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Subject:

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The need for Elementary School Counselors and a 1:250 Ratio for ALL CT School Counselors

As a counselor educator and former school counselor, I want to share a very clear message with you. **One of the contributions to our static achievement gap in Connecticut is the lack of equitable access to high quality mental health supports in our schools.** Every student in CT deserves to have the support of a highly qualified school counselor available to them from kindergarten through grade 12 to help them to develop academically, socially, emotionally and vocationally. Navigating the minefield of childhood and adolescence requires the consistent support of not only parents and educators, but those individuals trained to foster positive mental health. **Early intervention is paramount - especially now when 1 in 5 children have a diagnosable mental health disorder but only 20% are ever identified or treated.**

Currently access to school counselors is zipcode dependent in our state. As a school counselor educator I drive from school to school and witness, first hand, the stark difference between plush school counseling suites with 1 counselor for every 200 students, a SC coordinator, large budgets, professional esteem and a lengthy list of community partners who work with their shared student/family population. In these schools, less than 20% of students are living in poverty. Down the road, separated by zipcode and deeply dependent on local funding, school counseling departments often lack resources, consistent leadership, access to professional development, and a paucity of outside. In those schools, students often have experienced a great deal of trauma because more than 80% of these students live in poverty. So, why are there more school counselors in schools where children and their families already enjoy a high level of support? Because administrators understand that the more school counselors that are available, the more contact parents can have with an adult in the building who will support their child. The parents are enfranchised and they demand that level of "customer service". **Parents in high poverty areas are often unaware of this painful discrepancy in services unless they have sent their child to a better funded suburban schools.**

I will close by sharing this - the first night of my first year graduate course in school counseling I asked my 20 students to stand on one side of the room if they had a positive experience with their school counselor and to stand on the opposite side of the room if they had a negative experience. Of the 20 students, 8 were students of color and 2 had attended low achieving schools. The remainder were white and had attended suburban high schools in CT. All 8 students of color and the two who attended low achieving schools moved to the negative side. All 10 white suburban students moved to the positive side. This was only 2 years ago. These are the courageous conversations I have with my students. This is the courageous conversation we must have with lawmakers. We cannot give our students with the most need the least amount of support and expect things to change in CT. **We know that the presence of a consistent and caring School counselor who provides a comprehensive school counseling program guided by evidence practices and aligned multi-tiered systems of support makes a difference. It is crystal clear when we look at the data.** It is a moral imperative to address this egregious imbalance that sustains the status quo. Our kids deserve better. They deserve well trained, well informed, highly empathetic school counselors who reflect the diversity of our student population. Those school counselors should be present in ALL K-12 schools and no counselors should have to

support more than 250 students during a single academic year. We would NEVER give a kindergarten teacher 50 students and expect high quality results. So, why would you give school counselors in CT, on average, 435 students and expect them to support students in a meaningful way??

I support any and all efforts to make access to school counseling equitable in the state of CT in order to ensure a brighter future for ALL of our precious children who are brimming with potential.

Thank you,

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"Talk to yourself like you would to someone you love." - Brene Brown

CCSU School Counseling Program Website: http://www2.ccsu.edu/program/CounselorEducation-SchoolCounseling_MS

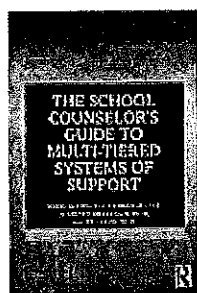


Instagram

Follow us on Instagram at [ccsu_school_counseling_program](https://www.instagram.com/ccsu_school_counseling_program)

Read up on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support!

The School Counselor's Guide to MTSS (Goodman-Scott, Betters-Bubon & Donohue, 2019). Routledge Publishers



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