



2022 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 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 enacted through funding awards to eligible local education providers. SCCGP allocates funding for a four-year grant cycle as allocations are available from the Colorado General Assembly.

Focus of this Report

This report describes outcomes of the SCCGP Cohort 7 at the close of the four-year grant period. The SCCGP Cohort 7 grant began with a development year of July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018,¹ and the subsequent three years of the grant were implementation years of July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2021.

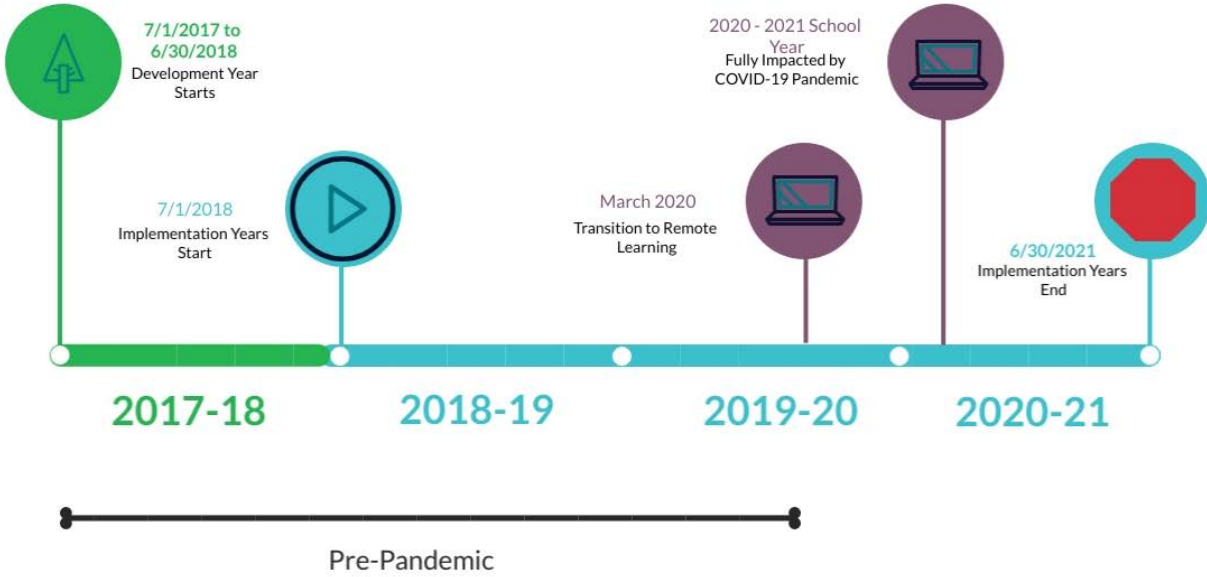
Information presented in this report is similar to recent SCCGP legislative reports. This report also includes information on the quasi-experimental study currently underway by the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab, in partnership with CDE.

Context for Cohort 7 Reporting: Implications of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic likely influenced the outcomes for Cohort 7. As shown in Figure 1, Cohort 7 experienced disruption of educational delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic during the last few months of the 2019-20 academic year (implementation year two), which lasted through the entirety of the 2020-21 academic year (implementation year three). Wherever possible, we offer an interpretation of data based on the likely implications of COVID-19 throughout this report.

¹ Cohort 7 received only partial funding for the development year.

FIGURE 1: SCCGP Cohort 7 Timeline



SCCGP Cohort 7 Description

A total of 83 schools were included in SCCGP Cohort 7. Of these, most (71%) served exclusively middle and high school students. See Table 1 for a full breakdown. Of the 83 grantee schools, 11% are designated as Alternative Education Campuses (AECs).

TABLE 1: SCCGP Cohort 7 School Levels Served

	High	Middle	Elementary	Undivided Middle & High	Elementary & Middle	Elementary, Middle, & High
Count	21	16	14	22	8	2
Percent of Cohort	25.3%	19.3%	16.9%	26.5%	9.6%	2.4%



Percentage of Vulnerable Students in SCCGP Cohort 7 Schools is Higher than the State Average (2020-21)

- 53% (grantees) vs. 40% (state) of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch
- 58% (grantees) vs. 48% (state) of students identifying as students of color
- 11% (grantees) vs. 10% (non-grantee) of students changed schools outside of the typical enrollment process

SCCGP funding decisions prioritize schools with dropout rates that exceed the state average, schools with a high percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, 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, the demographics of students served by Cohort 7 schools align with the populations of students that tend to have higher dropout rates than the state average. Annual dropout prevention legislative reports consistently indicate that students of color, economically disadvantaged students, and highly mobile students tend to have higher dropout rates than the state average.² In the 2020-21 academic year, SCCGP Cohort 7 schools enrolled 28,518 students, 58% of whom were students of color. Over half of students served were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Students who experience homelessness or foster care placements tend to be highly mobile; however,

the percentage of youth in foster care is not reported at the school level, and publicly available data on homelessness is limited at the school level due to CDE cell suppression policies. Funding was provided to schools across the state, including both urban and rural communities.

SCCGP Cohort 7 Program Outcomes

Program outcomes are reported on both the student level and the program staff level.

Student Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Outcomes

Despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, SCCGP Cohort 7 schools have seen meaningful improvement in several outcomes related to students' postsecondary and workforce readiness from the 2017-18 academic year (SCCGP Cohort 7's funding year) and the final implementation year, 2020-21.

Improved Educational Attainment

- The four-year high school graduation rate increased by 6.3 percentage points in non-AEC grantee schools, compared to an increase of 1.2 percentage points by non-AEC schools statewide.
- The high school six-year completion rate for AEC grantee schools increased by 3.1 percentage points, while the state AEC six-year completion rate decreased by 0.3 percentage points.

Decreased Dropout Rate

- The dropout rate for non-AEC grantee schools decreased by 0.4 percentage points, a greater improvement than the state average, which decreased by 0.3 percentage points in the same time frame.
- Although the AEC grantee school dropout rate increased by 0.8 percentage points, this rate remained lower (better) than the state average.

Postsecondary Participation

- Non-AEC concurrent enrollment participation for grantees increased by 15.7% at the end of the grant cycle, with an early-pandemic peak (32.4% increase) that was even more substantial. Cohort 7 schools' increase in concurrent enrollment exceeded the pace of the state during the first two years of implementation but dropped below the state average in the final year of the grant cycle.

² Reports to the Colorado legislature on Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement can be found [here](#).



- FAFSA completion for non-AEC grantee schools remained above the state average throughout the grant period; however, the percentage of students completing the FAFSA decreased for both AEC and non-AEC grantee schools in academic years affected by the COVID-19 pandemic at a faster pace than the state as a whole.
- Postsecondary matriculation rates remained relatively unchanged during the grant period for both AEC and non-AEC grantee schools, with the exception of a positive peak increase for non-AECs (2.3 percentage points) during the 2018-19 academic year. The Cohort 7 non-AEC school rates were similar to the state average throughout the grant cycle.
- Nearly 4,000 grantee students were enrolled in Career and Technical Education courses in the 2020-21 academic year.
- Over 1,000 grantee students participated in college visits in the 2020-2021 academic year.

Program Staffing Outcomes

Delivery of comprehensive school counseling was strengthened by investments in program staff:

- Cohort 7 schools added the equivalent of 25 full-time, certified school counselors. This brings the average student-to-counselor ratio down to 221:1 for grantees, below the American School Counselors Association's (ASCA) recommendation of 250:1.
- Based on ASCA ratings, counselors were able to support their schools in implementing high quality programs.
- Over 17,000 hours of professional development were completed by team members in the 2020-21 academic year.

Plan for a Quasi-Experimental Study

In SFY22 the Colorado Department of Education contracted with the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab to assess the impact of SCCGP on student engagement, educational attainment, and postsecondary readiness. Future SCCGP 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.



Introduction

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 these rules,

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. Specific outcome areas targeted by the program include:

- Attendance and School Engagement;
- Behavioral and Personal/Social Learning;
- K-12 Academic Achievement;
- K-12 Educational Attainment; and
- Postsecondary Readiness and Success.

SCCGP was created to support school counselors in implementing evidence-informed strategies to support students’ growth and development in these outcome areas.

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. Based on lessons learned from the initial cohorts, since 2014-15 (the first year for Cohort 4), SCCGP funds begin with partial funding for a development year prior to being fully funded for three years of implementation. Since the 2014-15 academic year, SCCGP has been appropriated \$10,000,000 annually to distribute to grantees across cohorts (in 2020-21: Cohorts 7, 8, 9, and 10) for implementing postsecondary success supports.

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 was given to applicants that served:

- 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-priced 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. The RFA 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.

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.

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 early cohorts, program planning challenges were identified. Thus, the program design shifted to address these challenges through a statutory change from S.B. 14-150. Beginning with the 2014-15 academic 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 a greater funding level for the three remaining years. The development year (year one) 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.



Evaluation Approach

Evaluation History, Plan for Quasi-Experimental Design, and Current Approach

Evaluation History

The SCCGP has shown promise throughout its 10 years of implementation. SCCGP legislative reports consistently indicate that the program has achieved all stated goals. A formal, rigorous outcome evaluation of program effectiveness last occurred in 2016 with strong results shown for schools receiving the grant compared to similar schools that had not received the grant. However, as the pool of grantees grew over time, most target schools received the treatment and, thus, finding comparison schools that had not received the grant became difficult. Therefore, no additional comparative evaluation of program effectiveness has taken place in recent years. With the recent expansion of the program to include elementary schools, there is now an opportunity and need to engage in ongoing rigorous evaluation of the program.

Plan for Quasi-Experimental Study (State Fiscal Year 2022-2025)

The Governor's Office of State Planning and Budgeting (OSPB) 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 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 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](#). OSPB awarded a four-year extension of this grant to execute the evaluation that began in SFY22.

Current Evaluation Approach

The evaluation approach for the current report replicates the types and structure of descriptive information presented in previous SCCGP legislative reports. In this report, a description of Cohort 7 is presented, followed by outcomes achieved through the 2020-2021 academic year. A limitation of this evaluation is that it is descriptive, not causal, and the outcomes reported here cannot be solely attributed to this program.

Much of the secondary data used in this report are publicly available. When needed, CDE's Office of Data Services provided validated data on K-12 outcomes. Postsecondary data was provided by the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) and is inclusive of National Student Clearinghouse data on matriculation. Additionally, grantees and schools submitted 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. Analyses descriptively compare Cohort 7 outcomes to state averages.

Alternative Education Campuses' (AECs') outcomes are analyzed separately because of their students' unique circumstances and challenges that affect their postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR) goals and timelines. A [prior year analysis by CDE](#) found that although AECs comprise only 2% of the state's student population, AECs enroll proportionally more students who have been historically and systemically afforded fewer opportunities for their success. For example, students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch make up



62% of AECs' student body whereas these students comprise 40% of the state's student population. Similarly, students of color comprise 64% of AECs' student body whereas they comprise 46% of the state's student population.

[Appendix B](#) provides additional details on data sources and analytical approaches used.



Description of SCCGP for Cohort 7

Description of Cohort 7 Grantees

SCCGP Cohort 7 included 24 grantees and 83 schools serving a diverse student population with regard to K-12 school type, student count, mobility rates, geographic region, race and ethnicity, and free and/or reduced-price lunch qualified students.

Types of Schools: Of the 83 schools included in the SCCGP Cohort 7, there are 21 high schools, 16 middle schools, 14 elementary schools, 22 schools that serve middle- and high-school students together, eight schools that serve elementary- and middle-school students together, and two schools that serve K-12 students (Table 2). Of the funded schools, 11% are designated as an AEC.



TABLE 2: SCCGP Cohort 7 Grantees and Types of Schools Funded

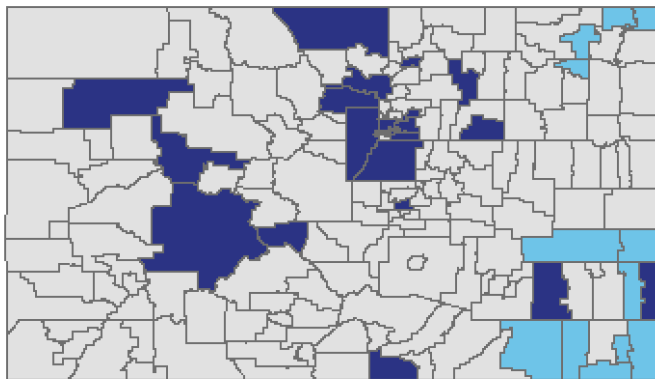
Districts	High	Middle	Elementary	Undivided Middle & High	Elementary & Middle	Elementary, Middle, & High	Total
Adams-Arapahoe 28J	0	0	0	0	6	0	6
Boulder Valley School District	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Charter School Institute (Grantee 1)	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Charter School Institute (Grantee 2)	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Cherry Creek School District	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Colorado Springs School District 11	2	3	0	1	0	0	6
Deer Trail School District 26J	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Denver Public Schools (Grantee 1)	1	2	0	3	0	0	6
Denver Public Schools (Grantee 2)	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Douglas County School District RE-1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Greeley-Evans School District 6	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Gunnison Watershed School District	1	1	0	1	0	0	3
Jefferson County Public School District	1	0	1	4	0	0	6
Las Animas School District RE-1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2






Districts	High	Middle	Elementary	Undivided Middle & High	Elementary & Middle	Elementary, Middle, & High	Total
Meeker School District RE-1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Northeast Colorado BOCES	1	1	4	4	0	1	11
Poudre School District	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Primero School District RE-2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Roaring Fork School District	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Salida School District	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Sheridan School District 2	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Southeastern BOCES	2	2	8	6	0	0	18
St. Vrain Valley School District	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Wiggins School District RE-50J	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
TOTAL	21	16	14	22	8	2	83

Geographic Location: Cohort 7 reached areas of the state previously unaddressed by SCCGP, including rural northeastern Colorado. Map 1 illustrates the geographic distribution of Cohort 7, with districts who received funding for the first time in Cohort 7 highlighted. Map 2 illustrates where SCCGP funding has been historically distributed throughout Cohorts 1 through 7.

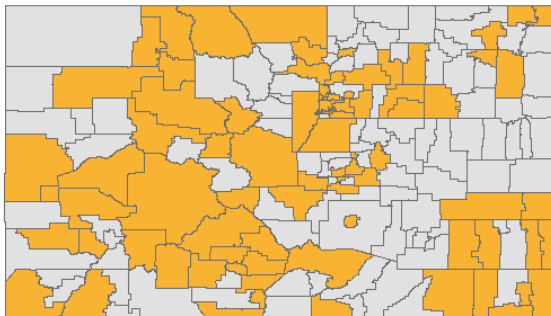
MAP 1: SCCGP Cohort 7 Grantee Locations





Cohort 7 Grantees

-  Not an SCCGP Recipient
-  Newly Funded SCCGP Recipient
-  Previously Funded SCCGP Recipient

MAP 2: SCCGP Grantee Locations, 2009-21



Grantee Districts 2009-2021

-  Not an SCCGP Recipient
-  SCCGP Recipient

Student Count: The SCCGP Cohort 7 reached 28,240 students; 2,192, or nearly 8%, were enrolled in AECs (compared to approximately 2% of the state student count). The October student count data are used to determine the number of students impacted by SCCGP funding.



Student Characteristics and High School Graduation Rates

Students of color, economically disadvantaged students, and highly mobile students tend to have lower high school graduation rates than the state average.³ Cohort 7 demographic data indicate that the SCCGP is being implemented in schools with 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 student populations.

Race and Ethnicity: Cohort 7 students were from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds with 58% identifying as a student of color, as compared to 48% of students statewide. Figure 2 depicts the racial and ethnic composition of students enrolled in SCCGP Cohort 7 schools.

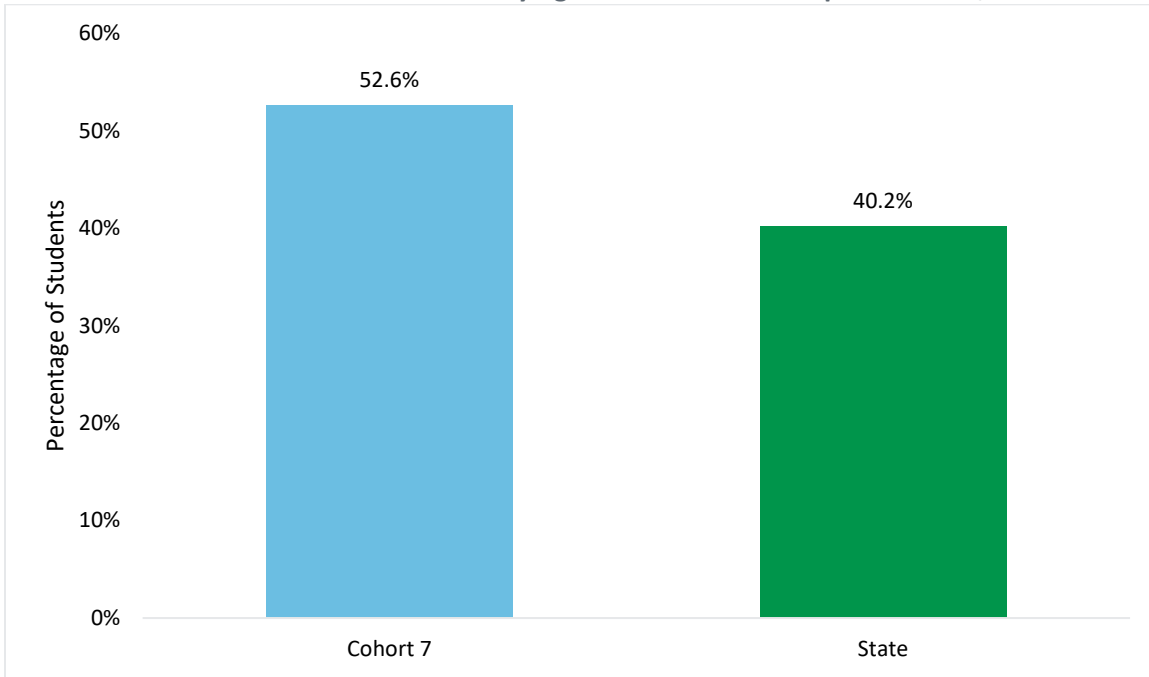
FIGURE 2: SCCGP Cohort 7 Student Racial and Ethnic Composition, 2020-21

³ 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-priced Lunch: The number of students qualifying for free or reduced-priced 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-priced lunch. SCCGP funds reached a high percentage of students from low-income backgrounds with 52.6% of students in Cohort 7 schools eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch, compared to only 40.2% of students statewide who are eligible (Figure 3).⁴

FIGURE 3: SCCGP Cohort 7 Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced-priced Lunch, 2020-21

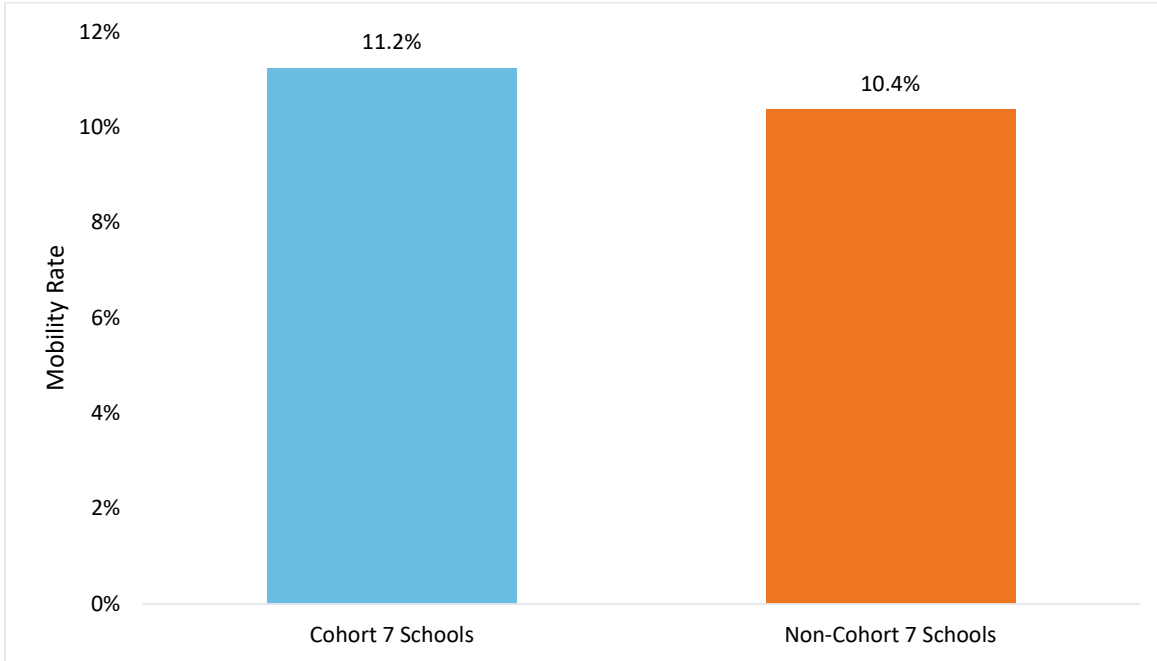


⁴ This estimate is based on publicly available data. Due to CDE cell suppression policies to protect student privacy, this may be an underestimate.



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 7 schools had a slightly higher student mobility rate than the average in all schools statewide that were *not* part of Cohort 7, 11.2% compared to 10.4%.⁵

FIGURE 4: SCCGP Cohort 7 Student Mobility Rate, 2020-21



Note. The comparison made here to non-cohort 7 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.

⁵ 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 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 7 schools with all schools statewide that were *not* part of Cohort 7 to give a more direct comparison.



SCCGP Cohort 7 Student Outcomes

Per C.R.S. 22-7-1008, a description of postsecondary 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 measure PWR in a variety of ways, including whether students demonstrate the required life skills for success after high school, are on track to four-year graduation, and have work experience and/or college credit. This report highlights baseline data⁶ for SCCGP Cohort 7 from the end of the initial development year to final outcomes after three years of SCCGP implementation for the following indicators:

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

It also examines CTE enrollment and college visits for students in the final year of the grant.

Alternative Education Campus (AEC) Outcomes

AECs’ outcomes are analyzed separately because of their students’ unique circumstances and challenges that affect their PWR goals and timelines. Because of the unique ways AECs aim to address student needs, this report considers slightly different outcomes for AECs and non-AECs:

- **Graduation and Completion:** four-year graduation rates are reported for non-AECs with students Grade 9 and above; six-year completion rates are reported for AECs with students Grade 9 and above.
- **Dropout Rates:** Dropout rates are reported separately for AECs and non-AECs with students in Grade 7 and above.
- **Concurrent Enrollment:** Only non-AEC schools reported.
- **FAFSA Completion:** AEC and non-AEC schools are reported in comparison to the overall state rate.
- **Matriculation Rate:** AEC and non-AEC schools are reported in comparison to the overall state rate.

Future legislative reports will include a more in depth examination of the differences between AEC and non-AEC schools funded by SCCGP ([see planned Quasi-Experimental Design Study](#)).

⁶ 2018 marked the end of the development year, providing baseline rates before full implementation began.



Graduation and Completion Rates

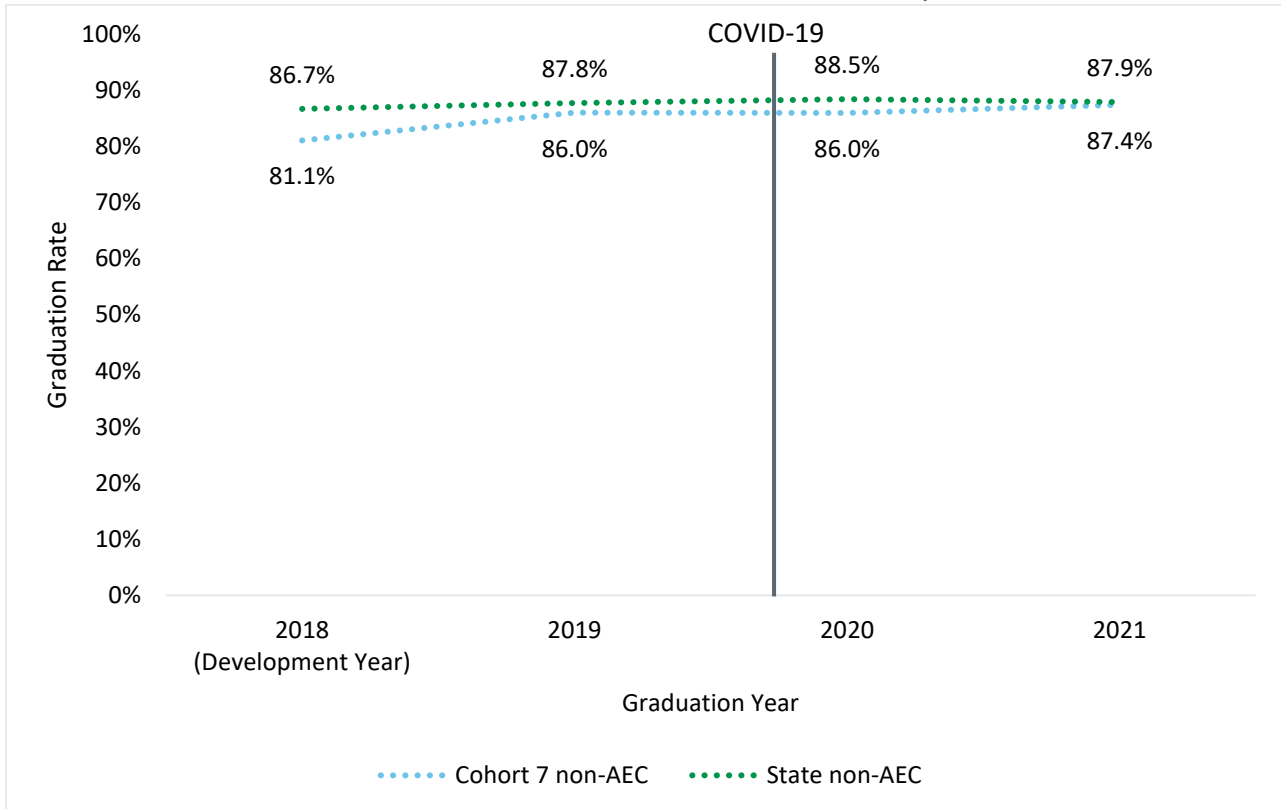
Four-year graduation is defined as those students who graduate from high school four years after entering ninth grade. This measure is appropriate for traditional, comprehensive high schools or “Non-AEC” schools. The year that students are anticipated to graduate in is the same as saying the “Class of 20XX.”

When students enter an AEC off-track for graduation, they may require an individualized plan for completing high school that takes longer to attain. Therefore, for AECs, an appropriate measure for understanding PWR is the six-year completion rate, which includes both students who graduated and those who completed a non-diploma certificate or High School Equivalency within six years after entering ninth grade.

Non-AEC

Cohort 7 included 35 non-AEC high schools. Prior to receiving full SCCGP funding, the Cohort’s anticipated year of graduation (AYG) four-year graduation rate was 5.6 percentage points below the state average for non-AEC schools (Class of 2018). While both the Cohort and the state’s graduation rate increased over the next three years, Cohort 7 schools closed the gap to only 0.5 percentage points by the end of the grant cycle (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5: SCCGP Cohort 7 Four-Year Graduation Rates for Non-AEC Schools, Class of 2018-21



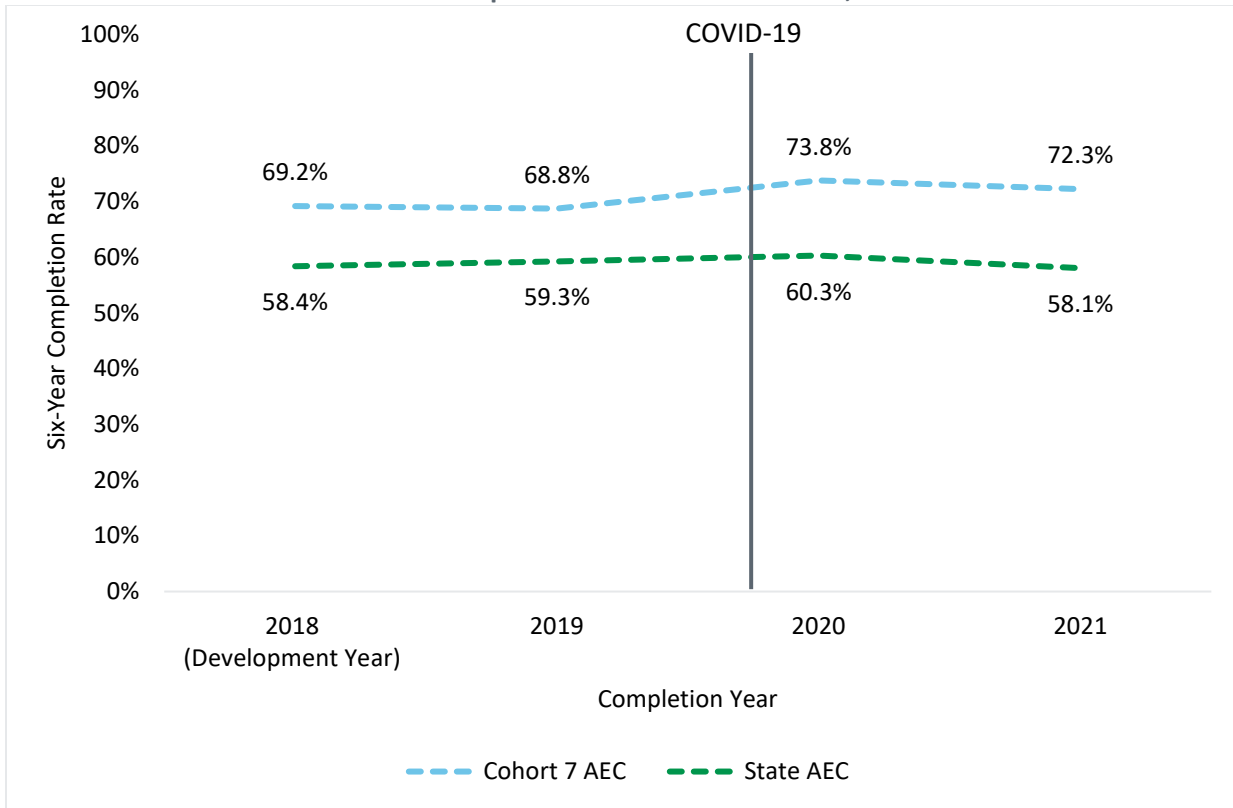


AEC

Cohort 7 included nine AEC high schools. In 2018, prior to receiving full SCCGP funding, the Cohort’s six-year completion rate for students was 10.8 percentage points above the state average for AEC schools. This group of students were part of the “Class of 2016” and the 2018 rate is six years after initially entering ninth grade.

After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Cohort 7 schools increased their six-year completion rate to 14.2 percentage points above the state average for AEC schools (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6: SCCGP Cohort 7 Six-Year Completion Rates for AEC Schools, Years 2018-21





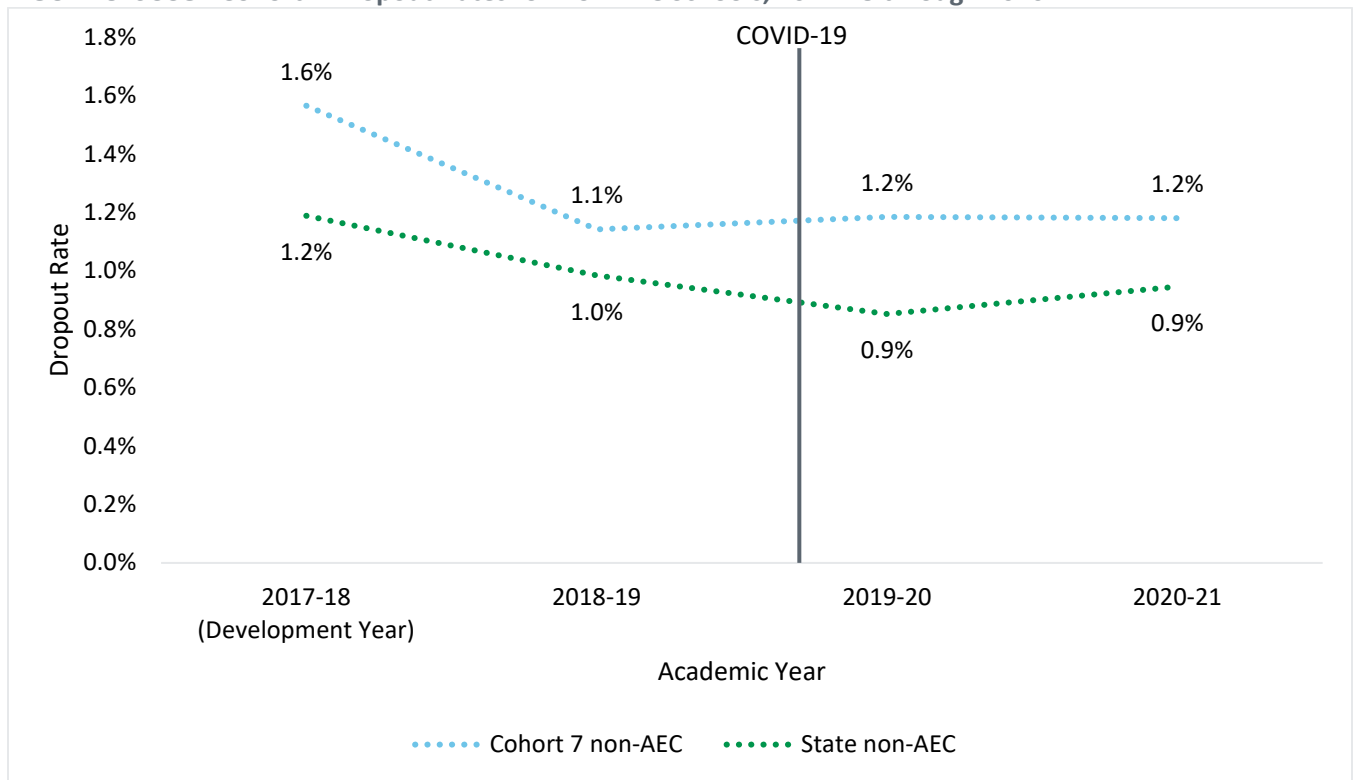
Dropout Rates

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.

Non-AEC

Cohort 7 contained 60 non-AEC schools with students in Grade 7 and above. Prior to receiving full SCCGP funding, the dropout rate for Cohort 7 was 1.6%, 0.4 percentage points above the state average for non-AEC schools. Both Cohort 7 schools and the state overall decreased their dropout rate over the following three years, with the gap between them narrowing to 0.3 percentage points by the end of the grant cycle (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8: SCCGP Cohort 7 Dropout Rates for Non-AEC Schools, 2017-18 through 2020-21

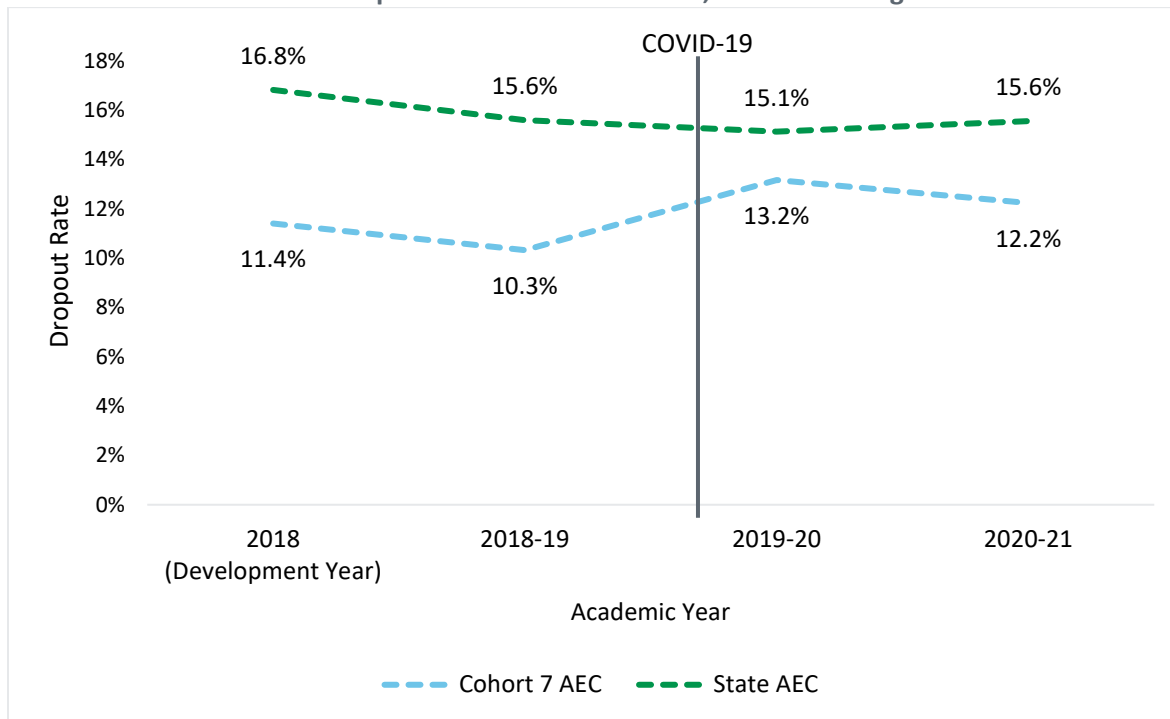




AEC

All nine AEC schools in Cohort 7 contained students in Grade 7 and above. Prior to receiving full SCCGP funding, the dropout rate for Cohort 7 AECs was 11.4%, 5.8 percentage points lower (better) than the state average. Over the four-year period, the state dropout rate for AECs decreased by 1.2 percentage points, while Cohort 7 schools' dropout rate increased by 0.8 percentage points (Figure 9). Despite this increase, Cohort 7 AEC schools' rates are still below (better) than the state average for this type of school.

FIGURE 9: SCCGP Cohort 7 Dropout Rates for AEC Schools, 2017-18 through 2020-21



Concurrent Enrollment

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 (CTE) courses, which may include coursework related to apprenticeship programs or internship programs, at an institution of higher education” as detailed in C.R.S. 22-35-103 (revised by S.B. 19-176).

Across all three implementation years, Cohort 7 schools concurrently enrolled substantially more students in postsecondary courses, as compared to pre-funding concurrent enrollment counts. Figures 10 and 11 depicts the change in number of students enrolled over time for Cohort 7 schools and the state.⁷

Cohort 7 schools' increase in concurrent enrollment exceeded the pace of the state during the first two years of implementation but dropped in the final year of implementation. Figure 12 illustrates the percent change in concurrent enrollment for Cohort 7 non-AEC students compared to the state as a whole (AEC and non-AEC schools). Peak concurrent enrollment was during the 2019-20 academic year. Cohort 7 increased their students' participation in concurrent enrollment by 32.4% relative to the 2017-18 academic year, whereas the state increased its concurrent enrollment by 28.6% relative to the 2017-18 academic year. In the final year of

⁷ State comparison numbers are examined separately because of differences in sample size compared to the cohort.



implementation, Cohort 7 concurrent enrollment rate was still well above the 2017-18 development year, a 15.7% percent increase.

FIGURE 10: SCCGP Cohort 7 Non-AEC Student Participation in Concurrent Enrollment, 2017-18 through 2020-21

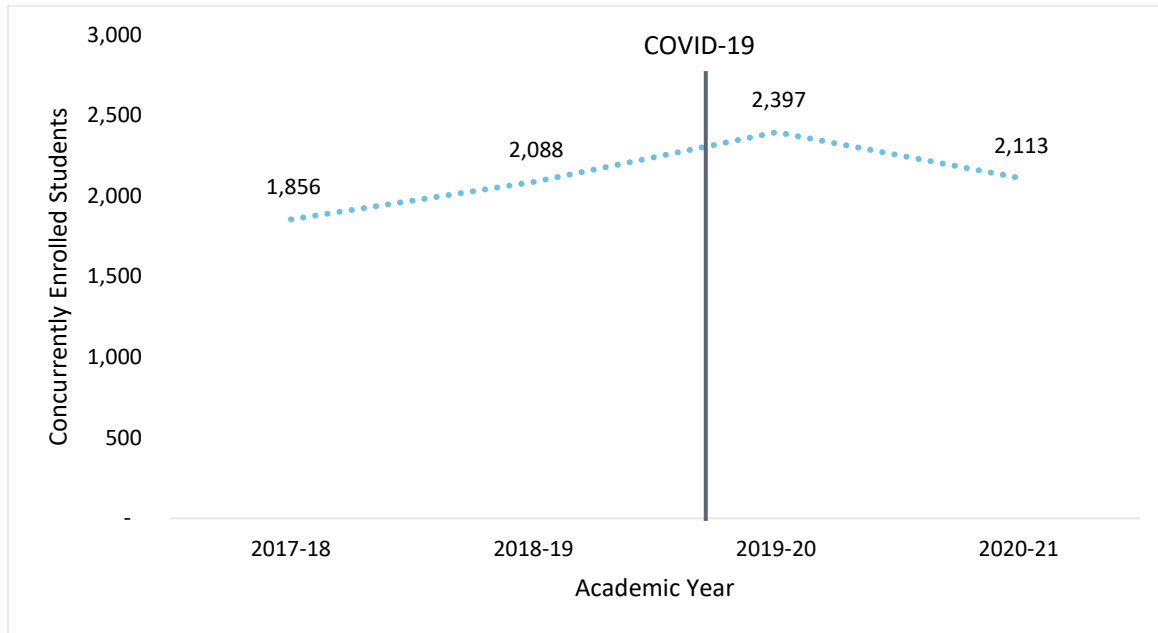


FIGURE 11: Statewide Student Participation in Concurrent Enrollment, 2017-18 through 2020-21, AEC and non-AEC Students

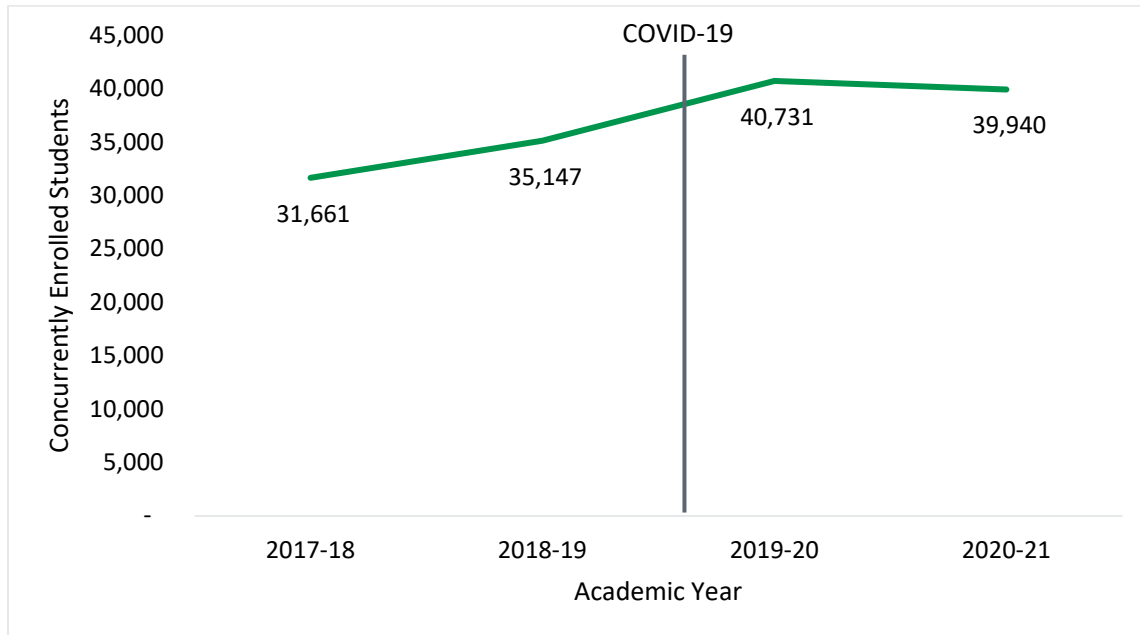
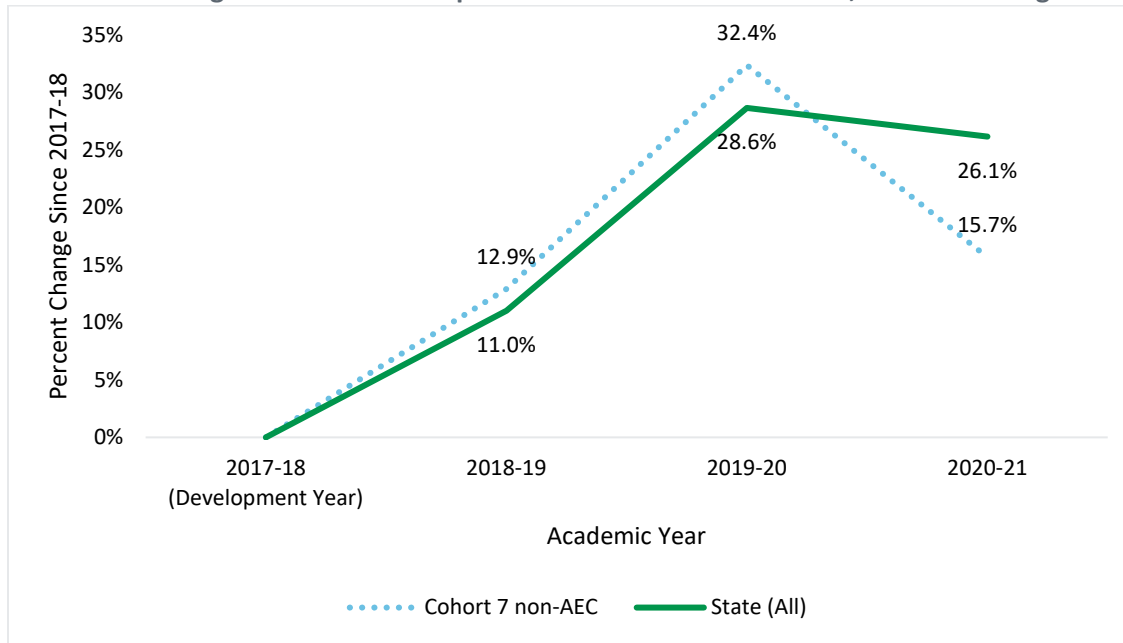




FIGURE 12: Change in Student Participation in Concurrent Enrollment, 2017-18 through 2020-21



Free Application for Federal Student Aid

Nationally, research suggests that 90% of high school graduates who complete the FAFSA during their senior year of high school enroll in college within 12 months.⁸ Thus, the Colorado legislature passed H.B. 19-1187 to allocate \$250,000 for FAFSA-related activities to support the implementation of this best practice. CDHE began collecting, validating, and reporting school-level data on seniors completing FAFSAs for the graduating class of 2012.⁹

Non-AEC

Cohort 7 non-AEC schools started out with higher rates of FAFSA completion compared to all high schools statewide. This gap increased during the first full year of SCCGP funding, pre-COVID-19 pandemic. However, both the Cohort 7 non-AEC and statewide rate of FAFSA completion dropped in 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and continued to decrease for the graduating class of 2021. Although the Cohort 7 non-AEC schools' FAFSA completion rate remained above the state rate throughout their funding, the gap between the cohort rate and state rate was smaller at the end of the four-year grant cycle, meaning that the Cohort 7 FAFSA completion rate dropped at a slightly faster pace than the state average during the COVID-19 pandemic.

AEC

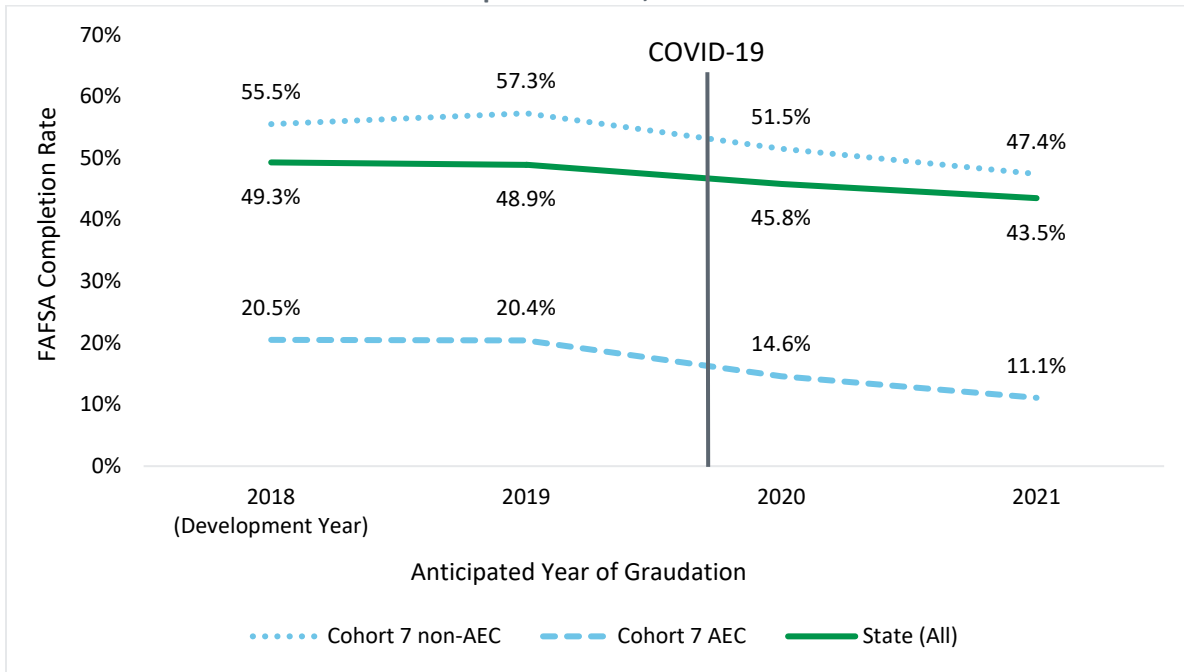
Cohort 7 AEC schools started out with a FAFSA completion rate nearly 30 percentage points lower than that of all high schools statewide. Like their non-AEC counterparts, Cohort 7 AEC schools' FAFSA completion rate decreased by 5.8 percentage points between 2019 and 2020, after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and continued to drop at a faster pace than the state overall average (Figure 13).

⁸ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002/06).

⁹ 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 2018-19 data is applicable to the graduating class of 2018.



FIGURE 13: SCCGP Cohort 7 FAFSA Completion Rates, Class of 2018-21



COVID-19

Although SCCGP provided Cohort 7 schools with funds to support the implementation of their school counseling programs, grantees reported that FAFSA completion workshops and college visits were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰ This reduction in activities aimed at increasing FAFSA completion rates is reflected in the data. Because SCCGP intentionally focuses on providing grants to schools whose students face systemic challenges, crises like COVID-19 are likely to compound existing need, especially in AECs. These compounding factors may explain the drop in FAFSA completion rates for the SCCGP-funded schools.

¹⁰ Changes to school counseling services delivery in Cohort 7 schools are evidenced by funding carryover. For example, at the end of FY2020-21, two-thirds of Cohort 7 grantees had unspent SCCGP funds.



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 completing high school. Postsecondary matriculation data are not yet available for the high school completion cohort of 2021.

Non-AEC

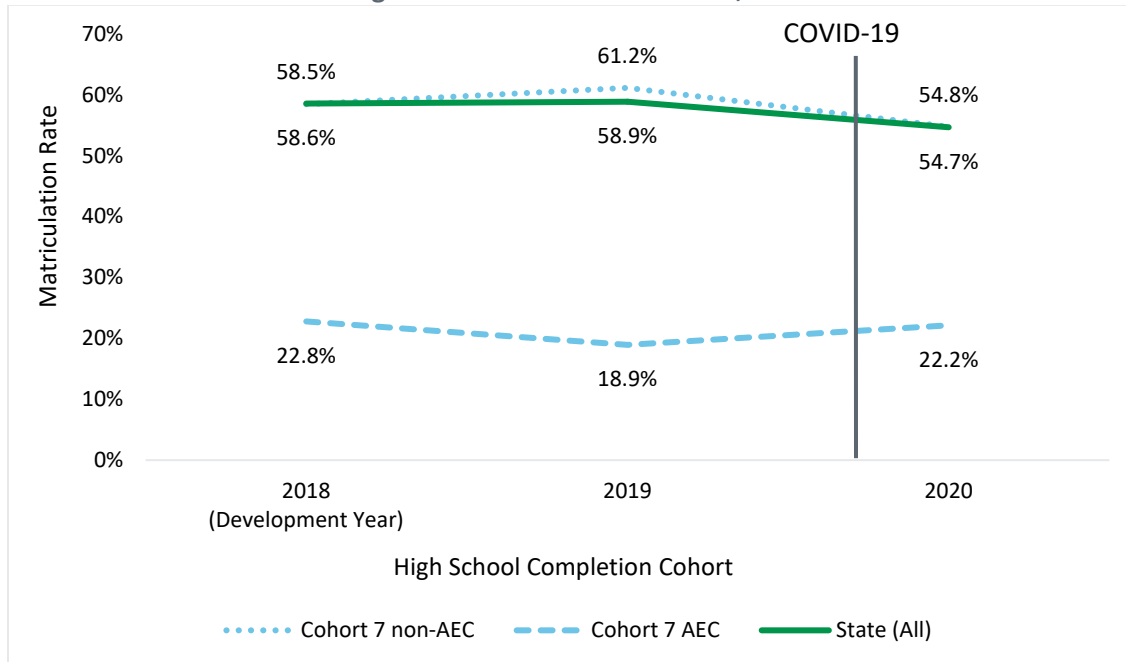
Cohort 7 non-AEC schools started out slightly below the state’s matriculation rate. For students who completed high school in the first year of full funding, Cohort 7 schools’ matriculation rate increased by 2.3 percentage points and exceeded the state rate.

Students who completed high school during the second year of funding (2019-20 academic year) were impacted by the abrupt and significant transition to remote learning when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020. This is the cohort of students for whom the uncertainty of the pandemic had the greatest impact on matriculation to postsecondary education in non-AEC school settings. The matriculation rate for non-AEC grantees was similar to the state as a whole and remained relatively consistent throughout the grant period (Figure 14).

AEC

Cohort 7 AEC schools started the grant cycle with a matriculation rate that was 35.8 percentage points below the overall state matriculation rate. At the end of the grant cycle the size of the gap decreased by 3.3 percentage points but remains well below the state matriculation rate.

FIGURE 14: SCCGP Cohort 7 High School Matriculation Rates, Class of 2018-20





Career and Technical Education

SCCGP encourages schools to increase students' exposure to diverse career pathways and opportunities through enrollment in CTE courses. In the final year of the grant, funded schools self reported enrollment of 3,902 students in CTE courses. Comparisons are not made to previous cohorts because the composition of the cohorts (i.e., total number of schools, proportion of elementary and middle schools) changes.

College Visits

The COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected schools' ability to attend college visits. While many reported that they were not allowed to do in-person visits, a handful of schools reported virtual visits and limited in-person visits with a total of 1,080 students in Cohort 7 schools that participated in college visits. One school also reported that their high school students participated in the Colorado Virtual College Fair Week in October where each student "visited" 3 or more colleges. Institutions visited by Cohort 7 students included:

- Colorado State University
- Ft. Lewis
- Metro State
- Mesa State
- Colorado Mountain College
- Western Technical College
- Colorado School of Mines
- Adams State
- Red Rocks Community College
- Front Range Community College
- Metropolitan State University of Denver
- Colorado State University Pueblo
- University of Colorado
- Colorado Mesa University
- Community College of Denver
- Aveda Institute
- Paul Mitchell
- Lincoln Tech
- Trinidad State College



SCCGP Cohort 7 Program Outcomes

Grantees submitted end-of-year reports at both the school and district levels (as applicable), which were designed to examine progress, outputs, and outcomes in six program areas:

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

Progress Toward Reaching Goals

During the planning year (year one), 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.¹¹ Seventy-four of the 83 schools in Cohort 7 provided data on goal progress on a total of 138 goals. Goals most often focused on ICAP completion (18%) and increased social and emotional skill development (18%), followed by getting and staying on track for graduation (9%), improving postsecondary readiness (8%), increasing school engagement (8%), and improving a comprehensive school counseling program (7%). Of the 138 goals, 81 (58.7%) were rated as “met” or “exceeded” at the end of grant funding. In effect, SCCGP funding opened up opportunities for tools that furthered counselors’ work in meeting these goals (Figure 15).

“We were able to afford a subscription to Naviance and YouScience because of the grant. We also had access to students once a week and this enabled us to do ICAP and SEL lessons with them.”

- Cohort 7 School

“COVID-19 was definitely a huge barrier for us. Even when we went back fully in person, we only had about 40 of 700 students return to in person...during the pandemic, students had to work. With low attendance, it made ICAP completion difficult.”

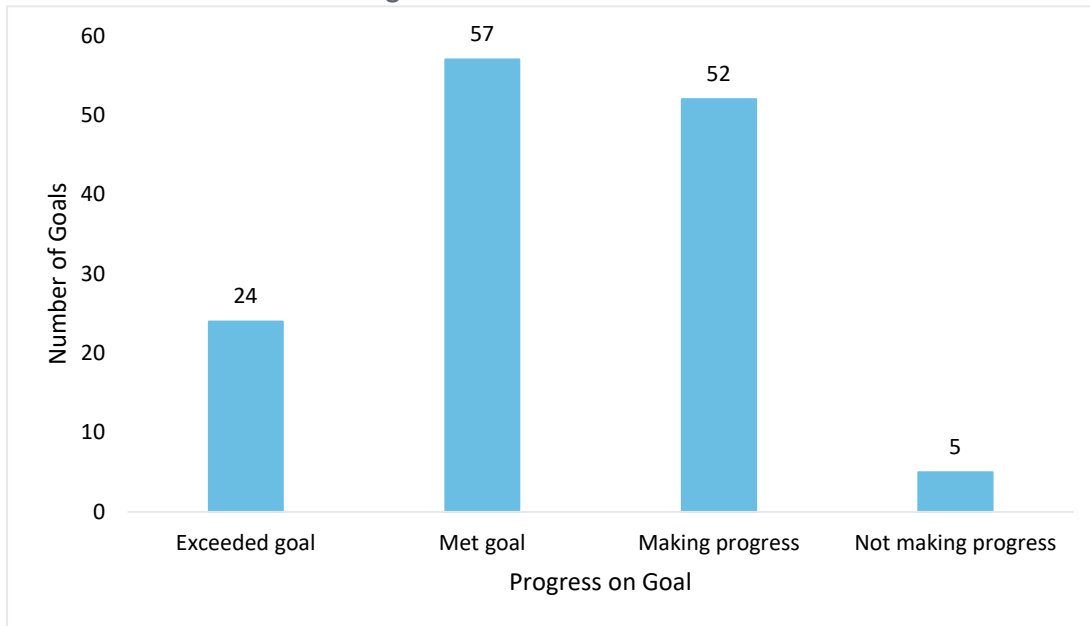
- Cohort 7 School

The remaining 41.3% of goals were rated as “making progress,” or “not met.” These latter ratings reflect imminent and extended effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including remote learning, canceled events, and lack of face time with students being reported by grantees as substantial barriers to meeting or making progress on program goals.

¹¹ Because grantees are able to apply funding across multiple sites, several entities combined school-level and district-level reporting. This section focuses primarily on *school-level* reported goals but is supplemented with district-level data when provided and applicable.



FIGURE 15: SCCGP Cohort 7 Progress on Goals



Professional Development

In the final year of implementation, Cohort 7 SCCGP recipients indicated that school counselors and team members attended over 17,000 hours of PWR professional development. Notably, approximately 63 school professionals from Cohort 7 schools attended the Colorado School Counselor Association Annual Conference and 74 attended the ASCA Annual Conference, some virtually and some in person. Other trainings grantees’ staff attended included:

- ASCA U Specialist courses¹²
- Hatching Results conference
- Learning and the Brain
- Sources of Strength
- ICAP redesign training
- Training on specific tools (e.g., Naviance, Xello, Powerschool)
- AVID summer institute
- Restorative Practices training
- CDE-sponsored school counselor workshops, institutes, and trainings

“Attending the ASCA Conference was extremely motivating! We walked away with a goal to become a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) school within 5 years. There are so many things that we are already doing that we just need to align to the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors and the Colorado ICAP.”

- Cohort 7 School

In addition to supporting grantees’ direct work with students and families, these professional development opportunities helped cultivate the ASCA model and strengthened the school counseling program on a more systemic level.

¹² In one district, 49 counselors completed a total of 162 ASCA U Specialist Training Courses.



Individual Career and Academic Plan Implementation

“Las Animas is a rural community. The students are very isolated from many career choices. The ICAP process helps students to think outside of the Arkansas Valley in regards to career options and pathways.”

- Cohort 7 District Report

ICAP is a multi-year process that intentionally guides students and families in the exploration of career, academic, and postsecondary opportunities. 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 enter the workforce with a living wage job. School counselors are expected to support all 9-12th grade students in creating and acting upon an ICAP, as described in the State Board of Education’s rules promulgation rules 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)).

As stated above, increasing ICAP completion was a common goal for grantees. SCCGP funding was able to further support achievement of this goal and strengthen the ICAP process on a systems level.

Student-to-Counselor Ratio

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 that 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.

“Having two full-time counselors made it far more possible than it would have been otherwise to work with students individually, in small groups, and in classroom settings. It was also useful in having someone to consult with and to share resources and ideas when working with students specifically dealing with conflict with their peers.”

- Cohort 7 School

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.¹³

¹³ 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



“Having an additional 0.5 counselor funded by the grant has allowed us to provide interventions with students who were struggling. Additional support with academic and social emotional needs was provided as well as having a counselor be a part of the MTSS team which met weekly.”

- Cohort 7 School

For Cohort 7 schools, SCCGP funding was effective in reducing the ratio by more than a third on average. Prior to SCCGP funding, Cohort 7 schools had the equivalent of 70.5 full-time, certified school counselors, for an approximate ratio of 300 students to one school counselor. In the final year of funding, that increased to 95.5 full-time counselors, for a ratio of 221 students to one school counselor. This change allowed SCCGP Cohort 7 schools to meet the best practice recommendation set forth by ASCA. With lower student-to-counselor ratios, grantees had more opportunities to provide support to students and build more capacity within their schools.

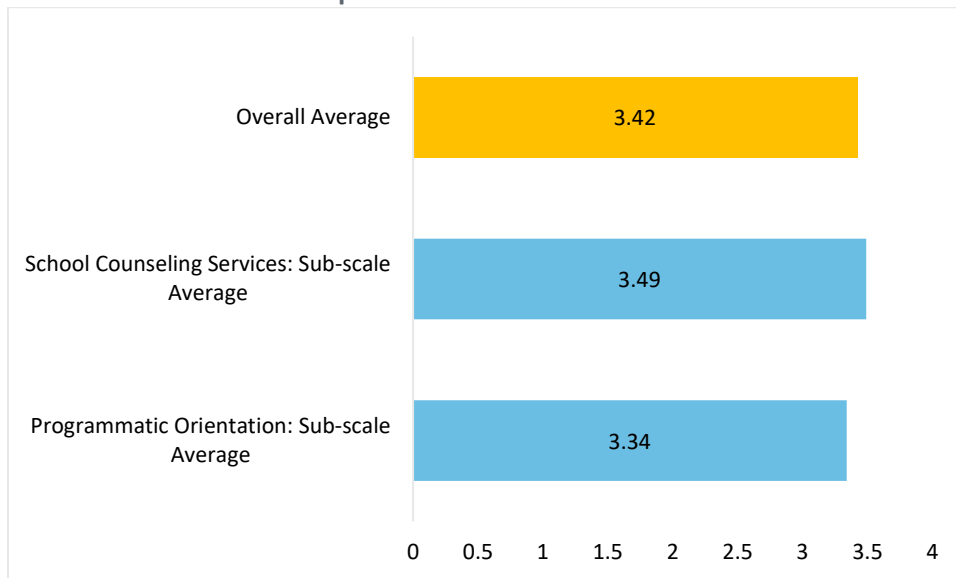


American School Counselors Association Model Implementation

The school-level end-of-year report included a reliable measure for assessing the level of ASCA Model implementation, the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.¹⁴ The survey includes a total of 14 self-reported items, which provide an overall implementation score and two factor scores—programmatically orientation and school counseling services. The 4-point rating scale used in the survey was 1 = Not Present, 2 = Development in Progress, 3 = Partly Implemented, and 4 = Fully Implemented.

At the end of the final year of funding, Cohort 7 schools reported fairly high levels of overall ASCA Model implementation, averaging a score of 3.42—approaching Fully Implemented—across all items, and both sub-scales’ averages fell between Partly and Fully Implemented. Ratings of items on the School Counseling Services sub-scale ranged from 3.02 to 3.77, with a sub-scale average of 3.49. Ratings of items on the Programmatic Orientation sub-scale ranged from 2.84 to 3.70, with a sub-scale average of 3.34. The only item to fall below the Partly Implemented threshold described counselors' use of data: “School Counselors analyze student data by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic level to identify interventions to close achievement gaps.” This is consistent with narrative components of reports describing overall challenges with using data, which can be made more complex when specifically examining it through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Overall, SCCGP Cohort 7 schools’ self-ratings on this tool demonstrate that one of the goals of the program, implementation of the ASCA national model, is being meaningfully achieved in funded schools (Figure 16).

FIGURE 16: ASCA Model Implementation in SCCGP Cohort 7 Schools



¹⁴ 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.



Conclusion

SCCGP continues to meet its legislatively mandated goals in reach and impact. Cohort 7 includes a total of 83 schools from across the state that are demographically and geographically diverse, serving students from Kindergarten through 12th grade. In 2020-21, the final year of funding, Cohort 7 grantees enrolled 28,240 students, including a higher percentage of students of color, those qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, and mobile students, relative to the percentage of these students in the statewide student population. Students attending AECs were also overrepresented in this group. Despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, SCCGP Cohort 7 schools have seen meaningful improvement in several outcomes related to students' PWR from the 2017-18 academic year (SCCGP Cohort 7's funding year) and the final implementation year, 2020-21.

Improved Educational Attainment

- The four-year high school graduation rate increased by 6.3 percentage points in non-AEC grantee schools, compared to an increase of 1.2 percentage points by non-AEC schools statewide.
- The high school six-year completion rate for AEC schools increased by 3.1 percentage points, while the state rate decreased by 0.3 percentage points.

Decreased Dropout Rate

- The dropout rate for non-AEC grantee schools decreased by 0.4 percentage points, a greater improvement than the state average, which decreased by 0.3 percentage points in the same time frame.
- Although the AEC grantee school dropout rate increased by 0.8 percentage points, this rate remained lower (better) than the state average.

Postsecondary Participation

- Non-AEC grantee concurrent enrollment participation increased by 15.7% at the end of the grant cycle, with an early-pandemic peak (32.4% increase) that was even more substantial. Cohort 7 schools' increase in concurrent enrollment exceeded the pace of the state during the first two years of implementation but dropped below the state average in the final year of the grant cycle.
- FAFSA completion for non-AEC grantee schools remained above the state average throughout the grant period; however, the percentage of students completing the FAFSA decreased for both AEC and non-AEC grantee schools in academic years affected by the COVID-19 pandemic at a faster pace than the state as a whole.
- Postsecondary matriculation rates remained relatively unchanged during the grant period for both AEC and non-AEC grantee schools, with the exception of a positive peak increase for non-AECs grantees (2.3 percentage points) during the 2018-19 academic year. The Cohort 7 non-AEC school rates were similar to the state average throughout the grant cycle.
- Nearly 4,000 grantee students were enrolled in Career and Technical Education courses in the 2020-21 academic year.
- Over 1,000 grantee students participated in college visits in the 2020-2021 academic year.



Program Staffing Outcomes

Delivery of comprehensive school counseling was strengthened by investments in program staff:

- Cohort 7 schools added the equivalent of 25 full-time, certified school counselors. This brings the average student-to-counselor ratio down to 221:1 for grantees, below the American School Counselors Association's (ASCA) recommendation of 250:1.
- Based on ASCA ratings, counselors were able to support their schools in implementing high quality programs.
- Over 17,000 hours of professional development were completed by team members in the 2020-21 academic year.

Although hampered by COVID, grantees were able to make initial gains in the first year of full implementation and sustain some, if not all, of their relative progress despite pandemic-related challenges. As schools continue the return to face-to-face instruction, counselors funded by SCCGP will be able to continue and further their impact on students' PWR.



Appendix A: 2020-21 School Counselor Corps Advisory Committee

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



Appendix B: Data Collection Sources

The following **data sources** were used to analyze reported outcomes for Cohort 7:

- 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
 - 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
 - [Student mobility rates](#)
 - [Postsecondary matriculation](#) (National Student Clearinghouse and Student Unit Record Data System [SURDS])

These data were further supplemented and verified by Data Services at CDE.

- 3) The Colorado Department of Higher Education i3 data system and reports were utilized for:
 - [FAFSA Completion](#) (U.S. Department of Education verified data)
 - Concurrent Enrollment (SURDS)

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