2021 Legislative Report
Colorado School Counselor Corps
Grant Program

Submitted to:
House Education Committee
Senate Education Committee
State Board of Education

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Executive Summary

The School Counselor Corps Grant Program (SCCGP) became law in 2008 (C.R.S. 22-91-101, et seq.) and was updated in 2014 via Senate Bill 14-150, and again in 2019 via House Bill 19-1187, to increase the availability of effective, school-based counseling within secondary schools. The purpose of SCCGP is to increase the state graduation rate and increase the percentage of students who are appropriately prepared for, apply to, and continue into postsecondary education. SCCGP allocates funding for a four-year grant cycle as allocations are available from the Colorado General Assembly. This report describes SCCGP Cohort 6 and the outcomes this cohort has achieved from one development year, July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017 (partial funding) and three implementation years, July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2020 (full funding).

SCCGP Cohort 6

A goal of SCCGP is to prioritize schools serving highly diverse and economically challenged students. The program continued to reach this goal with Cohort 6 grantees. As a snapshot, in the 2019-20 school year alone, the final school year under examination in this report, Cohort 6 enrolled 28,681 students, 56 percent identifying as students of color, 47 percent qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, and 12 percent identified as mobile. The percentages of students with these characteristics are all significantly higher than the state averages, which include 47 percent identifying as students of color, 41 percent qualifying as free or reduced-price lunch, and seven percent identified as mobile. Cohort 6 includes 19 high schools, 15 middle schools, and 3 undivided secondary schools. Eight of the 37 funded schools are designated Alternative Education Campuses (AECs), which enroll 1,795 students, or 6 percent of the Cohort 6 student count.

> **Percentage of Vulnerable Students in SCCGP Cohort 6 Schools Is Higher than the State Average (2019-20)**
>
> 47% (grantees) vs. 41% (state) qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch
>
> 56% (grantees) vs. 47% (state) identifying as students of color

SCCGP Cohort 6, Program Outcomes[1]

SCCGP Cohort 6 schools have seen meaningful improvement in cultivating students' postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR).

Non-AEC SCCGP Cohort 6 schools increased their four-year graduation rate by 5.4 percentage points while the state's non-AEC schools increased by 3.2 percentage points over the three years. SCCGP funding helped close the gap between Cohort 6 non-AEC schools' and the state non-AEC schools' dropout rate, from a .5 to a .3 percentage point difference.

When compared to the state, FAFSA completion rates for SCCGP Cohort 6 schools started out with higher rates. The difference increased during the first two years of full SCCGP funding; however, in the third year, when COVID-19 struck, the Cohort's rate fell dramatically, although still nearly five percentage points higher than the state's average.

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[1] Analyses of the AECs are kept separate in this report from analyses of traditional schools because of AECs unique contexts and student populations. See the Evaluation Approach, p. 6, for more details.

Cohort 6 high schools started out nearly two percentage points above the state's matriculation rate. With the first year of full funding, the Cohort saw 24 fewer students matriculating as compared to the prior year. With the second year of full funding, the Cohort rebounded to slightly higher than their pre-full funding rate.[2]

Cohort 6 AECs are also seeing gains. Their six-year completion rate increased 11.5 percentage points from 2017 to 2020 while the state AEC six-year completion rate increased 3.6 percentage points. The dropout rate for the cohort decreased nearly four percentage points whereas the state's decreased slightly more than three percentage points.

All Cohort 6 schools increased their students' concurrent enrollment, except for one AEC that does not yet participate in concurrent enrollment. They collectively increased participation by forty-one percent over the funding cycle.

SCCGP funded schools hired the equivalent of nearly 40 full-time, certified school counselors, bringing the schools' average student-to-counselor ratio down to 227:1, below the American School Counselors Association's recommendation of 250:1. These counselors were able to support their schools in implementing higher quality programs as determined by self-reported scores on implementation of the various aspects of the American School Counselor Association model. SCCGP funded schools were able to engage team members in 5,900 hours of professional development, enroll more than 12,3000 students in CTE courses, and engage approximately 4,425 students in college visits each year, prior to COVID-19 restrictions being in place for their final spring semester of funding.

Conclusion

SCCGP Cohort 6 has seen meaningful improvement in their students' postsecondary and workforce readiness, as measured by the overall growth in their graduation, completion, dropout, and concurrent enrollment rates. SCCGP school counselors and the programming that school counselors implemented using grant funds contributed to the Cohort's accomplishments.

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[2] Note that matriculation data is delayed a year; thus, it lacks the final year of analysis at this time.

Introduction

House Bill 08-1370 established the School Counselor Corps Grant Program (C.R.S. 22-91-101, et seq.) This statute has been updated twice via Senate Bill 14-150 and House Bill 19-1187. The Colorado State Board of Education promulgated rules (1 CCR 301-74) for program implementation which include the timeline for submitting applications to the Colorado Department of Education, the form of the grant application, criteria for awarding grants, and information to be included in the department's program report.

Purpose of the Program

The purpose of the School Counselor Corps Grant Program (SCCGP) is to increase the availability of effective school-based counseling within secondary schools with a focus on postsecondary preparation. SCCGP was created to increase the graduation rate and increase the percentage of students who successfully prepare for, apply to, and continue into postsecondary education. By focusing on the role of school counselors in increasing postsecondary and workforce readiness and ensuring timely high school graduation, this program seeks to enhance student outcomes. In 2007, prior to the legislation that established the SCCGP, the statewide graduation rate was 75 percent, which included all students graduating in four years or more. Thus, a high percentage of students were not graduating. Timely monitoring and interventions were needed to decrease the number of students who dropped out and increase the number of students who graduated.[3] SCCGP was created to support school counselors in implementing these strategies.

Role of the School Counselor Corps Advisory Board

The School Counselor Corps Advisory Board, established in C.R.S. 22-91-104.5, meets quarterly to assist the department in providing ongoing support to the funded sites in the form of professional development, mentoring, site visits, and technical assistance. See Appendix A for a listing of School Counselor Corps Advisory Board members.

Program Design

The first three cohorts of the SCCGP received three years of funding for implementation. Through data analysis and consultation with counselors in these earlier cohorts, program planning challenges were identified. Thus, the program design shifted to address these challenges through a statutory change from S.B. 14-150. Beginning with the 2014-15 school year (Cohort 4), the grant structure changed to provide four years of funding, with a smaller funding level in the first year for development and larger grants for the three remaining years. The development year allows grantees time and support to complete an environmental scan, a comprehensive needs assessment, goal setting activities and other best practices recommended by the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) to ensure subsequent grant funds will be used effectively. In addition, beginning with Cohort 4, CDE staff began offering structured trainings and a series of webinars each year to support grantees with a consistent model to use in designing their comprehensive school counseling programs. The second, third, and fourth years of grant funding supports the implementation of grantees' comprehensive school counselor programming plans, including the hiring of certified school counselors, the purchase or development of curricula or postsecondary planning programs, and/or college visits.

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[3] White, S.W., and Kelly, D.F. (2010). The School Counselor's Role in School Dropout Prevention. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 88*, 227-235.

Evaluation Approach

Data Collection & Analysis

A variety of data sources were utilized for this report. Wherever possible, the report relies on data that has been validated by a third-party, such as the National Student Clearinghouse or U.S. Department of Education. When these types of data were unavailable, state-collected data were utilized. Additionally, grantees and schools submitted a year-end annual report during the spring semester to provide information about program implementation. As SCCGP expands, more schools have received these funds, thus limiting the ability to identify comparison schools. Therefore, Cohort 6 analysis examines trends within the cohort as compared to state averages. See Appendix B for more details about data sources.

Alternative Education Campuses' (AECs) outcomes are analyzed separately because of their students' unique circumstances and challenges along with their unique postsecondary and workforce readiness goals and timelines. Recent analysis by CDE found that, although AECs comprise only 2 percent of the state's student population, AECs enroll students who have been historically and systemically afforded fewer opportunities for their success. For example, students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch make up 62 percent of AECs' student body whereas the state comprises 40 percent. Similarly, students of color comprise 64 percent of AECs' student body whereas the state comprises 46 percent. Because of the unique ways AECs aim to address student needs, AEC outcomes are separate from non-AEC outcomes.

Description of SCCGP for Cohort 6

Grant Application Process

The Request for Proposals (RFPs) are announced in the spring prior to the Colorado General Assembly making final appropriations for the program in order to allow eligible education providers time to prepare their application to the program. Based on lessons learned from the initial cohorts, since 2014-15 (the first year for Cohort 4), SCCGP funds begin with partial funding for a development year prior to being fully funded for three years of implementation. Since the 2014-15 school year, SCCGP has been appropriated $10,000,000 annually to distribute to grantees for implementing postsecondary success supports.

The SCCGP statute defines an eligible education provider as:
- A school district (on behalf of one or more secondary schools);
- A Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES);
- A charter school authorized by a local school board; or
- A charter school authorized by the Charter School Institute.

Priority was given to applicants that served:
- Secondary schools at which the dropout rate exceeded the statewide average;
- Secondary schools with a percentage of students who were eligible for Free or Reduced-Priced Lunch exceeding the statewide average; and/or
- Secondary schools with postsecondary remediation rates that exceeded the statewide average.

Allowable activities include secondary school counselor salaries and benefits; postsecondary preparatory services; professional development; and program development. The RFP included a rubric that detailed criteria that a proposal would be measured against and included sections on: 1) a quality plan; 2) partnerships; 3) postsecondary activities; and 4) a budget narrative.

The SCCGP distributed $510,480 to Cohort 6 for program development in 2016-2017 and then provided Cohort 6 $2,929,000 for 2017-18, $2,850,000 for 2018-19, and $2,840,000 for 2019-20 for full implementation.

Description of Cohorts 6 Grantees

SCCGP Cohort 6 included ten grantees and 37 schools that represent a wide range of schools serving a diverse student population with regard to secondary school type, student count, mobility rates, geographic region, ethnicity, and free and/or reduced lunch qualified students. Demographic data highlights Cohort 6's 2019-20 student body for ease of presentation.

Types of Secondary Schools: SCCGP Cohort 6 included 19 high schools, 15 middle schools, and 3 undivided secondary schools. See Table 1. Eight of the 37 funded schools are designated Alternative Education Campuses (AEC).

**TABLE 1: SCCGP Cohort 6 Grantees and Types of Schools Funded**

Districts	High	Middle	Undivided Middle & High	Total
Adams 12 Five Star Schools	5	0	0	5
Boulder Valley School District	0	0	1	1
Canon City Schools	1	3	0	4
Denver Public Schools	4	1	0	5
Durango School District	2	2	0	4
Englewood Schools	1	0	0	1
Greeley-Evans School District	3	4	1	8
Jeffco Public Schools	1	3	1	5
Park County School District	1	1	0	2
South Routt School District	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	19	15	3	37

Geographic Location: As illustrated through yellow highlights in Map 1, SCCGP Cohort 6 grantees are located across Colorado. Map 2 illustrates where SCCGP funding has been distributed throughout the program's existence.

**MAP 1: SCCGP Cohort 6 Grantee Locations**
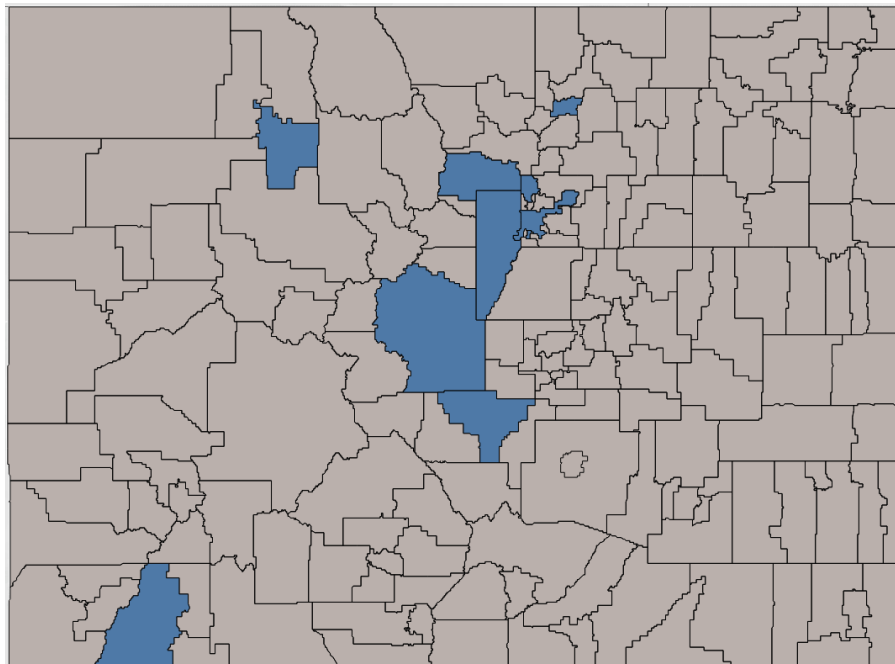
MAP 2: SCCGP Grantee Locations, 2009-21
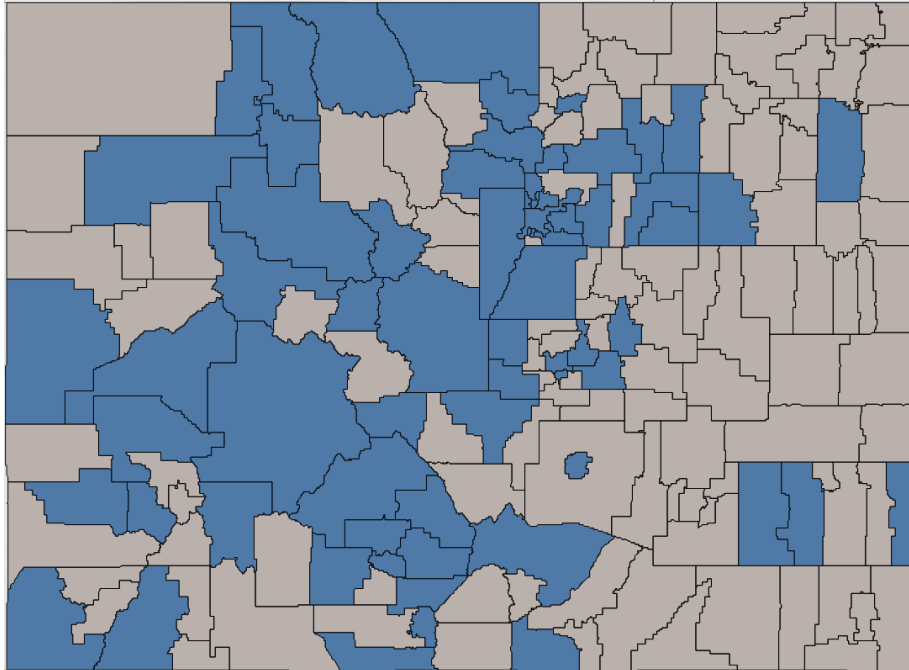
Student Count: Pupil membership data based on the October count is utilized to determine the number of students impacted by SCCGP funding for implementation. At the time of the 2019 October count, SCCGP Cohort 6 reached 28,681 students; and 1,795, or 6 percent, were enrolled in AECs (compared to the 2 percent of the state student count).

Ethnicity: The students served in SCCGP Cohort 6 schools were from highly diverse ethnic backgrounds. As of the 2019 October count, 56 percent of SCCGP Cohort 6 students identified as a student of color as compared to 47 percent of students statewide. The following chart depicts the ethnicities of students enrolled in SCCGP Cohort 6 schools.

CHART 1: Students' Ethnicity in SCCGP Cohort 6 Schools, 2019-20
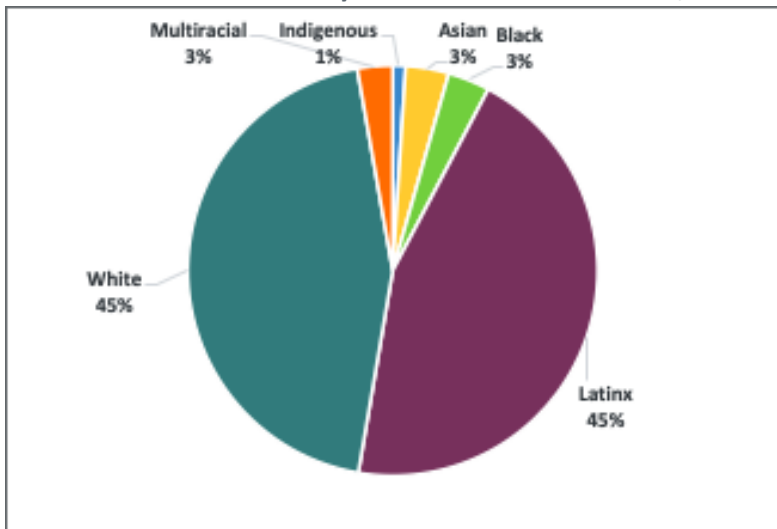
Free or Reduced-priced Lunch: The number of students qualifying for free or reduced-priced lunch is the standard proxy for students' socioeconomic status. As such, one of SCCGP's eligibility requirements is that the schools serve a high percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced-priced lunch. The 2019 October count data show that SCCGP funds continued to reach a high percentage of students from low-income backgrounds as 47 percent of students in Cohort 6 schools were eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch whereas only 41 percent of students statewide were eligible.

CHART 2: SCCGP Cohort 6 Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced-Priced Lunch, 2019-20
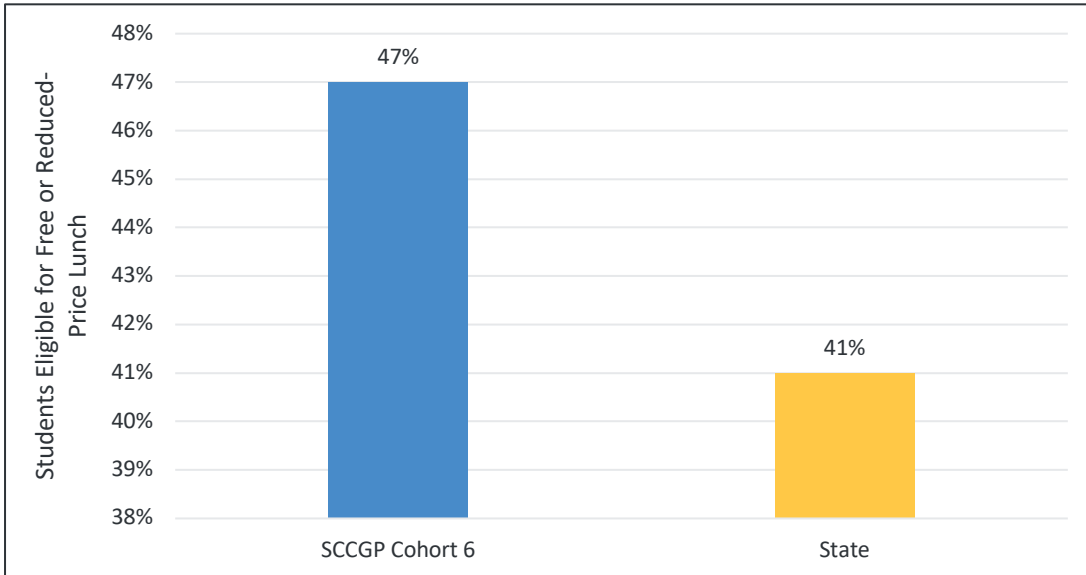
Mobility Rate: The mobility rate calculation timeframe was modified in the 2017-2018 school year so that only entries and exits that occur from the October Count date to the end of the school year are included in the calculation. Students must have a gap in attendance of more than 10 days for a move to be considered mobile. In 2019-20, Cohort 6 schools had significantly higher student mobility rates than the state, 12 percent compared to 7 percent.

CHART 3: SCCGP Cohort 6 Student Mobility Rate, 2019-20
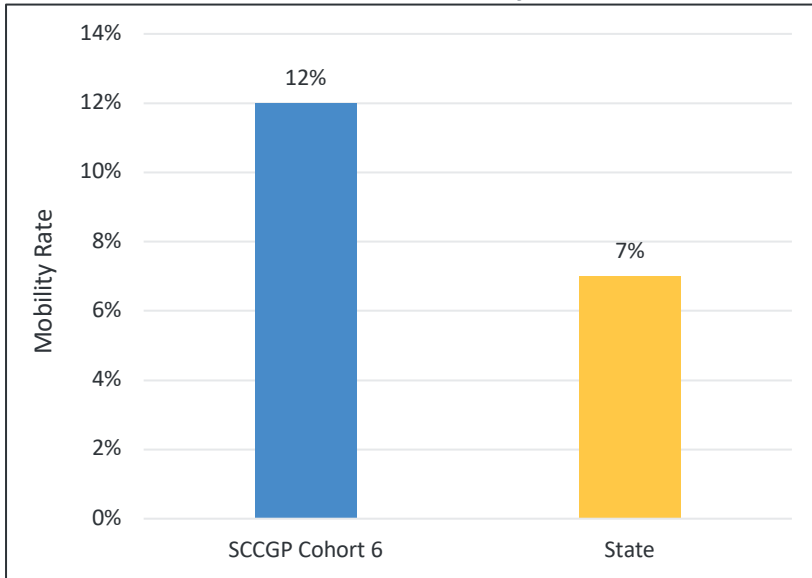
SCCGP Cohort 6 Outcomes

Per C.R.S. 22-7-1008, a description of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) was jointly adopted by the Colorado State Board of Education and Colorado Commission of Higher Education in 2015. PWR describes "the knowledge and skills (competencies) needed to succeed in postsecondary settings and to advance in career pathways as lifelong learners and contributing citizens." Districts measure PWR in a variety of ways, including whether students demonstrate the required life skills for success after high school, are on-track to four-year graduation, and have work experience and/or college credit. This report highlights baseline data from the initial development year of the SCCGP and final outcomes after three years of SCCGP implementation for the following indicators:

- Graduation and completion rates;
- Dropout rate;
- Concurrent enrollment participation;
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion; and
- Matriculation rate.

Graduation and Completion Rates

SCCGP aims to increase grantees' graduation and completion rates. Four-year graduation is defined as those students who graduate from high school four years after entering ninth grade. This metric is most appropriate for traditional, comprehensive high schools. For AECs, the six-year completion rate has been found to be most illustrative of whether the school attained postsecondary and workforce readiness goals, as most students enter an AEC off track to graduation and require an individualized plan for high school completion that often requires additional time in school. The six-year completion rate includes not only those who graduated, but also those who successfully completed a non-diploma certificate or High School Equivalency within the first six years after entering ninth grade. Thus, the AEC analysis begins with students who entered into high school in 2012 to capture those who are on longer high school completion schedules.

Cohort 6 included fourteen non-AEC comprehensive high schools. Prior to receiving full SCCGP funding, the Cohort's Class of 2017 four-year graduation rate was nearly one percentage point below the state average for students not enrolled in AECs. While both the Cohort and the state's rate increased with the Class of 2018, the Cohort's rate increased at almost double the rate, surpassing the state by .6 percentage points. By the end of the grant cycle, the Cohort increased their graduation rate by 4.5 percentage points.

CHART 4: Four-Year Graduation Rates for Non-AEC SCCGP Cohort 6 Schools and the State, Class of 2017-20
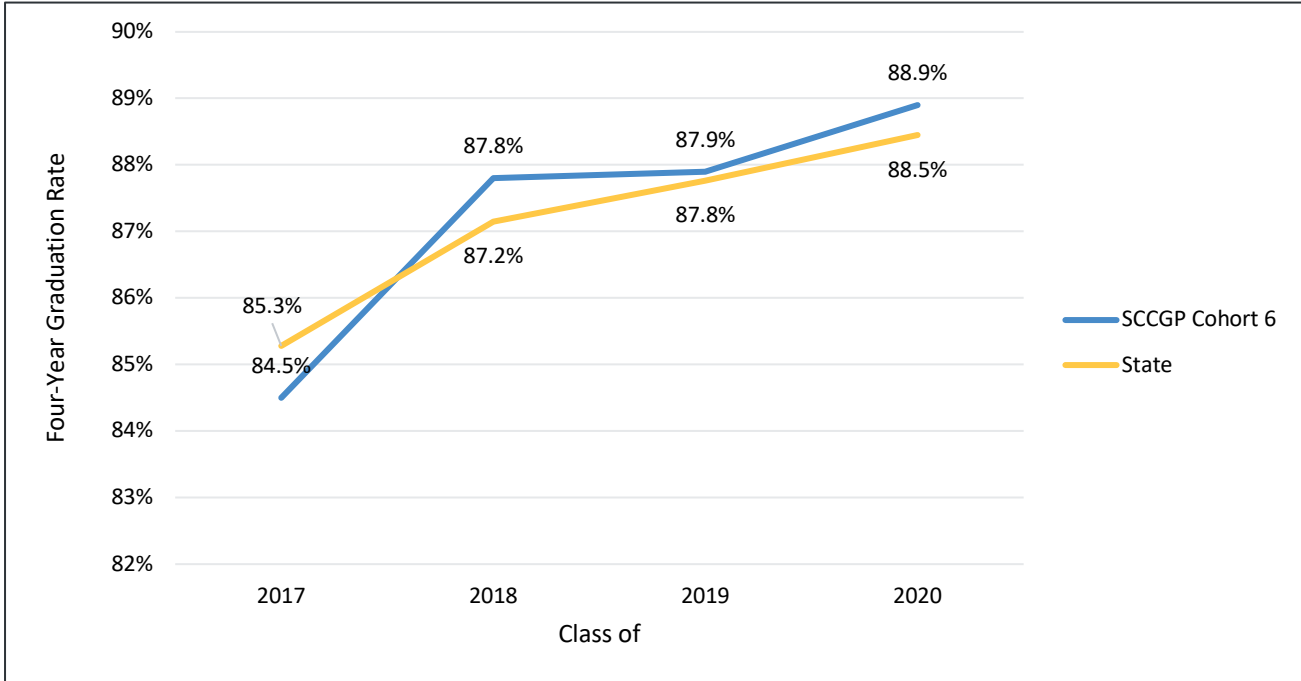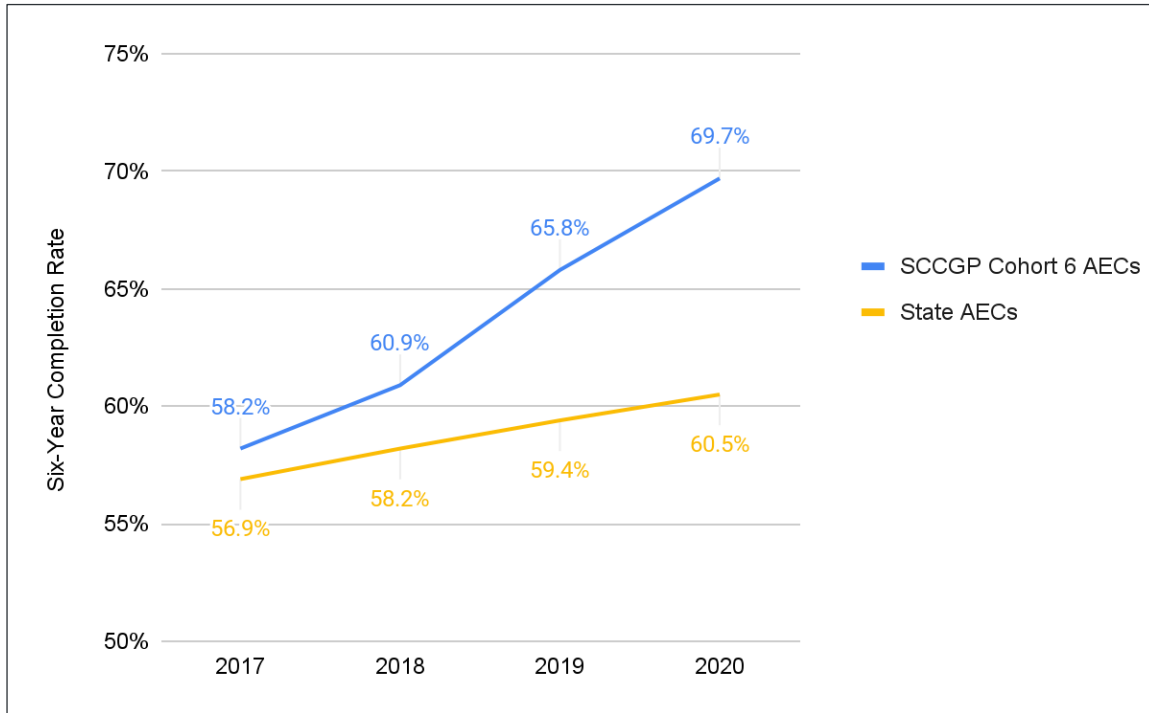

Note: Full funding for Cohort 6 began with the Class of 2018.

SCCGP-funded AECs are also seeing gains. From 2017 to 2020, Cohort 6 AECs' six-year completion rate increased 11.5 percentage points whereas the state AEC six-year completion rate increased approximately one third of the that, slightly more than 3.5 percentage points. The Cohort's AECs' positive gains are profound when compared to the state AECs' gain.

CHART 5: Six-Year Completion Rates for SCCGP Cohort 6 AECs and the State AECs, Years 2017-20

Note: Full funding for Cohort 6 began with the Year 2018.
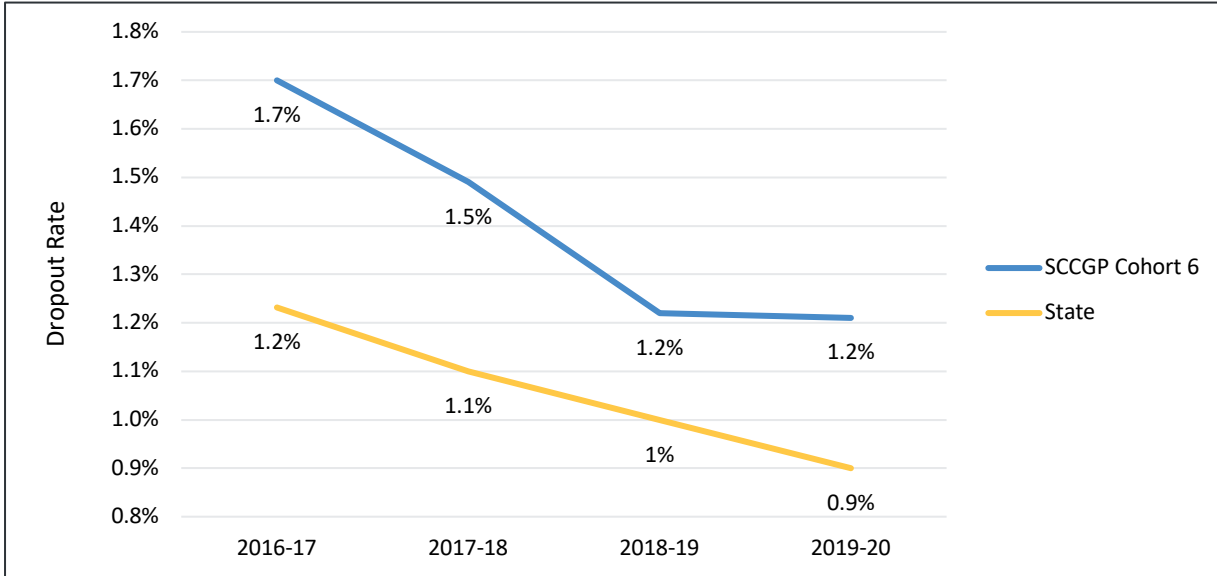
Dropout Rates

SCCGP funded schools saw gains with their rates of students staying in school. Cohort 6 started out with a half of a percentage point higher dropout rate than the state for non-AEC schools. Cohort 6 schools' rate dropped at a greater pace than the state's rate, reducing the gap to .3 percentage points. It has leveled out in the last year. See Chart 6.

CHART 6: Dropout Rates for SCCGP Cohort 6 Non-AEC Schools and the State, 2016-17 through 2019-20

Note: Full funding for Cohort 6 began in 2017-18.

Cohort 6 AECs saw a decrease in their dropout rates over the funding cycle as well. Although the cohort did start out more than four percentage points below the state rate, they ended close to five points below the state's average. Both were improving at similar rates, and when the state's rate slowed in the final year, the Cohort 6 AECs continued to have a similar rate of improvement as in the prior years. See Chart 7.

CHART 7: Dropout Rates for SCCGP Cohort 6 AECs, 2016-17 through 2019-20
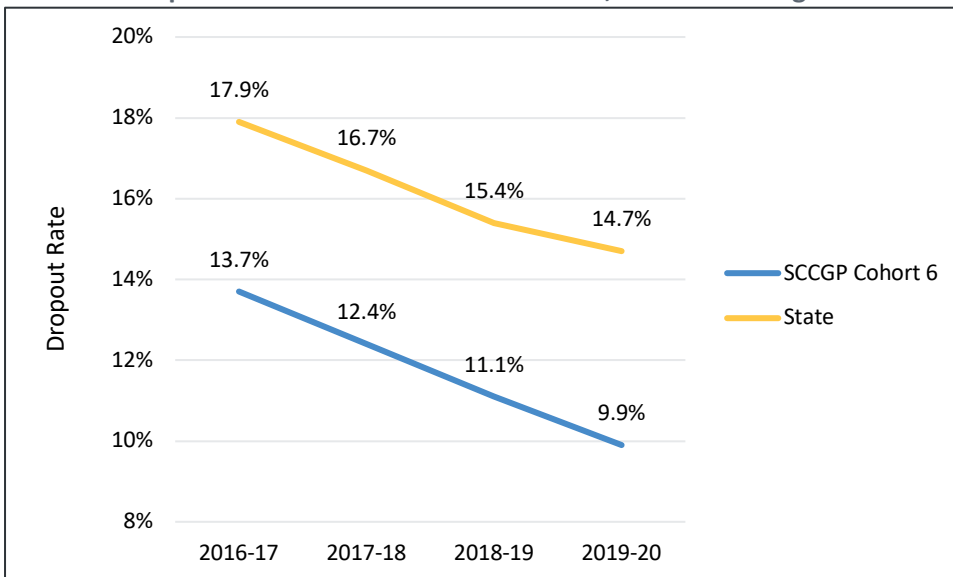
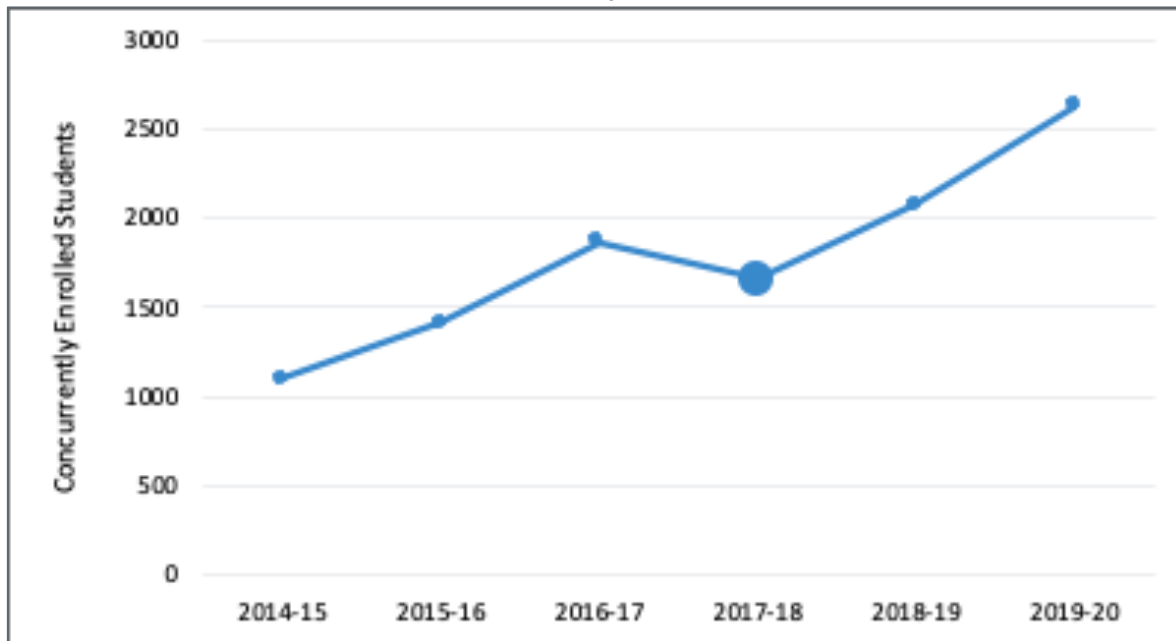*Note: Full funding for Cohort 6 began in 2017-18.*

Concurrent Enrollment

Beginning in 2012, per C.R.S 22-35-122, the Colorado Department of Higher Education, in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education, has authored an annual report on concurrent enrollment and other programs that offer college credit for high school students.[4] "Concurrent Enrollment" is the "simultaneous enrollment of a qualified student in a local education provider and in one or more postsecondary courses, including academic or career and technical education courses, which may include coursework related to apprenticeship programs or internship programs, at an institution of higher education" as detailed in C.R.S. 22-35-103 (revised by S.B.19-176).

Four funded schools began their concurrent enrollment programs during or after the SCCGP development year, which includes two AECs. Over the course of their SCCGP funding cycle, Cohort 6 grew their number of students concurrently enrolled in postsecondary courses. The following graph depicts Cohorts 6's growth over time with the large dot representing when full funding began, including the hiring of a school counselor. From 2015-16 to 2019-20, Cohort 6 increased their student participation in concurrent enrollment by eighty-six percent whereas the state increased student participation by forty-four percent. See Chart 8. Note that the state numbers are excluded because of differences in sample size compared to the cohort.

CHART 8: SCCGP Cohort 6 Schools' Student Participation in Concurrent Enrollment, 2014-15 through 2019-20

Note: Full funding for Cohort 6 began in 2017-18.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Nationally, research suggests that 90 percent of high school graduates who complete the FAFSA during their senior year of high school enroll in college within 12 months.[5] Thus, the Colorado legislature passed H.B. 19-1187 to allocate $250,000 for FAFSA-related activities to support the implementation of this best practice. The

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[4] Colorado Department of Higher Education & Colorado Department of Education. Annual Reports on Concurrent Enrollment can be retrieved at www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/concurrentenrollment

[5] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002/06).

Colorado Department of Higher Education began collecting, validating, and reporting school-level data on seniors completing FAFSAs for the Class of 2012. See https://fafsa.highered.colorado.gov. Note that FAFSA labels these data in terms of the college freshman class. The following analysis will maintain the referencing used throughout this report with the year reflecting the high school class; therefore, the FAFSA 2017-18 data is applicable to the graduating class of 2017.

Cohort 6 started out with higher rates of FAFSA completion as compared to the state. The difference increased during the first two years of full SCCGP funding; however, in the third year, when COVID-19 struck in the spring of 2020, the Cohort decreased more than the state average, both well below previous averages. See Chart 9 below.

Chart 9: SCCGP Cohort 6 Non-AEC High School Seniors' FAFSA Completion Rates, Class of 2017-20
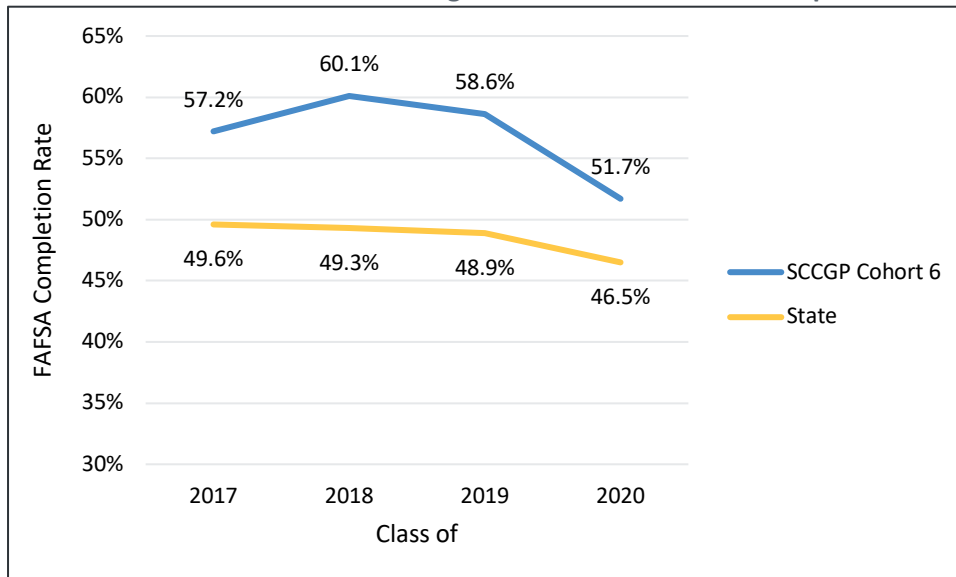
Note: Full funding began for SCCGP Cohort 6 with the Class of 2018.

Matriculation Rates

The matriculation rate reflects the percent of students who enroll in a two-year, four-year or career and technical education program in the fall after graduation. Cohort 6 non-AEC schools started out nearly two percentage points above the state's matriculation rate. With the first year of full funding, the Cohort saw 24 fewer students matriculating. With the second year of funding, the Cohort rebounded to slightly higher than their pre-full funding rate. The following chart shows the gains SCCGP-funded schools made, thus far, in supporting their students' matriculation compared to the statewide rate.

Chart 10: SCCGP Cohort 6 Non-AEC High School Matriculation Rates, Class of 2017-19
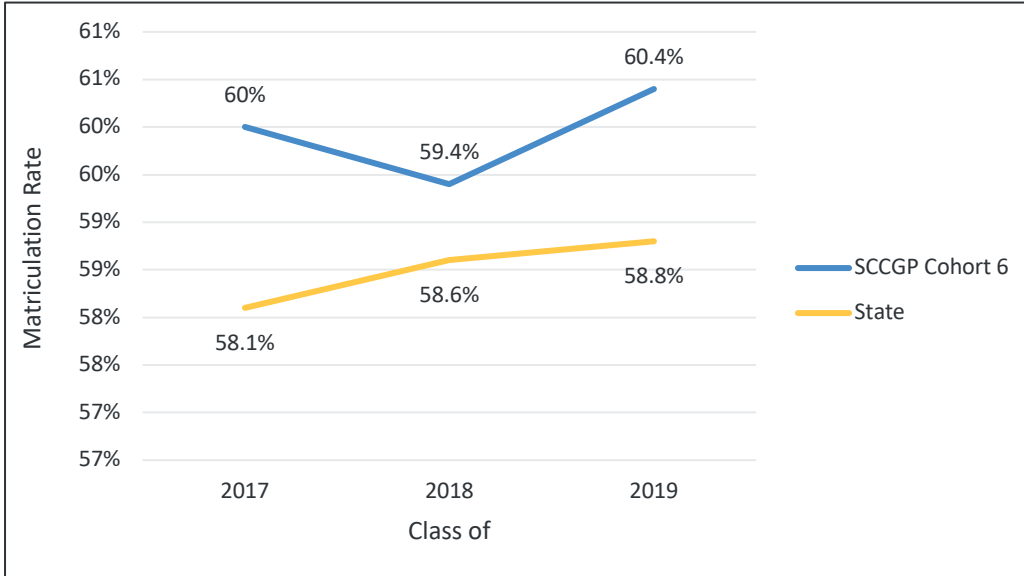
Note: Full SCCGP funding began with the Class of 2018.

SCCGP Cohort 6 Final Program Development Outcomes

Grantees (the administrative office of the local education provider) and funded schools were required to complete end-of-year reports, which were designed to examine grantee and schools' progress toward meeting their identified goals, professional development, ICAP implementation, student-to-counselor ratios, ASCA Model implementation, and student participation in career and technical education and college visits. The following analysis reflects the progress, outputs, and outcomes for Cohort 6 grantees' and schools' three years of SCCGP implementation funding.

Grantees' Progress toward Reaching Their Goals

For the final grant report, grantees reflected on the two to four goals they identified during the development year. In this final year of implementation, grantees self-reported meeting or exceeding 37 percent of the performance measures that they had identified for their goals. Each grantee noted the impacts of COVID-19 debilitating their ability to achieve their outcomes because of the shortened in-person school year.

Out of 19 self-reported goals, one grantee reported exceeding their goals in increasing postsecondary applications submitted because of their ability to require a Senior Seminar twice a week where the counselor could assist seniors with their planning. One grantee that met their SAT improvement goal attributed their success to having their Junior class participate in SAT prep through Khan Academy every Wednesday during their Impact time and supporting Juniors in visiting college campuses, which "motivated students to reach their highest potential SAT score in order to receive scholarship money for the college of their choice."

The one grantee that reported not making progress on their goal of improving postsecondary planning, culture and capacity due to multiple staff members leaving as a result of burnout with an intense start of the 2019-20 school year, including a significant increase in suicide risk assessments and child protective service reports. The new counselor was hired only three weeks prior to COVID-19 school closures.

Schools' Progress toward Reaching Their Goals

Thirty-five of the 37 funded schools reported their progress on a total of 102 goals. Schools self-reported meeting or exceeding 28 percent of those 102 goals, noting COVID-19 has a debilitating factor as postsecondary preparation classes, field trips, and events were canceled. Goals that schools experienced success with despite COVID-19 challenges included:
- Increased school engagement (7);
- Increased self-management and social skills, ICAP completion, getting/staying on-track for graduation, and improved postsecondary planning, culture and capacity (4); and
- Increased career awareness (3).

When schools were asked about positive circumstances that supported their ability to make progress, two schools that were meeting or exceeding their goals shared the following:

> *"The opportunity to meet with 95% of our freshman and provide information on graduation requirements, graduation status, resources and supports as they transition to high school [made a difference]. When appropriate we met with students and parents to discuss options and resources for academic support and credit recovery options. We evaluated transcripts twice a year to ensure that we are targeting the right students and creating awareness to students on their graduation status. Reviewed and encouraged postsecondary planning as motivation to finish school and earn a diploma."*

"Our Junior class participated in SAT prep on Khan Academy every Wednesday during their Impact time and had more buy-in this year as this was implemented in the previous years. Teachers also provided a new SAT question every week in their classes. I provided counseling support with study skills, time management and self-motivation. Juniors visiting college campuses also motivated students to reach their highest potential SAT score in order to receive scholarship money for the college of their choice."

Professional Development

In the final year of implementation, Cohort 6 SCCGP recipients indicated that secondary school counselors and team members attended nearly 5,900 hours of PWR professional development. Thirty-six school professionals from Cohort 6 attended the Colorado School Counselor Association (CSCA) Annual Conference and four attended the ASCA Annual Conference remotely. Other trainings grantees' staff attended included:

- National Financial Aid Conference and FAFSA trainings;
- Choice Theory; and
- CDE-sponsored school counselor workshops, institutes, and trainings.

Grantees shared the value of these professional development opportunities on their work and their impact on their programs, schools and students. The following quotes illustrate the value of engaging and cultivating leadership, providing facilitated time for teams to work on data, planning, and teaming, as well as learning from other schools and districts:

"We were able to use SCCG funds to support continued [professional development] focused on systems development across district schools. This training has supported the development of more aligned and consistent systems of support and is highly connected with developing more robust interventions that support the development of student self-management skills."

"Counselors worked across schools and then with their school teams to examine data and make plans for Tier II interventions. Teams also completed a task in Naviance."

"At the All County Counselor Training, counselors are both inspired to more strongly operate within the ASCA National Model AND are given practical, ready to use tools, with regard to the effectiveness of their work. Team time is built in so that counseling teams can build better understanding together as they collaborate in proactively planning their programming for the following year. Teams are also learning from and connecting with their colleagues who are paving the way in following the ASCA National Model. It is the one opportunity that all district counselors are invited to attend together, given resources and time to plan forward."

"Counselors trained at Bollman Technical Education Center and got a tour of the building, in addition to becoming much more familiar with CTE pathways and certificates offered to students. Counselors experienced two hands-on workshops, led by CTE teachers, to better familiarize themselves with the programming."

Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) Implementation

ICAP is a multi-year process that intentionally guides students and families in the exploration of career, academic and postsecondary opportunities. With the support of adults, students develop the awareness, knowledge, attitudes and skills to create their own meaningful and "PoWeRful" pathways to be postsecondary and workforce ready. The ICAP is used to help establish personalized academic and career goals, explore

postsecondary career and educational opportunities, align coursework and curriculum, apply to postsecondary institutions, secure financial aid, and enter the workforce with a living wage job. The State Board of Education promulgated rules for ICAPs pursuant to S.B. 09-256:

> *Effective September 30, 2011, each school counselor or school administrator shall ensure that every student in grades nine through twelve and their parents or legal guardians has access to and assistance in the development of an ICAP* (1 CCR 301-81, rule 2.02 (1)(d)).

Grantees' comments illustrate how the grant supported them in meeting this requirement with high quality and systemic integration:

> *"We have an ongoing process. It is continuous and we reflect on the student's ICAP throughout their school career. We have also created opportunities for students to learn about postsecondary opportunities so that their ideas can come to life."*

> *"School counselors deliver ICAP lessons throughout the year to all students 6-12th grade. [A web-based] tool is used for ICAP content exploration and the survey collection is through Student Portal. All of the K-12 lessons and supports are available and updated regularly. Due to COVID-19, the lessons are also recorded for students to utilize at their convenience. Additionally, there are large scale events like the 9th Grade Career Fair that are provided to students. School sites also provide events to students and parents to help with school knowledge, counseling knowledge, and postsecondary knowledge."*

> *"Students in our district have the opportunity to interact with career professionals through career fairs and internship opportunities. Thanks for the School Counselor Corp Grant, we have manageable ratios of students to school counseling department staff in each school so all students can get the support they need in their ICAP process."*

> *"We hold district led monthly ICAP professional development opportunities open to all counselors in the district. We continually weave our ICAP vision as well as support and tools into multiple counselor opportunities throughout the year. While we place greater value on students creating meaningful ICAPs than we do on the number completed, we do still expect that 100% of students will have an ICAP...ICAP surveys have been created to measure data, and probe for depth of meaning in students' responses. These surveys have become the foundation of our district ICAP curriculum, and counselors are now able to measure if their lesson plans evoke meaningful responses from their students. All of these actions have moved ICAP from a one-time event to an ongoing process."*

Student-to-Counselor Ratio

The grant reduced the student-to-counselor ratio in Cohort 6 funded schools to meet the ASCA recommendation of 250:1. ASCA recommends this ratio so that professional school counselors can focus their skills, time, and energy on direct and indirect services to students at least 80 percent of their time. This comprehensive school counseling program model:

- Ensures equitable access to a rigorous education for all students;
- Identifies the knowledge and skills all students will acquire as a result of the K-12 comprehensive school counseling program;
- Delivers programming to all students in a systematic fashion;
- Bases programming on data-driven decision making; and

- Ensures that programming is provided by a state-credentialed, licensed professional school counselor.

Benefits of lower student-to-counselor ratios and implementing the comprehensive counseling program include higher standardized test scores, higher graduation rates, and higher retention rates.[6]

Prior to SCCGP funding, Cohort 6 schools had the equivalent of 83 full-time, certified school counselors. In the final year of funding, that increased to 122 full-time counselors. This effectively decreased student-to-counselor ratios to exceed the best practice recommendation of a maximum ratio of 250 students to one school counselor. In the final year of full SCCGP implementation, the average ratio was 227 students to one counselor, reducing caseloads by more than a third on average. The state's ratio also decreased; however, not to the recommended levels[7]. See Chart 11.

Chart 11: Average Counselor's Student Caseload for SCCGP Cohort 6 Before and After Funding Compared to State
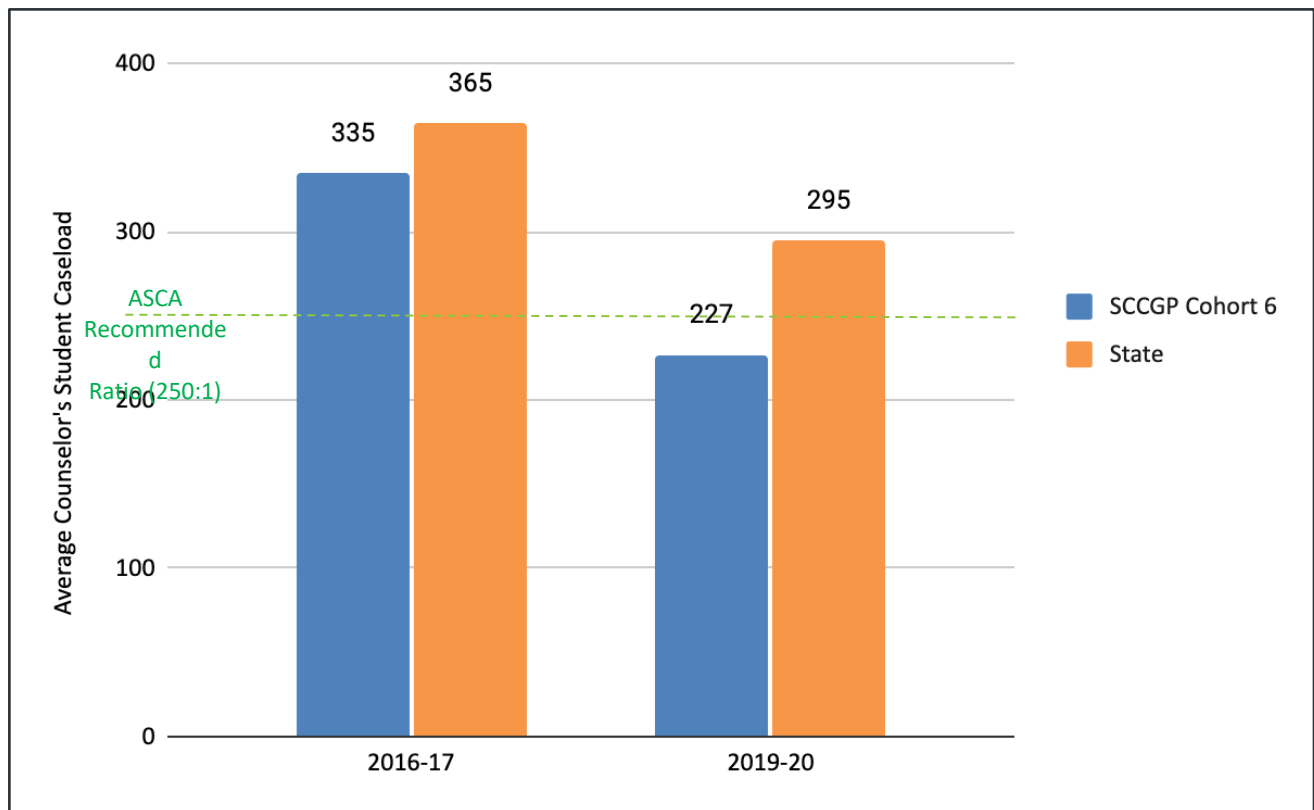
Throughout the grant reports, grantees noted that decreased student-to-counselor ratios afforded schools additional opportunities to develop systems and supports that enabled them to provide more comprehensive,

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[6] Burkard, A., Gillen, M., Martinez, M., & Skytte, S. (2011). Wisconsin School Counselors Benefit All Students: The Effect of Fully Implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Programs in Wisconsin High Schools. Retrieved on April 22, 2013 from www.oakcreek.k12.wi.us/ochs/guidance1/guidance_docs/WSCA_Research_Report_2011_11.pdf

[7] https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios

quality and/or individualized postsecondary readiness support services. The following quotes provide some examples of how counselors contribute to student success in unique and meaningful ways:

> *"The SCCG grant brought a School Counselor to [High School] for the first time. When the Counselor joined in 2016-17, [our] UIP was in the red. Over the 4 years the Counselor has been with us, our UIP has gone to yellow and most recently green. A comprehensive school-wide positive culture initiative is under way and fully supported by all faculty. ICAP is completely integrated into classroom curriculum by all teachers."*

> *"A yoga/mindfulness club was created with efforts made possible through SCCG. The at-risk youth were able to participate in an after-school yoga club run by the school counselor. The students were able to attend three out of five planned overnight college trips, made possible through the SCCG. This year, the graduating class earned over $420,000 in grants/scholarship money due to help in senior seminar by the hired school counselor. Local scholarship committees have a contact person at the High School, and this is all because of hiring a school counselor in this district."*

> *"The Well Being team increased their efforts towards positive Attendance and increased their focus on students with attendance rates below 90%. For students between 80-89% average daily attendance, the team met with students and created an attendance group that involved setting goals and sharing information on how attendance affects college and career readiness with parent input. We held parent meetings at which both the student and parent committed to helping their student attend school with follow-up parent meetings every three weeks…Of those students, over 50% improved their attendance. The goal for next year is to start earlier in the school year and invite parents…to discuss attendance; and at that time, they would sign contracts and make positive achievable goals. For students below 80% average daily attendance, more intensive supports and communication were provided to families and home visits helped identify gaps in support so that we could connect families and students to the right resources."*

American School Counselors Association (ASCA) Model Implementation

The school-level grant report included a reliable measure for assessing the level of ASCA Model implementation, the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.[8] The survey includes a total of 14 self-reported items, which provide an overall implementation score and two factor scores – programmatic orientation and school counseling services. The following table includes the three years of grant report data for SCCGP Cohort 6 demonstrating the significant progress made by grantees. Note: The four-point rating scale for the survey was 1 = Not Present, 2 = Development in Progress, 3 = Partly Implemented, and 4 = Fully Implemented.

Table 2: ASCA Model Implementation Scores for SCCGP Cohort 6 for Three Implementation Years

	Overall Implementation	Programmatic Orientation	School Counseling Services
2017-18	2.92	2.74	3.1
2018-19	3.2	3.07	3.33
2019-20	3.34	3.24	3.44

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[8] Clemens, E., Carey, J. & Harrington, K. (2010). The School Counseling Program Implementation Survey: Initial Instrument Development and Exploratory Factor Analysis. *ACA: Professional School Counseling,14:2,* 125-134.

Overall, SCCGP Cohort 6 schools' ASCA Implementation Scores demonstrate that the funded schools made significant improvements and have partly or fully implemented comprehensive school counseling programs as the funding concluded. The components with the highest implementation scores reported in this final grant year were:

- **"**The school counseling program has the resources to allow counselors to complete appropriate professional development activities" (3.61);
- "Services are organized so that all students are well served and have access to them" (3.56); and
- "A written mission statement exists and is used as a foundation by all counselors" (3.53).

"School counselors analyze student data by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic level to identify interventions to close achievement gaps" was rated the lowest overall in each year of implementation and did not improve as significantly as some of the other elements did, from 2.36 to 2.85. Scores for "The program has a set of clear, measurable student learning objectives and goals are established for academics, social/personal skills, and career development" improved at a similar rate, from 2.82 to 3.18.

On the other hand, scores for "The program operates from a plan for closing the achievement gap (2.68 to 3.24), "Needs assessments are completed regularly and guide program planning" (2.55 to 3.26), and "School counselors use student performance data to decide how to meet student needs" (2.65 to 3.38) increased substantially over the course of the grant cycle.

Career and Technical Education

SCCGP encourages schools to increase students' exposure to diverse career pathways and opportunities through enrollment in Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. Over the course of the grant cycle, Cohort 6 increased their CTE enrollment by nearly a third. In the first year, funded schools enrolled approximately 9,400 students; and by the third year, they had enrolled over 12,300 students in CTE courses. Information about student enrollment in CTE prior to SCCGP funding is unavailable.

College Visits

In the first two years of funding, schools engaged approximately 4,425 students in college visits each year. The third year of funding saw slightly more than half of the number of students able to visit colleges prior to COVID-19 precautions being put in place. Information about the number of students making college visits prior to SCCGP funding is unavailable.

Conclusion

SCCGP continues to meet its legislatively mandated goals in reach and impact. Cohort 6 includes a total of 37 schools from across the state, serving 19 high schools, 15 middle schools, and 3 undivided secondary schools. Eight of these schools hold AEC status. In 2019-20 alone, Cohort 6 grantees enrolled 28,681 students, including a higher percentage of students of color, those qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, and mobile students when compared to the percentage of these students in the statewide student population.

SCCGP contributed to a variety of PWR impacts demonstrated by Cohort 6 schools during the grant cycle, from 2016-17 to 2019-20:

- Non-AEC schools' four-year graduation rate increased by 5.4 percentage points whereas the rate for state non-AEC schools increased by 3.2 percentage points.
- Non-AEC schools realized a .5 percentage point decrease in their dropout rate, compared to the state's non-AEC dropout rate decrease of .3 percentage points.
- AECs' six-year completion rates increased by 11.5 percentage points, while the state rate increased 3.6 percentage points.
- The AEC dropout rate decreased almost a full percentage point more than the state's rate.
- The Cohort saw a 41 percent increase in their students' participation in concurrent enrollment, with four schools beginning their participation during the funding cycle.
- The number of students participating in CTE increased by 31 percent from the first year of full funding to the third.

Although these substantial gains may not be independently caused by SCCGP alone, much of the outcome data indicate that SCCGP Cohort 6 is equipping schools with greater postsecondary and workforce readiness capacity and students are experiencing the benefits with higher rates of postsecondary and workforce readiness outcomes.

Appendix A: 2019-20 School Counselor Corps Advisory Committee

Lisa Moore, Jefferson County Public Schools, Master Practitioner (Chair)

Andrew Burns, Pueblo City Schools, School District Administration (Vice Chair)

Carl Einhaus, Colorado Department of Higher Education, Student Affairs

Elysia Clemens, University of Denver, Counselor Educator

Lauren Jones, Colorado Community College System, CTE, Program Director

Brenda Meltenberger, Burlington School District, High School Counselor

Kim Medina, Colorado School of Mines, College Admissions Director

Catie Riessen, Brighton 27J School District, Middle School Counselor

Jennifer Quintana, Adams 12 Five Star School District, Elementary School Counselor

Appendix B: Data Collection and Analysis Process

1) CDE collected self-report data from grantees at the district and school level. These data were utilized for:
   - Student-to-counselor ratios
   - Grantee implementation indicators
     o Goals
     o Professional development
     o ASCA standards
     o ICAP
   - Career and Technical Education
   - College Visits

2) CDE's publicly accessible data were utilized for:
   - Demographic data and student counts
   - Graduation, completion, and dropout rates

3) The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) i3 data system and reports were utilized for:
   - FAFSA Completion (U.S. Department of Education verified data)
   - Concurrent Enrollment (Student Unit Record Data System, SURDS)
   - Postsecondary Matriculation (National Student Clearinghouse & SURDS)