

Austin Independent School District

DRE Publication 12.80

# High School Counselor Survey Report

Laura T. Sanchez Fowler, Ph.D.

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## Executive Summary

During the Spring of 2013, all high school counselors in AISD were offered the opportunity to participate in an online survey of the present working conditions, priorities, and challenges of their position in the district. The response rate for the survey was 85%, representing the majority of counselors on the 14 comprehensive high school campuses.

Key findings included:

1. Most AISD high school counselors have been certified less than 10 years, with about half reporting certifications between 1-5 years and the other half reporting 6-10 years. Counselors reported an average of 3-5 years' experience as teachers prior to becoming a school counselor.
2. Many high school campuses in AISD have student to counselor ratios significantly above the professional standards of the profession, which are generally set at a ratio of 250:1 (e.g. NOSCA, ASCA, TEA). AISD campus ratios range from one counselor to 51 students to one counselor to 600 students.
3. High school counselors reported that they find clarity interpreting the distinction between their roles and responsibilities and those of the College and Career Advisor. Overlap existed in few areas, however areas of overlap included assisting students to complete the FAFSA/TAFSA, selecting appropriate postsecondary options, and applications for financial aid.
4. USDOE-identified data points that should be collected in order to target students and stratify resources based on high-risk indicators of high school noncompletion and of postsecondary enrollment. These data are not formally collected on AISD campuses or at CAC. Some counselors informally collected information on their certain indicators, such as first generation college student, for their professional use.
5. AISD high school counselors reported 49 separate and distinct work responsibilities that required consistent engagement across the entire school year. Counselors felt they were spending "about the right amount of time" on 30 of these. Clearly, the district and campus staff who support counselor workload assignment will want to have further conversations about the heavy workload and perhaps provide assistance in reallocating some responsibilities or in helping counselors prioritize and consolidate time on certain of the tasks.
6. High school counselors felt reasonably comfortable with their roles and responsibilities in the event of a campus crisis. Important to note, however, was that there were a few who indicated that they were not comfortable at all. This must be remedied by counselor coordinators or campus administrators because a crisis can occur at any time on any campus. If there is only one counselor assigned to the campus, that counselor must be confidently ready to assume a leadership position when an unexpected crisis occurs.
7. One third reported not using the *SSIG* or *Focus for the Future* high school planning documents. Only 44% of high school counselors reported using the 4-year plan in Naviance and 25% reported not using Naviance at all.

## Overview

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) focuses on providing successful college and career preparation for all students. To reach this goal, students are expected to explore colleges and careers related to their personal interests and talents, to get an early start toward college by participating in rigorous coursework, and to demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to enroll in a postsecondary institution and to have a successful career. High school guidance counselors play a pivotal role in reaching our district goal to support students' successful high school graduation and in reaching students' goals to advance beyond their high school experience prepared for postsecondary education and the world of work. This report explains the results of a survey conducted with all high school guidance counselors and college and career advisors in 2012–2013.

## Survey Design and Development

In 2012–2013, Department of Research and Evaluation (DRE) staff worked closely with Learning Support Services (LSS) staff to develop a survey of high school counselors and college and career advisors. The survey was initiated by the high school program specialist, LSS, to assist central office staff in monitoring progress toward providing students with various college and career readiness supports to achieve Goal 3 of the District Strategic Plan (“All students will graduate ready for college, career, and life in a globally competitive environment.” [AISD, 2013, p. 19]). This report provides campus and district administrators with a realistic view of the present job duties, training needs, and strengths and challenges involved with working as a professional school counselor or college and career advisor in AISD. The survey was created through close collaboration between DRE and the high school program specialist, LSS, with significant input from college and career advisors and lead counselors.

The survey consisted of open and closed responses to items that addressed basic background and professional experiences, as well as professional responsibilities, work activities, professional development options and needs, the division of roles and responsibilities between counselors and college and career advisors on a shared campus, counselor-to-student ratios, caseload assignments, on-the-job stressors, and the use of technologies and software intended to support task completion. The online survey was open for 4 weeks during May and June, 2012. The present report provides a summary of high school counselors' responses to survey items. A companion report, *AISD College and Career Advisors Survey Report* (Sanchez Fowler, 2013), details college and career advisors' responses.

## Who participated in the survey?

A total of 47 high school counselors completed the survey. Table 1 lists the campuses the participants represented. Although 14 campuses participated, participation varied by campus. Akins, Anderson, Eastside, Garza, International, Lanier, LASA, LBJ, and Reagan had complete participation; all school counselors completed the survey. McCallum was represented, but by only 1 of 5 of their counseling staff. In total, there was a response rate of 85%, which was a reasonably valid response rate.

**Table 1. High School Counselors Who Participated in the Survey, by Campus**

Campus	Number of counselors on campus	Number of respondents	Percentage of campus respondents	Percentage of survey respondents
Akins	6	6	100.00%	12.2
Anderson	5	5	100.00%	10.2
Austin	5	4	80.00%	8.2
Bowie	6	5	83.33%	10.2
Crockett	5	4	80.00%	8.2
Eastside Memorial	2	2	100.00%	4.1
Garza	3	3	100.00%	6.1
International	1	1	100.00%	2
Lanier	3	3	100.00%	6.1
LASA	3	3	100.00%	6.1
LBJ	3	3	100.00%	6.1
McCallum	6	1	16.67%	2
Reagan	4	4	100.00%	8.2
Travis	4	3	75.00%	6.1
Missing	2			4.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>81.03%</b>	<b>99.90</b>

Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

### How many years have you been a certified school counselor?

Among those who completed the survey, most school counselors had been certified between 1 and 5 years (30%) or between 6 and 10 years (30%). Table 2 summarizes the full set of counselor responses. AISD is fortunate to have 33 high school counselors (among those who completed the survey) who have significant experience on-the-job. These seasoned professionals provide AISD high schools with leadership and mentor capabilities not always available in a district of this size.

**Table 2. Number of Years as a Certified School Counselor**

Years certified	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Less than one year	1	2.04%
1–5 years	15	30.61%
6–10 years	15	30.61%
11–15 years	8	16.33%
16–20 years	3	6.12%
More than 20 years	7	14.29%

Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

### How many years have you worked for AISD as a school counselor?

Nearly 60% of AISD school counselors who completed the survey had been employed between 1 and 5 years in AISD in their present role. Table 3 summarizes all responses to this item. Responses to this item indicated that

the length of time a counselor has been employed as a counselor in AISD belies the depth of their professional experience in this role. A comparison of tables 2 and 3 shows a wealth of experience as a certified counselor prior to their tenure with AISD.

**Table 3. Number of Years as a School Counselor in AISD**

Years as a counselor	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Less than one year	4	8.16%
1–5 years	29	59.18%
6–10 years	8	16.32%
11–15 years	2	4.08%
16–20 years	2	4.08%
More than 20 years	4	8.16%

Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

### How many years were you employed as a teacher before becoming a school counselor?

School counselors in the state of Texas are required to be a classroom teacher for a minimum of 3 years prior to becoming certified as a school counselor. The majority of respondents had been a teacher for 3 to 5 years prior to becoming a school counselor. Table 4 provides a summary of all responses to this item. After the survey had concluded, it was brought to light that at least three counselors moved to Texas and transferred their certification. In their prior state, there was no requirement of teaching experience. Texas honors their out-of-state certification without requiring the fulfillment of the classroom teaching experience. Therefore, counselors in that situation would have responded with 0-3 years, but there was no option for that response on the survey.

**Table 4. Number of Years as a Classroom Teacher**

Prior teaching experience	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
3–5 years	24	48.97%
6–10 years	11	22.44%
11–15 years	5	10.20%
16–20 years	1	2.04%
More than 20 years	2	4.08%

Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

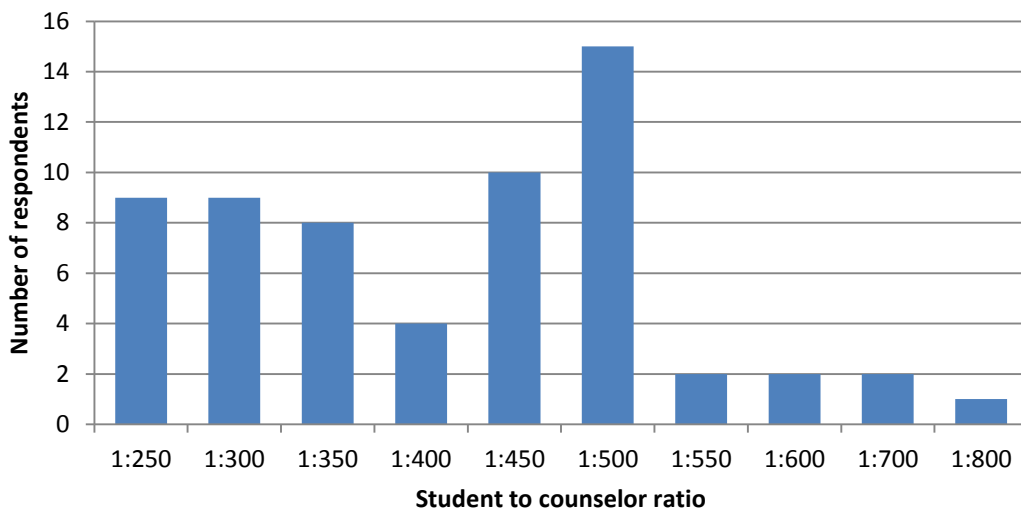
### What is the student-to-counselor ratio on your campus?

The student-to-counselor ratio on AISD high school campuses varied greatly. Figure 1 illustrates responses regarding counselor-to-student ratios across campuses. One AISD campus, Ann Richards, was omitted from the responses because it was an extreme outlier with an enrollment of 52 students. Among the remaining campuses, the most frequent response was a ratio of one counselor to 500 students (n=15). Second most frequent was one counselor to 450 students (n=10). Figure 2 condenses counselors within shared campuses, presenting the ratio by campus (rather than by respondent). Counselors sometimes reported differing caseload sizes within a shared campus. For example, six counselors from Akins completed the survey; four reported that they had a ratio of 500 students-to-one counselor, while one reported 400 students-to-one counselor and one reported 450 students-to-one counselor. The difference in caseloads could be attributed to various causes, for

example, if caseload is assigned based on “academies” on a campus, students may participate in some academies at a higher rate than other academies. Or, perhaps if a campus assigns students based on alphabetical assignments by first letter of last name, certain categories of letters may be more populous than others. Another reason could be that the lead counselor may have a lower case load to allow time for his or her leadership responsibilities. Figure 2 represents the campus name, the caseload(s) reported, and the caseload standard met, when one exists. Seven of 14 campuses met either TEA’s or professional counseling associations’ recommended ratios. Seven were significantly over recommended caseload ratios, signaling a need for closer scrutiny.

The national professional organization for school counselors, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), recommends a ratio of 250 students to 1 counselor (ASCA, n.d.). The Texas Education Agency (TEA) promotes a counselor to student ratio of 300:1 if meeting individually with all students during the school year, or 350:1 if not (TEA, August 10, 2012). According to a recent study by Radford and Ifill (2012), 50% of all high school counselors who participated in the US Department of Education’s “High School Longitudinal Study” during the 2009 data collection period had student-to-counselor ratios below 250. The median caseload for public high school counselors was 299 students to one counselor. In that national study, 20% of public high schools maintained a ratio of 351-450, while another 15% reported caseloads of more than 450. However, schools with high college-going rates were statistically more likely than others to have a caseload ratio of 250 students or less for each school counselor (Radford & Ifill, 2012). The National Association for College Admissions Counseling [NACAC] (2013) stated that the nationwide average student-to-counselor ratio was roughly 467:1, noting that it was nearly double their recommended 250:1. In AISD, seven campuses are identified in Table 5 as well-over recommended student-to-counselor ratios. Typically, that situation creates lower college-going rate than campuses that maintain recommended ratios.

**Figure 1. What Is Your Counselor-to-Student Ratio?**



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey



Table 5. Comparison of Reported Counselor: Student Ratio, by Campus

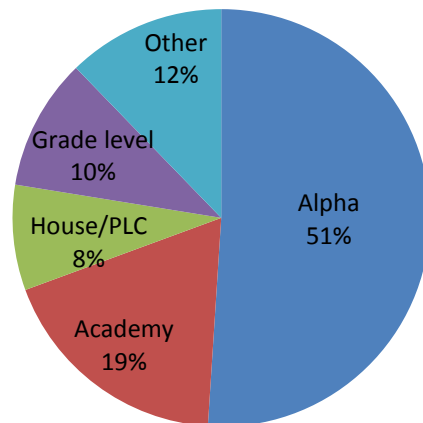
Campus	Ratio 1 counselor: (# students)	Meets Standard?
Akins	4-500*	<b>Over</b> [highest 15%-20% in nation, Radford and Ifill (2012)]
Anderson	400-600*	<b>Over</b> [highest 15% -20% in nation, Radford and Ifill (2012)]
Austin	450-500*	<b>Over</b> [highest 15%-20% in nation, Radford and Ifill (2012)]
Bowie	500	<b>Over</b> [highest 15% in nation, Radford and Ifill (2012)]
Crockett	350-450*	<b>Over</b> [highest 20% in nation, Radford and Ifill (2012)]
Eastside Memorial	250-350*	<b>TEA</b>
Garza	250	<b>ASCA, NOSCA</b>
International	250	<b>ASCA, NOSCA</b>
Lanier	500	<b>Over</b> [highest 15% in nation, Radford and Ifill (2012)]
LASA	300-350*	<b>TEA</b>
LBJ	250-300*	<b>TEA</b>
McCallum	400	<b>Over</b> [highest 20% in nation, Radford and Ifill (2012)]
Reagan	300	<b>TEA</b>
Travis	300-350*	<b>TEA</b>

Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

\*Note. Counselors at this campus reported different ratios from one another. This may be due to uneven caseloads due to signature programs, uneven alphabetical distribution of students, or differential caseload assignment depending on other duties assigned (i.e., lead counselor).

### How are student caseloads assigned at your campus?

Respondents indicated that half of high school campuses assigned student caseloads by alphabetical order based on the students' last names. Those whose organizational structure did not correspond to any of the provided options wrote in their own response, which included alpha by grade level, cohort, and "they're all mine" (n=3). Figure 2 represents responses to this item.

**Figure 2. How is your caseload distributed?**

Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

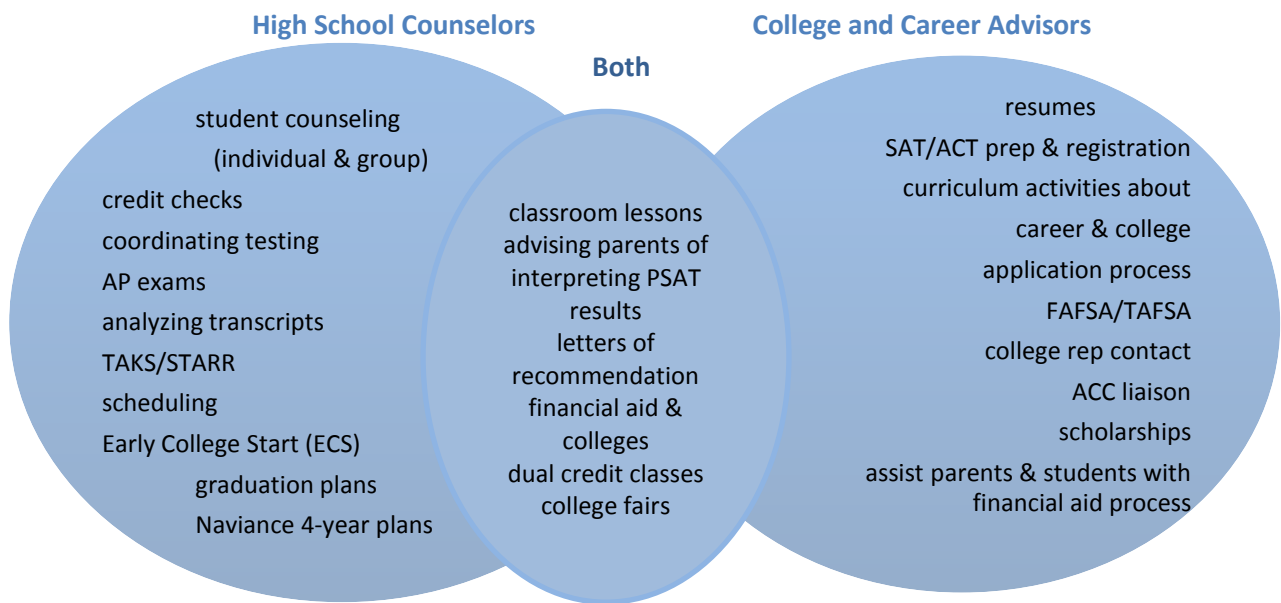
### How do campuses delineate the roles of high school counselor and college and career advisor?

Respondents were asked how their home campus differentiated the roles of college and career advisor from that of high school counselor. Their open-ended responses included a variety of ideas. Appendix A contains each response in its entirety. According to high school counselors, the role of high school counselors is distinct from that of college and career advisors. Unlike responses from college and career advisors, some counselor respondents reported an overlap between the two positions; this finding was more pronounced for nontraditional campuses (e.g., International High School, Garza High School, and Ann Richards) than for comprehensive 4-year high school campuses. The Venn diagram in Figure 3, based on the explanations of roles provided by high school counselors, shows that the overlap between positions allows for some variation and a small degree of overlap, with relatively distinct responsibilities. Areas of overlap, according to the counselors, include the following: (a) a counselor at a campus with no college and career advisor may advise parents and students about college options and financial aid; (b) both counselors and college and career advisors may be responsible for classroom lessons; (c) both counselors and college and career advisors may collaborate on tasks, such as getting students enrolled in Early College Start (ECS) dual credit courses; (d) each type of counselor may fulfill distinct responsibilities in students' college applications, such that counselors may write letters of recommendation and help a student select between colleges, while college and career advisors may assist students with financial aid options and applications; (e) both counselors and college and career advisors may collaborate on college fairs, and (f) sometimes counselors and college and career advisors share interpreting of PSAT results.

Results of the 2009 national counselor survey from the High School Longitudinal Study (Radford & Ifill, 2012) indicated that 63% of high school counselors had specific college advisors on their campus, but whether or not a high school had a counselor specifically dedicated to college readiness, selection and applications did not influence college going rates for the campus. However, 75% of the schools with the lowest college-going rates had school counselors who spent 20% or less time on college activities. By contrast, schools with high college-going rates had school counselors who spent 50% or more time on college counseling activities. Moreover, up to half of the school counselors in the study reported that they spent only 5-10% of their time on college activities (regardless of whether there was a specified college-focused counselor on their campus). In the same study, the

priority placed on postsecondary preparation as the counseling program’s primary goal directly influenced student college-going rates: 32% of counselors at schools with low college-going rates said that postsecondary preparation was their primary goal, while 52% of counselors with a medium college-going rate indicated such, and 72% of counselors with a high college-going rate indicated that their primary counseling priority was postsecondary preparation. The results seem to indicate that to achieve a high college-going rate among students, postsecondary preparation must be seen as a high priority among all school counseling staff, and all counselors must dedicate at least half of their work-related time to facilitating the postsecondary preparation activities among students. Having one college and career person on a campus is simply not enough to make a difference in the overall college-going rate on one’s own.

**Figure 3. How has your campus differentiated the roles of the high school counselor and college and career advisor?**



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

**Thinking about the culture of your school campus, what are the biggest obstacles you face in meeting your responsibilities?**

High school counselors responded to this open-ended item by explaining their current challenges at their campus. Full-text responses are available in Appendix B-1, with only minor edits made to preserve the confidentiality of the respondents. Figure 4 illustrates top challenges and the multitude of issues that must be addressed to reach Goal 3 successfully. Many challenges were identified by counselors, but the most common themes included a lack of time to complete all the many duties assigned; poor communication with administration and staff; a high counselor-to-student ratio that precluded outreach and instead was limited to responding to students who initiated contact; and linguistic diversity, which affected some campuses more than others.

Figure 4. Challenges to Achieving College and Career Goals



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

### Thinking about the culture of your school campus, what are the strengths or positive aspects that support you in meeting your responsibilities?

Counselors had many positive aspects to report about their work conditions and support systems, but these varied by campus. At times, the strength identified at one campus mirrored the challenge of another campus. More detailed conversations among counselors regarding the challenges and strengths of their campus environments may enable communication between counselors and their campus administrators about ways that challenges can be addressed and hopefully reduced.

Key strengths identified by counselors included positivity and shared “ownership” of students’ welfare by administrators and colleagues, mutual respect among campus staff, strong leadership skills of the lead counselor, secretarial support for the counseling department, strong professional skills across counselors on a given campus, strong professional skills, and communication and collaboration with Project Advance and college and career advisors. Full-text responses are available in Appendix B-2, with only minor edits made to preserve the confidentiality of the respondents.

### Activities and Duties Performed by High School Counselors

The high school program specialist from LSS, who spearheaded the survey, was interested in learning more about the daily activities of counselors, consistencies and differences in responsibilities across campuses, and differentiation between their roles and those of the college and career advisor. Using the “Roles and Responsibilities of the High School Guidance and Counseling Team, 2011–2012” (see Appendix C-2) and the national professional standards for school counselors, including college and career advising standards (e.g., The National Office for School Counselor Advocacy [NOSCA]), and other district guidance documents (e.g., “AISD District Expectations of the Guidance Counselor’s Delivery of Services” [see Appendix C-1]), she selected an array of daily tasks and responsibilities that might be applicable to college and career advisors and high school counselors. The tasks were divided into three segments of activities, broadly based on the organization of the “AISD District Expectations of the Guidance Counselor’s Delivery of Services” and the “Roles and Responsibilities of the High School Guidance and Counseling Team 2011–2012.” A sample item from the survey is presented in the call-out box on the next page.

High school counselors reported their key job responsibilities using three indicators. The first asked them to consider how often they engage in specific job duties across the course of the school year. Response options were (1) not applicable, (2) not at all, (3) beginning of year (August through November), (4) middle of year (November through March), (5) end of year (April through June), (6) beginning and middle of year, (7) middle and end of year, and (8) continuous throughout the year.

To obtain more information about the extent to which counselors spent time within the segment of time (e.g., beginning of the year, August to November), a follow-up question asked them to indicate how much time over a typical week or month they spent engaging in the listed activities. The response options were (1) not applicable, (2) not at all, (3) one full day per week, (4) multiple days per week, (5) one full week, (6) multiple weeks per month, or (7) one full month or more.

The final measure of daily work activities asked counselors to evaluate the amount of time spent engaged in specific tasks or duties in terms of whether they were engaging in the activity a sufficient amount of time compared with what was needed to complete the activity. Response options included (1) far too little, (2) too little, (3) about right, (4) too much, (5) far too much.

Possible alternative response options for this segment of survey items were debated by lead counselors and ADVANCE staff in discussions led by the high school program specialist from LSS and recorded by an analyst from the DRE. The final version of response options was determined by the high school program specialist, with the understanding that she would obtain information about the time commitments of college and career advisors and high school counselors as they related to specific duties and activities. A detailed view was chosen, and it was acknowledged that selecting one's responses could prove challenging. The resulting information was reviewed through multiple lenses and the most common responses were summarized in a qualitative report. (A detailed item-by-item response set can be obtained by contacting DRE.)

**Key duties and responsibilities.** Fifty percent or more of high school counselors said they “continuously” engaged in this activity throughout the year:

1. Advise students and parents about academic programs, with emphasis on academic rigor
2. Assist students in understanding of the requirements for each graduation plan
3. With students, verify the accuracy of credits for each student and adjust schedules accordingly, including checking for prerequisites and completed coursework, at each grade level
4. Complete activities indicated in the District Expectations section of the *Principal-Counselor Program Management Agreement*
5. Encourage all 12<sup>th</sup> graders to complete postsecondary plans (e.g., college applications, military, or work)
6. Encourage and facilitate participation by all seniors in the AISD/Austin Community College (ACC) College Connection
7. Advise students about appropriate options for remediation, acceleration, or both
8. Attend planning or department meetings, as appropriate (e.g., Child Study Team [CST], Gifted and Talented [GT], Limited English proficiency [LEP], English language learners [ELL]).
9. Participate on campus committees
10. Participate in Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) or State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) standardized testing

11. Analyze transcripts
12. Attend student-related meetings (e.g., LPAC, discipline, section 504, ARD)
13. Schedule students for classes
14. Enroll students in and withdraw students from classes
15. Explaining credits and grade point average (GPA) calculation
16. Conduct summer bridge programs and camps
17. Select courses
18. Explain early college high school
19. Work with parents
20. Complete transitional planning and forms
21. Plan for special education students
22. Plan for 504 students
23. Plan for GT students
24. Plan for ELLs
25. Plan for other student groups
26. Make classroom or small group presentations to students in each grade level by published Fall deadlines
27. Implement the use of Naviance Succeed software program with all students
28. Plan for the completion of district milestones
29. Implement Education: Go Get It Week or Gen TX (HB 122)
30. Serve on and collaborate with the advisory and the advocacy committee on the appropriateness of lessons used in advisory sessions
31. Conduct a needs assessment, data analysis, or both to identify students for small group support
32. Offer individual or group counseling to support students' academic, personal, and social/behavioral needs
33. Offer individual counseling, as appropriate, for students when classroom guidance and small group support are not enough for students' improved achievement
34. Apply the AISD bullying and harassment policy, as needed
35. Conduct small group or individual counseling regarding substance abuse issues related to self, family members, or others
36. Participate as a member of the campus counseling support team
37. Provide students and parents with information and referrals for district, campus, and community intervention services
38. Coordinate with school staff, including CST, or referred agencies concerning specific students
39. Report instances of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse to Child Protective Services (CPS) within 48 hours assist other staff with reporting when requested or needed
40. Work with suicidal students and their parents to access medical and mental health assistance, following the AISD suicide protocol
41. Coordinate the transition meeting for the student, parents, counselor, school nurse, and campus administrator for return of high-risk suicidal or emotionally fragile students to school

42. Support campus staff development training about procedures for reporting child abuse to CPS and for suicide prevention

**-Guidance Curriculum-**

R-1, R-2, R-3, SB 518

[Individual activities to be rated, such as:] **Facilitate the completion and updating of a four year plan in grades 9-11 using Naviance Succeed Course Planner.**

*How frequently do you engage in the listed activity throughout the year?*

- (1) not applicable,
- (2) not at all,
- (3) beginning of year (August through November)
- (4) middle of year (November through March)
- (5) end of year (April through June)
- (6) beginning and middle of year
- (7) middle and end of year
- (8) continuous throughout the year

*Over a typical week or month, how often do you usually engage in the listed activities?*

- (1) not applicable
- (2) not at all
- (3) one full day per week
- (4) multiple days per week
- (5) one full week
- (6) multiple weeks per month
- (7) one full month or more

*How much of your time (comparatively) is spent on the listed activities?*

- (1) far too little
- (2) too little
- (3) about right
- (4) too much
- (5) far too much

43. Distribute the *Developmental Guidance and Counseling Plan* brochure to all staff and students.
44. Conduct campus needs assessments
45. Consult with the advisory program coordinators about program needs and resources
46. Consult with teachers, staff, and parents regarding developmental needs of students
47. Serve on CST
48. Organize and present a Course Planning Information Night for parents of 9<sup>th</sup>- through 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students and include a review of graduation requirements
49. Ensure verification of seniors' credits and accuracy of transcripts

Least frequent duties and responsibilities. Fifty percent or more high school counselors selected “N/A” or “Not at all”:

1. Implement Education: Go Get It Week or Gen TX (HB 122)
2. Serve on and collaborate with the advisory and advocacy committee on the appropriateness of lessons used in advisory sessions
3. Conduct small group or individual counseling regarding substance abuse issues related to self, family members, or others
4. Distribute the *Developmental Guidance and Counseling Plan* brochure to all staff and students
5. Conduct campus needs assessments
6. Consult with the advisory program coordinators about program needs and resources
7. Perform hall, bus, or cafeteria duty
8. Maintain educational records (e.g., cumulative records, test scores, attendance reports, drop out prevention reports)
9. Handle student discipline
10. Cover classes for teachers on campus
11. Coordinate or assist in Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Saturdays
12. Plan and implement college and career fairs

Activities high school counselors rated spending an “about right” amount of time to complete. Fifty percent or more selected “about right”:

1. Explaining credits and GPA calculation
2. Conduct summer bridge programs and camps
3. Select courses
4. Explain early college high school
5. Work with parents
6. Plan for special education students
7. Plan for GT students
8. Plan for ELL students
9. Make classroom or small group presentations to students in each grade level by published Fall deadlines
10. Implement the use of Naviance Succeed software program with all students; plan for the completion of district milestones
11. Conduct a needs assessment, data analysis, or both to identify students for small group support
12. Offer individual or group counseling to support student academic, personal, and social/behavioral needs
13. Offer individual counseling, as appropriate, for students when classroom guidance and small group support are not enough for students’ improved achievement
14. Apply the AISD bullying and harassment policy, as needed
15. Participate as a member of the campus counseling support team
16. Provide students and parents with information and referrals for district, campus, and community intervention services
17. Coordinate with school staff, including CST, or referred agencies concerning specific students
18. Report instances of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse to CPS within 48 hours; assist other staff with reporting when requested or needed



19. Work with suicidal students and their parents to access medical and mental health assistance, following AISD suicide protocol
20. Coordinate the transition meeting for student, parents, counselor, school nurse, and campus administrator for return of high-risk suicidal or emotionally fragile students to school
21. Consult with teachers, staff, and parents regarding developmental needs of students
22. Organize and present a Course Planning Information Night for parents of 9<sup>th</sup>- through 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students and include a review of graduation requirements
23. Ensure verification of seniors' credits and accuracy of transcripts
24. Plan with counseling team to provide middle to high school transition activities; activities and dates must be presented to middle school feeder schools
25. Meet as a counseling team on a consistent basis, at least once every two weeks
26. Attend student-related meetings (e.g., LPAC, discipline, 504, ARD)
27. Analyze transcripts
28. Attend planning or department meetings as appropriate (e.g., CST, GT, LEP/ELL)
29. Assist with planning a coherent sequence of CTE courses
30. Participate on campus committees

“Too little” time spent in an activity, compared with other responsibilities. Fifty percent or more selected “too little” or “far too little”:

No item met the criteria for inclusion in this category.

“Too much” time spent in an activity, compared with other responsibilities. Fifty percent or more selected “too much” or “far too much”:

Participate in TAKS or STAAR standardized testing

***General observations about the daily activities and responsibilities of high school counselors.***

Respondents requested that the final report acknowledge that a number of activities were rated by high school counselors as receiving “about (the) right” amount of time to complete. Staff were exceeding the expected work day in order to devote “about (the) right” amount of time to complete all activities that were rated thusly. As a brief example, the item “Advise students of appropriate options for remediation and/or acceleration” was rated as something done “continuously” throughout the year, for an average of multiple days per week, and 76% of high school counselors indicated the time they were spending was “about right” to complete the task. That was one responsibility in a list of 58 possible activities (in addition to limitless other duties not included in this survey) that consumed an enormous “chunk” of the work day throughout the year. High school counselors responded that 48 other duties and activities occurred “continuously” throughout the school year. The enormity of high school counselors' typical work duties was clearly apparent and may require closer attention.

Although most items received convergent ratings from high school counselors, two items received divergent ratings. Group conversations may help the professionals come to a consensus about the extent to which their role should or could be assigned to college and career advisors. The first item was “assist with planning a coherent sequence of CTE courses.” Among the 42 respondents, one quarter responded that they did not engage in this task, while 35% responded that they engaged in it only at the beginning of the year. Even considering that the response options may have lacked sufficient exclusivity, this item held far less convergence

than did all others regarding the amount time during a week or month that they were most likely to engage in this activity. Thirty-eight percent reported that they did not do this task at all, 12% indicated that it took about the equivalent of one day a week, 19% indicated that it required an equivalent of multiple full days per week, 7% indicated it took one week per month, 14% indicated that it required multiple full weeks per month, and the remaining 5% reported engaging in the activity for the equivalent of one month. In terms of satisfaction with the amount of time it required, 54% responded that the amount of time it required was “about right.” Through guided conversation about this item, it may be that high school counselors could determine why variance existed between high school counselors’ experiences. The divergence in the typical amount of time reported, accompanied by most believing they were spending “about [the] right” amount of time, seems to warrant consensus about what this task entailed and how counselors approached the task to account for the variations. Perhaps an outcome of such a conversation could be the establishment of a mutually agreed upon set of expectations about how to do it well and about how much time it should take. Given that many counselors spent a great deal of energy on this task, it seems odd that 38% reported not engaging in the task at all.

The second item with divergent outcomes was “Facilitate the completion and updating of a 4-year plan in grades through 11 using Naviance Succeed Course Planner.” Ten percent of high school counselors reported that they did not do this activity at all. Two reported doing it continuously, 38% reported doing it at the beginning of the year, and 17% reported doing it continuously. Within these respondents, 28% reportedly engaged in this activity the equivalent to multiple days per week, 31% engaged in this activity the equivalent to multiple weeks per month, and 13% engaged in the activity for the equivalent of one month or more. In terms of how they saw the amount of time spent in this activity, 45% believed it was “just right,” while 17% believed it was too little time, and 33% believed it was too much time.

Guided group discussion may provide a clearer understanding about the diversity of responses to this activity. It may be that on some campuses it is a duty of the college and career counselor, or it may be that completing the 4-year plan in Naviance is not a priority on half of the campuses. This item should receive further consideration due to the outcomes of the college and career advisor survey, which showed a very similar pattern on this item. It would appear that the task of using Naviance to document the 4-year plan on an annual basis is not presently the clear responsibility of either counselors or college and career advisors. Conversations about how much time is adequate to fulfill this responsibility may be helpful to guide the time invested. Because some used it continuously and others only at the beginning of the year, it may be helpful to discuss what is an optimal time of year to take on this activity. Perhaps open discussions could assist counselors and college and career advisors and their supervisors to determine a set of best practices and time management strategies.

The creation of a written 4-year plan for grade 9 students in AISD has been recommended for all campuses but implemented inconsistently. Current research by Radford & Ifill (2012) showed that the creation of a plan for all grade 9 students was helpful, but schools that required a parental signature on the 4-year plan had a significantly higher rate of students who planned to enroll in a 4-year college after graduating high school. Approximately 80% of high schools in the national longitudinal study required students to have a career or education plan, and among those who did, 87% shared them with parents. Interestingly, 44% of the high schools who shared the plan with parents required parents to sign it. Schools with high college-going rates were significantly more likely to require a parental signature on a student’s 4-year plan (67%) than were schools with low college-going rates (37%) (Radford & Ifill, 2012). This practice of facilitating parental involvement in high school students’ education seems to have a strong pay-off for postsecondary aspirations. Therefore seems

important for AISD counselors and college and career advisors to collaboratively work out a plan for whom will take responsibility for entering and updating the 4-year plans for each student in Naviance, and to consider whether parental signatures on the plan should be required.

### **Work Duties by Category**

Looking more broadly at the categories of duties and responsibilities that take the most time for school counselors and at those duties that are perceived as most important, respondents rank ordered the four components of their job listed in the “AISD District Expectations of the Guidance Counselor’s Delivery of Services” (see Appendix C): (a) counseling activities, (b) guidance curriculum activities, (c) coordination activities, (d) other activities (to include committees, STAAR testing, bus or lunch duty, ARDS, and others). The rank ordering of job duties categories was included as an alternative view of their job duties that might provide a “bigger picture” way of examining their priorities, in contrast with the very detailed lists of specific duties.

The ranking approach provided counselors a way to express whether what they spent their time doing was in line with what they felt were the most important parts of a school counselor’s job. Counselors were nearly evenly divided between the perception that *counseling activities* and “*other*” activities required the largest portions of their time. The second most time-intensive category of job responsibilities was *coordination activities*. The third was *guidance curriculum activities*. When examined in terms of the relative importance of the categories within their job description, *counseling* was the most important category of activities they performed. The second most important was *guidance curriculum activities*, the third was *coordination*, and the least important was “*other*” activities. It makes sense that school counselors would rate counseling and guidance curriculum activities as the most important parts of their jobs. Whether it makes sense that the majority of their time was tied between counseling and “*other*” activities, while guidance curriculum ranked third, is a conversation for AISD district and campus administration to have with the school counselors.

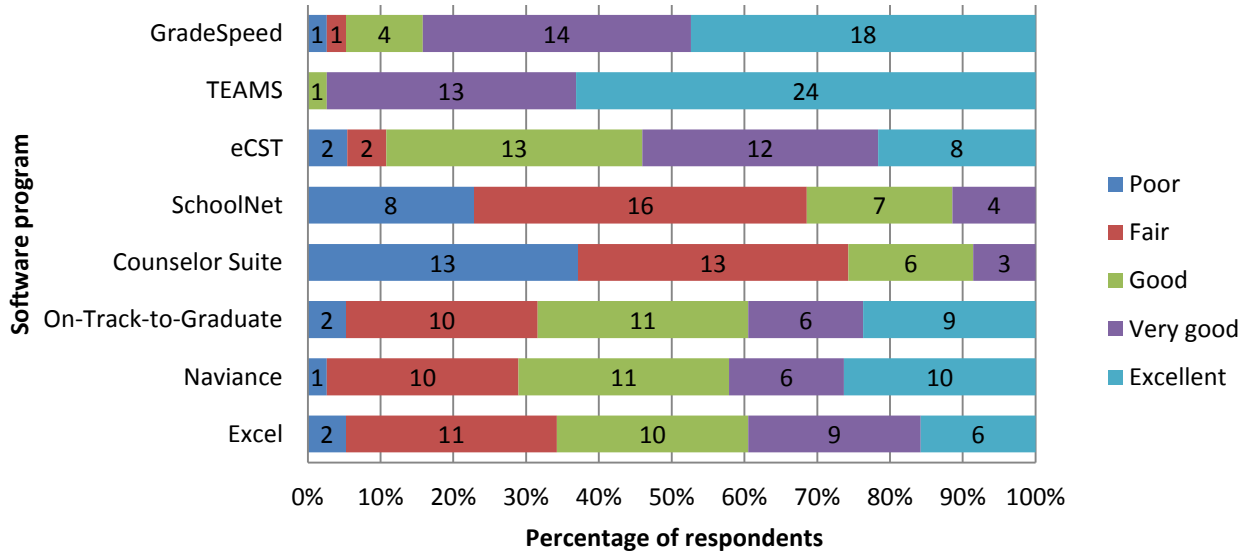
### **What do college and career advisors think about the district’s work productivity software?**

The district has invested resources in multiple platforms to support campus staff in their responsibilities to students. Multiple programs are available, some of which serve broad purposes and others of which fill a focused need. Eight software programs were presented on the survey: Excel, Naviance, On-Track-to-Graduate, Counselor Suite, Schoolnet, eCST, Teams, and Gradespeed. Respondents were asked to respond to three questions regarding each program. First, how would you rate your skill using this software? Second, does it make your job easier? And third, if it does not make your job easier, why not?

Figure 5 illustrates responses to the first question. Most high school counselors rated their skill level as good, very good, or excellent, using three of the software options listed: Gradespeed, Teams, and eCST. The programs rated lowest in skill were: Schoolnet and Counselor Suite. Several counselors rated their skill level as “poor” on these programs: 13 rated their skill as poor in using Counselor Suite, while eight rated their skill as poor using Schoolnet. As illustrated in Figure 6, the strongest disagreement with the item “Does this software make your job easier?” was assigned to the software On-Track-to-Graduate. Gradespeed, Teams, and Excel were tied as most useful to their job. Finally, Figure 7 illustrates responses to the question that asked “If it doesn’t make your job easier, why not?” The reason counselors did not believe Counselor Suite and Schoolnet made their job easier was “do not know how to use.” One quarter of respondents believed On-Track-to-Graduate duplicated other software programs. One factor that may have influenced their view is that more than one person has been

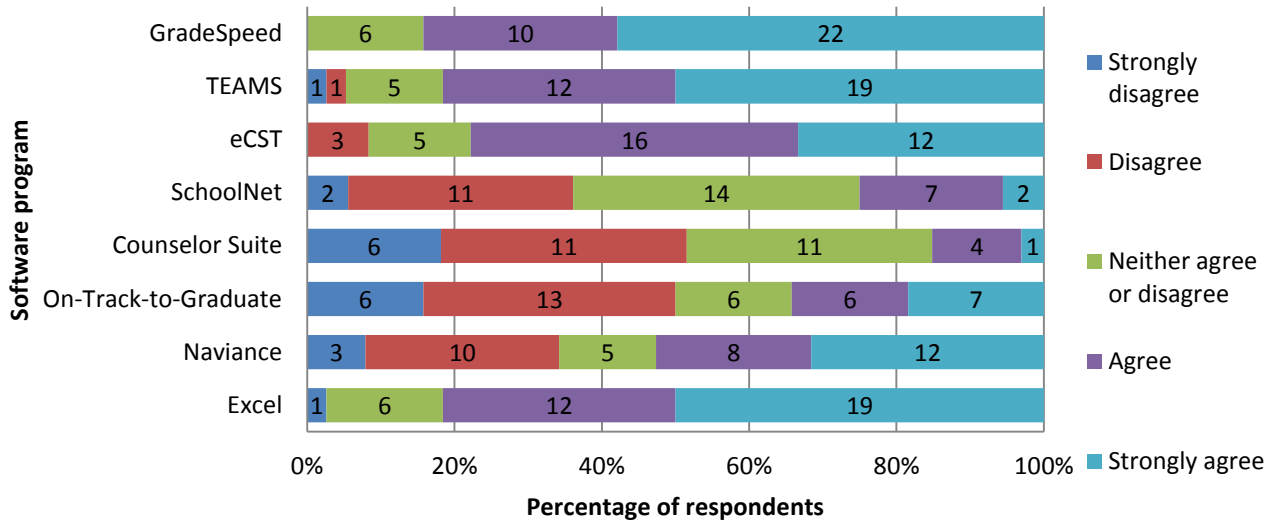
responsible for keeping current and updated information in the system due to personnel shifts at CAC. A discussion of these results could be helpful and provide insight into the work productivity software.

**Figure 5. How would you rate your skill using this software?**



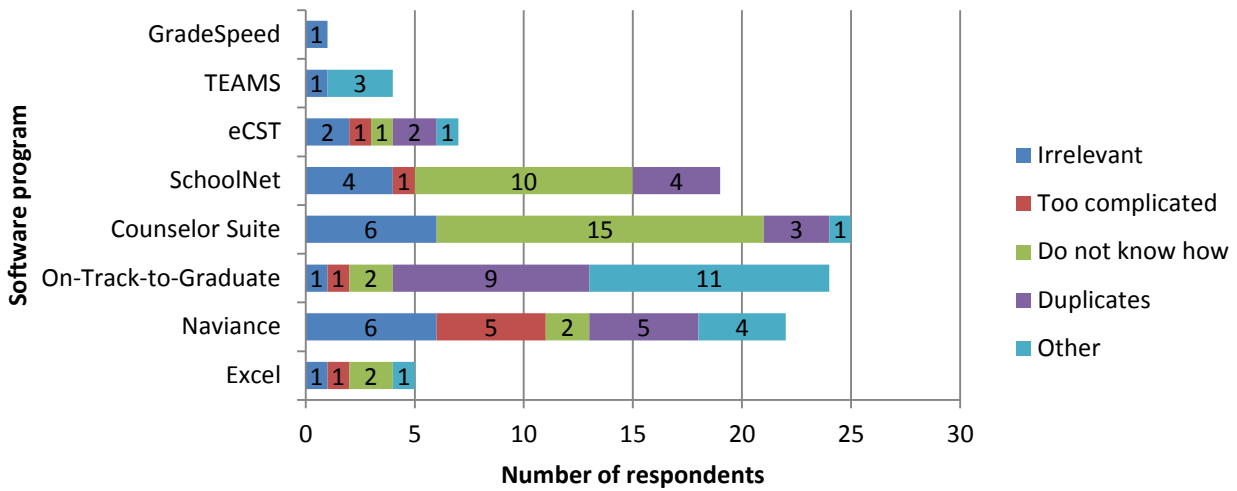
Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

**Figure 6. Does This Software Make Your Job Easier?**



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

Figure 7. If the software does not make your job easier, why not?



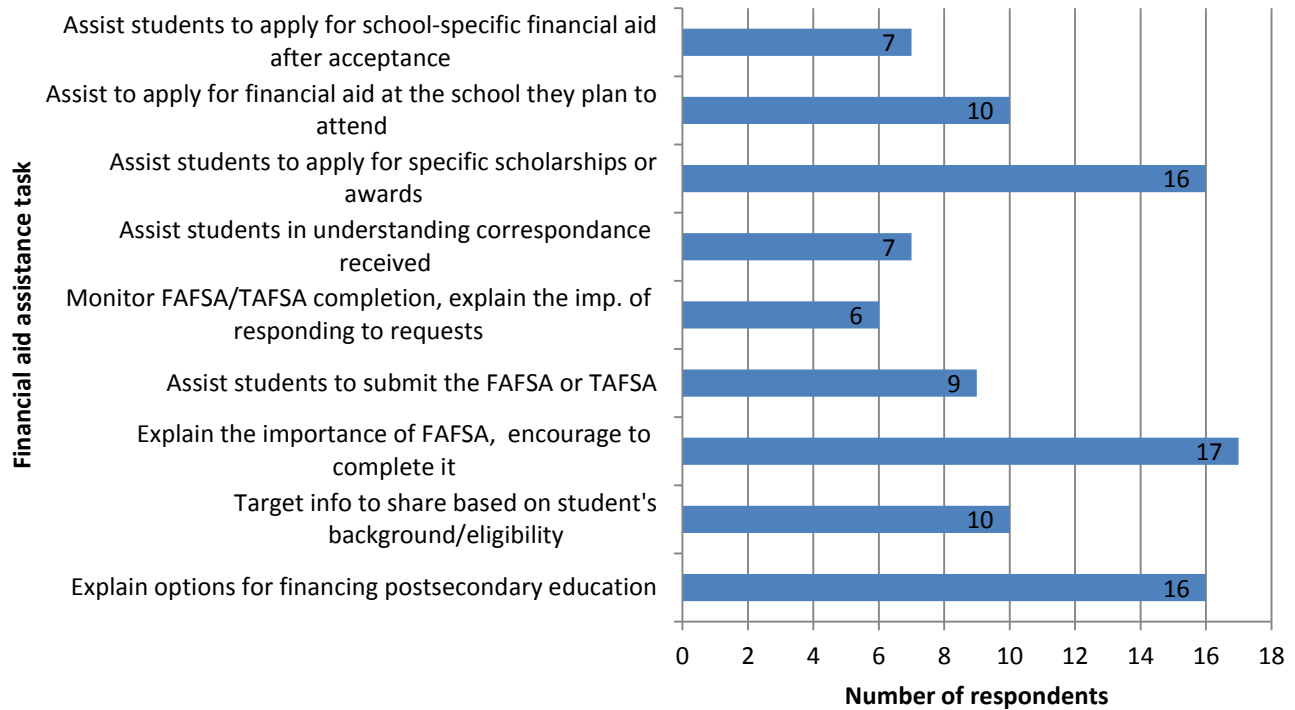
Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

**How do you help students prepare for post-secondary financial aid?**

A set of items asked high school counselors to respond with “true” or “false” to a set of activities they might be performing related to helping students apply for postsecondary financial aid. Responses in Figure 8 demonstrate that high school counselors were not pursuing a set of common practices across campuses. These tasks were most typically related to the responsibilities of college and career advisors, according to the “Roles and Responsibilities of the High School Guidance and Counseling Team 2011–2012” (available in Appendix C). Counselors indicated being overwhelmed by the number and intensity of their campus and individual student responsibilities, so it could be possible that this is one set of outreach tasks that could be shifted to the college and career advisors. Conversations among school counselors regarding their reasoning behind completing these tasks and how they navigate time management issues given their lengthy list of daily duties and responsibilities could be fruitful. Perhaps other counselors would share how they managed the tasks in which they engaged and the tasks they relied upon the college and career advisor to complete.

The 2012 NOSCA survey of school counselors and campus administrators found that school counselors identified their largest need for training in the area of transitioning students from high school graduation to college enrollment and college affordability planning. They expressed feeling least trained in the area of college affordability planning. In the NOSCA (2012) study, school counselors rated lowest their personal commitment, training and available resources for “using student FAFSA completion data to monitor application completion, to make application updates and corrections, and to ensure that students receive and review aid reports” (p. 5). However, high school counselors at economically disadvantaged schools (at least 75% of the student body on free or reduced lunch), reported greater success, stronger commitment, more training and more administrative and district support for the process of monitoring FAFSA data described above.

**Figure 8. How Do You Help Students Apply for Financial Aid?**



Source: AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

**Do you attend Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings for special education students?**

The majority of high school counselors report attending ARD meetings for special education students (75%) and Section 504 meetings for students with other disabilities (71%). Follow-up questions were asked of those who indicated they attend these meetings. First, respondents were asked if they felt professionally prepared to fulfill their responsibilities regarding students with disabilities. Twenty-six counselors (66%) felt prepared to fulfill their professional duties with students who have disabilities “often” or “all” of the time. Ten counselors felt prepared only “sometimes” and three felt prepared “rarely” or “never.” Stated another way, about four in 10 counselors did not feel routinely comfortable with their role in supporting the needs of students with disabilities. This seems to be an area that should be addressed through professional development options or professional learning communities.

Another follow-up question regarding the role of the high school counselor with students who have disabilities asked counselors to identify what specific responsibilities they were assigned. A broad set of responsibilities were provided by counselors. The most common set of responsibilities fell under the counselor’s role of Section 504 Coordinator, which means the counselor attends meetings; manages program implementation; oversees or completes paperwork and documentation legal requirements; provides input regarding grades, attendance, and academic/social emotional concerns; schedules meetings; checks in with 504 students; and conducts other organizational tasks.

- Provide academic information
- Advise about academic progress and postsecondary options
- Provide credit and graduation information; also, coordinate the testing accommodations for each test
- Follow up with students to help them be successful in school; consult with teachers to collect forms and ask for feedback; plan 504 meetings
- Change schedules for SPED students. Do paperwork for 504
- Handle credits, graduation requirements, graduation progress, grades
- Serve as e-CST coordinator, Sec 504 coordinator, referral coordinator
- Ensure that the individualized education programs (IEPs) and accommodations are followed

In addition, participants offered the following comments to describe their responsibilities with students who have disabilities:

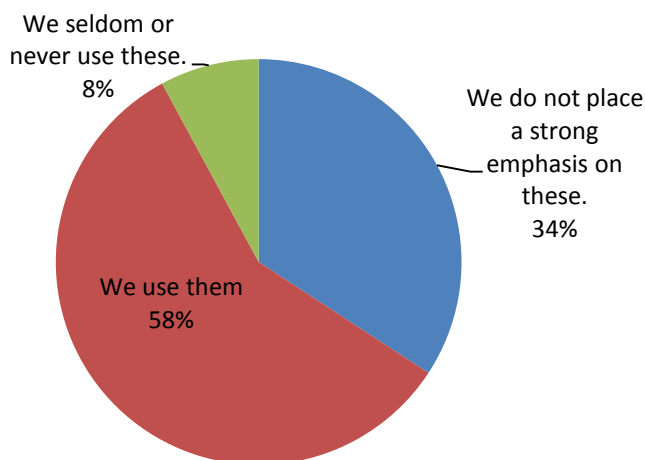
- “I am responsible for keeping track of the life-skill students and making sure that their academic needs are been met. With 504, I am mainly responsible for assisting Spanish-speaking parents to understand what's going on with their students in that program.”
- “I am the Campus 504 Coordinator. This means that I have to schedule and run all annual meetings for each 504 student. I also am responsible for obtaining consent for reevaluations, scheduling reevaluations, and holding a reevaluation meeting to explain and discuss the results. Also, I am responsible for making sure that all e504 documentation is accurate and up to date, as well as the documentation folder in the cumulative folder. During state testing, it is my responsibility to make sure that all students who receive accommodations receive them during testing.”
- “I attend graduation ARDs and provide graduation requirements for the others. I also attend any ARD or 504 meeting for a student [for whom] I have pertinent information. However, often I don't attend, but provide information since counselors are not an actual member of an ARD committee.”
- “I submit the College Board request for accommodations, check their credits.”
- “We have a 20% special ed population on our campus, so we are continuously helping and coordinating schedules, programs, classes, meetings, etc. for our students.”

The activities and responsibilities of school counselors imply a need for high confidence in one’s abilities to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The most common response regarding their assigned duties was “504 coordinator,” meaning that they were expected to be the campus “expert” on the legal requirements, needs, and progress of students who have disabilities and who qualify for supports and services under Section 504. Again, this was a large “hat” to wear and only represented one of the 49 roles and responsibilities high school counselors stated they performed consistently throughout the year.

### **How does your campus use *Focus for the Future* or the *Secondary School Information Guide (SSIG)*?**

Nearly 60% of counselors reported specific usage of *SSIG* and *Focus for the Future* (which are high school planning tools). However, 34% (roughly one counselor in three) reported not placing an emphasis on these planning and preparation tools. Just under 10% reported not using the documents at all. Figure 9 illustrates counselors’ responses.

**Figure 9. How Does Your Campus Use Focus for the Future or the SSIG?**



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

One concern about the number of campuses that did not rely on these planning tools was the response counselors made to the question about their use of Naviance 4-year plans. Neither counselors nor college and career counselors reported using the Naviance 4-year plan capabilities consistently or maintaining their accuracy. Therefore, if they did not use the *SSIG* or *Focus for the Future* tools consistently, how did either group of professionals support students to complete 4-year plans and to carefully document how they intended to make sure they complete all the graduation requirements? Future conversations between and among counselors and college and career advisors should address this central question.

The uses for the *Focus on the Future* and *SSIG* documents (among those who use them) included:

- Support 4-year plan
- Use with advisory and advisory/classroom guidance
- Communicate graduation requirements and postsecondary planning
- Use for course planning and graduation plans
- Use for graduation requirements
- Use for grade-level presentations and completion of course selection for upcoming school year
- Use for graduation plans, prerequisites, etc.
- Hand them out during grade-level conferences
- Use them in character education class
- Use the *SSIG* for grad requirements, policies, ACC dual credit options
- Use the *SSIG* for grad requirement clarification
- Use to supplement guidance lessons
- Use during transition to other campuses, choice sheets
- Provide information to parents and students about high school requirements and postsecondary plans
- Explain credits and ACC dual credits



In addition, participants offered the following comments to describe their use of the *Focus on the Future* and *SSIG*:

- “The counselors and registrars use the *SSIG*, but I don't think anyone else does. Teen Leadership classes use the *Focus on your Future* when we receive them in time. We NEVER receive the *SSIGs* in time for the students to use them for scheduling.”
- “*SSIG* arrives too late but we do refer to it for academic procedures.”
- “I give both to parents and students. I do group guidance with FOYF by grade level. I place these in the hands of parents as valuable resources!”
- “I passed out *Focus on the Future* booklets when I met with juniors for senior and post high school planning. We hand out the *SSIG* when we go into the classroom to complete choice sheets, but the book is often left behind.”
- “I want to use them more. It is a GREAT resource. We just haven't focused on using the resource scheduling.”
- “During the beginning and middle part of the year we meet with class size groups according to our alpha and discuss graduation plans, college information, etc.”
- “Very little classroom time for *Focus on the Future* and the *SSIG* is cumbersome.”
- “We hand them out but they seldom make it home. They come out after the students have made course selections and don't feel that they need the *SSIG*.”

### **At what grade does your campus begin actively supporting college and career readiness for students?**

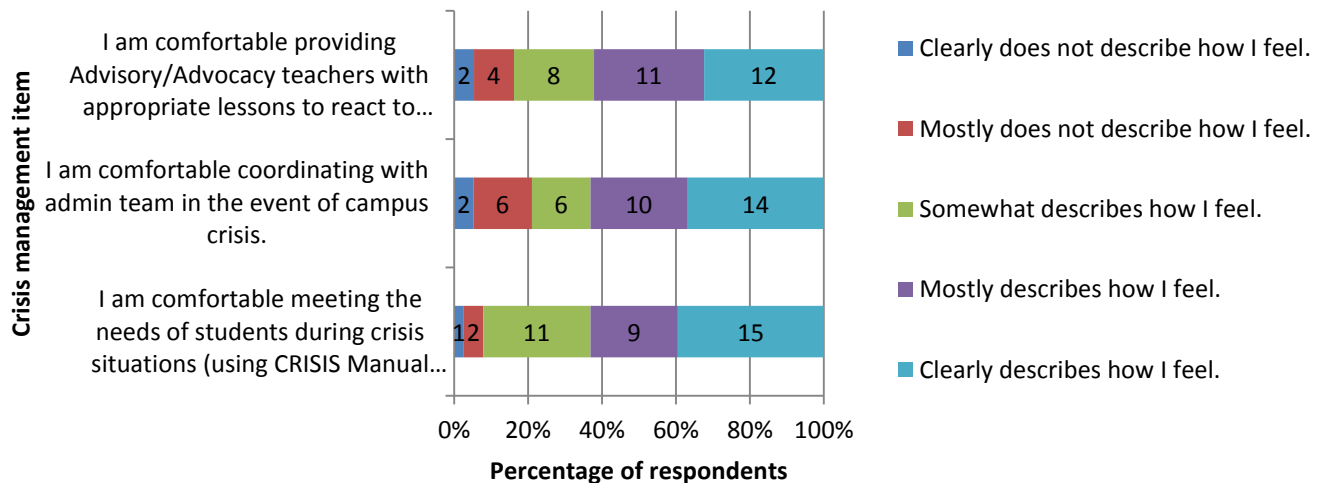
The majority of high school counselors reported that they begin to actively support college and career readiness for students in grade 9 (53.1%), while others reported waiting until grade 10 (8.2%) or grade 11 (12.2%). On the 2013 High School Exit survey (Looby & Neal, 2013), 28.4% of students reported beginning to consider college as a “real possibility” in grade 9, while another 27% began to seriously consider postsecondary education in grade 10. Roughly one-third (30%) thought seriously about college beginning in their junior year, while the remaining 15% did not think seriously about college until their senior year. In contrast, the majority of at-risk seniors (39%) reported they began to seriously consider their postsecondary options during their 11<sup>th</sup>-grade year, with an additional 21% during their senior year. One-half of at-risk students did not begin to seriously consider college as an option for themselves until their junior or senior year. These student-reported data are relevant for high school counselors to consider when they think about assisting students to prepare for their lives after high school. The 28% of counselors who do not begin to address postsecondary planning until after freshmen year may be unintentionally supporting student planning that occurs too late to assist students to become college ready by graduation. Those students who do not seriously consider college as an option during their freshmen year frequently fail to select rigorous coursework, participate in necessary school-related activities and community involvement, prepare for and take appropriate tests, and apply for admission/explore financial aid options that students will need in order to complete a competitive college application. By that time, their high school achievements have been completed. Their options for postsecondary education and career development will be more limited than the students who begin planning and preparing earlier. According to research on postsecondary enrollment, most students have begun to informally decide whether they plan to attend postsecondary institutions by the end of 9<sup>th</sup> grade, often based on conversations with family and friends about college and financing college. Therefore, 9<sup>th</sup> grade is a key year to begin providing students and their parents

with information about postsecondary options and financial aid information (Radford & Ifill, 2012; Hossler and Stage, 1992).

**How comfortable are you with standard school counselor crisis management duties?**

Three questions on the survey addressed school counselors’ comfort with standard school counselor crisis management duties. These duties are an essential component of the school counselor’s professional responsibilities since when a crisis hits a campus, all eyes turn toward the school counselor or school counselor team to provide leadership and mental health support. The results of these questions appear in figure 10. The chart illustrates 100% of the responses to each item, while the numbers inside each bar represent the number of respondents. A total of 48% (n=23) of all counselors reported being mostly or completely comfortable providing Advisory/Advocacy teachers with appropriate lessons to react to a crisis, while 16% (n=6) felt uncomfortable with this responsibility. Regarding coordinating the administrative team in the event of a campus crisis, 21% (n=8) school counselors felt uncomfortable or very uncomfortable with the counselor’s role, while 63% (n=24) felt comfortable. Finally, 8% (n=3) reported feeling very uncomfortable with meeting the needs of students during crisis situations. The last item had the highest ratings for “somewhat describes how I feel” as 30% (n=11) were somewhat uncomfortable with these duties. Given that the numbers of crisis-related events have increased in recent years, it is important that school counselors receive sufficient training and are knowledgeable about procedures, lessons, and receive sufficient formal and informal district support for their ability to perform this role. When considering the small numbers of school counselors who reported feeling uncomfortable with any of the three tasks, it may be tempting to deprioritize crisis management, but in the moment when a crisis occurs, it is pivotal that the school counselor is prepared and confident about his or her responsibilities, next steps and actions.

**Figure 10. High School Counselors’ Level of Comfort with Crisis Management Duties**



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

### **Do you identify higher-risk students regarding high school completion or postsecondary enrollment?**

Research on factors that put students at higher-risk for failing to graduate from high school and failing to enroll in postsecondary education has identified several key stumbling blocks for students (Chen & Kaufman, 1997; Horn, Chen & Adelman, 1998; Kaufman & Bradby, 1992; Rosenbaum, 1986). The highest risk factors after controlling for demographic characteristics (e.g., gender and race/ethnicity), according to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) were lowest socioeconomic quartile, single-parent family, older sibling who dropped out of high school, changed school two or more times from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, average grades of C or lower from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, failing two or more high school courses, repeated an earlier grade from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, first-generation college student status, and parent involvement in school activities/expectations for child's achievement. The authors of the USDOE studies recommended first identifying risk factors in rising 9<sup>th</sup>-grade students to provide targeted assistance to these students, thereby enhancing the likelihood of high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment. Presently, as a district, AISD does not formally identify these risk factors in high school students.

High school counselors were asked the same set of questions as were college and career advisors regarding the monitoring of information indicative of higher-risk status for not graduating or not going to college in order to determine whether the information was gathered or used by either group of professionals on their campuses. Given that college and career advisors typically focus their efforts on grade 12 students, school counselors would be most likely to interact with students across the four-year period.

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#### *Research on College and Career Readiness*

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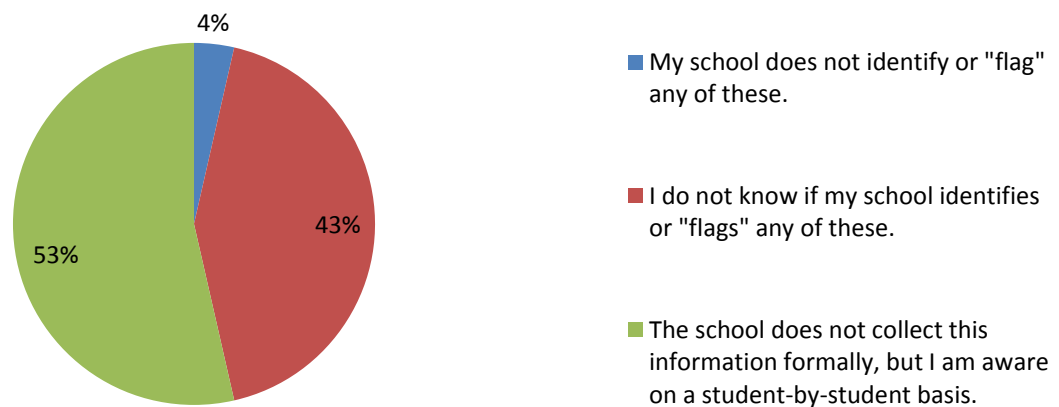
Hossler and Stage (1992) concluded that 70% of 9<sup>th</sup>-grade students in their study had established postsecondary plans. Minority students and their parents had educational attainment aspirations equal to or greater than the majority of students in grade 9, but were less likely than were the majority to enroll in postsecondary education by the time they graduated. The authors pointed out that students did not generally learn about financial aid options until the upper grades (in AISD the topic is covered in senior economics). However, their decision to attend postsecondary education was often made in the first 2 years. After the decision had been made, even informally, students were less likely to complete the stepping stones to postsecondary options (e.g., taking more challenging courses, dual credit, or advanced placement courses; gathering information about postsecondary school options; or registering to take the ACT/SAT). The authors called for more targeted 9<sup>th</sup>-grade interventions to address basic postsecondary questions with minority and economically disadvantaged students and their parents.

In 2008, AISD's DRE conducted a major research investigation into local determinants of postsecondary enrollment (Garland, 2008). The study explored race and ethnicity, economic disadvantage, GPA, and number of absences as important to postsecondary enrollment in the Class of 2007. The focus of the study was confined to postsecondary enrollment rather than high school completion and postsecondary enrollment. It did not use, nor would it have had access to, the USDOE predictors at the time because they had not been collected by the district. If GPA is viewed as a proxy for course failure, then the only differences in the list of variables are race or

ethnicity and absences. The USDOE predictors controlled for the effect of race or ethnicity on high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment because the preponderance of evidence indicated that they mattered, and therefore the researchers wanted to isolate the impact of additional predictors that could be targeted and supported.

The list of USDOE key risk indicators was provided to high school counselors and college and career advisors, and the survey items asked whether their campus had a system in place to identify any of these factors or whether they identified any of these risk factors of their own professional accord, and if so, how the information was used. Figure 11 illustrates high school counselors' responses to whether their campus tracked student statuses regarding educational risk factors related to graduation and postsecondary enrollment. Forty-three percent of respondents were unaware of whether their campus collected information on risk factors. Just over half of respondents, however, reported that they collected at least some of the information themselves. The most common risk factors counselors were monitoring were repeating a grade and whether a student would be a first-generation college student. Given the lack of information collected by college and career advisors (Sanchez Fowler, 2013), sharing this information may be of mutual benefit.

**Figure 11. Does your campus identify/"flag" students who have the following high-risk factors for school failure?**



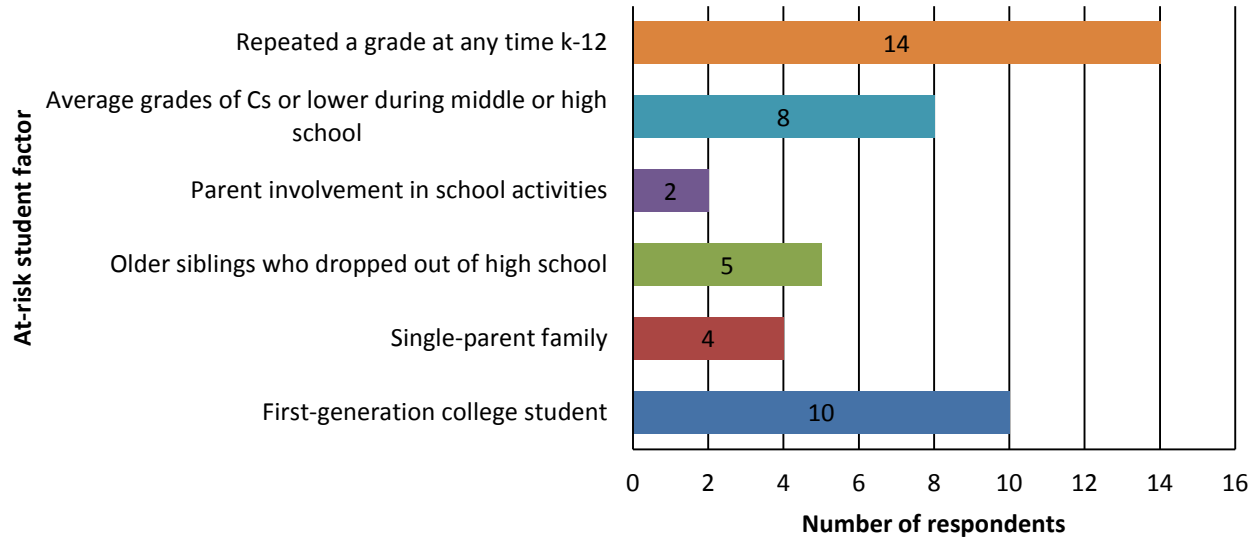
Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

As illustrated in Figure 12, high school counselors reported that they or the campus tracked whether students would be a first-generation college attendee. Four counselors (10%) reported that they or the campus tracked whether a student was a member of a single-parent family, and two counselors (5%) reported that they or the campus tracked parent involvement in school activities. After reviewing the results of the survey, inquiries were made at CAC to determine if these data points were available in the present data systems, if requested by high school counselors or college and career advisors. Of the eight indicators identified in the research, only average grades, credits assigned from middle and high school and number of school transfers were consistently available within district students' records. Given the research evidence supporting the list of risk factors for high school completion and postsecondary enrollment, future conversations among college and career advisors and high school counselors are recommended to plan how best to document and support higher-risk students as they progress through high school.

High school counselors can begin to influence students' postsecondary aspirations in grade 9. Hossler and Stage (1992) reported that by the end of the freshmen year, students have already begun to determine whether they are "college material" and to informally decide whether college is something their family could or would afford. Students who decide in the first two years of high school whether they believe they can afford postsecondary education make subsequent decisions regarding rigorous course selections, registration for tests such as the ACT or SAT, and exploration of postsecondary options that can unintentionally limit students' options as they near high school graduation. On the 2013 AISD High School Exit survey (Looby & Neal, 2013), students reported beginning to "seriously consider college" most frequently during their junior or senior years. That is too late in the process for students who may have a decent, but not outstanding academic record, need financial aid in order to attend, and whose parents have not attended higher education. In the US Department of Education's longitudinal study (Radford and Ifill, 2012), 18% of freshmen reported that they had met with the school counselor regarding college options, while 21% had spoken to a teacher, 53% had spoken to friends, 63% had spoken to their father, and 77% had spoken to their mother about college. Schools with a high percentage of African American students (more than 50% of the school enrollment) were significantly more likely to have spoken to their counselor about college in grade 9.

When parents in the US Department of Education's longitudinal study (Radford & Ifill, 2012) reported that they or a member of their family had met with the school counselor about postsecondary admission requirements while the student was in grade 9, there was a positive association with students' beliefs that college is affordable for their family. Considering that students indicated they had conversations with parents and friends about college during their freshman year, it seems understandable that having met with a school counselor to receive information about postsecondary admissions and financial aid options would lead students to believe college could be affordable. By providing this information early on, students and their families have information to inform the conversations that are naturally and informally occurring during grade 9, and can perhaps keep an open-mind when selecting rigorous coursework and continuing to learn more about postsecondary options as they progress through high school.

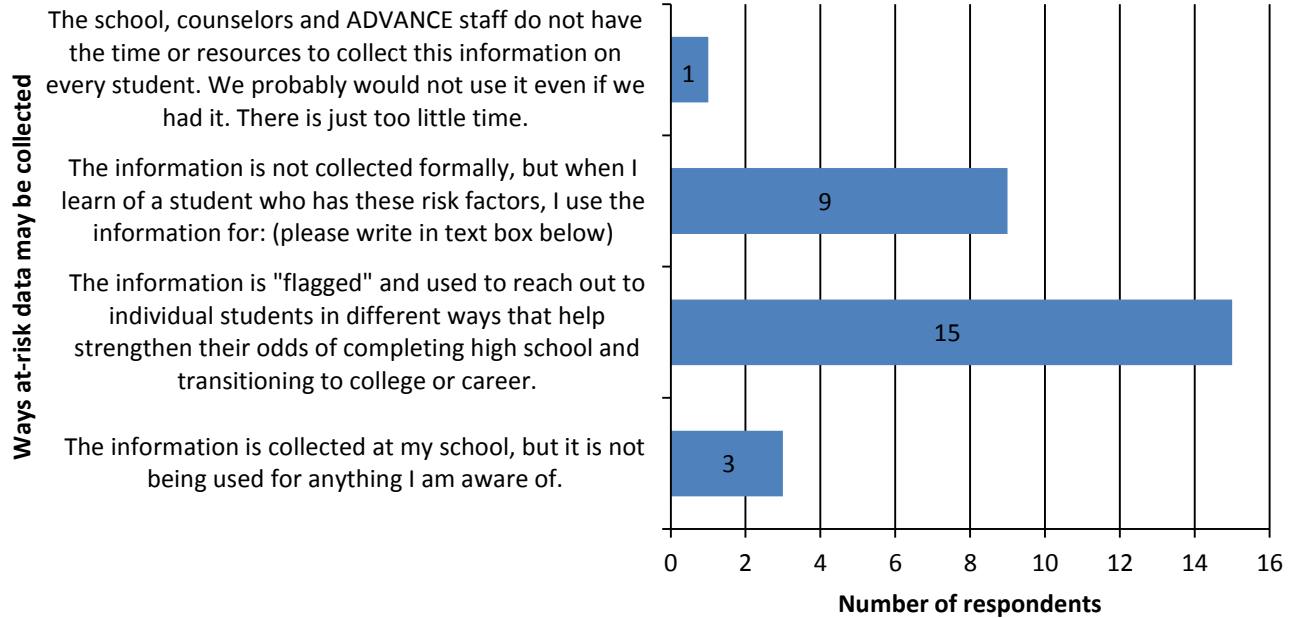
Figure 12. Which of the following risk factors does your campus collect information about?



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

A follow-up question was presented to respondents who indicated information about some of the student risk factors was formally collected by the campus or gathered by the staff members informally. The follow-up question asked how the information was used. One response option stated, “The information is ‘flagged’ and used to reach out to individual students in different ways that help strengthen their odds of completing high school and transitioning to college or career.” The majority of respondents (53%) indicated that to be true of their campus. The other option provided a text box in which they could respond about how they used the information about risk factors when they collected it informally. Six respondents (21%) indicated they informally collected information about some of the risk factors, and each provided an explanation about how it was used. Figure 13 illustrates the percentage of responses obtained on this item.

**Figure 13. Does your campus identify/"flag" students who have the following high-risk factors for school factors?**



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

Respondents who responded to the follow-up question “The information is *not* collected formally, but when I learn of a student who has these risk factors, I use the information...” gave the following uses:

- Use in college advising, inventories in Naviance, help filing FAFSA
- Use to help students by getting them services in Communities In Schools (CIS), taking them to the Child Study Team (CST) meetings, give them extra support, scheduling appropriate classes
- Use in individual advising
- Use in risk assessment

Identifying student risk factors for the purpose of outreach to keep students in school until graduation and/or to support their exploration of postsecondary education as a viable option for their future is one important means of increasing graduation rates and postsecondary enrollment rates on a campus. In AISD, the 2013-2014 district graduation rate among Hispanic (83.3%) and African American (86%) students was lower than the rate for Asian (91.9%) and White (91.3%) students, with higher risk subgroups such as special education students (70.5%) and English language learners (62.6%) significantly lower than the district average (86.4%)(TEA, 2014).

Students’ views of college affordability were influenced by the amount of time school counselors reported spending on college-related counseling, and by the extent to which school counselors indicated college-related counseling was a high priority on the campus. When looking specifically at students who would be first generation college-goers, Radford & Ifill (2012) found that those whose counselors spent more than 20% of their time on college-related activities had significantly higher likelihood of believing that college was financially possible. Additionally, as the mathematics scores of first-generation college-goers increased, so did their belief that college could be affordable for them. Finally, students whose parents expected their first-generation college-goer to earn at least a bachelor’s degree were 85 times more likely (than their peers whose parents

expected them to earn a high school diploma or associates degree or who were uncertain) to believe college could be affordable for them. Children of parents who had an associate's degree rather than a high school diploma or less had 42% greater odds of believing that college was affordable for their family. Unless students complete the FAFSA, they will not have objective information to determine whether postsecondary education is affordable for their family. In 2012-2013, only 53.7% of AISD seniors completed the FAFSA. Within that district average, ELL students' completion rate for the FAFSA was only 24.7% (roughly one-third of those that graduated) and special education students' completion rate was only 38.5% (approximately half of those that graduated). These figures serve to support the recommendation that AISD high school counselors properly identify high risk groups of students to support their college aspirations beginning as freshmen and consistently reinforcing the notion through the point of high school completion. One task that could move high school counselors in that direction would be annual completion or adjustment of the 4-year graduation plans in Naviance, which was noted as an inconsistent practice earlier in this report.

According to the results from the 2013 AISD High School Exit survey AISD seniors who were identified as "at risk" received considerably less college-going support from family members than did students who were not considered "at risk." For example, 31% of at-risk students reported that a family member helped them to complete applications for colleges or schools, as compared with 51% of not at-risk students. Similarly, 45% of at-risk students reported that family members encouraged them to apply to several colleges, as compared with 64% of not at-risk students. Likewise, 46% of at-risk students reported receiving help from family members to complete financial aid applications, compared with 65% of not at-risk students. Differences were equally stark when comparing the educational experiences of parents of at-risk and not at-risk students. Research indicates that parents are extremely influential in students' attitudes, aspirations, and college plans (Bordua, 1960; Bozick & Lauff, 2007; Bloom, 2007; Radford & Ifill, 2012). Among AISD seniors in the class of 2013, 61% of at-risk students' parents had received a high school diploma or GED as their highest educational degree, whereas 36% of not at-risk students' parents had done so. By further comparison, 21% of at-risk students' parents earned a bachelor's degree or higher, whereas 51% of not at-risk earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Students with parents who do not have a bachelor's degree are in need of more support from schools, as their parents often do not know as much about college admission and financial aid and cannot provide the same support (Bloom, 2007; Radford & Ifill, 2012).

According to Radford and Ifill (2012), ninth grade students who reported talking to their counselors about going to college, or whose parents had talked to counselors about going to college were significantly more likely to plan to enroll in college immediately after high school. The odds of planning to enroll in college immediately after high school increased by 37% for students who reported having done so, while the odds of students planning to enroll in college immediately after high school when their parents had spoken to a school counselor about college during the 9<sup>th</sup> grade year increased by 42%. When comparing students whose parents expected them to earn a high school diploma or less with those whose parents expected them to earn a bachelor's degree or higher, Radford & Ifill (2012) found that the odds that students planned to enroll in a bachelor's degree program immediately following high school were more than 2.5 times greater for students whose parents expected a bachelor's degree or higher. On the 2013 AISD High School Exit Survey, 13% of at-risk students reported that their parents expected them to earn a high school diploma, while only 5% of not at-risk students' parents expected them to earn a high school diploma. Another 10% of at-risk students reported that their parents expected them to earn an associate's degree, while 39% reported that their parents expected them to



earn a bachelor's degree, and 19% expected an advanced degree. Among not at-risk students, 5% reported that their parents expected them to earn an associate's degree, 49% expected them to earn a bachelor's degree, and 30% reported that their parents expected them to earn an advanced degree. Lastly, 15% of at-risk seniors reported that they were not sure what level of educational attainment their parents expected of them, compared with 9% of not at-risk students who reported the same.

Another key factor in supporting postsecondary enrollment among at-risk students is fulfillment of the requirements for admission, specifically rigorous coursework and taking the necessary admissions tests like the ACT or SAT. Students who enroll in postsecondary education must have completed both of these criteria. Students in AISD have access to rigorous coursework through International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Enrollment (DE) courses (c.f. The International Baccalaureate Organization, August 14, 2012; The College Board, October, 2013; Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, & Bailey, 2007). Nationally, dual enrollment courses are most readily available of the three types of rigorous college-preparatory courses, with 86% of high school reporting availability (Radford & Ifill, 2012). Typically, schools are more likely to offer AP courses as a function of socioeconomic status of the student population. Where more students have higher socioeconomic statuses, more AP courses are available. Where more students have lower socioeconomic statuses, college preparatory programs like TRIO, AVID and UPWARD BOUND are more likely (US Department of Education, October, 2013). In public high schools where a large percentage of students are Hispanic, counselors are more likely to have a formal program in place to encourage consideration of postsecondary education (Radford & Ifill, 2012). Within AISD, only 5.4% of all high school students elected to enroll in dual credit courses. Approximately 23% of all high school students elected to enroll in AP courses. Among students who enrolled in AP courses, 74% took the AP exam to receive credit for the course; among those who took the exam required to receive AP credit, only 54% passed the exam. When the small number of students who passed the AP exam are examined further, a mere 27% of economically disadvantaged students passed. African American students who took the exam passed at a rate of 39.6% and Hispanic students passed at a rate of 55.1%. The at-risk students in AISD need formal programs to support their academic success beginning in grade 9 and continuing consistently through graduation.

In supporting postsecondary aspirations of students as they progress through high school, counselors are instrumental in supporting student test-taking plans, such as the ACT or SAT. In AISD during 2012-2013, a total of 2698 students took the SAT (a decrease from 2747 in 2010-2011) and 1496 students took the ACT (an increase from 1231 in 2010-2011). Radford and Ifill (2012) explored five counselor actions related to supporting student test-taking as related to postsecondary education. A regression analysis was conducted to consider the impact of counselor actions that included the amount of time counselors reported spending on college readiness, selection and applications; the level of priority given to college counseling; whether schools provided assistance with seeking financial aid; whether students spoke to a counselor about going to college in their freshmen year; whether their parent spoke to a school counselor about college admission requirements during the student's freshmen year.

For first-generation college students who indicated that they planned to enroll in postsecondary education immediately after high school, the strongest predictors of whether they would indeed take the SAT or ACT, were the student talking to their counselor about college (it doubled the odds that the student would take the test), the four-year college-going rate for the campus, and the student's math score. The resulting counselor actions recommended by the study's authors included devoting more time to college readiness among freshmen, which

impacts their college-going aspirations, rigorous course enrollment, and likelihood of viewing college as affordable for their family and the likelihood that they will take admissions tests and complete college applications. Also recommended was to initiate conversations with freshmen about college, and likewise, initiating conversations with parents of freshmen. When parents and students reported having talked to the school counselor about college, their odds of having bachelor's degree aspirations increased. The most recent AISD data available to examine the gap between those students who aspired to participate in postsecondary education and those who enrolled after graduation shows that while 92% of graduating seniors intended to enroll, only 68% actually enrolled (Looby, Pazera & Fowler, 2013).

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### *Research on College and Career Readiness*

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Research has strongly suggested that factors in high schools that influence the transition to college operate through the formal structure, which provides students with college-linking resources, and through the organizational norms that communicate values and establish practices that are related to going to college (Alexander & Eckland, 1977; Hill, 2008; McDonough, 1997). The college-linking process has been defined as “the process of planning, application, and decision-making that culminates in enrollment in college” (Hill, 2008, p. 53). In AISD, the college and career advisor has, in part, been assigned the role of facilitating the college-linking process. College-linking strategies, as defined by Hill (2008), can be classified into three categories, each of which has a differential impact on students from different racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds and creates different outcomes for each group. Access to resources is frequently dependent upon student and family initiation. Likelihood of initiation may vary with the student's background characteristics. Prior research has demonstrated that disadvantaged students and families are more likely than are non-disadvantaged students and families to rely on the school for resources related to educational attainment, and they may be less likely to seek them on their own (Lareau, 1987; Stanton-Salazar, 2000).

In comparing college-linking models, certain models were positively associated with increased 4-year enrollment. A “brokering-type” model produced significantly greater odds of 4-year college enrollment with no difference by race or socioeconomic status, a finding Hill (2009) interpreted as evidence of equity. Among those students who were choosing between a 2-year and a 4-year school, the “clearinghouse-type” model significantly increased the odds of attending a 4-year institution for Black and Hispanic students. However, clearinghouse models had significant negative effects on 2-year college enrollment. In fact, the negative association was stronger for Hispanic students than for other students. According to Hill's research, Hispanic students attending schools with good resources and a limited commitment to equitable access to the resources (e.g., a “clearinghouse-type” model) were more likely to forgo college altogether than to attend a 2-year school.

Jointly, college and career advisors and high school counselors could more formally target and support students at highest risk of failure to graduate and those who could be supported to attend postsecondary education (who may not otherwise attend). Perhaps through a combination of literature review; program study; and professional development opportunities (e.g., a professional learning community endeavor), this could indeed occur. The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center (2012) published a study of barriers and supports to school counselor success. Regarding counselors' efforts to achieve equity among student groups on their home

campus, nearly 9 out of 10 school counselors say that “making sure that students from low-income, disadvantaged, and immigrant backgrounds get the extra attention and support they need to achieve success equal to other students” is extremely important (p.6). Close to half of the counselors in their survey reported that they do not know how to identify students who need help (41%), do not know how to apply interventions to suit the diverse cultural and academic needs of their students (43%) and do not necessarily prioritize equity when implementing their programs (44%). Just under half (49%) of high school counselors said they knew how to keep students’ parents and families actively involved. High schools with lower rates of college attendance reported experiencing greater challenges with family involvement (The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, 2012).

Research-based discussions and professional development opportunities for AISD high school counselors and college and career advisors, both jointly and as separate entities, could support them to explore their roles in our high schools, the extent to which the campuses actively engage differential strategies to target particular groups of students for high school completion and postsecondary enrollment support, and the way they gather key data points to guide campus impact on postsecondary enrollment. As an example, NOSCA offered a webinar series earlier in 2013 focused on gathering and using data as a tool to enhance student equity in high school (Lee, 2013). The slides are available online and the equity-focused strand of professional development activities continues to be developed by NOSCA. Current studies on college-linking strategies and on postsecondary enrollment trends stratified by economic disadvantage, race or ethnicity, gender, and academic preparation are abundant. To take full advantage of the current status of research on postsecondary enrollment, high school completion, and postsecondary persistence, AISD high school counselors and college and career advisors must have the time and support by campus administrators and CAC leadership to evaluate the effectiveness of our present strategies and set targets for our future efforts to achieve Goals 3 of the Strategic Plan.

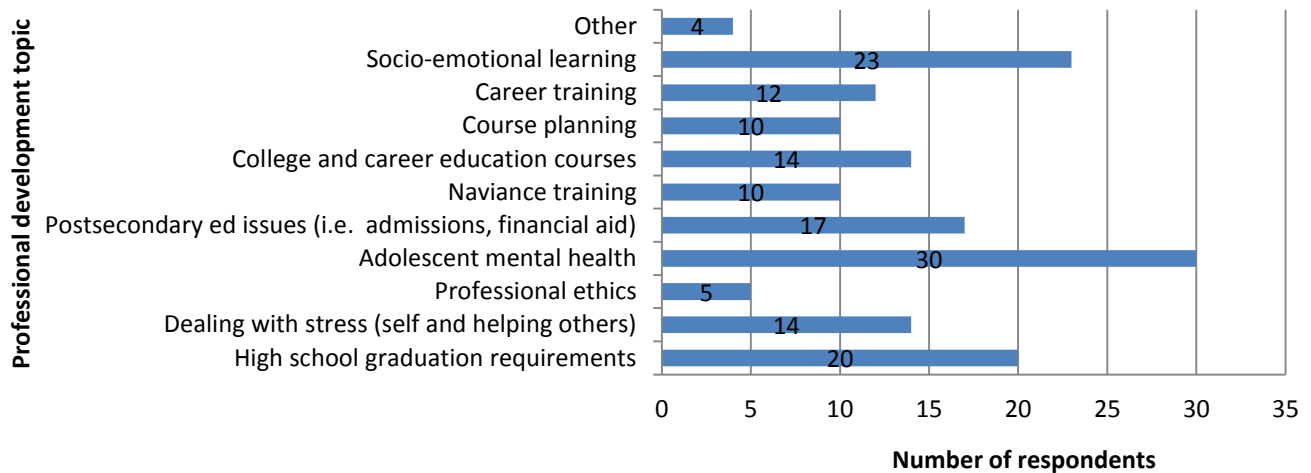
### **What types of professional development do high school counselors receive and what do they need?**

Professional development activities were probed through the survey items in terms of what types of professional development activities were pursued, and how often, and what present needs were. The most common forms of professional development activities for high school counselors in AISD were attending district-based trainings (59%), campus-based trainings (51%), meeting with other AISD counselors (43%), and reading professional literature (43%). Three respondents indicated that they did not engage in professional development activities. Reasons for not attending professional development activities were related to lack of time and encouragement to attend, and lack of resources to cover financial costs to register or travel. Respondents who attended local (18%) or national (18%) trainings were asked to report which local or national trainings they attended. No consensus emerged regarding regional or local trainings; the eight respondents listed mostly separate trainings (i.e., TACAC, College Board, ASCA, and Region XIII). In response to the question “What does AISD do to support your pursuit of professional development and training,” 65% of respondents selected “sends emails of upcoming trainings or conferences.” The second-most-frequent response selected was “facilitates monthly meetings for lead counselors and for Advance staff,” which was selected by 35% of respondents. The third-most-frequent response selected was “webinars.” Sixteen respondents (33%) chose that response. The responses selected least often were: professional learning communities and site-based technology training.

With regard to professional development needs for the 2013–2014 year, the most common request was for adolescent mental health (61%), followed by socio-emotional learning (47%) and high school graduation requirements (41%). The final survey question asked respondents what recommendations they had for AISD

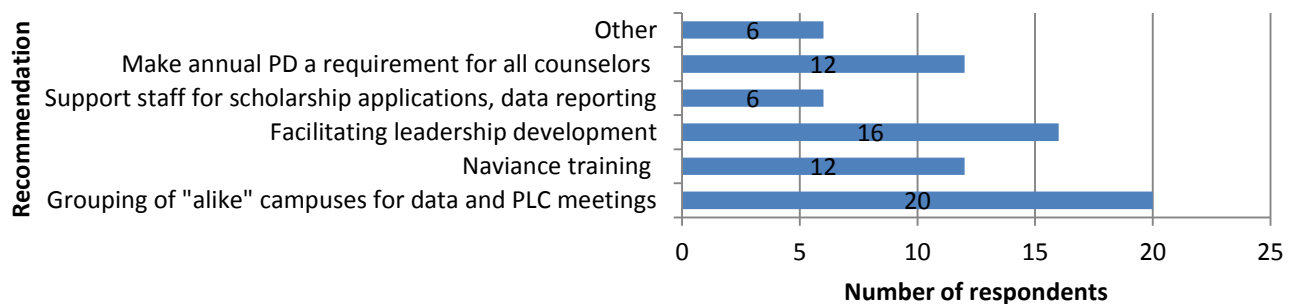
with regard to how to better facilitate professional growth and development for high school counselors. The two most frequent responses were grouping of “alike” campuses for data briefings and professional learning communities (PLCs, 41%) and facilitating leadership development among counselors (33%). Naviance training was recommended by one in four of all counselors who responded to the survey. Figure 13 illustrates the responses to professional development activity requests. Figure 15 shows responses to the question “What recommendations do you have for how to better facilitate professional growth and development opportunities for high school counselors?”

**Figure 14. What topics are most important to you for professional development opportunities for school counselors in AISD?**



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

**Figure 14. What recommendations do you have for how to better facilitate professional growth and development for high school counselors in AISD?**



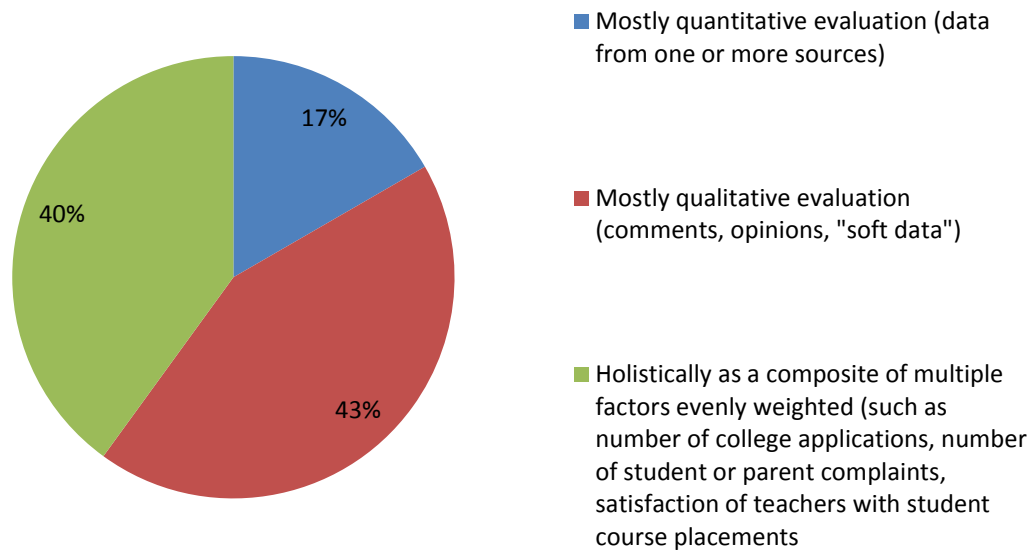
Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

**How do campuses evaluate high school counselors’ performances?**

High school counselors reported that their performance evaluation methods were based largely on qualitative “soft” data, such as comments and opinions (43%), whereas only 17% indicated their evaluation was based mostly on quantitative data (e.g. percentages, numbers, and other “hard” data). The second most common approach (40%) was the use of a holistic composite of multiple factors evenly weighted (i.e. number of college

applications, number of parent or student complaints, satisfaction of teachers with student course placements, and the like). Figure 15 illustrates the responses to this survey item.

**Figure 15. In what ways does your campus evaluate your job effectiveness?**

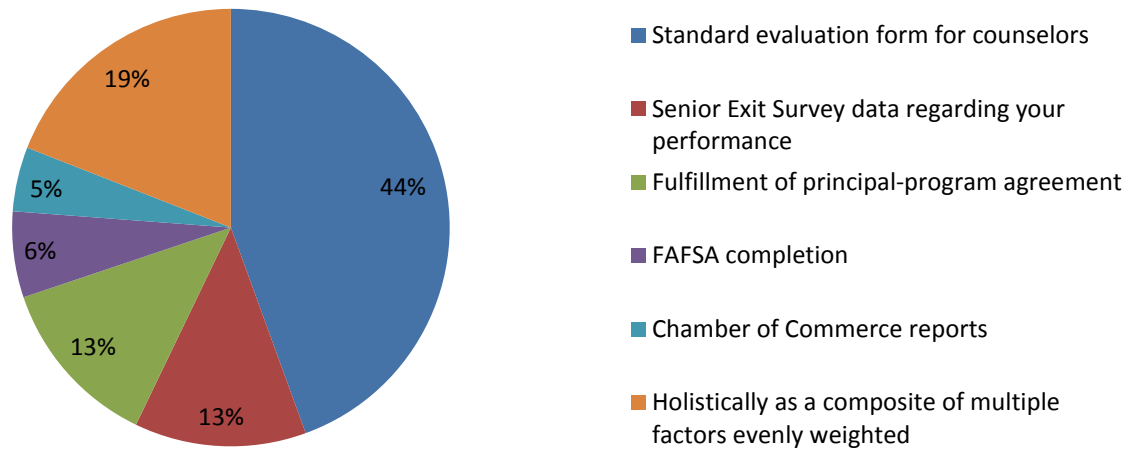


Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

Many high school counselors reported their evaluation process was dependent upon the standard evaluation form for counselors (44%). Second-most common was viewing the process as holistic, or as a composite of multiple factors evenly weighted (e.g., number of college applications, number of student or parent complaints, and satisfaction of teachers with student course placements). Figure 16 illustrates job performance measures for school counselors.

With regard to the notion of counselor accountability, the NOSCA national survey of school counselors and their campus administrators (NOSCA, 2013) reported that one in five counselors do not currently have a system of accountability set up. Approximately half of the survey participants reported that the accountability system in their school is focused on student outcomes ("hard data") as opposed to counseling activities and 23% reported that their school focuses on both student outcomes and counseling activities. The most frequently cited data sources reported by high school counselors included school counseling program development (74%), administrative and clerical tasks (69%) and coordinating tests (60%). High school counselors who participated in the NOSCA study indicated that "fair" ways to assess counselor effectiveness are transcripts of audits of graduation readiness (60%), completion of a college-prep sequence of courses (59%) and students' gaining access to advanced classes and tests (58%). The authors of the NOSCA study noted that school counselors' belief that they can be effective in improving a specific outcome measure was correlated to their belief that it can serve as a "fair" measure of their job performance. For example, 83% believe they can improve completion rates, while 59% see it as a fair measure of counselor accountability. But only 48% believe they can improve graduation rates, and just 23% perceive it to be a fair measure of counselor accountability.

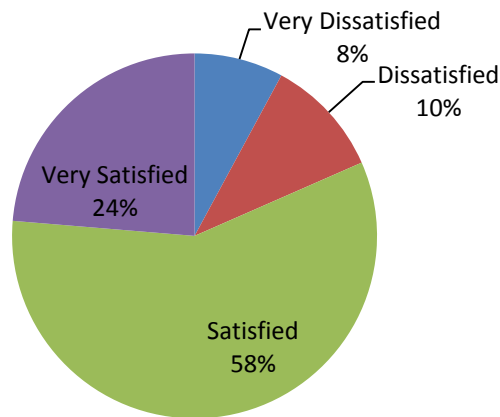
Figure 16. What performance data are most commonly used for your evaluation process?



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

The majority of college and career advisors were satisfied with the way their performance was evaluated. Figure 17 shows that 82% were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” and 18% were dissatisfied. Evaluation methods varied across campuses, but it is helpful to know that the processes were largely acceptable to the vast majority of counselors.

Figure 17. How satisfied are you with how your job performance is evaluated?



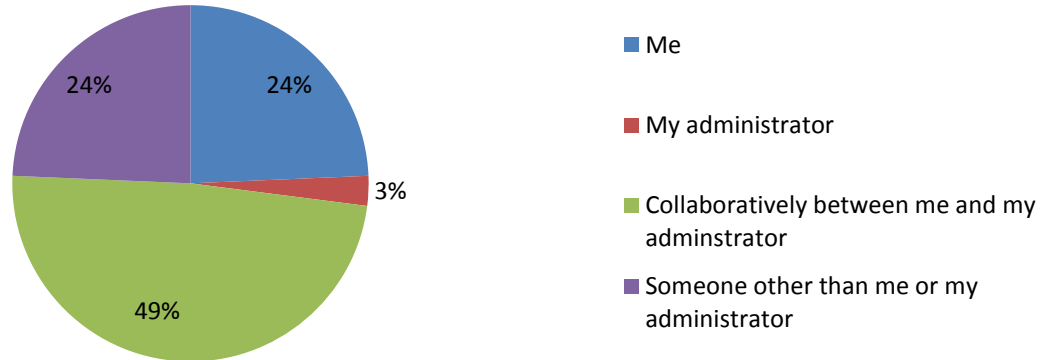
Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

**How are data-driven, measureable goals determined for the annual principal/counselor program management agreement document?**

The annual principal/counselor program management agreement document outlines expectations for performance by the school counselor at the assigned campus. Typically, the agreement provides structure to the counselor’s roles, responsibilities and duties across the school year. Performance goals are set by staff at each campus. As shown in figure 18, the high school counselors who completed the survey reported that the annual principal/counselor program management document is most frequently created as a collaborative effort

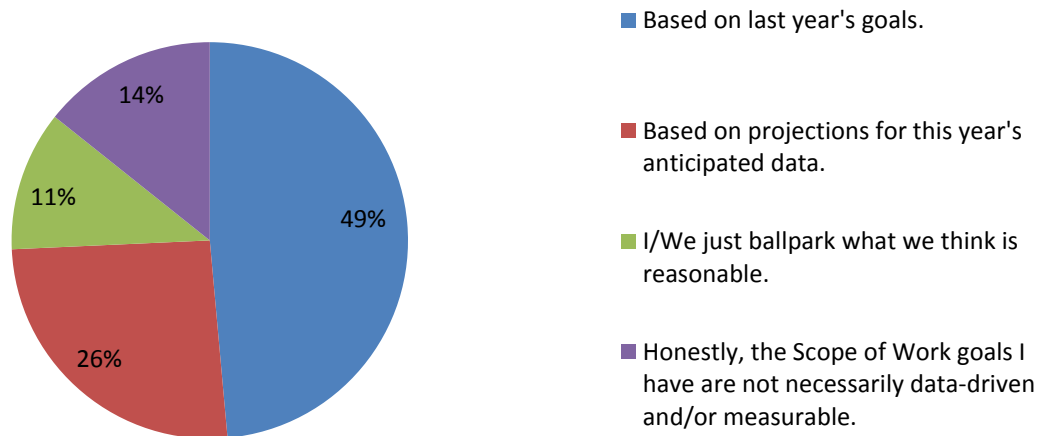
between the campus administrator and the high school counselor. Data-driven performance goals are based largely on a combination of last year’s performance data/goals and the projections of this year’s anticipated data, as shown in figure 19.

**Figure 18. The principal/counselor program management agreement is completed by...**



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

**Figure 19. How are data-driven, measureable goals determined for the principal/counselor program management agreement document?**



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey

**Do college and career advisors experience high work-related stress?**

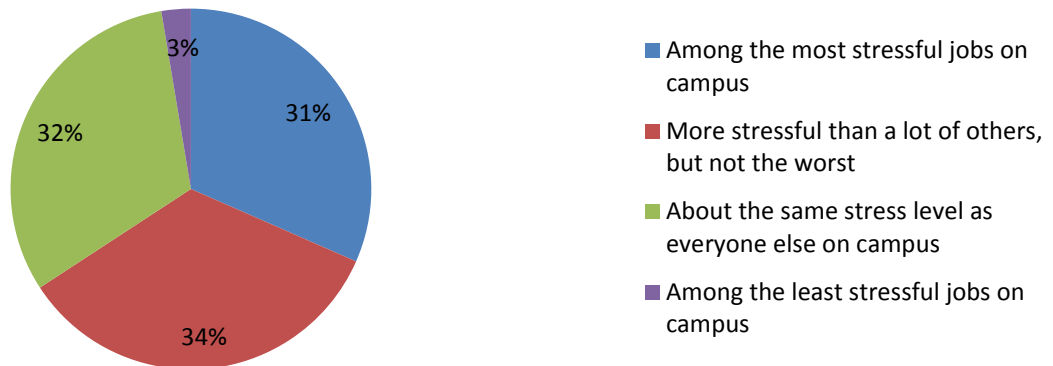
Survey items probed professional stress experienced by high school counselors. The primary question stem read “What factors increase the level of work-related stress you feel?” Responses were tallied as Yes/No and are illustrated in Figure 20. Response options included the following:

- Frequent district and state-level changes to graduation requirements and testing (24 responses, 49%)
- Demands of data entry and clerical tasks are excessive and preclude high quality student advising (23 responses, 47%)
- Demands of nonprofessional campus tasks, such as test administration, lunch duty, and hall duty, interfere with postsecondary support for students (18 responses, 37%)

- Naturally high levels of stress related to professional job duties, such as supporting a student in crisis (18 responses, 37%)
- Student-to-counselor/Advance staff ratio is too large (15 responses, 31%)
- Number and intensity of nonprofessional duties and tasks on campus (10 responses, 24%)
- Scope of work is too broad for one person to accomplish (8 responses, 16%)
- Other (5 responses, 10%)
  - “Always a lot happening on our campus”
  - “Because we have a very high mobility rate, an exorbitant number of schedules to create as well as follow up with new students. Leadership is not effective with communication which greatly inhibits counselors to work as effectively as a team with admin as could be.”
  - “Lack of positive feedback and support”
  - “Poor communication and respect from Administration”
  - “Ratio is too large considering our type of population and being only half time”
- Single department position, which means the lack of collegiality and the lack of opportunity to participate in a PLC (3 responses, 0.06%)

Despite the many stressors identified by college and career advisors, when asked how stressful their job was compared with that of other staff on their campuses, respondents stated that their level of stress was, by and large, about the same as that of other staff. Figure 14 illustrates how college and career advisors rated their level of stress compared with that of their coworkers. Still, it seems noteworthy that 38% of respondents believed their job was more stressful than that of their campus coworkers.

**Figure 20. How stressful is your job as a high school counselor compared with the stress you see in others who work on your campus?**



Source. AISD 2013 Counselor and College and Career Advisor Survey



## Summary

The 2013 Survey of High School Counselors and Project ADVANCE Staff was designed to probe issues of time usage, work-related activities, professional development needs, work productivity software, job evaluation, college-linking activities, and basic prior job experiences in and outside AISD. Key findings for high school counselors included the following:

- The majority of high school counselors in AISD have been school counselors from 1 to 5 years. Among the 49 school counselors who participated in the survey, 15 had been certified from 1 to 5 years and 15 had been certified from 6 to 10 years. Almost half had 3 to 5 years' experience as classroom teachers.
- The student-to-college/career advisor ratio varied dramatically across campuses, ranging from 51 to 600 students for one college and career advisor. The most common ratio was one counselor to 500 students. ASCA recommends a ratio of 250 students to one counselor. The AISD counselor-to-student ratios are double the recommended ratio by NOSCA and ASCA and about 1.5 times the ratio recommended by TEA.
- From the perspective of high school counselors, the job roles and responsibilities for high school counselors and college and career advisors have been divided to include separate duties for grades 9 through 11, but for seniors, an overlap exists with respect to supporting students to complete the FAFSA/TAFSA, select an appropriate postsecondary option, and apply for financial aid.
- USDOE-identified data points to target students and stratify resources based on high-risk indicators of high school non-completion and of postsecondary enrollment were not being collected or monitored consistently on AISD campuses or at CAC. Some counselors collected information on certain indicators (most likely first-generation college students) and used the information to provide tailored recommendations to students.
- When asked about counselors' participation in matters related to students with disabilities, the majority of counselors felt comfortable in their role, but one-third felt unprepared to meet the responsibilities. Many school counselors were assigned the time-intensive role of Section 504 coordinator for their campus, as one small portion of their assigned duties. Professional development activities should be considered to address preparation for the role in terms of practical matters related to time management and organizational strategies, as well as legal and administrative requirements. Given the experience and comfort level of some counselors with this role, professional development activities could occur on a peer-led or PLC basis.
- In terms of job roles and responsibilities, 49 separate responsibilities were reported by counselors as requiring consistent engagement across the entire school year. Among these, counselors reported feeling they spent "about [the] right amount of time" on 30 responsibilities. This finding seems to indicate a need for prioritization of assigned tasks and duties through conversations with district leadership and campus administrators.
- High school counselors felt reasonably comfortable with their roles and responsibilities during crisis situations. However, there were a small number of counselors who were not comfortable at all. This should be remedied by counselor administrators because a crisis situation can occur at any time and on campuses where there may only be one counselor, he or she must be confidently ready to assume a leadership role.

- The most common forms of professional development activities for high school counselors in AISD were attending district-based training (59%), attending campus-based training (51%), meeting with other AISD lead counselors (43%), and reading professional literature (43%). Three school counselors reported not attending any professional development activities due to a lack of time and resources.
- One-third of high school counselors reported not using the SSIG or Focus for the Future tools consistently with students, for a variety of reasons. Only 44% of counselors reported using the 4-year plan in Naviance, and an additional 25% reported not using Naviance at all. These findings raise concerns about how counselors and college advisors are assuring that students complete all graduation requirements in an organized fashion.
- The primary vehicle that carries expectations for annual high school counselors' performance goals is the *Principal/Counselor Management Agreement* document. Counselors reported that they complete this form in collaboration with their campus administrator, and that data-based performance goals are included and are derived from last year's performance data and a projection of the coming year's data.
- Most high school counselors reported their evaluation process was primarily a function of the standard evaluation form for counselors. Most were satisfied with the present evaluation system.
- The two most influential work-related stressors reported by high school counselors were (a) frequent changes to district- and state-level graduation requirements (24 responses, 49%) and (b) demands of data entry and clerical tasks were excessive and precluded high-quality student advising (23 responses, 47%). One-third of respondents felt their stress was greater than that of their campus colleagues, one-third believed that their stress was among the worst on campus, and one-third felt their work-related stress was comparable to that of their peers.

The results of this survey provide insight into the work responsibilities and perceptions of the college and career advisors in AISD during the 2012–2013 school year. Hopefully, this report will provide a starting point for discussion and dialog regarding assigned job responsibilities, student supports, technology, and professional development opportunities for this hard-working group of AISD professionals.

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## Appendix A

Open-ended responses to “How has your campus differentiated the roles of the school counselor and Project ADVANCE Facilitator?”

A school counselor is responsible for...

A Project ADVANCE facilitator is responsible for...

Note. Small edits have been made to obscure the specific campus referenced, to protect the confidentiality of the respondent.

- **School counselor** is responsible for credit checks, scheduling, personal/social and career counseling, Naviance plans, AP and PSAT testing, Early College Start **Project ADVANCE** is responsible for FAFSA/TAFSA, college applications, Naviance, scholarships
- A **school counselor** is responsible ...Academic Planning, Student Support Services, Social Development A **Project ADVANCE** Facilitator is responsible for...College and Career Support
- At my campus a **school counselor** is responsible for scheduling, transcript reviews, Naviance 4 year plans and providing information on graduation requirements. A **Project ADVANCE** Facilitator is responsible for assisting students with college applications and college information.
- Very different roles.
- At XXX, we do not have a **Project ADVANCE** counselor because [*of our enrollment numbers*]. As a regular school counselor I provide to my students and parents the information that they need to understand the college and graduation process. I also do our presentations to all our parents pertaining to the topic. In the past we have joined the **Project ADVANCE** counselor in field trips. Not this year.
- A **school counselor** is responsible for classroom guidance, individual planning, responsive services and system support. A **Project ADVANCE** counselor is responsible for class room guidance and individual planning involving post-secondary options for students.
- We are clearly differentiated on this campus. **School counselors** work collaboratively with **Project ADVANCE** facilitators to get students enrolled in ECS dual credit classes. We also work together in helping students with their decision making about post-secondary choices. We know and respect the roles and responsibilities we each have.
- **School counselor** is responsible for academics and emotional counseling and a small amount of college counseling (general advising and letters of recommendation). **Project ADVANCE** is responsible for all aspects of college counseling, including scholarships.
- **School counselor** is responsible for personal counseling, crisis counseling, academic advising, and college advising. On the college end, we write the college recommendation letters (about 60 personalized letters each) and help students choose between schools. We also do PSAT interpretations, help run sessions in multiple college and career nights, and write letters for scholarships. The **Project**

**ADVANCE** facilitator is responsible for organizing over 130 colleges to visit our school (contacting the admissions reps, setting up visits, posting the visit times, arranging student sign ups, hosting the reps, following up with students about the schools); helping students create a list of schools that they wish to apply to; organizing and distributing scholarship information; doing financial aid breakdowns for students; visiting schools in order to be able to recommend schools that best "fit" a student. Honestly, we really need at least one other **Project ADVANCE** counselor--other college prep schools have a 30:1 ratio of college counselors to students, and we have a 225:1 ratio.

- I am assigned to XXXX, where the role of the **school counselor** is quite different from that of those at the [other] campuses. One major difference is that since the [this campus] is a special program and not a "school campus" we do not have the staff that a school campus has, therefore, along with my counselor duties, I am also the testing coordinator for both TAKS and STAAR EOC testing.
- **School counselor** is responsible for academic, career, personal/social aspects for students. Assists with college counseling, recommendations. **Project ADVANCE** facilitator is responsible for managing college and scholarship numbers, parent nights, FAFSA, apply Texas follow through.
- **School counselor** is responsible for guidance, individual counseling, responsive services, and system support. Additionally, the school counselor oversees students' academic progress with regards to credits and graduation plan alignment to the credits received, attendance, family and social issues that may arise, classroom support, facilitating college entrance exam administration, collaborating with teachers and administration, and working with students in special populations such as 504, Special Education, ELL, etc. **Project ADVANCE** facilitator is responsible for communicating the college admission process along with financial aid procedures to the student. The **Project ADVANCE** facilitator is there throughout the process with the student. He/she also assists the student that may not be college bound. I see the **Project ADVANCE** facilitator as the school counselor's right arm because both responsibilities are broad and encompass a wide range of tasks. The facilitator also shows the student how to use NAVIANCE in inputting resumes, plans for the future, etc. Both the **school counselor** and the **Project ADVANCE** facilitator work together.
- A **School counselor** is responsible for the student's academic success, graduation, and individual needs. A **Project ADVANCE** facilitator is responsible for providing help for a student regarding individual applications and scholarships as well as helping a student research colleges.
- A **School counselor** is responsible for comprehensive services directly related to social emotional, career/post-secondary planning and academics. A project advance facilitator is responsible for post-secondary planning and scholarships.
- Academic and Career readiness vs. College and Career readiness
- **Project ADVANCE** takes care of college prep: SAT/ACT reg; FAFSA; Early College Start; scholarships
- A **School counselor** is responsible for helping kids with academics (courses, grades) while in high school as well as social/emotional issues, as well as promoting college and future planning. A **Project ADVANCE** facilitator is responsible for more specific college related planning.

- **School counselor** - counseling and academic advising **Project ADVANCE** - college, career, scholarships
- **School counselor** are responsible for scheduling, 4 year plans, credit checks, crisis counseling, academic planning, test coordination, classroom guidance, personal counseling, 504 coordinator, group counseling coordination, Naviance site coordination. **Project ADVANCE** facilitators are responsible for college counseling, financial aid Saturdays and seminars, scholarship coordination, ECS liaison, AVID coordination, Coordination of visits by college admission representatives, Naviance site coordination.
- A **School counselor** is a student advocate, and is responsible for the academic, personal/social, and career development of our students. There are many school counseling jobs that are primarily focused on academic advising. While this is an important component of our day to day responsibilities, we spend a large part of our day practicing individual and group counseling. Highly gifted students often possess many characteristics that put them at risk for anxiety, depression, and suicidality. As such, some of our typical responsibilities include teaching coping skills and stress management, and screening for these high level mental health issues. In addition, our counselors are also highly skilled in academic planning and advising, helping to teach organizational and time management strategies, and helping students develop individual plans to ensure success. We also write college rec letters and work with students and families throughout their high school career to help them with post-secondary plans. Our **Project ADVANCE** is responsible for all things college. This means organizing over 150+ college visits, putting together parent nights, coordinating all things Naviance, and helping to develop, create, and maintain a college going culture in our school community. Credit courses making sure students are on track, letters of recommendation for college and scholarship, eCST involvement, testing, 504, test info, ACC dual enrollment, etc. Advance, ACC dual enrollment, FAFSA completion, SAT/ACT registration
- A **School counselor** is responsible for...personal, social and academic issues. A **Project ADVANCE** facilitator is responsible for the college admissions process. I am not familiar with the job responsibilities of the **Project ADVANCE** facilitator on my campus.
- **School counselor** has all responsibilities for a certain grade level. **Project ADVANCE** just works with college information.
- **School counselor**: schedules, grad requirements, crisis management, social emotional ed/concerns, summer school enrollment, ECS, 504, sped ref, ARDs, 4 year plans in Naviance, other Naviance assignments, testing (PSAT, EOC, TAKS, ASVAB, AP, CBE), ref to outside social work/psychological care/psychiatric care, anti-bullying, and all around student success. **Project ADVANCE**: anything college related - scholarships, FAFSA, senior exit survey, Apply TX, Naviance uploading...
- The **Project ADVANCE** Facilitator is primarily responsible for college and scholarship applications. The school counselor is responsible for academic advising, scheduling, individual counseling, testing, and other responsibilities assigned by administration.
- **School counselors** and Project ADVANCE Facilitator work hand in hand with students. As for specific roles, the **School counselors** work on more of the academic and support service need for the students and **Project ADVANCE** concentrates on post-secondary track (though we do help her as well with this).

- The **School counselor** is mainly responsible of keeping track of students' credits and ensuring that the students are on track to graduate. The **Project ADVANCE** Facilitator is mainly responsible to help students with the actual college application, including the search and application for sources of financial aid.
- A **School counselor** is responsible for: providing individual counseling, scheduling, peer mediation, administering state tests, attending ARD meetings, coordinating Section 504, coordinating the Child Study Team, conducting parent/teacher conferences, checking credit deficiencies, coordinating GT, etc. A **Project ADVANCE** facilitator is responsible for everything college related.
- A **School counselor** is responsible for individually counseling, academic advising and graduation plans, post-secondary planning, parent and student conferences and communication. The **Project Advance** facilitator assists our students in college and career planning, the college application process, financial aid process, and scholarships.
- **School counselor** credit checks, schedule changes, choice sheets, data entry, Naviance lessons to students, CTE, classroom presentations, etc. **Project Advance**: college visits, college admissions, scholarships, senior surveys, classroom presentations, parent meetings, etc.
- A **school counselor** is responsible for: Scheduling, making sure students are on track to for graduation, meeting/contacting parents, ACC, Advising, summer school, RTIAP, EOC, and CBE test administration, 504 meetings, referring students to alternative programs, individual counseling, group counseling, consultation, collaboration with agencies, parents, admin, teachers, and parents, removal hearings, CBE, finding alternative ways for students to earn credits (CBE, Virtual School, Delta, SSN), planning for college, explain FASFA, college presentations, checking GPA, providing info for SAT/ACT, National Merit. A **Project Advance** counselor arranges college presentations, does brown bag lunches for FASFA, goes more in-depth with college applications, meets with parents about more specific questions. A **school counselor** opens the door and provides a broad overview to the college application process.
- **School counselor** - academic credits, counseling issues **Project Advance** - college and career
- A **School counselor** is responsible for academic and socio-emotional support for all students on campus. **Project ADVANCE** facilitator is responsible for college and career assistance, support and advising.
- **School counselor**.....tons of scheduling, Naviance four year plans, failures, parent meetings, milestones **Project Advance**.....all college bound education, ACC Early College Start facilitator
- There is no **Project Advance** facilitator at my campuses
- All parts of a developmental school guidance department. **Project Advance** facilitator is just responsible for post-secondary plans and financial aid.
- **School counselor** duties include: credit checks, parent meetings, coordination with teachers, 504 accommodations, mental health screenings, etc. **Project Advance** facilitator duties include: Apply Texas submission, scholarships, senior college and career Info



- **School counselor** is responsible for individual counseling, academics and graduation requirements, testing, 504, GT, CBE, PSAT and a lot of other things. **Project Advance** facilitator is responsible for scholarships, SAT/ACT registration and college process.
- **Project ADVANCE** & **counselors** do career and college advising. **Project ADVANCE** does the more detailed advising when it comes to ACC and ECS. A **XXX counselor** is the scholarship coordinator but **Project Advance** tracks all acceptance letters for college admission and scholarships received. **Project ADVANCE** does the hand-holding for two individual scholarships (these former XXX families need to be treated special to encourage their future giving). **Counselors** do course advisement. **Counselors** do credit checks. **Project ADVANCE** does monthly brown bag presentations to parents. **XXX counselor** and **Project ADVANCE** do FAFSA workshops. **Project ADVANCE** and **counselors** make joint presentations to students about post-secondary. **Counselors** do social-emotional counseling (but brief and often just response to crisis).

## Appendix B-1

Open-ended responses to “Thinking about the culture of **your school campus**, what are the **strengths/"positives" that support** your ability to meet your professional responsibilities?”

*Note.* Small edits have been made to obscure the specific campus referenced, to protect the confidentiality of the respondent.

- Each house has a Graduation Specialist. I rely on her for a great deal. She is on top of student attendance. She arranges meetings with parents and students when needed. We also have weekly house meetings that include teachers and she helps coordinate those meetings.
- Since our counseling team all started at XXX two years ago, we are close. We meet daily to have lunch and discuss students. We are a huge support for one another. At the end of last year, I was involved in the hiring process of our Project Advance person. Because of this, we instantly became a team, meet monthly and support one another.
- Our teachers/administration are the biggest assets in enabling our counselors to be successful. Our teachers work with us in identifying students that need our services and our administration allows us the flexibility to meet our program goals and our students' needs.
- One of the strengths of my campus is my Assistant Principal who has been very supportive of anything that I need to do or want to do. Another strength is that we are planning for next school year...trying to be proactive with the support of the administration.
- I also work with a great group of teachers that have been very supportive of my role as the counselor. Without their support I would not be able to do the things that I need to do.
- I speak Spanish, which helps me deal more effectively with parents and students that speak Spanish, which is about 70% of the school. This school is very nurturing and most of the teachers are trained to deal with non-English speakers. I have been able to successfully deal with all the population without major language difficulties. We have about 17 different languages spoken here. The biggest obstacle is having another year of a part time counselor. The ratio is based on regular campuses, who have students that speak the English language and just a very small percentage of ELLs with no English background. The regular campuses have a guidance counseling secretary that assists the counselor. We have to wear many hats at XXX.
- The support I get from my teammate and colleague, the AP that I am paired with. The support from the principal who values the work we do. Counselors and Advance are valued and respected on this campus.
- Overall caring attitude of the campus staff
- The environment is flexible, and we are able to, for the most part, do our job without micromanagement.

- Our principal is very supportive and lets us have the creative freedom to do our job. We do not have to do testing administration, which leaves us more time to work with students. Honestly, we are just an awesome team--if someone is having a hard day, someone else steps up. We all have a caseload of students, but we share kids. We are constantly communicating with one another. Our staff trusts us and refer students to us constantly, because we have asked them to refer and because we follow through. This "buy in" of our community keeps our days busier, but it also keeps our kids healthier because we are doing so much counseling.
- The opportunity to do more individual/group counseling.
- Administrative support. Team work with the counseling team. Weekly counseling meetings.
- We have a great team and work well together and help each other when needed. We are also all willing to stay late and come on the weekends if needed to get everything done.
- The teachers are great and very helpful. They refer students when needed. The administration is mostly helpful and is supportive.
- Competent staff.
- We help each other.
- I am surrounded by great school counselors.
- Campus Leadership
- I enjoy working closely with the assistant principal in my academy. We collectively assist students and parents. I also really like working with all of the teachers here to help students improve.
- Overall the teachers and administrators respect the importance of the counseling program. We have a great team of counselors who support each other. The students are wonderful to work with and are becoming more involved in the planning of their courses and futures as we're able to better educate them.
- My office is within my house so I can see students more easily.
- Supportive administration
- We have an incredible strong counseling team, and each one of us is intelligent, creative, innovative, and energetic. We are all passionate about our work and bring different strengths to the table. This energy and diversity creates a dynamic team and a positive working environment. Our principal also has a counseling background, so she supports us and our programming in a way that doesn't exist on every campus. Our students are also amazing (and challenging) and our parent community is supportive as well.
- My coworkers and that include our Advance person and the trust that my faculty and staff has on me that they don't question my requests of them. My secretary...

- The administration and faculty really support the counseling program at [my campus].
- Faculty are supportive and helpful.
- Great counseling team and great academic director who supports our team
- Our academic dean is very supportive and understanding and protective of our role. Without her, we would probably be "dumped on" more frequently. Our principal is also quite supportive of letting the counselors tend to our roles. But with the "do more with less" mentality and reality of district budgets, we are often part of the faculty team that just steps in and helps out for the sake of the students.
- The counseling department works as a team and is able to accomplish a lot because we share the same goals.
- Having a good counseling team that supports each other.
- The biggest positive that I have encountered in our campus is the attitude of the majority of our staff. Most of the time, whenever I have needed assistance from other staff members, they have provided it to me without any problems and with a very positive attitude. The great majority of our staff members care very deeply about serving our students well, and their interactions with me have been a reflection of that attitude.
- Strong counseling department and supervisor
- Within the counseling department we are very supportive of one another and of the students who come to the office. The environment of the counseling office is one of collaborating, cooperation, and support for students and staff.
- Basically great students... Lots of support from teachers, counselors, social worker, and advance staff.
- Our principal supports us and understands our timelines
- My colleague who is the other counselor has been the BIGGEST support for me professionally. He is an amazing counselor and has been amazing to work with. We also have a lot of support from our principal has been fantastic. We are able to meet with him at any point and time and he is very supportive of the work that we do with our students.
- Great social worker to support crisis intervention. Great Project Advance facilitator that has to take on way too many counselor duties
- My position gets the respect it deserves in most cases, so I am able to work with the others to make sure that students' needs are being met, at least from the education perspective
- Very positive faculty to take care of "our" students. Faculty are very good about alerting me to students they are concerned about. [My campus] takes care of their students. Students on the whole come from supportive family that hold education as a priority. It is my community so I know families, brothers and

sisters old and young. [My campus] has a reputation of taking care of its students so students who come here are very aware of learning expectations.

- Our administration gives us autonomy in designing our guidance program, and seems to back up whatever goals we pursue.
- Collaboration between the department and support services.
- Everyone wants to help. Every staff member cares. Never do I hear well that's not my job or I don't have enough time for that. We work as a great team even though we have very specialized curriculum here with great experts in their fields.
- A nurturing and supportive staff (especially administration) and a cohesive counseling team.

## Appendix B-2

Open-ended responses to the question, "Thinking about the culture of **your school campus**, what are the **biggest obstacles** you face in meeting your professional responsibilities?"

*Note.* Small edits have been made to obscure the specific campus referenced, to protect the confidentiality of the respondent.

- Time. Since I currently have 484 students on my caseload freshman and sophomores are often neglected. Those students often need to take the initiative and see me in order to get served. Because of a lack of time, we do not get in the classroom or lead groups as often as we would like.
- I do not feel we have obstacles or barriers in meeting our professional responsibilities.
- This is my first year at this high school and one of the biggest obstacles was trying to make sense of what was left from the previous counselor. Since I have been here I have felt like I have never been able to "catch up" with everything. I have been reacting to everything happening around me. Another obstacle is the campus culture of not visiting with your counselor. I am the kind of counselor that likes to meet with students in person to discuss their schedule change requests, to review transcripts and any other issues that there may be. However when I started working at XXX, I sent out passes to my students and they would never show up to my office. Slowly as the year went by, they word got around to my students that they could and should come by to see me. They now know that they can come by my office and fill out a form to request to see me.
- Another obstacle was that I was working in a reaction mode with my fellow counselors. Almost everything we did was because we were reacting to something that needed to be done yesterday. I emphasized to my colleagues that we needed to be proactive rather than reactive.
- Lack of communication. As the primary communicators between school and home, when we are given incorrect or incomplete information, this is what is transmitted home. We are then held responsibility when the incorrect or incomplete information creates a problem. We are not respected as professionals and our opinions are hardly ever taken into consideration when making decisions about things that directly relate to our job duties (i.e. scheduling)
- This school year I was assigned only a part time position, which means that I am responsible of 250 students at a fifty percent time. Our school is a different school in the sense that all our students start the 9th grade with no English language knowledge. Their first formal English instruction is received at this school. Some of our students are refugees from different countries in the world and others are from Latin America. Most of the Spanish speakers are minors that are caught on the border trying to cross by themselves, with no parents or significant adults. Some cross the dessert alone. For this reason, the population is more challenging than on regular campuses.
- I am given the freedom and support to complete the responsibilities of my position.

- Time. Since I currently have 484 students on my caseload freshman and sophomores are often neglected. Those students often need to take the initiative and see me in order to get served. Because of a lack of time, we do not get in the classroom or lead groups as often as we would like.
- I do not feel we have obstacles or barriers in meeting our professional responsibilities.
- I am given the freedom and support to complete the responsibilities of my position.
- Testing duties and high volume of student crisis situations
- Poor communication. Counselors are frequently the first point of contact for parents when it comes to ANY issue a student might be having. We are expected to have answers for new policies, procedures and are frequently not included in discussions of various issues. Also, decisions are made by administration concerning issues that directly affect counselors, such as the master schedule, and we are often left out of the line of communication.
- I wish there was more time in the day! We have created a school culture where counselors are valued and respected, so students are constantly seeking us out for personal and crisis counseling, as well as academic advice. Sometimes other duties like 504 coordination, OCPE paperwork, GT paperwork, proctoring AP exams, and recruiting duties cut in to the total amount of time we have. This is hard, but we manage it.
- Distance between my office and the location of high school students.
- Ratio of students. Testing responsibilities and managing EOC dates that conflict with AP and IB dates. Managing student crises with normal everyday demands.
- Too many students assigned to each of us. Too many duties that take away from actually seeing the students. Not enough time.
- Not enough time to meet all the demands.
- It seems we are more responsive than proactive. Our student population may be small in comparison to other high school campuses, but the dynamics of need are high.
- The biggest obstacles I face are communication among staff, especially administrators and getting administrators to respect and understand what counselors do.
- Parental engagement
- Leadership does not include counselors in decision making and counselors are not treated as leaders on the campus. Communication from leadership is either dogmatic and dictatorial or nonexistent. Systems/procedures keep changing without proper communication regarding changes. The counseling and admin staff do not work together as a team to problem solve. The lead counselor did not hold regular counseling meetings. The counselors are spread out throughout the campus and are not able to consistently communicate with one another. All of these factors result in an overall lack of organization and effectiveness.

- I have far too large a caseload. I get overwhelmed with checking academic credits and scheduling while not having enough time to work with students individually or in the classroom. The administration doesn't understand the demands on my time.
- Parents who don't speak English
- Size of caseload.
- Physical space
- Getting all the requirements for graduation, in particular our Fine Arts Academy students. Responsible for the PSAT, TAKS Retest and AP exams.
- None
- State testing coordination and implementation.
- Time
- Biggest obstacles to performing professional school counseling duties in one word: TESTING! The amount of time we spend with College Board, TAKS, EOC, ASVAB, Compass, and CBE in roles such as proctor, scheduling, counting, alphabetizing, checking in/out materials etc., STEALS time from the students in our care. Testing does not
- There is a lack of understanding in regards to the roles and responsibilities of a school counselor.
- Not receiving proper training to support our students.
- The biggest obstacle in our campus is the lack of clear communication. I sometimes don't find things out until the very last minute, and sometimes I find things out from the students rather than from other staff members. That is quite frankly embarrassing.
- Coordinating Section 504 and Child Study Team
- The biggest challenge is lack of understanding for what a school counselor's professional responsibilities and priorities are. This results in time restrictions in our work day to meet with students, have the ability to follow up with students, and be proactive in interventions and support.
- Students with societal, mental health, truancy, family, income, relationship problems.
- Time to do proactive counseling - we tend to counsel after the student is contemplating suicide, depressed, stressed, cutting, or a behavior issue
- That there aren't enough hours in the day! We only have two counselors here on campus and our responsibilities go beyond the day to day duties of a school counselor. For example, I am the AP Coordinator, 504 Coordinator, CBE Coordinator and also the PSAT Coordinator. We are a team here and everyone works very hard to make sure that we are covered in all areas.



- Too many schedule adjustments and last minute reactionary items
- Being responsible for four campuses with several different entities working together to make things happen - lots of pieces come into play
- Communication from top down. Or, communication not coming from clichés of assistant principals, clichés of other counselors. No one being held accountable to certain standards that are necessary for a counseling department to have a systematic process of evaluating the services of this department and changing to meet the needs of its clients. Also, people who do not want to do a certain job will push off on the counselors who already have too much to do. Lack of leadership in the head of department. Too much reliance on this is the way we have done it so this is how it is going to be done.
- The biggest obstacles is parents and staff not really knowing or understanding what our role is; despite our many attempts to advocate. Another role is stakeholders including, teachers, staff, and administration, not understanding the many tasks we are assigned, and the stressors that we constantly face due to the nature of our job.
- Biggest obstacles: Lack of administrative support and understanding of our position.
- Our school needs to do a more pro-active and personal approach in working with students who are less prepared for the rigors of our courses and receive less academic and sometimes emotional support from their parents.
- Time management with crisis vs. job duties
- Distance between my office and the location of high school students.



Appendix C-2

**AISD Roles and Responsibilities of the High School Guidance and Counseling Team 2011-2012**

**CAMPUS**  
**Roles and Responsibilities of the High School Guidance and Counseling Team**  
**2011-2012**

<b>Individual (Crisis) Counseling</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>COUNSELOR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Counsel with students as appropriate and acquire intervention services/resources as needed, including attendance, drop out, behavior management, and graduation rate</li> <li>▪ Retain sign-in sheets, copies of referrals, or a database list of students that come to the Counseling Office for individual counseling assistance.</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with SCLs, Parent Specialists, Drop Out Specialists, and other appropriate personnel to acquire resources for students</li> <li>▪ Attend Impact, 504, Sp.Ed. meetings as appropriate.</li> <li>▪ Notify parents as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ADVANCE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Refer student to his/her counselor.</li> </ul>
<b>Group Counseling</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>COUNSELOR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitate counseling groups or arrange for outside community agencies to counsel groups as appropriate.</li> <li>▪ Make students aware of campus and community intervention services.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ADVANCE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Refer students to his/her counselor.</li> </ul>

Implementation plans of the team to ensure that individual counseling or group counseling, including a crisis plan:

4/19/2013

**CAMPUS**  
**Roles and Responsibilities of the High School Guidance and Counseling Team**  
**2011-2012**

<u>Transcripts/Credits/Student Schedules</u>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>COUNSELOR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review SASI history and student schedules to ensure proper placement.</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with the registrar to review students' credits. It is the counselor's responsibility to check and certify credits. Seniors should have all credits checked, verified, and be placed in the appropriate classes by the 2<sup>nd</sup> week each semester so they will be on target for graduation.</li> <li>▪ Intervene with students that are not on track to graduate on the Recommended High School Plan.</li> <li>▪ Complete credit checks by deadlines, as outlined in the <i>Developmental Service Plan for Guidance and Counseling Teams 2008-09</i>. All students in grades 9-12 should have credits checked by the end of the first semester.</li> <li>▪ Follow <i>Certification for AISD students for Graduation 2008-09</i> and collaborate with registrars.</li> <li>▪ Encourage all students to enroll in the rigorous classes. Utilize <i>AP Potential</i> when applicable.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ADVANCE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emphasize to 9-12 grade students individually and in groups the importance of graduating on the Recommended High School Plan.</li> <li>▪ Access registrar's data on transcript requests to determine the number of students who have applied to a postsecondary institution.</li> <li>• Follow <i>Certification for AISD students for Graduation 2008-09</i> and collaborate with counselors.</li> <li>• Individual schedules of students should be referred to the counselors.</li> <li>• Encourage all students to enroll in rigorous classes.</li> </ul>

**Implementation plan of the team to accomplish the appropriate placement of each student:**

4/19/2013

**CAMPUS**  
**Roles and Responsibilities of the High School Guidance and Counseling Team**  
**2011-2012**  
**Academic Advisement/Interventions**

<u>COUNSELOR</u>	<u>ADVANCE</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advise students about the levels of rigor in courses and general course content.</li> <li>▪ Advise all students of the advantages of taking more rigorous courses.</li> <li>▪ Have knowledge of and provide intervention services to students who have borderline or failing grades (running a query for students not passing) and make parents aware of available support services.</li> <li>▪ Advise students and parents of the coherent sequence of courses and their prerequisites.</li> <li>▪ Refer students to Impact team for appropriate academic interventions.</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with ADVANCE to provide opportunities for all parents to learn the level of rigor in courses, general course content and the advantages of taking more rigorous courses.</li> <li>▪ Facilitate the transition process of students from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade.</li> <li>▪ Schedule students who have failed a portion of the exit level TAKS into the appropriate course and/or tutorial classes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaborate with counselors to provide opportunities for all parents to learn the level of rigor in courses, general course content and the advantages of taking more rigorous courses.</li> <li>▪ Encourage students to take more rigorous coursework.</li> <li>▪ Review college admissions requirements with students and teachers and advise students to meet those requirements in addition to high school graduation requirements.</li> <li>▪ Train teachers on college admission requirements</li> </ul>

**Implementation plan for the team for student academic advisement:**

4/19/2013

**CAMPUS**  
**Roles and Responsibilities of the High School Guidance and Counseling Team**  
**2011-2012**  
**Scholarships**

<u>COUNSELOR</u>	<u>SCHOLARSHIP COORDINATOR</u> (must be a counselor)	<u>ADVANCE</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have knowledge of scholarship information and the scholarship process and share this information with parents and students.</li> <li>▪ Provide letters of recommendation and/or counselor recommendations in a timely manner for students when requested.</li> <li>▪ Turn in scholarship information to the scholarship coordinator no later than June 1.</li> <li>▪ Facilitate the scholarship committee.</li> <li>▪ Assist students in scholarship essay writing activities.</li> <li>▪ Be responsible for accessing the district scholarship database, downloading it and sharing that information to G&amp;C team members, parents, and teachers (advisories), campus groups as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Point of contact with CAC about scholarships. Be responsible for accessing the district scholarship database, downloading it and sharing that information to <u>all</u> members of the G&amp;C team, parents, teachers (advisories), groups, etc. as appropriate.</li> <li>▪ Disseminate a district scholarship list to <u>all</u> seniors in a timely manner and on a monthly basis, including information about the Scholarship database.</li> <li>▪ Determine best classes for disseminating scholarship information, i.e. Govt., Econ. and English IV.</li> <li>▪ Inform PTA and other appropriate groups on campus about scholarship opportunities</li> </ul> <p>Report campus scholarship data to G&amp;C Supervisor and a copy <u>Teresa Mendoza no later than the last day of reporting in 20011-12.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assist counselors in providing scholarship opportunities and information to all seniors, identified students, teachers, parents, and appropriate groups on campus.</li> <li>▪ Assist the scholarship coordinator in collecting scholarship data</li> <li>▪ Assist seniors in completing an AISD scholarship application.</li> </ul>

Implementation of team for scholarship activities:  
 Scholarship coordinator for your campus is: \_\_\_\_\_

4/19/2013

**CAMPUS**  
**Roles and Responsibilities of the High School Guidance and Counseling Team**  
**2011-2012**

**Caseload Responsibility (Meeting Graduation Requirements)**

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>COUNSELOR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that all students in their caseload (regardless of campus counseling structure, i.e., ABC, grade level, smaller learning community or magnet) are meeting the Recommended High School Plan requirements.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ADVANCE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that all 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students are tracked through the post secondary application process.</li> </ul>
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**Early College Start/Dual Credit**

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>COUNSELOR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have knowledge of which courses are Tech Prep courses and dual credit course, the prerequisites for Tech Prep and dual credit courses and the sessions the courses are offered.</li> <li>▪ Advise students of the dual credit and Tech Prep process.</li> <li>▪ Sign dual credit forms, keep a copy, and develop a list of dual credit students and monitor students' credits. Ensure courses offered for dual credit have been approved through AISD.</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with the registrar to ensure that grades for dual credit courses are recorded on the student's transcript.</li> <li>▪ Schedule the ASSET (test) and notify appropriate students of the test and their results.</li> <li>▪ Assist student in registration for ACC. Ensure courses offered for Dual Credit have been approved through the AISD Curriculum department. Collaborate duties with ADVANCE for AISD/ACC College Connection, Dual credit, and Early College Start.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ADVANCE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist student in registration for ACC. Ensure courses offered for Dual Credit have been approved through the AISD Curriculum department. Collaborate duties with counselors for AISD/ACC College Connection, Dual credit, and Early College Start.</li> <li>▪ Advise students of the dual credit and Tech Prep process.</li> <li>▪ Participate and collaborate for duties in the AISD/ACC College Connection initiative, dual credit and Early College Start.</li> </ul>
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**Implementation plan for the team in preparing students for Early College Start/Dual Credit activities:**

4/19/2013

**CAMPUS**  
**Roles and Responsibilities of the High School Guidance and Counseling Team**

**2011-2012**  
**Financial Aid**

<p><u>COUNSELOR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have knowledge of financial aid information and the application process, including attendance at TASFAA workshops.</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with ADVANCE in providing financial aid information to students and parents, grades 9-12.</li> <li>▪ Lead counselors are the "gate keepers" of financial fee waivers for students for PSAT, ACT, and SAT.</li> <li>▪ Maintain documentation of students who receive waivers and check eligibility</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with ADVANCE to train teachers, parents and administrators on Financial Aid awareness and application process</li> </ul>	<p><u>ADVANCE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assist students and parents in completing financial aid process and applications</li> <li>▪ Hold financial aid sessions for parents and students throughout the year, grades 9-12</li> <li>▪ Help students interpret financial aid award letters</li> <li>▪ Track the number of students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)/TAFSA</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with lead counselor for financial fee waivers for students</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with counselors to train teachers, parents, and administrators on Financial Aid awareness and the application process.</li> </ul>
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Implementation plan for the team on meeting the Financial Aid needs of parents and students:

4/19/2013



**CAMPUS**  
**Roles and Responsibilities of the High School Guidance and Counseling Team**  
**2011-2012**

<b>Testing</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>COUNSELOR</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Know the appropriate test for each student and notify at risk students of his/her testing sessions.</li> <li>▪ Aid students who qualify for fee waivers and check eligibility and assist in the registration of students, as appropriate.</li> <li>▪ Distribute college admission testing information, including a schedule and location to all stakeholders (advisories).</li> <li>▪ Train teachers (advisories) on how to assist students to register online.</li> <li>▪ Share the test results (TAKS, PSAT, AP and ASSET) with students and parents and interpret the test results with students and parents individually and in student groups as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>ADVANCE</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitate the registration process for college admissions tests for all students.</li> <li>▪ Track students who take the college admissions tests during the school year.</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with counselors in the registration of students who qualify for fee waivers.</li> <li>▪ Distribute college admission testing information, including a schedule and location to all stakeholders (advisories).</li> <li>▪ Share the test results (TAKS, PSAT, AP and ASSET) with students and parents and interpret the test results with students and parents individually and in student groups as appropriate.</li> </ul>

**Implementation plan for the team on testing responsibilities:**

4/19/2013

**CAMPUS**  
**Roles and Responsibilities of the High School Guidance and Counseling Team**  
**2011-2012**

**College and Career Exploration Activities**

<b>COUNSELOR</b>	<b>ADVANCE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaborate with ADVANCE to provide opportunities for college and career exploration, attending college fairs, opportunities for students to visit local and regional college campuses, organizing campus college representative visits, and postsecondary informational classroom visits for all students 9-12 (as part of the AISD Guidance and Counseling comprehensive Guidance Plan.</li> <li>▪ Be knowledgeable of appropriate sequencing of CATE courses and enroll students in CATE courses based on their interest and aptitude.</li> <li>▪ Facilitate the completion and update a four-year plan in grades 9-11 through the completion of the IACP Process. Adhere to all deadlines as outlined in the <i>Developmental Service Plan for High School Guidance and Counseling Teams for 2008-09</i></li> <li>▪ Assist all students in facilitating the use college and career/majors web search engines for all students. Train teachers to work with students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaborate with Counselors to provide opportunities for college and career exploration, attending college fairs, opportunities for students to visit local and regional college campuses, organizing campus college representative visits, and postsecondary informational classroom visits for all students 9-12</li> <li>▪ Provide transportation to local college fairs for all students as budget permits</li> <li>▪ Provide opportunities for students to visit local and regional college campuses.</li> <li>▪ Assist in organizing or organize campus college representative visits</li> <li>▪ Conduct high school exit survey.</li> <li>▪ Help organize or organize postsecondary mentors or motivational guest speakers to increase postsecondary interest.</li> <li>▪ Assist in postsecondary informational classroom visits.</li> <li>▪ Assist all students in facilitating the use college and career/majors web search engines. Train teachers to work with students.</li> </ul>

Implementation plan for the team for College and Career Exploration Activities:

4/19/2013

# AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

## **SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

Meria J. Carstarphen, Ed.D.

## **OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

William Caritj, M.Ed.

## **DEPARTMENT OF PROGRAM EVALUATION**

Holly Williams, Ph.D.

## **AUTHORS**

Karen M. Cornetto, Ph.D.

Lisa N.T. Schmitt, Ph.D.

Catherine Malerba, Ph.D.

Angelica Herrera, Ph.D.



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