

2017-2022

Hawai'i Counseling and Advising

*An Essential Component
to Student Readiness*

Issue Brief



HAWAI'I P-20
Partnerships for Education

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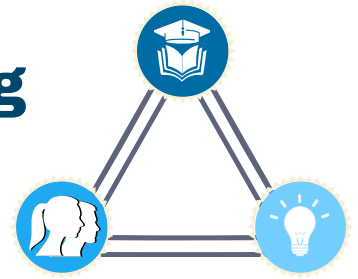
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01

College and Career Counseling and Advising is Essential



There are approximately 10,000 high school graduates each year in Hawai'i who need to make the decision of what to do as a young adult. For many of these high school seniors, the process of deciding what to do after high school can be extremely daunting, especially for students from disadvantaged populations. The demand for high-quality and equitable counseling and advising services to prepare students for life after secondary school has been a historical challenge to address. With large numbers of students on campuses and limited time capacity of educators and staff, the need to provide every individual student with a high-quality education and student services has been overwhelming to our public school systems.

Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education launched the College and Career Pathways Initiative in 2018 to address specific elements of this large, statewide challenge. The College and Career Pathways Initiative is a statewide commitment to preparing students for career and life success. With an established, statewide Hawai'i College and Career Pathways Initiative framework, Hawai'i P-20 found it imperative to heavily invest in improving College and Career Counseling and Advising practices to better support the trajectory of students successfully transitioning into postsecondary education, training, and the workforce. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for comprehensive counseling and advising support has only been amplified.

“

It is crucial to keep in mind that schools can have the most rigorous curriculum, but if the student is not coming to school or coming to school with their basic needs not being met, they will not achieve to their highest potential.

”

Silvia Koch

Counselor
Hawai'i State Department of Education



The purpose of this issue brief is to share recent key learnings around counseling and advising practices in Hawai'i, suggest ways to maximize effective structures, and uplift the voices of counselors who play a critical role in opening more doors towards equitable college and career access for students. Our hope is that we can spark change in the narrative of students feeling uncertain about their futures, to one where they are confident to aspire, identify, and reach a future plan that serves their individualized needs.

Hawai'i P-20's Counseling and Advising Journey

02

The launch of Hawai'i P-20's investment journey towards improving counseling and advising systems in our K-12 schools began in 2017 through a statewide analysis of counseling efforts within schools. The analysis was conducted through a statewide Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) counselors survey in order to determine how counselors were allocating their time to support students to be college and career ready.

Through this initial survey, we were able to identify activities where counselors were spending their time and the extent to which those activities fell into the framework created by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), which many HIDOE schools currently follow. Four years after the initial survey, Hawai'i P-20 conducted a follow-up counselor survey to gather information on three areas of interest:

1. **What counseling changes or progress has been made since 2017?**
2. **What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on counseling in Hawai'i?**
3. **Where do HIDOE counselors continue to need assistance?**

Both counselor survey results have shaped Hawai'i P-20's counseling and advising statewide efforts for the last five years to better improve college and career outcomes. The timeline on the next page illustrates the progress made in counseling and advising since 2017.



Hawai'i P-20's Counseling and Advising Journey –

What has happened in the last five years?

Hawai'i P-20 Counseling and Advising Projects

2017

"6-to-16" (Planning Stage)

Hawai'i P-20 received a 3-year grant focused on building comprehensive College & Career counseling programs that begin in middle school, continue through high school, and into postsecondary education.

This "6-to-16" project included five complex teams comprised of HIDOE schools and University of Hawai'i campuses. Teams planned out their strategies to implement over the next 2 years.

Statewide Counselor survey

A statewide counselor survey and focus group discussions were conducted to assess the state of HIDOE counseling services based on ASCA guidelines.

[Middle School & High School Survey Summary Report](#)

2018

"6-to-16" (Innovation Stage)

Five "6-to-16" teams began to implement their planned College & Career readiness activities with the support of the innovation grant funding.

GEAR UP "6-16" (Expansion)

Hawai'i P-20 was awarded a 7 year GEAR UP grant from the U.S. DOE. The awarded proposal sought to expand the implementation of aligned, "6- to-16" counseling programs across the state.

2019

"6-to-16" (Refinement Stage)

6-to-16 teams continue to refine their projects and implement only high-impact College & Career activities that align across middle and high school and into postsecondary.

CCCR Expectations Guide

P-20 created the College, Career, and Community Readiness [Expectations Guide](#) (CCCR), which provides a continuum of grade-level benchmarks to help prepare middle, high school and college students for life success.

Hawai'i Nudge Project

In collaboration with Nudge4 Solutions, Hawai'i P-20 launched the text-based advising program, "Hawai'i Nudge Project" to increase college enrollment, FAFSA completion rates, and counseling practices at HIDOE high schools.

2020

Statewide Counselor Professional Development (PD)

Hawai'i P-20, in collaboration with HIDOE and Chaminade University, launched a 5-course series of credit bearing courses (PDE3) for HIDOE counselors and teachers to receive relevant counseling PD to support students.

CCCR Webinar Series & Summit

To improve alignment with postsecondary educators, the [College, Career and Community Readiness Webinar Series](#) and [annual summit](#) were created. These virtual PD events aim to bring educators and key stakeholders together to learn about relevant efforts to help students to reach their college and career goals.

Next Steps to Your Future

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Next Steps to Your Future (NSF) initiative was created to help graduating seniors stay on track in transitioning to their post-high school plans. NSF connects students with dedicated advising services and provides students with free education and training courses.

Hawai'i Nudge Project

The "Hawai'i Nudge Project" expanded to 7 additional HIDOE high schools. The project established an online website to publicly share text-based resources, program materials, and training.

2021

Statewide Counselor Professional Development (PD)

Hawai'i P-20, HIDOE, and Chaminade University continues to offer relevant online professional development (PDE3) courses for HIDOE counselors and educators.

CCCR Webinar Series & Summit

Hawai'i P-20 continues to offer the College, Career, & Community Readiness Webinar series and annual statewide convening for K-12 & postsecondary partners.

Next Steps to Your Future

Based on successful outcome data from NSF 2020, Hawai'i P-20 continued to offer Next Steps to Your Future (NSF) to help graduating seniors stay on track with achieving their post-high school plans.

Achieve & Earn

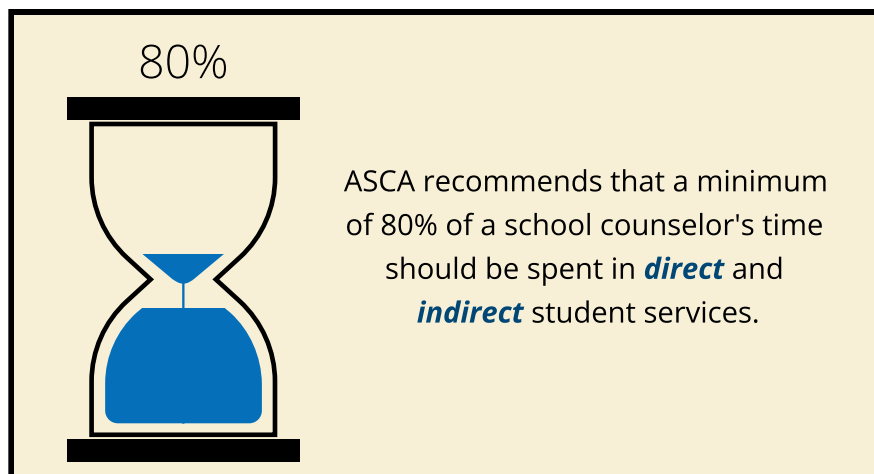
Hawai'i P-20 launched a new 2-year cohort pilot project for 60 high school seniors transitioning into college. Students receive counseling and advising services, incentive funding, scholarships, and mentoring support.

The needs of Hawai'i students are extremely diverse and have dramatically changed since the recent COVID-19 pandemic. In response to these changes, more schools are beginning to devote their time toward finding the best mix of models and strategies that offer high-quality and effective counseling services for students. This section explores reasonable counseling and advising strategies that schools can immediately consider putting into practice to improve student college and career outcomes. We encourage taking familiar school structures and adjusting it to be more effective and purposeful for all students.

The Question: Are we maximizing counselors' unique skill sets at our schools?

National research shows that among college and career readiness efforts, counselors serve as a pivotal source of information and holistic support for all students. Based on the HDOE statewide counselor survey findings, there is one area that we should leverage to maximize the efforts of Hawai'i's counselors to better serve our students, and this entails clarifying the job duties of a counselor.

ASCA Recommendation



Direct Services:

In-person interactions between school counselors and students.

Indirect Services:

Services provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselor's interactions with others.

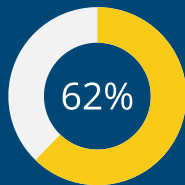
“ School counselors are highly educated, professionally certified individuals who help students succeed in school and plan their careers. ”

03 | Best Practices – Structures

A Solution: Provide counselors with clarified job expectations

Among various existing counseling and advising structures that currently take place in the HIDOE school system, providing counselors with clarified job descriptions and role expectations by grade level/band should be a top priority to ensure equitable services for all students.

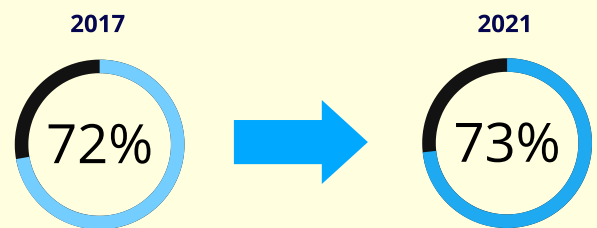
62% of Hawai'i DOE middle and high schools fall under the recommended ASCA 250:1 ratio. (2021 data)



“ School counselors are responsible for each and every student in the building and, unlike others on campus, they are in a position to focus on the educational journey of each student.”

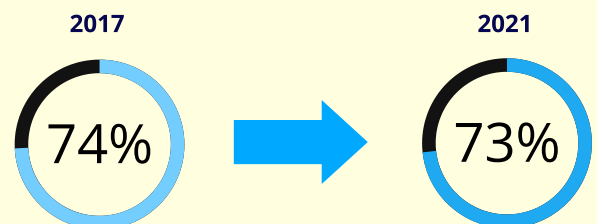
The Education Trust

HIDOE Middle School Survey Data



In 2017, HIDOE middle school counselors reported that **72%** of their day was spent on *direct* and *indirect* student services. In 2021, there was a 1% increase in change but it still stayed below the ASCA 80% recommendation

HIDOE High School Survey Data



In 2021, HIDOE high school counselors reported that **73%** of their day was spent on *direct* and *indirect* student services. This was down from **74%** in 2017 and remains below the ASCA 80% recommendation.

The Question: Are all students receiving sufficient counseling and advising?

Based on our statewide HIDOE survey findings, many students receive insufficient guidance in answering the most important college and career transition questions: “What career path should I choose?” and “Where can I gain the knowledge and skills I need to get a good job?” According to a recent article in Education Week (Klein, 2020), only 52 percent of students feel ready to enter the workforce after high school. The responsibility of career planning seems to fall on the school career specialists or guidance counselors.

The lack of time to fulfill duties dedicated to college and career counseling in daily school schedules yields concerning gaps in counseling and advising support for all students. As a result, counselors are forced to work beyond their contractual agreements to meet the demands of their jobs. This “reactive” approach to their work forces them to prioritize the only high-risk students experiencing academic and social/emotional needs, generating further inequities.

250:1

A Solution:

Ensure counselors have reasonable student caseloads

To ensure the quality of support from counselors, it’s imperative that schools follow the appropriate student to counselor caseload ratio at an ASCA recommended 250 students per one school counselor.

If counselors are given a reasonable student caseload and appropriate counselor job responsibilities, they could become leaders in building a stronger culture of college and career readiness and have more capacity to provide personalized counseling and advising services to every single student.

Counselor Survey Responses

Counselor ranking of student groups they interact with	Middle school counselor responses (n=38)	High school counselor responses (n=51)
Most Interaction	Students with behavioral concerns	Students who struggle academically
Second most interaction	Students with social/emotional concerns	Students with social/emotional concerns
Third most interaction	Students who struggle academically	Students with behavioral concerns
Fourth most interaction	Students in the academic middle	Students who are high academic achievers
Least Interaction	Students who are high academic achievers	Students in the academic middle

Key Finding:

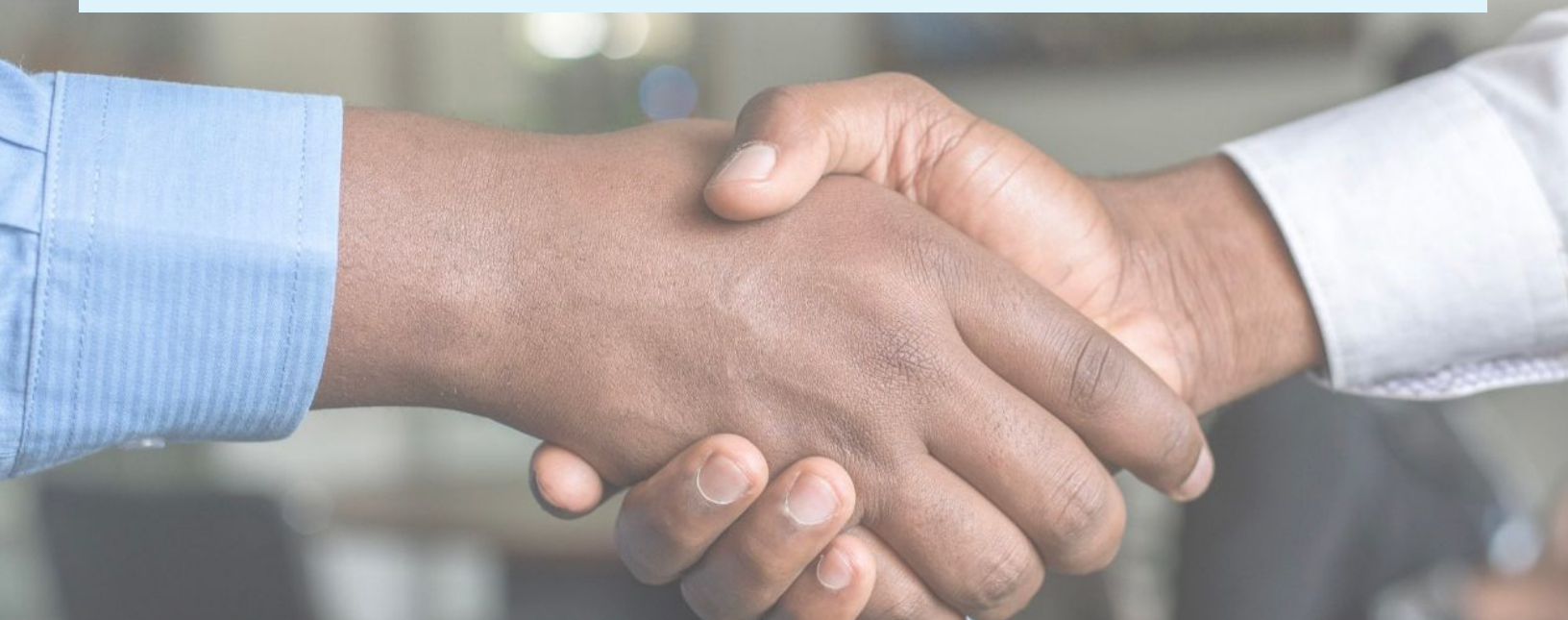
Hawai'i counselors are less likely to interact with middle and high academic achieving students.

03 | Best Practices – *Partnerships*

The Question: Are we effectively working together to best prepare our students for critical transition points?

Our education system along with local employers have been experiencing confusion about who is responsible for leading the movement of providing students with up-to-date, relevant, and valuable college and career knowledge, skills, and experiences. It is to our overall benefit to embrace the idea that all stakeholders are responsible for this work. To achieve this concerted effort, we will need to collaboratively organize our counseling and advising goals and expectations for students across systems and coordinate processes, terminology, and requirements to avoid student frustration. This will lead to students understanding the actionable steps they need to take to successfully transition through each phase of their educational journey.

In recent years, education policy advocates have championed the concept of aligned advising (*A New Framework for Aligned Advising*), which envisions academic advising as a linked process that takes place over the course of a student's academic career journey, cumulatively preparing students for post-secondary education and careers. This perspective advocates the utilization of counselors' training to provide the relevant information, tools, and personalized social-emotional support to best prepare students for the next phase of their academic and career journey.



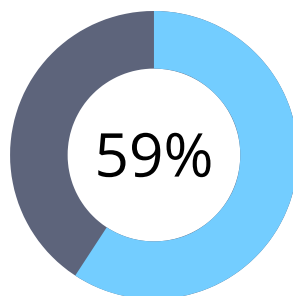
“ No one system alone can guide individuals throughout their education and career paths. Policies should foster strong partnerships among public systems to break down siloes, reduce redundancies, and smooth transition points for students and workers. ”

JFF, Modernizing Career Navigation in the U.S.

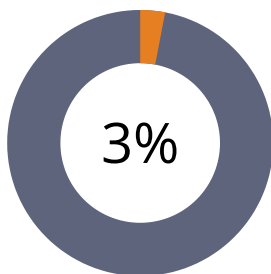
A Solution: Create collaborative partnerships to develop a statewide equity-driven counseling and advising plan to support students' transition towards postsecondary education and careers.

To improve student preparedness for adulthood and career transitions, Hawai'i will need to build comprehensive and integrated college and career guidance programs and services. We can do this with strong and committed partnerships between K-12 schools, colleges, workforce, and community partners. These partnerships are critical to ensure that services are prioritized, organized, and consistent in their support for all students. By building partnerships, stakeholders can create new state-level and student direct strategies that extend across systems such as building necessary transition programs for students, develop statewide equity-driven plans to better serve underrepresented populations, facilitate capacity building, enable cross-sector data sharing, and establish processes that encourages institutions to blend and braid funds to support counseling and advising initiatives.

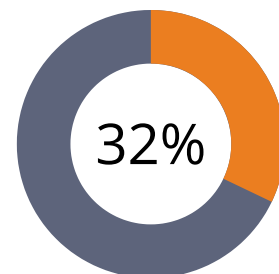
Overall, Hawai'i counselors varied considerably in terms of how frequently they met with counselors at other institutions



59% of middle school counselors interacted with high school counselors **yearly**



3% of middle school counselors **never** interacted with high school counselors



32% of high school counselors indicated that they **never** interacted with college/university counselors

04 | Pandemic Lessons

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, counseling and advising services have become a high priority area for many K-12 and postsecondary schools in Hawai'i. The 2020-2021 school year featured a great deal of distance learning and general uncertainty, and we sought to clarify how these factors affected the student-counselor dynamic using the statewide counselor survey.

What did student-counselor engagement look like during the pandemic (2020-2021)?

Through the responses collected from the 2021 HIDOE counselor survey, most respondents indicated a need for multiple communication channels to reach students. Several counselors mentioned contacting parents because they could not otherwise track down the student. In many cases, counselors who previously had access to students through classroom settings experienced limited access during the pandemic because of the emphasis on students' passing grades; therefore, class time could not be forfeited for counselor classroom guidance.

Addressing Pandemic Barriers

When surveying HIDOE counselors in 2021, we found that many of the pandemic barriers seemed to be addressed in similar ways across the state.

What were your most effective methods in addressing barriers?

- Using multiple methods to contact students
- Contact Parents/Guardians
- Coordinate with teachers

Counselors emphasized:

- The need to utilize multiple means of communication with students and families
- The need to be proactive
- The need to utilize a scheduling system
- Technology-mediated counseling has shortcomings associated with it. (e.g. wi-fi challenges, video/camera abilities, and privacy limitations.)

What counseling changes made during the pandemic are you continuing to keep and implement?

- Conducting virtual meetings
- Using student email
- Using texting
- Posting counseling information online

Sustaining Counseling Changes

Despite the many challenges counselors and educators faced during the pandemic, there were beneficial changes that staff anticipate sustaining within their school structure.

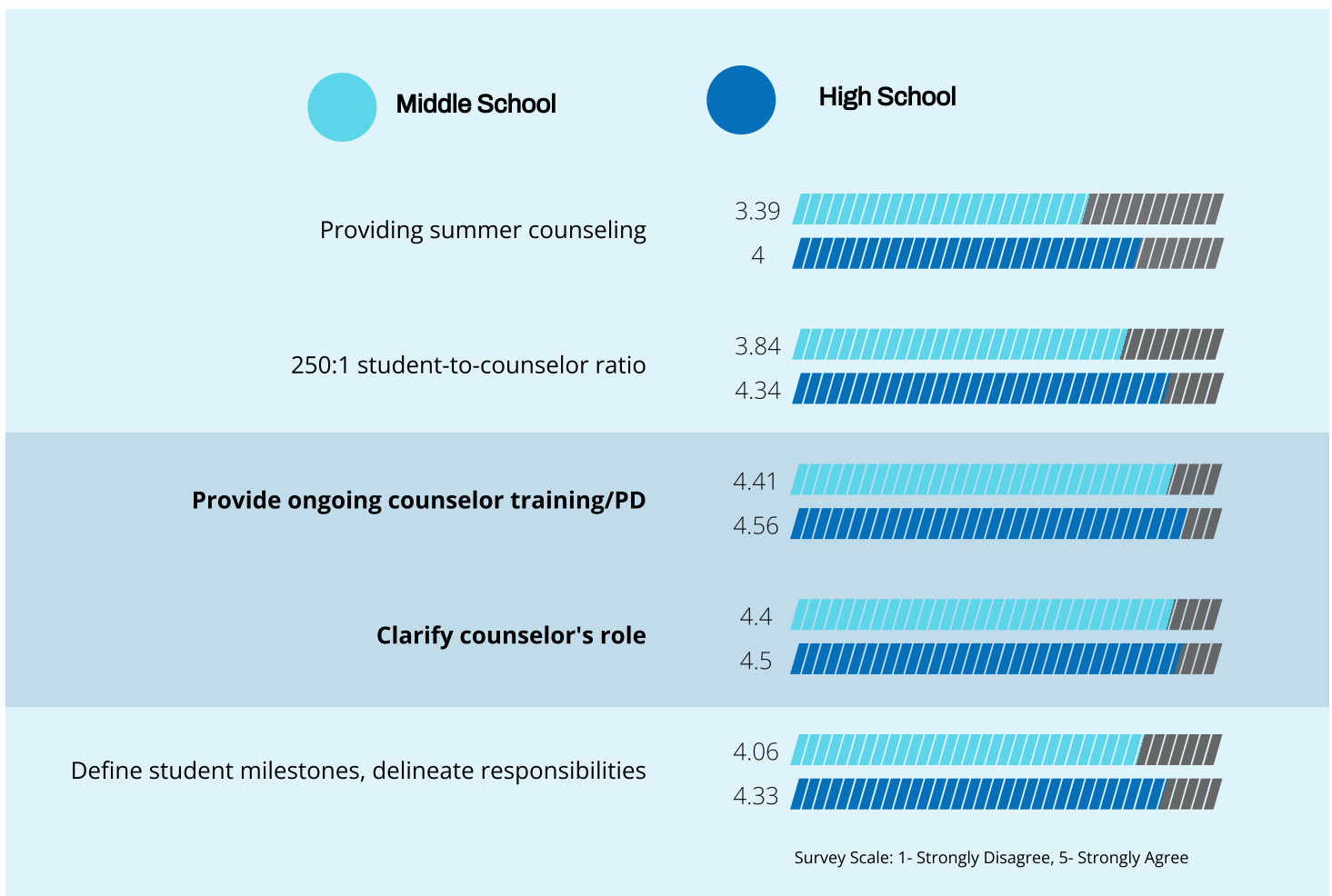
What are Hawai'i counselors saying about policies?

Through the 2021 HIDOE counselor survey, counselors were given a list of national policies that were implemented in various states and were asked to indicate whether they agreed that these policies would help students progress toward their college and career goals.

While all policies were highly rated by Hawai'i middle and high school counselors, the top two policies that were rated the highest were:

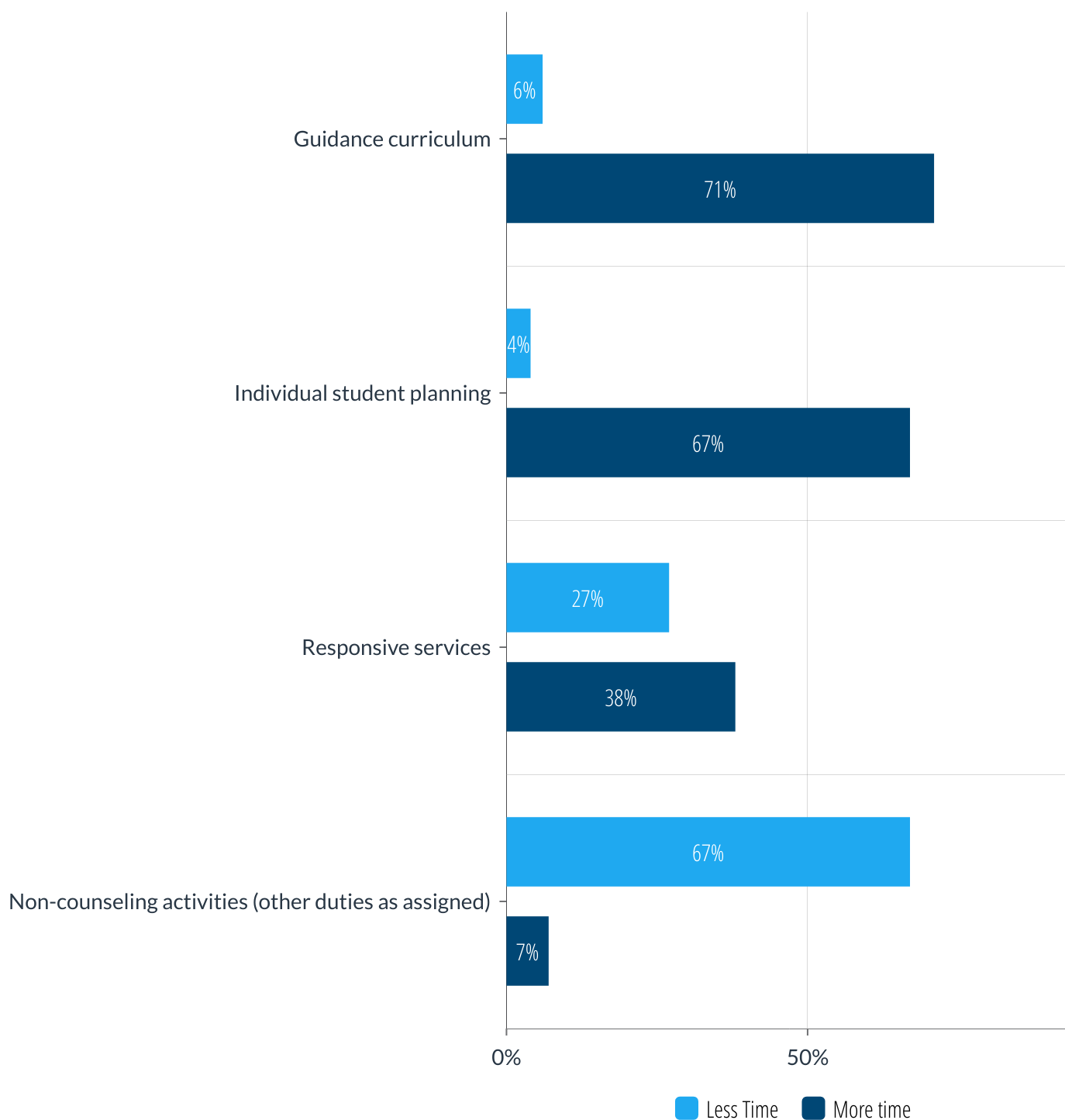
1. **Clarifying the counselor's role**
2. **Providing ongoing counselor training/professional development**

Most counselors agree that various counseling policies could have a beneficial impact on helping students progress toward their college and career goals



05 | Recommended Actions

Where do middle school and high school counselors want to spend more time?



Hawai'i counselors play an essential role in our educational pipeline to ensure students have rigorous and comprehensive educational experiences. Achieving equitable education that includes student services for all students to be college and career ready will require a significant amount of micro- and macro-level systemic changes.

By drawing on five years of learning from various state-level counseling and advising pilot projects (see list of Hawai'i P-20 pilot projects in Section 2 of this report), data insights from Hawai'i DXP's [College and Career Readiness Indicator](#) reports, and the Hawai'i statewide counselor surveys, Hawai'i P-20 will continue to work with community partners, advocates, and educational stakeholders to prioritize ways to improve counseling and advising practices across the state at the K-12 and postsecondary levels.

The following **three action items** listed below are highly recommended to initiate sustainable change that will better support all Hawai'i students as they prepare for a future that is right for them.

1

Policy Recommendation 1: **Revise and Clarify Counselor Job Descriptions**

Many counselors are overburdened by tedious and unrelated tasks that do not directly support students' preparation for success after graduation. By systematizing and following ASCA recommendations, the administration can position counselors to become champions within a school leadership team to design a path that promotes equity in student academic, career, and life success within their communities.

Creating clear counselor job descriptions and ensuring that each counselor has no more than a 250-student caseload ratio, administrators will gain a clearer perspective on how to delineate and better align responsibilities that maximize the time school staff, teachers, and counselors have to drive college and career readiness changes.

2

Policy Recommendation 2:

Provide Sustainable Counseling and Advising Professional Development

The changing nature of workforce trends and best practices for student career preparedness highlights the importance of relevant and consistent professional development for counselors throughout Hawai'i's educational system. To improve student college and career readiness outcomes, other states are beginning to invest in ongoing professional development and finding new certification structures for counselors and educators to be equipped with appropriate and timely knowledge to help all students successfully navigate their various postsecondary and career options.

What are counselors saying about Professional Development?

Hawai'i DOE counselors...

- prefer to participate in professional development that is counselor-specific and provided by non-school sources
- have identified several potential professional development topic areas of interest
 - mental health
 - social-emotional learning
 - student/family engagement
 - college and career emerging practices

“

School organized professional development... is always geared to teachers and not counselors. But we are forced to go so we know what the teachers are doing in the classroom. It's really frustrating to sit through 6 hours of common formative assessment training we will never use when we could have done an ASCA planning/workday with our department instead.

”

Counselor survey response

3

Policy Recommendation 3:

Define Student Milestones and Delineate Roles and Responsibilities

K-12 and postsecondary schools, stakeholders, and community partners can better collaborate and define specific responsibilities and tasks related to coordinating college and career opportunities for all students by establishing a set of clear, grade-level milestones that all students should meet as they prepare to transition into life after high school.

There is a compelling desire from most HIDOE schools to integrate a school-wide college and career program within the classrooms to ensure all students are given the opportunity to gain the relevant knowledge and experiences within their K-12 academic journey. In order to reach all students, schools should invite all teachers and staff to participate in this student development effort. When schools implement a whole school approach, students are better prepared for their futures. (Whittinghill, 2021).

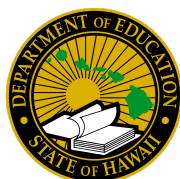
Based on Hawai'i P-20's statewide counselor surveys conducted in 2017 and 2021, there was a high-interest from both HIDOE middle and high school counselors to spend more time on counseling-specific activities, and a desire to spend less time on non-counseling activities as suggested by ASCA . If student milestones were created at all schools (e.g. [Hawaii P-20 CCCR Expectations Guide](#)), counselors would be able to strategically work with teachers and administrators to design comprehensive and aligned college and career curriculum and experiences throughout a student's entire academic journey with minimal program redundancies.

06 | Acknowledgements

This issue brief highlights viewpoints and summarizes Hawai'i P-20's leading counseling and advising pilot projects and statewide initiatives that occurred between 2017-2022. Through the collaboration with various funders, educational stakeholders, and community partners, our hope is to spark change among our College and Career Counseling and Advising practices to better prepare Hawai'i's students for bright futures.



Mahalo to our various project supporters which include Hawai'i State Department of Education, University of Hawai'i Community Colleges, Harold K.L Castle Foundation, GEAR UP Hawai'i, Stupski Foundation, University of Hawaii Foundation, and Hawaii Community Foundation.



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HAWAI'I P-20

Partnerships for Education



www.hawaiip20.org



p20hi@hawaii.edu