

SUPPORT FOR COUNSELORS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOLS

- WHEREAS, School counselors, psychologists, and social workers are a vital, but often overlooked part of the education system, playing key roles in supporting students in systemic ways and designing and delivering comprehensive school counseling programs that improve a range of student learning and behavioral outcomes;^{1,2} and
- WHEREAS, The roles of school counselor, psychologist, and social worker are different based on education, experience, and focus, (school psychologists primarily focus on special needs or exceptional learner subgroups, school counselors serve the entire school population, and social workers have special expertise in understanding family and community systems and linking students and families with their community) however services provided by individual school counselors, psychologists, and social workers may overlap and duties will vary from one school system to the next – and from one school to the next;^{3,4,5} and
- WHEREAS, For the past century, counselors have been hard at work performing many roles in their schools, from guiding student decision making concerning college and career readiness, helping students to address personal problems to decrease dropout rates, and collaborating with parents and other stakeholders, to other non-counseling related duties such as administering tests, teaching, and filling other;^{1 6} and
- WHEREAS, Elementary school counseling programs play an integral role in preparing students to be college and career ready and elementary school counselors provide academic, personal, social, and life skills development opportunities that are necessary for student success and life-long learning;^{7,8} and
- WHEREAS, In 2015, suicide was the leading cause of death for Utahns ages 10 to 17 and the rate of suicide among Utah youth ages 10 to 17 has been increasing since 2011;^{9,10} and
- WHEREAS Many professionals within a school help to support student’s positive mental health including social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, and other specialized instructional support personnel; these support personnel understand that students unmet mental health needs can be a significant obstacle to student academic, career and social/emotional development and can even compromise school safety; and are prepared to address barriers and to assess ways to maximize students’ in schools, communities and their family structure by directing students and parents to school and/or community resources for additional assistance through referrals that treat mental health issues (suicidal ideation, violence, abuse, depression, etc.);^{5,11,12} and
- WHEREAS, Unlike a generation ago, the majority of job openings in the next decade will require at least some postsecondary education; and experts estimate that despite high unemployment rates overall, American businesses are in need of 97 million workers for high- or middle-skill jobs, yet only 45 million Americans currently possess the necessary education and skills to qualify for these positions;^{1,13} and

WHEREAS, Counselors are uniquely positioned to help address these key gaps in education and workforce development, given their unique position within the school, which allows them to work with the whole child, supporting both academic and nonacademic needs;^{1, 13} and

WHEREAS Utah statute requires that an individual learning plan or a plan for college and career readiness be implemented for each student which recognizes the student's accomplishments; plans, monitors, and manages education and career development; and involves the students, parents, and school personnel in preparation and implementation;^{14, 15} and

WHEREAS Studies show that children have greater academic achievement, motivation, positive attitudes about self, and that the sense of control over their environment improves when their parents are involved in their education and the school counselor is the primary contact for many parents to connect with the school;^{16, 17} and

WHEREAS In 2016, Utah's average counselor to student ratio for 7th-12th grades was 1-to-350.97, and 1-to-725 when considering all public schools, kindergarten through 12th grade, making it the third from the bottom throughout the country, however the American School Counselor Association, a nongovernmental professional development organization, recommends that schools have a 1-to-250 ratio, and Utah has a 1-to-350 ratio requirement established by the State School Board in 2009;^{18, 19} now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That Utah PTA and its constituent associations be involved in local and statewide efforts to educate parents, teachers, administrators and policy makers including school board members, to understand the need for and benefit of counseling programs in both secondary and elementary schools, and be it further

Resolved, That Utah PTA and its constituent associations work to fully implement the use of quality College and Career Readiness plans in its secondary and elementary schools, and be it further

Resolved, That Utah PTA provide training to local PTA leaders and parents on the importance of partnering with school counselors, psychologists and social workers in recognizing mental health concerns in students and increasing family involvement in guiding the student through their educational plan, especially in areas of academic planning for college and career readiness, college affordability, and the college and career admission processes and be it further

Resolved, That Utah PTA actively advocate for funding to effectively train school counselors, psychologists, and social workers in trauma informed practices, how to implement awareness programs, and to recognize danger signals and to make appropriate referrals of children who are at risk for suicide and mental health issues, and be it further

Resolved, That Utah PTA and its constituent associations actively advocate for increased funding for additional trained counselors, psychologists, and social workers to assist and educate families and youth in both elementary and secondary schools participating in the public school system.

(This Resolution updates and replaces EDU 1990-7 Trained Professionals, EDU 2001-1 Elementary Counseling and Guidance Programs, and EDU 2013-2 Education Planning: SEP, SEOP and FEP).

Documentation

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