

Counselors in Texas Public Schools

Every effort should be made to relieve counselors of extraneous tasks so that they may appropriately meet their responsibilities to consult and counsel with students as to their individual educational needs, goals, and aims.

*State Board of Education rules on
general responsibilities of school districts
(Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part II, §75.2)*

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) recently concluded a five-year investigation of the effects of education reform on students identified as at risk of school failure. Among other findings, the study revealed discrepancies between the role of the school counselor as envisioned in state and national models of counseling and guidance programs and the counselor's actual duties as reported in the field. In case studies, students and school staff consistently expressed frustration over the lack of time available for counseling and guidance services. Teachers reported they often counseled students because counselors were too busy — burdened with tasks unrelated to guidance. Counselors confirmed that extraneous duties, especially those related to paperwork and testing, prevented them from adequately satisfying the demand for counseling services.

As the student population grows more diverse and the challenges students face more complex, the need for counseling and guidance is rapidly increasing. This report introduces a two-year study of counseling and guidance programs in Texas public schools. In September 1994, TEA will

Policy Research Report

conduct a statewide survey of a representative sample of public school counselors. The survey will focus on the role of the counselor and include questions about the counselor's current duties, the appropriate role of the counselor, and the staffing needs of guidance programs. The survey will also explore the topics of job stress and staff development needs.

During the next phase of the study, staff will conduct intensive case studies at a small number of districts. The case studies will incorporate individual and focus group interviews with counselors, teachers, principals, students, and possibly parents. Focus group interviews are conducted in a discussion setting that allows interaction between group members as well as with the interviewer. Through an in-depth study of a few sites, the role of the counselor will be examined within the broader context of the entire educational program and school-wide staffing configurations. The case studies will also explore indicators of program success.

The final phase of the study will look at data related to supply and demand of counselors. TEA is

involved in a cooperative research project with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) to develop a behavioral model of educator supply and demand for Texas and the southern region of the United States. The SREB is integrating data gathered from state agencies in each state to follow prospective educators from the time they enter college through their professional careers. A separate analysis of counselor supply and demand will be produced as part of the joint TEA/SREB project. A longitudinal analysis of Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data will provide additional information related to topics such as mobility of counselors.

Guidance Programs

Published as a model by TEA in 1990, the *Comprehensive Guidance Program for Texas Public Schools* describes four components of the comprehensive guidance program: a guidance curriculum, responsive services, an individual planning system, and system support. The guidance curriculum provides students information and instruction related to skills needed in everyday life. Areas

(Continued on Page 2)

Policy Research Report

Components of a Comprehensive School Guidance Program and Roles of the Counselor

Components

Role of the Counselor

Guidance Curriculum: Provides guidance content in a systematic way to all students.

Guidance: Teach the school developmental guidance curriculum.

Assist teachers in the teaching of guidance related curriculum.

Responsive Services: Addresses immediate concerns of students.

Counseling: Counsel with students individually about their concerns.

Counsel with small groups of students about their concerns.

Use accepted theories and techniques appropriate to school counseling.

Consultation: Consult with parents, teachers, administrators, and other relevant individuals to enhance their work with students.

Coordination: Coordinate with school and community personnel to bring together resources for students.

Use an effective referral process to help students and others use special programs and services.

Assessment: Use student data other than test and appraisal results appropriately for assessment purposes.

Individual Planning: Helps students monitor and understand their own development.

Guidance: Guide individuals and groups of students through the development of educational, career, and personal plans.

Consultation: Consult with parents, teachers, administrators, and other relevant individuals to enhance their work with students.

Assessment: Interpret test and other appraisal results appropriately.

System Support: Includes program and staff support activities and services.

Program Management: Plan, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive program of guidance, including counseling services.

Supervise activities of clerical, paraprofessional, and volunteer personnel.

Assessment: Help plan and evaluate the district/campus group standardized testing program.

(Continued from page 1)

addressed in the curriculum include self-esteem development, problem solving skills, and communication skills.

Responsive services address immediate academic and relationship concerns of students, as well as student misbehavior and dropout prevention. The individual planning system helps students monitor and understand their own development and to plan and set goals. System support includes guidance program development and counselor professional development, consultation with teachers and administrators, parent education, and school improvement planning.

The comprehensive guidance program is a program for all students, not just those identified as at risk of failure, and it is a developmental and preventive program. Through coordination with teachers, administrators, and other school staff the guidance program is integrated into the education program. Through coordination with school and community services, counselors bring together resources for students and use an effective referral process to assist students. As developmental specialists counselors recognize students' needs and see that those needs are met, but are not necessarily the individuals who deliver all services.

Role of the Counselor

As presented in the table on page 2, the TEA model outlines six basic roles of the counselor: guidance, counseling, consultation, coordination, assessment, and program management. In their guidance role, counselors teach and assist instructors who teach the guidance curriculum and help students develop educational, career, and personal plans. Counselors use accepted theories and appropriate techniques to counsel with individuals and small groups of students about their immediate concerns. Counselors

also consult with parents, teachers, administrators, representatives of youth and social service organizations, and other members of the community to better address students' immediate concerns and assist them with individual planning.

Counselors coordinate with school and community personnel to bring together resources for students and refer students to special programs and services. Counselors help plan and evaluate the campus testing program as well as interpret results and use other sources of student data for assessment purposes. In their program management role, counselors plan, implement, and evaluate counseling and guidance programs and supervise staff.

The Texas model for a comprehensive school guidance program includes counselor professional development as part of the system support component. Professional development has a prominent place in the American School Counselor Association model. Professional development includes staff development and the continuous learning necessary to be a developmental specialist. It might also include enhancing research skills and keeping up to date with important developments in the counseling field.

According to the comprehensive guidance model, counselors' focus on the four components of the guidance program should shift depending on the developmental level of the students on the campus. For example, as Chart 1 shows, the guidance curriculum should receive more attention in elementary and middle school. As students get older, counselors should place more emphasis on individual planning. The actual amount of time spent on each program is determined at the campus level by the counselor and principal in conjunction with teachers, parents, and others based on an assessment of the needs on the campus.

Texas Policy Overview

Texas state laws and State Board of Education (SBOE) rules related to guidance programs and counselors in public schools changed very little in the decades preceding the 1990s. In 1990 the Texas Legislature directed the SBOE to conduct a sunset review of all existing Texas Education Agency (TEA) rules. The sunset legislation included a three-year schedule specifying when each rule would become void and the SBOE would need to adopt new rules. That review process set in motion a series of changes that continues to affect guidance policy.

Chart 1 Recommended Time Distribution Across Components of the Comprehensive Guidance Program			
Component	Elementary Schools	Middle/Junior High Schools	High Schools
Guidance Curricula	35% - 45%	35% - 40%	15% - 25%
Responsive Services	30% - 40%	30% - 40%	25% - 35%
Individual Planning	5% - 10%	15% - 25%	25% - 35%
System Support	10% - 15%	10% - 15%	15% - 20%
Non-Guidance	0%	0%	0%

As students get older, the emphasis on the individual planning and system support components of the guidance program increases.

Guidance Programs

In 1976 the SBOE adopted rules describing a comprehensive guidance program that was to be incorporated as part of the educational program in public schools. The rules were amended in 1979, then remained unchanged until 1991. In 1991, the first year of the sunset review process, rules related to guidance programs were repealed because the SBOE did not have specific statutory authority to adopt rules in this area. The SBOE's general rule making authority was

repealed as part of the same bill that included the sunset legislation. That same year the Texas Legislature added the presence and quality of comprehensive and developmental guidance and counseling programs to the accreditation criteria in law.

Before 1989, powers and duties of the SBOE laid out in the Texas Education Code (TEC) prevented the SBOE from adopting any policy that would require a district, as a prerequisite for accreditation, to hire a guidance counselor. This restriction was

repealed in 1989. In 1992 the accreditation rules were repealed and revised accreditation rules were adopted as part of the sunset process. In the process, the SBOE added the new criteria for accreditation from the law to the rules.

Legislation passed in 1993 pulled together in one chapter and redirected the focus of Texas laws related to public school system accountability. In response the SBOE amended the planning and accreditation rules to move the state from the process-driven accreditation system to a performance accountability system. The accreditation criteria related to a comprehensive guidance program did not survive this change in TEA rules but remains in law.

Counselor Certification Requirements

Requirements for certification as a school counselor established by the SBOE in 1955 remain in effect today. The requirements, detailed in Chart 2, are a bachelor's degree, a Texas teaching certificate, three years of teaching experience, and 30 hours of graduate course work in counseling. Although a master's degree is not required by SBOE rule, all of the 34 counselor preparation programs at Texas colleges and universities require completion of a master's degree for certification as a counselor. As Chart 3 shows, 92 percent of the counselors in Texas schools in 1993-94 have a master's degree or higher. Almost 20 percent of those without a master's degree are on emergency permits.

In 1993 the SBOE conducted the sunset review of rules related to professional educator preparation programs. Besides readopting existing program requirements for certification, the SBOE adopted a plan that will move the state away from the current process-driven system of approving educator preparation programs. Rules specifying the types of courses

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Chart 2 Requirements for Counselor Certification in Texas

Professional Counselor Certificate

- Bachelor's degree
- Texas teacher certificate, special education certificate, or vocational certificate that requires a bachelor's degree
- Three years of teaching experience
- 30 semester hour graduate program in counseling that includes
 - (1) three semester hours in the guidance program;
 - (2) six semester hours related to the pupil served: intensive study that develops an understanding of the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development of children and youth, and influences of the school program on development; and
 - (3) 21 semester hours related to the resource area: courses in educational and occupational information, testing, guidance techniques, and supervised practicum
- ExCET requirement: Counselor

Professional Special Education Counselor Certificate

- Professional counselor certificate
- Six semester hours in special education

Professional Vocational Counselor Certificate

- Professional counselor certificate
- 12 semester hours of specified vocational guidance courses
- Three years of experience in an occupation for which vocational education is being conducted in the Texas public secondary schools (may also include up to two years teaching experience)

Gender of Counselors

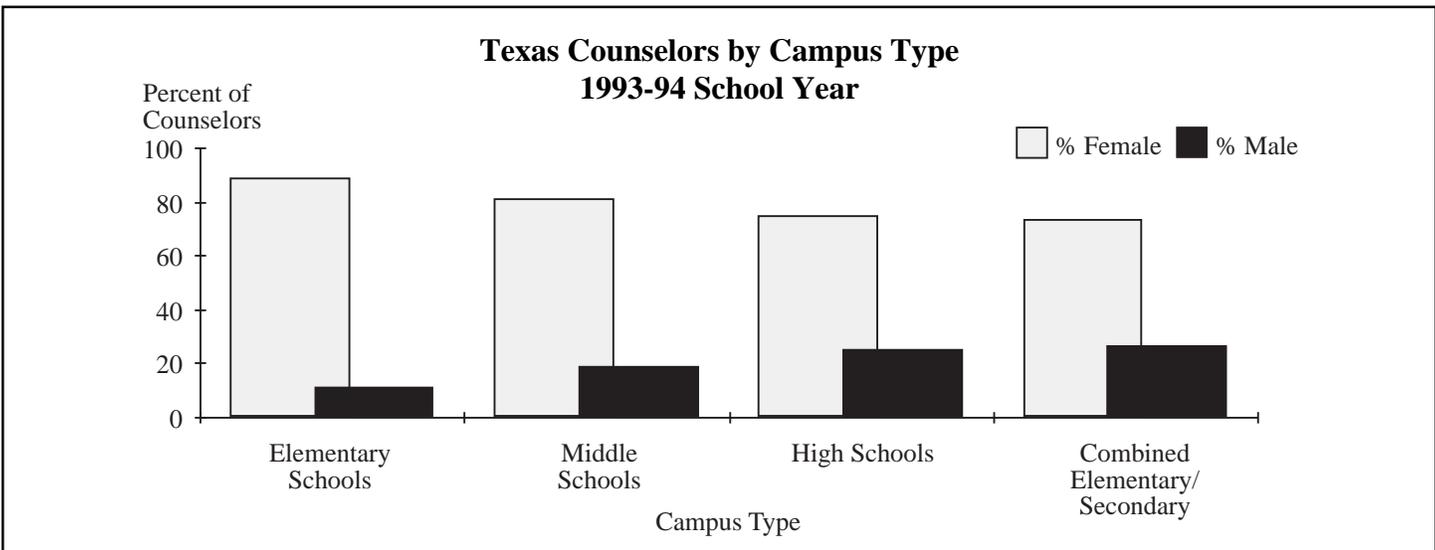
There are 1,370 male counselors on Texas campuses, 18 percent of all counselors. As with teachers, there are more male counselors on high school campuses than middle school and elementary campuses. One-fourth of high school counselors are male compared to 11 percent of elementary school counselors. Although the gender makeup of the counseling staff does not vary consistently with campus size, the smallest campuses have considerably larger proportions of male counselors. One-third of the counselors on campuses with fewer than 100 students are male.

Campuses with more than 50 percent Hispanic students have more male counselors than campuses with fewer Hispanic students. This pattern is reversed on campuses with more than 50 percent African American students, which have fewer male counselors. Campuses with high percentages of African American students also have higher percentages of African American counselors than other campuses. The low percent of male counselors on these campuses may reflect in part the small number of African American male educators.

As the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in a district increases, the percentage of male counselors also increases. Students are classified as economically disadvantaged if they meet any of a number of conditions such as being eligible for free and reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program or having a family income below the poverty line. One third of counselors in *districts* with more than 80 percent economically disadvantaged students are male.

However, male counselors are not as often assigned to *campuses* with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students. Only 21 percent of counselors on campuses with more than 80 percent economically disadvantaged students are male.

	Percent Male	Percent Female
Campus Size		
Over 1,000	22	78
700 to 1,000	17	83
500 to 700	14	86
250 to 500	13	87
100 to 250	23	77
Under 100	34	66
Percent Hispanic Students		
Under 5%	14	86
5% to 10%	15	85
10% to 20%	16	84
20% to 30%	17	83
30% to 50%	17	83
Over 50%	24	76
Percent African American Students		
Under 5%	21	79
5% to 10%	17	83
10% to 20%	17	83
20% to 30%	15	85
30% to 50%	16	84
Over 50%	15	85
Percent Economically Disadvantaged Students		
Under 20%	17	83
20% to 30%	16	84
30% to 40%	17	83
40% to 60%	19	81
60% to 80%	19	81
Over 80%	21	79
State Total	18	82



(Continued from page 4)

prospective teachers and professional support staff must complete will be replaced with proficiencies. In 1994 the SBOE approved proficiencies for teachers and administrators. Counselor proficiencies being developed by the Commission on Standards for the Teaching Profession, Texas Counseling Association, and TEA are scheduled for approval by the SBOE in 1995. The counselor proficiencies will describe what counselors are expected to know and be able to do. Like the teacher and administrator proficiencies, the counselor proficiencies will be founded on a learner-centered environment. As a learner-centered professional the counselor will focus on what students need rather than the needs of the guidance program. This shift in focus may ultimately lead to a restructuring of counselor preparation programs.

ExCET Examination

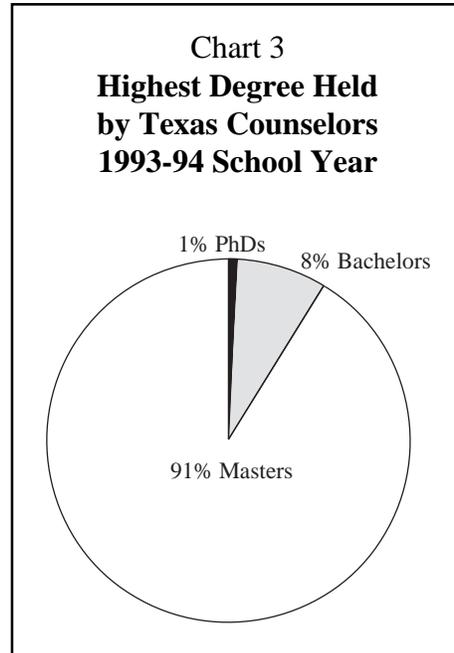
In 1986 the Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET) was added as a requirement for certification as a counselor. Test objectives for the counseling examination cover guidance programs, human development and learning theory, measurement and appraisal, individual and group counseling and career development. These objectives will be replaced in the next year with test competencies from which a new ExCET examination will be developed. The test competencies will reflect the same shift in focus from what prospective counselors are taught to what they should know and be able to do. The new competencies will emphasize understanding learners, promoting learners' growth and achievement, and counseling in the learner-centered environment.

Counseling Assignment

SBOE rules related to credentials and assignments were reviewed in 1993 along with the rules related to educator preparation. In response to

concerns about the shortage of certified counselors, the SBOE initially proposed adding a student services specialist position to the list of assignments to be readopted. The student services specialist would have been assigned to special counseling programs such as drug education programs, programs for students at risk of dropping out of school, and family crisis intervention. A TEA counselor certificate is required for assignment as a school counselor. As proposed, psychologists, social workers, and counselors certified by the Texas Department of Human Services would have been eligible for assignment as student services specialists, in addition to TEA certified counselors. The position was deleted before the new list of assignments was adopted due to concerns about assigning individuals who did not have the credentials required for certification as a counselor by TEA.

Teacher shortage areas are identified in Texas based on the



Although Texas does not require a master's degree for certification as a counselor, all of the counselor preparation programs in the state offer counseling as a master's program.

percent of teachers in each program or subject area who have emergency teaching permits because they are not fully qualified to teach the classes to which they are assigned. The 1994-95 teacher shortage areas, based on 1992-93 permits, range from a high of 7.9 percent of bilingual education/English as a second language teachers to a low of 3.2 percent of high school mathematics teachers on emergency permits. About 3.6 percent of 1993-94 counselors have emergency permits.

Funding for Guidance Programs

The Texas school finance system distributes state funds to school districts based on the number of students in each district and district tax effort. These funds, combined with local property tax revenues, are the primary source of funding for educational programs and support services in schools. State and local revenues are supplemented with federal funds distributed to school districts under programs such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Chapter 1 program for economically disadvantaged students.

The number of students per counselor generally varies in Texas by district operating expenditures per pupil, although the highest spending districts do not have the lowest student/counselor ratios. Much greater variation exists between campuses. As Chart 4 shows, campuses with instructional expenditures below \$2,000 per pupil have an average of 559 students per counselor, compared to 296 students per counselor in campuses with instructional expenditures over \$3,400 per pupil.

In 1991 the Texas Legislature added language to the school finance provisions earmarking \$5 million of the state compensatory education allotment each year for elementary school counseling programs. In 1993 they increased the amount to

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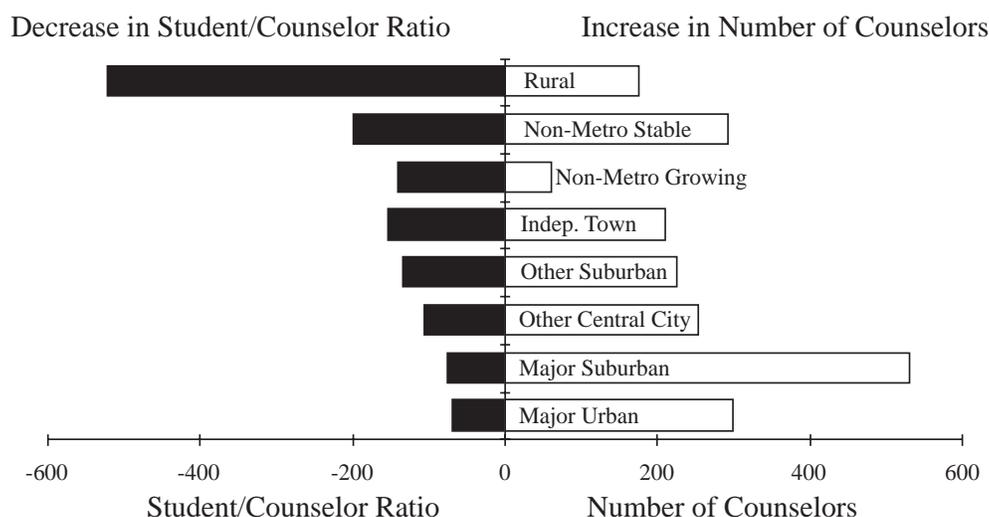
Counseling Staff Trends — 1988-89 to 1993-94

The greatest increase in number of counselors between the 1988-89 and 1993-94 school years occurred in the major urban districts and the suburban districts in and around the ten major urban districts. Most of this increase was driven by student growth. Student/counselor ratios in the major urban and suburban districts show the least change in the state. The greatest change in student/counselor ratios over the past five years occurred in rural districts, where the number of students per counselor was cut in half. The decrease in student/counselor ratios in rural districts is due almost entirely to adding counselors in schools that had no counselor in 1988-89. The student/

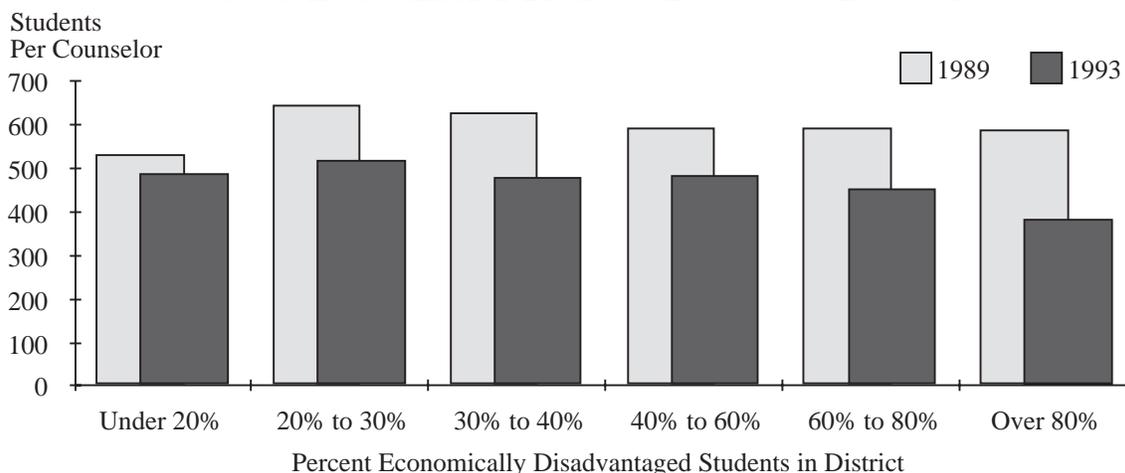
counselor ratios on rural campuses with counselors averaged 380 students per counselor in 1988-89 compared to 371 in 1993-94.

Districts with the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students experienced the greatest decrease in student/counselor ratios between 1988-89 and 1993-94. Districts with over 80 percent economically disadvantaged students now have the lowest average student/counselor ratio, compared to districts with fewer economically disadvantaged students.

Growth of Counseling Staffs — 1988-89 to 1993-94



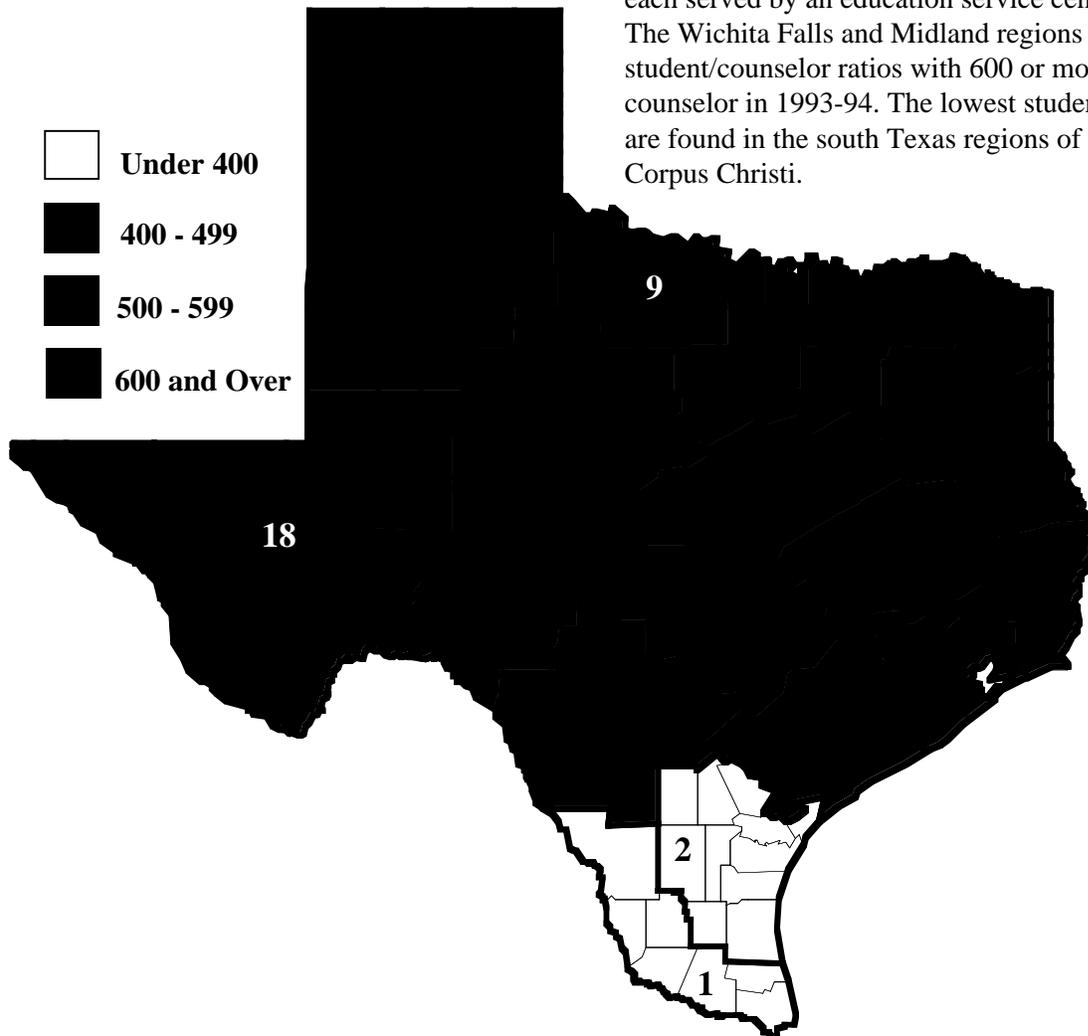
Student/Counselor Ratio — 1988-89 to 1993-94



Student/Counselor Ratio by Education Service Center Region

ESC	Students Per Counselor	ESC	Students Per Counselor		
1	Edinburg	396	11	Fort Worth	528
2	Corpus Christi	380	12	Waco	556
3	Victoria	470	13	Austin	438
4	Houston	499	14	Abilene	460
5	Beaumont	500	15	San Angelo	506
6	Huntsville	490	16	Amarillo	453
7	Kilgore	509	17	Lubbock	508
8	Mt. Pleasant	457	18	Midland	600
9	Wichita Falls	618	19	El Paso	545
10	Richardson	487	20	San Antonio	401

Texas is divided into 20 geographic regions, each served by an education service center (ESC). The Wichita Falls and Midland regions have the highest student/counselor ratios with 600 or more students per counselor in 1993-94. The lowest student/counselor ratios are found in the south Texas regions of Edinburg and Corpus Christi.



(Continued from page 6)

\$7.5 million. School districts must apply for the funds. The law specifies the duties of counselors employed with these funds, outlines components of the guidance program, and specifies a student/counselor ratio of not more than 500 students per counselor. These funds must be used to implement a guidance program or enhance the existing guidance program in the district. In distributing the funds, preference is given to districts with high percentages of students identified as at risk of school failure.

TEC Revision

In 1993 the Texas Legislature passed sunset legislation for the Texas Education Code (TEC), directing the commissioner of education to submit proposed revisions before the next legislative session. With the exception of the two chapters containing laws related to public school finance, the

TEC will become void and new laws must be adopted by the legislature. State professional counseling associations advocate expanding the law describing the role of counselors employed with earmarked state funds to cover all counselors. They report that counselors employed under this legislation are not burdened with administrative and clerical duties unrelated to the guidance program. The commissioner feels this would not be consistent with his emphasis on accountability and deregulation in the TEC revision. His recommendations, transmitted to the legislature in July 1994, modify the language describing the role of counselors but do not expand the law to cover all counselors.

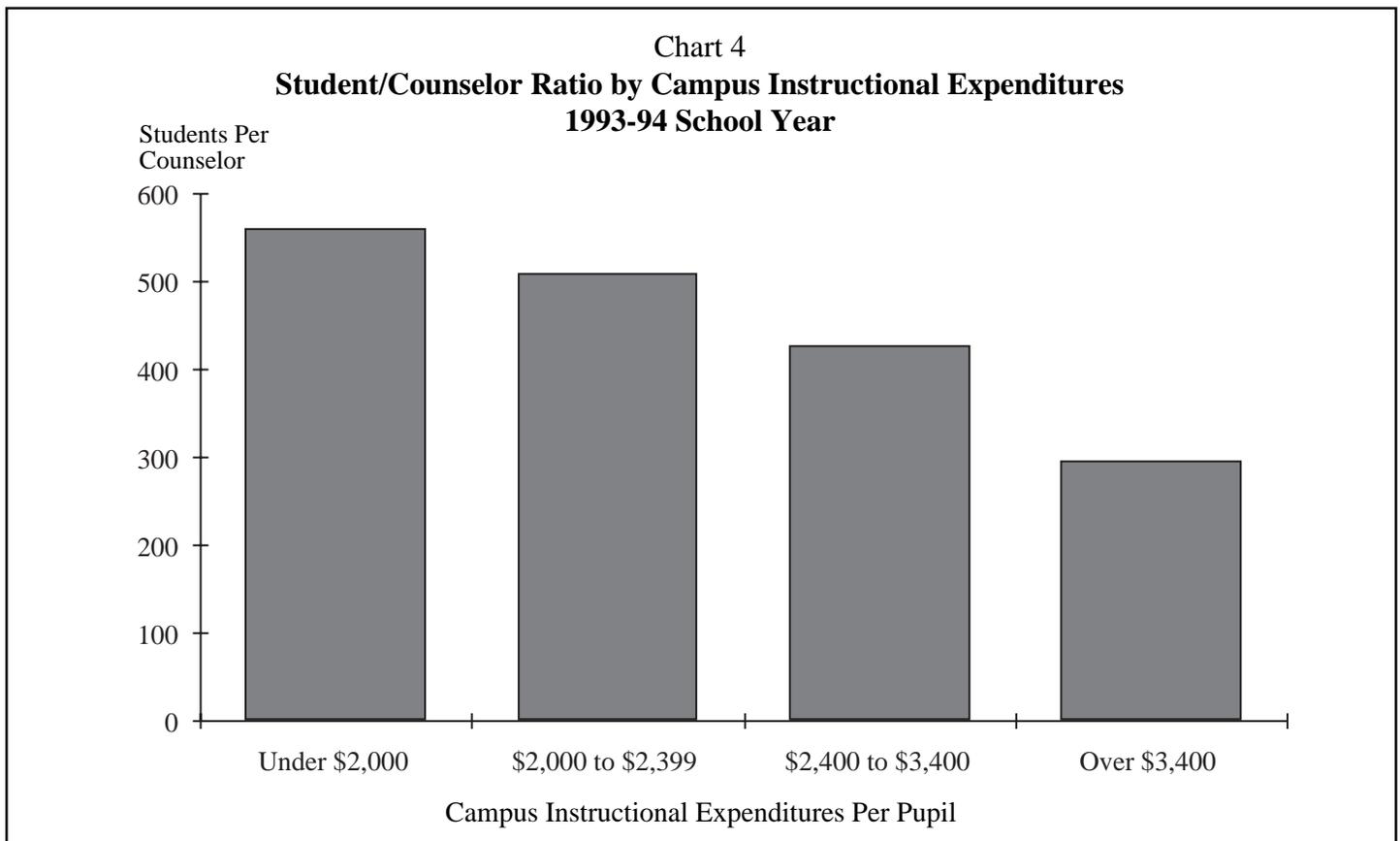
Future Policy Directions

Recent actions of the SBOE and Texas Legislature reflect a shared

concern about the availability of counselors for public school students. The same concern was voiced by the governor at the April 1994 joint meeting of the SBOE and Texas Juvenile Probation Commission. This concern will undoubtedly resurface as counselor proficiencies and ExCET competencies are developed over the next year, and the Texas Legislature reexamines funding priorities in an atmosphere of fiscal constraint.

Profile of the Texas Counselor

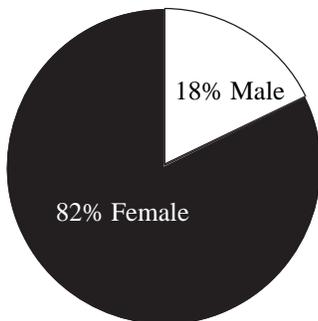
The analyses throughout this report are based on the 7,558 full-time equivalent counselors assigned to Texas public schools in 1993-94. An additional 222 counselors are employed by districts and cooperatives of districts but not assigned to campuses.



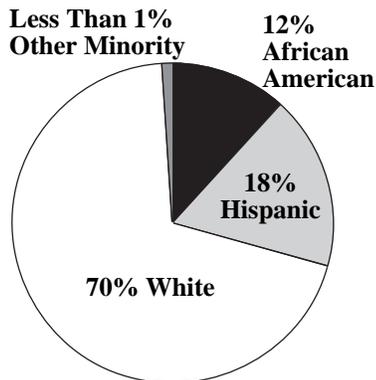
The number of students per counselor on a campus is related to the instructional expenditures, both of which are related to campus type. High school campuses typically have higher expenditures and lower student/counselor ratios than middle or elementary schools.

**Chart 5
Demographic Characteristics
of Texas Counselors
1993-94 School Year**

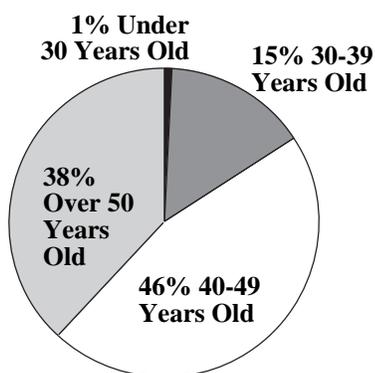
Gender



Ethnicity



Age



Texas counselors, like teachers, are predominantly female. They are also predominantly white, although almost 30 percent are Hispanic, African American, and other minorities. The average counselor age is 47; only 16 percent are under 40.

Few national data on school counselors are available. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) estimates the number of guidance counselors and directors nationally based on data reported by the states. Guidance counselors and directors are defined as professional staff members assigned specific duties and school time for counseling students and parents. In 1991-92, the most recent year for which NCES data are available, Texas reported 8,648 guidance counselors and directors under this definition. This accounted for 2.6 percent of total staff. Nationally, guidance counselors and directors made up 1.8 percent of total staff.

Like the teaching force, the Texas counseling staff is predominantly female. As Chart 5 shows, 82 percent of Texas counselors are female. Although Texas counselors as a group are more diverse than teachers, they do not reflect the racial/ethnic diversity of the student body. Chart 5 also shows counselors by race/ethnicity. Almost 30 percent of counselors are Hispanic, African American, or other racial/ethnic minorities, compared to over half of all students.

Chart 6 shows the change in number and percent of counselors by race/ethnicity since 1988-89. The number of counselors increased by 37 percent over this five-year period. The number of Hispanic counselors increased by 65 percent, growing from 15 percent to 18 percent of all counselors. The number of African American counselors grew at a much slower rate. Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET) results for 1993-94 show this trend continuing. Almost 20 percent of the 762 ExCET examinees who passed the counselor examination were Hispanic. Only five percent were African American.

Texas counselors range in age from 25 to 80 years old. The average age is 47. As Chart 5 shows, only one

percent of counselors are under 30 and 16 percent are under 40. Almost half of all counselors are between the ages of 40 and 49. Hispanic counselors as a group are slightly younger; their average age is 45. African American counselors are slightly older, with an average age of 49. Texas counselors, on the average, have 18 years of professional experience (including teaching experience) and 11 years of tenure in the district.

The average counselor salary is \$38,144 per year. Counselor salaries are typically higher in districts that also have higher teacher salaries. Larger districts and districts in urban areas, for example, pay higher counselor salaries.

District operating expenditures are not related to counselor salaries. However, district wealth and tax effort are both related to counselor salaries. Wealth, taxable property value per student, is an indicator of a district's ability to raise local revenues. Wealthier districts pay slightly higher counselor salaries. Districts with total tax rates over \$1.3367 have average counselor salaries that are about \$3,500 higher than salaries in the districts with total tax rates under \$1.1297.

In 1993-94, a total of 1,085 campuses with 267,316 students do not have even a part-time counselor. This represents 17 percent of the 6,300 campuses and over seven percent of the students in Texas. Since the se data were reported in October 1993, they may include schools in which the counseling position was vacant in the fall of the 1993-94 school year. Over half of the schools with no counselor have fewer than 200 students and 85 percent have fewer than 500 students.

Almost twenty percent of campuses have less than a full-time counselor. Many of these campuses
(Continued on page 12)

Race/Ethnicity of Counselors

The patterns of racial and ethnic diversity of counselors in Texas are similar to those of teachers. African American counselors are employed predominantly in the major urban districts. Major urban districts are the ten largest school districts that serve the metropolitan areas of Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio. Fifty-six percent of African American counselors are employed in the major urban districts, making up 30 percent of their counseling staffs.

Although the greatest number of Hispanic counselors are employed in major urban districts, they comprise the largest proportion of counselors in other central cities and their suburbs. Other central city school districts are major districts in large Texas cities outside the major metropolitan areas. The suburban districts are located in and around the central city districts. The smallest percentages of minority counselors are found in rural districts and suburban districts in and around the major urban districts.

As might be expected, over half of the counselors in the border regions of Edinburg and El Paso are Hispanic. Schools in the Corpus Christi and San Antonio education service center (ESC) regions average 40 and 30 percent Hispanic counselors, respectively. Statewide 35 percent of students are Hispanic. The Houston and Beaumont ESC regions have the largest percentages of African American counselors, over 25 percent. The Richardson and Waco ESC regions have 17 and 12 percent African American counselors. Fourteen percent of Texas students are African American.

The panhandle and north central regions of Wichita Falls, Abilene, Amarillo, and Lubbock all have over 90 percent white counselors. These regions also have over 90 percent white teachers. The ethnic makeup of the student body is predominantly white and Hispanic.

There is some correspondence between the race/ethnicity of counselors and students. Half of the counselors are minorities in the 254 districts in which 50 percent or more of the students are minorities. Districts in which fewer than five percent of the students are minorities have no minority counselors.

Number of Districts		Percent White	Percent Hispanic	Percent African American
District Type				
10	Major Urban	47	23	30
62	Major Suburban	85	8	7
24	Other Central City	62	29	9
76	Other CC Suburban	58	35	7
71	Independent Town	79	14	7
62	Non-Metro Fast Growing	73	23	3
253	Non-Metro Stable	84	11	5
487	Rural	94	6	1
ESC Region				
38	I Edinburg	19	81	0
42	II Corpus Christi	56	40	3
41	III Victoria	85	9	7
55	IV Houston	68	6	26
29	V Beaumont	70	1	29
57	VI Huntsville	87	3	10
98	VII Kilgore	89	1	10
48	VIII Mt. Pleasant	88	0	11
40	IX Wichita Falls	99	0	1
79	X Richardson	77	6	17
77	XI Fort Worth	88	3	9
78	XII Waco	86	2	12
56	XIII Austin	81	12	7
43	XIV Abilene	96	0	4
43	XV San Angelo	80	19	1
65	XVI Amarillo	93	6	1
61	XVII Lubbock	92	5	2
33	XVIII Midland	83	11	5
12	XIX El Paso	43	53	3
50	XX San Antonio	63	30	8
Percent Minority Students				
83	Under 5%	100	0	0
136	5% to 10%	99	0	1
192	10% to 20%	96	1	2
149	20% to 30%	93	3	5
231	30% to 50%	88	4	8
254	Over 50%	50	31	18
State Total		70	18	12

Note: Percent Other Minority rounds to zero for all categories of districts.

(Continued from page 10)

share a counselor with other campuses in the district or region. Forty percent of campuses have one full-time counselor. The remaining 24 percent of campuses have more than one counselor.

Student/Counselor Ratio

The student/counselor ratio, or number of students per counselor, is used to compare both counselor work load and student access to guidance programs across districts and campuses of different sizes. Statewide there is an average of 476 students per counselor in 1993-94. This compares to 595 students per counselor in 1988-89.

Student/counselor ratios vary widely across Texas school districts. As noted earlier, these ratios are related to district and campus expenditures per pupil. School district wealth, however, is not related to student/counselor ratio. In 1993-94 low wealth districts have student/counselor ratios very similar to those in high wealth districts. As illustrated in Chart 7, this equalizing of student/counselor ratios has taken place since 1988-89. Equalizing of the state school finance system and the ear-

marking of state funds for counseling may explain in part the equalization of student/counselor ratios over the past five years.

As Chart 8 shows, the campus student/counselor ratio is partly determined by whether the campus is large enough to have a full-time counselor, or to add counselors to the staff. Campuses with between 500 and 700 students have the highest student/counselor ratios. These campuses are large enough to employ a full-time counselor, but not large enough to employ a second counselor. Larger campuses are able to employ additional counselors to lower their student/counselor ratios. Smaller campuses share a counselor between two or more campuses. They have smaller student/counselor ratios but do not have a counselor on campus full time.

Chart 9 shows that student/counselor ratios are lower in secondary than elementary schools. With an average of 338 students per counselor, high schools meet the 350 to one ratio recommended by state professional education associations, including the Texas School Counselor Association. Elementary schools, by contrast, have

an average student/counselor ratio of 646 to one.

Campuses with lower Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) passing rates also have lower student/counselor ratios, suggesting that counseling programs focus on students at risk of failing or dropping out of school. Chart 10 shows this pattern persists regardless of the percent of students on the campus who are economically disadvantaged.

Issues Related to the Role of the Counselor

One goal of this research and evaluation study is to explore questions surrounding the professional identity of the counselor. In *School Counselor Role Statement: Fact or Fiction*, Carter reports that the majority of counselors surveyed view themselves as developmental in orientation. However, in practice, it seems counselors do not often perform developmental tasks. In *How They View Their Role: A Survey of Counselors in Different Secondary Schools*, Tennyson finds that most counselors surveyed seldom engage in preventive activities such as facilitating self-awareness through small group processes; developing interpersonal skills; teaching decision making; promoting social development; or using any formal measures to assess students' developmental needs and maturity.

Instead, counselor roles continue to focus on remediation of students with special needs, especially those identified as at risk. Over 40 percent of students in Texas public schools are categorized as being at risk of school failure. This remedial, or "crisis-oriented," approach combined with the increasing importance of assessment for school accountability may emphasize the counselor's role related to assessment and expand that role to one of a testing coordinator.

**Chart 6
Change in Number of Counselors by Ethnicity
1988-89 to 1993-94**

Counselors	1988 – 89	1993 – 94
White	3,958 (72%)	5,305 (70%)
Hispanic	806 (15%)	1,331 (18%)
African American	718 (13%)	898 (12%)
Other Minority	14 (0.3%)	24 (0.3%)
TOTAL	5,497 (100%)	7,558 (100%)

The Texas counseling staff increased by 2,061 counselors in the five years from 1988-89 to 1993-94. The diversity of counselors as a group changed little.

In its February 1994 newsletter, the Texas Association for Assessment in Counseling published the results of an informal survey conducted at a state conference in which counselors reported concerns about their assessment duties. Counselors were concerned about being used as clerical help and felt some duties associated with assessment are an inappropriate use of time for any professional. They felt assessment duties take too much time away from more appropriate counseling functions, misusing limited guidance funds, and the demands of assessment duties create unnecessary stress for counselors. Counselors were also concerned about their image as “police” or “warehouse custodians.”

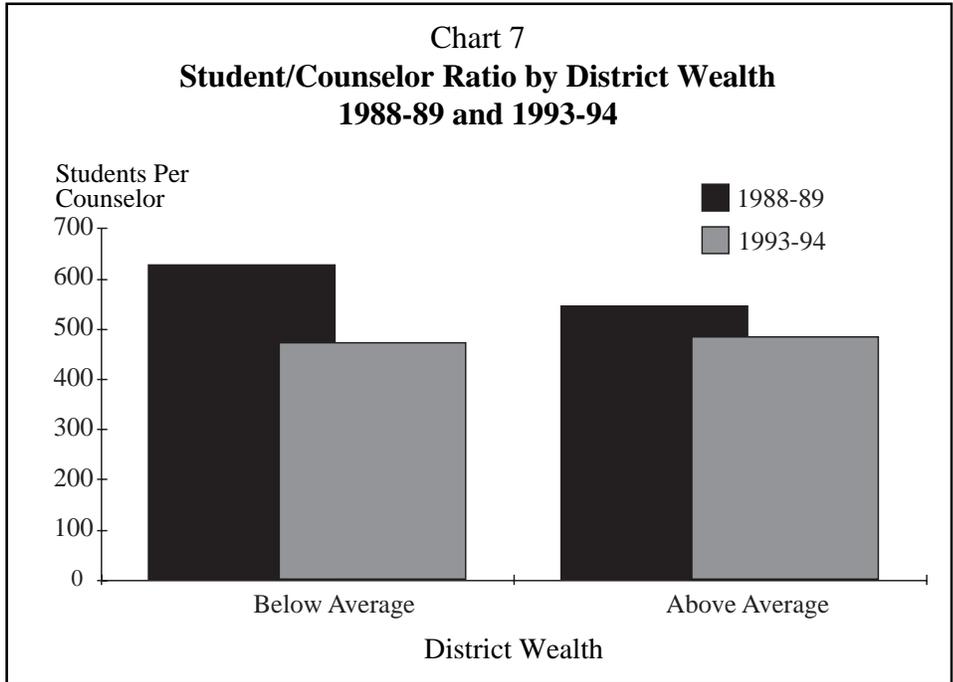
Time management is one of the greatest concerns of counselors. Besides assessment, counselors are also assigned numerous non-guidance duties such as scheduling, discipline, and various paraprofessional tasks that interfere with their abilities to establish preventive, developmental programs.

Viewing counseling as related only to academic assessment and career guidance appears to be problematic. Studies continue to advocate that preventive, developmental guidance and counseling should also be part of the educational process. A recognition of the close relationship between students’ personal growth and their academic development underlies this view and supports the integration of these programs. This position is echoed throughout the State Board of Education policy statements on early childhood and elementary school, middle school, and high school education.

In an effort to address the developmental needs of all students, counselors pursue preventive activities before risk behaviors occur.

Primary prevention activities deal with the basic needs of all students, and secondary prevention targets more specific concerns once an individual has displayed certain characteristics that place him or her at a higher risk. A balanced program contains both elements and must be age-appropriate for the different developmental stages students undergo from prekindergarten through grade 12.

Because their work involves students from many different age groups, counselors feel developmental guidance must also be reinforced through the staff development process. Studies, including the Texas evaluation study of prekindergarten education programs being conducted by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), report that current educational practices do not always adhere to pedagogy. (Continued on page 15)



Student/counselor ratios have equalized across different wealth categories of districts over the past five years.

Chart 8
Counselors Per Campus — 1993-94 School Year

Campus Enrollment	Counselors Per Campus	Students Per Counselor
Over 1,000	4.0	379
700 to 1,000	1.5	549
500 to 700	1.0	584
250 to 500	0.8	504
100 to 250	0.5	394
Under 100	0.2	221

Student/counselor ratios are determined in part by campus size. Campuses in the middle size ranges have the highest student/counselor ratios. Large campuses hire more than one counselor. Smaller campuses have lower student/counselor ratios but often do not have a counselor on campus full time.

Financing Lower Student/Counselor Ratios

National and state professional counseling organizations recommend student/counselor ratios as low as 100 students per counselor. The ratio recommended by Texas professional education organizations is 350 students per counselor. Texas legislation funding counseling programs requires districts to maintain a ratio of at least one counselor per 500 students district-wide at the elementary level. One barrier to meeting these ratios is the cost to districts of employing additional counselors.

The average Texas counselor salary is \$38,144. Fringe benefits increase the total payroll cost to about \$50,000 per counselor. Fringe benefits include contributions to the Teacher Retirement System, social security, health insurance, workers' compensation, and unemployment contributions.

An additional 535 counselors are needed to provide access to counselors at a ratio of 500 to one for the 267,316 students on campuses that currently have no counselor. The payroll cost for 535 counselors would be almost \$27 million. This does not include the cost of facilities, furniture and equipment, or materials.

Although the average student/counselor ratio in Texas is 476 students per counselor, 334 campuses with 210,005 students have student/counselor ratios over 1,000 to one. Reducing the ratio on these campuses to 1,000 students per counselor would require 39 additional counselors at a payroll cost of almost \$2 million. A 1,000 to one student/counselor ratio is three times as many students per counselor as recommended by Texas professional education organizations.

Reducing student/counselor ratios statewide to 350 students per counselor would require increasing the current counselor work force by 45 percent, at a payroll cost of \$171 million. To put these costs in perspective, the \$171 million to reduce the student/counselor ratio to 350 to one would increase average district per pupil expenditures in the state by \$47. Average per pupil expenditures in 1992-93 were \$4,201. This represents an average property tax rate increase of \$.03. The average total tax rate in 1992-93 was \$1.3017.

	Campuses	Students	1,000/1 Ratio		500/1 Ratio		350/1 Ratio	
			Counselors	Payroll	Counselors	Payroll	Counselors	Payroll
No Counselors	1,085	267,316	267	\$13,365,800	535	\$26,731,600	764	\$38,188,000
Ratios Over 1000/1	334	210,005	39	\$1,933,075	249	\$12,433,350	429	\$21,433,550
Ratios 500 - 1000/1	2,058	1,305,021			637	\$31,875,255	1,756	\$87,804,726
Ratios 350 - 500/1	1,515	1,058,250					469	\$23,468,501
Total	4,992	2,840,592	306	\$15,298,875	1,421	\$71,040,205	3,418	\$170,894,478

(Continued from page 13)

gogically or developmentally appropriate principles. Prekindergarten teachers in the TEA study understood the concept of developmentally appropriate practices but had difficulty transferring these practices to the classroom. Staff development activities can help counselors both increase their understanding of developmentally appropriate practices and develop strategies to guide practice.

Ten years ago, in *Assessing School Counselor Performance*, Bleuer identified four dimensions of guidance programs that were most in need of change. Her framework is consistent with that presented by the *Comprehensive Guidance Program for Texas Public Schools*, which

describes traditional program methods as reactive, unsystematic, and clerical in nature. Summarized in Chart 11, the framework includes a shift from crises and remedial priorities to developmental and preventive priorities. Inherent in this shift is a move toward consistent services to all students. The framework also includes a shift from individual guidance and counseling only to group guidance and counseling, from administrative tasks to counseling, and from counselors working in isolation to programs that are part of the school's entire educational program.

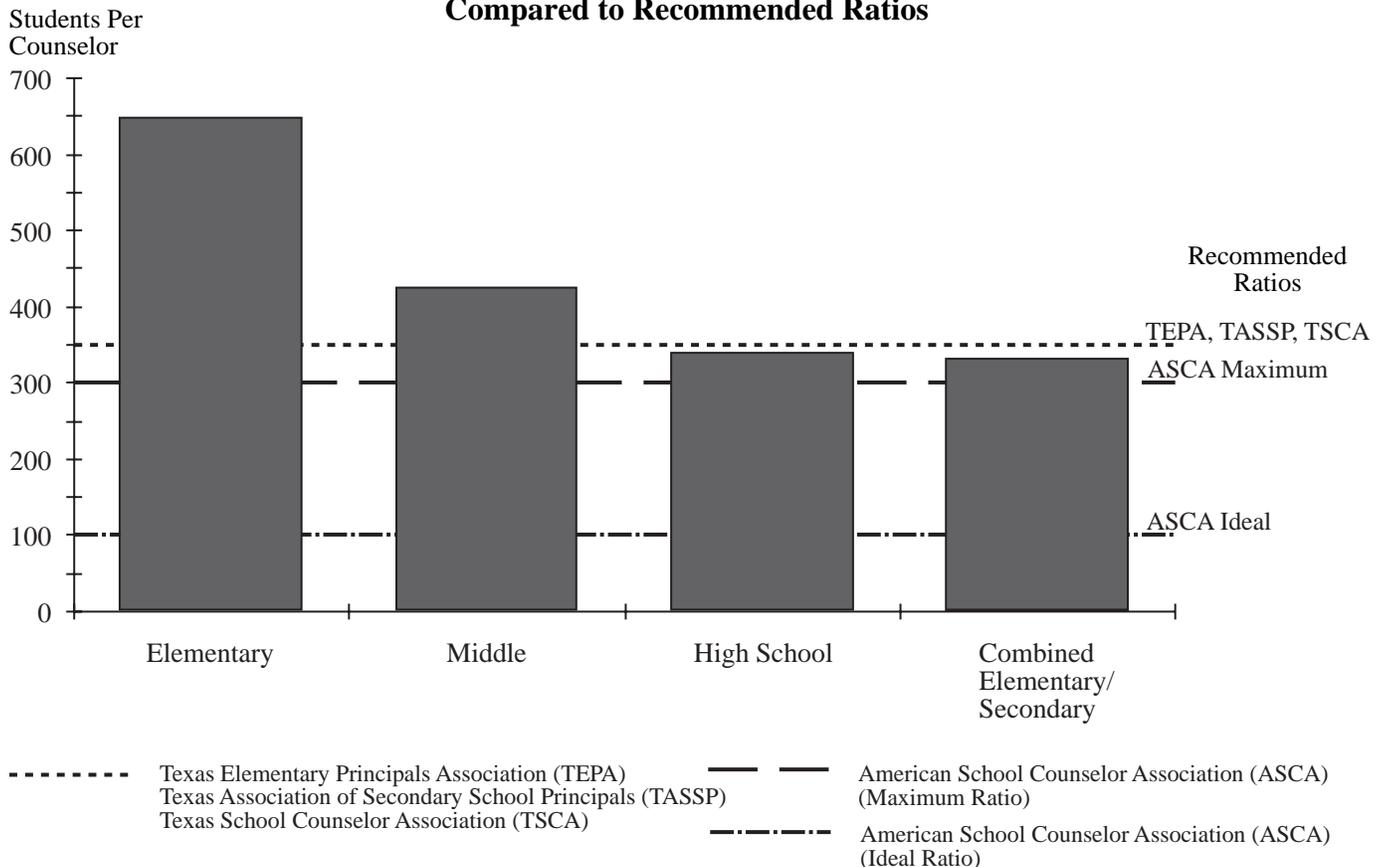
Conclusion

The history of counseling and guidance programs in Texas public

schools has been characterized by efforts to forge a balanced approach to the academic and developmental needs of students. These efforts have played a large part in shaping the professional identity of the school counselor as well. Recent studies suggest, however, that in practice, local programs and counselor roles remain at odds with state and national models.

Since 1981, when the American School Counselor Association first developed recommended guidelines for school counseling and guidance programs, state and national models have continued to advocate programs that are more developmental and preventive in nature. Yet, as Texas has moved toward a system of educational

Chart 9
Student/Counselor Ratio by Campus Type — 1993-94 School Year
Compared to Recommended Ratios



Texas high schools have student/counselor ratios that approximate state and national recommendations. There are twice as many students per counselor in Texas elementary schools as recommended by state and national professional associations.

Chart 10
Student/Counselor Ratio
1993-94 School Year

Percent Passing All TAAS Tests Taken					
Percent Economically Disadvantaged	Under 33.3%	33.3% to 47.2%	47.2% to 60.5%	Over 60.5%	Total
Under 20%	255	366	429	478	449
20% to 30%	335	420	446	527	448
30% to 40%	358	472	492	594	488
40% to 60%	392	472	539	634	487
60% to 80%	429	510	608	672	482
Over 80%	510	555	633	719	531
Total	431	468	476	512	

Campuses with low TAAS performance have fewer students per counselor than high performing campuses. Campuses with large proportions of economically disadvantaged students, however, have more students per counselor than campuses with fewer economically disadvantaged students. There is a high correlation between student family income and TAAS performance; about half of all campuses fall in the six shaded cells on the chart.

Chart 11
Shift in Focus of Guidance Programs

Traditional	Comprehensive
crises/remedial priorities	developmental/preventive
uneven service to students	consistent service to all students
individual guidance and counseling only	group guidance and counseling
counselors only	counselors, school staff, parents, and community
unstructured	student centered
administrative tasks	counseling
unmeasurable	designed from needs assessment and ongoing evaluation

Comprehensive guidance programs focus on developmental and preventive activities and emphasize coordination with the educational program. Traditionally, counseling programs have been crisis oriented.

accountability that stresses assessment, counseling and guidance programs appear instead to have focused increasingly on academic remediation.

The increased responsibilities associated with standardized testing and numerous non-guidance duties have left counselors feeling overburdened and ill-equipped to meet the rising demand for developmental counseling. The lack of time available for counseling is compounded by an average student/counselor ratio in the state of 476 to one.

This report provides a cross-section of the information currently available about Texas counselors. The profile of the counselor includes a summary of demographic information such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, and education, as well as employment information such as years of professional experience, tenure, and salary. The variation in number of counselors on a campus and students per counselor is discussed in regard to counselor work load and access of students to counselors.

National and state models of guidance programs are presented along with an overview of issues related to these models. Finally, Texas policy regarding guidance programs and counselors is reviewed. Taken together, each of the topics reviewed contributes to an understanding of the status of counselors in Texas.

Responses to the upcoming survey, information gathered through case studies, and further longitudinal analysis of existing data will expand this understanding in three ways. First, greater detail will be provided about the counselor work load and needs of the guidance program. In the survey counselors will respond to questions about how they spend their time and their level of involvement in

campus-wide activities. Both the survey and case studies will also provide information about the clerical, paraprofessional, and administrative staffing needs of the guidance program not reflected in the student/counselor ratio.

Second, the study will provide information against which the current models can be evaluated. The model guidance program is described as developmental, preventive, and

comprehensive. The survey will examine counselors' perceptions of the ideal program and priorities of different activities and student groups. The case studies will explore these questions in relation to students needs and program goals and objectives. Finally, the model of educator supply and demand and further longitudinal analysis of data will answer questions related to supply and demand of counselors.

Overall, this study will assess the availability and quality of counseling in an effort to define a professional identity for the school counselor that better addresses student needs. The study also will look at the policy implications of enhancing counseling and guidance programs in terms of the organization of their delivery and coordination with other agencies.

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