

Report: Students Need More Counseling

This Indiana Chamber Foundation research report was released in late May. Excerpts from the press release and executive summary identify the challenges and potential next steps.

A new Indiana Chamber report finds that school counselors are not able to meet the range of postsecondary needs of students, due in large part to a stagnant system and a variety of situations often out of their control.

“What we have is a counseling issue, not an issue with the counselors,” explains Indiana Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Kevin Brinegar. “In fact, the vast majority of counselors in the survey said they would like to spend more time providing college and career guidance.”

The *Indiana School Counseling Research Review* was conducted for the Indiana Chamber Foundation to assess the current state of school counseling and to see whether the landscape had changed much the last

two decades. A 1994 statewide study titled *High Hopes Long Odds* had identified disparities in the way counselors provided college and career readiness to students.

“Unfortunately, little has progressed in 20 years,” Brinegar offers. “This is such a vital tool for middle and high school students, but far too little time is being spent with students on college and career readiness despite the obvious need.”

What prompted the Indiana Chamber to seek the research is the organization’s *Indiana Vision 2025* economic development plan, which features a focus on Outstanding Talent. Brinegar emphasizes, “One goal in the plan is to increase to 90% the proportion of Hoosier students who graduate from high school ready for college and/or career training; therefore improving the counseling aspect is critical.”

A total of 426 Indiana school counselors – 73% of them from high schools – were surveyed for the *Indiana School Counseling Research Review*.

According to the survey, 58% of respondents said that a quarter or less of their time is spent on college and career readiness activities; that number jumps to 90% of counselors when the timeframe for college/career readiness duties is placed at 50% or less. Fewer than 10% of counselors said they spent more than half their time in this key role.

The Indiana Chamber report shows that just since 2010 the amount of time counselors are asked to devote to non-counseling duties has more than doubled. In 2010, 18% of a counselor’s time was spent away from direct service to students; in 2013 it was 40%. (That translates to time spent on college and career guidance declining from 32% to the current 21%.)

School Counselors: Time on Tasks				
	2010	2011	2013	2013*
Counseling	20.0%	23.1%	17.1%	15.4%
Guidance	32.0%	29.9%	21.9%	21.4%
Advocacy	13.0%	13.1%	10.8%	10.6%
Program Management	19.0%	16.8%	13.3%	13.0%
Non-counseling	18.0%	18.2%	36.8%	39.5%

*Indiana School Counseling Research Review study. Previous surveys were conducted by the Indiana Department of Education.



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“These other activities might include being the hall monitor, administering tests or even managing the school mascot,” states Derek Redelman, Indiana Chamber vice president of education and workforce development. “The bottom line is that a school counselor’s job duties include a growing catch-all list of non-related activities that takes them from their primary function. And that needs to be addressed.”

The Indiana Chamber took the additional step of forming an advisory group to provide feedback on what efforts – programs and policies – could make the strongest impact. The advisory group included school counselors, principals, superintendents, community college partners, youth-serving organizations and government agencies.

“This group of advisors was asked to consider a range of initiatives that would have the most positive effect on student achievement, postsecondary attainment and career readiness through counseling services,” Redelman offers.

The end result was this set of Indiana Chamber goals and initiatives:

- **Continue to raise awareness.** Consider developing a marketing campaign to expand the postsecondary opportunities made available for consideration by students.
- **Recognize successful programs and initiatives.** Accomplished by exploring metrics and potential partners to recognize schools and/or counseling programs that have demonstrated success. Then use recognition to highlight a broad range of postsecondary success opportunities for students.
- **Communicate employer needs.** Explore opportunities for organized employer tours for students and educators to foster deeper understanding of career opportunities. Also collaborate with partners



“As policymakers, we are increasingly focused on the need for students to be college and career ready. The problem is that too many students and families still don’t know what that means. This report highlights the need to redesign the counseling model, freeing counselors to focus more on readiness responsibilities rather than administrative tasks.”

Teresa Lubbers, Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education

- to improve access to web-based information, including IndianaSkills.com.
- **Assist with data accessibility.** Champion the continued development of the public user interface for Indiana’s longitudinal data system, which will make it possible for policy leaders to identify the greatest training and educational needs, and to evaluate progress in meeting those needs.
- **Create the right accountability incentives.** Continue to work on school accountability task force.

The *Indiana School Counseling Research Review*, which also includes comments from 11 personal interviews with key counseling leaders in the state, was produced by Matt Fleck of Fleck Education and the Partnership for College and Career Readiness.

RESOURCE: The *Indiana School Counseling Research Review* full report and executive summary at www.indianachamber.com/education

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