

INDIANA SCHOOL COUNSELOR SURVEY

2025-26 Results Summary

NOVEMBER 2025



2025-26 Indiana School Counselor Survey Results

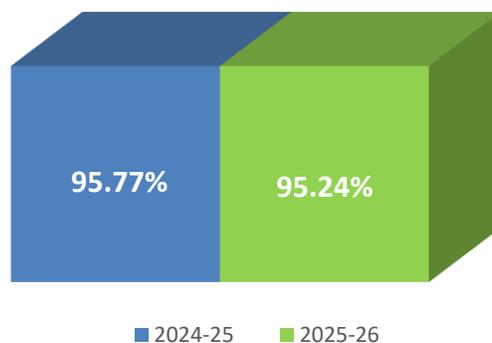
The annual Indiana School Counselor Survey - conducted statewide since 2011 – provides a snapshot of professional school counseling at the elementary, middle, and high school levels in the Hoosier state. It also offers comparisons with previous years to assess trends over time. More than 500 Indiana counselors, approximately a quarter of all school counselors in the state, responded to this year's survey sponsored collaboratively by Inspire Success, the Indiana School Counselor Association (INSCA), and the Indiana Association of College Admission Counseling (INACAC).

Survey results are organized according to the three primary focus areas of school counseling - helping students succeed in the areas of academic achievement, well-being, and readiness for postsecondary and career success – with additional data related to school counselor time use and counseling program quality and support.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Consistent with last year's survey results, more than 95% of Indiana school counselors hold a firm belief that they positively impact student achievement (Graphic A).

Graphic A. % Agree/Strongly Agree "I positively impact student achievement"



Even with counselors' confidence in their ability to influence student achievement, a healthy majority (76.98%) agree or strongly agree that they could use additional training and resources to help more students succeed academically.

Some of the open-ended comments from the survey reflected that need, such as the following response to the question of what would make counselors’ work more effective:

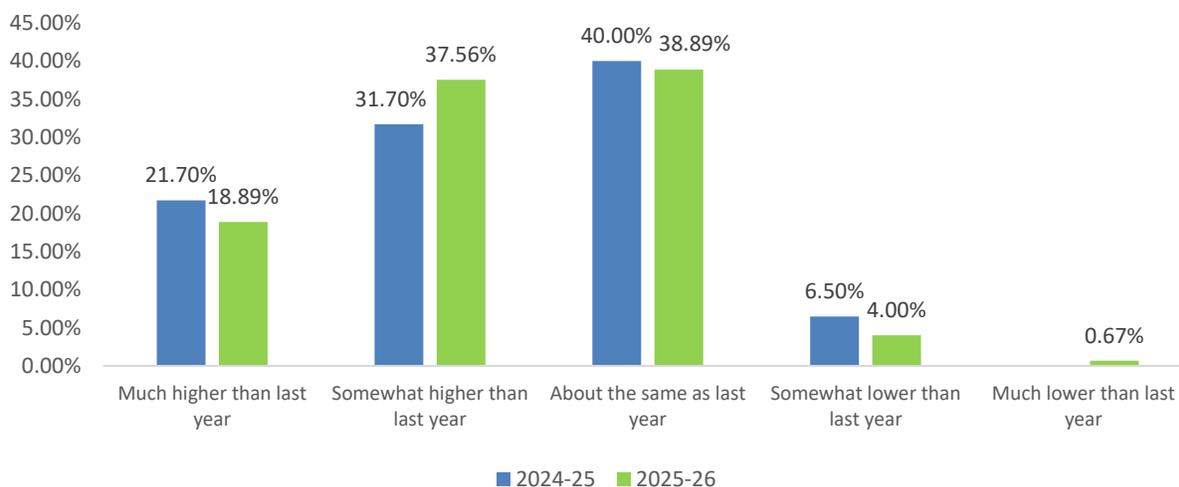
“A better understanding of what I can do as a school counselor to raise the achievement level of my students and get them closer to grade level.”

The need for research-based interventions and practical ideas regarding what school counselors can do to positively impact student academic achievement were specifically mentioned.

STUDENT WELL-BEING

A majority of school counselors (56.5%) believe **the social-emotional needs of their students are higher or much higher this year compared to last year**, up 3% (Graphic B).

Graphic B. Comparison of “the social-emotional needs of my students this school year” to Last Year



One survey respondent said they need, *“More support for students who need therapy, especially related to anxiety, chronic absenteeism.”* The seriousness of this need was noted by another survey respondent who said,

“We had a 6th grade student die by suicide...”

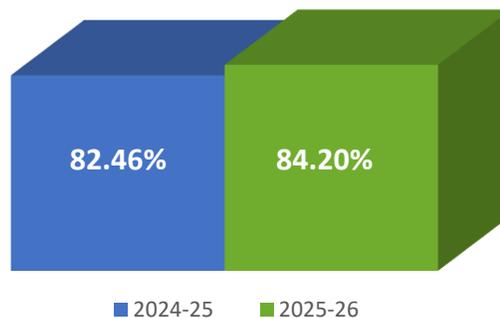
"We had a 6th grade student die by suicide last year. I am working locally to strengthen the education piece for parents of students struggling with their mental health but we are not there yet."

Some counselors feel they lack preventative resources that could help them identify and support students struggling with mental health challenges. Said one,

*"Our school currently has a calm down area, which is a helpful resource for students. However, **one of the biggest challenges we face is not always knowing what students are feeling in the moment.** Without this insight, it is difficult to make informed decisions about teaching strategies, building the right supports, or understanding the overall mood climate of the school at any given time."*

A slightly higher percentage (1.54%) of school counselor respondents this year compared to last indicated they needed more resources and training to help students with social-emotional needs (Graphic C).

Graphic C. % Agree/Strongly Agree to Needing More Resources/Training for Student S-E Needs



One counselor indicated that the professional development needs are greatest for *"students struggling with their mental health who have limited resources themselves, such as no insurance and no access to mental health care."*

Yet, this year's survey indicated some bright spots in the availability of resources and support for students struggling with mental health related issues. 84.65% (compared to 83.89% last year) agreed or strongly agreed that their school had an

"agreement and/or memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a local community mental health partner."

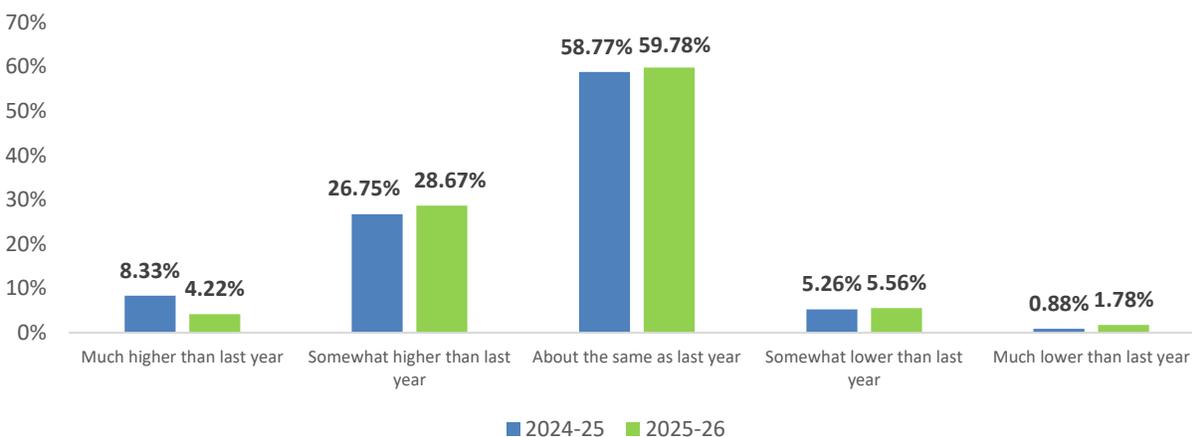
And though less than half of respondents (47.18%) agreed or strongly agreed that *"The availability of local mental health specialists to which we can refer our students is adequate,"* the percentage of positive responses this year was much higher than the total of 36.97% agreeing with the same statement last year.

Recent national questions about the value of social-emotional learning (SEL) do not appear to have dampened local support with 76.59% of respondents this year agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement that *"my community supports social-emotional programming at my school"* compared to approximately the same percentage (76.71%) as last year.

STUDENT READINESS FOR SUCCESS

A majority of school counselors reported that **approximately the same amount of career and college readiness activities were available to their students this year compared to last year** (Graphic D).

Graphic D. Amount of Readiness Activities/Strategies Available to Students This Year Compared to Last



Nevertheless, ten percent of survey respondents indicated an interest in professional development related specifically to helping students with college and career readiness. Requests were made for "ready to use" classroom resources on workforce trends and career-related resources for all student developmental levels - elementary, middle, and high school – not just resources for high schools.

Several respondents sought to reach state leaders with the message that career readiness includes helping students succeed academically and social-emotionally, not just talking about careers.

*“The push from the IDOE and the statehouse seems to be entirely career related and tied to the chamber of commerce and business interests. **I’d like support to help us develop students who are decent human beings and prepared to function in and contribute to the well being of their community.** I’d like [state counselor associations] to communicate clearly to legislators, state leaders, and the IDOE that career counseling is only a third of our responsibility and that they need to stop pushing out the other two domains.”*

Another noted,

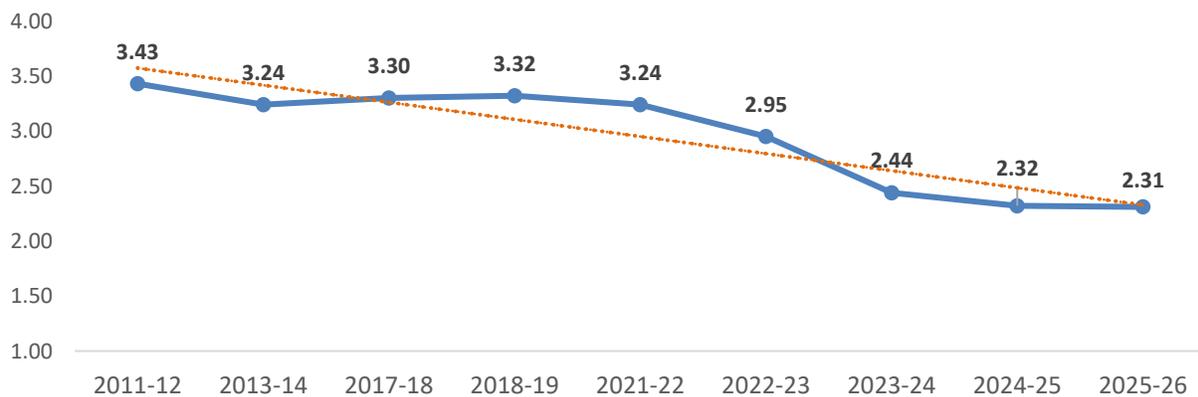
*“It seems that school counselors are having to divide their attention to the college and career aspect of counseling and don’t have enough time to focus on social-emotional which is honestly more important. **If students are feeling socially and emotionally supported then they will be more motivated to work on their academic and career goals.**”*

SCHOOL COUNSELOR TIME USE

Having enough time to work with students continued a steady downward trend with the average number of school counselor survey respondents saying they have enough time to meet with students falling to a new low (Graphic E).

Graphic E. "I have enough time to meet with students"

1=Strongly Disagree to 4=Strongly Agree



As in past years, school counselors are frustrated over having to spend time on clerical and test monitoring duties and less time with students. Many expressed frustration with the actions of state leaders and legislators that require counselors to spend more time understanding and monitoring student graduation requirements.

“There is so much time wasted on tracking. The new Indiana Diploma will be impossible to track and will take so much more of our time.”

“The rollout of the new diploma and information related to it has been completely unacceptable. We are not equipped to guide students and families effectively.”

“Taking money away from schools when you're also implementing these new ridiculous diplomas with their asinine requirements that nobody has time to track and we can't hire anyone to help because the state cut funding? Great ideas, Indiana.”

“The one thing that would help me be a more effective school counselor is less testing on our plates [and] more time to work with students.”

Counselors expressed concerns about what they perceive as an increasing disconnect between what is expected of them and the pressures they and their students experience every day.

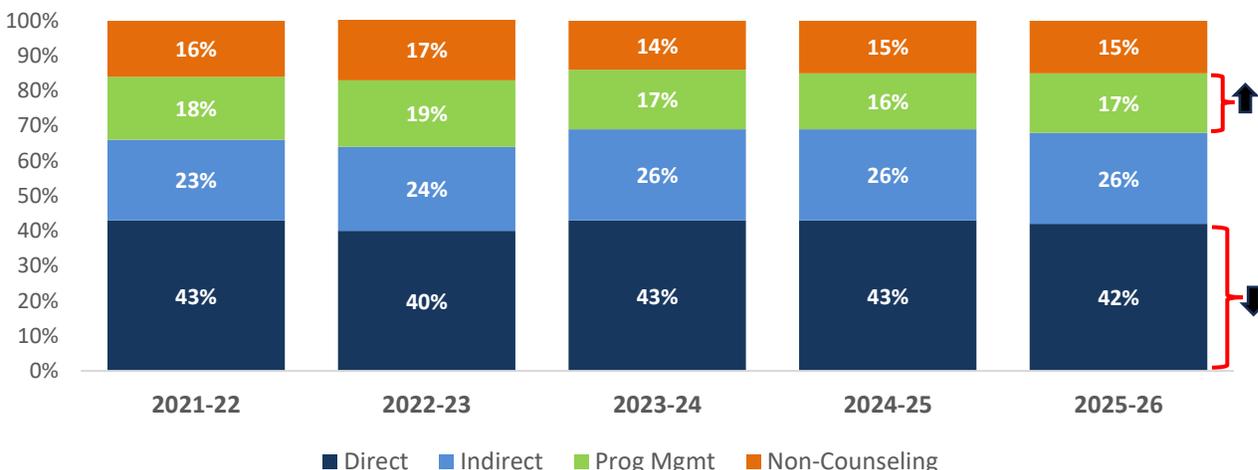
Said one, “There is such a discrepancy with the reality that is public school and what the state believes. Public schools and school counselors are literally acting in crisis mode. The voice of rural schools and our needs are not being heard.”

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has long recommended school counselors spend 80% or more of their time directly or indirectly helping students and 20% or less on program management.

But in Indiana school counselors consistently report spending less than 70% of their time helping students and the remaining time split between program management and non-counseling tasks that do not advance student success.

This year, school counselors reported a 1% drop in the percentage of time they are able to spend directly with students (Graphic F).

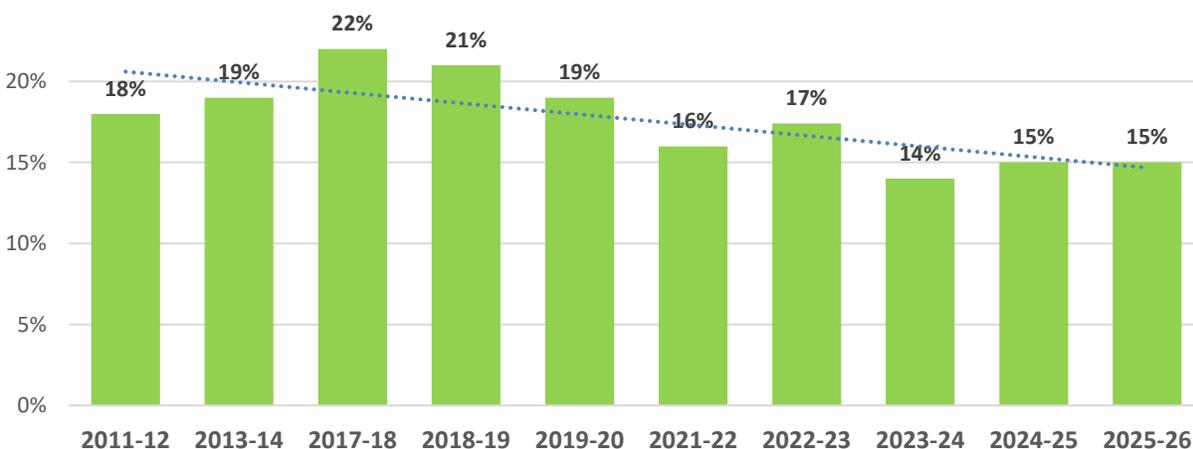
Graphic F. School Counselor Time Use



Non-counseling tasks – such as proctoring tests or monitoring the lunch room – appear difficult to remove from counselors’ responsibilities, averaging between 15 and 22% of a school counselor’s day for the last 14 years (Graphic G).

Drilling down into the non-counseling tasks, school counselors reported spending an average of 12.7% of their time last year proctoring or supervising testing and 26.1% on data entry for student enrollment, graduation tracking, and scheduling.

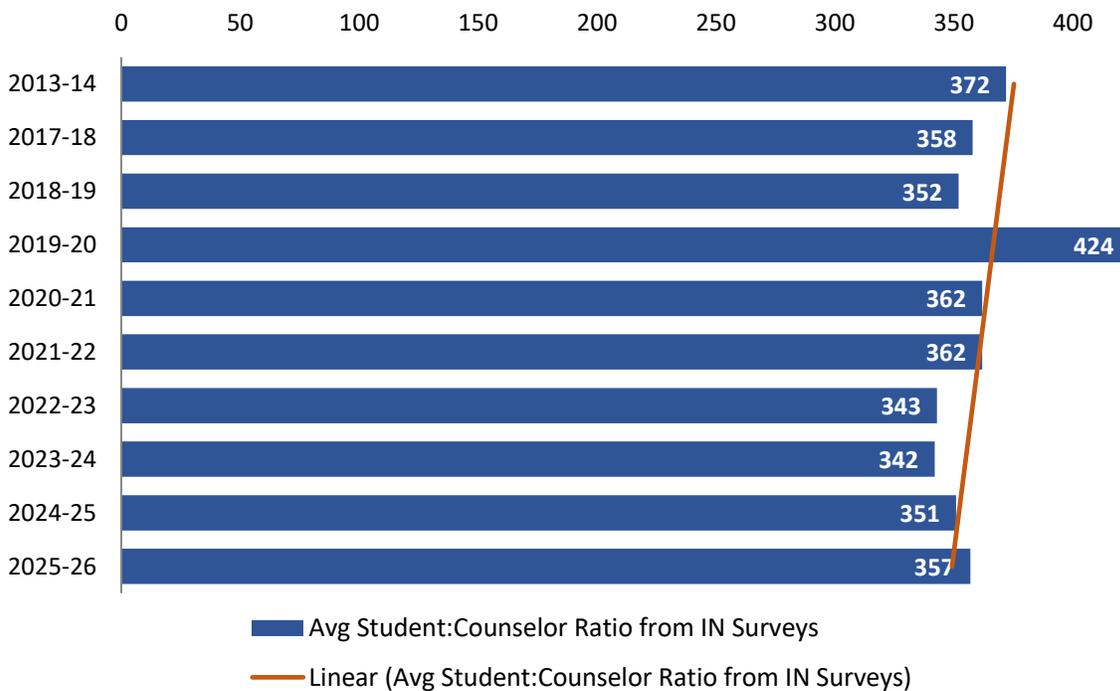
Graphic G. Non-Counseling Tasks Percentage of Time



Counselor caseloads are another significant influence on the amount of time counselors spend with students. After two years of falling, average Indiana student

to counselor ratios rose last year and continued to rise this year with survey respondents reporting average caseloads at 357 students per counselor (Graphic H). The nationally recommended caseload by ASCA is no more than 250 students per counselor.¹

Graphic H. Average Indiana Student to Counselor Ratios Over Time



Nearly 10% of survey respondents this year specifically suggested smaller caseloads would help them be more effective. One comment summed up the responses of many:

“It all comes back to one thing. Time. My time is spent in paperwork or meetings rather than being with my students face to face. If my caseload was smaller and I was not required to complete so much paperwork, I could be with my students.”

¹ According to the [American School Counselor Association \(ASCA\)](https://www.asca.org/)

When asked to estimate how much time they spent on paperwork last year, Indiana school counselors reported spending an average of 26.1% of their time on data entry and 12.6% of their time proctoring or supervising testing.

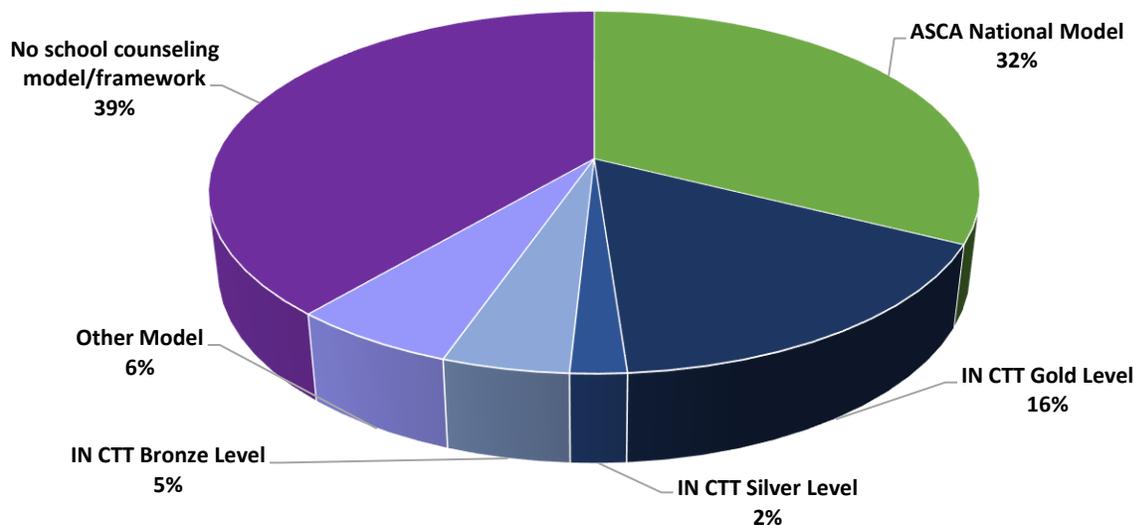
SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM QUALITY

Nearly two-thirds (61.0%) of school counselors report having a comprehensive counseling program in place to ensure program quality (Graphic I).

Almost a quarter of schools (22.9%) implemented a model using Indiana's *Carrying the Torch to Student Success (CTT)* process. **Together, the figures mean that half (49.1%) of all Indiana schools are using the national counseling model to organize their school counseling programs.**²

Half of all Indiana schools are using the national counseling model to organize their school counseling programs.

Graphic I. Comprehensive Counseling Model Use



Several counselors reported working towards aligning their day-to-day work with a comprehensive counseling model but acknowledging that it takes time. Said one, *"We are encouraged to try to get there!"* and another, *"...but very much a work in*

² The figure represents the sum of 32.6% schools using the ASCA National Model and 16.5% which have reached Indiana's Gold Level status which is aligned to the ASCA National Model.

progress!" The one element a majority (77.2%) of survey respondents said was missing from their school counseling program was a program advisory council that includes parents and community representatives.

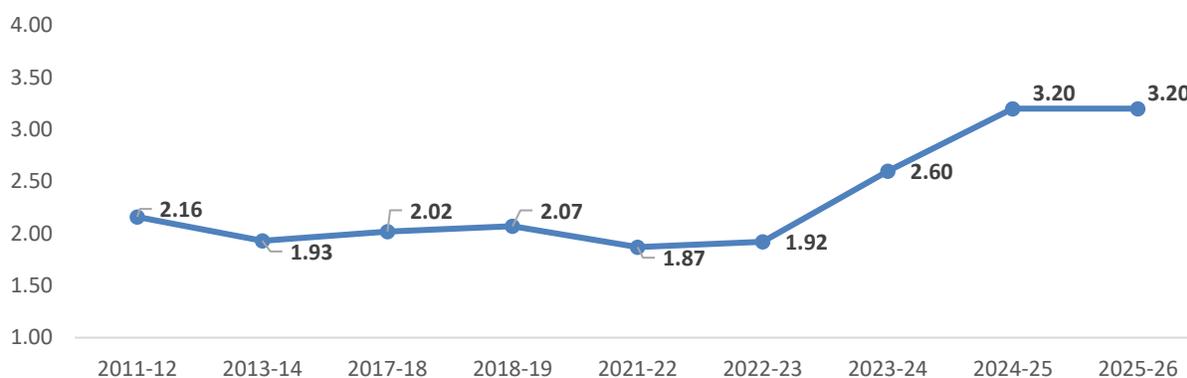
SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM SUPPORT

Administrator Support

On average, a majority of Indiana school counselors continue to feel positive about the support they receive from principals and administrators. Survey results from the last three years have been significantly higher than those over the last decade with a strong majority of survey respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that their principal understands and supports their role as counselors (Graphic J).

Graphic J. Administrators Support/Understand Role of Counselors

1=Strongly Disagree to 4=Strongly Agree



Said one counselor, *"I feel like I have great support and resources. I would love to have a group where we can share with other districts what they are doing in their programs and what works for them."*

But not all respondents were happy. Some feel their administrators do not respect their opinions or fully comprehend what school counselors do. One counselor summarized it this way:

"Principals continue to not understand the role of counselors. This should be a significant portion of their training - perhaps a requirement to shadow counselors for a certain number of hours."

In addition to requesting more support from administrators, many survey respondents noted the need for additional resources and training related to

students' mental health, working with undocumented students and families, increasing student motivation, helping students in emotional distress with de-escalation and co-regulation, and other areas.

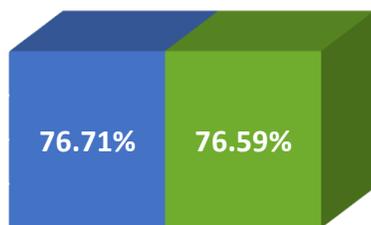
Several respondents commented they are struggling with implementing Indiana's new graduation requirements while at the same time helping students cope with a variety of social-emotional issues.

"So much is being added to the responsibilities of school counselors from all directions: diploma changes, work-based learning options, graduation pathways, an explosion of social-emotional needs from students. It feels like there is a growing expectation that we have to be available at all hours of the day to provide support."

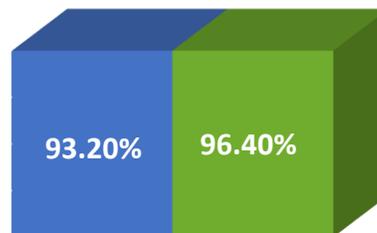
Community Support

Counselors perceive very strong support from their communities related to programming about college and career readiness, with more than 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing that their community is supportive (Graphic L).

Graphic K. Agree/Strongly Agree "My Community Supports SEL"



Graphic L. Agree/Strongly Agree "My Community Supports College/Career Programming"



Though fewer counselors agreed that their community supports social-emotional learning (SEL), overall support was still rated as positive by more than three-quarters of respondents (Graphic K).

Some communities continue to associate support for students' mental health with politically unpopular programs such as critical race theory (CRT). One respondent noted, *"Our school board associates SEL with CRT because ONE teacher discussed CRT topics during a designated SEL lesson. That one action shut down [our SEL] services to all schools."*

A way to deal with suspicion and misperceptions of counseling programs was suggested by another respondent who said their school's counseling program could be strengthened by, *"building relationships with parents and finding ways to bring parents into the school to see what the teachers and the counselors are doing."*

SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM NEEDS

Professional development related to understanding Indiana's new graduation requirements and addressing the mental health needs of students were the two most frequently requested topics school counselors requested in this year's survey. Requests for more resources related to preparing students for postsecondary education and careers ranked third.

☐ *Indiana's New Graduation Requirements*

Many counselors used the survey to vent their frustration about the time required to master Indiana's new graduation requirements. Several reflected a basic understanding of the new rules but are seeking additional information to feel more *"comfortable and confident."* Resources such as graduation tracking software and a statewide student information system (SIS) were mentioned as ways to make monitoring of students' graduation requirements more efficient and less time-consuming.

☐ *Student Mental Health Needs*

Counselors reflected a desire for a wide spectrum of resources to better aid students struggling with emotional, social, and mental health challenges. Many asked for *"practicable resources that can be put into practice immediately in individual or group counseling"* related to grief counseling, solutions-focused therapy, trauma, executive functioning skills, motivation, and other areas.

☐ *College and Career Readiness*

Indiana's efforts to increase the career and postsecondary readiness of students appear to be supported by school counselors, but survey respondents indicated more training is needed on how to get more students to complete work-based learning. Additional resources and training need to be expanded to families as well as students in the elementary and middle school levels. Said one respondent:

"Public schools are in a funding crisis, asking counselors to put more work in and not give us resources is a recipe for people to leave the profession."

The percentage totals in Table M. convey strong percentages of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the need for more training and resources in a variety of areas.

Table M. Counselors Agreeing/Strongly Agreeing to Needing Resources

Helping students succeed academically.	77.0%
Helping students prepare to succeed in college and other postsecondary education/training programs.	68.0%
Helping students understand the various postsecondary education and training options, in addition to four-year college, to help them prepare for a career.	70.2%
Helping students improve their social-emotional well-being, motivation, and/or self-efficacy.	84.2%

CONCLUSION

Consistent with previous surveys, results of the 2025-26 Indiana School Counselor Survey convey a continued desire from school counselors for more time, training, and supportive resources to ensure a greater number of students succeed.

Indiana's school counselors feel the social-emotional needs of their students are greater this year than last and request additional resources and training to better meet students' mental health challenges as well as the state's new graduation requirements.

While support from principals and school communities is high, counselors feel pressured by a lack of time and resources to meet both the expectations of the state and the needs of students.

Indiana School Counselor Association (INSCA) Executive Board Chair Lydia McNeiley says this year's survey results will be used to "strengthen our advocacy at the state level, ensuring that school counselors' voices are heard in policy decisions." She says the feedback will help INSCA be purposeful in how it supports school counselors in advancing the profession by providing expanded "professional development, practical resources, addressing workload challenges, promoting wellness and recognition, and enhancing membership value."

The annual survey of Indiana school counselors is produced through a collaboration between the Indiana School Counselor Association (ISCA), Indiana

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Association of College Admission Counselors (INACAC), and Inspire Success whose mission is to inspire those who help students succeed.

For questions about the annual Indiana School Counseling Survey, please contact Aimee Portteus at Inspire Success.

