



Utah Comprehensive Counseling and Guidance Program

State Evaluation Summary

Conducted by the Center for School
Counseling Outcome Research,
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Amherst

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Utah Counseling and Guidance Programs State Evaluation Summary

Utah — along with Connecticut, Missouri, Nebraska, Rhode Island and Wisconsin — participated in a recent national study of school counseling programs conducted to answer the following questions:

- (1) Do school counseling programs in high schools contribute significantly to students' educational outcomes?
- (2) What aspects of school practice contribute the most to students' educational outcomes?
- (3) Based upon these results, how might school counseling practice be improved?

This evaluation study found evidence that school counseling programs and school counselor practices in Utah high schools contribute significantly to students' educational outcomes.

Effective school counseling programs and school counselor practices have an impact on these student outcomes:

- More students achieving math proficiency
- More students achieving reading proficiency
- Higher ACT scores
- More students taking the ACT
- Higher graduation rates (Perkins data)
- More students participating in non-traditional preparation programs

This study assesses the contribution school counseling programs make to student educational outcomes after controlling for demographic differences among schools. Actual school-level outcome data and demographic data were obtained from the Utah State Office of Education. Information on school counseling practices and programs was collected through an Internet-based survey of high school counselors and principals. The survey response rate was 57.5 percent (161) for school counselors and 26.0 percent (128) for principals. Because there was very little correspondence between counselors' and principals' views of the nature of the school counseling program, results are based on school counselor surveys only.

While the findings cannot assure that given practices are causally related to improvements in student outcomes, this evaluation model identifies practices that are likely to result in improved student outcomes.

Positive student education outcomes can be expected to result when school programs are structured so that:

- A written mission statement exists and is used as a foundation by all counselors.
- Services are organized so that all students are well served and have access to these services.
- All students receive classroom guidance lessons designed to promote academic, social/personal, and career development.
- School counselors use student performance data to decide how to meet student needs.
- School counselors analyze student data by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic level to identify interventions to close achievement gaps.
- School counselor job descriptions match actual duties, and school counselors spend at least 80 percent of their time in activities that directly benefit students.
- The school counseling program includes interventions designed to improve the school's ability to educate all students to high standards.
- School counseling priorities are represented on curriculum and education committees.
- School counselors communicate with parents to coordinate student achievement and gain feedback for program improvement.
- The school counseling program develops yearly management agreements with principals to guide program goals and activities.

The counselor-to-student ratio and length of time a Comprehensive Counseling Guidance Program (CCGP) has been in place also make a difference. Results strongly suggest that the implementation of better school counseling program delivery systems and the presence of counselor-to-student ratios that permit effective practice contribute to several important education outcomes for students.

Improved counselor-to-student ratios have an impact on these student outcomes:

- Lower discipline rates.
- Higher attendance rates.

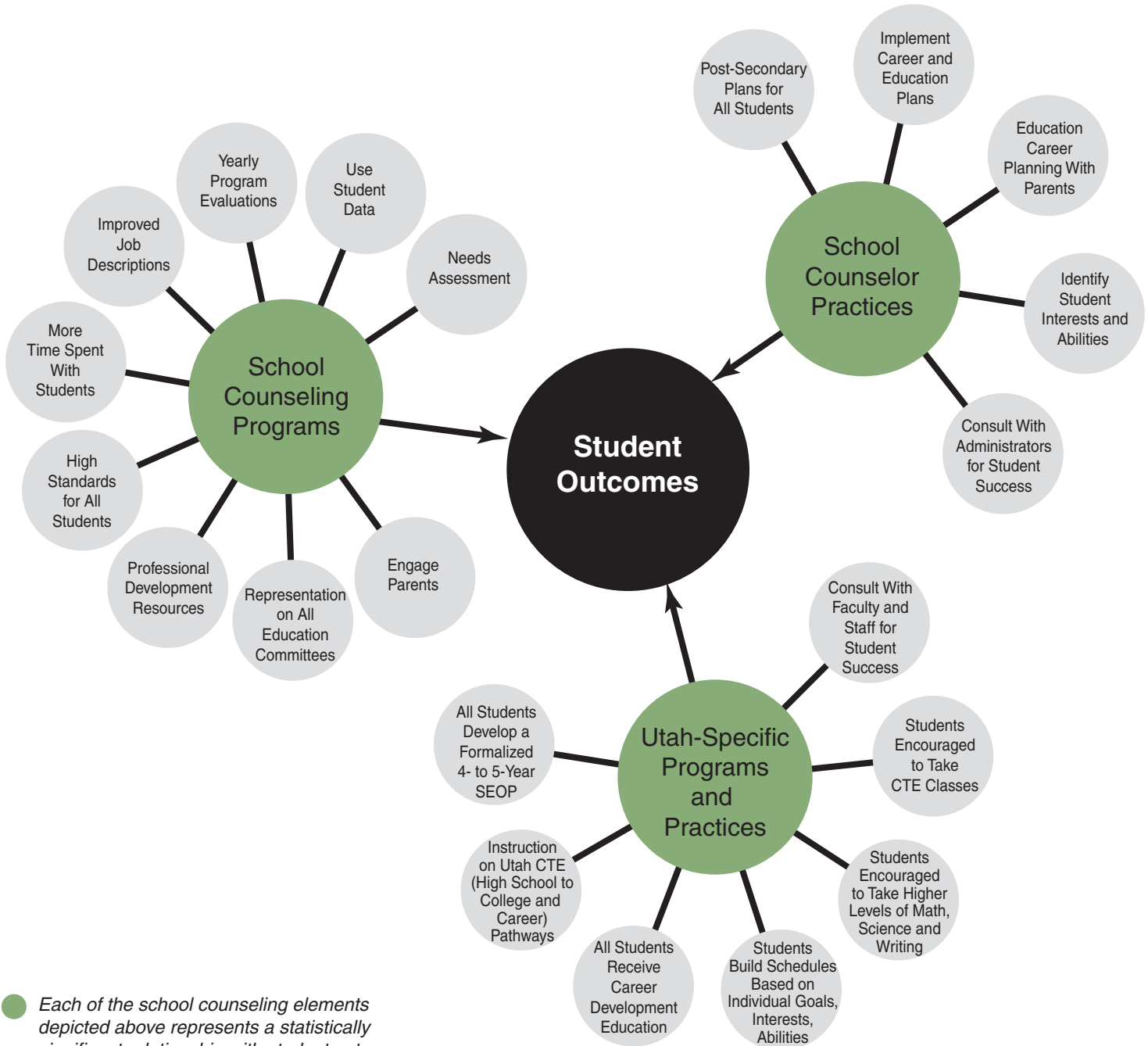
The length of time that a CCGP has been implemented has an impact on these student outcomes:

- Higher attendance rates.
- Lower suspension rates.

Improved counselor-to-student ratios was also positively associated with schools that met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Seventeen Student Outcome Measures Used in This Study

- Suspension rate
- Discipline incidence rate
- Attendance rate
- Graduation/dropout rate
- Average ACT score
- Percentage of students taking the SAT/ACT
- Percentage of students scoring proficient in math on the state standardized test
- Percentage of students scoring proficient in English on the state standardized test
- Percentage of students taking Advanced Placement courses
- Percent proficient in reading (Perkins data)
- Percent proficient in math (Perkins data)
- Percent proficient in technical skills (Perkins data)
- Percent program completion (Perkins data)
- Percent graduation (Perkins data)
- Percent placed (Perkins data)
- Nontraditional program participation rate (Perkins data)
- Nontraditional program completion rate (Perkins data)



- Each of the school counseling elements depicted above represents a statistically significant relationship with student outcomes.
- Specific items above represent factors that contribute to positive student outcomes.




The following important elements of **Comprehensive Counseling and Guidance Programs** are significantly associated with positive educational outcomes for students in Utah. Students do better when **school counselors:**

- Help all students develop a formalized four- or five-year SEOP.
- Implement a program that includes instruction on the Utah High School to College and Career Pathways.
- Persuade more students to take higher-level math, science and writing classes.
- Help students build schedules based on individual career goals.
- Implement a CCGP that helps more students develop post-secondary education and training plans.
- Encourage students to take Career and Technical Education classes.

These Typical Utah School Counselor Practices Have an Impact on the Following Student Outcomes:


- More students achieving math proficiency.
- More students achieving reading proficiency.
- Higher ACT scores.
- More students taking the ACT.
- Higher graduation rates (Perkins data).
- More students participating in non-traditional preparation programs.

Effective Utah School Counseling Practices

- Maintain open lines of **communication** with school administrators and other staff members in order to promote student success.
- Coordinate services across the **feeder system** to ensure positive student outcomes for all students in grades K-12.
- Collaborate with other state agencies in order to assure student access and effective use of Utah's **Career Information Delivery System**.

- Deliver developmental and sequential **guidance curriculum** as defined by standards in the *Utah Model*, and in accordance with the needs identified in the school assessment.
 Guidance Curriculum
- Work closely with students and their parents/guardians to accomplish the individual goal-setting and planning and to reflect that in the **SEOP**.
 Student Education Occupation Plan
- Facilitate **career exploration** to assure student awareness of the full range of post-high school education and employment opportunities.
- Ensure that students and their families are supported in the discovery of all available resources of **financial aid**.
- Use **CTE Pathways** to help students:
 - Connect their interests in high school, college and careers.
 - Understand the **sequence of courses** defined for each Pathway.
 - Choose the Pathway that **best suits individual** needs and circumstances.
 - Acquire the knowledge and skills that will lead to a **certificate or degree and/or career**.



A copy of the complete report can be found online at www.schools.utah.gov/cte/guidance.html

 Click the "Publications" link, then find the "Carey & Harrington (2010)" PDF under "Research Publications."



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