State of the State: Counseling in California Schools

Dr. Loretta Whitson
• A little bit about the California Association of School Counselors
• A promising Future
• California By the numbers
  • Shifts in funding and accountability
  • Growing recognition of need
  • School-based problems that can be resolved through support services
• Recent significant political developments
Dr. Loretta Whitson
Executive Director

• California Association of School Counselors formed in 2000
• Largest State School Counseling Organization in the Country
• Focus is on Advocacy and Professional Development
What We Do....

Develop
- Develop fiscal and policy changes that support school counseling programs

Ensure
- Ensure State Budget and policy proposals and actions do not impede programs

Create
- Create awareness and understanding of student need and the need for school-based counseling programs

Bring
- Bring light to the work that school counselors do, and the challenges that are faced

Ensure
- Ensure school counseling programs are integrated into K-12 state priorities – not siloed!

Draw
- Draw awareness of connections as well as unintended consequences of actions at state level

Serve
- Serve as a resource including state-of-the-art professional development
Office – Only (School Counseling) State-Level Office in the Nation...EVER
It is a promising future!
California Rankings and Research
As certified and licensed (across institutions and communities)

- California has regularly ranked at or near the bottom among the states in the number of counselors per student. In 2009-10 there was one counselor for every 810 students. Twice as many as the national level (Ed Source, 2012).

- New report, written by Columbia University economics professor Randall Reback, points to research that shows school-based healthcare and mental health services have multiple benefits. (Ed Source, Sept. 18, 2018).
California Ranks 41st in State Per Pupil Spending

- Per pupil current spending: $11,495 (23rd)
- Per pupil current spending change from 2015: 9.8%
- Average teacher salary: $78,711 (2nd)
- Nation’s Report Card performance: Worse than average
- Graduation rate: 83.0% (30th)
- Total enrollment: 6,217,031 (1st)
- Total spending: $72.64 billion (1st)

U.S. Census Bureau report covering Fiscal Year 2016.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Counselor</td>
<td>9,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>6,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>2,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7,353</td>
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</tbody>
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2017-18
California School Counselor to student ratios - 30 years

Data
Student Needs
Discipline, safety, chronic attendance, marginalized youth, trauma and suicide prevention
Addressing Student Mental Health Needs

“There has been a significant decrease in school counselors’ caseloads because there has been a high increase in mental health issues within the schools.”

“Teachers, families, and other stakeholders (with the support of strong research) are understanding the link between academic progress and social and emotional well being.”

“Teachers consistently say that they are ill equipped to handle the behaviors and emotional impact students are experiencing today. As a result, teachers are spending more time addressing behaviors and less time teaching.”
The number of school counselors in California schools has nearly doubled in the past seven years since the passage of SB 1458, School Accountability (2012). The focus of the work of the school counselor is in three domains: 1) academic, 2) college/career, & 3) social/emotional.
School Counselors

Best Practices in four strategic areas

- Chronic Absenteeism
- Suspensions
- Graduation Rates
- College/Career
- The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
MTSS

Multi-Tiered System of Support

Inclusive Academic Instruction
- Identify a comprehensive assessment system
- Create and utilize teams
- Provide universal academic supports
- Provide supplemental interventions and supports
- Provide intensified intervention supports
- Develop guideline to implement curriculum with universal design for learning (UDL)

Inclusive Behavior Instruction
- Identify a comprehensive assessment system
- Create and utilize teams
- Provide universal behavior supports
- Provide supplemental interventions and supports
- Provide intensified intervention supports
- Provide comprehensive behavior supports

Inclusive Social-Emotional Instruction
- Identify a comprehensive assessment system
- Create and utilize teams
- Provide universal social-emotional supports
- Provide supplemental interventions and supports
- Provide comprehensive social-emotional development supports

All Means All

Administrative Leadership
- Strong & Engaged Site Leadership
  - Lead development of a vision
  - Attend instructional meetings and classes
  - Create a leadership team
  - Create opportunities to contribute
  - Use data to guide decisions

Protected Educator Support System
- Provide access to instructional coaching
- Seek input from teachers
- Make learning opportunities available to all
- Use data
- Conduct strengths-based evaluations

Fully Integrated Organizational Structure
- Identify who has access
- Use non-categorical language and practices
- Use collaborative instruction among peers
- Use paraprofessionals to support inclusive education

Strong & Positive School Culture
- Foster collaborative relationships
- Create a shared vision
- Identify ways for all staff to contribute
- Ensure all students have access to extra-curricular activities
- Demonstrate culturally responsive practices

Family & Community Engagement
- Trusting Family Partnerships
  - Engage with students and families
  - Obtain input and feedback
  - Provide engagement opportunities
  - Facilitate home-school communication
  - Provide information

- Trusting Community Partnerships
  - Engage with the community
  - Identify mutual interests and goals
  - Ensure reciprocity
  - Maintain an open door policy
  - Invite community members to serve

Inclusive Policy Structure & Practice
- Strong LEA / School Relationship
  - Develop a district-based team
  - Attend school-level meetings
  - Provide district-level professional learning
  - Identify and remove barriers
  - Regularly communicate outcor

- LEA Policy Framework
  - Link multiple initiatives
  - Review data
  - Review and revise policy
  - Select research-based practice
  - Expand practices into other schools and Districts

Adapted with permission from: SWIFT Education Center. (2016). MTSS Placemat. Lawrence, KS. swiftschools.org
The Multi-Tiered, Multi-Domain System of Supports (MTMDSS) depicted in the image to the left is a planning and decision-making framework that utilizes an evidence-based practice approach to school counseling core curriculum and instruction aligned with assessments to address the needs of ALL students in the three domains of school counseling: academic, college and career, and social/emotional.
1 in 10 children and young people have a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder and/or emotional and behavior problems (often the same children) and around one in seven has less severe problems that interfere with their development and learning.

Anti-social behavior and conduct disorder affect over five per cent of children, particularly boys, while anxiety and depression affect four per cent.

Suicide is one of the three most common causes of death in youth and is now rising: In 2014 there was a 43 per cent rise in the number of young people who admitted attempting suicide, while self-harm and eating disorders are a growing problem.
Solving California’s higher education problems—particularly the gaps that affect young people of color and low-income communities the most—requires all of us together.

Numerous Reports verify the need to improve college equity and access for all students.
State and National Reports

Student Needs
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

December, 2018

“We issue this report amid rising concerns that the resources needed for school personnel in order to improve school climate are inadequate”.
Unlike all prior reports, these data are not estimates but based on the actual reports from nearly every public school in the nation.
California data indicates the trend of schools to prioritize law enforcement officers and not student support service staff to support the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of students!

“Other resources, such as investing in counselors, social workers or other health personnel prove to be far more effective in preventing shootings, as well as other violence”.
This report shows:
The disparate impact of harsh discipline on educational opportunity
Inadequacy of resources used for school personnel that can improve school climate
Inordinate amount of days of lost instruction resulting from the use of suspension.
The results of HRC’s 2017 Youth Survey reveal persistent, serious challenges for LGBTQ students in California (January, 2019)

- Only 10 percent of LGBTQ youth in California say all of their school staff are supportive of LGBTQ students;

- Only 32 percent of LGBTQ youth in California always feel safe in the classroom;

- Half of all respondents have been teased or bullied because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, and 28 percent of LGBTQ youth in California have been threatened with physical violence at least once because of their sexual orientation or gender identity;

- Forty-three percent of transgender students can NEVER use the bathroom/locker room at school that matches their gender identity.
California Politics

Student Needs
As a counselor leader, I focused the part 19 years in making sure the work we do in California schools is seen as significant to ALL California decision makers.
We are sought after by California lawmakers

October 2018 email...“we are currently working on legislation for the upcoming year. I’m specifically looking at an idea to increase high schoolers’ access to counselors”.

College Prep, or Prison Prep? California Schools with Cops, but no Counselors
In 2018 CASC monitored over 60 bills and all budgetary actions related to K-12 education.
2018 CA Legislation

CASC monitored over 60 bills and all budgetary actions related to K-12 education

School Climate Initiative ($15 million)

AB 834 (O’Donnell) - school-based health programs

AB 1747 (Rodriguez) – school safety plans

AB 2022 (Chu) – pupil mental health services
2019-20 Legislative Session

- New Governor
- New State Superintendent of Public Instruction
- New Legislators
- New Legislative Session
2020 Proposition Proposal

• A measure that would fundamentally alter Proposition 13 already has enough signatures to qualify for the November 2020 ballot. It’s known as “split roll” and here’s how it would work:

• California property owners – whether homes or businesses — have benefited equally for 40 years from the passage of Prop. 13. That measure limits annual increases on property taxes.

• Now a progressive group, including housing advocates and teachers unions, wants to split homes and businesses onto separate tax rolls.

• Owners holding more than $2 million in commercial property would no longer be taxed based on the original price they paid. Instead, they would pay based on the property’s regularly re-assessed market value.
Political Clout

California School Counselor to student ratios - 30 years

[Graph showing the California School Counselor to student ratios from 1990 to 2017.]
Friends of School Counselors

Assemblymember Ed Hernandez

Assemblymember Jose Medina

Assemblymember Tony Thurmond

Senator Ricardo Lara
Pupil Services Coalition

- Review and follow legislation
- Meet and collaborate with California Department of Education (CDE) staff
- Meet with legislators offices
- Advocating for the establishment of the Office of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel at the CDE
The Student Mental Health Policy Workgroup will assess the current mental health needs of California students and gather evidence to support its policy recommendations to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the California Legislature.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction Elect - Tony Thurmond
Statewide Funding Streams

- MEDI-CAL EARLY AND PERIODIC SCREENING, DIAGNOSIS, AND TREATMENT (EPSDT)
- MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT (MHSA)
- A. MHSA-PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION (PEI)
- B. MHSA-COMMUNITY SERVICES AND SUPPORT (CSS)
- AB 602: SPECIAL EDUCATION LOCAL PLANNING AREA (SELPA) ALLOCATION
- AB 114: EDUCATIONALLY-RELATED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (ERMHS)
- LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULA (LCFF)
Mental Health Statewide Funding Streams

https://www.schoolhealthcenters.org/start-up-and-operations/funding/mental-health/ermhs/

- Medi-Cal Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT)
- Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)
  a. MHSA-Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI)
  b. MHSA-Community Services and Support (CSS)
- AB 602: Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA) Allocation
- AB 114: Educationally-Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS)
- Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

Panel convened a year ago to update the Pupil Personal Service Credential Standards – Pre-service standards
Last updated in 2000
Final Stages

Members of the Team:
Kirsten Barnes      Catalina Cifuentes
Danielle Duarte    Elvia Estrella
Thierry Koplin     Caroline Lopez
Paul Meyers        Shyrea Minton
Laura Rodriguez    Loretta Whitson
Timely and leading-edge trainings to enhance the capacity of California school counselors.

- 2019 Projected Trainings:
  - Summer Boot Camp
  - Instructional Strategies
  - Trainers of Trainers Programs
  - Restorative Practices
  - Solution Focused
  - Undocumented Youth
  - Mental Health Best Practices

- Integrating practical, strategic, and relational skill-building to increase school counselors’ abilities to respond to and evolve within the ever-changing school environment.

Professional Development