



# 2023 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

First enacted in 2008 by H.B. 08-1370 and updated in 2014 by S.B. 14-150 and again in 2019 by H.B. 19-1187, Colorado’s School Counselor Corps Grant Program (SCCGP) aims to improve high school graduation rates and postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR) and participation by increasing the availability of effective school-based counseling services within K-12 schools. The program is administered by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and provides funding to eligible local education providers. SCCGP allocates funding for a four-year grant cycle as appropriations are available from the Colorado General Assembly.

### Focus of This Report

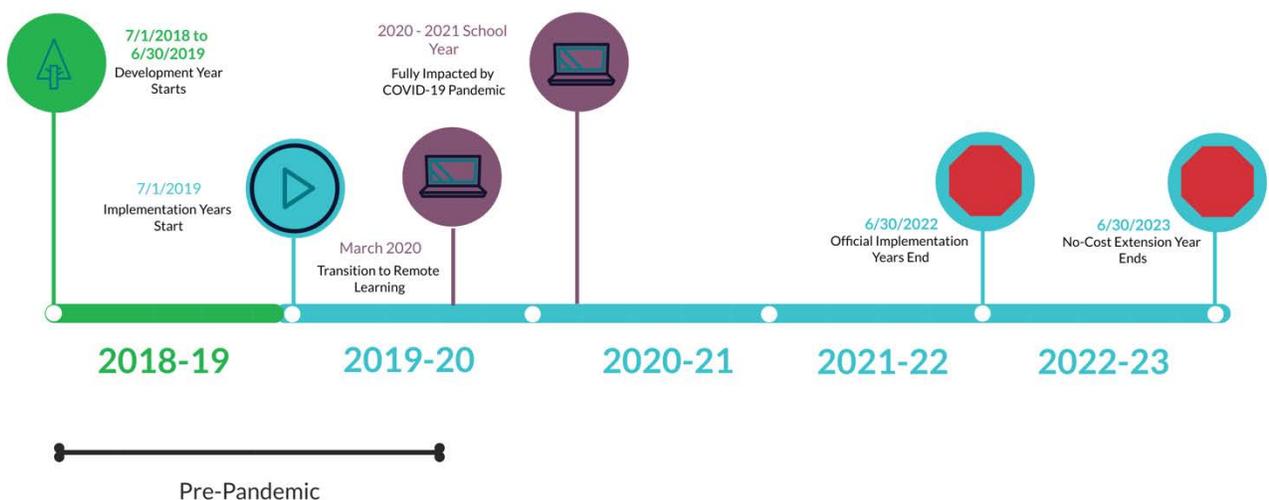
This report describes outcomes of the SCCGP Cohort 8 at the close of the four-year grant period. The SCCGP Cohort 8 grant began with a development year of July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019, and the subsequent three years of the grant were implementation years of July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2022.

Information presented in this report is similar to recent legislative reports, with one notable exception: due to the limited number of secondary schools in Cohort 8, most secondary and postsecondary outcomes are not reported. This change in Cohort makeup is a result of the program’s expansion in S.B. 17-068 to include elementary schools.

### Context for Cohort 8 Reporting: Implications of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic likely influenced the outcomes for Cohort 8. As shown in Figure 1, Cohort 8 experienced disruption of educational delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic during the last few months of the 2019-20 academic year (Year 2, the first year of implementation), which lasted through the entirety of the 2020-21 academic year (Year 3). Though most schools returned to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year, it is likely that the ripple effects of the ongoing pandemic continued to impact students, educators, counselors, schools, and their communities.

**FIGURE 1: SCCGP Cohort 8 Timeline**





Additionally, due to the pandemic, Cohort 8 was given a no-cost extension year to spend funding. While Cohort 8 schools did not receive additional funding in 2022-23, they had until June 30, 2023, to spend all awarded funds from the four years of the grant.

### SCCGP Cohort 8 Description

A total of 23 schools were included in SCCGP Cohort 8. Of these, most (65.2%) were elementary schools, which is a substantially larger percentage when compared with previous cohorts. For example, Cohort 7 included only 16.9% elementary schools. See Table 1 for a full breakdown. Funding was provided to schools across the state, including both urban and rural communities.

**TABLE 1: SCCGP Cohort 8 School Levels Served**

	High School	Middle School	Elementary School	Serves Middle & High	Serves Elementary & Middle
<b>Count</b>	2	3	15	2	1
<b>% of Cohort</b>	8.7%	13.0%	65.2%	8.7%	4.3%

#### Percentage of Historically Underserved Students in SCCGP Cohort 8 Schools is Higher than the State Average (2021-22)

- 58% (grantees) vs. 37% (state) of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch
- 59% (grantees) vs. 48% (state) of students identifying as students of color
- 14% (grantees) vs. 12% (state) of students changed schools outside of the typical enrollment process
- 2.0% (grantees) vs. 1.3% (state) of students experience homelessness

In the 2021-22 academic year, SCCGP Cohort 8 schools enrolled 9,043 students. SCCGP funding decisions (based on C.R.S. 22-91-104, state board rules, and program guidelines), prioritize schools with dropout rates that exceed the state average, schools with a high percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (FRL)<sup>1</sup>, postsecondary remediation rates at secondary schools that exceed the state average, and elementary schools with higher rates of K-3 students identified as having a significant reading deficiency. Thus, Cohort 8 schools, like previous Cohorts,<sup>2</sup> tend to serve students that exceed the state average on these metrics. For example, 59% of students in Cohort 8 schools were students of color and over half were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Students in Cohort 8 also experienced homelessness at a higher rate than the state average. In 2021-22, the final year of funding, Cohort 8 grantees collectively received \$1,980,000 in funding

<sup>1</sup> FRL rates had fluctuations in recent years. For example, universal meals during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a 3% drop in FRL rate statewide. In 2023-24, the FRL rate increased by 6%. This increase is due to the inclusion of Medicaid eligible students, which was likely off-set by lower FRL forms being completed due to the Healthy School Meals for All.

<sup>2</sup> Previous reports to the Colorado legislature on School Counselor Corps Grant Program can be found [here](#).



## SCCGP Cohort 8 Outcomes

Outcomes examined in this report include student outcomes (dropout rates) and program outcomes (capacity built for grantee schools). Outcomes from Cohort 8 reflect the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

### Maintained Lower Dropout Rates

In the final year of the original grant term (2021-2022), the dropout rate for the 8 grantee schools serving grades 7-12 (0.9%) remained<sup>3</sup> below the state average (2.2%) but increased by .7% points from the implementation year.

### Made Progress on Goals

Over 40% of the goals set by grantees before the onset of the pandemic were self-reported as “exceeded” or “met” and an additional 44.7% of goals were notes as “making progress.”

### Built Capacity within Schools

- Funding from SCCGP moved student-counselor ratios from 860:1 to 276:1 across grantees, allowing counselors to provide more individualized support to students and their schools. The number of licensed school counselors in Cohort 8 schools went from 9.0 FTE before the beginning on the grant cycle to 25.5 FTE in the last year of the grant.
- SCCG sites attended nearly 2,000 hours of professional development in the final funding year alone, which further developed their knowledge, skills, and ability to meet students’ needs.
- Counselors engaged other professionals and community members in the ICAP process, building capacity within others at their school to support PWR.

Overall, while COVID-19 will likely continue to impact future cohorts, SCCGP enabled grantees to positively impact their students and school communities, build capacity to encourage sustainability beyond their four years of funding, and continue driving toward goals that support students’ postsecondary and workforce readiness.

## Plan for a Quasi-Experimental Study

In SFY22 CDE contracted with the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab to assess the impact of SCCGP on student engagement, educational attainment, and postsecondary readiness. Future legislative reports will detail the progress on this study and results. The quasi-experimental study is funded by a grant from the Office of State Planning and Budgeting.

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<sup>3</sup> The dropout rate in grantee schools was already lower than the state average before the beginning of the program.



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## Introduction

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H.B. 08-1370 established the School Counselor Corps Grant Program (SCCGP; C.R.S. 22-91-101, et seq.). This statute has been updated twice via S.B. 14-150 and H.B. 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 (CDE), the form of the grant application, criteria for awarding grants, and information to be included in the Department’s program report. Per 22-91-105, C.R.S. :

*On or before May 15, 2011, and on or before May 15 each year thereafter, the Department shall submit to the State Board of Education and to the education committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives, or any successor committees, a report that, at a minimum, summarizes the information received by the Department pursuant to subsection (1) of 22-91-105, C.R.S. The Department shall also post the report to its website.*

### Purpose of the Program

The purpose of SCCGP is to increase the availability of effective school-based counseling within K-12 schools with a focus on postsecondary preparation. SCCGP was created to increase the high school graduation rate and the percentage of students who successfully prepare for, apply to, and continue into postsecondary education, as well as to improve career readiness and success. To target these outcomes, the program leverages school counseling services, as guided by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) national model.

### Grant Application Process

Requests for applications (RFAs) 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.

The SCCGP statute defines an eligible education provider as:

- A school district (on behalf of one or more K-12 schools);
- A Board of Cooperative Educational Services;
- A charter school authorized by a local school board; or
- A charter school authorized by the Charter School Institute.

As is statutorily required, priority is given to applicants that serve:

- Secondary schools at which the dropout rate exceeded the statewide average;
- K-12 schools with a percentage of students who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch exceeding the statewide average; and/or
- Secondary schools with postsecondary remediation rates that exceeded the statewide average.

Allowable activities include K-12 school counselor salaries and benefits, postsecondary preparatory services, professional development, and program development. Since the 2014-15 school year, the General Assembly has appropriated approximately \$10,000,000 annually for SCCGP to be distributed to grantees across cohorts (in 2021-22: Cohorts 8, 9, 10, and 11) for implementing postsecondary success supports.

### 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, technical assistance, and supplemental grant application review. See [Appendix A](#) for a listing of School Counselor Corps Advisory Board members from 2021-22.



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## Program Design

The first three cohorts of the SCCGP received three years of funding for implementation. In the 2014-2015 academic year (Cohort 4), the program design shifted through a statutory change from S.B. 14-150 to address program planning challenges. The current grant structure provides four years of funding, with a lower funding level in the first year for development and a greater funding level for the three remaining years. The development year (Year 1) allows grantees time and support to complete an environmental scan, a comprehensive needs assessment, goal-setting activities, and other best practices recommended by ASCA to ensure subsequent grant funds will be used effectively. The implementation years (two through four) support execution of grantees' comprehensive school counselor program plans, including the hiring of certified school counselors, the purchase or development of curricula or postsecondary planning programs, and/or college visits. Starting with Cohort 4, CDE staff also 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.

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## Evaluation Approach

### Evaluation History

The SCCGP has shown promise since its implementation began over a decade ago, [as shown in previous legislative reports](#). Legislative reports consistently indicate that SCCGP has achieved all stated goals. A formal, rigorous outcome evaluation of program effectiveness last occurred in 2016 (and was included in that year's legislative report). It showed strong results for schools receiving the grant compared to similar schools that had not received the grant. With the recent expansion of the program to include elementary schools, there is an opportunity and need to engage in another rigorous evaluation of the program.

### Quasi-Experimental Study (State Fiscal Year 2022-2025)

The Governor's Office of State Planning and Budgeting (OSP) awarded a grant to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to engage an independent evaluator in the design of a rigorous evaluation of SCCGP. During State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2021, CDE partnered with the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab (Colorado Lab) at the University of Denver to develop an in-depth strategy for evaluating impact and implementation fidelity of SCCGP over a four-year period. The Colorado Lab designed a comprehensive study with two key components: 1) A rigorous outcome evaluation of cohorts 7-10 using a quasi-experimental design (QED) to assess key student engagement, educational attainment, and postsecondary readiness outcomes at the elementary school, middle school, high school, and postsecondary education levels; and 2) a performance management tracking process in grant years 2021-22 through 2023-25 to assess progress of SCCGP grantees towards the culminating outcomes and to enable strategic learning. Both study components are contextualized by fidelity monitoring to promote continuous quality improvement and replicable processes that adhere to the ASCA model for comprehensive school counseling. A copy of the evaluation plan, including key program outcomes to be assessed, is linked [here](#). OSP awarded a four-year extension of this grant to execute the evaluation that began in SFY22. Future legislative reports will continue to document progress toward the study, to be completed in 2025. The results of the outcome evaluation will be included in the 2025 legislative report.

### Current Reporting Approach

The approach for the current report is modeled after previous legislative reports, starting with a description of Cohort 8, followed by outcomes achieved through the 2021-2022 academic year. This descriptive report does not aim to establish causal links between the SCCGP and the outcomes described.

Much of the data used in this report are publicly available. CDE's Office of Data Services provided validated data on K-12 outcomes and descriptive statistics for Cohort 8 and the state overall. Additionally, funded schools



submit an end-of-year report during or shortly after each spring semester to provide information on program implementation, progress towards goals, and select performance measures. Most analyses descriptively compare Cohort 8 outcomes to state averages. [Appendix B](#) provides additional details on data sources and analytical approaches.

### Limitations of this Report

Previous SCCG cohorts focused primarily on funding secondary schools, and related legislative reports focused on secondary and postsecondary outcomes. However, Cohort 8 funding was distributed largely to elementary schools, reflecting the state’s longer-term vision for postsecondary and workforce readiness. This means that any secondary and postsecondary outcomes would be based on data from a very small number of schools. Therefore, we focus primarily on cohort-wide outcomes that provide a clearer picture of schools funded by the SCCGP. We will explore the potential for future legislative reports to include additional measures at the elementary/middle school level that are aligned with the program’s logic model.

It is important to keep in mind that many of the cohort-wide outcomes analyzed in this report are based on site self-reported data from grantee schools. To ensure accuracy and standardized measurement across schools, wherever possible, we have used secondary data from CDE for further confirmation.

As noted above, this report is descriptive, not causal. Therefore, outcomes reported here cannot be directly attributed to this program.

### Description of SCCGP Cohort 8

SCCGP Cohort 8 included 10 grantees representing 23 schools serving a diverse student population with regard to K-12 school type, school size, mobility rates, geographic region, race and ethnicity, and free or reduced-price lunch qualified students.

**TABLE 2: SCCGP Cohort 8 Grantees and Types of Schools Funded**

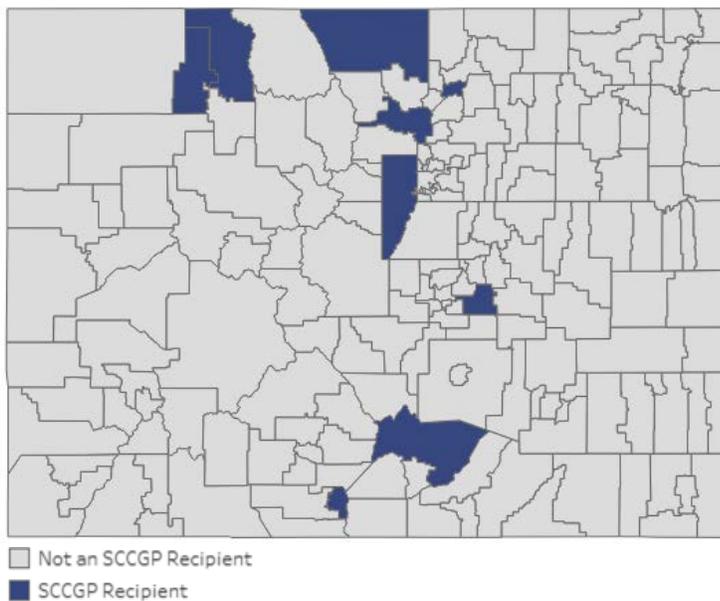
Districts	High School	Middle School	Elementary School	Middle & High	Elementary & Middle	Total
Charter School Institute	1	0	0	0	0	1
Ellicott 22	0	0	1	0	0	1
Greeley 6	0	0	7	1	0	8
Hayden RE-1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Huerfano RE-1	1	0	0	0	1	2
Jefferson County R-1	0	0	3	0	0	3
Poudre R-1	0	2	0	0	0	2
Sanford 6J	0	0	1	1	0	2
St Vrain Valley RE1J	0	0	2	0	0	2
Steamboat Springs RE-2	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>23</b>

**Types of Schools and Program Reach:**

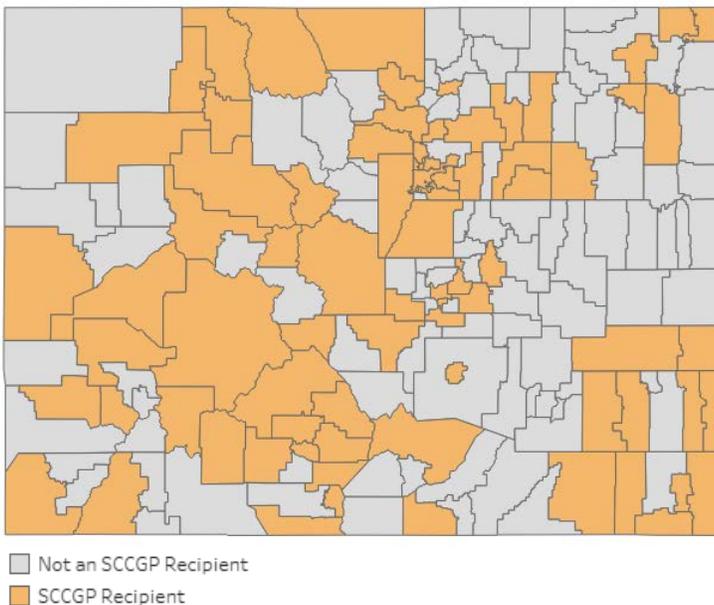
Of the 23 schools included in the SCCGP Cohort 8, there are two high schools, three middle schools, 15 elementary schools, two schools that serve middle- and high-school students together, and one school that serves elementary- and middle-school students together (Table 2). In the final year of funding, these schools served a total of 9,043 students. This is substantially different from previous cohorts, which focused largely on funding middle and high schools. For example, Cohort 7 included only 16.9% elementary schools.

**Geographic Location:** Cohort 8 contained a mix of urban and rural school districts from across the state.

**MAP 1: SCCGP Cohort 8 Grantee Locations**



**MAP 2: SCCGP Grantee Locations, All Cohorts, 2009-2022**



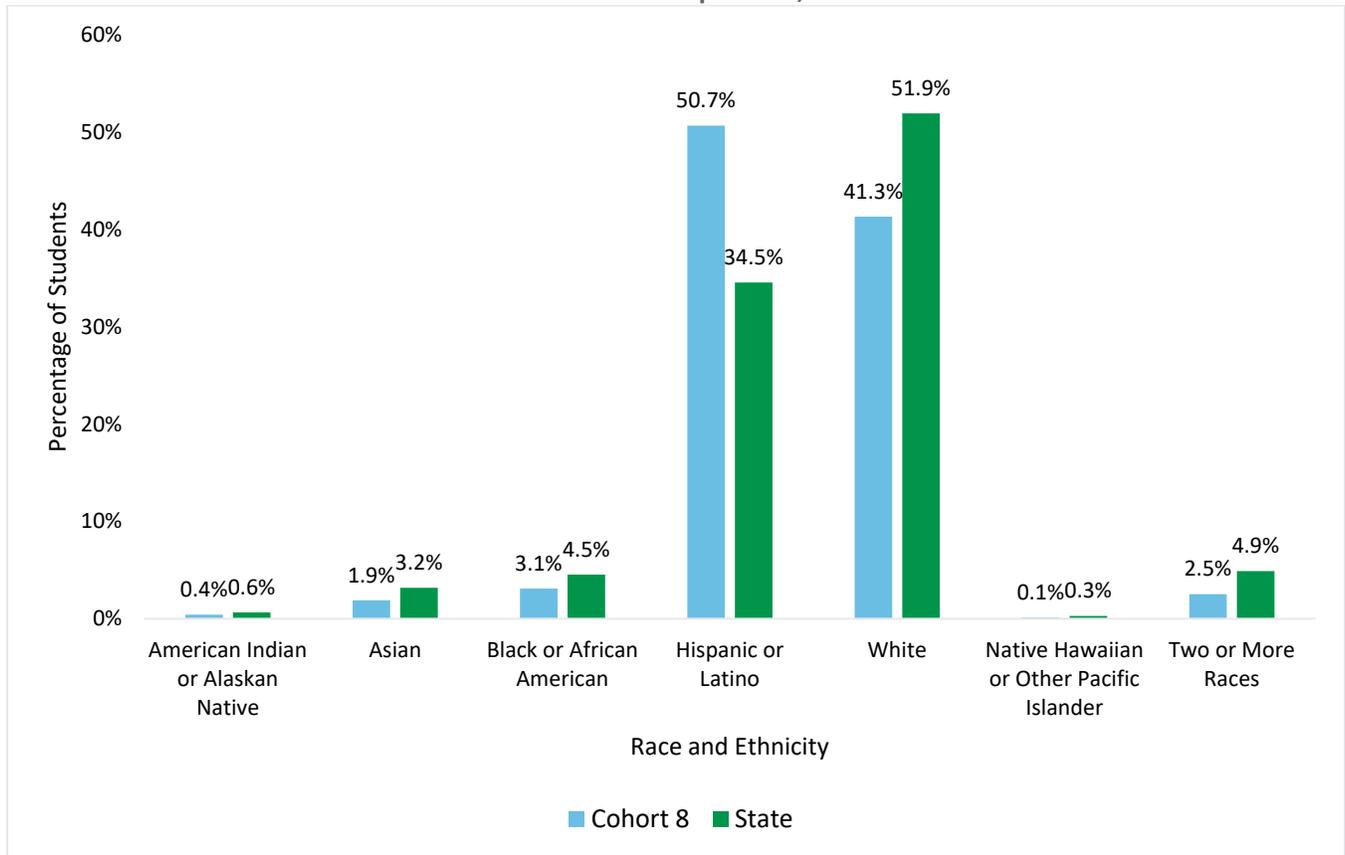


### Student Characteristics

Students of color, economically disadvantaged students, and highly mobile students tend to have lower high school graduation rates than the state average.<sup>4</sup> Given this context, Cohort 8 demographic data indicate that the SCCGP is being implemented in schools with historically underserved students, who may need additional support to accelerate progress on high school graduation rates and postsecondary readiness. These data also suggest that SCCGP is meeting its goal of serving diverse populations of students.

**Race and Ethnicity:** Cohort 8 students were from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds, with 59% identifying as a student of color, as compared to 48% of students statewide. In particular, Cohort 8 schools served nearly 50% more Hispanic or Latino students than the state average. Figure 2 depicts the racial and ethnic composition of students enrolled in SCCGP Cohort 8 schools.

**FIGURE 2: SCCGP Cohort 8 Student Racial and Ethnic Composition, 2021-22**

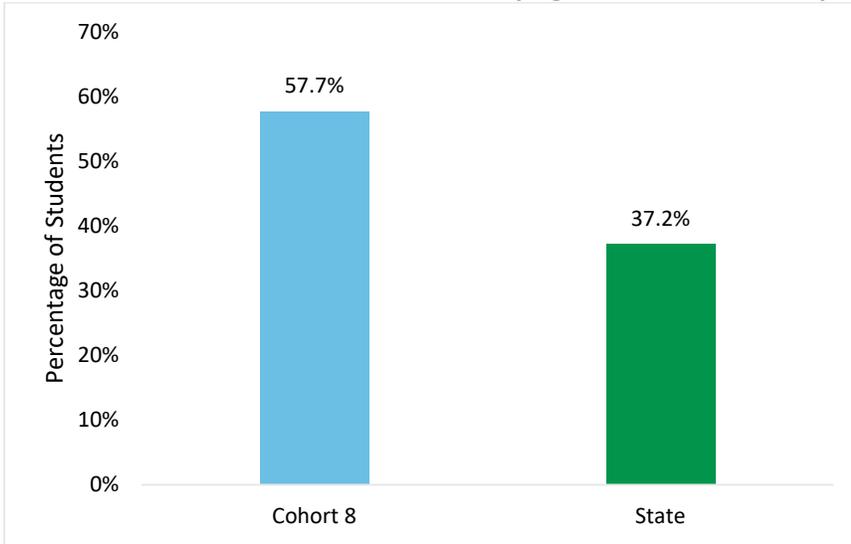


<sup>4</sup> Division of Student Pathways, Office of Student Engagement and Dropout Prevention. (2021). *2019-2020 State Policy Report: Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement*. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/2019-20statepolicyreport>



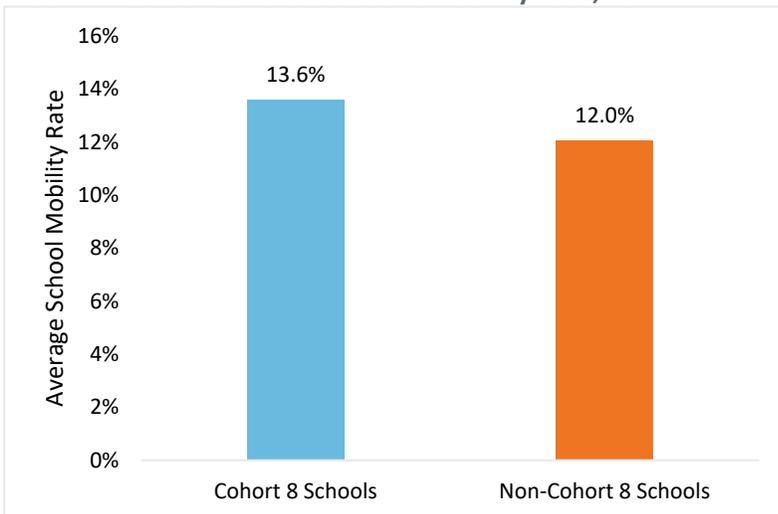
**Free or Reduced-Price Lunch:** The number of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch is a standard proxy for socioeconomic status of the student’s household or economic disadvantage. As such, one of SCCGP’s funding priority considerations is that the schools serve a high percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. SCCGP funds reached this aim, with 57.7% of students in Cohort 8 schools eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, compared to 37.2% of students statewide (Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3: SCCGP Cohort 8 Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced-price Lunch, 2021-22**



**Student Mobility Rate:** The mobility rate is the percentage of students who change schools outside of the typical enrollment process and is inclusive of school moves within and across districts. Students must have a gap in attendance of more than 10 days for the student to be considered mobile. In 2020-21, Cohort 8 schools had a higher student mobility rate than schools statewide that were *not* in Cohort 8, 13.6% compared to 12.0%. *Note.* The comparison made here to non-cohort 8 schools, as opposed to the state average, is because the State Mobility Rate is based upon district mobility rates and this approach provides a more direct comparison.

**FIGURE 4: SCCGP Cohort 8 Student Mobility Rate, 2021-22 <sup>5</sup>**

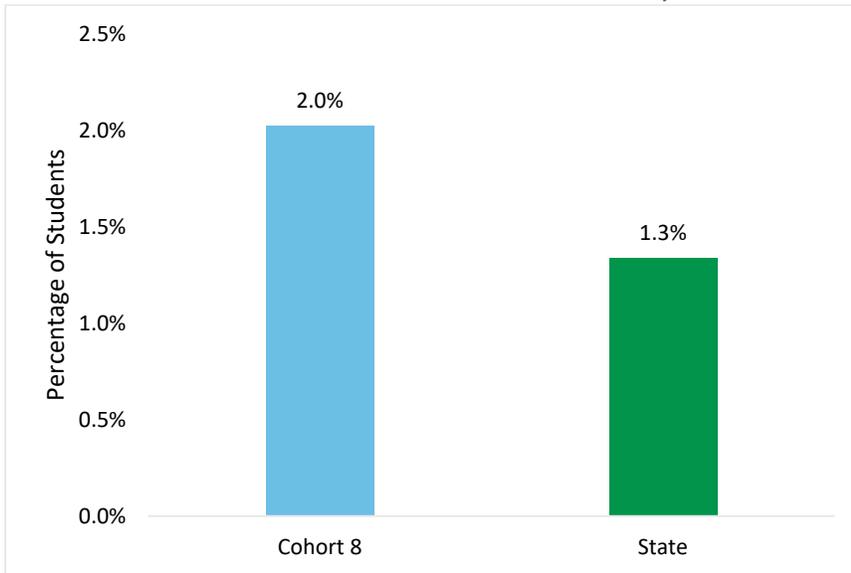


<sup>5</sup> School mobility rate calculations are based on the unduplicated count of K-12 students who moved into or out of the *school* during the year, including students transferring from one school to another within the district. This differs from the method used when calculating



**Student Homelessness Rate:** Students experiencing homelessness face additional barriers to accessing education. These barriers are related to higher rates of chronic absenteeism, higher dropout rates, and lower graduation rates.<sup>6</sup> In the final year of implementation, Cohort 8 schools had a higher student homelessness rate than the state as a whole, 2.0% compared to 1.3% statewide.

**FIGURE 5: SCCGP Cohort 8 Student Homelessness Rate, 2021-22**



## SCCGP Cohort 8 Student and Program Outcomes

Previous SCCGP reports included analysis of several secondary and postsecondary student outcomes, including graduation rates, matriculation rates, FAFSA completion rates, and participation in PWR programs. However, given that the small number of high schools in this cohort poses analytic and privacy limitations, we only report one student outcome: dropout rate.

We also report program outcomes, drawn from grantee schools' end-of-year (EOY) reports which examine progress in six program areas:

- identified SCCGP goals;
- professional development;
- Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) lessons and activities;
- student-to-counselor ratios; and
- American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Model implementation.

district mobility rates, which does not include this within-district movement. The State Mobility Rate is based upon district mobility rates, so Chart 3 compares Cohort 8 schools with all schools statewide that were *not* part of Cohort 8 to give a more direct comparison.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Education. (2016, July 27). Supporting the success of homeless children and youths: A fact sheet & tips for teachers, principals, school leaders, counselors, and other school staff.

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160315ehcyfactsheet072716.pdf>

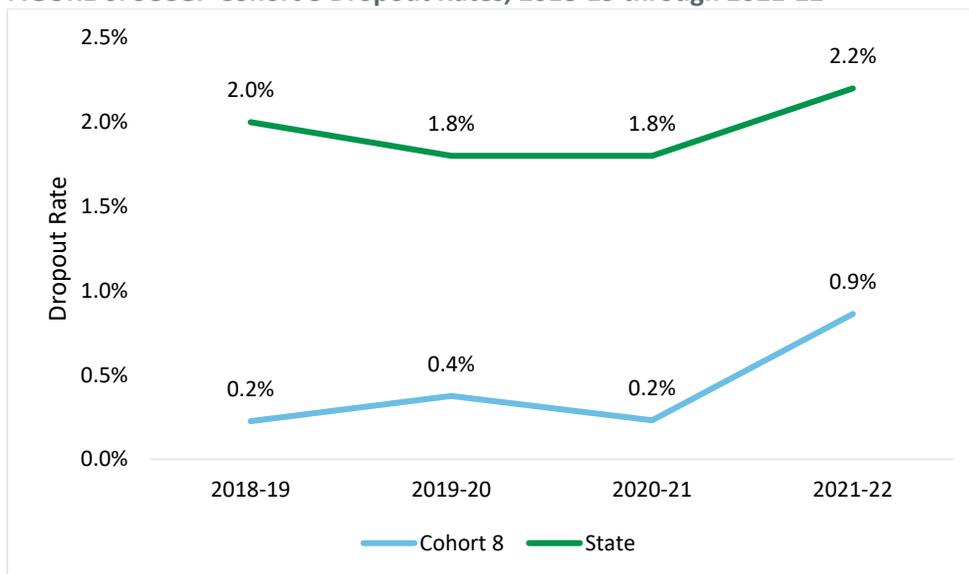


## Dropout Rates

The dropout rate is the percentage of students in Grades 7 and above who leave school for any reason, except death, before completion of a high school diploma or its equivalent and do not re-enroll in another school or educational program during the same academic year. A decline in dropout rates indicates an improvement. Out of the 23 schools in the SCCGP Cohort 8, eight schools enrolled students grade 7 and above, serving 1,944 students across them. Prior to receiving full SCCGP funding, Cohort 8 schools had average dropout rates of 1.8 percentage points lower than the state average. Over the course of the funded years, Cohort 8 maintained a lower dropout rate than the state as a whole. However, both groups saw a substantial increase in the dropout rate in the 2021-22 school year, and the gap between the state and Cohort 8 narrowed to 1.3 percentage points.

In Cohort 8’s EOY reports, several schools reported that their schools experienced higher rates of chronic absenteeism, tied to frequent and sustained illness, concerns about the ongoing pandemic, and increased school and social anxiety. These are early indicators that might help explain this increased dropout rate.

**FIGURE 6: SCCGP Cohort 8 Dropout Rates, 2018-19 through 2021-22**



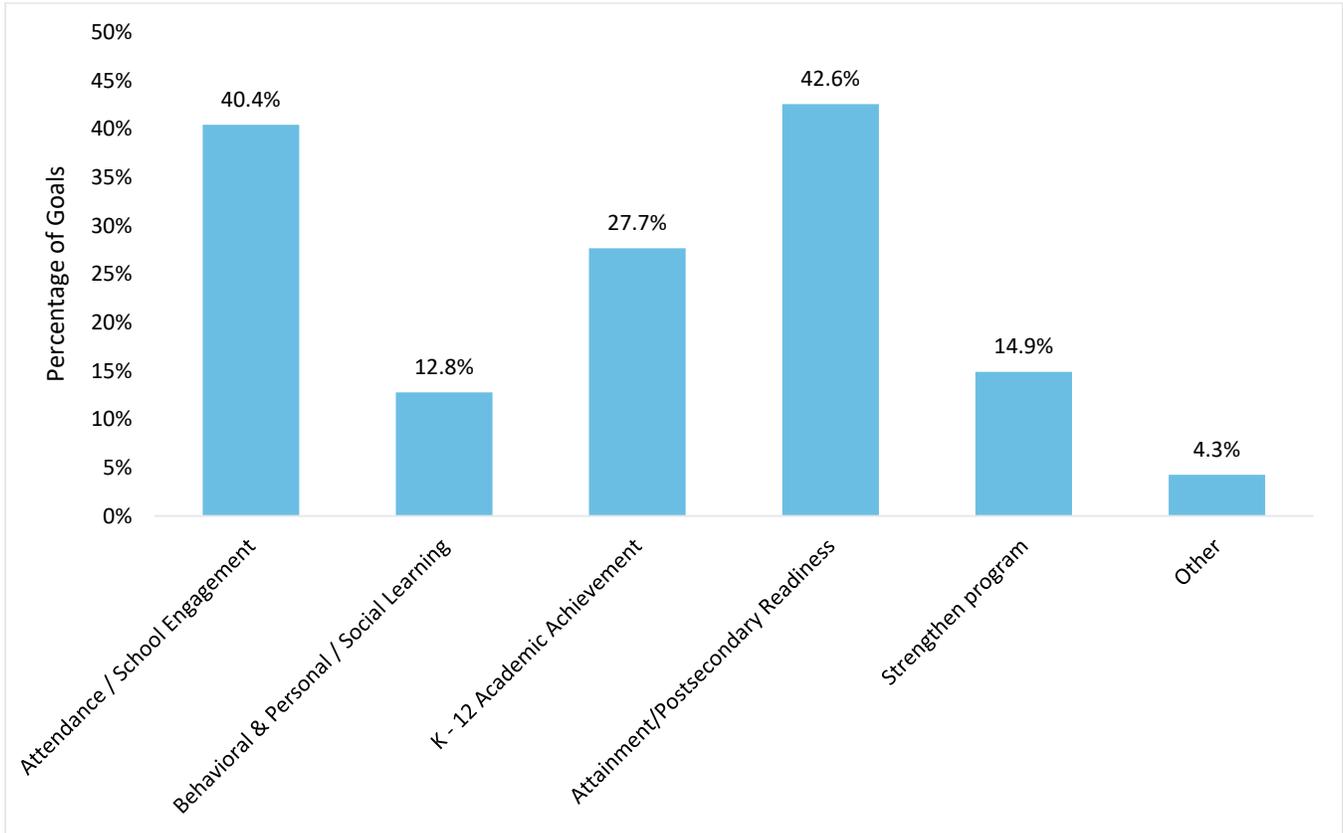
## Progress Toward Reaching Goals

During the planning year (Year 1), schools and districts create goals they would like to achieve with SCCGP funding, based on their needs assessment, environmental scan, and ASCA best practice guidance.

Seventeen of the 23 schools in Cohort 8 provided data on progress on a total of 47 goals. Grantees identified the primary focus areas of their goals, selecting from six options aligned with the overall goals of the program. Cohort 8’s goals most often focused on educational attainment and postsecondary readiness (42.6%) and attendance and school engagement (40.4%), as shown in Figure 7.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Because grantees are able to select multiple related focus areas, percentages sum to over 100%.

**FIGURE 7: SCCGP Cohort 8 Goal Focus Areas<sup>6</sup>**



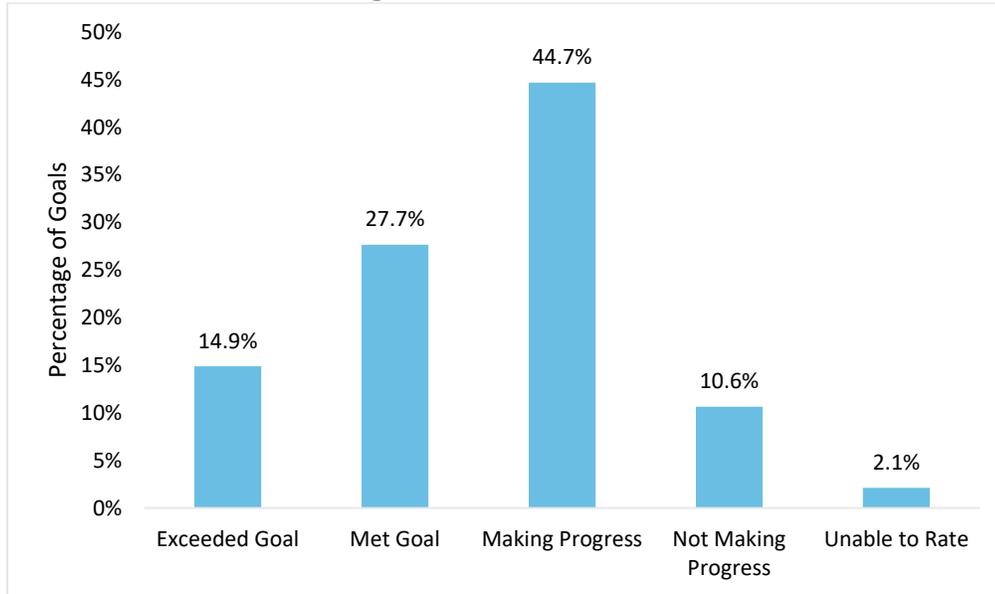
Of the 47 goals, grantees rated 20 (42.6%) as “met” or “exceeded” at the end of grant funding (Figure 8). The remaining were rated as “making progress,” “not making progress,” or “unable to rate.”

Goals that were “met” or “exceeded” were supported by the development of a comprehensive school-wide counseling program, enabled by SCCG funding. For example, a school that met their goal of increasing student engagement and awareness of PWR attributed their success to the support that the school counseling program received from administrators and alignment across counselors and grade levels. Other sites that met or exceeded goals mentioned building school culture around the importance of school counseling activities, getting teacher buy-in, and actively engaging with families.

For goals that were not met or exceed, grantees generally attributed the lack of progress to the ongoing effects of the pandemic on students’ well-being and resulting effects on their behavior, attendance, and longer-term outcomes. For example, one grantee explained that in previous years, they had been making progress on decreasing chronic absenteeism, and by Year 3, they had reached their benchmark of 18%. However, in Year 4, chronic absenteeism jumped back to 27%. The grantee explained that families have changed their behavior around student illness, including mental health concerns – when students aren’t feeling well, families are more likely to keep them home, compared to pre-pandemic practices.



**FIGURE 8: SCCGP Cohort 8 Progress on Goals**



### Professional Development

In the final year of implementation, Cohort 8 SCCGP recipients indicated that school counselors and other team members attended nearly 2,000 hours of professional development related to PWR. This included 3 school professionals attending the ASCA National Conference, and 11 school professionals attending the Colorado School Counselor Association (CSCA) Conference, some virtually and some in person. Other trainings attended by grantee school staff included:

- ASCA U specialist courses
- ASCA Model coaching
- Restorative Practices training
- Boston International Trauma Conference
- Dougy Center Grief Training
- Beyond Consequences Trauma Informed Academy
- The ABC's of 504's and Individual Education Program (IEP)
- The Neuroscience of Co-Regulating
- Hatching Results training
- Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) implementation training
- Threat Assessment and Management to Prevent Targeted School Violence
- CDE-sponsored school counselor workshops, institutes, and trainings

Following engagement in these professional development opportunities, counselors reported making changes to school-wide practices related to student behavior, cultivating mindfulness practices among students and staff to reduce stress and better recognize behavior, and feeling more equipped to meet the daily requirements of their role.

### Individual Career and Academic Plan Implementation

Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) is a multi-year process that intentionally guides students and families in the exploration of career, academic, and postsecondary opportunities. ICAP helps students 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. School counselors support school personnel and all 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade students in creating and acting upon an ICAP, as described in the State Board of Education’s rules promulgation 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)).*

Over the course of funding, SCCGP sites work to strengthen the ICAP process across grade levels, ranging from college visits for high school students to career-focused read aloud opportunities for kindergarteners. In the final year of funding, Cohort 8 schools offered nearly 300 ICAP activities, reaching over 5,000 students. Examples of the activities implemented by Cohort 8 schools are listed in Table 3.

**TABLE 3: SCCGP Cohort 8 Examples of ICAP Activities Offered, by School Type/Grade Levels Served**

Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Interest inventories Career research and presentations Lunch and learns, guest speakers Curriculum activities: AVID, Junior Achievement, AmeriTowne Community-connected content exploration Interviewing family and community members Individual counseling conversations; discussions of postsecondary aspirations Job-related read alouds Career BINGO Dream / vision / goal-planning activities Field trips	Naviance / Xello lessons Interest inventory Lessons on learning styles, school subjects, decision-making, time management, transition to high school	Senior Night sessions/open house Financial aid presentation College visits Military visits
	College / Career Fairs	

**Grantee quote:**

*“One activity the grant really was helpful for us to be able to do is the creation of the career corner in the library...dedicated to various career and occupational books.”*

**- Cohort 8 School Report**

The SCCG program also helped counselors to develop school resources that will last beyond the grant funding. For example, schools created additional counseling positions or secured additional resources with grant funds to support postsecondary and workforce readiness, such as a career corner in the library or online activities and curricula.

SCCGP funding could support schools in developing longer-term infrastructure and capacity for implementing ICAP. For example, most Cohort 8 schools (88%) involved at least one individual other than school counselors in implementing ICAP. This is a higher rate than the schools in Cohorts 9 and 10 (78%), who are earlier in their



SCCGP funding and development. The inclusion of other professionals, community members, and caring adults strengthens the school counseling program, prioritizes ICAP alongside other school wide initiatives, and leads to greater capacity for implementation across the school.

## Student-to-Counselor Ratio

*“Previous to having a second counselor...the student to counselor ratio was 331:1. By lowering that ratio, the presence of a second counselor allowed for more consistent support of students...The addition of a trained suicide assessment professional has proved essential since we have seen the number of suicide assessments increase this school year as students have returned from a disrupted school experience in 19-20 and 20-21.”*

- Cohort 8 School

The ASCA national model for comprehensive school counseling programs recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of no more than 250 students to one school counselor (250:1). ASCA recommends this ratio so professional school counselors can focus their skills, time, and energy on direct and indirect services to students at least 80% of their time. This student-to-counselor ratio enables a comprehensive school counseling program that:

- 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 include improved attendance and discipline rates and higher graduation and completion rates.<sup>8</sup>

For Cohort 8 schools, SCCGP funding was effective in dividing the student-to-counselor ratio by three on average. Prior to SCCGP funding, Cohort 8 schools had the equivalent of 9 full-time, certified school counselors, for an approximate ratio of 860 students to one school counselor. In the final year of funding, that increased to 25.25 full-time counselors, for a ratio of 276 students to one school counselor. This change allowed SCCGP Cohort 8 schools to get close to the best practice recommendation set forth by ASCA. With lower student-to-counselor ratios, grantees had more opportunities to provide individualized support to students, build more capacity within their schools, and develop more resources that support a comprehensive school counseling program.

## American School Counselors Association Model Implementation

The EOY reports included a reliable measure for assessing the level of ASCA Model implementation, the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.<sup>9</sup> The survey includes a total of 14 items, which provide an overall implementation score and two factor scores—programmatics orientation and school counseling services. The 4-

<sup>8</sup> Carey, J., & Dimmitt, C. (2012). School counseling and student outcomes: Summary of six statewide studies. *Professional School Counseling*, 16(2). <https://doi-org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/2156759X000>

<sup>9</sup> 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.

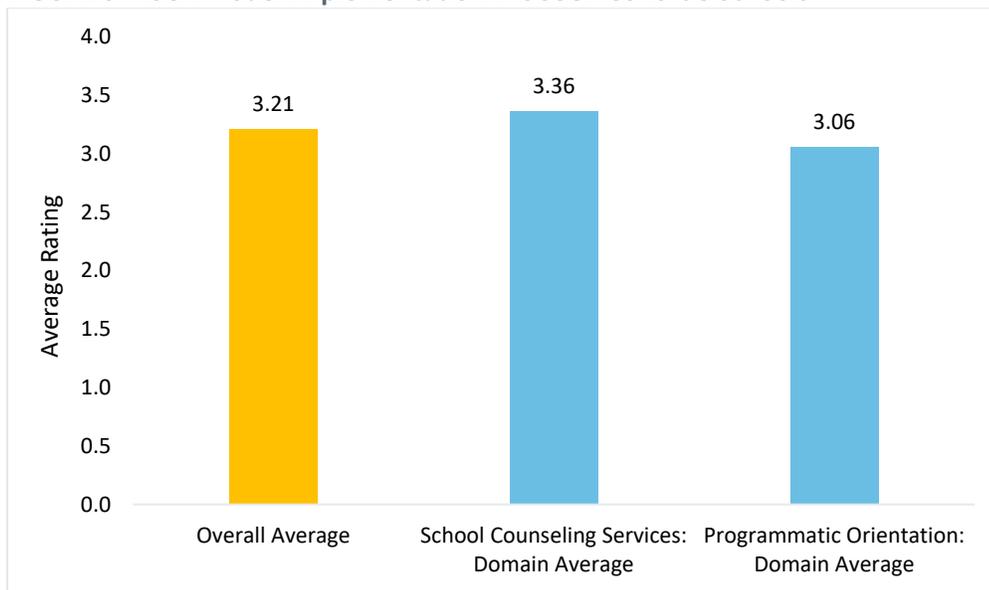


point rating scale used in the survey was 1 = not present, 2 = development in progress, 3 = partly implemented, and 4 = fully implemented.

Overall, SCCGP Cohort 8 schools' self-ratings on this tool demonstrate that one of the key areas of implementation for the SCCGP, implementation of the ASCA national model, is in progress in funded schools (Figure 9). At the end of the final year of funding, Cohort 8 schools reported partial overall implementation of the ASCA model, averaging a score of 3.21/4 across all items. Both domains of the ASCA self-rating also had average scores falling between partly and fully implemented. Ratings of items on the school counseling services domain ranged from 3.11/4 to 3.58/4, with a domain average of 3.36/4. Ratings of items on the programmatic orientation domain ranged from 2.82/4 to 3.35/4, with a domain average of 3.06/4.

Two items fell below the "partly implemented" threshold, both related to data disaggregation: "The program operates from a plan for closing the achievement gap," and "School counselors analyze student data by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic level to identify interventions to close achievement gaps." Challenges in using data in nuanced ways also appeared in narratives within the EOY reports, especially in describing progress toward goal achievement. For example, no schools reported on goal progress for different demographic groups.

**FIGURE 9: ASCA Model Implementation in SCCGP Cohort 8 Schools**





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## Conclusion

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Cohort 8 includes a total of 23 schools from across the state. In 2021-22, the final year of funding, Cohort 8 grantees enrolled 9,043 students, including a high percentage of students of color, those qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, mobile students, and students experiencing homelessness, relative to the percentage of these students in the statewide student population.

Outcomes from Cohort 8 reflect the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath:

### **Maintained Lower Dropout Rates**

The dropout rate for grantee schools (0.9%) remained below the state average (2.2%) but increased from the implementation year. Counselors reported increased chronic absenteeism and students' mental health concerns and related behaviors.

### **Made Progress on Goals**

Over 40% of the goals set by grantees before the onset of the pandemic were rated as "exceeded" or "met" and another 44.7% of goals were noted as "making progress."

### **Built Capacity within Schools**

- Funding from SCCGP moved student-counselor ratios from 860:1 to 276:1 across grantees, allowing counselors to provide more individualized support to students and their schools. The number of licensed school counselors in Cohort 8 schools went from 9.0 FTE before the beginning on the grant cycle to 25.5 FTE in the last year of the grant.
- SCCG sites attended nearly 2,000 hours of professional development in the final funding year alone, which further developed their knowledge, skills, and ability to meet students' needs.
- Counselors engaged other professionals and community members in the ICAP process, building capacity within others at their school to support PWR.

Overall, while COVID-19 will likely continue to impact future cohorts, SCCGP enabled grantees to positively impact their students and school communities, build capacity to sustain the effects of the program beyond their four years of funding, and continue driving toward goals that support students' postsecondary and workforce readiness.



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## Appendix A: 2021-22 School Counselor Corps Advisory Committee

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

Tammy Lawrence, Boulder Valley School District, School Counselor Coordinator (Vice Chair)

Carl Einhaus, Colorado Department of Higher Education, Senior Director of Student Success & P-20 Alignment

Diane Stutey, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs, Counselor Educator

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

Emma Richardson, East Central BOCES, Distance Learning Coordinator

Kim Medina, Colorado Mesa University, College Admissions Director

Shae Smith, Akron School District, School Counselor

Joshua Gibbs, Colorado Department of Labor & Employment

Shauna Hobbs, Mesa County D51, School Counselor Coordinator

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## Appendix B: Data Sources

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The following **data sources** were used to report outcomes for Cohort 8:

- 1) The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) collected self-reported data from grantees at the district and school level. These data were utilized for:
  - Student-to-counselor ratios
  - Grantee implementation indicators
    - Goals
    - Professional development
    - ASCA standards
    - ICAP
  
- 2) CDE's [publicly accessible data](#), supplemented and verified by Data Services at CDE, were utilized for:
  - [Demographic data and student counts](#)
  - [Student mobility rates](#)
  - [Dropout](#) rates

Descriptive statistics guided the **analysis process**, with SCCGP cohort outcomes compared to the general state student population (i.e., all schools) unless otherwise noted. For specific analytical questions, please contact the Colorado Lab at [admin@coloradolab.org](mailto:admin@coloradolab.org).