



# Indiana School Counselor Association

“Counselors Care”

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The Indiana School Counselor Association (ISCA) is proud to represent more than 500 men and women across the state whose passion is meeting the academic, social, emotional and personal development needs of children enrolled in K-12 schools across Indiana. Day in and day out, Indiana’s School Counselors promote student success through advocacy, collaboration, professional leadership, and data-driven practices. We strive for excellence each day because when we are able to do our work excellently, Indiana students benefit tremendously.

The members of the ISCA wish to thank the Indiana Chamber of Commerce Foundation for their leadership in commissioning a study released this week, *“Twenty Years After High Hopes Long Odds; School Counseling in 2014”*. We are pleased that the Chamber recognizes the critical importance of school counseling and its connection to positive outcomes for Indiana’s K-12 population. We are hopeful that the report will lead to a robust discussion on the future of school counseling and college and career preparation in Indiana.

The report articulates many of the accomplishments, hopes, achievements and concerns of school counselors in Indiana. It correctly recognizes that Indiana is the national leader in the number of schools receiving the Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program (RAMP) Award. These awards are given to schools that demonstrate evidence of implementing all of the national school counseling program standards. Additionally, more than 150 schools in Indiana have been recognized as Gold Star Schools, a state initiative that recognizes schools which show evidence of implementing all of Indiana’s school counseling program standards.

While we take pride in the number of comprehensively implemented school counseling programs, Indiana’s School Counselors are eager to do much more for the students we are so fortunate to serve. The study illustrates the fact that far too much of school counselors’ time is spent on non-counseling duties. In fact, school counselors report that almost 40% of their time is consumed by responsibilities other than counseling. Make no mistake, it is every counselor’s greatest professional disappointment that we are not able to spend more of our time focusing on what we do best: preparing students for success by assisting them in meeting their social, emotional, academic, personal, and college and career goals.

Too often, school counselors are looked upon as the stop-gap to address the pressing need of the moment rather than as uniquely skilled professionals in a school setting who have a critical impact on student success. Yet, study after study demonstrates that high quality counseling programs have a positive effect on student’s academic achievement, career development, and social and emotional development. If we want to maximize opportunities for our students, access to a comprehensive counseling program beginning in elementary school is critically important. When counselors have the opportunity to engage with students in elementary school a strong foundation for academic success, positive social and emotional development, and college and career preparation is laid. Unfortunately, we see a shrinking number of elementary school counselors in Indiana and often find situations in which one counselor is responsible for several elementary schools in a school corporation.



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If Indiana is serious about improving outcomes for students, then we must have a frank and open conversation about the critical role school counseling plays in meeting that goal. It rings hollow when we publicly insist that student achievement is our state’s top priority while we rank 44<sup>th</sup> nationally in the ratio of counselors to students. Burdening school counselors with an ever increasing load of non-counseling duties does not improve opportunities for student success, particularly when Indiana’s student-counselor ratio is the highest it has been in twenty years.

The Chamber Foundation’s report is a clarion call to action. As citizens and leaders in our state prepare an action plan in response to the data in the report, ISCA stands ready to engage fully in the conversation and is committed to leading the effort to design a system that creates positive outcomes for Indiana children. It is critical that school counselors be invited to join business and industry leaders and policy makers in shaping the future of college and career education and readiness in Indiana. For the sake of Indiana’s K-12 students, let the conversation begin.

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