



2020 Legislative Report Colorado School Counselor Corps Grant Program

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

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary

3

Introduction

5

Purpose of the Program
Role of the School Counselor Corps Advisory Committee
Program Design

Evaluation Approach

6

Data Collection & Analysis

Description of Program for Cohorts 2-7

8

Grant Application Process
Description of Grantees

School Counselor Corps Grant Program Cohorts 2-7 Outcomes

13

Graduation and Completion Rates
Dropout Rates
Concurrent Enrollment
Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
Matriculation Rates (Cohorts 2-6 only)

Conclusion

20

Appendix A: 2018-19 School Counselor Corps Advisory Committee

21

Appendix B: Data Collection Analysis and Process

22

Appendix C: School Counselor Corps Grant Program Cohort 5 Final Program Development Outcomes

23

Endnotes

30



Executive Summary

The School Counselor Corps Grant Program (SCCGP) became law in 2008 (22-91-101 et. seq.) and was updated in 2014 via Senate Bill 14-150, and again in 2019 via HB-19-1187, to increase the availability of effective school-based counseling within secondary schools. The purpose of SCCGP is to increase the state graduation rate and increase the percentage of students who are appropriately prepared for, apply to, and continue into postsecondary education. Beginning with Cohort 4 in 2013-14, SCCGP began allocating funding for a four-year grant cycle as funds are appropriated by the Colorado General Assembly. The first year of a cycle is partial funding for a development year and the subsequent three years are for full funding for implementation. Earlier cohorts received three years of full implementation funding.

This report describes SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 and the longitudinal outcomes the program has achieved since the 2011-12 school year when consistent program implementation and data collection began with Cohort 2. This eight-year analysis examines the trends of SCCGP impact as new cohorts were added to the program for three years of implementation funding. Cohorts that sunset remain in the analysis to study long-term, sustainable impact. In the summary results and data tables throughout this report, schools are included in the reporting as they become grantees and remain in the reporting once the grant has been completed in order to measure long term impact. State averages are used as a point of comparison for trends, which includes all publicly funded schools in Colorado.

SCCGP Cohorts 2-7

SCCGP prioritizes schools serving highly diverse and economically challenged students. The program has been extremely successful in reaching its target audience each year. For example, as a snapshot, in the 2018-19 school year alone, the final school year under examination in this report, Cohorts 2-7 enrolled 151,180 students, 60 percent identifying as students of color, 58 percent as qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, and 15 percent as mobile. These demographic variables are all significantly higher than the state averages, 41, 47, and 8 percent respectively, and all previous school years have reached similarly greater proportions of students with vulnerable circumstances than the state. SCCGP reaches schools in all corners and regions of the state and grantees consist of 110 high schools, 109 middle schools, and 49 undivided secondary schools (see Map 1 on page 9 for the locations of these schools). Thirty-five of the 265 previously or currently funded schools are also designated Alternative Education Campuses (AEC).

SCCGP-funded Schools Support More Vulnerable Students than the State Student Population (2018-19)

- 58% (grantees) vs 41% (state) qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch
- 60% (grantees) vs 47% (state) identifying as students of color
- 15% (grantees) vs 8% (state) mobility rate

SCCGP Cohorts 2-7, Program Outcomes¹

SCCGP schools have seen a meaningful impact in cultivating students' postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR). Overall trends for the schools previously or currently funded by SCCGP, Cohorts 2-7, saw consequential improvements over the course of SCCGP funding and beyond.

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



SCCGP-funded schools, since the program's inception, non-AEC schools' four-year graduation and completion rates increased by 8 and 6 percentage points, respectively, whereas statewide rates increased by 6 and 5 percentage points, respectively, from 2011-12 to 2018-19. By 2018-19, SCCGP-funded schools outperformed the state in graduation and completion rates by 4 and 3 percentage points, respectively. The impact on dropout rates are less pronounced with small variances over the course of SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 implementation and sustainability, with the exception of this last school year, which saw a .4 percentage point difference between SCCGP-funded schools' and the state's rates.

SCCGP-funded AECs also exhibit impacts with overall positive trends; however, they are less robust and consistent than non-AEC funded schools.

Each cohort saw growth in their students' concurrent enrollment participation during the course of their three-years of SCCGP funding and have sustained their growth in participation. Completed cohorts' growth ranges from 20 to 179 percent change over one to seven years of SCCGP implementation.

When compared to the state, FAFSA completion rates for SCCGP-funded schools, since the program's inception, show some of the most significant impact. For the first three years of funding, SCCGP-funded schools' and the state's rates were relatively equal. Every year after (2014-15 through 2018-19), the SCCGP-funded schools increased their FAFSA completion rate to a greater degree than the state, from a 2.7 to a 6.1 percentage point difference.

With the exception of a dip in the initial years of the grant program, SCCGP-funded, non-AEC schools increased their overall matriculation rate from 48 to 57 percent, nine percentage points over the course of seven years. During the same time, the state's matriculation rate increased from 57 to 59 percent, a two percentage point increase.

Conclusion

SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 have seen a meaningful impact on their students' postsecondary and workforce readiness as measured by the overall sustained growth in their graduation, completion, dropout, FAFSA completion, concurrent enrollment, and matriculation rates even after funding ceased.

Non-AEC SCCGP-funded Schools Outperform State in 2018-19

- 85% (grantees) vs 81% (state) graduation rate
- 86% (grantees) vs 83% (state) completion rate
- 1.6% (grantees) vs 2% (state) dropout rate
- 54.5% (grantees) vs 48.4% (state) FAFSA completion rate

Matriculation Increases Cohorts 2-6

9 percentage point increase in SCCGP-funded schools' matriculation rate vs 2 percentage point increase for the state from Class of 2012 through 2018.



Introduction

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

Purpose of the Program

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

Role of the School Counselor Corps Advisory Board

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

Program Design

The first three cohorts of the SCCGP received three years of funding for implementation. Through data analysis and consultation with counselors in these earlier cohorts, program planning challenges were identified. Thus, the program design shifted to address these challenges through a statutory change from SB14-150. Beginning the 2014-15 school year (Cohort 4), the grant structure changed to provide four years of funding, with a smaller funding level in the first year for development, and larger grants for the three remaining years. The development year allows grantees time and support to complete an environmental scan, a comprehensive needs assessment, goal setting activities and other American School Counseling Association-related best practices to ensure that subsequent grant funds will be used as effectively as possible and in alignment with local needs. In addition, beginning with Cohort 4, CDE staff began offering structured trainings and a series of webinars each year to support grantees with a consistent model to use to design their comprehensive school counseling programs. Data suggest that the program design changes that began with Cohort 4 have had a positive effect on overall outcomes of the grant in terms of consistency and sustainability.



Evaluation Approach

This legislative report takes a different approach to examining SCCGP impacts than previous reports. Over the ten years that SCCGP has existed, 265 schools have been funded for three years to implement postsecondary readiness activities in schools with higher rates than the state in dropout, eligibility for free or reduced-priced lunch, and/or remediation. After the second cohort, identifying schools to use as a comparison group that met similar criteria and were also not receiving, or had not received, SCCGP funds became impossible due to the effective reach of the program in serving its target population. Thus, the only meaningful method for evaluation of impact was to look at changes over time within grantees and comparing that to state trends over the same time period.

Additionally, SCCGP aims not only to impact students who are enrolled at schools at the time they receive funding, but rather, SCCGP aims to develop the infrastructure and support that will sustain the impacts the short-term infusion of funding realizes. Therefore, the analysis in this report takes a longitudinal approach and includes schools in the SCCGP-funded group once they receive implementation funding through the school year with the most recent data available (2018-19 with the exception of matriculation data which has a one-year lag). For example, Cohort 4 schools received implementation funding 2015-16 through 2017-18, so they were included in the SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 group beginning 2015-16 and each year thereafter, even though their funding ended in 2017-18. The assumption evaluated in this report is that SCCGP funding supports impact that sustains after the funding cycle ends. Due to the desire to examine cumulative impact over multiple cohorts, baseline data are not included, rather only change over time with the addition of more schools meeting the initial criteria for funding (i.e. higher than the state's dropout, free or reduced-priced lunch, and/or remediation rates). State-level data is used as a comparison throughout.

Data Collection & Analysis

A variety of data sources were utilized for this report. Wherever possible, third-party validated data sources were used as a primary source, such as the National Student Clearinghouse or U.S. Department of Education, as these data have been verified as accurate by a third-party entity. When these types of data were unavailable, state-collected data were utilized. See Appendix B for more details about data sources.

As SCCGP expands, more schools have received these funds, thus eliminating the ability to identify comparison schools beginning with Cohort 3. Therefore, this report examines the cumulative and sustained impact of Cohorts 2-7 grantees since their initial year of full SCCGP funding compared to the state.

AECs' outcomes are analyzed separately because of their students' unique circumstances and challenges along with their alternative postsecondary and workforce goals and timelines. Recent analysis by CDE found that although AECs comprise only 2 percent of the state's student population, AECs enroll significantly more vulnerable students. For example, according to 2019 October Count data, students of color comprise 64 percent of AECs' student body whereas they comprise 46 percent of the state's student population. Similarly, students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch make up 62 percent of AECs' student body whereas the state's population comprises 40 percent. Because of the challenging circumstances AECs aim to address in unique ways, AEC outcomes are separated out from non-AEC outcomes. Note that the state averages used throughout this report include the 2 percent of AECs.

Demographic data to describe the students enrolled in past and current SCCGP grantees only includes 2018-19 data for the ease of presentation. However, past reports that examine cohorts 2-4 separately demonstrate how



these proportions hold relatively constant throughout each cohort because SCCGP effectively reaches its target population each year (see www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/schoolcounselorcorps).

Although not the primary focus of this report, Appendix C contains the analysis of Cohort 5 grantees' and schools' year-end annual reports as they complete their three-year full funding cycle to continue to understand the process of implementing a comprehensive school counselor program that yields sustainable postsecondary impacts.



Description of Grantees Cohorts 2-7

Grant Application Process

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

The SCCGP statute defines an eligible education provider as:

- A school district (on behalf of one or more secondary schools);
- A Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES);
- A charter school; or
- An Institute Charter School.

Priority was given to applicants that served:

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

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

Description of Cohorts 2-7 Grantees

From 2011-12 through 2018-19, SCCGP funded 265 schools for three years of implementation. SCCGP grantees represent a wide range of schools serving a diverse student population with regard to secondary school type, student count, mobility rates, geographic region, ethnicity, and free and/or reduced lunch qualified students.

Types of Secondary Schools: SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 funded 109 high schools, 108 middle schools, and 48 undivided secondary schools. Thirty-five of the 265 funded schools are designated Alternative Education Campuses (AEC).

Geographic Location: As illustrated through yellow highlights in Map 1, SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 grantees are located across Colorado.

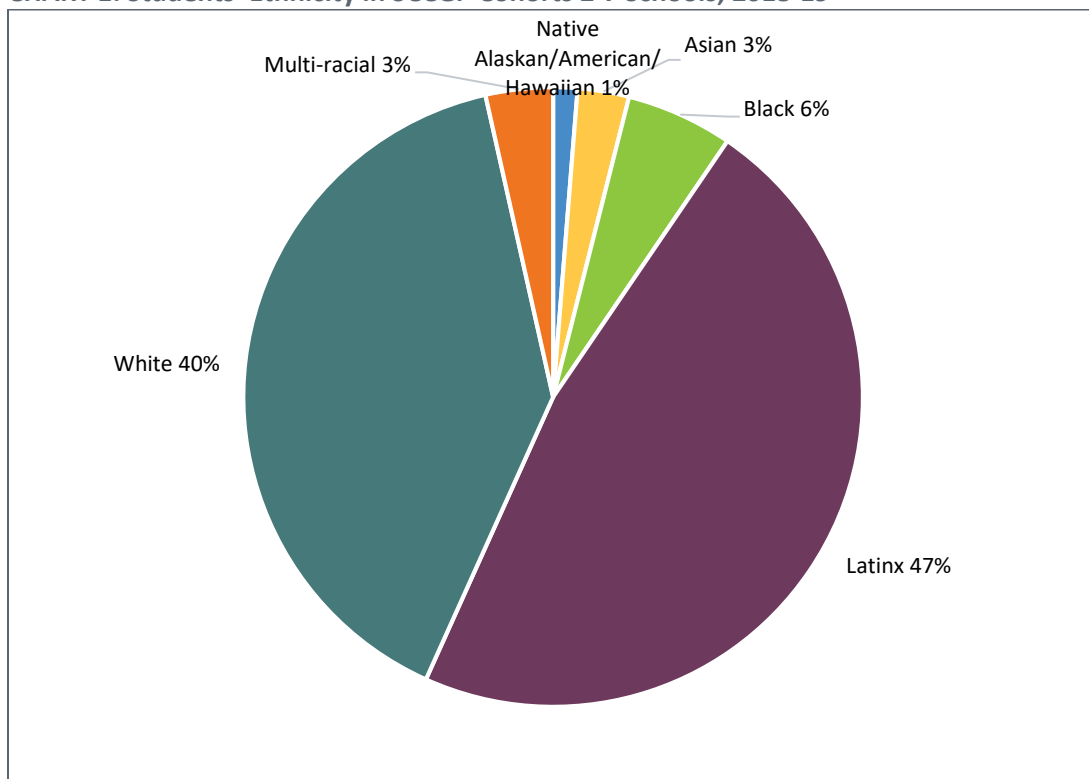


Table 1: Student Counts for SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 Once Implementation Funding Began and the State

| | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| SCCGP Cohort(s) | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2-3 | 2-4 | 2-5 | 2-6 | 2-7 |
| Non-AEC Total | 47,416 | 47,518 | 48,403 | 77,733 | 102,117 | 108,389 | 123,301 | 139,832 |
| Non-AEC 7 th -12 th | 38,051 | 38,253 | 39,026 | 63,928 | 70,759 | 91,459 | 102,444 | 113,383 |
| Non-AEC Seniors | 5,420 | 5,180 | 5,235 | 9,130 | 12,570 | 14,283 | 15,892 | 17,463 |
| AEC Total | 2,265 | 1,916 | 1,871 | 3,227 | 7,596 | 6,982 | 8,626 | 11,348 |
| AEC 7 th -12 th | 2,257 | 1,912 | 1,870 | 3,225 | 7,594 | 6,981 | 8,604 | 11,311 |
| AEC Seniors | 1,090 | 933 | 917 | 1,701 | 4,103 | 3,634 | 4,489 | 5,563 |
| State | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 854,265 | 863,561 | 876,999 | 889,006 | 899,112 | 905,019 | 910,280 | 911,536 |
| 7 th -12 th | 366,720 | 371,969 | 378,008 | 385,400 | 394,337 | 400,700 | 405,924 | 410,969 |
| Seniors | 61,398 | 62,503 | 62,836 | 63,001 | 65,317 | 66,244 | 68,059 | 69,316 |

Ethnicity: The students served in schools funded by SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 were from highly diverse ethnic backgrounds. As of the 2018 October count, 60 percent of all SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 students identified as a person of color as compared to 47 percent of students statewide. The following chart depicts the breakdown of students’ ethnicities enrolled in SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 schools.

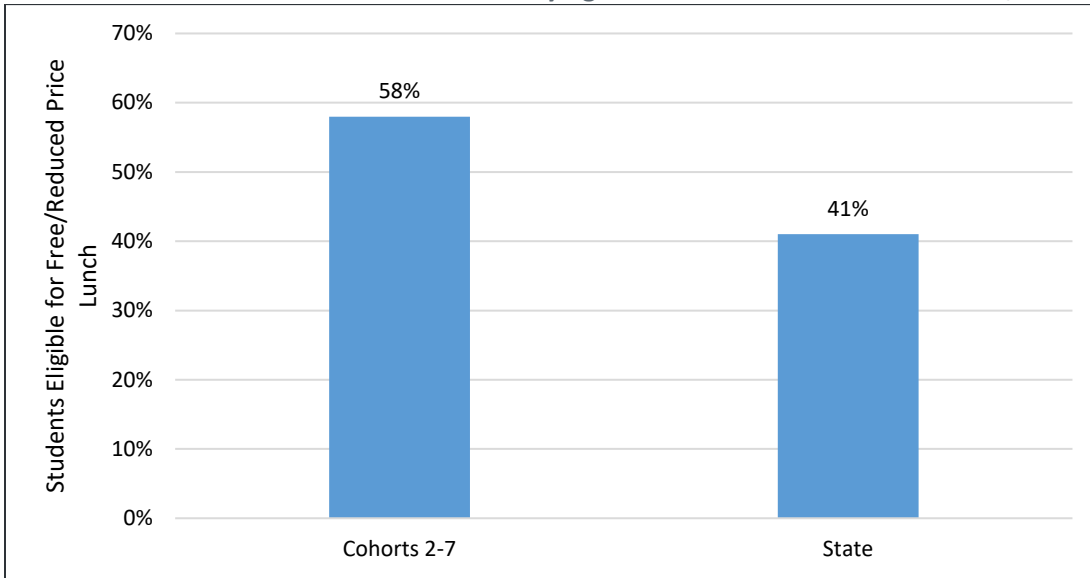
CHART 1: Students’ Ethnicity in SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 Schools, 2018-19





Free or Reduced-priced Lunch: The number of students qualifying for free or reduced-priced lunch is the standard proxy for students’ socioeconomic status. As such, one of SCCGP’s eligibility requirements is that the schools serve a high percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced-priced lunch. The 2018 October count data show that SCCGP funds reached students from low income backgrounds as 58 percent of students in Cohorts 2-7 schools were eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch whereas only 41 percent of students statewide were eligible.

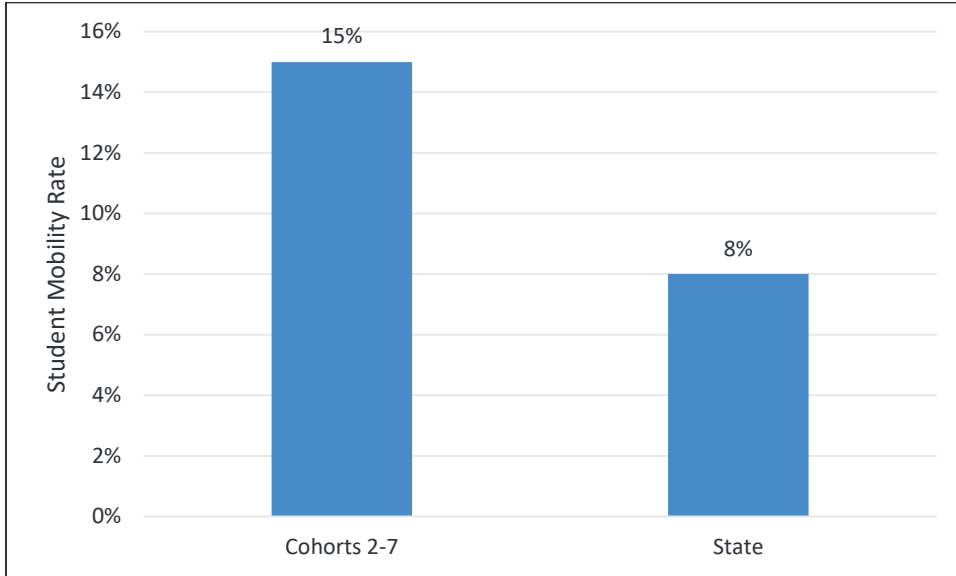
CHART 2: SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced-Priced Lunch, 2018-19



Mobility Rate: The mobility rate calculation timeframe was modified in the 2017-2018 school year so that only entries and exits that occur from the October Count date to the end of the school year are included in the calculation. Students must have a gap in attendance of more than 10 consecutive days to be considered mobile. Cohorts 2-7 schools had significantly higher student mobility rates than the state, 15 percent compared to 8 percent, in 2018-19.



CHART 3: SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 Student Mobility Rate, 2018-19





SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 Outcomes

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

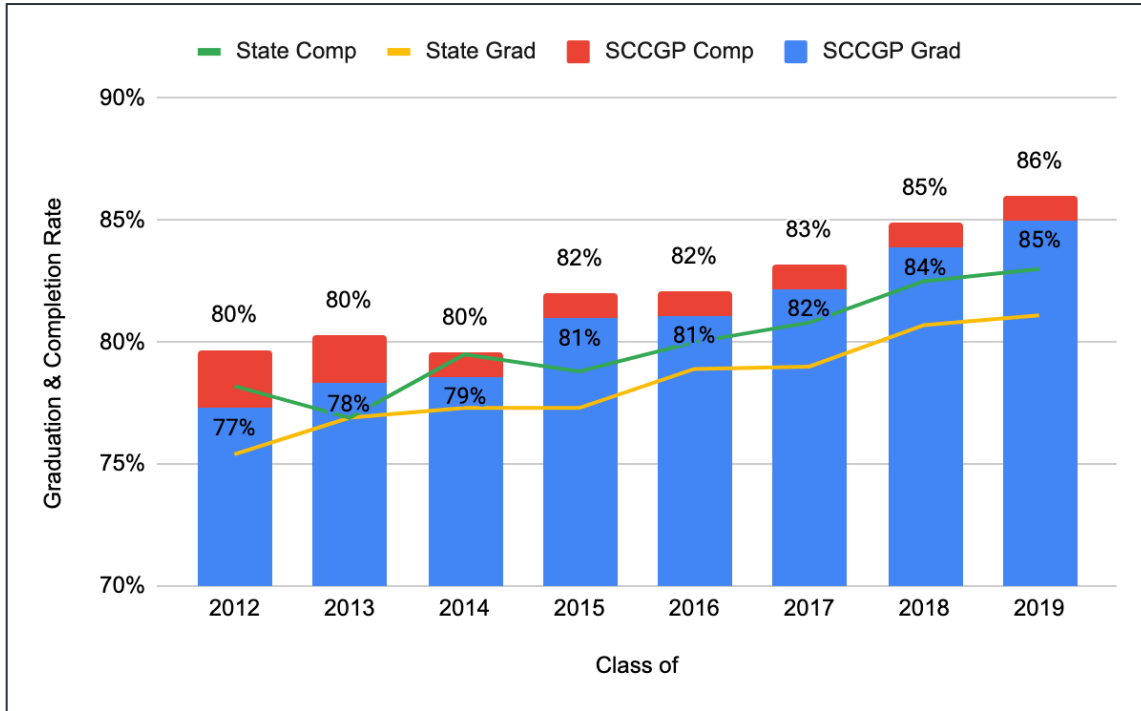
- Graduation and completion rates
- Dropout rate
- Concurrent enrollment participation
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion
- Matriculation rate

Graduation and Completion Rates

SCCGP aims to increase grantees’ graduation and completion rates. Four-year graduation is defined as those students who graduate from high school four years after entering ninth grade. Four-year completion rates include not only those who graduated, but also those who successfully completed a non-diploma certificate or High School Equivalency within the first four years after entering ninth grade. From 2011-12 to 2018-19, SCCGP funded, non-AEC schools’ four-year graduation and completion rates increased by 8 and 6 percentage points, respectively, whereas the statewide rates increased by 6 and 5 percentage points, respectively. By 2018-19, SCCGP-funded schools outperformed the state by 4 and 3 percentage points, respectively. The chart below illustrates how SCCGP-funded schools are consistently improving their graduation rates and increasingly outperforming the state average and how completion rates follow a similar, yet less pronounced, trend.



CHART 4: Four-Year Non-AEC Graduation Rates for SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 Schools and the State, Class of 2012-19

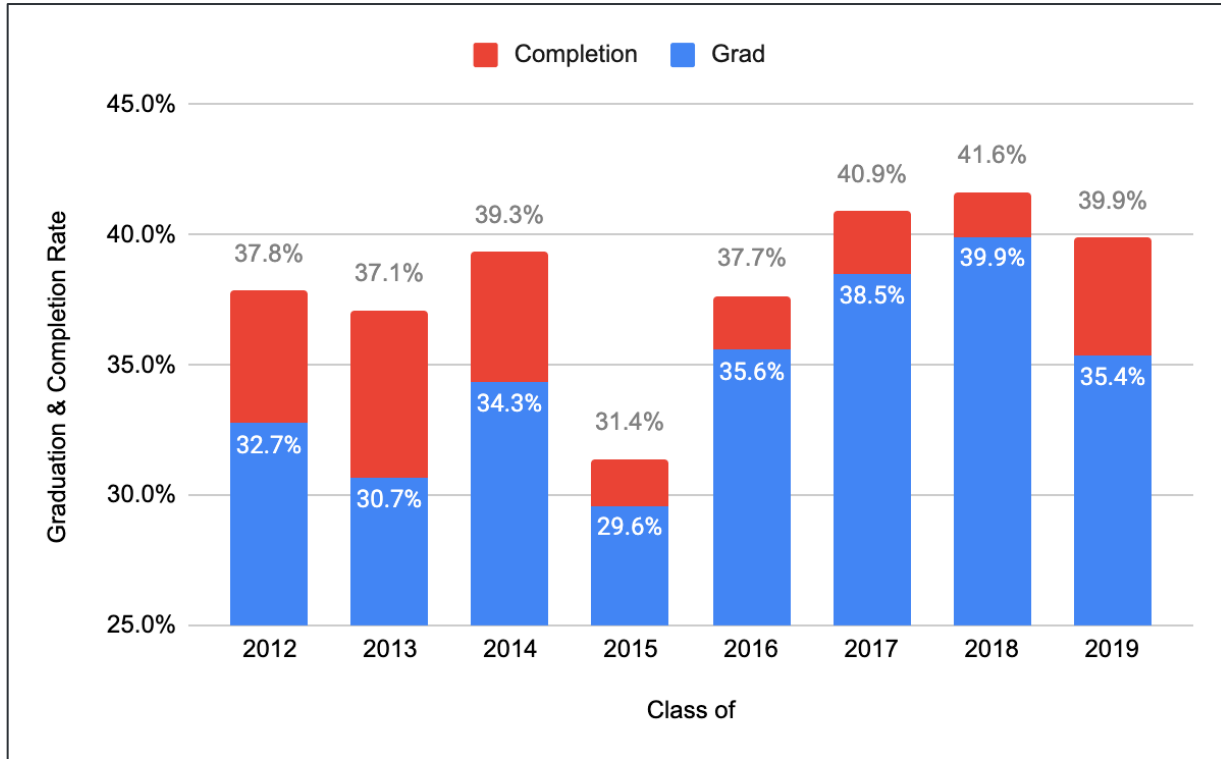


For the SCCGP and state sample sizes for each year, see Table 1 on page 10.

SCCGP-funded AECs are also seeing gains; however, they are less robust and consistent than traditional schools' gains. The Class of 2015, which saw the greatest dip in graduation and completion rates, introduced three highly unique AECs that focus on the significant challenges of new immigrant and English language learner high school students, the majority in their young adult years. The rates returned to their previous average with the addition of a new cohort in 2016, and steadily increased for the following two years.



CHART 5: Four-Year Graduation and Completion Rates for SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 AECs, Class of 2012-19



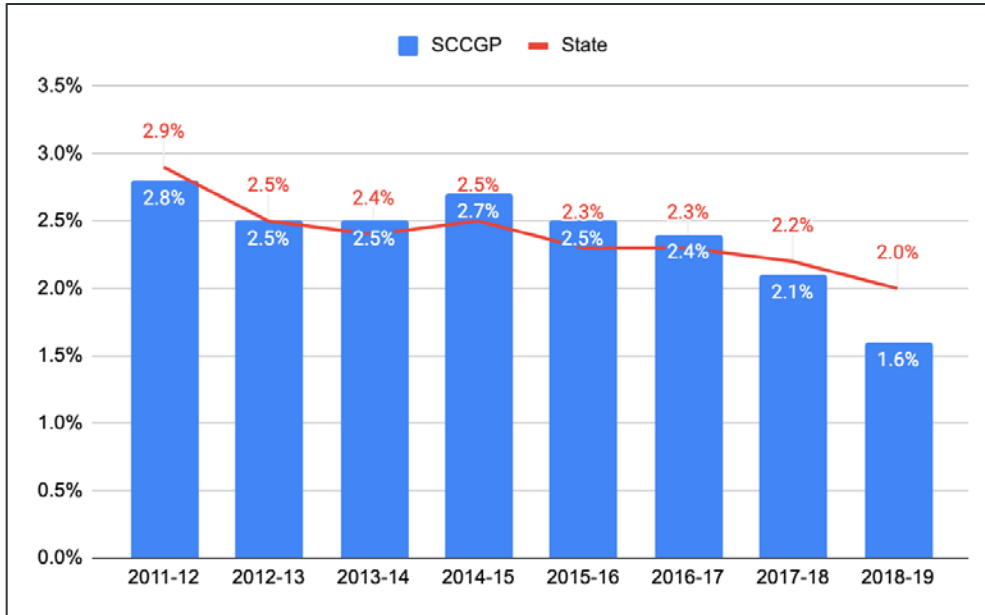
For the SCCGP AEC sample sizes for each year, see Table 1 on page 10.

Dropout Rates

Dropout rates also demonstrate that schools that receive SCCGP funds are observing increases in students staying in school. Over the eight years of SCCGP implementation funding, the Cohorts collectively reduced their dropout rate by 1.2 percentage points whereas the statewide rate dropped 0.9 percentage points. The following chart illustrates Cohorts 2-7 traditional schools' dropout rate trends compared to the state. Note that dropout rates are calculated based on 7th-12th grade counts.



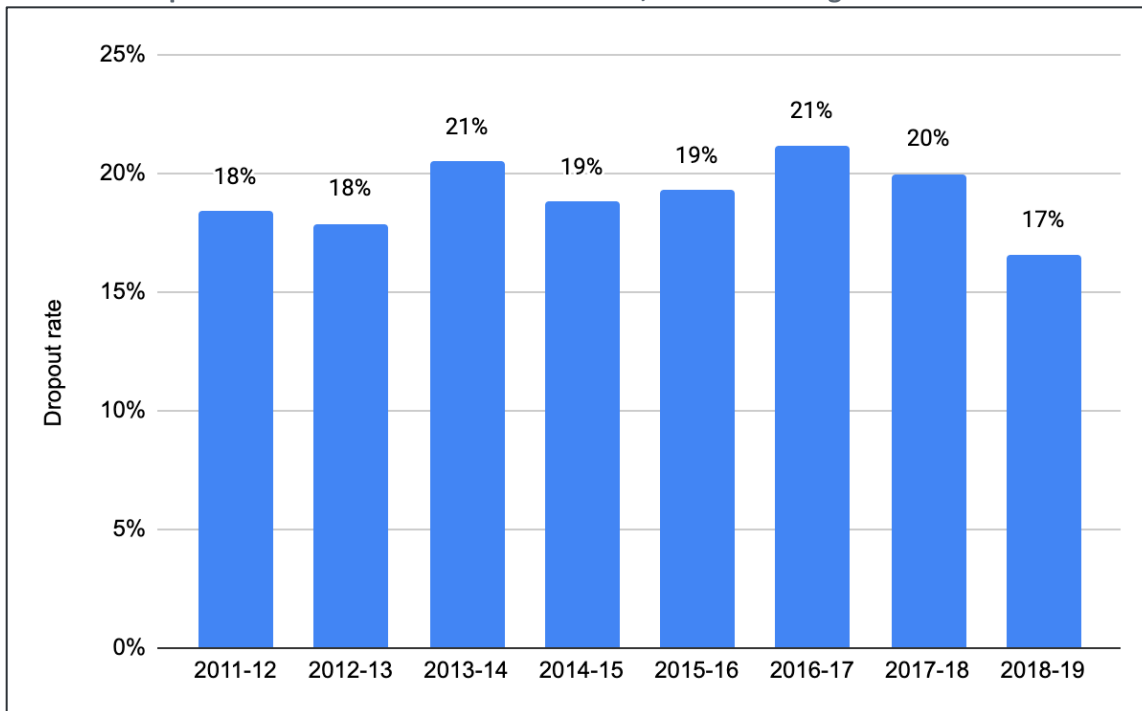
CHART 6: Dropout Rates for Non-AEC SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 Schools and the State, 2011-12 through 2018-19



For the SCCGP and state sample sizes for each year, see Table 1 on page 10.

Again, the AEC data shows a less clear trajectory of impact. Over the course of the eight years of SCCGP-funded implementation, dropout rates did decrease by one percentage point. However, a downward trend is not yet established as most years saw an increase from the initial year.

CHART 7: Dropout Rates for SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 AECs, 2011-12 through 2018-19



For the SCCGP AEC sample sizes for each year, see Table 1 on page 10.

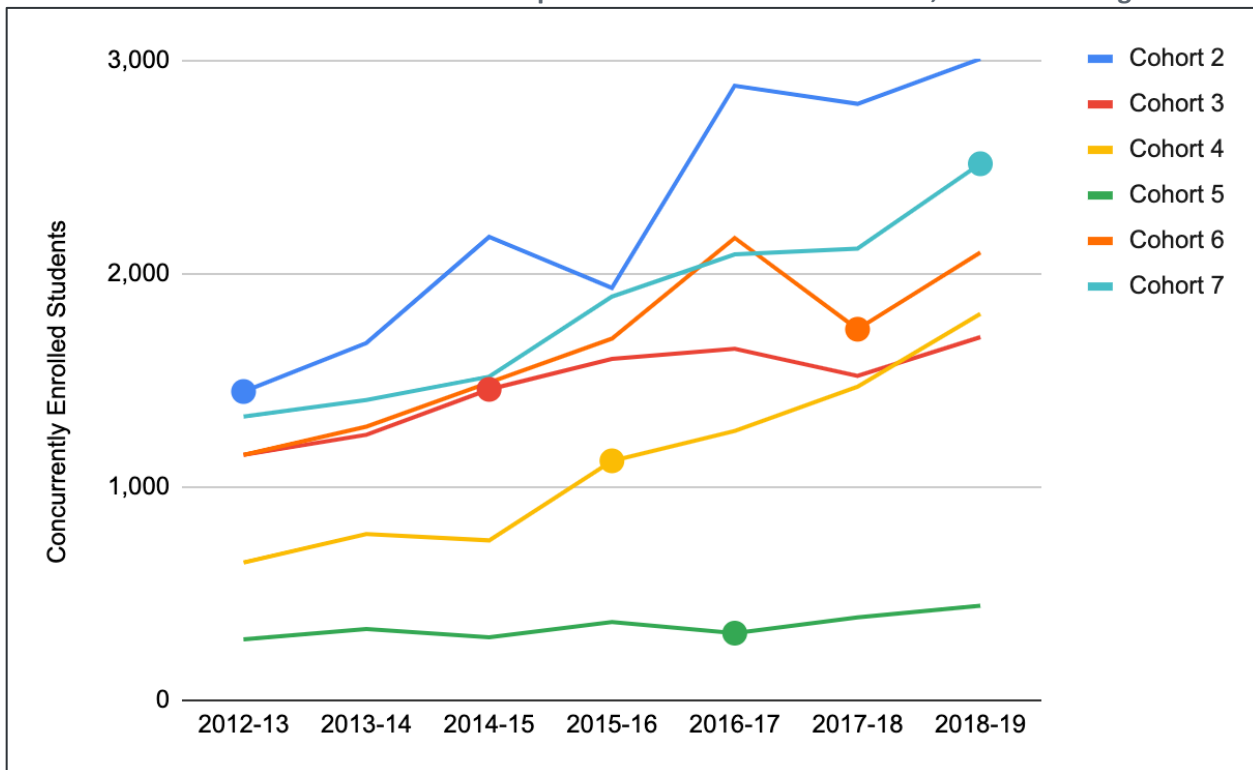


Concurrent Enrollment

Beginning in 2012, per C.R.S 22-35-122, the Colorado Department of Higher Education in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education has authored an annual report on dual or concurrent enrollment.ⁱⁱ “Concurrent Enrollment” is the “simultaneous enrollment of a qualified student in a local education provider and in one or more postsecondary courses, including academic or career and technical education courses, which may include course work related to apprenticeship programs or internship programs, at an institution of higher education” as detailed in C.R.S. 22-35-103 (revised by SB-19-176).

Over the course of their SCCGP funding, each cohort grew and sustained their number of students concurrently enrolled in postsecondary courses. The following graph depicts Cohorts 2-7’s growth individually over time with the large dot representing when full funding began, including the hiring of a school counselor. Cohorts 6 and 7 are in the middle of their funding cycle and have not realized the full potential of their gains in having a school counselor support students’ concurrent enrollment. Cohorts 3 and 5 show less significant growth than other cohorts likely because they consist largely of high schools in rural Colorado. Concurrent enrollment is particularly challenging in these areas of the state as higher education partners are further away making access to concurrent enrollment opportunities more difficult to establish, historically. Additionally, Cohort 5 only includes four high schools.

CHART 8: SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 Student Participation in Concurrent Enrollment, 2012-13 through 2018-19



Note: The large dot represents when SCCGP funds for full implementation began for each cohort. For SCCGP sample sizes for each year, see Table 1 on page 10.

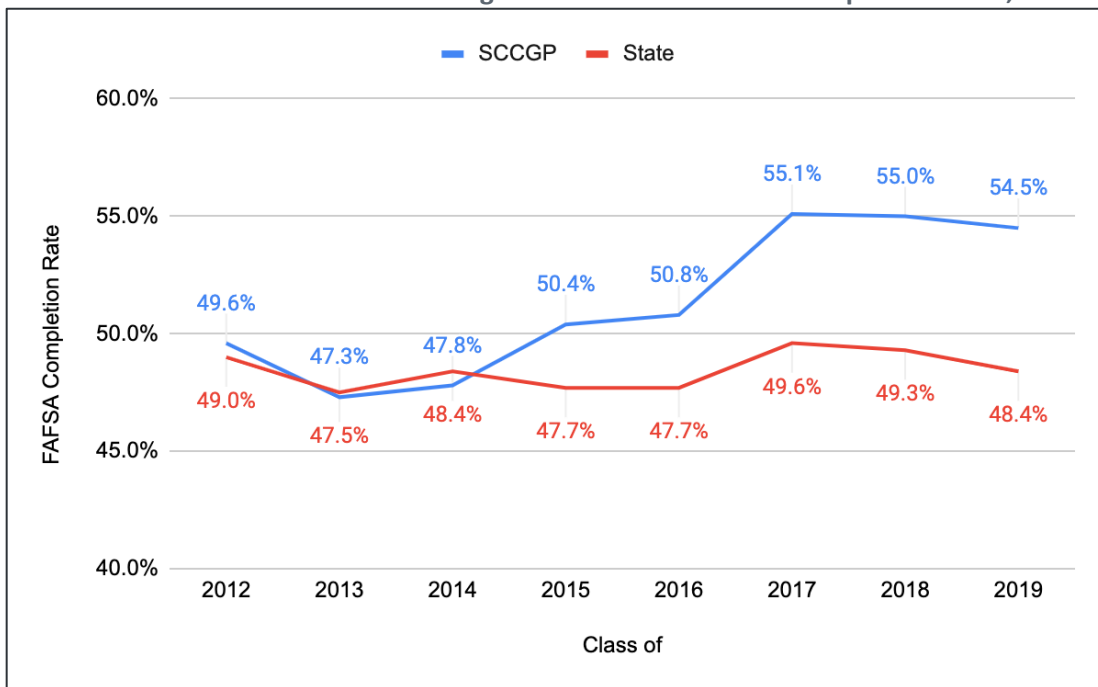


Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Nationally, research suggests that 90 percent of high school graduates who complete the FAFSA during their senior year of high school enroll in college within 12 months.ⁱⁱⁱ Thus, the Colorado legislature passed HB19-1187 to allocate \$250,000 for FAFSA-related activities to support the implementation of this best practice. The Colorado Department of Higher Education began collecting, validating, and reporting school-level data on seniors completing FAFSAs for the Class of 2012 (see <https://fafsa.highered.colorado.gov>). Note that FAFSA labels these data in terms of the college freshman class. The following analysis will maintain the referencing used throughout this report with the year reflecting the high school class; therefore, the FAFSA 2015-16 data is applicable to the graduating class of 2015.

When compared to the state, FAFSA completion rates for SCCGP-funded schools show some of the most significant impact. For the first three years of funding, SCCGP-funded schools' and the statewide rates were relatively equal. Every year after, the SCCGP-funded schools saw rates 2.7 to 6.1 percentage points higher than the statewide average. See the chart below for their eight-year trends.

Chart 9: SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 Non-AEC High School Seniors' FAFSA Completion Rates, Class of 2012-19



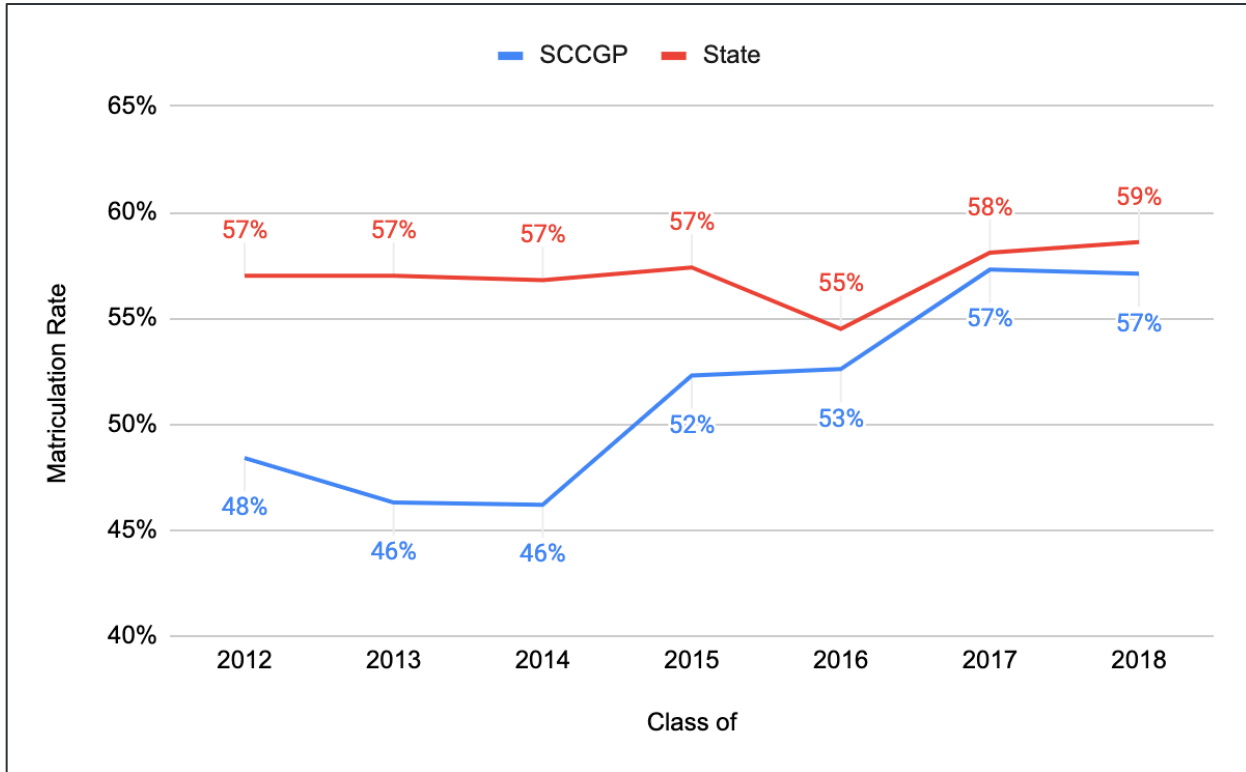
For SCCGP and state sample sizes for each year, see Table 1 on page 10.

Matriculation Rates

The matriculation rate reflects the percent of students who enroll in a two-year, four-year or career and technical education program in the year after graduation. With the exception of a dip in the initial years of the grant program, SCCGP-funded, non-AEC schools increased their overall matriculation rate from 48 to 57 percent, an increase of nine percentage points over the seven years. During the same time, the state's matriculation rate increased from 57 to 59 percent, an increase of two percentage points. The statewide rate for the class of 2016 dropped two percentage points while the SCCGP-funded schools' rate improved by one percentage point. The following table shows the gains SCCGP-funded schools made in supporting their students' matriculation compared to the statewide rate.



Chart 10: SCCGP Cohorts 2-7 Traditional School Matriculation Rates Class of 2012 through 2018



For SCCGP and state sample sizes for each year, see Table 1 on page 10.



Conclusion

SCCGP is meeting its legislatively mandated goals in reach and impact. Cohorts 2-7 include a total of 265 schools across all regions in the state, serving 109 high schools, 108 middle schools, 48 undivided secondary schools and 35 AECs. In 2018-19 alone, past and current grantees enrolled a total of 151,180 students, including a significantly more students of color, those qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, and mobile students when compared to state averages.

SCCGP contributed to a variety of PWR impacts demonstrated by schools in various phases of implementation – Year 1-3 or sustainability:

- SCCGP-funded, non-AEC schools' four-year graduation and completion rates increased by 8 and 6 percentage points, respectively, whereas the state's rates increased by 6 and 5 percentage points, respectively, from 2011-12 through 2018-19.
- In 2018-19, SCCGP-funded, non-AEC schools realized a .4 percentage point smaller dropout rate than the state's dropout rates.
- SCCGP-funded AECs' four-year graduation and completion rates and dropout rates are stabilizing after the addition of a highly impacted group of AECs were funded in 2014-15.
- Each cohort saw growth in their students' concurrent enrollment during the course of their SCCGP funding. Cohorts that have completed their funding cycle have sustained their growth in participation beyond their funding cycles.
- For the first three years of funding, SCCGP-funded schools' and the state's FAFSA completion rates were relatively equal. Every year after, the SCCGP-funded schools increased their rate to a greater degree than the state, from a 2.7 to a 6.1 percentage point difference.
- SCCGP-funded, non-AEC schools increased their overall matriculation from 48 to 57 percent, 9 percentage points for the 7 years. During the same time, the state's matriculation rate increased from 57 to 59 percent, 2 percentage points.

Although this evaluation cannot claim that all of these substantial gains are unequivocally caused by SCCGP alone, the eight-year trend data demonstrates that SCCGP schools and students are experiencing higher rates of postsecondary readiness than the state.



Appendix A: 2018-19 School Counselor Corps Advisory Committee

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

Andrew Burns, Durango School District, School District Administration (Vice Chair)

Carl Einhaus, Colorado Department of Higher Education, Student Affairs

Elysia Clemens, University of Denver, Counselor Educator

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

Brenda Meltenberger, Burlington School District, High School Counselor

Kim Medina, Colorado School of Mines, College Admissions Director

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

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



Appendix B: Data Collection and Analysis Process

- 1) CDE collected self-report data from grantees at the district and school level. These data were utilized for:
 - Student-to-counselor ratios
 - Grantee implementation indicators
 - Goals
 - Professional development
 - ASCA standards
 - ICAP
 - Career and Technical Education
 - College Visits
- 2) CDE's publicly accessible data were utilized for:
 - Demographic data and student counts
 - Graduation, completion, and dropout rates
- 3) The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) i3 data system and reports were utilized for:
 - FAFSA Completion (U.S. Department of Education verified data)
 - Concurrent Enrollment (Student Unit Record Data System, SURDS)
 - Postsecondary Matriculation (National Student Clearinghouse & SURDS)

Appendix C: SCCGP Cohort 5 Final Program Development Outcomes

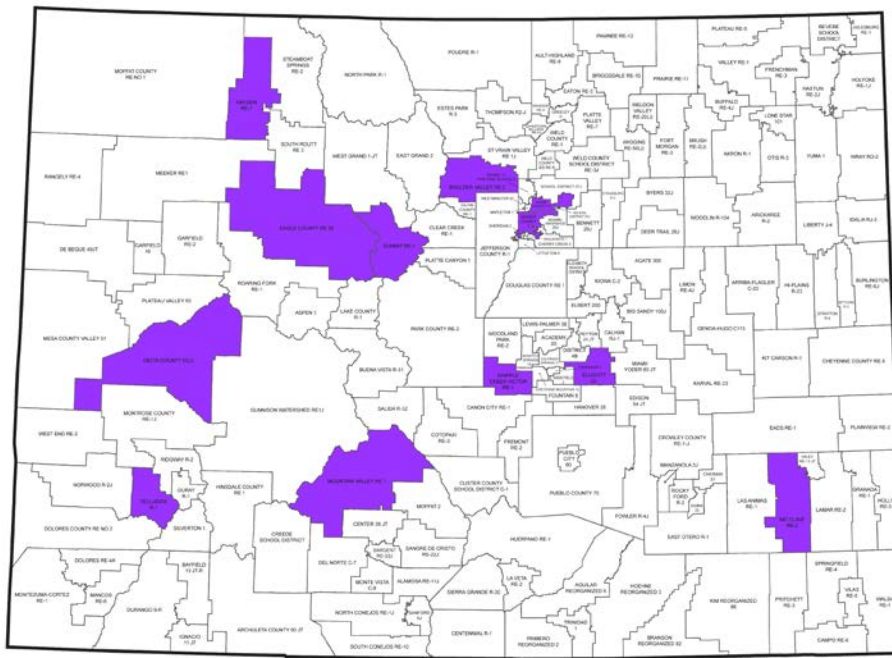
SCCGP Cohort 5 Background Information

Cohort 5’s program implementation data were analyzed for this report because they completed their funding cycle in 2018-19. In 2015-16, Cohort 5 received an initial year of partial funding for development, totaling \$536,041, to conduct a district- and school-level needs assessment and environmental scan and identify up to four SMART goals based on a root cause analysis. Interventions were then identified to address the prioritized goals and their root causes.

For the three years following, Cohort 5 received slightly more than \$2 million for implementation. Cohort 5 was comprised of twenty-three schools, the majority of which are located in rural communities (see Map 2 below). Schools served approximately 5,600 students in each of the three years they received implementation funding.

MAP 2

School Counselor Corps Grant Cohort 5



Grantees (e.g. districts, BOCES) and funded schools were required to complete end-of-year reports, which were designed to examine grantee and schools’ progress toward meeting their identified goals, professional development, ICAP implementation, student-to-counselor ratios, American School Counselor Association Model implementation, and student participation in career and technical education and college visits. The following analysis reflects the themes of progress, outputs, and outcomes for Cohort 5 grantees’ and schools’ three years of SCCGP implementation funding.



Grantees' Progress toward Reaching Their Goals

For the final grant report, grantees reflected on the two to four goals they identified during the development year. In this final year of implementation, 52 percent of grantees self-reported meeting or exceeding the performance measures that they had identified for their goals.

Out of 25 self-reported goals, grantees reported success most often with:

- ICAP completion (4) and
- Increased school engagement (3).

These grantees attributed their success to having district, faculty, and community leadership and support; the ability to develop and implement consistent tools and processes for regular and clear check-ins and monitoring to keep students on track; the ability to engage students in career fairs (even if virtually), college visits, apprenticeships, and concurrent enrollment; and the additional staff person allowing for a district and school leadership presence.

Two grantees that experienced mixed results on their goals attributed their challenges to being understaffed due to counselor transitions or extended leave for family medical reasons. Two grantees that were making progress across all their goals, but not yet meeting them at the end of the grant cycle, noted system changes and inconsistency in tools and scheduling as barriers to progress.

Schools' Progress toward Reaching Their Goals

All 24 funded schools reported their progress on a total of 67 goals. Schools self-reported meeting or exceeding 50 percent of those 67 goals, which largely included:

- ICAP completion (10) and
- Increased school engagement (5).

Schools self-reporting that they are making substantial progress commented:

"Students had trusted adults that regularly checked in about grades and behavior. For many of these students, this is the only adult that shows an interest in their grades."

"Our working relationship with the staff at CMC [Colorado Mountain College] continues to grow in a positive direction. CMC has set up numerous visits to [our school] and the school climate views taking concurrent enrollment positively."

Professional Development

In the final year of implementation, Cohort 5 SCCGP recipients indicated that secondary school counselors and team members attended nearly 2,550 hours of PWR professional development, reaching more than 200 school professionals with approximately 12 hours of professional development per person on average. Twenty-eight school professionals from Cohort 5 attended the Colorado School Counselor Association (CSCA) Annual Conference and three attended the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Annual Conference. Other trainings grantees' staff attended included:

- College Colloquium;
- Motivational Interviewing; and
- School counselor workshops, institutes, and trainings.



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

“It was really positive to have both of our administrators present at the professional development. They were able to get a better understanding of our role and what it is that we do currently within counseling while also helping to explore what it is that we are capable of!”

“The middle school career conversations provided insight into how best to guide students into exploring their interests, abilities, values and goals in terms of career planning. This training also allowed me to reflect upon the role of leadership and how it is defined in school counseling. It was informative to hear from other schools on how they implement the Capstone process and effective strategies in doing so.”

“There are so many grey areas in school counseling that it is always beneficial to attend discussions on ethical and legal challenges in school counseling. Examples of such challenges and how to properly address them is such valuable information to obtain and take with you. [I was] provided with more insight into the ICAP process and how to make them more meaningful and comprehensive.”

“This is the first year that we have had the opportunity to meet as a counseling department... It was very beneficial for us to meet together and figure out what we are individually doing that is working and what we need to improve on as a district.”

Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) Implementation

ICAP is a multi-year process that intentionally guides students and families in the exploration of career, academic and postsecondary opportunities. With the support of adults, students develop the awareness, knowledge, attitudes and skills to create their own meaningful and “PoWeRful” pathways to be postsecondary and workforce ready. The ICAP is used to help establish personalized academic and career goals, explore postsecondary career and educational opportunities, align coursework and curriculum, apply to postsecondary institutions, secure financial aid, and ultimately enter the workforce following college graduation. The State Board of Education promulgated rules for ICAPs pursuant to SB 09-256:

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

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

“We have been able to expose grades 9-12 to the local job fair due to the SCCG funding we have received. We have been able to purchase reading and study skills programs to assist in closing the academic gaps.”

“We now have schools giving a grade to ICAP and have created actual advisory classes in several schools. ICAP was solidified by policy early in the grant so that has helped drive this effort. Counselors are



also using [an electronic] platform in several schools to present ICAP lessons which has lowered the anxiety of teachers who had to not only give up class time but also design lessons.”

“We have milestones identified at each grade level (6th-12th). This is the floor of the ICAP and all activities for these milestones are in Naviance so student progress can be documented and saved.”

“Counselor meets with each high school student to discuss a 4-year high school plan and graduation credits based on the student's postsecondary goals. We visit and tour colleges that students are interested in and attend Career Fairs. This year, we hosted our own Career Fair and students met for 20 minutes with 40 industry... Students complete career and workforce/college surveys in Virtual Job Shadow and are able to watch videos of actual people working in careers of interest. We host a financial aid family night and have an on-line classroom for scholarships searches. We also started an internship program this year and a ‘Career Cab,’ worksite tours for students.”

Student-to-Counselor Ratio

The grant played an instrumental role in reducing the student-to-counselor ratio in Cohort 5 funded schools to meet the American School Counselor Association recommendation of 250:1. ASCA recommends this ratio so that professional school counselors can focus their skills, time, and energy on direct and indirect services to students at least 80 percent of their time. This comprehensive school counseling program model:

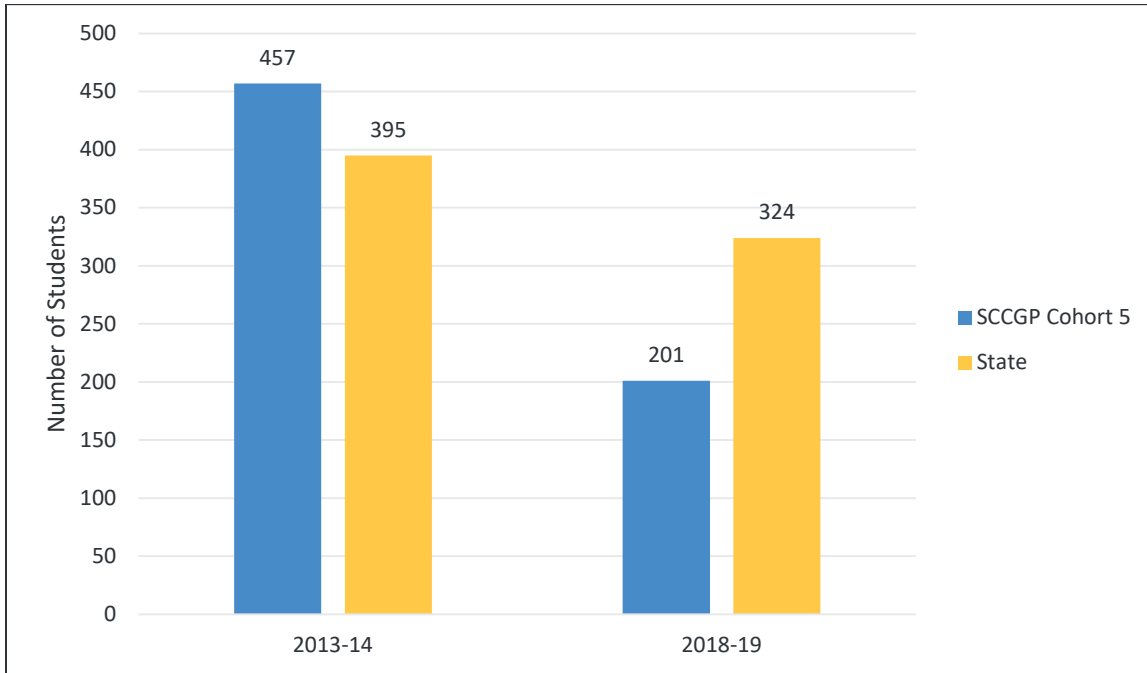
- ensures equitable access to a rigorous education for all students;
- identifies the knowledge and skills all students will acquire as a result of the K-12 comprehensive school counseling program;
- delivers programming to all students in a systematic fashion;
- bases programming on data-driven decision making; and
- ensures that programming is provided by a state-credentialed, licensed professional school counselor.

Benefits of lower student-to-counselor ratios and implementing the comprehensive counseling program include higher standardized test scores, higher graduation rates, and higher retention rates.^{iv}

In 2013-14, when submitting their SCCGP applications, the average ratio for Cohort 5 schools was 457 students to one counselor. Beginning in 2016-17, the equivalent of 32 full-time, certified school counselors were hired using SCCGP funds for Cohort 5 schools. This effectively decreased student-to-counselor ratios to well below the best practice recommendation of a maximum ratio of 250 students to one school counselor. In the final year of full SCCGP implementation, the average ratio was 201 students to one counselor, reducing caseloads by more than half on average (see Chart 11 below). This is dramatic especially when compared to the state, which started with a lower average caseload of 395 students as compared to Cohort 5, however, only ended with a 324 average student caseload, which is still well above the recommended ratio.



Chart 11: Average Counselor’s Student Caseload for SCCGP Cohort 5 Before and After Funding Compared to State



Throughout the grant reports, grantees noted that decreased student-to-counselor ratios afforded schools additional opportunities to develop systems and supports that enabled them to provide more comprehensive, quality, and/or individualized postsecondary readiness support services. The following quotes provide some examples of how counselors contribute to student success in unique and meaningful ways:

“SCCG has brought a counselor to GMCA, a school that needed this service greatly. I cannot thank you all enough for giving GMCA that opportunity. To see the growth that is not reflected in these three goals is incredible. We have students applying and attending college. We have students taking concurrent enrollment classes and passing them. The change in our students that has happened as a direct result of SCCG providing a counselor to GMCA is incredible. Thank you.”

“With the Secondary School Counseling position in place, we were able to update and improve our MTSS/RTI process. The School Counselor also helped in establishing a bi-weekly Academic Focus Team meeting, where teachers could bring up concerns, and discuss solutions. This team worked to update policies and practices throughout the year.”

“Increased awareness and collaboration among teachers/staff and the opportunity to use class time to deliver lessons, collaboration with staff in the building to help provide language support for ELL or Newcomers students. The addition of the counselor who is funded by the grant, delivers and monitors the ICAP lessons and data. Her services are delivered at the middle school level, where the completion rate is 97%.”



American School Counselors Association (ASCA) Model Implementation

The school-level grant report included a reliable measure for assessing the level of ASCA Model implementation, the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.^v The survey includes a total of 14 self-reported items, which provide an overall implementation score and two factor scores – programmatic orientation and school counseling services. The following table includes the three years of grant report data for SCCGP Cohort 5 demonstrating the significant progress made by grantees. (Note: The four-point rating scale for the survey was 1 = Not Present, 2 = Development in Progress, 3 = Partly Implemented, and 4 = Fully Implemented.)

Table 2: ASCA Model Implementation Scores for SCCGP Cohort 5 for Three Implementation Years

| | Overall Implementation | Programmatic Orientation | School Counseling Services |
|---------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2016-17 | 3.17 | 3.18 | 3.16 |
| 2017-18 | 3.49 | 3.43 | 3.55 |
| 2018-19 | 3.47 | 3.46 | 3.48 |

Overall, SCCGP Cohort 5 schools’ ASCA Implementation Scores demonstrate that the funded schools made significant improvements and have achieved partly to fully implemented comprehensive school counseling programs as the funding concluded. The components with the greatest implementation scores reported in this final grant year were:

- “School counselors spend at least 80% of their time in activities that directly benefit students” (3.71);
- “The school counseling program has the resources to allow counselors to complete appropriate professional development activities” (3.67); and
- “A written mission statement exists and is used as a foundation by all counselors” (3.67).

“The program operates from a plan for closing the achievement gap” was rated the lowest overall in the last year of implementation and did not improve as other elements did, 3.05 to 3.13. Interestingly, “School counselors analyze student data by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic level to identify interventions to close achievement gaps” (2.69 to 3.25), “The School Counseling program includes interventions designed to improve the school’s ability to educate all students to high standards” (2.90 to 3.54), and “School counselors communicate with parents to coordinate student achievement and gain feedback for program improvement” (2.87 to 3.42) increased significantly over the course of the grant cycle.

Career and Technical Education

SCCGP encourages schools to increase students’ exposure to diverse career pathways and opportunities through enrollment in Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. With each year of the grant, Cohort 5 enrolled 1,500-1,750 students in CTE courses. Enrollment prior to SCCGP funding is not available.

College Visits

Grantees stated that in each of the three implementation years, SCCGP Cohort 5 schools provided approximately 1,500 unduplicated students with opportunities to visit colleges. Data for visits prior to SCCGP funding is not available.



Conclusion

Cohort 5 process implementation outcomes demonstrate how the SCCGP contributes to broader PWR goals:

- Reducing the average student-to-counselor ratio by more than half from 457:1 to 201:1;
- Improving the overall quality implementation of American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Model from 3.17 to 3.47 (on a 4-point scale);
- Providing nearly 2,550 hours of PWR professional development, reaching more than 200 school professionals with approximately 12 hours of professional development per person on average;
- Enhancing ICAP systems with curricula, tools, and programs for career advising and portfolio development;
- Enrolling 1,500-1,750 students in CTE courses for each year funded; and
- Supporting approximately 1,500 students in visiting a college with their school for each year funded.

In end of year reporting, Cohort 5 grantees attributed their success to the ability to hire qualified professionals to develop and support the enhancement of a comprehensive school counseling program.



Endnotes

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

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

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

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

^v 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.