

12-2011

## School counselor assignment in secondary schools: Replication and extension

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SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSIGNMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS:  
REPLICATION AND EXTENSION

By

Jennifer L. Williamson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

**Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Educational Psychology**

**Department of Educational Research, Cognition & Development  
College of Education**

**The Graduate College**

**University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
December 2011**

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THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the dissertation prepared under our supervision by

**Jennifer L. Williamson**

entitled

**School Counselor Assignment in Secondary Schools: Replication and Extension**

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology**  
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**December 2011**

## ABSTRACT

### **School Counselor Assignment in Secondary Schools: Replication and Extension**

By

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Before school counselors can carry out the duties and responsibilities outlined as part of a comprehensive school counseling program, they must know which students they are responsible for helping. The topic of assigning students to school counselors has only recently been seen in the educational research arena in a study by Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin (2009). The current study attempts to replicate and extend the findings of Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin by addressing the questions of how secondary school counselors are assigned and what are their perceptions of their assignment. In addition, the study attempts to determine whether a particular type of school counselor assignment is more effective in enhancing student achievement in a large school district. A review of literature relevant to this study includes: the history of school counseling; the role of the school counselor; student achievement as defined by NCLB (2001); school counselor interventions in the areas of standardized-test scores, attendance, and graduation rates; and school counselor assignment.

The study was conducted in two parts. Part one of the study was conducted using a survey questionnaire—School Counselor Assignment Questionnaire, SCAQ (Akos,

Schuldt, and Walendin, 2009). A total of 213 secondary school counselors from Clark County School District participated in the survey. The results found that the breakdown of school counselor assignment used in participating secondary schools was similar to that found by Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin (2009) with a majority of middle schools using a grade level looping method and a majority of high schools using an alphabetical method. Also evident in the findings of this study was that school counselors using methods of school counselor assignment in which they keep the same students from year to year, had more positive perceptions of their method than those who were using a mixed method.

Part two of the study is an analysis of student achievement data from schools using different school counselor assignment methods. Results of this analysis show no significant difference between school counselor assignment and the student achievement variables—percentage of students who meet or exceed standards on the standards-based reading test, percentage of students who meet or exceed standards on the standards-based math test, and student daily average attendance. At the middle school level there was a difference related to method of assignment in the student achievement variables, but extended analysis suggested this was an artifact of extraneous variables.

Although the findings of this study do not identify a relationship between school counselor assignment and the three NCLB variables representing student achievement, it does further the findings of the original study by showing statistically significant differences in counselor perceptions of several aspects of their school counselor assignment method. These findings appear to warrant consideration when discussing school counselor assignment with school counseling students, when school counseling

departments are developing their comprehensive guidance program, or when working to create better guidelines for determining school counselor assignment.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Reaching this important goal in my life has been a long journey with many ups and downs. I would not have made it to this point without some very special people who have worked to keep me grounded, motivated, and inspired.

First, I would like to thank my family. To my husband, Robert, and my son, Spencer, thank you for supporting me throughout this process and for never letting me give up. Also, Spencer, thanks for always checking in to see if I was “working on my paper.” To my Mom and Dad, you have always encouraged and inspired me to do my best and brought me up to believe I could accomplish anything I set out to do, and I thank you for that. To my sister, Kathy, thank you for always being there when I needed you. To my brother, Dave, thanks for the competition. It really helped me keep my eye on the ball, and I know you will be joining me very soon!

To Dr. Paul Jones and Dr. Wendy Hoskins, you both inspired and encouraged me in your own ways, and I couldn’t be more grateful. It seems that you both knew exactly what I needed and when I needed it. You pushed when I needed to be pushed, and listened when I needed to talk. I would not have made it through without your expertise, guidance, patience, and kindness. Dr. Jones, being mutual night owls was a great help when I emailed questions late at night. Wendy, our coffee talks kept me from giving up. I look forward to resuming them and continuing to work on our quest for the perfect school counselor assignment.

Dr. Pam Staples, thank you for sticking with me to the very end and continuing to return to UNLV to serve on my committee. I appreciated working with you during the career seminar. I gained so much insight and knowledge from that experience.



Dr. Jeff Gelfer, thank you for agreeing to step in and serve on my committee. The insight you offered from your perspective was greatly appreciated.

To Dr. Patrick Akos, thank you for allowing me to use your questionnaire and study as a stepping-stone. My study would not have been possible without your previous research and assistance.

To my wonderful cohort and great friends Priscilla, Mary Jo, Judi, Katrina, and Terry, I enjoyed working with all of you throughout this journey. Your support and friendship means a great deal to me, and I look forward to the day we all meet up again.

To Kim Boyle, Director of Guidance and Counseling for the Clark County School District, thank you for graciously agreeing to sponsor my study. Also, thank you to Jill and Ana for helping to facilitate the survey.

Finally, I would like to thank all my wonderful friends who helped me in many ways. Thank you to Jen Whited for always being available to pick up my son or take him home with you when I had class or meetings. Thank you to Sheila Parise for the tremendous amount of support as a babysitter, friend, and “counselor.” Thank you to Kim and Mike McGrath for your friendship. Our game nights, barbeques, and Halloween chili always gave me something to look forward to. To Shirley Allen, thank you so much for the daily emails and the step-by-step goals you helped me set and then reach. To the amazing PAL teachers, Lisa, Margie, Kirk, Nathan, Rita, and Robert, thank you for making going to work every day something to look forward to, for making me laugh, and for all your support.

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## CHAPTER 1

### **Introduction**

Before school counselors can carry out the duties and responsibilities outlined as part of a comprehensive school counseling program, they must know which students they are responsible for helping. While the topic of assigning students to school counselors has only recently been seen in the educational research arena (Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin, 2009), it is not a new concept in the administration of school counseling programs.

In 1962 Patterson informed readers of his school counseling textbook that school counselor assignment is part of the process of building a school counseling program:

Decisions must be made regarding the assignment of counselors to groups of students, e.g., whether women counselors are assigned to girls and men counselors are assigned to boys, whether there are separate counselors for each class, or whether counselors are responsible for certain groups of students throughout their school careers (pp. 32-33).

Although the main focus of this decision—should men work with boys and women work with girls—has changed over the years, school counselor assignment remains part of the process of setting up a comprehensive school counseling program.

With the introduction of The No Child Left Behind Act, NCLB (2001), school accountability became a major focus for educators, and school counselors were no exception. In addition, the ASCA National Model (2005) changed the focus of comprehensive school counseling programs by highlighting the fact that school counselors are as integral to student achievement as all other educators. It placed a focus on using data to drive the comprehensive school counseling program, to instill a higher

level of accountability for school counselors and to show that school counselors are essential in helping students meet their achievement goals (Brown & Trusty, 2005).

To align with educational reform and the criteria set forth by NCLB (2001) and the ASCA National Model (2005), decisions about school counselor programs and interventions should be research-based and data-driven with a focus on student achievement. Increasing student achievement in the areas defined by NCLB is now an essential piece of the comprehensive school counseling program, and the role of the school counselor includes collecting and using data to show the effect of the school counseling program on student achievement (Thompson & Moffett, 2008).

At this time research-based interventions used by school counselors have been successful in improving several aspects of student achievement including standardized-test scores (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Campbell & Brigman, 2005; Falco, 2008; Leon, 2009; and Miranda, Webb, Brigman, & Peluso, 2007), attendance rate (Leland-Jones, 1998; Maher & Barbrack, 1982; Schopen, 1997; Thompson, 1991), and graduation rate (Bemak, Chung, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005; Blum & Jones, 1993; Pearson & Banerji, 2004). The majority of these interventions involved some type of small group counseling and/or peer mentoring programs used with students who were specifically targeted for intervention based on previous performance or at-risk behaviors. Only one intervention targeted the entire freshmen class of students (Pearson & Banerji).

While it is evident that these interventions have been successful at improving student achievement factors, they do not focus on all aspects of student achievement, and they do not focus on the entire student population. Choosing a method of assigning

school counselors to students is a program decision that takes into account all students and should be no exception when it comes to being research-based and data-driven.

### **Statement of the Problem**

While Gysbers and Henderson (2006) and the ASCA National Model (2005) currently suggest several possible options for assigning student caseloads to school counselors including pros and cons to consider when making this decision, neither of them offer research or data to inform this decision.

Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin (2009) conducted a preliminary study to determine what methods of school counselor caseload assignment were used in secondary schools and school counselor perceptions of these methods. They concluded that the majority of middle schools used a grade-level method of counselor assignment, and the majority of high schools used an alphabetical method of counselor assignment. Yet, their analysis of the effectiveness of the school counselor assignment method yielded no significant difference.

To date, no other studies have been found related to the effectiveness of school counselor assignment, and no studies have been found on the relationship between school counselor assignment and student achievement. A study to further investigate the methods of school counselor assignment used and the perceptions of school counselor assignment by school counselors beyond the one school district studied by Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin (2009) is necessary in order to confirm or possibly refute their findings. In addition, a study that includes school counselor assignment's relationship to student achievement would be useful to school counselors developing or revising their comprehensive school counseling programs.

Using a method of school counselor assignment that has been shown to be effective in increasing student achievement would effectively address two issues. First, it would follow NCLB (2001) and ASCA National Model (2005) guidelines stating that research and data should drive the decision making process. Second, it would help to align the mission of the school counseling program with NCLB requirements to raise student achievement for all students since school counselor assignment effects all students instead of those chosen for specific interventions.

### **Purpose of Study**

As long as counselors have been working in schools with students, there has been the need to assign them to a particular student caseload, but there is little research to suggest whether one method of school counselor assignment is more effective than another overall or in relation to student achievement. The primary purpose of this study is to look for a relationship between a particular type of school counselor assignment and student achievement in a large school district.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guide the research design:

1. How are school counselors assigned to students in secondary schools?
2. What are school counselors' perceptions of the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of each type of assignment?
3. What is the relationship between school counselor assignment and student achievement?

The findings of this research will contribute to the field of school counseling by examining the relationship of school counselor assignment and student achievement in a large school district in Nevada that covers urban, suburban, and rural areas.

In order to effectively address the research questions, the study was conducted in two parts. Part one of the study was conducted using a survey questionnaire—School Counselor Assignment Questionnaire, SCAQ (Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin, 2009)—and addresses the first two research questions. Part two of the study is an analysis of student achievement data from schools using different school counselor assignment methods, and it addresses the third research question.

The remaining chapters provide details of this study. Chapter two is a review of literature relevant to this study including: the history of school counseling; the role of the school counselor; student achievement as defined by NCLB (2001); school counselor interventions in the areas of standardized-test scores, attendance, and graduation rates; and school counselor assignment. Chapter three explains the selection of the participants, the methodology of the research, and the data analysis method used for this study. Chapter four gives the results of the data analysis for each of the three research questions. Chapter five offers a discussion of the results, limitations of this study, and implications for future research.



## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

#### History of School Counseling/Role of School Counselor

School counseling from its early beginnings, which focused on vocational guidance, all the way to 21<sup>st</sup> century comprehensive guidance and counseling programs has evolved dramatically since the early 1900's. Along with the evolution of school counseling, the roles and functions of the school counselor have also changed to reflect the paradigm shifts in education as well as society.

It is widely recognized that Frank Parsons, known as the "Father of Guidance," is credited with the idea that vocational guidance should be a standard part of the school curriculum in public schools (Coy, 1999). In addition, he advocated that vocational guidance should be taught by trained professionals (Baker & Gerler, 2004). Parsons' idea of vocational guidance in the schools was "fully compatible with the calls for educational reform in the schools of the nation in the early 1900s" (Herr, 2001, para. 2). It was also in part a response to the needs of the industrial revolution for skilled workers in many different areas (Zunker, 2006). The focus of counseling and the role of the counselor in these early years was to provide vocational guidance to students.

While working with students on vocational choices and skills, the guidance professional began to rely on the use of assessments. This added a new dimension to the profession. The use of personality and aptitude tests meant that the people assigned to the position of vocational counselor, usually teachers, needed to have more specialized training. Patterson (1962) stated that those with specialized professional training should only provide counseling and guidance services.

Beginning in the 1920's, the idea of guidance in schools began to shift from the sole purpose of vocational guidance to a broader scope. This scope included the areas of educational guidance and personal guidance (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). This broader focus led to more individuals being needed to address the added areas of emphasis. These areas became considered services and opened the door to the idea that school counseling involved providing an array of services to students.

The work of Carl Rogers, a prominent psychologist, in the early 1940's added more to the emphasis of mental health in schools. As a result, the training of school counselors changed dramatically to include therapeutic counseling processes and procedures (Baker & Gerler, 2004). The pupil personnel services model of counseling became the main organizational tool for school guidance and counseling through the early 1970's.

Another shift in the focus of school counseling came as a direct result of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958. The NDEA is credited as being responsible for school counselors beginning to focus on students' educational planning and direction (Coy, 1999; Dixon, 1987). The NDEA was passed because Russia was leading the United States in space technology causing those in power to believe American students were lacking in the areas of math and science. The NDEA specifically provided funds and direction for school counselors in order to encourage students to move forward in these two areas and to prepare them to enter college programs in science and math (Herr, 2001; Studer & Diambra, 2010).

Another shift in school counseling led to it being described as having three main areas of focus: vocational, personal, and educational (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). In

addition to these areas of emphasis for school counselors, Coy (1999) points out that during this time period the idea of developmental guidance also emerged. Realizing that individual students progressed through the vocational, personal, and educational areas in a developmental sequence, school counseling services took on a developmental approach.

School reform in the 1970's, particularly the idea of more accountability in education, opened the door for the development of school counseling programs that were more comprehensive (Brown & Trusty, 2005). It became evident that school counseling needed to be seen as a "program in its own right rather than as services ancillary to other educational programs" (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006, p. 20). Schools across the nation began to develop guidance programs that offered an array of services to help students as they progressed in the areas of career, personal, and educational development.

These guidance programs seemed to be working, as school counselors were busy providing guidance and services to students who came to them for help. However, the accountability movement began to question whether school counselors were actually effective in helping students. This led to a major shift from providing services to individual students to providing a comprehensive guidance program to all students (Herr, 2001).

In 1974 the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) endorsed the idea of a comprehensive school counseling program and as a result, states began to develop and publish their own comprehensive school counseling programs (Brown & Trusty, 2005). These programs were developed much the same as any other curricular areas. They focused on student outcomes in three domain areas: academic, personal/social, and career. As a result, school counselors began to be seen as partners in student achievement

(Stone & Dahir, 2006). National student standards were developed by ASCA in 1997 and included both competencies and indicators (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). These standards were incorporated into many of the state school counseling programs.

As more states, districts, and schools worked to develop their own comprehensive school counseling programs, it became evident that an overall framework was necessary in order to ensure that the school counselor's role and identity was held to the same standards across the nation and that counselors needed to be held more accountable for student success (Hart, 1992). The ASCA responded to this need by developing the ASCA National Model for comprehensive school counseling programs. The initial model was published in 2003 (ASCA) and later revised in 2005 (ASCA). The ASCA National Model framework consists of the foundation, management, delivery, and accountability components that guide the organization of an effective comprehensive school counseling program. "The ASCA National Model suggests that school counselors can be more accountable when they follow a universal plan" (Myrick, 2005, p. 7).

The accountability piece of the ASCA National Model (2005) pertains to all aspects of the model including the career, personal/social, and academic school counseling domains. This accountability changed the focus of school counseling programs from the question of what school counselors do to the question of how are students different as a result of what school counselors do (Protheroe, 2010). This focus on student outcomes helps to show that the mission of an effective comprehensive school counseling program is closely aligned with the mission of the school. With the passing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001), the mission of all schools in the United States focuses in some way on student achievement for all students.

## **Student Achievement**

The goal of public education in the United States has taken on many different meanings over time depending on the overall push of society. However, whether the goal is to teach literacy, to prepare students for college, to create skilled workers, or to teach critical thinking (Roundtable, 2001) the overall common theme is student success or achievement of these goals. “Good schools should and can help individuals attain success. Almost everyone sees the mastery of basic skills as the core of schooling” (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2004, p. 12).

With the implementation of NCLB (2001), student achievement for all students—with a focus on closing the achievement gap among demographically diverse students (Mills, 2008)—has been moved to the forefront of education. As a result, accountability for schools is at an all time high. Schools must show improvement each year for all students or risk being labeled inadequate. School administrators are under pressure to find research-based programs, as instructed by NCLB, which can be implemented to help meet student achievement goals.

Section 1111 of NCLB (2001) defines the criteria for measuring student achievement in order to determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). It instructs states to develop rigorous academic content standards in subject areas that must include mathematics and reading or language arts. Students are assessed using standards-based tests during certain academic years in these subject areas. The scores on these assessments make up the first of three main criteria used to determine AYP. The second criteria used to determine AYP is the percent of students who participated in the standards-based assessments. NCLB requires that at least 95% of students enrolled take

part in the assessments in order to successfully meet AYP progress for a particular year. The third criteria used to determine AYP is the graduation rate for high school students. Since graduation rate is not used in middle and elementary schools, states are instructed to determine their own third criteria at these levels (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The Nevada Department of Education has written an AYP technical manual (2010) outlining the specific criteria to be used by all school districts in Nevada in order to determine AYP status. Nevada currently uses the federally mandated standards-based test scores, percentage of students participating in the standards-based assessments, and graduation rate (for high schools only). In addition, Nevada has chosen to use students' daily average attendance rate as the third criteria for middle and elementary schools.

Each year once AYP data are collected and reviewed, schools are given an AYP status, such as High Achieving or In Need of Improvement (Nevada Department of Education, 2010). Each individual school and school district is also required by the state to prepare an annual accountability report (Chapman, 1996). These accountability reports are available to the public via the Internet.

Because the ASCA National Model (2005) supports the school's academic mission, increasing student achievement in the areas defined by NCLB is now an essential piece of the comprehensive school counseling program, and the role of the school counselor includes collecting and using data to show the effect of the school counseling program on student achievement (Thompson & Moffett, 2008). As a result, numerous studies have been conducted on various school counseling interventions used to improve standardized-test scores, attendance, and graduation rates.

### **Standardized-test Scores.**

Although there are many factors that define student success, most people recognize a student's score on a standardized test as a definite measure of academic achievement. Even though test scores should not be the only measure of achievement, they are often viewed as a critical measure. Research on the following school counselor interventions has shown that they have been effective in improving standardized-test scores.

Brigman and Campbell (2003) developed the Student Success Skills (SSS) model for structured group counseling sessions and counselor-led classroom guidance lessons in order to help increase student achievement and behavior. The initial study on the model was done with students in grades five, six, eight and nine. A total of 180 students participated in the study. After ten school counselors completed training on the use of the SSS model, they held eight small group sessions, four booster sessions, and three classroom guidance lessons with participating students. The group and classroom guidance curriculum for the SSS is based on three essential skill clusters that have been found to be critical to achieving academic success. These three skills clusters include cognitive and meta cognitive skills, social skills, and self-management skills. Brigman and Campbell found that after participating in the SSS model 70% of the students showed improved behavior (based on the School Social Behavior Scale) and standardized test scores in math and reading were greatly improved—82% and 61% respectively.

Subsequent studies done on the SSS model have produced similar results. Campbell and Brigman (2005) conducted a similar study using the SSS model with 240 fifth and sixth grade students and 25 school counselors. Students in the study scored

significantly higher in both math and reading on standardized tests and 69% showed improved behavior. Webb, Brigman, and Campbell (2005) again replicated the study, with 418 fifth and sixth grade students showing improved math scores and behavior, but no significant difference on reading scores. However, Leon (2009) used a culturally translated version of the SSS model with 103 fourth and fifth grade Hispanic students. Her analysis revealed a significant increase in math scores, but the increase in reading scores was not enough to be significant. An examination of studies done on the SSS model (Miranda, Webb, Brigman, and Peluso, 2007) to determine the effects on different ethnic groups revealed that while there were no differences among ethnic groups in the results, math and reading scores both showed significant increases among all students.

In addition to the SSS model, the counselor-led Skill Builders intervention has also been shown to increase student achievement in math (Falco, 2008). For nine weeks 153 sixth grade students participated in a thirty-minute Skill-Builders lesson once a week with the school counselor. The Skill-Builder curriculum focuses on time-management, goal-setting, mathematics study skills, and help-seeking skills. The assumption is that if these skills improve in relation to math, a student's self-efficacy in math will improve resulting in increased achievement in math. Results of the study show that students' self-efficacy in math did increase and the intervention also had a significant impact on math achievement.

### **Attendance.**

While daily average attendance is a criteria used by NCLB (2001) to determine a school's adequate yearly progress, it has also been documented as a factor contributing to a student's overall success in school (Sparks, 2010). In a study conducted in Ohio schools



(Roby, 2004), a statistically significant relationship was found between student attendance and student achievement. Student achievement in Roby's study was defined by state standardized-test scores in reading and math, which correlates with the test scores used by NCLB to determine AYP.

A study conducted by Maher and Barbrack (1982) looked at the effectiveness of behavioral group counseling and cross-age behavioral group counseling on attendance of ninth grade students. School counselors nominated students who were at risk for serious truancy issues to participate in the study. Students were placed into groups of four. Two of the groups were led by school counselors, and two of the groups were led by twelfth grade students who were trained for this study. Each group met twice a week for ten weeks. At the conclusion students in both groups showed a significant increase in attendance suggesting that meeting in small groups using a behavioral approach is effective in increasing attendance rate.

Similarly, Thompson (1991) found that using older students as role models and peer mentors also helped to increase the attendance rate of ninth grade students. In her study she trained eleventh grade volunteers to act as peer mentors using basic counseling skills such as active listening and clarification. Mentors worked with their assigned students during lunch and via telephone conversations for a three-month period. Although the study goal of 98% attendance was not met, the attendance rate of participating students did increase.

Leland-Jones (1998) also found that peer tutoring along with counseling/mentoring helped to increase student attendance among sixth graders. The peer tutors were seventh and eighth grade students who were taught a Pause, Prompt, and

Praise method of tutoring to use with their assigned students. Overall sixth-grade absences were reduced by 75% or more each quarter.

Another intervention found to be successful with seventh grade students exhibiting excessive absenteeism is the brief strategic intervention. Schopen (1997) used this intervention to target specific patterns contributing to unwanted behavior—in this case absenteeism. Once these patterns were controlled or stopped, the absenteeism would stop. Schopen’s method for strategic intervention involved four steps: (1) Get the parent and student into the counselor’s office, (2) Identify the barriers, (3) Remove the barriers, and (4) Monitor daily. After completing the four-step intervention with twelve individual students, Schopen reported that eight of the students showed an increase in attendance rate.

### **Graduation Rate.**

If “almost everyone sees the mastery of basic skills as the core of schooling” (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2004, p. 12), then perhaps the ultimate sign of failure on the part of the school is a student dropping out of school and not graduating. It should come as no surprise then that school counselors, in an effort to align with the mission of the school (ASCA, 2005), are incorporating interventions designed to keep students in school and help them graduate.

Reviewing the literature on school counselor interventions for dropouts and improving graduation rate is difficult because there are so many factors involved and many researchers seem to be in disagreement as to exactly what the factors are that lead to dropping out of school. Prevatt and Kelly (2003) highlighted many of these factors in their research review on dropout prevention interventions. Some of the contributing

factors they found were peer relationships, interpersonal relationships, and stress and coping skills. Another difficulty in reviewing dropout interventions is the lack of longitudinal studies that might show whether interventions actually helped students remain in school and graduate on time.

White and Kelly (2010) conducted a similar review of dropout intervention research found in prominent school counseling publications. Their review focused on interventions aimed at reducing school dropouts in general. In the end they came up with two categories of interventions—protective factors (i.e. social support, mentoring, and skill development) and risk factors (i.e. academic support and instruction). Several interventions in both categories were shown to be effective in dropout prevention.

Using the protective factor of social support as a basis for dropout intervention, Pearson and Banerji (2004) instituted the Ninth-Grade Program (NGP). The NGP was instituted in six different high schools with the program design based on three goals: “(a) meeting the student’s academic needs, (b) providing an atmosphere of caring, and (c) providing a relevant yet challenging curriculum” (p. 249). The NGP was in effect for three years at each school as part of the study. Data from the year prior to the study were used as a baseline. At the conclusion of the three years, analysis showed a significant decrease in dropout rate from year two to year three of the study. Year one of the study had an increase in dropout rate, but researchers attribute that to the idea that a dropout prevention program is not meant to be a quick fix, but an ongoing program. In addition, results also showed an increase in student attendance.

Blum and Jones (1993) used group counseling and mentoring as a social support dropout intervention. Students met in small groups with a school counselor for eight

weekly sessions and one follow-up session. The sessions focused on study skills, interpersonal skills, and student strengths. Academic performance was also monitored during group counseling. In addition, students were assigned an adult mentor that interacted with them daily. As a result, students had more positive interaction with their peers and improved academically, both protective factors for deterring dropouts.

Group counseling was also shown to be an effective support for at-risk students by Bemak, Chung, and Siroskey-Sabdo (2005). They introduced the Empowerment Groups for Academic Success (EGAS) as a means to improve many of the factors contributing to students dropping out of school. The EGAS approach is unique in that it focuses on the needs of the group members rather than activities and discussions led by the counselor. Bemak, et al. followed an EGAS group of seven African-American females identified as being high risk for school failure. The group met once a week for 45 minutes from October until the end of the school year. The girls, with the assistance of a counselor, agreed on group norms and then essentially ran the group by focusing their discussions on the problems and issues that mattered to them. This fostered a sense of empowerment and ownership along with a sense of responsibility to the group. Although the lack of control for the counselor was difficult at first, it was understood that “beginning a group with discussions about school and schoolwork would repeat the Cycle of Disengagement” (p. 385) that needed to be broken. A follow-up survey given one year after the group finished found that the girls continued to support each other, gave more attention to schoolwork, had improved attitudes, and aspired to attend college.

Yet another group counseling intervention was used by Wirth-Bond and Coyne (1991) to address the dropout risk factor of academic support. In their study high-risk

high school students were identified and placed in the Vocational Special Needs (VSN) program. This program consisted of students meeting daily for one class period with a counselor to focus on study skills, problem-solving skills, and communication skills. Another important piece to the VSN program is a counselor-student ratio lower than the general student population. These two factors contributed to students having an improved sense of belonging as evidenced by student questionnaire results showing that 70% of the students felt totally understood or understood a lot by their VSN counselor. Results also showed a low dropout rate for students receiving VSN services.

### **School Counselor Caseload Assignment**

It is evident from the numerous studies highlighted here that school counselors have been successful at improving standardized-test scores, attendance, and graduation rates of students through many different interventions. However, it is important to note that these interventions focus on one or two aspects of student achievement and focus on working with students in small groups or individually. Using these studies as a basis, school counselors would have to implement several separate interventions to improve overall student achievement in order for their school to meet the annual goals for AYP. While counselor interventions will always be a part of the school counselors' role, an organizational change in the comprehensive school counseling program that would help improve overall student achievement would allow school counselor's to focus their individual and group interventions across all counseling domains as needed.

Deciding how to assign student caseloads to individual counselors is something that all secondary schools—elementary schools typically only have one counselor—have to consider. The ASCA National Model (2005) states that a school counselor program

organized with clear expectations will result in student growth. However, there seem to be no clear guidelines to follow when making the decision of how students will be assigned to counselors.

Patterson's discussion on the organization of a school counseling program from a 1962 textbook devotes only one sentence to the issue of caseload assignment:

Decisions must be made regarding the assignment of counselors to groups of students, e.g., whether women counselors are assigned to girls and men counselors are assigned to boys, whether there are separate counselors for each class, or whether counselors are responsible for certain groups of students throughout their school careers (pp. 32-33).

Little has changed in modern and updated school counseling program manuals. Brown and Trusty (2005) focus on determining what responsibilities a counselor will be required to do and only mention caseload in terms of duties. For example, a counselor assigned to the ninth grade would be responsible for carrying out the duties associated with ninth grade such as high school transition activities. The ASCA National Model (2005), which is currently one of the main go-to guides for developing a comprehensive school counseling program only lists several options for assigning counselors to student caseloads and states that this is to be a point of agreement between the counselor(s) and administrator. It is listed as the first item on the Secondary School Counseling Program Management Agreement found in the appendix of the ASCA National Model.

The guide to developing and managing a school guidance and counseling program written by Gysbers and Henderson (2006) gives the most in-depth discussion on student caseload assignment with approximately two pages devoted to this topic. In addition to

listing four different ways to assign counselors to students, Gysbers and Henderson state that this decision should be based on the philosophy of the guidance and counseling program and “supported by the rationale relevant to the program design” (p. 210). For example, assigning students by grade level would work well with a counseling program that is developmental in design.

In addition, Gysbers and Henderson (2006) give some pros and cons to different assignment types that may be helpful when counseling departments and administrators are making this decision. Grade level assignment gives a certain amount of consistency to student services, and if counselors move up with the grades each year students would continue to have the same counselor. Still, the number of students and counselors at a particular school may make this type of assignment inequitable, and parents with children in different grades would have to deal with more than one counselor. Alphabetical assignment allows families and siblings to all deal with the same counselor, but counselors would be responsible for dealing with the duties and developmental activities of several different grade levels. Caseload assignment by teacher allows counselors to work closely with teachers and align with the achievement standards of the school, but students may change classes and teachers during the year and from year-to-year which would cause disruption in counselor/student relationships, activities, and interventions.

A search for supporting research that would help address the question of what the best method is for assigning students to counselors reveals only one study. Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin (2009) conducted a preliminary study to determine what methods of school counselor caseload assignment were used in secondary schools and school counselor

perceptions of these methods. They created the School Counselor Assignment Questionnaire (SCAQ) and administered it to 146 middle and high school counselors.

The SCAQ results showed that 40% of the schools used grade level assignment. Of these, 27% had counselors looping, moving from to grade to grade with their students, and 13% kept counselors assigned to the same grade each year. Counselors were assigned alphabetically in 31% of the schools. The remaining assignments were 18% “other”, 4% by academy/track, 4% a blend of different methods, and 3% by counseling domains (career, personal/social/, and academic). In addition, the study revealed that the most common school middle school counselor assignment is grade level, and the most common high school assignment is alphabetical.

Another aspect of the study (Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin, 2009) focused on school counselor perceptions of effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of the method of school counselor assignment. There were no statistically significant differences between the different methods; however, they did find that the means for the method of grade-level looping was slightly higher than grade-level static in the middle schools. Also addressed in the study were the counselors’ views on the advantages and disadvantages of their school counselor assignment. The analysis of this section revealed similar pros and cons as listed by Gysbers and Henderson (2006).

Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin (2009) are clear that their study is a preliminary one intended to start the process of gathering information in the area of school counselor assignment. This in itself is limiting, but further limitations exist in the small sample size (146) and the lack of statistical significance found. In the end, Akos et al. suggest that research be continued in this area to further identify effectiveness, efficiency, and equity



of the different methods of school counselor assignment and its relationship to various student outcomes such as academic achievement.

### **Implications for Further Research**

It has been well documented that from its inception under the guise of vocational guidance, school counseling has been a vocational position within a school, a group of services delivered by several individuals, a program of services performed by the school counselor for those who need it, and finally, a comprehensive program delivered by one or more professional school counselors to all students. Currently, the ASCA National Model (2005) is used as a framework for developing, evaluating, and updating comprehensive school counseling programs. The ASCA National Model suggests that school counselors align the mission of their program with that of their school and/or district.

With the NCLB Act (2001) dictating what student achievement is and how to measure it—(a) standardized-test scores in math and reading, (b) participation rate on standardized-tests, and (c) graduation rate or, in some instances, daily average attendance. Principals and other administrators have been strongly encouraged to utilize school counselors to help increase student achievement (Connolly & Protheroe, 2009; Protheroe, 2010). This leaves school counselors looking for research-based and empirically supported interventions and program changes they can utilize when working to increase student achievement.

There have been several research studies exploring interventions to increase standardized-test scores and attendance. The majority of these studies focus on counselor-led small group interventions or working with individual students. Studies on school

counselor interventions aimed at increasing graduation rate are not quite as numerous. This is in part due to disagreement of exactly which, and how many, factors affect graduation rate and the fact that these studies would need to be conducted over several years in order to obtain graduation information for all the participants. However, even with the small amount of research done on school counselor interventions to increase graduation rate, the majority of these studies has also focused on small groups and individuals.

When it comes to school counselors working to improve student achievement there is no research showing how comprehensive school counseling program changes can impact student achievement. The literature on comprehensive school counseling programs reads more like a how-to manual rather than empirical research. For example, when organizing a comprehensive school counseling program, the criteria for assigning school counselors to students must be determined. The current literature only gives limited ideas on how to assign school counselors to students. These ideas are not supported by research. Some of the literature lists pros and cons of different methods, but none of the literature suggests that one way is more effective than another. The only study done on school counselor assignment focused on school counselor perceptions of their current method of school counselor assignment, but not in relation to student achievement (Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin, 2009).

Research regarding the effectiveness of different methods of school counselor assignment in relation to student achievement would add to the body of knowledge in the field by providing school counselors with information that will help guide the organization of their comprehensive school counseling program. Utilizing the most

effective method of school counselor assignment in order to increase student achievement would align with not only the goals of the school counseling program, but the school and/or district as well.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Methodology**

#### **Purpose of Study**

School counselors have been dividing up their student caseloads in various ways for years. However, there is little research to guide school counselors when making the decision of how to assign their students. The purpose of this quantitative study is to attempt to determine whether a particular type of school counselor assignment is more effective in enhancing student achievement in a large school district, and to determine school counselors' perceptions of the effectiveness of each type of school counselor assignment.

#### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guide the research design:

1. How are school counselors assigned to students in secondary schools?
2. What are school counselors' perceptions of the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of each type of assignment?
3. What is the relationship between school counselor assignment and student achievement?

In order to effectively address the research questions, the study was conducted in two parts. Part one of the study was conducted using a survey questionnaire and addresses the first two research questions. Part two of the study is an analysis of student achievement data from schools using different school counselor assignment methods, and it addresses the third research question.

## **Part One**

This part of the study examined school counselor perceptions of the method used to determine their student caseload assignment. The intention was to replicate the findings of Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin's (2009) study on the method of school counselor assignment used in middle and high schools along with the perceptions of the counselors using each method. In addition, this part addresses the first two research questions.

### **Participants.**

The participants for this part of the study were professional school counselors in the Clark County School District (CCSD), Las Vegas, NV. This school district was chosen because of its size—it is the fifth largest school district in the nation (American School & University, 2010)—and the fact that it covers a wide area that includes urban, rural, and suburban schools. This allows the results of the study to be more widely utilized among schools across the nation.

Similar to the preliminary school counselor assignment study done by Akos, Schuldt, and Waldin (2009) only middle and high school counselors were used. The elementary schools in CCSD have only one counselor or a part-time counselor (one counselor assigned to two schools) making school counselor assignment a non-issue at the elementary level. In addition, any middle and/or high schools with only one school counselor were excluded for the same reason as the elementary schools. Schools with only one school counselor do not have a choice in school counselor assignment as all students are assigned to the same counselor.

### **Procedure.**

This part of the study was conducted through the use of a survey questionnaire. Surveys are particularly useful when the research seeks firsthand knowledge of people's feelings and perceptions about a specific issue (Fowler, 1995). A survey is also the "preferred method if the researcher wishes to obtain a small amount of information from a large number of subjects" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, pg. 125), which is consistent with this particular study.

The questionnaire used is an adapted version of the School Counselor Assignment Questionnaire (SCAQ), which was developed for a preliminary study on school counselor assignment (Akos, Schuldt, & Walendin, 2009). A copy of the adapted version of the SCAQ is included in Appendix A. Permission to use the SCAQ was obtained through email correspondence with the primary author, which is included in Appendix B. The SCAQ consists of a demographic and content section.

The demographic section focuses on basic information such as, type of school (i.e. middle school, junior high school, high school, or other), type of school location, and number of students in caseload. The school type and location are closed questions in which respondents chose answers from a predetermined list. The other demographic questions are open-ended since they require only one-word answers. For example, respondents were asked to put the specific number of students in their caseload in the space provided for that answer. This allows the researcher to categorize them based on the answers given rather than having respondents choose the category (Fowler, 1995, 2002).

The content section of the questionnaire includes two parts. The first part consists of a closed question used to determine the type of school counselor assignment. Respondents were asked to choose from a predetermined list of answers based on the research question, which should be the guiding factor in the preparation of survey questions (Fowler, 1995, 2002). The list of categories for counselors to choose from included:

- a) grade level – static (counselors remain with the same grade level each year)
- b) grade level – looping (counselors move with their students to the next grade level each year)
- c) alphabetical
- d) domain specific (personal/social, academic, and career)
- e) academy/track
- f) blend (any combination of the above)
- g) other

This question also has the option “Other” which respondents could choose and then explain the answer in an open-ended format. The second part of the content section is composed of questions “designed to probe the school counselors’ perceptions about the effectiveness of their current school counselor assignment” (Akos, Schuldt, & Walendin, 2009, p. 24). The creators of the SCAQ used the components of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2003) to create the questions in this section. These questions were answered based on a 4-point agree-disagree Likert scale using the following categories: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree. At this time no reliability or validity data is available.

The survey instrument format or method of data collection was conducted through the Internet using Survey Monkey. Respondents were sent an email with a link to the survey questionnaire. CCSD has an inter district email system which is linked to all school counselors enabling access using this mode.

The advantages of using the Internet to conduct survey research according to Fowler (2002) include low cost, quick return rate—still allowing respondents enough time to think through answers given, ease of presenting questions, and promotion of confidentiality because the respondent does not have to look at or speak to anyone directly. In addition, Fowler also explains that with the use of a computer-assisted data collection method, the data will be in machine form and easier to assess. The computer also allows questions that do not apply to certain respondents to be skipped. This reduces the amount of surveys that cannot be used because of respondents' mistakes or misinterpretations.

There are also disadvantages to using the Internet for survey research. One of the disadvantages is that a good list of email addresses is needed (Fowler, 2002). However, CCSD has email lists already set up for specific job titles, which eliminated this issue. Another disadvantage is that one cannot predict or control technical problems that may arise using this method (Fowler, 1995). No technical difficulties were encountered during the survey portion of this study.

Other disadvantages for this particular study have to do with the fact that it was self-administered. According to Fowler (2002), this type of survey must be designed very well, which is not easy to do. Using open-ended questions, which were done in this study, is also not recommended by Fowler because there is not an interviewer present to



“probe incomplete answers for clarity” (pg. 62). However, the open-ended questions used in this survey were intended to find information that the researcher does not already know or anticipate, which is one reason to use open-ended questions (Fowler, 1995).

Fowler (2002) also lists the level of respondents’ reading and writing skills as a possible disadvantage for self-administered surveys. However, those surveyed in this study have at least a master’s degree. In addition, even though an email list, which includes only middle and high school counselors, was used, there is still no control over who actually responds to the survey, which Fowler also lists as a disadvantage.

Overall, the advantages of using the Internet as the mode of data collection for this particular study far outweigh the disadvantages as stated by Fowler (2002). Utilizing the CCSD’s inter district email system eliminated many of the problems normally encountered when using the Internet to conduct survey research.

In addition to the advantages of using the Internet to survey the participants, the SCAQ has its own advantage for use in this study. The SCAQ has been previously used with a comparable group. Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin (2009) used the SCAQ in a preliminary study with middle and high school counselors in a large Southeastern school district that included a cross-section of urban, suburban and rural schools. Clark County School District is also a large school district that includes a cross-section of all three types of schools.

### **Data Analysis.**

The data collected to address research question number one was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The percentage of total participants using each method of school counselor assignment is reported. In addition, in order to highlight differences in school

counselor assignment at each level the percentage of total participants at the high school and middle school levels using each method of school counselor assignment are reported separately. The data collected to address research question number two was analyzed using qualitative statistic methods. The responses to the Likert scale questions were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The ANOVA results are reported separately for all participating schools, middle schools only, and high schools only.

## **Part Two**

This part of the study examined the relationship between the method of school counselor caseload assignment and student achievement. The results of this part of the study address the third research question.

### **Procedure.**

The independent variable for this part of the study was the type of school counselor assignment. For the purpose of this study, the school counselor assignment, or independent variable levels, are defined as one of the following:

- h) grade level – static (counselors remain with the same grade level each year)
- i) grade level – looping (counselors move with their students to the next grade level each year)
- j) alphabetical
- k) domain specific (personal/social, academic, and career)
- l) academy/track
- m) blend (any combination of the above)
- n) other

Since the SCAQ does not ask the participants to list the name of the school where they currently work, the school counselor caseload assignment data was collected from the CCSD Guidance and Counseling Department. Each year schools in CCSD complete a school counseling department duty form and turn it in to the Guidance and Counseling Department. These forms include the counselor caseload assignments, and this information was made available to the researcher.

The purpose of collecting the counselor caseload assignment information from the Guidance and Counseling Department was to allow participants a higher level of confidentiality when completing the SCAQ. Several schools have only two or three counselors and asking them to list the name of their school on the SCAQ would mean a higher risk of confidentiality being compromised.

Student achievement serves as the dependent variable in part two of this study. The data on student achievement in the middle and high schools used in the study was obtained from the CCSD 2009-2010 District Accountability Summary Report (CCSD, 2010). Nevada School Accountability bill—NRS 385.347—mandates that each district submit a district accountability report to the state and the public each school year (Chapman, 1996). The CCSD district accountability report is readily available to the public via the CCSD website, [www.ccsd.net](http://www.ccsd.net).

For the purpose of this study student achievement is operationally defined in terms of the data provided in the district accountability report used to determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001). NCLB states that each school's AYP is determined by the standards-based test performance data given in the areas of reading and mathematics,

percentage of students taking the standards-based tests, and graduation rate for high schools only. The state of Nevada mandates that middle schools use daily average attendance as their additional criteria (Nevada Department of Education, 2010).

The specific data used in this study as the operational definition of student achievement is the performance data on the reading and mathematics standards-based tests and average daily attendance since all this data is available for both middle and high schools making it possible to compare all secondary schools in the analysis. The student attendance data for the standards-based tests was not used, as it is not included on the district accountability report.

Test data was found in the section titled “Summary of Standards-Based Test Performance.” This section gives the percentage of students for each subject in the following four categories:

- ED = Percentage of students performing in the lowest range of achievement (Emergent/Developing)
- AS = Percentage of students performing in the Approaches Standards range of achievement
- MS = Percentage of students performing in the Meets Standards range of achievement
- ES = Percentage of students performing in the highest range of achievement (Exceeds Standards)

Participating schools were compared using the combined percentages listed in the Meets Standards (MS) and Exceeds Standards (ES) columns. This shows the difference in student achievement between schools. In addition, the daily average attendance can be found the section titled “Demographics and Student Information.”

Data for extraneous variables, or covariates, available on the CCSD 2009-2010 District Accountability Summary Report (CCSD, 2010) was also collected. The covariates that were used for analysis in this study were Per Pupil Expenditure, Teacher

Daily Average Attendance, and Transiency Rate. Including covariates allows the researcher to reduce error variance by controlling for the confounding variables (Keppel & Wickens, 2004).

### **Data Analysis.**

The school counselor assignment and student achievement data was first analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in which the dependent variable was student achievement—a separate ANOVA was run for each factor of the student achievement variable, and the independent variable was method of school counselor caseload assignment. Second, correlation coefficients were run between the dependent variable and the possible covariants—Per Pupil Expenditure, Teacher Daily Average Attendance, and Transiency Rate. Finally, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was computed using covariates displaying high correlations with the dependent variable. The statistical program used to analyze the data was SPSS.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Results and Analysis**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to attempt to determine whether a particular type of school counselor assignment is more effective in enhancing student achievement in a large school district and to look at school counselors' perceptions of the effectiveness of their school counselor assignment.

In order to effectively address the research questions, the study was conducted in two parts. Part one of the study was conducted using the School Counselor Assignment Questionnaire (SCAQ) and addresses the first two research questions. Part two of the study was an analysis of student achievement data from schools using different school counselor assignment methods, and addresses the third research question.

#### **Part One**

##### **Participants.**

The participants for this part of the study were middle and high school professional school counselors in the Clark County School District (CCSD), Las Vegas, NV. CCSD has a total of 52 middle/junior high schools and 33 regular comprehensive high schools with two or more school counselors. There are only five junior high schools in CCSD and all include the same grade levels as the middle schools, which are grades six through eight. Therefore, for the remainder of this study all middle and junior high schools will be referred to as middle schools. There are 153 middle school counselors and 246 high school counselors currently employed in these schools. Of the 399 potential participants, 234 responded to the survey. Counselors who were the only one in their building or counselors who failed to complete the survey were excluded from the analysis

reducing the number of participants to 213 yielding a return rate of 53%. Eighty-four middle school and 129 high school counselors completed the survey. This represents 55% of the middle school and 52% of the high school counselors in the district.

### **Findings.**

Research Question 1: How are school counselors assigned to students in secondary schools?

The overall results from survey participants responding to the question asking about counselor assignment method are displayed in Table 1. Noteworthy information from this data is a statistically significant difference between reported assignment method between middle and high school respondents,  $\chi^2(6, N = 213) = 99.69, p = .0001$ . The majority of middle school respondents 64 (76.2%) use a grade level method of counselor assignment. There are two assignment methods in this category: (1) Grade Level Looping, where counselors move from grade to grade with their students and keep the same students from year to year; (2) Grade Level Static, where counselors stay with the same grade and are assigned new students each year. A majority of high school respondents 69 (53.5%) use an alphabetical method of counselor assignment where they are assigned students alphabetically by last name and keep the same students from year to year.

A breakdown of all the results shows that 82 (38.5%) are assigned to their students by grade level. Of the counselors assigned by grade level 53 (24.9%) have a looping assignment and 29 (13.6%) have a static assignment. In addition, 76 (35.7%) are assigned alphabetically, 38 (17.8%) are assigned using a blend of methods, 7 (3.3%) are assigned by academy/track where counselors are assigned to students according to what

academy/track they belong to keeping the same students from year to year, 7 (3.3%) are assigned by “other” methods, and 3 (1.4%) are assigned by domain where counselors see students according to their particular needs at the time and do not necessarily see the same students from time to time or year to year. Initially, 17.8% of participants chose the “other” category as their method of assignment. However, after reviewing the explanations of these assignments, it was determined by the researcher that many of these methods fit into one of the listed categories (i.e. alphabetical and grade level = blend) and were reclassified accordingly. The data in Table 1 are based on the reclassified totals.

Of the 38 participants that choose blend as their method of school counselor assignment, 25 (65.7%) of them described their blend as a combination of grade level and alphabetical (i.e. one counselor for grade 9 and the counselors for grades 10-12 assigned alphabetically). The other blend assignments were described as combinations of the following: 4 (10.5%) alphabetical and academy/track; 2 (5.2%) grade level, alphabetical, and academy/track; 2 (5.2%) grade level, alphabetical, and domain; and 5 (13.2%) did not specify the combination(s) of their blended assignment.

The seven participants who chose “other” as their school counselor assignment described methods of assignment that did not fit into any of the given options. For example, two participants described methods involving assigning counselors by gender. All methods described as “other” are as follows:

- We are online so I am the full-time [student] counselor while not working on full-time [students] I am registering, monitoring, and working with part time students as well
- Teaming but switching to grade level specific for 11-12 year



- by testing location/numbers
- boys, girls, and one counselor meets with boys and girls--does the schedule
- Each counselor has one grade level and split the boys/girls of other grade level
- 8th grade counselor also has 7th grade girls: 6th grade counselor also has 7th grade boys
- Each counselor has 3 grades with one team on each grade.

Even though an initial look at the results show that grade level and alphabetical assignment are used by the majority of respondents, a closer examination of the results show that the main difference between these two methods is middle school and high school respectively.

Research Question 2: What are school counselors' perceptions of the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of each type of assignment?

This research question was addressed with the Likert scale section of the SCAQ that included eighteen questions focusing on school counselor perceptions of various aspects of their school counselor assignment method. Due to the small amount of respondents for several of the counselor assignment methods and in order to include all responses in the analysis, the seven school counselor assignment methods on the SCAQ were reclassified into three new categories where counselors keep the same students each year, receive new students each year, or use a mix of these two methods. A breakdown of the respondents categorized into these three methods is displayed in Table 2. Just as with the original classification system, information from the data displayed in this table shows a statistically significant difference in reported assignment method between middle and high school respondents,  $\chi^2(2, N = 213) = 8.41, p = .015$ .

These three new assignment categories were used as the independent variable in a one-way between subjects ANOVA to examine the relationship between assignment method and the responses to each Likert scale question from the SCAQ. Each question was analyzed using all participants, middle school participants only, and high school participants only. Additional information can be found in Table 3 for all participants, Table 4 for middle school participants, and Table 5 for high school participants.

Question A: Our school counselor assignment is effective.

There was a statistically significant difference for respondents in counselor perceptions among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 210) = 9.18, p = 0.0005$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.36, SD = .776$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 2.78, SD = .876$ ). The differences between counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 3.09, SD = .818$ ), counselors who keep the same students, and counselors using a blend were not statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as more effective than those who use a blend of the methods.

Using middle school participants only, there was a statistically significant difference for respondents among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 81) = 3.52, p = 0.034$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.40, SD = .793$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 2.75, SD = .754$ ). The differences between counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 3.16, SD = .765$ ),

counselors who keep the same students, and counselors using a blend were not statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded middle school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as more effective than middle school counselors who use a blend of the methods.

Using high school participants only, there was a statistically significant difference for respondents among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 126) = 5.50, p = 0.0005$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.34, SD = .769$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 2.79, SD = .927$ ). The differences between counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 3.00, SD = .913$ ), counselors who keep the same students, and counselors using a blend were not statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded high school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as more effective than high school counselors who use a blend of the methods.

Question B: Our school counselor assignment encourages developing helping relationships with the students in our caseloads.

There was a statistically significant difference for respondents in counselor perceptions among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 209) = 7.66, p = 0.001$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.46, SD = .770$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 2.96, SD = .878$ ). The differences between counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 3.13, SD = .793$ ), counselors who keep the same students, and counselors using a blend were not

statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as one that encourages developing relationships with their students more than those using a blend of the methods.

Using middle school participants only, there was a statistically significant difference for respondents among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 80) = 3.93$ ,  $p = 0.024$ . However, post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test did not show any significant differences. Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.60, 3.21, and 3.08 respectively.

Using high school participants only, there was a statistically significant difference for respondents among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 126) = 3.95$ ,  $p = 0.022$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = .822$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 2.91$ ,  $SD = .914$ ). The differences between counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = .913$ ), counselors who keep the same students, and counselors using a blend were not statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded high school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as one that encourages developing relationships with their students more than high school counselors using a blend of the methods.

Question C: Our school counselor assignment allows us to develop relationships with parents.

There was a statistically significant difference for respondents in counselor perceptions among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 210) = 7.04, p = 0.001$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.40, SD = .723$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 3.03, SD = .782$ ) and counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 2.98, SD = .783$ ). The difference between counselors who receive new students each year and counselors using a blend were not statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as one that allows them to develop relationships with parents more than those who receive new students and those who use a blend of the methods.

Using middle school participants only, there was a statistically significant difference for respondents among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 81) = 6.28, p = 0.003$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.53, SD = .639$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 3.00, SD = .745$ ) and counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 3.00, SD = .603$ ). Means for counselors who receive new students each year and counselors using a blend were equal. These results suggest that of those who responded middle school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as one that allows them to develop relationships with parents more than middle school counselors who receive new students and middle school counselors who use a blend of the methods.

Using high school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of developing relationships with parents were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 126) = 2.38, p = 0.097$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.31, 3.08, and 2.97 respectively.

Question D: Our school counselor assignment is helpful in delivering a well-coordinated guidance curriculum.

Differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of delivering a well-coordinated guidance curriculum were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 208) = 2.21, p = 0.113$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.19, 3.00, and 2.93 respectively.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of delivering a well-coordinated guidance curriculum were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 80) = 1.07, p = 0.35$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.17, 2.95, and 2.92 respectively.

Using high school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of delivering a well-coordinated guidance curriculum were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 125) = 1.23, p = 0.297$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.20, 3.08, and 2.94 respectively.

Question E: Our school counselor assignment allows for individual student planning.

There was a statistically significant difference for respondents among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 208) = 3.08, p = 0.048$ . However, post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test did not show any significant differences. Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, use a blend of the methods, and receive new students were 3.21, 2.98, and 2.91 respectively.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of allowing for individual student planning were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 81) = 2.86, p = 0.063$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, use a blend of the methods, and receive new students were 3.23, 2.92, and 2.79 respectively.

Using high school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of allowing for individual student planning were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 124) = .852, p = 0.429$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.21, 3.08, and 3.00 respectively.

Question F: Our school counselor assignment is helpful in delivering responsive services.

There was a statistically significant difference for respondents in counselor perceptions among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 208) = 5.53, p = 0.005$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.30, SD = .754$ ) is significantly higher than

counselors who use a blend of methods ( $M = 2.87, SD = .842$ ) The differences between counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 3.16, SD = .583$ ), counselors who keep the same students, and counselors using a blend were not statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as being helpful in delivering responsive services more than those who use a blend of the methods.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of being helpful in delivering responsive services were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 79) = 1.68, p = 0.193$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.35, 3.28, and 2.92 respectively.

Using high school participants only, there was a statistically significant difference for respondents in counselor perceptions among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 126) = 3.68, p = 0.028$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.27, SD = .734$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 2.85, SD = .906$ ) The differences between counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 3.00, SD = .577$ ), counselors who keep the same students, and counselors using a blend were not statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded high school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as being helpful in delivering responsive services more than high school counselors who use a blend of the methods.



Question G: Our school counselor assignment is conducive to utilizing system supports.

There was a statistically significant difference for respondents in counselor perceptions among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 206) = 5.46, p = 0.005$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.28, SD = .709$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 2.93, SD = .838$ ). The difference between counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 2.94, SD = .669$ ), counselors who keep the same students, and counselors using a blend were not statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as conducive to utilizing system supports more than those who use a blend of the methods.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of being conducive to utilizing system supports were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 79) = 2.22, p = 0.115$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.32, 3.11, and 2.90 respectively.

Using high school participants only, there was a statistically significant difference for respondents in counselor perceptions among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 124) = 4.03, p = 0.020$ . However, post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test did not show any significant differences. Mean scores for counselors who receive new students, use a blend of the methods, and keep the same students were 3.26, 2.94, and 2.69 respectively.

Question H: Our school counselor assignment allows us to be at or below 20% in system support.

Differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of being at or below 20% in system support were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 178) = 2.78, p = 0.065$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 2.83, 2.63, and 2.51 respectively.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of being at or below 20% in system support were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 72) = .828, p = 0.441$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 2.78, 2.57, and 2.50 respectively.

Using high school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of being at or below 20% in system support were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 103) = 2.05, p = 0.135$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 2.88, 2.69, and 2.52 respectively.

Question I: Our school counselor assignment allows us to serve all students equitably.

There was a statistically significant difference for respondents among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 209) = 4.23, p = 0.016$ . However, post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test did not show any significant differences. Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, use a blend of the methods, and receive new students were 2.93, 2.60, and 2.52 respectively.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of serving all students equitably were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 80) = 1.84, p = 0.165$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, use a blend of the methods, and receive new students were 2.81, 2.39, and 2.50 respectively.

Using high school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of serving all students equitably were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 126) = 2.36, p = 0.099$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.00, 2.69, and 2.64 respectively.

Question J: Our school counselor assignment is effective for supporting school transitions.

There was a statistically significant difference for respondents in counselor perceptions among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 208) = 4.08, p = 0.018$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.17, SD = .815$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 2.80, SD = .701$ ). The differences between counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 2.97, SD = .740$ ), counselors who keep the same students, and counselors using a blend were not statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as more effective for supporting school transitions than those who use a blend of the methods.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of effectively supporting school transitions were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 81) = 2.56, p = 0.083$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.28, 3.05, and 2.75 respectively.

Using high school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of effectively supporting school transitions were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 124) = 1.76, p = 0.176$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.10, 2.85, and 2.81 respectively.

Question K: Our school counselor assignment is clear, e.g. students and parents always know which counselor they need to speak with.

There was a statistically significant difference for respondents in counselor perceptions among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 210) = 6.94, p = 0.001$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.20, SD = .806$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 2.69, SD = .900$ ). The differences between counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 2.88, SD = .907$ ), counselors who keep the same students, and counselors using a blend were not statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as more clear (i.e. students and parents always know which counselor they need to speak with) than those who use a blend of the methods.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of being clear (i.e. students and parents always know which counselor they need to speak with) were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 81) = 1.40, p = 0.253$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.26, 3.00, and 2.92 respectively.

Using high school participants only, there was a statistically significant difference for respondents among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 126) = 5.45, p = 0.005$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.16, SD = .804$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 2.61, SD = .899$ ). The differences between counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 3.69, SD = 1.182$ ), counselors who keep the same students, and counselors using a blend were not statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded high school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive their method as more clear (i.e. students and parents always know which counselor they need to speak with) than high school counselors who use a blend of the methods.

Question L: Our school counselor assignment allows for frequent collaboration.

Differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of allowing for frequent collaboration were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 210) = 1.72, p = 0.181$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.12, 2.97, and 2.87 respectively.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of allowing for frequent collaboration were not

statistically significant,  $F(2, 81) = .441, p = 0.645$ . Mean scores for counselors who use a blend of the methods, keep the same students, and receive new students were 3.25, 3.06, and 3.00 respectively.

Using high school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of allowing for frequent collaboration were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 126) = 3.00, p = 0.053$ . Mean scores for counselors who use a blend of the methods, keep the same students, and receive new students were 3.16, 2.92, and 2.73 respectively.

Question M: Our school counselor assignment takes advantage of our strengths.

Differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of taking advantage of counselor strengths were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 207) = .791, p = 0.455$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.00, 2.94, and 2.82 respectively.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of taking advantage of counselor strengths were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 81) = 2.15, p = 0.807$ . Mean scores for counselors who receive new students, use a blend of the methods, and keep the same students were 2.95, 2.92, and 2.81 respectively.

Using high school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of taking advantage of counselor strengths were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 123) = 2.08, p = 0.129$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.12, 2.92, and 2.78 respectively.

Question N: Our school counselor assignment creates a problem when one of our counselors is not present.

Differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of creating a problem when one counselor is not present were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 209) = 1.21, p = 0.299$ . Mean scores for counselors who use a blend of the methods, receive new students, and keep the same students were 2.40, 2.28, and 2.18 respectively.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of creating a problem when one counselor is not present were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 81) = .563, p = 0.572$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students and use a blend of the methods was 2.17, and the mean score for counselors who receive new students was 1.95.

Using high school participants only, there was a statistically significant difference for respondents among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 125) = 3.48, p = 0.034$ . However, post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test did not show any significant differences. Mean scores for counselors who receive new students, use a blend of the methods, and keep the same students were 2.77, 2.48, and 2.18 respectively.

Question O: Our school counselor assignment allows us to use our time efficiently.

Differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of allowing counselors to use their time efficiently were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 206) = 1.61, p = 0.202$ . The mean score for counselors who keep the same students was 3.02, and the mean scores for counselors who receive new students and use a blend of the methods were 2.81.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of allowing counselors to use their time efficiently were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 80) = 1.57, p = 0.214$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, use a blend of the methods, and receive new students were 3.06, 2.82, and 2.74 respectively.

Using high school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of allowing counselors to use their time efficiently were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 123) = .545, p = 0.581$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.00, 2.92, and 2.81 respectively.

Question P: Our school counselor assignment allows us to function as a cohesive unit.

There was a statistically significant difference for respondents in counselor perceptions among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 209) = 5.04, p = 0.007$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for counselors who keep the same students ( $M = 3.09, SD = .824$ ) is significantly higher than counselors who receive new students each year ( $M = 2.66, SD = .865$ ). The differences between counselors who use a blend of the methods ( $M = 2.76, SD = .857$ ), counselors who keep the same students, and counselors who receive new students were not statistically significant. These results suggest that of those who responded school counselors who keep the same students each year perceive that their method allows them to function as a cohesive unit more than those who receive new students.



Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of allowing counselors to function as a cohesive unit were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 81) = 1.29, p = 0.281$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, use a blend of the methods, and receive new students were 3.09, 2.83, and 2.79 respectively.

Using high school participants only, there was a statistically significant difference for respondents in counselor perceptions among the three student assignment methods,  $F(2, 125) = 4.12, p = 0.019$ . However, post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test did not show any significant differences. Mean scores for counselors who receive new students, use a blend of the methods, and keep the same students were 3.09, 2.73, and 2.46 respectively.

Question Q: Our school counselor assignment is conducive to using data to plan and evaluate school counseling services.

Differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of being conducive to using data to plan and evaluate school counseling services were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 210) = 1.20, p = 0.305$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, use a blend of the methods, and receive new students were 2.93, 2.82, and 2.69 respectively.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of being conducive to using data to plan and evaluate school counseling services were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 81) = 1.28, p = 0.285$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, use a blend of the methods, and receive new students were 2.94, 2.92, and 2.63 respectively.

Using high school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of being conducive to using data to plan and evaluate school counseling services were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 126) = .345, p = 0.709$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 2.92, 2.79, and 2.77 respectively.

Question R: Our school counselor assignment allows us to be leaders and advocates.

Differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of allowing counselors to be leaders and advocates were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 209) = 1.46, p = 0.235$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, use a blend of the methods, and receive new students were 3.14, 2.98, and 2.91 respectively.

Using middle school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of allowing counselors to be leaders and advocates were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 81) = 1.33, p = 0.271$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, use a blend of the methods, and receive new students were 3.17, 3.00, and 2.84 respectively.

Using high school participants only, differences for respondents among the three assignment methods in perceptions of allowing counselors to be leaders and advocates were not statistically significant,  $F(2, 125) = .430, p = 0.652$ . Mean scores for counselors who keep the same students, receive new students, and use a blend of the methods were 3.12, 3.00, and 2.97 respectively.

## **Part Two**

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between school counselor assignment and student achievement?

This research question was addressed with data from the 52 middle schools and 33 regular comprehensive high schools in CCSD with two or more school counselors. A series of one-way analysis of variance, and if warranted, one-way analysis of covariance were computed with the student achievement data used to determine a school's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001)—reading test data, math test data, and student daily average attendance—as the dependent variable. The reading and math test data is reported as the percentage of students at each school that meet or exceed the standards on standards-based tests. School counselor assignment method was used as the independent variable. Additional data collected by schools for NCLB that appeared potentially appropriate for use as a covariant in this study included per pupil expenditure, transiency rate, and teacher average daily attendance.

These analyses were computed separately for middle and high schools due to the significant difference in the majority school counselor assignment method used at the middle school and high school levels. For this question, the method of school counselor assignment was reclassified into two categories using the majority method at each level as category one and the other methods as category two. The objective of the analyses is to investigate whether there is a relationship between the counselor assignment method most often used in the school and indicators of student achievement.

The two new categories for the middle school are: Category one-grade level looping, Category two-other methods. The two new categories for the high schools are: Category one-alphabetical, Category two-other methods.

### **Findings.**

#### ***Middle School.***

##### *Reading Test Data.*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed using the two categories of school counselor assignment as the independent variable and the percent of students who meet or exceed standards on standards-based reading tests as the dependent variable. There was a statistically significant difference in the reading test data at middle schools using a grade level looping method ( $n = 29$ ,  $M = 69.66$ ,  $SD = 10.39$ ) and other methods ( $n = 23$ ,  $M = 62.09$ ,  $SD = 10.10$ ) of counselor assignment,  $F(1, 50) = 6.981$ ,  $p = .011$ , effect size = .123. These results could initially suggest that a grade level looping method of counselor assignment results in higher reading scores at middle schools unless extraneous variables co-occurring with counselor assignment were significantly related to the dependent variable. In this case, two of the variables identified as potential covariants, per pupil expenditure and transiency rates, were associated with both the method of counselor assignment and the reading scores.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between reading test data and three potential covariates: per pupil expenditure, transiency rate, and teacher daily average attendance. Results are displayed in Table 6.

There was a statistically significant negative correlation between middle school reading test data and per pupil expenditure,  $r = -.589$ , and also a statistically significant negative correlation between middle school reading test data and transiency rate,  $r = -.828$ . Lower transiency rates and lower per pupil expenditures were associated with higher performance on the reading test.

In this sample, there was also a statistically significant relationship between method of assignment and both per pupil expenditure and transiency rate. The relationship between method of assignment and teacher average daily attendance was not significant. One-way ANOVAs were computed with assignment method as the independent variable and per pupil expenditure, transiency rate, and teacher daily average attendance as the dependent variables. The results were:  $F(1, 50) = 9.837$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $F(1, 50) = 7.366$ ,  $p = .009$ ,  $F(1, 50) = .326$ ,  $p = .570$  respectively. Effect sizes were: .164, .128, and .006. Schools using the method of assignment favored in most middle schools in the sample had lower per pupil expenditure and lower transiency rates.

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is a statistical procedure used to clarify the relationship between an independent and dependent variable by attempting to control for the effect of other variables. Although an ideal covariant for an ANCOVA has a strong relationship with the dependent variable and minimal relationship with the independent variable, the latter is seldom achieved unless assignment to the independent variable is random (Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2003).

More than one covariant can be used in a single ANCOVA. However, each additional covariant reduces the power of the analysis through loss of an additional degree of freedom and is not recommended, particularly when there is a significant

relationship with an existing covariant (W.P. Jones, personal communication, September 22, 2011).

The correlation coefficients in Table 6 suggest that either transiency rate or per pupil expenditure could be used as a covariant in an ANOCVA analysis of counselor assignment method and middle school reading test scores. Transiency rate was selected for this analysis because of the higher magnitude of the correlation of transiency rate and reading test scores and because a regression analysis indicated that the addition of per pupil expenditure to transiency rate had negligible impact on the prediction of reading test scores as compared to using transiency rate alone.

The ANCOVA analysis of the relationship between counselor assignment method and reading test scores after considering the influence of transiency rate indicated no statistically significant difference in reading test scores between the two counselor assignment methods,  $F(1, 49) = .514, p = .477, \text{effect size} = .645$ . Despite the very high relationship between transiency rate and reading test scores, the design of this study would not support a conclusion that differential performance on the reading test is 'caused by' differences in transiency rate. These results do support a conclusion that the initial differences in reading test scores between the two counselor assignment methods were an artifact influenced by differences in transiency rates in the schools with different counselor assignment methods and were not a direct function of the counselor assignment method.

A comparable analysis model to that used in analysis of the reading test data was applied to the dependent variables of math test data and average daily attendance at both the middle school and high school levels. In each case, the analyses begin with a simple

ANOVA with counseling assignment method as the independent variable and one of the NCLB criteria as the dependent variable, followed by information about potential covariants, and an ANCOVA.

*Math Test Data.*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed using the two categories of school counselor assignment as the independent variable and the percent of students who meet or exceed standards on standards-based math tests as the dependent variable. There was a statistically significant difference in the math test data at middle schools using a grade level looping method ( $n = 29$ ,  $M = 63.24$ ,  $SD = 12.89$ ) and other methods ( $n = 23$ ,  $M = 54.52$ ,  $SD = 11.80$ ) of counselor assignment,  $F(1, 50) = 6.322$ ,  $p = .015$ , effect size = .112. Similar to the findings with the reading test scores, these results would initially suggest an advantage of grade level looping as the counselor assignment method likely to produce higher performance on the math tests.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between math test data and the three potential covariates: per pupil expenditure, transiency rate, and teacher daily average attendance. Results are displayed in Table 7.

Comparable to the results with the middle school reading test data as the dependent variable, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between math test data and per pupil expenditure,  $r = -.557$ , and, also a statistically significant negative correlation between math test data and transiency rate,  $r = -.843$ . Increases in middle school math test scores were correlated with decreases in transiency rate and decreases in per pupil expenditure.

With the same rationale as described when middle school reading test data were the dependent variable, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted using the two categories of school counselor assignment as the independent variable, math test data as the dependent variable, and transiency rate as the covariate. After controlling for the effect of transiency, it was evident that the relationship between counselor assignment and percentage of students who meet/exceed math standards was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 49) = .211, p = .648, \text{effect size} = .004$ .

*Daily Average Attendance.*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed using the two categories of school counselor assignment as the independent variable and student daily average attendance rate as the dependent variable. There was a statistically significant difference in the student daily average attendance rate at middle schools using a grade level looping method ( $n = 29, M = 95.09, SD = .811$ ) and other methods ( $n = 23, M = 94.53, SD = .622$ ) of counselor assignment,  $F(1, 50) = 7.647, p = .008, \text{effect size} = .133$ . Similar to the findings with the reading and math test data, these results would initially suggest that a grade level looping method of counselor assignment would likely result in a higher student daily average attendance rate at participating middle schools.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between student daily average attendance and the three potential covariates: per pupil expenditure, transiency rate, and teacher daily average attendance. Results are displayed in Table 8.

As with the middle school reading and math test data as the dependent variable, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between student daily average



attendance and per pupil expenditure,  $r = -.396$ , and, also a statistically significant negative correlation between student daily average attendance and transiency rate,  $r = -.729$ . Increases in student daily average attendance were correlated with decreases in transiency rate and decreases in per pupil expenditure.

With the same rationale as described when middle school reading test and math test data were the dependent variable a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted using the two categories of school counselor assignment as the independent variable, student daily average attendance as the dependent variable, and transiency rate as the covariate. After controlling for the effect of transiency, it was evident that the relationship between counselor assignment and student daily average attendance at the middle school level was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 49) = 1.304$ ,  $p = .259$ , effect size = .026.

### ***High School.***

#### *Reading Test Data.*

High school data was also analyzed using a comparable model to that used for the analysis of the middle school data using the same variables. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed using the two categories of school counselor assignment as the independent variable and the percent of students who meet or exceed standards on standards-based reading tests as the dependent variable. Differences between the reading test data at high schools using an alphabetical method ( $n = 18$ ) and other methods ( $n = 15$ ) of counselor assignment were not significant,  $F(1, 31) = .797$ ,  $p = .379$ , effect size = .025. Mean scores for schools using an alphabetical method and

schools using other methods of school counselor assignment were 91.17 and 93.27 respectively.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between reading test data and the three potential covariates: per pupil expenditure, transiency rate, and teacher daily average attendance. Results are displayed in Table 9.

There was a statistically significant negative correlation between reading test data and transiency rate,  $r = -.454$ . Lower transiency rates were associated with higher performance on the reading test at the high school level.

In this sample, the relationship between method of assignment and per pupil expenditure, transiency rate, and teacher daily average attendance at the high school level was not significant. One-way ANOVAs were computed with assignment method as the independent variable and per pupil expenditure, transiency rate, and teacher daily average attendance as the dependent variables. The results were:  $F(1, 30) = .132, p = .719$ ,  $F(1, 31) = .001, p = .976$ ,  $F(1, 31) = 2.464, p = .127$  respectively. Effect sizes were .004, .000, and .074.

Even though there was no significant difference between school counselor assignment and reading test data and each of the possible covariants, the correlation coefficients in Table 9 suggest that transiency rate could be used as a covariant in an ANCOVA analysis of counselor assignment method and high school reading test data. The ANCOVA analysis of the relationship between counselor assignment method and reading test data after considering the influence of transiency rate indicated no statistically significant difference in reading test data between the two counselor

assignment methods,  $F(1, 30) = 1.009, p = .323$ , effect size = .033. These findings suggest that school counselor assignment does not have a direct effect on reading test data in participating high schools.

*Math Test Data.*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed using the two categories of school counselor assignment as the independent variable and the percent of students who meet or exceed standards on standards-based math tests as the dependent variable. Differences between the math test data at high schools using an alphabetical method ( $n = 18$ ) and other methods ( $n = 15$ ) of counselor assignment were not significant,  $F(1, 31) = .002, p = .967$ , effect size = .000. Mean scores for schools using an alphabetical method and schools using other methods of school counselor assignment were 69.94 and 69.73 respectively.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between math test data and the three potential covariates: per pupil expenditure, transiency rate, and teacher daily average attendance. Results are displayed in Table 10.

Comparable to the results with the high school reading test data as the independent variable, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between math test data and transiency rate,  $r = -.887$ . Lower transiency rates were associated with higher performance on the math test.

With the same rationale as described when high school reading test data were the independent variable, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted using the two categories of school counselor assignment as the independent variable, math test

data as the dependent variable, and transiency rate as the covariate. After considering the influence of transiency, it was evident that the relationship between counselor assignment and percentage of students who meet/exceed math standards was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 30) = .001, p = .974$ , effect size = .000. These findings suggest that school counselor assignment does not have a direct effect on math test data in participating high schools.

*Daily Average Attendance.*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed using the two categories of school counselor assignment as the independent variable and student daily average attendance rate as the dependent variable. Differences between daily average attendance at high schools using an alphabetical method ( $n = 18$ ) and other ( $n = 15$ ) methods of counselor assignment were not significant,  $F(1, 31) = .126, p = .725$ , effect size = .004. Mean attendance rates for schools using an alphabetical method and schools using other methods of school counselor assignment were 92.88 and 92.66 respectively.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between student daily average attendance and the three potential covariates: per pupil expenditure, transiency rate, and teacher daily average attendance. Results are displayed in Table 11.

As with the high school reading and math test data as the dependent variable, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between student daily average attendance and transiency rate,  $r = -.776$ . Lower transiency rates were associated with higher student daily average attendance.

With the same rationale as described when high school reading test and math test data were the dependent variable, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted using the two categories of school counselor assignment as the independent variable, student daily average attendance as the dependent variable, and transiency rate as the covariate. After considering the influence of transiency, it was evident that the relationship between counselor assignment and student daily average attendance was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 30) = .269, p = .608, \text{effect size} = .009$ . These findings suggest that school counselor assignment does not have a direct effect on student daily average attendance in participating high schools.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

#### **Significance for Theory and Practice in School Counseling**

The method used to assign school counselors in high schools and middle schools could initially appear to be only a matter of administrative convenience with little significance in the efficacy of the service provided. However, Gysbers and Henderson (2006), possibly the most influential figures in design of contemporary comprehensive counseling and guidance programs, continue to emphasize that selection among the various assignment methods should be based on the philosophy and primary objectives of the counseling program.

They argue, for example, that programs with a developmental focus should assign counselors by grade level, perhaps allowing counselors to move up a grade with students each year. Alphabetical assignment allows families and siblings to work with the same counselor but may require counselors to be knowledgeable at several developmental levels. Connecting counselor assignment with individual teachers may facilitate focus and alignment with achievement standards but becomes complex as students change classes and can interfere with counselor-student relationships.

It would thus appear obvious that the underlying theoretical values and preferences of a program are or should be reflected in the method used for counselor assignment. The ASCA National Model (2005), however, is strangely silent on this connection. The ASCA guide for developing a comprehensive school counseling program only lists several options for assigning counselors to student caseloads and states that this is to be a point of agreement between the counselor(s) and administrator. There

is no apparent recognition that the assignment method may directly influence the relative emphasis on various objectives of a comprehensive school counseling program.

Also puzzling, especially given the influence of Gysbers and Henderson, is the fact that the literature is essentially silent on empirical support or challenge of their recommendations about counselor assignment methods. Only one study addressing the question of best method for assigning counselors was found, a preliminary study that was extended in this dissertation.

As will be detailed in the remainder of this chapter, this study identified factors in counselor assignment with potential theoretical and practical significance in delivery of school counseling services. Consideration of developmental differences would initially appear to be reflected differences in the pattern of assignment between middle schools and high schools. The majority of middle schools in this study used a grade level looping method, and the majority of high schools used an alphabetical method of assignment. But, there was a common feature in that both of these methods require the students to remain with the same counselor throughout their attendance at a particular school.

Also evident in the findings of this study was that school counselors using methods of school counselor assignment in which they keep the same students from year to year, had more positive perceptions of their method than those who were using a mixed method. In particular, when analyzed all together or separated by level, the counselors keeping their students consistently had more positive perceptions of the effectiveness of their method and its help in building relationships with students. This is noteworthy for school counselor educators for several reasons.

First, it is evident that a successful counselor/student relationship takes time to establish (Blair, 1999). School counselors who are able to work with the same students throughout their attendance at a particular school will have the time to establish this critical relationship. This study supports the idea showing that school counselors who are currently working with the same students from year to year do feel that it has helped them build relationships with their students.

Second, school counselors who perceive their method as being effective may work harder toward this end. This is indicative of Bandura's social cognitive theory and the idea of self-efficacy (Pajares, 2002). If school counselors believe they are working effectively and building successful relationships with students, then it provides them with the motivation to do that which they believe they have already accomplished.

Third, building from the possibility of positive self-efficacy pushing school counselors to work more effectively, is the idea of job satisfaction. The positive perception of school counselor assignment effectiveness could be a product of higher job satisfaction among school counselors who work with the same students from year to year. Building a positive relationship with students may give school counselors a higher sense of job satisfaction, which in turn may promote more positive perceptions of effectiveness.

Conversely, school counselors using a mix of the two school counselor assignments consistently had lower perceptions of their method than those counselors who keep the same students each year. Although Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin (2009) suggested that finding a blend of counselor assignment methods that utilized the pros of each method rather than looking at one specific method might be advantageous, these results suggest otherwise. Using a mixed method of assignment may be confusing to the



counselors, students, and parents as evidenced by the mixed method having a significantly lower perception of their assignment being clear to others. This may also be attributed to a lack of communication to stakeholders about which students are assigned to which counselors. This too should be taken into account when discussing school counselor assignment with school counseling students, when school counseling departments are developing their comprehensive guidance program, or when working to create better guidelines for determining school counselor assignment.

The recommendations by Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin (2009) implied that the method of counselor assignment could have an influence on student achievement. This belief was not supported in the findings of this study. At the middle school level there was a difference related to method of assignment in the student achievement variables, but extended analysis suggested this was an artifact of extraneous variables.

### **Summary of Research and Results**

This study examined the implications of method of school counselor assignment with a sample from secondary schools in the Clark County School District (CCSD). One objective of this study was to determine whether a particular type of school counselor assignment is more effective in enhancing student achievement. In addition, the study also looked at school counselors' perceptions of the effectiveness of their school counselor assignment.

The School Counselor Assignment Questionnaire (SCAQ) was used to determine what method of school counselor assignment the participating counselors use and to look at school counselors' perceptions of the effectiveness of their school counselor assignment. The SCAQ consists of a short demographic section and an eighteen question

Lkert Scale section asking about counselors' perceptions of their current assignment. The researcher also analyzed student achievement data from schools using different school counselor assignment methods to look at the relationship between student achievement and school counselor assignment. Following is a summary of results for each of the three research questions.

Research Question 1: How are school counselors assigned to students in secondary schools?

The study results show that the primary method of school counselor assignment among the respondents in secondary schools is by grade level; however, there was a clear difference in the method of assignment between the high school and middle school levels. The high school respondents primarily use an alphabetical method of counselor assignment and the middle school respondents primarily use a form of grade level assignment with looping—counselor moves with students from grade to grade—being used by the majority of middle school respondents.

These results are similar to those of the preliminary study done by Akos, Schuldt, and Walendin (2009). The main difference between the results of the two studies is that the preliminary study only had a total of 4% of counselors who reported using a blend assignment whereas the current study had a total of 17.8% of counselors who reported using a blend assignment. The majority of the blend assignments reported were at the high school level and were described as being a combination of grade level and alphabetical assignment.

Further explanation by responding counselors shows that this is due to high schools having a separate ninth grade counselor or having one or more academy/track

counselors. This could be an indication that a blend method of counselor assignment is becoming more popular as many high schools focus on ninth grade students or academies in which one or more counselors are specifically assigned to ninth grade students only (McIntosh & White, 2006).

Research Question 2: What are school counselors' perceptions of the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of each type of assignment?

This question used the Likert Scale section of the SCAQ to determine the respondents perceptions of their current school counselor assignment. After reclassifying the school counselor assignments into a three-category system due to small numbers in some of the original categories, the researcher analyzed the responses based on perception. The three categories that were used in this analysis were:

- Counselors who keep the same students each year
- Counselors who receive new students each year
- Counselors who use a mix of the above methods

When middle and high school levels were analyzed together, results show that counselors who keep the same students from year to year had significantly more positive perceptions of their method of counselor assignment in ten of the eighteen perception questions asked on the SCAQ. One explanation for their positive perceptions may be that they have more time with their students. This may account in part for their higher positive perceptions of developing student-counselor and student-parent relationships, supporting school transitions, and delivering helpful responsive services all of which require a deeper understanding of their students.

When middle and high school levels were analyzed separately, results show that middle school respondents who keep the same students each year had significantly more positive perceptions of the effectiveness of their school counselor assignment than counselors who used a mixed method of counselor assignment. In addition, they also had a significantly more positive perception of their assignment allowing them to build student and parent relationships than counselors who used a mixed method. There were no additional significant differences in the middle school analysis. However, the majority of the perceptions were positive based on the mean scores.

Results for high school respondents only show that counselors who keep the same students had significantly more positive perceptions of their method of assignment than counselors using a mixed method for seven of the eighteen questions. One difference between the analysis of all respondents and high school respondents only that stands out is that there was no significant difference in perceptions among all three methods for building a relationship with parents. One explanation for this may be that parents of high school students are generally less involved in their child's education than those of middle and elementary parents (Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010). Even though there were not as many significant differences for the high school analysis, just as with the previous analyses, the majority of the perceptions were positive based on the mean scores.

While the perceptions results from counselors who keep the same students each year were more positive, it is important to note that the majority of responses based on the mean scores for each method of school counseling were positive responses (i.e. agree, strongly agree) showing no major dissatisfaction or negative perceptions of any method. School counselors should carefully review of each method before making a decision on

which one to use. A closer look at the advantages and disadvantages of each method along with the needs of the students, parents, school, and community should be part of the decision making process.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between school counselor assignment and student achievement?

This question used the method of school counselor assignment and student achievement data to determine if there is a relationship between school counselor assignment and student achievement. As with part one of the study, due to a low number of schools using certain counselor assignment methods, it was necessary to reclassify the methods into two categories for middle schools and two categories for high schools.

Thus, the independent variable of school counselor assignment was as follows:

- Middle School Level
  - Grade Level Looping
  - All other methods
- High School Level
  - Alphabetical
  - All other methods

The NCLB student achievement measurements were used as the dependent variables and were as follows: percentage of students who meet or exceed standards on the standards-based reading test, percentage of students who meet or exceed standards on the standards-based math test, and student daily average attendance. A statistically significant difference was found between counselor assignment method and student achievement at the middle school level, but when the influence of transiency rate was

accounted for, the difference was no longer evident. At the high school level there were no significant differences. However, transiency rate was also associated with the student achievement variables at the high school level as well. Although the association of transiency rate and student achievement was not the focus of this study, it is notable that this association was consistent throughout this part of the analysis.

### **Limitations**

The current research includes limitations that should be considered when reviewing the results. Part one of the study consisted of 213 survey participants, which yielded a return rate of 53%. However, the number of participants in some of the school counselor method categories was very low. For example, there were only three respondents in the domain category in contrast with 76 respondents in the alphabetical category. This large difference in the sample sizes made difficult to run the analysis as initially planned. As a result, the surveys were reclassified in order to have more equal sample sizes and include all survey results. This was also a limitation for part two of the study in which the low number in several categories again resulted in a reclassification in order to run the analysis with the data from all secondary schools. In addition, another limitation with respect to the sample is that all counselors surveyed and schools analyzed were from one district: Clark County School District.

Another limitation of the current research is that counselors and schools were asked what is their current method of school counselor assignment. Even though all data used in the study analysis was from the same school year, the study does not consider whether or not the method of school counseling assignment was new to a particular school or had been in place for a few or even several years. Also, the data does not show

whether the school counselor was new to the building, and therefore, the assignment method, or if the school counselor had been using the method previously. This could have skewed the results if school counselors were new to a particular assignment method and/or school because they may not have had sufficient time using the method to make a sound judgment of their perceptions. They may also have perceived a new method to be less positive if they recently switched methods, but did not want to.

In addition, the study was limited by the self-reporting of the school counselor assignment method. It became obvious after the data was collected that some school counselors did not know or understand what each of the school counselor assignment methods were. This was evident by the fact that on the SCAQ three counselors indicated that they used a domain specific assignment method. However, when collecting the data from the CCSD guidance office to show the school counseling method at each specific secondary school, there were no schools that reported using a domain specific method of assignment.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research should address the limitations of this study. Specifically, in terms of sample size, further studies should work to obtain a higher number of schools using the counselor assignment methods that are less popular or begin with a classification system including the following categories: (1) counselors who keep the same students, (2) counselors who receive new students, and (3) counselors who use a blend of these categories. Using a nationwide sample of schools rather than one school district would be one way to increase the sample sizes. Further studies should also include demographic questions pertaining to the number of years the current method of assignment has been

used in a school and the number of years a counselor has been using the current method of assignment. Finally, the classification system of school counselor assignment method should be defined and explained clearly to those participating in the study.

Some suggestions for future research in the area of school counselor assignment that involve a change in methodology include taking a qualitative approach. It may be enlightening to interview school counselors using different methods of assignment. Because perceptions are subjective and based more on feelings, an interview allowing school counselors to share their feelings in their own words might help to support the perception findings of the present study and may even make them stronger. Another method of study that may reveal stronger results would be a longitudinal study over the course of three years at the middle school level and four years at the high school level. This would allow the researcher to follow students throughout middle or high school with counselors that use a particular method of assignment throughout the students' time at that school. Different aspects of schools using different methods of assignment could then be compared such as student achievement.

Additionally, new studies could look at school counselor assignment from different perspectives. A study could be done on the self-efficacy of school counselors using different methods of school counselor assignment. In addition, a study could be done on the level of job satisfaction as it relates to counselor self-efficacy in respect to the school counselor assignment method being used. This could be taken even further by comparing a specific school counselor's level of job satisfaction and self-efficacy while using one method of school counselor assignment and then switching to another method.



Finally, an additional study could focus on the relationship between transiency rate and school counselor assignment method. Specifically, the new study should look into the reason why the relationship between the two exists. This might be especially helpful to schools with high transiency rates.

Table 1

*CCSD Secondary School Method of School Counselor Assignment*

	Grade Level-Static	Grade Level-Looping	Alphabetical	Domain	Academy/Track	Blend	Other	Total
Middle School	18	46	7	1	0	7	5	84
High School	11	7	69	2	7	31	2	129
Total	29	53	76	3	7	38	7	213

Table 2

*CCSD Secondary School Reclassification School Counselor Assignment Method*

	Keep the Same Students	Receive New Students	Blend	Total
Middle School	53	19	12	84
High School	83	13	33	129
Total	136	32	45	213

Table 3

*Perception Data of Counselor Assignment Methods for All Participants*

Our school counselor assignment ...	Counselor Assignment Method									
	Same Students			New Students			Blend			<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
A - is effective.	136	3.36	.776	32	3.09	.818	45	2.78	.876	.0001
B - encourages developing helping relationships with the students in our caseloads.	135	3.46	.770	32	3.13	.793	45	2.96	.878	.001
C - allows us to develop relationships with parents.	136	3.40	.723	32	3.03	.782	45	2.98	.783	.001
D - is helpful in delivering a well-coordinated guidance curriculum.	134	3.19	.767	32	3.00	.672	45	2.93	.809	.113
E - allows for individual student planning.	135	3.21	.767	32	2.91	.734	44	2.98	.762	.048
F - is helpful in delivering responsive services.	135	3.30	.754	31	3.16	.583	45	2.87	.842	.005
G - assignment is conducive to utilizing system supports.	135	3.28	.709	32	2.94	.669	42	2.93	.838	.005
H - allows us to be at or below 20% in system support.	115	2.83	.725	27	2.63	.839	39	2.51	.885	.065
I - allows us to serve all students equitably.	136	2.93	.900	31	2.52	.890	45	2.60	.780	.016
J - is effective for supporting school transitions.	135	3.17	.815	32	2.97	.740	44	2.80	.701	.018
K - is clear, e.g. students and parents always know which counselor they need to speak with.	136	3.20	.806	32	2.88	.907	45	2.69	.900	.001
L - allows for frequent collaboration.	136	3.12	.817	32	2.97	.822	45	2.87	.842	.181
M - takes advantage of our strengths.	134	3.00	.850	32	2.94	.840	44	2.82	.786	.455
N - creates a problem when one of our counselors is not present.	135	2.18	.836	32	2.28	.851	45	2.40	.863	.299
O - allows us to plan	134	3.02	.845	32	2.81	.693	43	2.81	.764	.202

and use our time efficiently.										
P - allows us to function as a cohesive unit.	135	3.09	.824	32	2.66	.865	45	2.76	.857	.007
Q - is conducive to using data to plan and evaluate school counseling services.	136	2.93	.840	32	2.69	.821	45	2.82	.747	.305
R - allows us to be leaders and advocates.	136	3.14	.800	32	2.91	.893	44	2.98	.762	.235

Table 4

*Perception Data of Counselor Assignment Methods for Middle School Participants Only*

Our school counselor assignment ...	Counselor Assignment Method									
	Same Students			New Students			Blend			<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
A - is effective.	53	3.40	.793	19	3.16	.765	12	2.75	.754	.034
B - encourages developing helping relationships with the students in our caseloads.	52	3.60	.664	19	3.21	.713	12	3.08	.793	.024
C - allows us to develop relationships with parents.	53	3.53	.639	19	3.00	.745	12	3.00	.603	.003
D - is helpful in delivering a well-coordinated guidance curriculum.	52	3.17	.734	19	2.95	.705	12	2.92	.669	.348
E - allows for individual student planning.	53	3.23	.697	19	2.79	.855	12	2.92	.669	.063
F - is helpful in delivering responsive services.	52	3.35	.689	18	3.28	.575	12	2.92	.669	.193
G - assignment is conducive to utilizing system supports.	53	3.32	.673	19	3.11	.567	10	2.90	.568	.115
H - allows us to be at or below 20% in system support.	49	2.78	.743	14	2.57	.938	12	2.50	.674	.441
I - allows us to serve all students equitably.	53	2.81	.921	18	2.39	.916	12	2.50	.522	.165
J - is effective for supporting school transitions.	53	3.28	.818	19	3.05	.621	12	2.75	.754	.083
K - is clear, e.g. students and parents always know which counselor they need to speak with.	53	3.26	.812	19	3.00	.667	12	2.92	.900	.253
L - allows for frequent collaboration.	53	3.06	.818	19	3.00	.667	12	3.25	.452	.645
M - takes advantage of our strengths.	53	2.81	.900	19	2.95	.780	12	2.92	.669	.807
N - creates a problem when one of our counselors is not present.	53	2.17	.802	19	1.95	.780	12	2.17	.835	.572

O - allows us to plan and use our time efficiently.	53	3.06	.745	19	2.74	.733	11	2.82	.603	.214
P - allows us to function as a cohesive unit.	53	3.09	.815	19	2.79	.713	12	2.83	.835	.281
Q - is conducive to using data to plan and evaluate school counseling services.	53	2.94	.745	19	2.63	.831	12	2.92	.515	.285
R - allows us to be leaders and advocates.	53	3.17	.700	19	2.84	.898	12	3.00	.853	.271

Table 5

*Perception Data of Counselor Assignment Methods for High School Participants Only*

Our school counselor assignment ...	Counselor Assignment Method									
	Same Students			New Students			Blend			<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
A - is effective.	83	3.34	.769	13	3.00	.913	33	2.79	.927	.005
B - encourages developing helping relationships with the students in our caseloads.	83	3.37	.822	13	3.00	.913	33	2.91	.914	.022
C - allows us to develop relationships with parents.	83	3.31	.764	13	3.08	.862	33	2.97	.847	.097
D - is helpful in delivering a well-coordinated guidance curriculum.	82	3.20	.793	13	3.08	.641	33	2.94	.864	.297
E - allows for individual student planning.	82	3.21	.813	13	3.08	.494	32	3.00	.803	.429
F - is helpful in delivering responsive services.	83	3.27	.734	13	3.00	.577	33	2.85	.906	.028
G - assignment is conducive to utilizing system supports.	82	3.26	.734	13	2.69	.751	32	2.94	.914	.020
H - allows us to be at or below 20% in system support.	66	2.88	.713	13	2.69	.751	27	2.52	.975	.135
I - allows us to serve all students equitably.	83	3.00	.883	13	2.69	.855	33	2.64	.859	.099
J - is effective for supporting school transitions.	82	3.10	.811	13	2.85	.899	32	2.81	.693	.176
K - is clear, e.g. students and parents always know which counselor they need to speak with.	83	3.16	.804	13	2.69	1.182	33	2.61	.899	.005
L - allows for frequent collaboration.	83	3.16	.819	13	2.92	1.038	33	2.73	.911	.053
M - takes advantage of our strengths.	81	3.12	.797	13	2.92	.954	32	2.78	.832	.129
N - creates a problem when one of our counselors is not present.	82	2.18	.862	13	2.77	.725	33	2.48	.870	.034
O - allows us to plan	81	3.00	.908	13	2.92	.641	32	2.81	.821	.581



and use our time efficiently.										
P - allows us to function as a cohesive unit.	82	3.09	.834	13	2.46	1.050	33	2.73	.876	.019
Q - is conducive to using data to plan and evaluate school counseling services.	83	2.92	.900	13	2.77	.832	33	2.79	.820	.709
R - allows us to be leaders and advocates.	83	3.12	.861	13	3.00	.913	32	2.97	.740	.652

Table 6

*Pearson Correlation Matrix among Middle School Reading Test Data, Per Pupil Expenditure, Transiency Rate, and Teacher Daily Average Attendance*

	PR	PPE	TR	TDAA
PR	1.000	-.589**	-.828**	.127
PPE	-.589**	1.000	.552**	.058
TR	-.828**	.552**	1.000	-.133
TDAA	.127	.058	-.133	1.000

*Note.* PR = Percent of students who meet/exceed reading standards, PPE = Per Pupil Expenditure, TR = Transiency Rate, TDAA = Teacher Daily Average Attendance.  
 \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 7

*Pearson Correlation Matrix among Middle School Math Test Data, Per Pupil Expenditure, Transiency Rate, and Teacher Daily Average Attendance*

	PM	PPE	TR	TDAA
PM	1.000	-.557**	-.843**	.158
PPE	-.557**	1.000	.552**	.058
TR	-.843**	.552**	1.000	-.133
TDAA	.158	.058	-.133	1.000

*Note.* PM = Percent of students who meet/exceed math standards, PPE = Per Pupil Expenditure, TR = Transiency Rate, TDAA = Teacher Daily Average Attendance.  
 \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 8

*Pearson Correlation Matrix among Middle School Student Daily Average Attendance, Per Pupil Expenditure, Transiency Rate, and Teacher Daily Average Attendance*

	SDAA	PPE	TR	TDAA
SDAA	1.000	-.396**	-.729**	.289*
PPE	-.396**	1.000	.552**	.058
TR	-.729**	.552**	1.000	-.133
TDAA	.289*	.058	-.133	1.000

*Note.* SDAA = Student Daily Average Attendance, PPE = Per Pupil Expenditure, TR = Transiency Rate, TDAA = Teacher Daily Average Attendance.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 9

*Pearson Correlation Matrix among High School Reading Test Data, Per Pupil Expenditure, Transiency Rate, and Teacher Daily Average Attendance*

	PR	PPE	TR	TDAA
PR	1.000	.051	-.454**	-.091
PPE	.051	1.000	-.349	-.345
TR	-.454**	-.349	1.000	.181
TDAA	-.091	-.345	.181	1.000

*Note.* PR = Percent of students who meet/exceed reading standards, PPE = Per Pupil Expenditure, TR = Transiency Rate, TDAA = Teacher Daily Average Attendance.  
 \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 10

*Pearson Correlation Matrix among High School Math Test Data, Per Pupil Expenditure, Transiency Rate, and Teacher Daily Average Attendance*

	PM	PPE	TR	TDAA
PM	1.000	.221	-.887	-.127
PPE	.221	1.000	-.349	-.345
TR	-.887	-.349	1.000	.181
TDAA	-.127	-.345	.181	1.000

*Note.* PM = Percent of students who meet/exceed math standards, PPE = Per Pupil Expenditure, TR = Transiency Rate, TDAA = Teacher Daily Average Attendance.  
 \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 11

*Pearson Correlation Matrix among High School Student Daily Average Attendance, Per Pupil Expenditure, Transiency Rate, and Teacher Daily Average Attendance*

	SDAA	PPE	TR	TDAA
SDAA	1.000	.071	-.776	-.105
PPE	.071	1.000	-.349	-.345
TR	-.776	-.349	1.000	.181
TDAA	-.105	-.345	.181	1.000

*Note.* SDAA = Student Daily Average Attendance, PPE = Per Pupil Expenditure, TR = Transiency Rate, TDAA = Teacher Daily Average Attendance.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

## Appendix A

### School Counselor Assignment Questionnaire

1. What type of school do you work in?

Middle School  
Junior High School  
High School  
Other

2. How would you classify your current school's location?

Urban  
Rural  
Suburban

3. How many core school counselors (full time with caseloads) are at your school?  
(Please do not include other support personnel)

Fill in answer

4. Approximately how many students attend your school?

Fill in answer

5. Approximately how many students are in your caseload?

Fill in answer

6. What grade levels are represented in your caseload? (List all that apply)

List answer

7. Does your school counseling department adhere to the ASCA National Model?

8. What method is used to assign counselors to students in your school?

grade level – static (counselors remain with the same grade level each year)  
grade level – looping (counselors move with their students to the next grade level  
each year)  
Alphabetical  
Domain Specific  
Academy/Track  
Blend  
Other



9. If you answered OTHER for caseload assignment, please describe:

Fill in answer

10. Please rate the following questions based on your experience under your current form of school counselor caseload assignment.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our school counselor assignment is effective.				
Our school counselor assignment encourages developing helping relationships with the students in our caseloads.				
Our school counselor assignment allows us to develop relationships with parents.				
Our school counselor assignment is helpful in delivering a well-coordinated guidance curriculum.				
Our school counselor assignment allows for individual student planning.				
Our school counselor assignment is helpful in delivering responsive services.				
Our school counselor assignment is conducive to utilizing system supports.				
Our school counselor assignment allows us to be at or below 20% in system support.				
Our school counselor assignment allows us to serve all students equitably.				

Our school counselor assignment is effective for supporting school transitions.				
Our school counselor assignment is clear, e.g. students and parents always know which counselor they need to speak with.				
Our school counselor assignment allows for frequent collaboration.				
Our school counselor assignment takes advantage of our strengths.				
Our school counselor assignment creates a problem when one of our counselors is not present.				
Our school counselor assignment allows us to plan and use our time efficiently.				
Our school counselor assignment allows us to function as a cohesive unit.				
Our school counselor assignment is conducive to using data to plan and evaluate school counseling services.				
Our school counselor assignment allows us to be leaders and advocates.				

11. What do you believe are the advantages of your current school's system of counselor assignment?

12. What do you believe are the disadvantages of your current school's system of counselor assignment?

Appendix B

Thursday, March 11, 2010 12:20 PM  
Re: School Counselor Assignment Study

From: "Jennifer Williamson" <jenjenw724@yahoo.com>  
To: "Patrick Akos" [pakos@email.unc.edu](mailto:pakos@email.unc.edu)

Thank you so much Dr. Akos for sending this to me. Do I need any special permission to use it with my dissertation study? Please let me know.  
Thank you so much!

Jennifer

Thursday, March 11, 2010 12:22 PM  
Re: School Counselor Assignment Study

From: "Patrick Akos" <[pakos@email.unc.edu](mailto:pakos@email.unc.edu)>  
To: "Jennifer Williamson" <jenjenw724@yahoo.com>

Permission is granted from me. Please do share your results with me and if you move to publish - I would be happy to help as a 2nd, 3rd author.

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### I. EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

- 2011 *Ph.D. Educational Psychology, School Counselor Education*, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. (Anticipated completion date: December, 2011).
- 1999 *M.S. Educational Psychology, School Counseling*, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.
- 1990 *B.A. English Education*, Maryville University, St. Louis, Cum Laude.

**Licensure:** Secondary English Teacher, Nevada  
Secondary School Counselor, Nevada

### II. PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

- 2007-present *High School Counselor*, Las Vegas High School. Deliver comprehensive guidance program to students at Las Vegas High School, including PAL program students.
- Spring 2008 *Part-time Instructor*, University of Nevada Las Vegas. Developed curriculum for and taught Career Theories and Practice for the Counselor Education Department, one, three-credit course.
- 2006 -2007 *PAL Counselor/Teacher*, Las Vegas High School. Delivered comprehensive guidance program to 150 students in the PAL program, taught Composition and College Survival courses.
- Spring 2007 *Part-time instructor/intern*, University of Nevada Las Vegas. Taught Counseling and Consultation Skills for Teachers for the Education Department, three one-credit courses.
- 1999-2006 *Counselor Coordinator*, Las Vegas High School. Coordinate all aspects of the counseling department, act as liaison with administration, carried a student caseload of 150 students.

- 2004            *Teaching Assistant*, University of Las Vegas, Nevada. Assisted Dr. Kelly Coker teaching Organization and Administration of School Counseling Programs
- 1996-1999      *Reading Teacher on Special Assignment*, Curriculum & Professional Development, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, NV. Developed curriculum for reading and English courses grades 7-12, developed and presented professional development workshops.
- 1992-1996      *English Teacher*, Basic High School, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, NV. Developed and taught secondary English courses for grades 9-12.

### III.      **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

American School Counselor Association  
 Nevada School Counselor Association  
 Western Association for College Admission Counseling

### IV.      **SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS AND ACTIVITIES**

#### **Journal Articles**

Vatterott, C., Tomaine, M., Mencin, J. (1993). Middle school transition: Creating new roles for teachers. *In Focus*, 3-9.

#### **Presentations**

Geismann, M., Brewer, S., & Williamosn, J. (2008, September). College counselor to university professor: Utilizing your expertise to improve graduate counseling programs. Presented at National Association For College Admission Counseling, Seattle, WA.

Hoskins, W., & Williamson, J. (2005, October). Counselor educators as change agents in the evaluation process of 21<sup>st</sup> century school counselors. Presented at The Association of Counselor Education and Supervision, Pittsburgh, PA.

Williamson, J., Kadoich, J., Boyle, K., & Clyde, C. (2006, June). School counselors as change agents in the counselor evaluation process. Presented at American School Counselor Association, Chicago, IL.

Williamson, J., Hersha, J., & Lescenski, L. (2008, February). Creating a college/career culture. Presented at Nevada School Counselor Association, Las Vegas, NV.

## V. TEACHING

### **Courses taught:**

*Career Theories & Practice*, Spring Semester, 2007, University of Nevada Las Vegas.

*Counseling and Consultation Skills for Teachers*, Spring Semester, 2007 & 2008, University of Nevada Las Vegas.

*Organization and Administration of School Counseling Programs*, Spring Semester, 2004, University of Nevada Las Vegas. Team taught course with Dr. Kelly Coker, assisted in classroom presentations, developed and taught specific lessons.

### **Courses prepared to teach:**

Introduction to School Counseling  
Organization and Administration of School Counseling Programs  
Counseling and Consultation Skills for Teachers  
Career Theories & Practice  
Counseling the College Bound Student

### **Service**

2011-2012	<i>State Conference Committee Chair</i> , Nevada School Counselor Association
2010-2011	<i>Past President</i> , Nevada School Counselor Association
2009-2010	<i>President</i> , Nevada School Counselor Association <i>State Conference Committee Chair</i> , Nevada School Counselor Association
2008-2009	<i>President-Elect</i> , Nevada School Counselor Association
2007-2010	<i>Member</i> , Clark County School District College Counseling Cadre
2007-2008	<i>Member</i> , Clark County Guidance and Counseling Program Task Force
2003-2005	<i>Member</i> , Clark County School District/University of Nevada, Las Vegas, School Counseling Advisory Board

- 2003-2005     *Member, Clark County School District Testing Advisory Committee*
- 2003-2004     *Member, Clark County School District School Counseling Program Task Force*

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