

Reimagining School Counseling in the Long Beach Unified School District

**Submitted by
The TALB School Counselors Organizing Committee**

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POSITION STATEMENT

The Role and Function of School Counselors

School Counselors play a critical role in assisting students in reaching their academic, personal/social and career goals. For school counselors to be effective in supporting students in meeting these essential goals, school counselors' duties and responsibilities and high student to counselor ratios must be addressed. High student to counselor ratios undermine and hinder counselors' ability to meet the existing and growing needs of students, families, and staff. Additionally, assigning counselors administrative functions and duties equally undermines and hampers counselors' ability to develop a trusting transparent relationship with students, which is essential to provide the level of support students need to thrive emotionally, academically, and socially.

Rationale

Over the past few decades, local and state officials, community members, and policy makers have called on schools and school districts to address the wide range of societal priorities and student needs, such as academic achievement, social/emotional support, and barriers that are impeding students from reaching their maximum potential. The COVID crisis has amplified the urgency for school and school districts to increase the level of student support services, as research is predicting that students will be impacted by this once in a generation pandemic for years to come.

Although, there has been an investment in hiring 12 social workers for the 2022-2023 school year, this does not alter the need for comprehensive change in school counseling in the Long Beach Unified School District. Social workers are responsible for working with selected students and advocating for their emotional, mental and physical wellbeing, as well as providing support to families. A small part of their work overlaps with the support that school counselors provide. However, unlike school social workers, school counselors are professional educators, who work with all students at their school, and provide academic, personal/social and career development.

Summary

School counselors are far too frequently assigned duties and responsibilities that do not take advantage of their specialized training. Skill-sets that would provide an array of support to students are overlooked or underutilized, which interferes with counselors' ability to provide direct support/intervention to students, to improve student's academic achievement, to facilitate home-school collaborations, to improve school-wide policies, and to coordinate needed services with community-based partners. In addition, the current student to counselor ratios at most LBUSD schools are 2 to 5 times the recommendations from the California Association of School Counselors (CASC) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), which is 250:1.

Over the past year, the TALB School Counselors Organizing Committee has been studying current and past literature and research on school counseling reform. The research is clear that schools where counselors have appropriate duties and responsibilities and sufficient student to counselor ratios, students have higher academic achievement and adequate personal social support.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal, State, and local governmental agencies are consistently reporting that the recent pandemic will have an impact on students for years. According to Education Week March 31, 2021 article, [*The Pandemic Will Affect Students' Mental Health for Years to come. How Schools Can Help.*](#) “The pandemic, combined with a massive experiment in remote schooling, a racial justice movement stemming from police killings of Black Americans, and economic and political instability will have long-term effects on schoolchildren’s mental health. For the foreseeable future, educators will have to grapple with a host of additional challenges that will complicate students’ abilities to learn, such as increased anxiety, substance abuse, and hyperactivity—all symptoms of the trauma many students have lived through this past year.”

Due to the impact that the COVID crisis has had on our children, schools, and communities throughout the country, considerable attention has been focused on the role and function of school counselors. Although, the pandemic has put the public eye on school counselors, concerns regarding school counselors aren’t new. The [*California Department of Education 2017 Research Report on School Counseling Effectiveness*](#) stated, “California has made important strides in class size reduction, higher academic standards, greater accountability, and improved teacher preparation. The important missing link in these initiatives to improve student learning is the need for more school counselors and other student support services, such as school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses.

Traditionally, California students' access to counselors varies by grade level, and 29 percent of California school districts have no counseling programs at all. When counseling programs exist, counselors are often asked to add administrative duties such as testing, supervising, and class scheduling. The ratio of students per counselor in this state averages 945 to 1, compared to the national average of 477 to 1, ranking California last in the nation.

School counselors provide counseling programs in three domains: academic, career, and personal/social. Their services and programs help students resolve emotional, social, or behavioral problems and help them develop a clearer focus or sense of direction. Effective counseling programs are important to the school climate and a crucial element in improving student achievement.”

The attention and concerns regarding the role and function of school counselors has been a national discussion, beyond the State of California.

It should also be noted that the attention surrounding school counselors is not regional and has drawn interest from the highest levels of our government. On June 30, 2014, the United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, sent educators across the country a Key Policy Letter, title [*Administrators Lead & Manage My School*](#).

In his letter, Secretary Duncan, stated “If the nation is to meet President Obama’s goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, it is imperative that all students have consistent access to school counselors who possess the training and skills to help students reach their highest aspirations. School counselors are pivotal in helping students manage their academic programs as well as the inevitable life events that may threaten students’ ability to succeed in school. Yet, as the Civil Rights Data Collection recently found, one in five American high schools operates without any school counselors on staff (<http://www.ed.gov/blog/2014/03/five-new-facts-from-the-civil-rights-data-collection/>).

This is an untenable situation for millions of students who need the support of site-based school counselors, whose job it is to ensure their students’ success.

Schools that do employ counselors may not use them to full advantage. Despite the critical role school counselors play in supporting students’ college and career readiness, they often are asked to perform many “non-counseling” duties that can distract from their core work and ultimately leave students without the individualized attention they need to complete their academic course work, successfully navigate the college admissions and financial aid processes, and/or prepare for productive careers. Increasing the number of students who graduate from high school ready for college and careers requires that all students benefit from a holistic support system that ensures consistent access to effective school counselors.”

Secretary Duncan’s appeal to school leaders was for them to support and increase the number of school counselors so that they can become more effective in assisting a greater number of students – especially low-income students, minority students, students with disabilities, and English learners – successfully access postsecondary education or career opportunities, and specifically mentioned concerns regarding school counselors' role in providing support to students.

More recently, on February 19, 2022, [AB 2508 \(Quirk-Silva\)](#) was introduced to the California Assembly Committee, which is chaired by Long Beach Assemblyman and former school teacher, Patrick O'Donnell.

AB 2508 urges the governing board of a local educational agency (LEA) to provide a comprehensive educational counseling program for all pupils and redefines the definition of educational counseling and services provided to pupils to reflect current practices.

Need for the bill: The author of AB 2508 stated, "Teaching methods, curriculum modifications, as well as standards of education have changed and evolved over the 30 years I have been teaching in California. Insights gained from the past combined with new knowledge, enables the state to continue to develop and implement comprehensive educational programs for our students. Research points to the effectiveness of school counselors in supporting students in many ways. Without updating the California Education Code, these positive outcomes fall short if school counselors are not utilized in schools or in ways commensurate with their training and areas of expertise."

Background of SB 2508: In 2009, the California Association of School Counselors (CASC) issued a set of standards for the school counseling profession. These standards were intended to address a number of problems resulting from unclear expectations of school counselors, including counseling time being diverted to administrative tasks, poor quality evaluations due to absence of an evaluative specific to school counseling, and poorly structured and incoherent counseling programs. The report noted that, "without clear standards of practice for school counseling, student support programs and services often become a jumble of disconnected services and random acts of guidance."

The provisions of AB 2508 are intended to mirror this set of standards, with updates related to reflect the Local Control Funding Formula and Local Control and Accountability Plan, and other recent policy trends, such as restorative justice practices and positive behavior interventions.

Argument in support of AB 2508: According to the California Federation of Teachers "AB 2508 updates the definition of 'school counselor' to reflect the current role of school counselors and is the first step to ensuring counselors understand their role in assisting students seeking career pathways. This legislation provides updates to the legislation to highlight career pathways, cite federal programs and opportunities for job training, and names industry certification opportunities. It further ensures that counselors understand their role to assist in

addressing any mental health issues that may be addressed to create an environment where students are receptive to understanding their career options.”

Assembly Floor Vote in Favor - 61-0, 5/5/22

Opposition: None received - (VERIFIED 6/23/22)

AB 2508 Update: On August 18, 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law AB 2508. AB 2508 amends several sections of California Education Code 49600, to accurately reflect the role and duties of school counselors and modifies the antiquated language and terms that are over fifty-years old.

THE STATE OF SCHOOL COUNSELING IN LBUSD

Over the past year, the TALB School Counselors Organizing Committee has been studying current and past literature and research on school counseling reform, consulting with statewide organizations, collecting survey data from LBUSD counselors, and examining current LBUSD data. Reimagining School Counseling in the Long Beach Unified School District Report is an outcome of our work.

The primary purpose of this committee report is to bring attention to the immediate barriers that are currently preventing school counselors from providing students with the academic, personal/social and career support they will need to be successful in the coming years, especially considering the post-Covid analysis mentioned earlier. The main barriers are that school counselors consistently being assigned managerial functions and duties and have student to counselor ratios that are not practical for counselors to meet the increasing needs of students.

Although, the American School Counselor Association recommends a student to counselor [ratio](#) of 250 to 1, the TALB School Counselors Organizing Committee reviewed Long Beach Unified School District [data](#) and found that during the 2021-2022 school year, many schools in the Long Beach Unified School District student had student to counselor ratios that were 2 to 5 times the recommended ratios. Furthermore, a school counselor survey conducted by the committee also found that the vast amount of counselors’ time and duties assigned are spent on administrative functions, and not activities and functions that are recommended by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) or the California Association of School Counselors (CASC).

For over 30 years, research has shown that students in schools where counselors provide a Comprehensive School Counseling Program show great gains in their academic development, personal/social development, and career development. It is

the recommendation of the TALB School Counselors Organizing Committee that the Long Beach Unified School District follows the guidelines of AB 2508 and implement a district wide Comprehensive School Counseling Program Initiative.

TALB and the LBUSD will negotiate the school counselors' evaluation process during the 2022-2023 school year. This will provide an excellent opportunity to review the current school counselors' evaluation process, school counselors' duties and responsibilities, student to counselor ratios, and align counselors' duties and ratios with the Standards for the School Counseling Profession.

The School Counselor's Role

ASCA School Counselor and School Counseling Programs Position Statement

School counselors focus their skills, time and energy on direct and indirect services to students. To achieve maximum program effectiveness, ASCA recommends a student-to-school-counselor ratio of 250:1. Although ratios vary across states, school districts and even grade levels, the growing body of research as summarized by Carey and Martin (2015) supports that implementation of school counseling programs positively affects outcome data (e.g., student achievement and discipline referrals) at all grade levels.

ASCA also recommends that school counselors spend [80 percent](#) or more of their time in direct and indirect services to students. These direct and indirect activities should come from the ASCA National Model rather than inappropriate duties assigned to school counselors as listed in the ASCA National Model Executive Summary (2019b). The [20 percent](#) or less of the school counselor's time should be focused on program planning and school support including:

- Reviewing school data
- Developing annual student outcome goals
- Creating classroom, group and closing the gap action plans
- Reporting results of action plans to the school community
- Discussing the priorities of the school counseling program in the annual administrative conference

Duties that fall outside of the school counselor framework as described in the ASCA National Model should be limited and performed by other school staff to

support a school's smooth operation and allow school counselors to continue to focus on students' academic, career and social/emotional needs.

Fair-share responsibilities should not preclude implementing and managing a school counseling program.

ACSA's report [*Embrace the Past, Welcome the Future: A Brief History of School Counseling*](#), states "As the second decade of the 21st century began, an ongoing issue for school counseling was accountability. Although this has been part of professional discussion since the 1920s, and much work was done over the ensuing years, there is a renewed sense of urgency today concerning accountability. The literature makes it clear that evaluation is here to stay and needs to be designed and carried out to not only demonstrate effectiveness but also to improve the work of school counselors.

What will the next 100 years be like? No one knows for sure, but if the next 100 years are like the first 100 years, school counseling will continue to evolve. The forces that shaped school counseling so far will continue to do so, and discussion about purposes and organization will continue. So, while no one knows what the future holds, current literature suggests that at least for the near future, students and their parents in school districts across the country will continue to benefit from having fully implemented school counseling programs. Embrace the past, welcome the future."

School counselors embrace the idea of using the school counseling standards to evaluate and provide accountability. However, the current duties assigned to counselors in the Long Beach Unified School District do not align with the school counseling standards that were used to develop the performance evaluation document, evaluation rubric, and counselor evaluation handbook.

The TALB School Counselors Organizing Committee is unanimous in support of developing a district-wide Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP). This will align counseling duties and responsibilities and students to counselors' ratios with the CASC California Standards for the School Counseling Profession, which were used to create the performance evaluation document, evaluation rubric, or the counselor evaluation handbook.

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM OVERVIEW

A Comprehensive School Counseling Program is a solid blueprint for ensuring that students are well prepared to meet the academic, social/emotional and career challenges presented to them. The program supports students in meeting academic standards and is integral to providing a safe and secure environment for learning, reduces dangerous and counterproductive risk-taking behaviors, and enhances student resiliency.

In a Comprehensive School Counseling Program, school counselors design and deliver school counseling programs that improve student outcomes. The ASCA National Model Executive states, [“The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs”](#) outlines the components of a school counseling program that is integral to the school’s academic mission and is created to have a significant positive impact on student achievement, attendance and discipline.”

The ASCA National Model guides school counselors in the development of school counseling programs that:

- are based on data-informed decision making
- are delivered to all students systematically
- include a developmentally appropriate curriculum focused on the mindsets and behaviors all students need for postsecondary readiness and success
- close achievement and opportunity gaps
- result in improved student achievement, attendance and discipline

The framework of the ASCA National Model consists of four components: define, manage, deliver, and assess.

Define

Three sets of school counseling standards define the school counseling profession. These standards help new and experienced school counselors develop, implement, and assess their school counseling program to improve student outcomes.

Manage

To be delivered effectively, the school counseling program must be efficiently and effectively managed. The ASCA National Model provides school counselors with the following program focus and planning tools to guide the design and implementation of a school counseling program that gets results.

Program Focus:

Beliefs

Vision Statement

Mission Statement

Program Planning

School Data Summary

Annual Student Outcome goals

Action Plans

Classroom and Group

Closing the GAP

Lessons Plans

Annual Administrative Conference

Use of Time

Calendars

Annual

Weekly

Advisory Council

The purpose of the advisory council is to provide feedback on program goals, make recommendations, and advocate for the school counseling program.

Deliver

School counselors deliver developmentally appropriate activities and services directly to students or indirectly for students as a result of the school counselor's interaction with others.

These activities and services help students develop the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success and improve their achievement, attendance and discipline.

Direct Student Services

- Instruction
- Appraisal and Advisement
- Counseling

Indirect Services

- Consultation
- Collaboration
- Referrals

Assess - To achieve the best results for students, school counselors regularly assess their program to:

- determine its effectiveness
- inform improvements to their school counseling program and delivery
- show how students are different as a result of the school counseling program

School counselors also self-assess their own mindsets and behaviors to inform their professional development and annually participate in a school counselor performance appraisal. The ASCA National Model provides the following tools to guide assessment and appraisal:

- Program Assessment
- School Counseling Program Assessment
- Annual Results Reports
- School Counselor Assessment and Appraisal
- ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies Assessment
- School Counselor Performance Appraisal Template

School Counseling Curriculum

School counselors plan, implement, and evaluate developmental school counseling curriculum that address the needs and priorities of their school.

Their work is further differentiated by attention to age-specific developmental stages of student growth, and by the needs, tasks, and student interests related to those stages.

SCHOOL COUNSELING MATTER

Through a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes success and achievement for all students, school counselors can help set students on a path to postsecondary success. The foundation of students' success begins in elementary, crystalizes in middle school and culminate in high school, as students begin to enter the world of work, technical training, or postsecondary education. As a vital member of the school's support team, school counselors provide essential academic and social-emotional support to assist students in reaching their goals.

In particular, students of color and students from low-income families benefit from having more access to school counselors. For example, Black students are more likely than their White peers to identify their school counselor as the person who had the most influence on their thinking about postsecondary education.

Too often, not enough counselors or counseling support are available to students of color and students from low-income families. Students of color and students from low-income families have been overlooked and underserved for far too long. If anything, they deserve more access to school counselors than their peers — not the same, and certainly not less. And yet, according to data compiled by the Organizing Committee, some schools with the most students of color, students from low-income, and English Language Learners in the Long Beach Unified School District, have ratios 2 to 5 times the recommended students to counselor ratios. Additionally, some schools have counselors only 1, 2 and 3 days per week, making their ratios equivalent to being five times the recommended students to counselor ratio.

A synopsis of ACSA's report on the essential roles of elementary, middle and high school counselor:

Why Elementary School Counselors?

The elementary school years set the foundation for developing the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for children to become healthy, competent and confident learners.

Elementary school counselors have an impact on these years by implementing a school counseling program and collaborating with school staff, parents and the community to create a safe and respectful learning environment.

By providing education, prevention, early identification and intervention, elementary school counselors help their students achieve academic success, develop an understanding of career opportunities and develop social/ emotional skills in response to issues they face.

The Essential Role of Elementary School Counselors

The work of elementary school counselors aligns with the school’s mission to support all students’ academic achievement as they prepare for the ever- changing world of the 21st century. This alignment is accomplished through the design, development, and implementation of a school counseling program. The tools guiding this work are the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, which address students’ academic, career and social/emotional development, and the ASCA National Model, with its data-informed, results- based focus. Research demonstrating the effectiveness of school counseling programs continues to grow, and there is evidence of the positive impact these programs have on academic and social/ emotional development. In order to provide elementary students with the prevention, early identification and intervention support they need, student to counselor ratios must be addressed.

Elementary School Student to Counselor Ratios

School Name	School Site Level	Counselors FTE	Enrollment (as of 3/25/22)	Student to Counselor ratios based on FTE
Addams Elementary	ES	1	805	805
Alvarado Elementary	ES	0.6	363	605
Barton Elementary	ES	1	433	433
Birney Elementary	ES	1	496	496
Bixby Elementary	ES	0.4	519	1297
Bryant Elementary	ES	0.4	311	777
Burbank Elementary	ES	1	586	586
Burcham Elementary	ES	0.2	354	1770
Carver Elementary	ES	0.2	495	2475
Chavez Elementary	ES	1	315	315
Cleveland Elementary	ES	0.4	456	1140
Dooley Elementary	ES	1.5	785	523
Edison Elementary	ES	1	450	450
Emerson Parkside Academy	ES	0.4	328	820
Fremont Elementary	ES	0.2	449	2245
Gant Elementary	ES	0.4	604	1510
Garfield Elementary	ES	1	575	575
Grant Elementary	ES	1	996	996
Harte Elementary	ES	1	798	798

Henry Elementary	ES	0.8	837	1046
Holmes Elementary	ES	1	396	396
Kettering Elementary	ES	0.4	301	752
King Elementary	ES	1	652	652
Lafayette Elementary	ES	1	885	885
Lincoln Elementary	ES	1	841	841
Longfellow Elementary School	ES	1	899	899
Los Cerritos Elementary School	ES	0.6	458	763
Lowell Elementary	ES	0.4	537	1342
Macarthur Elementary	ES	0.4	290	725
Madison Elementary	ES	0.6	356	593
Mann Elementary	ES	0.8	313	391
McKinley Elementary	ES	1	511	511
Naples Elementary	ES	0.2	290	1450
Nieto Herrera Elementary	ES	1	768	768
Oropeza Elementary	ES	1.5	593	395
Prisk Elementary	ES	0.4	481	1203
Riley Elementary	ES	0.4	343	858
Roosevelt Elementary	ES	1	905	905
Signal Hill Elementary	ES	3	669	223
Smith Elementary	ES	1	723	723
Stevenson Elementary School	ES	1	515	515
Twain Elementary	ES	0.6	452	753
Webster Elementary	ES	1	517	517
Whittier Elementary	ES	1	631	631
Willard Elementary	ES	1	569	569

Why Middle School Counselors?

Middle school students are characterized by rapid physical growth, curiosity about their world and an emerging self-identity. Middle school counselors have an impact on these years by implementing a school counseling program and collaborating with school staff, parents and the community to create a safe, respectful learning environment whereby young adolescents can maximize personal and academic achievement.

Middle school counselors enhance the learning process and promote academic, career and social/emotional development. School counseling programs are essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set informed career goals and realize full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community.

The Essential Role of Middle School Counselors

Middle School Students' Developmental Needs:

Middle school is an exciting yet challenging time for students, their parents, and teachers. During this passage from childhood to adolescence, middle school students are characterized by a need to explore a variety of interests, connecting their learning in the classroom to its practical application in life and work; high levels of activity coupled with frequent fatigue due to rapid growth; a search for their own unique identity as they begin turning more frequently to peers rather than parents for ideas and affirmation; extreme sensitivity to the comments from others; and heavy reliance on friends to provide comfort, understanding and approval.

Significant Findings:

In the recent [Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines](#) (CSTAG) training, CSTAG was defined as “an approach to violence prevention that emphasizes early attention to problems such as bullying, teasing, and other forms of student conflict before they escalate into violent behavior.” Dr. Cornell stated that special attention must be placed on the middle school age students, and mentioned various effective preventative programs, such as bully prevention, conflict resolution, life skills training, motivation interviewing, problems solving/social competencies, and many more.

This supports the LBUSD suicide prevention training's findings that “according to the National Center for Health Statistics, in 2020 youth suicide accounted for more deaths in the United States than all natural causes combined among 10-14 year-old and 15-25 year old and is currently the second and third leading cause of death for you respectively.

There is plenty research to conclude that middle school students are the most at-risk and need the most support. However, our middle school ratios are some of the highest in the State of California. The following are the K-8 and middle school student to counselor ratios:

K-8 School Students to Counselors Ratios

School Name	School Site Level	Counselors FTE	Enrollment (as of 3/25/22)	Student to Counselor ratios based on FTE
Robinson	K-8	1	749	749
Powell	K-8	1	849	849
Muir	K-8	1	963	963
Gompers	K-8	0.6	348	580
Tincher	K-8	1	729	729
Cubberley	K-8	1	938	938
Newcomb	K-8	1	784	784

Middle School Student to Counselor Ratios

School Name	School Site Level	FTE Counselors	Enrollment (as of 3/25/22)	1.0 FTE Counselor to Student Ratio per Calculation
Hoover Middle School	MS	1	567	567
Lindbergh Middle School	MS	1	435	435
Hughes Middle School	MS	2	1318	659
Lindsey Middle School	MS	1	713	713
Jefferson Middle School	MS	1	990	990
Stephens Middle School	MS	1	806	806
Bancroft Middle School	MS	1	893	893
Nelson Middle School	MS	1	838	838
Franklin Middle School	MS	1	1078	1078
Marshall Middle School	MS	1.5	925	617
Hamilton Middle School	MS	1	838	838
Washington Middle School	MS	1	975	975
Stanford Middle School	MS	1.5	1190	793
Rogers Middle School	MS	1	777	777
Helen Keller Middle	MS	1	431	431

Why High School Counselors?

High school years are full of growth, promise, excitement, frustration, disappointment and hope. It is the time when students begin to discover what the future holds for them. High school counselors have an impact on these years by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program and collaborating with school staff, parents and the community to create a safe and respectful learning environment. High school counselors enhance the learning process and promote academic, career, and social/emotional development. High school counseling programs are essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set informed career goals and realize their full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community.

The Essential Role of High School Counselors

High School Student's Developmental Needs:

High school is the final transition into adulthood, postsecondary education and the world of work as students begin separating from parents and exploring and defining their independence. Students are deciding who they are, what they do well and what they will do when they graduate. During these adolescent years, students are evaluating their strengths, skills, and abilities.

The biggest influence is their peer group. They are searching for a place to belong and rely on peer acceptance and feedback. They face increased pressures regarding risk behaviors involving sex, alcohol and drugs while exploring the boundaries of more acceptable behavior and mature, meaningful relationships. They need advisement in using technology to further their academic and career goals and also need assistance in managing and responding to the challenges of using technology safely and appropriately for personal expression.

High school students need advisement in making concrete and compounded decisions. They must navigate academic, peer and parental pressures as they face high-stakes testing, the challenges of college admissions, the scholarship and financial aid application process and entrance into a competitive job market.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES MATTER

One of the primary challenges counselors face is defined as role ambiguity. According to the authors of *Assessing the Counseling and Non-Counseling Roles of School Counselors*, Role ambiguity has been prevalent in the school counseling literature for over 45 years (Astramovich et al., 2013; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Dahir, 2004; Gysbers & Henderson, 1994; Gysbers & Stanley, 2014; Hart & Prince, 1970; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Lieberman, 2004; Sink & MacDonald, 1998). There are two prominent reasons for role ambiguity and role-related concerns. First, misunderstandings about appropriate school counseling duties exist. For example, school counselors may be assigned to non-counseling duties based on established practices, traditions, or customary roles from the past such as test coordination, scheduling, school discipline, and administrative tasks (Anderson, 2002; Baker, 2001; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Gysbers, 2001).

Second, administrators often direct school counselors to inappropriate assignments such as class schedules or registration tasks to support the efficiency of the school (Ribak-Rosenthal, 1994) or to accomplish large tasks expeditiously (Anderson & Reiter, 1995; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Consequently, school counselor self-efficacy is negatively affected by performing non-counseling duties (Jellison, 2013).

The challenge with role confusion and role ambiguity has been a continuing issue for school counselors in the LBUSD for the past 20 years. Instead of being a “professional counselor” as mentioned in the CASC and ASCA reports, the school counselors’ role and function in the LBUSD has been transformed into what some people call “Jack of all trades, master of none.” It implies that school counselors are typically good at almost everything, but an expert, or master, in none. Because school counselors are often given multiple jobs – mainly non-counseling duties – their role is often too broad and becomes less effective in supporting the needs of students.

While the “Jack of all trades, master of none” may be the sentiment of some, empirical research, the California State Legislature, state and national school counseling organizations recommend that school counselors should be in-fact, professional school counselors, and not de facto administrators and management substitutes. Developing a district-wide Comprehensive School Counseling Program will clarify the appropriate role and function of school counselors.

Below is a list of appropriate and inappropriate school counseling activities based on the ASCA National Model for School Counseling Program.

Appropriate Activities for School Counselors	Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advisement and appraisal for academic planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building the master schedule
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • orientation, coordination and academic advising for new students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interpreting cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordinating cognitive, aptitude and achievement testing programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing counseling to students who are tardy or absent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performing disciplinary actions or assigning discipline consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing short-term individual and small- group counseling services to students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing long-term counseling in schools to address psychological disorders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consulting with teachers to schedule and present school counseling curriculum lessons based on developmental needs and needs identified through data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • covering classes when teachers are absent or to create teacher planning time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interpreting student records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintaining student records
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyzing grade-point averages in relationship to achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • computing grade-point averages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consulting with teachers about building classroom connections, effective classroom management and the role of noncognitive factors in student success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supervising classrooms or common areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting student records and information per state and federal regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeping clerical records
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consulting with the school principal to identify and resolve student issues, needs and problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisting with duties in the principal's office
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advocating for students at individual education plan meetings and 504 meetings, student study teams and school attendance review boards, as necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordinating schoolwide individual education plans, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention plans, MTSS and school attendance review boards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyzing disaggregated schoolwide and school counseling program data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serving as a data entry clerk

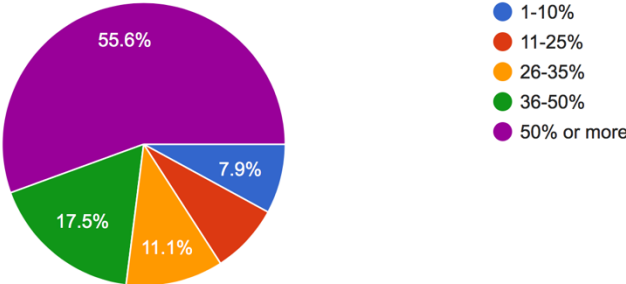
The Organizing Committee utilized the appropriate and inappropriate activities document and created a survey. The survey was sent to Long Beach Unified School District school counselors and more than 50 percent of the Long Beach Unified School District counselors completed the survey.

The results of the survey revealed the following significant finding:

- 84% of school counselors spend more than 25% of their time on non-counseling duties.
- 55.6 % of school counselors spend more than 50% of their time on non-counseling duties.

What percent of your time is devoted to non-counselor duties (i.e. scheduling, supervision, test coordination, non-intervention discipline)?

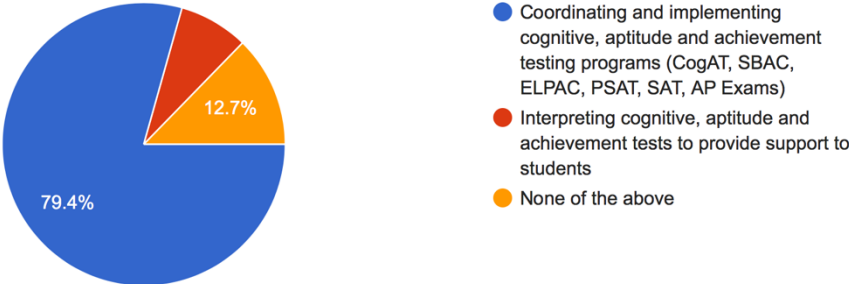
63 responses



- 79.4 % of school counselors spend their time on non-counseling administrative testing administration, instead of utilizing data to provide support services for students.

I spend most of my time:

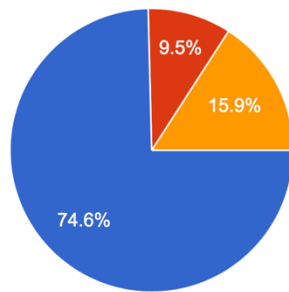
63 responses



- 74.6 % of school counselors spend their time coordinating administrative academic functions, instead of providing advocacy services and support for students at the meetings.

I spend most of my time:

63 responses

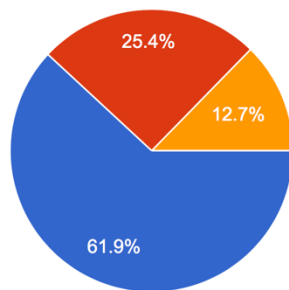


- Coordinating school-wide individual education plans, 504 plans, student study teams, response to intervention plans, MTSS and school attendance review boards.
- Advocating for students at IEP, SST, and SARB meetings, as necessary. Attending these meetings as support not serving as the administrative designee.
- None of the above

- 61.9% of school counselors spend their time assisting with administrative duties instead of consulting with the school principal to identify and resolve student issues, needs and problem solve.

I spend most of my time:

63 responses



- Assisting with administrative duties assigned by the principal or assistant principal
- Consulting with the school principal to identify and resolve student issues, needs and problems
- None of the above

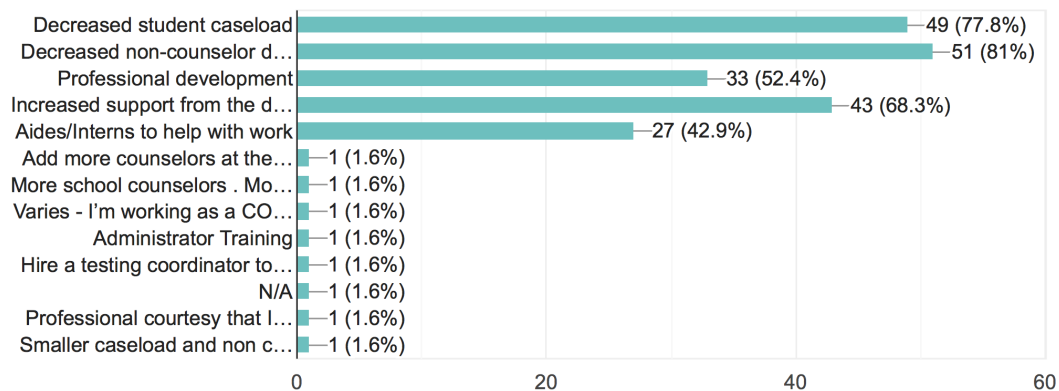
Additional survey questions:

What would you need to do your job more effectively?

- **77.8% - Decreased student caseload**
- **81% - Decreased non-counselor duties**
- **52.4% - Professional development**
- **68.3% - Increased support from the district or county**
- **42.9% - Aides/interns to help with work**

What would you need to do your job more effectively? (Check all that apply)

63 responses



What are some of the most common non-counselor duties or tasks you have been assigned?

63.5% - Scheduling

82.5% - Supervision

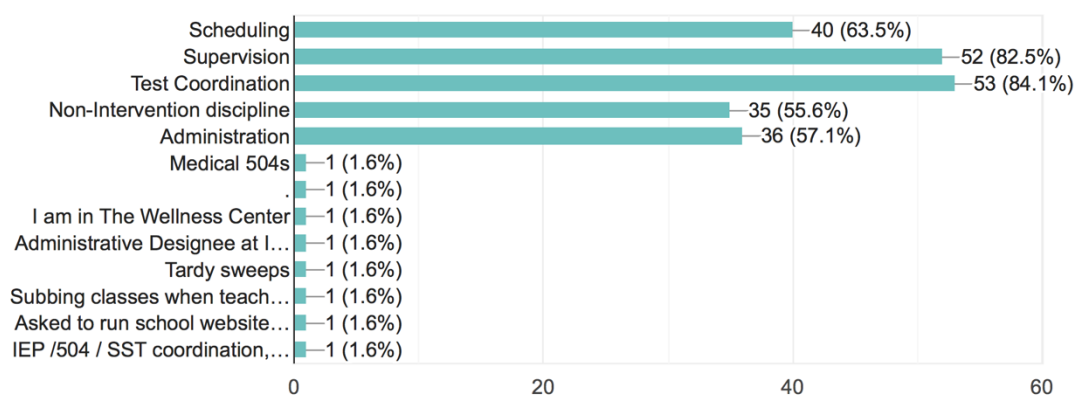
84.1% - Test Coordination

55.6% - Non-Intervention Discipline

57.1% - Administration Duties

What are some of the most common non-counselor duties or tasks you have been assigned?

63 responses



What barriers do you encounter when serving students?

85.7% - Insufficient time to meet with students

68.3% - Insufficient time to build rapport with students

34.9% - Lack of support from administration

73% - Being assigned non-counseling duties

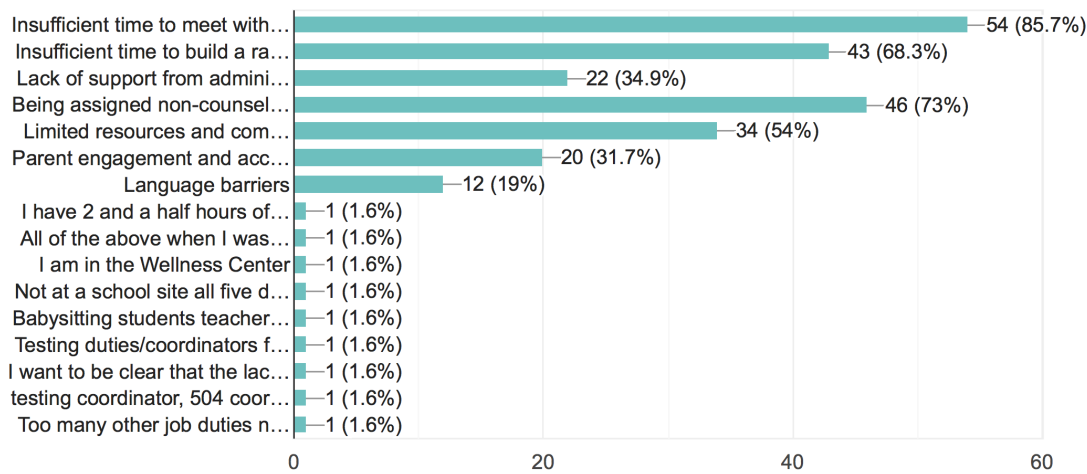
54% - Limited resources and commitment

31.7% - Parent engagement and access

19% - Language barriers

What barriers do you encounter when serving students? (Check all that apply)

63 responses



Discipline

Of the many inappropriate duties delegated to school counselors, being assigned non-intervention discipline is the most detrimental. Elementary, K-8, and middle school counselors are often tasked with non-intervention discipline, which impedes the development of a positive relationship between counselors and students, as well as the relationship between counselors' parents/guardians.

The American School Counselor Association's [Position Statement on School Counselor and Discipline](#) states "School counselors have specialized training and skills in promoting appropriate student behavior and preventing disruptive student behavior. School counselors maintain nonthreatening relationships with students to best promote student achievement and development and serve as a resource for school personnel in developing individual and schoolwide discipline procedures. School counselors should be, by policy, designated as neutral and resourceful consultants, mediators and student advocates. It is not the school counselor's role to serve as an enforcement agent for the school but rather be a significant contributor to the development of the prevention and intervention programs through which problem behaviors are managed and positive behaviors are nurtured."

WHY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM?

Elementary, middle, and high school counselors define and focus the school counseling program based on the school's academic, attendance, and discipline data. Identifying student needs through this data and consulting with administrators directs the program development. School counselors balance their program by addressing students' academic, career and social/emotional development in addition to balancing the delivery methods, recognizing that students learn in multiple ways.

The end result of this work is reflected in improvement in academic, attendance and discipline outcomes related to academic development, college and career readiness, and social/ emotional development.

Direct student services, including:

instruction – teaching the school counseling curriculum to students focused through the lens of selected student standards from the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success.

appraisal and advisement – assessing student abilities, interests and achievement to help them make decisions about their future.

counseling – providing professional assistance and support to a student or small group of students during times of transition, heightened stress, critical change or other situations impeding student success. School counselors do not provide therapy or long-term counseling in schools. However, school counselors are prepared to recognize and respond to student mental health needs and assist students and families seeking resources.

Indirect student services, including:

consultation – share strategies supporting student achievement with parents, teachers, other educators and community organizations

collaboration – work with other educators, parents and the community to support student achievement

referrals – support for students and families to school or community resources for additional assistance and information

What are the benefits of a Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP)?

CSCP positively impact students, parents, boards and departments of education, teachers, site-administrators, school counselors, counselor educators/universities, post-secondary institutions, student services personnel, business and industry, and the community. The benefits to each of these groups include the following:

Benefits for Students

- Prepares students for the challenges of the 21st century through academic, career, and personal/social development
- Relates educational program to future success
- Facilitates career exploration and development
- Develops decision-making and problem-solving skills
- Assists in acquiring knowledge of self and others
- Enhances personal development
- Assists in developing effective interpersonal relationship skills
- Broadens knowledge of our changing world
- Provides advocacy for students
- Encourages facilitative, cooperative peer interactions
- Fosters resiliency factors for students
- Assures equitable access to educational opportunities

Benefits for Parents

- Prepares their children for the challenges of the 21st century through academic, career, and personal/social development
- Provides support for parents in advocating for their child's academic, career, and personal/social development
- Develops a system for their child's long-range planning and learning

- Increases opportunities for parent/school interaction
- Enables parents to access school and community resources

Benefits for The Long Beach Unified School District Board of Education, Executive Staff, and Site Administrators

- Provides rationale for implementing a comprehensive school counseling program in the school system
- Provides assurance that a quality counseling program is available to all students
- Demonstrates the necessity of appropriate levels of funding for implementation
- Supports appropriate credentialing and staffing
- Provides a basis for determining funding allocations for school counseling programs
- Furnishes program information to the community
- Gives ongoing information about student competencies and Standards for Excellence attained through school counseling program efforts

Benefits for Teachers

- Provides an interdisciplinary team effort to address students' personal/social needs and educational goals
- Provides skill development for teachers in classroom management, teaching effectiveness and affective education
- Provides consultation to assist teachers in their guidance role

Benefits for Administrators

- Integrates school counseling with the academic mission of the school
- Provides a program structure with specific content
- Assists administration to use school counselors effectively to enhance learning and development for all students
- Provides a means of evaluating school counseling programs

Benefits for School Counselors

- Provides a clearly defined role and function
- Eliminates non-counseling functions
- Provides direct and indirect service to all students
- Provides a tool for program management and accountability
- Enhances the role of the school counselor as a student advocate
- Ensures involvement in the academic mission of the school

Benefits for Counselor Educators/Universities

- Enhances collaboration between counselor education programs and public schools
- Provides exemplary supervision sites for school counseling internships
- Increases opportunities for collaborative research on school counseling program effectiveness

Benefits for Post-secondary Institutions

- Enhances articulation and transition of students to post-secondary institutions
- Prepares students for advanced educational opportunities
- Motivates students to seek a wide range of substantial post-secondary options, including college

Benefits for the Community and Business Industry

- Creates community awareness and visibility of the student support systems required for student success
- Enhances economic development through quality preparation of students for the world of work
- Provides an increased opportunity for collaboration and participation of community members to within the program

- Provides the future workforce with decision-making skills, pre-employment skills, and career development skills
- Educates the community and business members to the needs of the school

Benefits for Student Services Personnel

- Differentiate the various roles of school psychologists, social workers, mental health professionals, and other professional student services personnel, and clearly define the role of the school counselor, and highlight the areas of overlapping responsibilities
- Fosters a positive team approach, which enhances cooperative working relationships

As our culture and educational institutions change, school counseling practices are emerging to better meet the needs of today’s students. School counselors are accomplishing this by, among other activities, the following:

Preparing and delivering classroom guidance lessons which impact all students in a preventative and proactive manner

Studying data to determine which students are not being adequately serviced

Using data to improve program delivery and implementation

Ensuring that all students are college-ready, whether or not they choose to enter a post-secondary education immediately after high school

Providing the necessary college and career education so that all students can make informed choices

Creating job readiness programs that include job shadowing, internships, and career education curriculum.

Conclusion:

Sometimes the best blueprint for a path toward the future can be designed by utilizing blueprints from the past. During the 90s, the Long Beach Unified School District was challenged by critical issues and crises such as overrepresentation of Black males in Special Education, achievement gap between White students and students of color, high drop-out rate, youth incarceration, unprecedented gang violence, and severe violence on school campuses. There were three distinct themes that were

consistently used district-wide and in the community to address how these challenges would be met:

It Takes a Village to Raise A Child: This African Proverb was used to mobilize and challenge the community to build the community assets needed to meet the major challenges that were confronting our parents, students, schools, and community. It was a call to cultivate a community building initiative.

Crisis equals Opportunity: In 1959, John F. Kennedy stated, “The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word for ‘crisis.’ One brush stroke stands for danger: the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger—but recognize the opportunity.” As there were many challenges – and crises - facing the entire Long Beach community during this period in our district’s history, we were reminded to both understand the crises of the moment, but to also find the opportunities moving forward.

Carpe diem: The Latin phrase was used to usher in an urgency for all stakeholders to take the energy and support derived both “It Takes a Village to Raise a Child” and “Crisis equals Opportunity” to “seize the day!”

The district responded with bold initiatives such as:

- Becoming the first district in the country to mandate uniforms
- Elementary School Reforms: Ready or not
- Middle School Reform: Caught in the Middle
- High School Reform: Second to None
- 9th grade academy
- Gang Alternative & Prevention Program (G.A.P.P.) with the Los Angeles County Probation Department
- Village 2000 Project

Schools responded by implementing cutting edge evidence-based approaches, such as:

- Adopting cutting-edge school reform models, such as Dr. James Comer’s Comer School Development Programs
- Adopting the national renowned Henry Levin’s Accelerated School Model
- HIPPIE Program (Home Instructional for Parents of Pre-School Youngsters)
- S.A.L.T. Program
- Rites of Passage Programs

- Second Step Program (Committee for Children)

All the reforms and structures that were implemented during this crucial period in Long Beach Schools, were instituted with counselors playing a pivotal role in providing direct and indirect counseling and guidance services to students, and support services to, parents, and teachers. School counselors responded to these challenges by implementing effective research-based programs such as Second Step and Think First, Young Black Scholars, to name a few, and coordinated support programs such as the Village 2000 Mentor Program, the Personal Pal Mentoring Program to name a few.

The Long Beach Unified School District prides itself on being bold, and cutting-edge, data-driven, and has received local, state, national and international acclaim. Like many school districts in California, the district has made great progress in focusing on higher academic standards, greater accountability, and improved teacher preparation and support. However, the missing link in the overall improvements and reforms for the past 20 years, has been school counseling reform. The aforementioned academic initiatives and reforms have resulted in school counselors being overburden with additional administrative functions - to assist with the implementation of the initiatives - that they no longer have the time to carry out their school counseling duties. The district is urged to take the bold initiative and explore the process of developing a district-wide Comprehensive School Counseling Program.

In order to develop a Comprehensive School Counseling Program, duties that are assigned to counselors and student to counselor ratios must be aligned with the Standards for the School Counseling Profession.

Currently, our students, families, and schools are experiencing some immense challenges. As our past has taught us that sometimes the best blueprint for a path toward the future can be designed by utilizing blueprints from the past.

It Takes A Village: As all the stakeholders work together to provide our student with the appropriate SEL necessary for them to achieve their academic and career aspirations, school counselors take great pride in being the first responders in supporting our students and families.

Crisis Equals Opportunity: The COVID crisis has decimated communities throughout the country. Schools are struggling with implementing supports to meet the needs of the students, families, and teachers. However, there are opportunities

that we can take from the experiences we've had in dealing with the multitude of challenges that resulted from COVID. One opportunity is for the Long Beach Unified School District to examine the practice of counselors being utilized to perform administrative functions, instead of being professional school counselors, and utilizing data to provide evidence-based programs and supports to students and families.

Carpe diem: Now is the time to include school counseling as a priority in addressing the needs of our students, by making the bold move and approving the Organizing Committee's recommendation that the Long Beach Unified School District implements a Comprehensive School Counseling Program. The research presented in this report is clear that there are great benefits to implementing this approach.

Again, our report has demonstrated the substantial research to support the implementation of a Comprehensive School Counseling Program. Furthermore, there is no research to suggest that assigning counselors to non-counseling and administrative duties improves students' academic, personal/social and career development, school climate, or resiliency development.

You will not find a more dedicated group of employees in the Long Beach Unified School District than school counselors. This was demonstrated during the world-wide COVID pandemic. School counselors immediately stepped up and mobilized. We delivered materials, books, Chromebooks, supplies, school work, and hotspots, to our families.

In addition, we resourced local food banks and delivered food clothing, and made community referrals to our most vulnerable families. Many extended themselves to families after work hours, on the weekends, and during the summer.

School counselors are pleased with the additional 12 social workers who were hired for the 2022-2023 school year. The work they will provide students and families in the Wellness Centers is a much needed resource. However, this does not diminish the enormous challenges school counselors are going to face as we are tasked with providing support for all students. Although, there are minor overlap in the duties of social workers and counselors as it relates to social/emotional support, counselors are primarily educators and have school wide responsibilities regarding academic and career development.

School counselors are asking to finally be recognized and appreciated as professional counselors, and not continue to be the “Jack of all trades, master of none.” The data supports it, the research is definitive, and our students need it!

We know that this won’t be easy and will take a lot of hard work. However, comprehensive change and reform are usually difficult and painstaking, but are often necessary. This is one of those rare times, but our district has always been able to meet the challenges of the time. We also know that it won’t be free and will include some budgetary considerations. However, empirical data suggests that our kids have been severely damaged by this once in a generation pandemic, at-risk indicators of our students and families are at an all-time high, and research shows that a Comprehensive School Counseling Program is effective in assisting students in their Academic, Personal/Social and Career Development, and increase their resilience.

With this indisputable compilation of research, the question at hand is not “how can we afford to do this? The most obvious question is how can we afford to not do this?”