# School Counseling in Florida

## A College Board 2011 National Survey of School Counselors State Brief

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.<sup>1</sup> 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 one-third of high schools serving the most Hispanic and African American students offer calculus and only 40 percent offer physics.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> In order to support students in college and career success, and to regain our status as 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 because of 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

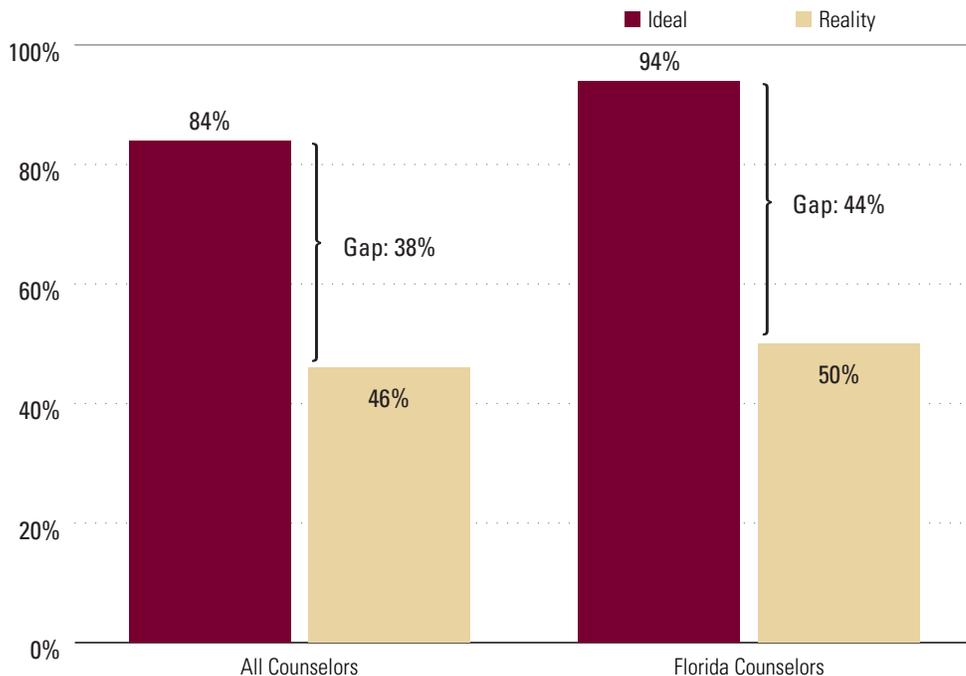
Florida, like the nation, is facing a high school and college completion crisis. This brief, *School Counseling in Florida*, focuses on the unique challenges and opportunities facing school counselors in the Sunshine State. It is a supplement to the *2011 National Survey of School Counselors: Counseling 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 Florida believe that 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 or in their profession.

*Like their peers around the country, Florida counselors report a large gap between the ideal mission of schools and the reality.* Counselors in Florida and nationally do not see college completion and career readiness as being the mission of their schools in reality (39 percent in Florida, compared to 30 percent nationally, rate their schools as a 9 or a 10 on a zero-to-10 scale). Nearly nine in 10 Florida counselors (89 percent) believe it should be the mission of their schools, resulting in a 50-point gap. This gap is slightly smaller than the national trend, which has a 55-point gap (85 percent ideal, compared to 30 percent reality).

*Counselors in Florida report a larger gap than counselors nationally between the ideal mission of the school counseling profession and its reality.* Florida counselors overwhelmingly believe the ideal mission of school counselors should be to graduate students who are college and career ready. Ninety-four percent of counselors gave this mission statement a 9 or a 10 on how well it fits their view for the ideal mission for school counselors, compared to 84 percent nationally (Figure 1). However, far fewer counselors in Florida believe that the college and career ready mission actually fits the mission of school counselors in reality, with only half (50 percent) of Florida and 46 percent of counselors nationally giving it a 9 or a 10. This amounts to a 44 percent gap between the ideal and reality among counselors in Florida and a 38 percent gap among counselors nationally.

**Figure 1:** Counselors in Florida See Larger Gaps in Graduating Students Who Are College and Career Ready



Counselors rating “To ensure that all students reach the end of the 12th grade and earn a high school diploma, ready to succeed in college and career” as a “9” or “10” for the mission of school counselors in their schools in the ideal and in reality.

***Compared to their peers nationally, Florida’s counselors place greater emphasis on high school graduation rates.*** Ninety-three percent of counselors in Florida (compared to 79 percent nationally) rate “to achieve graduation rates that are as close to 100 percent as possible” as a 9 or 10 on how well the statement fits their view of what the role of the school counselor should ideally be. In contrast, only a slight majority (56 percent in Florida and 50 percent nationally) give achieving graduation rates of 100 percent a 9 or a 10 for fitting the role of school counselors in their schools in reality. This amounts to a gap between ideal and reality of 37 points in Florida and 29 points nationally.

**Key Finding:** School counselors in Florida are more likely to believe that their schools take advantage of their ability to serve as a student advocate, deal with the whole student and establish a relationship of trust with their students.

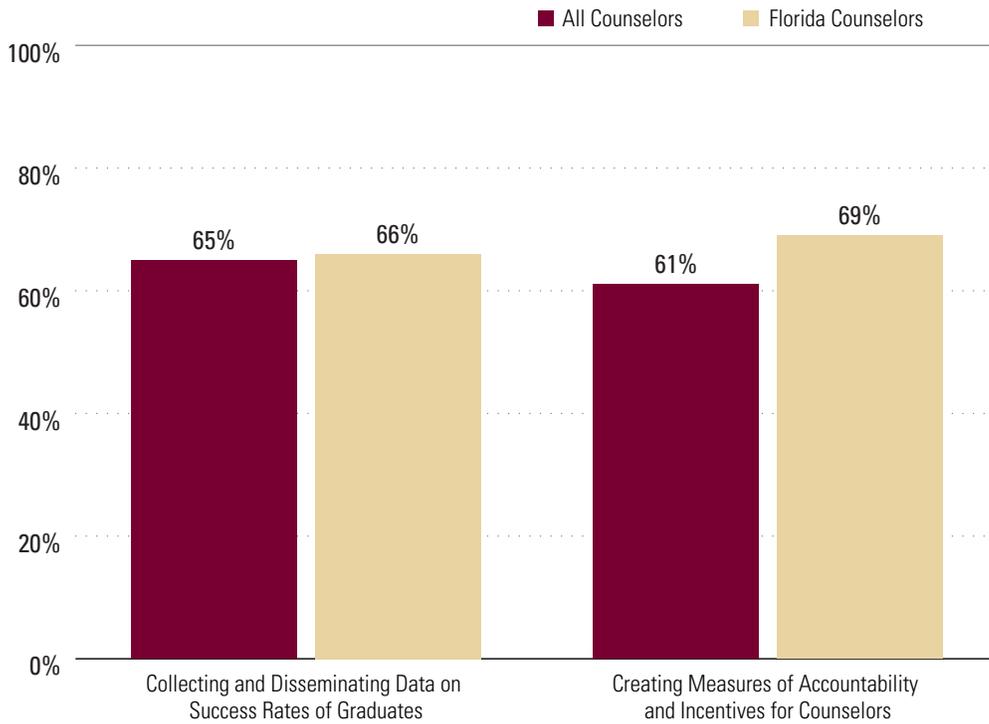
***Like their peers across the country, counselors in Florida believe their ability to act as student advocates is important, but they are more likely to say that their schools utilize this ability.*** Counselors rated the ability to work proactively as a student advocate as one of the most important contributions school counselors can make, with 68 percent of Florida counselors and 74 percent of counselors nationally agreeing. However, Florida counselors are more likely to say that their schools take full advantage of this unique role. One-half (50 percent) of counselors in Florida and 42 percent of counselors nationally rated their schools as a 9 or a 10.

***The connection counselors are able to forge with students is a special priority for counselors in Florida, and they believe that their schools recognize their ability.*** More than six in 10 (65 percent) counselors in Florida and nationally said that their ability to establish a relationship of trust with students is one of their most important roles. The majority of Florida counselors believe that their schools take advantage of this unique contribution (59 percent in Florida, compared to 57 percent nationally). Florida counselors also think that their schools take full advantage of their ability to deal with the whole student, with 48 percent in Florida rating a 9 or a 10, compared to 40 percent nationally.

**Key Finding:** School counselors in Florida believe that 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 Florida are more likely to support a major overhaul of the education system but show similar levels of support for specific educational reform proposals, compared to counselors nationally.*** In order to improve student success, 55 percent of all counselors and 63 percent of counselors in Florida said that major changes or a complete overhaul of the education system are needed. Nearly seven in 10 counselors in Florida support specific reforms such as collecting and disseminating data on the success rates of high school graduates (66 percent, compared to 65 percent nationally). A larger proportion also support the creation of measures of accountability and incentives for counselors (69 percent in Florida, compared to 61 percent nationally [Figure 2]).

**Figure 2:** Counselors in Florida Support Certain Accountability Measures of Counselor Effectiveness



Percentage of counselors who “strongly support” or “somewhat support” these measures of accountability.

***Like counselors across the country, Florida counselors see certain measures of accountability as fair or appropriate.*** Counselors in Florida are most likely to view students’ access to advanced classes and tests 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, 70 percent of Florida counselors rate access to advanced classes as a 6 or higher, compared to 60 percent nationally. Furthermore, Florida counselors rate using high school graduation rates as fair and appropriate, with 66 percent rating it a 6 or higher, compared to 57 percent nationally.

## ***Double-Digit AP® Gains in Florida***

Over the past decade, students in Florida experienced one of the largest national increases in AP® participation rates, with an increase of 25.4 percentage points from 2001 to 2011 of students taking at least one AP Exam during high school (from 22.0 to 47.4 percent).<sup>8</sup> The state has also seen an increase of 436 percent in the number of minority students taking AP Exams and a 449 percent increase in the number of AP Exams taken by minority students.<sup>9</sup> Initiatives like the *Florida Partnership* have helped to create this momentum. Over the past 10 years, this partnership of the Florida Department of Education and the College Board has developed a systematic approach to identify schools in need of support in developing a college-going culture.

However much work remains. AP enrollment is one key area school counselors can directly affect — and school counselors agree. When asked to rate 16 different measures of counselor effectiveness, the highest-rated measure for counselors in Florida was “students gaining access to advanced classes/tests: AP, IB, honors and dual enrollment courses.” Counselors in Florida also endorsed this measure by a full 10 percentage points higher than counselors nationally; one in three strongly endorsed it (with 70 percent of counselors in Florida rating it a 6–10 on a zero-to-10 scale, versus 60 percent nationally, and 33 percent rating it “strongly” with a 9 or a 10 on a zero-to-10 scale, versus 22 percent nationally). Though the number of minority students who received AP Exam scores of 3 or higher increased by more than 280 percent,<sup>10</sup> fewer than half of test-takers statewide (45.2 percent) scored at least one 3 or higher.<sup>11</sup> Counselors in Florida are uniquely positioned to build on the AP momentum in Florida — both because of their unique role within schools to guide student course selection and their stated belief that AP access is a fair and appropriate measure of their effectiveness.

***Counselors in Florida, like their peers nationally, embrace a college and career readiness agenda, but counselors in Florida believe their schools are more successful at achieving these goals.*** 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. Counselors in Florida identified “advancing students’ planning, preparing, participation and performance in a rigorous academic program that connects to their college and career aspirations and goals” as the most important component, with 76 percent of Florida counselors rating it a 9 or a 10, compared to 71 percent nationally. In contrast, only 41 percent of counselors in Florida (and 34 percent nationally) said that their schools are extremely successful at accomplishing this component. Compared to counselors nationally, counselors in Florida are especially enthusiastic about ensuring equity in extracurricular opportunities for all students. Seventy percent of Florida counselors (and 58 percent nationally) said that it’s extremely important “to ensure equitable exposure to a wide range of extracurricular opportunities that build leadership, nurture talents and interests, and increase student engagement.” More Florida counselors also see their schools as achieving this goal; 40 percent of counselors in Florida rate their school as extremely successful, while 32 percent of counselors nationally do the same.

***While counselors in Florida and across the nation generally see themselves as ready to adopt the eight components, they are also less likely to believe that they have the necessary administrative support to do so.*** A majority of counselors in Florida can see themselves committing to the approach outlined by the eight components (92 percent in Florida and 93 percent nationally rate themselves as a 6 through 10 on a zero-to-10 scale; 60 percent compared to 57 percent nationally rate themselves as a 9 or 10). Only half of counselors said that they have the training and skills needed to successfully implement each of the components (54 percent of Florida's counselors and 50 percent nationally rate their training as a 9 or a 10). Even fewer believe that they have the administrative support and resources necessary to successfully implement each of the items: Only 29 percent rate this as a 9 or a 10 in Florida, and only 27 percent of counselors nationally.

# Next Steps

The Florida 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 Florida'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.<sup>12</sup> Now is the time to support school counselors in their efforts — to strengthen the Florida education system and secure its future.

## Notes

1. Robert Balfanz, et al., *Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic, Annual Update 2012* (Baltimore and Washington, DC: 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](http://www.civicerprises.net/reports/Building-A-Grad-Nation-Report-2012_Full_v1.pdf).
2. *The Transformed Civil Rights Data Collection* (Washington, DC: Office for Civil Rights. U.S. Department of Education, March 12, 2012).
3. National Center for Education Statistics, “Table 331: Graduation Rates of First-Time Postsecondary Students Who Started as Full-Time Degree-Seeking Students” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, 2009). Available at [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09\\_331.asp?referrer=report](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_331.asp?referrer=report), in *School Counselors Literature and Landscape Review: The State of School Counseling in America* (New York: Civic Enterprises for the College Board. November 2011). Available at [http://www.civicerprises.net/reports/school\\_counselors\\_literature\\_and\\_landscape\\_review.pdf](http://www.civicerprises.net/reports/school_counselors_literature_and_landscape_review.pdf).
4. Current Population Survey, 2000–2009 (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau).
5. John Bridgeland 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](http://civicerprises.net/reports/counseling_at_a_crossroads.pdf).
6. Bridgeland and Bruce, *2011 National Survey of School Counselors*.
7. *School Counselors Literature and Landscape Review*.
8. *Civic Marshall Plan State Indices: Update 2012* (Baltimore and Washington, DC: The Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University, March 2012). Available at [every1graduates.org](http://every1graduates.org).
9. College Board, “The Florida Partnership” (New York: The College Board, 2012). Accessed June 8, 2012, at <http://www.collegeboard.org/floridapartnership>.
10. College Board, “The Florida Partnership.”
11. *Civic Marshall Plan State Indices: Update 2012*.
12. Bridgeland and Bruce, *2011 National Survey of School Counselors*.



### **About the College Board**

The College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success — including the SAT<sup>®</sup> and the Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup>. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators and schools.

**For further information, visit [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).**

### **The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center**

The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center was established to help transform education in America. Guided by the College Board's principles of excellence and equity in education, we work to ensure that students from all backgrounds have the opportunity to succeed in college and beyond. We make critical connections between policy, research and real-world practice to develop innovative solutions to the most pressing challenges in education today.

**For further information, visit [advocacy.collegeboard.org](http://advocacy.collegeboard.org).**

### **Civic Enterprises**

Civic Enterprises is a public policy firm that helps corporations, nonprofits, foundations, universities and governments develop and spearhead innovative public policies to strengthen our communities and country. Created to enlist the private, public and nonprofit sectors to help address our nation's toughest problems, Civic Enterprises fashions new initiatives and strategies that achieve measurable results in the fields of education, civic engagement, health and many more. For information about Civic Enterprises, please visit their website at **[www.civicerprises.net](http://www.civicerprises.net)**.

### **Hart Research**

Hart Research has been one of America's leading public opinion and strategic research firms for four decades. Throughout that time, Hart has been at the forefront of identifying and understanding Americans' changing expectations, attitudes and behaviors, and views on public policy. Hart Research's clients come from virtually every sector of society, including politics, labor unions, media, nonprofit organizations and for-profit organizations, including many Fortune 500 corporations. For more information about Hart Research, please visit their website at **[www.hartresearch.com](http://www.hartresearch.com)**.