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An Investigation of the Perceptions of High School  
Professional School Counselors: Qualitative Insights

By:

Ashley N. Rizzi, Ed.D.

Samantha Vanderpool, Ed. D.

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
Of Lynn University of Boca Raton in Partial Fulfillment

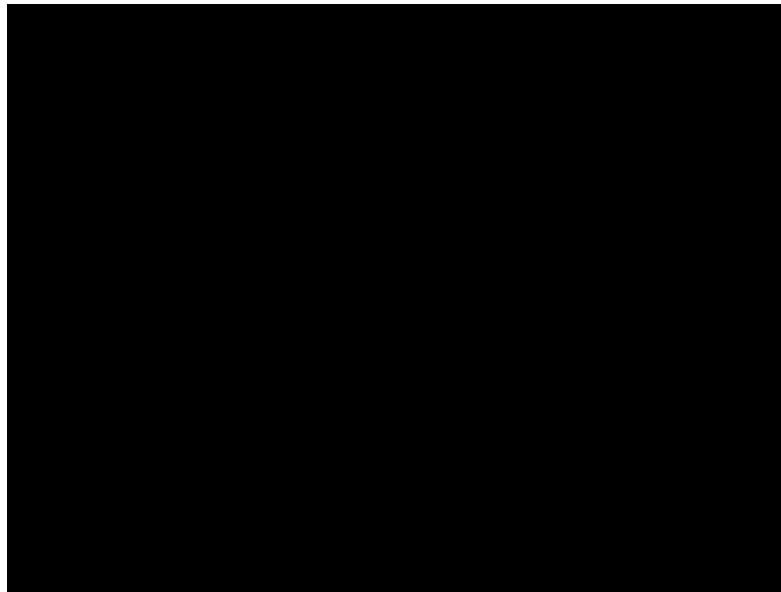
Of the

Requirement for the Degree

Of

Doctor of Education

Boca Raton, Florida



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## Abstract

Professional school counselors design and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs that promote student achievement (ASCA, n.d.). A school counseling department supports the visions and missions of the school and consist of individuals who advocate for all students (ASCA, 2017). A comprehensive school counseling program is an integral component of all schools. (ASCA, n.d.). A professional school counselor addresses academic, career, and social/emotional development of students because their role helps bridge these gaps (Morgan, Greenwaldt, & Gooselin, 2015).

The purpose of this mixed-method study is to examine the professional school counselor's perceptions of their role and purpose in a school setting when facilitating classroom guidance. The researchers collected the data through an online survey containing questions regarding the amount of time spent facilitating one-on-one counseling, small group, classroom guidance, as well as whether school counselors feel a classroom guidance program aids in the betterment of the students. The questions, which were evaluated in this study are: "How does a classroom guidance curriculum improve the role of professional school counselors?" and "What is necessary to integrate an effective classroom guidance curriculum in a high school setting?"

The results indicated there is a need for a classroom guidance lesson plans to support the professional school counselor's role and purpose in a high school setting. It was clear from the participant's responses that their time as a professional school counselor is limited; therefore, the need for access to classroom guidance lessons plans would be beneficial. Due to this finding, the researchers have created a website for professional school counselors to access lesson plans in the areas of academic, career, and social/emotional with ease.

It is recommended to send the link of the website to all professional school counselors who were asked to complete the survey. Another recommendation is to send out a follow up survey to the same group of professional school counselors asking if they felt the website is useful.

*Keywords:* professional school counselor, classroom guidance, high school, counselor-led curriculum, academic development, career development, social/emotional development

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This dissertation has two author's names: Ashley Rizzi and Samantha Vanderpool. This would not have been possible without our committee providing us the path we needed to. Having Samantha right by side throughout this journey has made one of the most difficult things I have done to date, very gratifying. When I began the voyage of obtaining a doctoral degree, I had no idea it would bring more than three new letters after my name. I now have an additional family, my new Lynn University family.

Thank you just does not seem to be enough to say or show my appreciation for Dr. Kelly Burlison, our committee chair and our committee members, Dr. Jenn Lesh and Dr. Melissa Garcia. These women have provided countless hours of feedback and insight as well as encouraging me as I traveled down this educational road. I also want to thank my friends, colleagues, Cohort 9, and Dr. Kathleen Weigel because they all played a part in helping me complete this dissertation.

A thank you must also go out to my family, because without their support I feel I would not be where I am today. My mother, Wendy, who has continued to be my biggest cheerleader since birth and my brother, Adam, for bragging about his baby sister, "The Doctor." Although my father, Jack is not physically here I want to thank him for always telling me I can be anything I want to be. Special thanks also go to my husband, Brian Rizzi for continuously showering me with support, encouragement, and endless amounts of unconditional love while constantly reminding me how proud he is of me.

Educationally,

Ashley Rizzi

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Sincerely,

Samantha Vanderpool

## DEDICATION

We would like to dedicate our dissertation to all the professional school counselors or anyone considering becoming a professional school counselor. Being a professional school counselor is extremely hard, but very rewarding. No two days' mirror one another; each day is different from the day before, and different from what will take place tomorrow. The highlight of our day is always how we can help our students. We do what we do because we love what we do and it shows.



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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) indicates a school counseling program that consists of an all-inclusive range to provide all students in the academic, career, and social/emotional domains (2013/2017). School counseling programs support the visions and missions of all schools and these programs are powerful activists for all students (ASCA, 2017). Professional school counselors provide classroom guidance on topics such as career, college, school-wide character education, the transition from middle to high school, peer pressures, bullying prevention, scholarships, and financial aid (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). The purpose of a professional school counselor is to address academic, career, and social/emotional needs of students because their role helps bridge these gaps (Morgan, Greenwaldt, & Gooselin, 2015). This study addressed the professional school counselor's perceptions of their role and purpose in a school setting when facilitating classroom guidance. The study focused on an investigation of high school professional school counselors and their perception of classroom guidance and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors. This chapter includes the background of the problem, the significance of the study, the rationale of the study, the purpose of the study, research questions, assumptions, and limitations.

### **Background**

"Professional school counselors serve a vital role in maximizing student success" (ASCA, 2017, p. 1). ASCA (2017) believes professional school counselors work with students in the three domains of academic achievement, career growth, and social/emotional development, thus safeguarding that students today will be productive and well-balanced adults of tomorrow (2017). Professional school counselors have the responsibility of working with students' kindergarten to twelfth grade in an effort to help solve academic, career, and social/emotional

matters (Learn.org, n.d.). Within the ASCA National Model, there are mindsets and behaviors, which are organized by domains (ASCA, 2014). According to ASCA, these domains help enhance student learning and foster their mindset and behaviors (2014). In the areas of academic, career, and social/emotional problems professional school counselors also aid in identifying students who are affected by substance abuse, domestic violence, or tribulations with other students as well as advising students through their post-secondary path (Learn.org, n.d.).

**Academic Development.** "Standards guiding school counseling programs to implement strategies and activities to support and maximize each student's ability to learn" (ASCA, 2014, p. 1). Throughout their educational career, students acquire knowledge, attitude, and skills while building the foundation for their future success (ASCA, 2017).

**Career Development.** "Standards guiding school counseling programs to help students understand the connection between school and the world of work and to plan for and make a successful transition from school to postsecondary education and/or the world of work and from job to job across the lifespan" (ASCA, 2014, p. 1).

**Social/Emotional Development.** "Standards guiding school counseling programs to help students manage emotions and learn and apply interpersonal skills" (ASCA, 2014, p. 1).

According to ASCA (2017), professional school counselors find themselves facilitating various roles, such as individual counseling, small group counseling, and classroom guidance.

**Individual Counseling.** When counselors meet individually with their students, they guide them while creating personal goals and future plans.

**Small Group.** Small group counseling is a well-organized and applicable way for professional school counselors to meet students' academic, career, and social/emotional development, and situational needs (ASCA, 2014). Further, "group counseling makes it possible

for students to achieve healthier academic and personal growth in a rapidly changing global society" (ASCA, 2014, p. 30).

**Classroom Guidance.** A classroom guidance curriculum involves well thought out lessons planned to help students reach goals and to teach all students the knowledge, attitudes, and skills applicable to their developmental level (ASCA, n.d.). This type of school counseling curriculum can be taught throughout a school's general curriculum (ASCA, n.d.). Campbell and Dahir (1997) state professional school counselor's roles require them to provide direct and indirect services throughout the school day. For example, working with students' one-on-one or planning for classroom guidance curriculum.

According to ASCA (2017) often teachers, parents, students, and administrators wonder what professional school counselors do, as they are involved in numerous activities on and off a school campus (ASCA, 2017). According to Murray (2015), people who have not worked in the counseling field lack the knowledge of the professional school counselor's tasks and duties in a school setting. Professional school counselors not only work with the students, but also school administrators, teachers, school staff, parents, and community members. Professional school counselors work with students in several capacities, such as one-on-one settings, small groups, and facilitate classroom guidance in areas like academic achievement, drug awareness, and self-esteem (ASCA, 2017).

According to ASCA (2017), professional school counselors have a duty to aid the needs and advocate for students who have disabilities. They facilitate 504 meetings that address students with mental and physical impairments limiting one or more life activities. Professional school counselors attend problem-solving team meetings where they collaborate with other professionals to identify students who are partaking in negative behaviors in hopes of reducing or

eliminating the jeopardy of destruction or negative consequences (Florida's Multi-Tiered System of Supports, n.d.). Professional school counselors also attend Individual Educational Plan/Program (IEP) meetings to provide students with short-term goals and aid in goal-focused guidance at a minimum of once a year (ASCA, 2017).

### **Transition to High School**

Bornsheuer, Polonyi, Andrews, Fore, and Onwuegbuzie (2011) suggest that professional school counselors are aware successful academic completion is a significant indicator of future educational achievements and promotion, thus a vital factor within the literature. When students begin high school, they will experience a change in context; where the school setting is now larger, more impersonal, competitive, and teacher-centered (Hertzog & Morgan, 1999; Mizelle & Irvin, 2000; Morgan & Hertzog, 2001). "Extensive study of grades across the high school transition consistently shows that from middle to high school, students' grades in school decline" (Benner, 2011, p. 5). Research also suggests a decline in students' academic achievement in their core class tests, from middle to high school (Benner, 2011). Reyes, Gillock, Kobus, and Sanchez (2000) stated many students, particularly, those from underrepresented groups, perceive less social support upon transition to high school. The environment of the high school creates a setting where students have more options in their academics and extracurricular activities, as well as becoming acquainted with a rise in homework, studying, and social groups (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000; Morgan & Hertzog, 2001). Researchers have found that a safe and healthy school environment is important for promoting students' academic achievement (Konishi, Hymel, Zumbo, & Zhen, 2010). Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, and Eder (2011) found school counseling curriculums help students improve especially in the areas of problem-solving and the lessening of disciplinary actions. According to Whiston and Quinby (2009), when professional school

counselors facilitate individual counseling, small group counseling, and classroom guidance students are more likely to enhance their academic, career, and social/emotional development.

### **Relationships**

Student-teacher relationships play an important role in this process affecting both academic and social outcomes (Wentzel & Looney, 2007). Gagnon and Mattingly (2017) believe that when students have better access to their professional school counselor graduation rates are higher, disciplinary referrals decrease, and there is growth in the areas of academic, career, and social attainment. Schools are one of the primary socialization forces (Wentzel & Looney, 2007). The rapport between the teacher and student is imperative as the connectedness between both can improve students' sense of class belongingness and provide safe places for students to express themselves and their concerns (Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004). McCombs (2004) found that school success is optimized within caring, supportive, and safe environments. Konishi et al. (2010) explain closer relationships and better communication with teachers can develop within these environments and, as a result, students may be more equipped to seek help when they need it from a professional school counselor.

The ASCA National Model notes students who work closely with their professional school counselor acquire more knowledge and have an increase in positive behavior as well as achievement in their academics (ASCA, 2003). Professional school counselors continuously utilize their leadership skills when working with students to increase their students learning and academic success, which will help, guide them in future outcomes (House & Martin; Lee & Walz, 1998; Janson et al., 2009). Student behaviors are an important factor when it comes to their learning environment for the individual student as well as their peers (US Department of Education, 2017).

To better support students, professional school counselors develop and maintain supportive relationships in schools and create a caring school community for all students (Blount, 2012). The role of a professional school counselor is not only academic advising, but also working closely with the social/emotional development of the student population to increase the rapport between them (ASCA, n.d.). When a professional school counselor works with students about personal and social growth, confidentiality plays a significant role. Conversations between the professional school counselor and the student is confidential unless the student shares they are harming themselves, someone is harming them or they know someone is harming themselves; these situations are reported immediately (ASCA, 2017).

### **Individual School Counseling**

Individual school counseling consists of meeting with students one-on-one to address future endeavors, situations between peers, and family matters, which at times hinder student's paths to success as well as tackling attendance, school performance, and check-ins to pinpoint progress (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). These sessions can consist of one meeting or numerous on-going meetings (Newsome & Gadding, 2007; Whiston & Quinby, 2009). Professional school counselors provide services to support students who display problems that impede their academic, career, and social/emotional growth (ASCA, 2005). Services such as individual counseling are provided in the professional school counselor's office, as this space is considered a safe place for students to share their questions, comments, and concerns (Clark & Breman, 2009).

### **Small Group Counseling**

ASCA identified small group counseling as a crucial service for professional school counselors to facilitate when aimed toward academic, career, and social/emotional domains



(2005). Webb and Brigman (2007) found professional school counselors can hone in on students who may benefit from extra support in either the area of academics or social needs by facilitating small groups. Small group counseling can vary from school to school. ASCA suggests that small group consists of academic study skills, mediations between students, new student groups, or specific topics such as Grief Group, Coping Skills, and Friendship groups (2017). The aforementioned groups aid students in dealing with the death of a loved one, learning how to handle situations, and making and maintaining friendships.

Borders and Drury (1992) discovered this type of curriculum for social skills to be considered relaxing for students. Hoag and Burlingame (1997) state students who are at-risk for failing and are involved in small group curriculums have positively improved their academic achievement. Students who are at-risk of dropping out coupled with attending tutoring and small group counseling; researchers have found these students' gain improvement in their academics, behaviors, and self-esteem (Edmondson & White, 1998).

### **Classroom Guidance**

According to Aluede, Imonikhe, and Afen-Akpaida (2007), classroom guidance curriculums include lessons that are organized in such a way where the student's developmental stage is recognized to ensure those receiving the benefits. According to Quarto (2007), the ASCA National Model states that the delivery of classroom guidance activities ensures all students benefit from their professional school counselor. Research has shown there is a gap in the perception of high school professional school counselors and their duties, such as classroom guidance (Morgan, Greenwaldt, & Gosselin, 2014). According to Morgan et al. (2014), classroom guidance is one type of intervention that contributes towards students' success in their classrooms and in society. Although the literature is extensive when it comes to the role of the

professional school counselor, little addresses further development of classroom guidance curriculum.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is that there is a gap in the research involving professional school counselor-led curriculums and student academic achievement (Dimmitt, Carey, McGannon, and Henningson, 2005). This study's emphasis is on an investigation of high school professional school counselors' perceptions of classroom guidance and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors. It provides a qualitative insight regarding classroom guidance. The review of the literature includes information regarding topics such as: the role of a professional school counselor, student engagement, student behavior, rapport between counselor and student, transition, counselor-led curriculum, and graduation requirements. According to Whiston and Quinby's (2009) meta-analysis study on school counseling outcome research, it was found that students who took part in a professional school counselor curriculum showed progress in academic and or behavior when compared with students who did not take part. This study conducted a needs assessment survey that provides both a theoretical and practical benefit to an investigation of high school professional school counselors in the area of classroom guidance.

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 state, "NCLBA put in place measures that exposed achievement gaps among traditionally underserved students and their peers and spurred an important national dialogue on education improvement", hence, there is a need to expand educational opportunities and improve student outcomes. "Student behaviors are key to the development of both student engagement and perceived competence" (Akey, 2006). According to a study on the effects of student achievement in grade nine, students who participated in a

counselor-led intervention showed gains in not only student engagement, but also showed a higher completion rate of grade nine when compared to students who did not receive the intervention (Renda, 2014). Therefore, professional school counselor-led classroom guidance does have an impact when students participate. Akey (2006) believes that the performances of students are an important factor when it comes to their learning environment. Currently, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 explains the U.S. dropout rates are at an all-time low (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). However, ESSA states through student achievements students receive a firm foundation for further work to expand educational opportunity and improve outcomes. As the research has shown, students who participate in counselor-led classroom programs can improve student achievement and behavior (Villares, Lemberger, Brigman, & Webb, 2011). There is extensive literature when it comes to the role of the professional school counselor, but little addresses further development of a classroom guidance curriculum. Therefore, this study investigated high school professional school counselors' perception of classroom guidance and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors.

### **Rationale for the Study**

There have been several studies which examine student achievement after participating in classroom guidance. A study in a high school where students who participated in the counselor-led curriculum, All Hands on Deck (AHOD), showed significant gains in the school's graduation rate (Salina, Girtz, Eppinga, Marinez, Blumer, Killian, et al., 2013). Another study found that a comprehensive school counseling program utilizing a counselor-led curriculum in the classroom has a positive effect on student's behavior and education (Carey, Harrington, Marin, & Hoffman,

2012). Although the literature is extensive when it comes to the role of the professional school counselor, little addresses further development of classroom guidance curriculum.

This study utilized a needs assessment survey to assess how professional school counselors perceive classroom guidance and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors. Furthermore, the researchers of this study hypothesize that professional school counselors will disclose pros and cons related to how the development of a classroom guidance curriculum could be a vital part of a student's education. In addition, the researchers posit the importance of professional school counselor's role and purpose in the school setting is for student's successful advancement in student's academic, career, and social/emotional domains, as well as postulate that professional school counselors have a meaningful contribution to graduation success. Additionally, the study investigated the professional school counselor's role and purpose in a high school setting when facilitating classroom guidance. Morgan et al. (2014) state to effectively close the gap and provide students with a reliable path in academic achievement more attention must focus on the training of professional school counselors. The roles of a professional school counselor include individual counseling, small group counseling, and classroom guidance among other duties. Therefore, this study provided new information on how high school professional school counselors perceive classroom guidance and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the needs assessment study was to examine how high school professional school counselors perceive the development of a classroom guidance curriculum and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors. With school districts continuously pursuing increasing graduation rates, this study sought to determine how a classroom guidance

curriculum helps improve professional school counselor's role and purpose in a classroom setting. A study out of Missouri found when students have greater access to their school counselor state graduation rates increased (Lapan, Gysbers, Braggs, & Pierce, 2012). Thus, professional school counselors can be a critical part of school improvement efforts (Salina et al., 2013). Furthermore, this study investigated: a) the professional school counselor's role and purpose when facilitating classroom guidance, b) evaluate whether a professional school counselor finds the development of classroom guidance curriculum beneficial to student achievement and c) discuss further needs for improvement in the classroom guidance curriculum. Evidence-based research indicates when professional school counselors use curriculums it can improve a students' academic achievements (Villares, et al 2011). Overall, the study investigated high school professional school counselors' perception of classroom guidance and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors.

### **Research Questions**

The significance of the study was to address the professional school counselor's role and purpose in a school setting and their perception of classroom guidance. The following research questions guided this study:

- 1: How does a classroom guidance curriculum improve the role of professional school counselors?
- 2: What is necessary to integrate an effective classroom guidance curriculum in a high school setting?

## **Assumptions**

The researchers at the onset of this study made the following assumptions:

1. Professional school counselors will disclose pros and cons that the development of a classroom guidance curriculum is a vital part of education.
2. The importance of the professional school counselor's role and purpose in the school setting is for student's successful advancement in their academic, career, and social/emotional domains.
3. Professional school counselors have a meaningful contribution to graduation success.

## **Definition of Terms**

This section provides words and definitions used in the dissertation. Each word is uniquely used throughout the dissertation. The definitions provide information to the readers.

- **504 Meetings:** "Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects qualified individuals with disabilities defined as a person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities" (ASCA, 2016, p.55).
- **Academic Achievement:** ASCA indicates the standards, which guide school counseling programs to teach strategies and activities to sustain and maximize each student's capability to learn (2017).
- **American School Counselor Association (ASCA):** Supports professional school counselors' efforts to help students focus on academic, personal, social and career development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society (Rakestraw, 2015).
- **At-Risk Students:** ASCA (2012) indicates student at any time could potentially drop out of school, become truant, perform below academic levels, think about suicide, and use

drugs. These students present personal or social concerns as they often are coping with low self-esteem, family matters, grief, abuse or neglect.

- **Career Development:** ASCA (2017) indicates school counseling programs provide students with the skills to a) understand the connection between school and the world of work and b) plan for and make an effective transition from school to post-secondary education and or the world of work as well as from job to job throughout life.
- **Classroom Guidance:** A 30-45-minute lesson plan covering topics such as academic, career, and social/emotional development.
- **Comprehensive School Counseling Program:** Focuses on the development of academic, career, social, and emotional skills; which is provided for each student as well as school staff, parents, and community members. It can be used as an intervention based on the needs of the school and students.
- **Direct Services:** Face-to-face interactions including individual counseling, small group counseling, and classroom guidance.
- **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):** This act can be located beginning at section 1177 of title 114 of United States code. Signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015, previous version of the law, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act for the national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2017). No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), was passed by Congress in 2001, which was signed into law by President George W. Bush on Jan. 8, 2002 because there was concern that the American education system was no longer internationally competitive thus significantly increased the federal role in holding schools responsible for the academic progress of all students and it put a special focus on

ensuring that states and schools boost the performance of certain groups of students, such as English-language learners, students in special education, and poor and minority children, whose achievement, on average, trails their peers (Klein, 2017).

- **Indirect Services:** School counseling curriculum planning allows for an inclusive successful comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2017).
- **Individual Counseling:** Professional school counselors meet with students one-on-one for one or more times.
- **Individual Education Plan / Program (I.E.P.):** An I.E.P. is a written document which is created for each child who is eligible for special education. This plan is developed through a team of teachers, professional school counselors, parents, and special education staff and reviewed at least once a year (Baume, 2016).
- **Social/Emotional Development:** ASCA (2017) indicates standards guiding school counseling programs to aid students in managing their emotions and learn how to apply interpersonal abilities.
- **Problem Solving Team:** A problem-solving team is comprised of a group of professionals who meet various times to develop plans of action for struggling students. The team will define the problem or goal, analyze the problem, develop and implement a plan, and measure response to instruction/interventions (Florida's Multi-Tiered System of Supports, n.d.).
- **Professional School Counselor:** Masters-level, credentialed professional school counselors work with students in the academic development, career development, social/emotional development. Their work supports student success through education in



these domains, improvement of skills, reduction of stress, and improvement in mental health functioning (Dimmitt & Holt, n.d.)

- **Professional School Counselor–Led Curriculum:** Through classroom guidance programs students are taught skills in key areas (personal and social, self-management, and cognitive and academics) they benefit across social/emotional, and behavioral outcomes (Mariani, Villares, Wirth, & Brigman, 2014).
- **Small Group:** Three to eight student group covering topics such as academic, career, social, and emotional development.
- **Student Behavior:** ASCA (2014) indicates professional school counselors identify and explain the specific attitudes, comprehension, and capabilities students should be demonstrating in the school setting.
- **Student Success Skills (SSS):** Curriculum that is an evidence-based, professional school counselor-led intervention (Webb, Brigman, & Campbell, 2005). Consisting of five, 45-minute classroom lessons once a week with three follow up booster sessions as needed and small group lessons. The program was designed to teach students in elementary through secondary grades the fundamental skills necessary to increase academic success through the development of cognitive, social, and self-management skills (Brigman & Webb, 2010). These classroom lessons, according to Brigman et al. (2007) focus on strategies and concepts which will help with (1) goal setting, (2) cognitive and memory skills, (3) creating a caring, supportive and encouraging classroom, (4) dealing with test anxiety, and (5) building healthy optimism.

## **Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

This chapter provided a description of the qualitative design using a needs assessment survey. The next two chapters present related literature, results of the study, and discuss any further findings or recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter addresses a comprehensive review of related literature on the professional school counselor's role and purpose in a school setting when facilitating classroom guidance. The literature discusses the professional school counselor's role regarding the student's academic, career, and social/emotional domains. Research suggests the professional school counselor's role and purpose in the school setting are for the overall growth and development of youth today (Salina et al., 2013).

High school professional school counselors do not only hold a degree in this field of study, but also are required to meet all licensing standards and follow the laws of the states in which they are employed; such as being a mandated reporter (ASCA, 2017). ASCA recommends a ratio of one counselor for every 250 students (2017), however this is not the case in most school settings. The average ratio is one counselor for every 500 students and rising in some states, such as California and Arizona where it is 1,000 students for every one counselor (ASCA, 2013).

### **Role of a Professional School Counselor**

Professional school counselors' efforts help students focus on academic, career, and social/emotional development to achieve success in school and are prepared to be responsible members of society (ASCA, 2013). The professional school counselors' comprehensive program may recognize personal beliefs, which show how all students benefit from a school counseling program (ASCA, n.d.). Janson, Stone, & Clark, (2009) state the role of a professional school counselor is a vibrant member in education for our students, especially since counselors are not only academic advisers, but also operate as leaders. "High school counseling programs are essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and

values, set informed career goals and realize their full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community" (ASCA, 2017). Dodson (2009) describes how programs used by professional school counselors have changed in the last decade regarding how they interact with their students. McDonough and Calderon (2006) state that previously a professional school counselor's job was complex in definition due to social influences versus today they are considered the 'go to' educators on how to guide students for post-secondary education.

According to Dodson (2009), ASCA offers counseling programs that are comprehensive, data-driven, and held to a higher standard. The ASCA National Model supports the overall mission of students' academic success, career, and social/emotional components (2009). The literature regarding the ASCA National Model explains it not only consists of a foundation, delivery, management and accountability systems, but also how professional school counselors are responsible for meeting with all students (2009). The purpose of a professional school counselor is to advocate for all students (see figure 1).

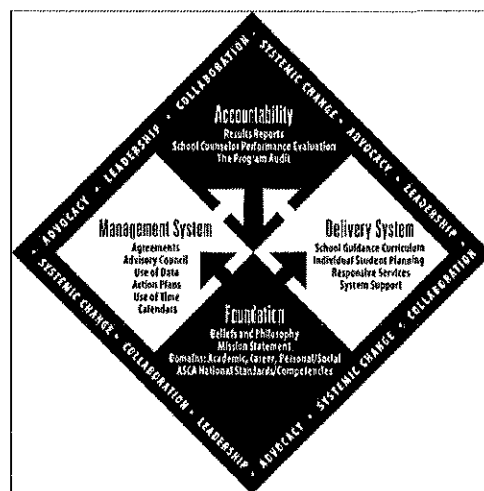


Figure 1. The ASCA National Model explains when professional school counselors are presenting classroom guidance lessons the four areas of accountability, management system,

delivery system, and foundation are followed (2005). The first component, foundation, focuses on all students reaching their full potential by professional school counselors creating lessons that identify personal philosophies, which speak to how all students benefit from the school counseling program (ASCA, 2005). The second component is the management system that combines tools and key pillars that represent school needs that professional school counselors rely on for data (ASCA, 2005). The third component, delivery, professional school counselors provide indirect as well as direct services for students, parents, administrators, and community members (ASCA, 2005). The fourth component, accountability, allows professional school counselors to measure and examine how effective the comprehensive school counseling program is (ASCA, 2005).

Dodson (2009) discusses the federal enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 is of importance to educators to ensure they are held accountable and their students receive the highest level of educational success. Numerous professional school counselors devote time regarding meeting with students who are either high achievers or at-risk than the little number of students who don't need direct academic, career, social, and emotional assistance (ASCA, 2009).

"Professional school counselors develop comprehensive programs that focus on student outcomes, teach student competencies and are delivered with identified professional competencies" (ASCA, p.1, n.d.). ASCA (n.d.) believes professional school counselors educate students in the areas of academic, career, social/emotional development as they are armed with the knowledge to meet the grueling demands of the profession. ASCA (n.d.) also states the responsibility of the professional school counselor to have insightful knowledge as to what the

needs of the school are, but also to deliver services that are beneficial for students, parents, faculty, and the community.

### **Student Engagement**

Widespread research presents evidence that student engagement is vital for educational success (Akey, 2006). Akey (2006) explains student engagement to be the amount of involvement and fundamental desires that students show in school. Kuh (2007) suggest student engagement is the participation in educationally effective practices, both inside and outside the classroom, which leads to a range of measurable outcomes. Dowson and McInerney (2001) concur that engaged students not only retain and learn more, but also enjoy the learning process than compared to their counterparts who are not engaged. According to Akey (2006), research suggests student engagement can be seen through the student's curiosity, desire to know more, and positive emotional responses to learning and the school environment. According to Fredricks, Blumenfel, and Paris (2004), "Student engagement is increasingly viewed as one of the keys to addressing problems such as low achievement, bored and alienation, and high dropout rates" (p. 1). Thus, engaged students are more prone to do better on tests and show a decline when looking at dropout rate (Martin & Torres, 2016). A group counseling model, such as the Achieving Success Everyday (ASE) intervention, has proven to aid in the increase of student's academic and personal-social outcomes (Steen, Henfield, & Booker, 2014).

### **Student Behavior**

Student behavior is an act that can be observed, measured, and repeated as well as, clearly defining behavior by specifically describing their actions (Bicard & Bicard, 2013). Student behavior can be identified using indicators such as grades, attendance, discipline referrals, and can be shown as early as sixth grade (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007).

According to Neild (2009), indicators around student behavior are the lessening of parental supervision and support, accompanied by the increase in peer influence that characterizes adolescence. This may result in increased risk-taking behaviors and declining academic performance. Student behavior results may manifest themselves in behavior problems, students may have weaker attendance, and earn poor course grades (Neild, 2009).

### **Student and Professional School Counselor Rapport**

McDonough (2005) indicates professional school counselor's roles in high school settings typically impact the students in various ways. McDonough (2005) states students are more likely to increase their attendance to a post-secondary education when there is a partnership between professional school counselors, parents, and students. Webb and Brigman (2006) state professional school counselors are strongly encouraged to advocate for the needs of their students and the professional school counselor's role in meeting those needs; which includes counselor efforts tied to improved student outcomes. Examples include better attendance and an increase in academic, career, social/emotional development. The result of this work has "reflected the improvement in academic, attendance and behavioral outcomes related to academic development, college and career readiness, and social/emotional development" (ASCA, 2017, p. 2).

A professional school counselor guides students by working within the areas of their academics, career, social/emotional development (ASCA, n.d.). Akey suggests when building professional school counselor and student rapport, they work together on attendance, discipline, and academics, as well as the social/emotional domains (2006). Akey (2006) also notes positive student academic outcomes are shown when supportive student and professional school counselor relationships are influenced in the school context. The ASCA National Model (2003)

explains the student's professional school counselor can monitor student goals in hopes the students are achieving their desired outcomes and have more of an overall feeling of success.

### **Student Success Skills**

Student Success Skills (SSS) is one example of a school counseling curriculum that supports student academic achievement (Brigman et al., 2007). SSS includes intervention strategies specifically designed to maximize the human potential of young learners (Villares, 2011). Villares (2011) states the SSS program is based on the findings of a series of large reviews of educational research that identified foundational skill sets and attitudes that separate successful and academically competent students from those who struggle and fail. By facilitating classroom guidance curriculum, professional school counselors aid in the increase of student understanding and cognizance of the dangers of risky behaviors as well as encourages resiliency and academic achievement (ASCA, 2017). According to Leon, Villares, Brigman, Webb, and Peluso (2011), the SSS curriculum has made significant differences in reducing the achievement gap. According to Brigman (2005), the small group curriculum through SSS has shown when it is used with underperforming students their academics improve.

### **Student Transition into High School**

According to Bornsheuer et al. (2011), successful completion of ninth grade is the most significant indicator of future academic achievement and promotion. In the Reach Higher Report, the U.S. Department of Education (2017) suggests that student behaviors influence their academic performance and achievements. Students in the ninth grade not only have the lowest grade point averages, most absentee issues, and the bulk of failing grades, but also the most behavioral referrals (Pharris-Ciurej & Hirschman, 2012). Neild (2009) discusses ninth grade marks a critical juncture in American schooling, these students need more acknowledgments



with their academics, career, social, and emotional domains. Some of their difficulties are completing homework, lack of parental involvement, and low expectations (Urbina, 2011).

**Completing homework.** There can be distractions when a student leaves school resulting in incomplete homework.

**Lack of parental involvement.** Due to work and giving ownership to their child.

**Low expectations.** Students do not feel they can achieve academic success.

When students enter the high school setting, it is a new environment which creates a venue where students have more options in their academics and extracurricular activities as well as becoming more involved in the academic and social demands (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000; Morgan & Hertzog, 2001). Konishi et al. (2010) suggest that a safe and healthy school environment is important for promoting students' academic achievement.

"School counseling programs are essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set informed career goals and realize the full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community" (ASCA, 2017, p.1). Schlossberg et al. (2001) discusses how high school students are more likely to improve academically, behaviorally, and obtain knowledge in said areas when they have participated in classroom guidance programs geared towards goal-setting, problem-solving, and career exploration. Similarly, it was found when students participated in school counseling curriculums not only did student engagement increase, but so did student academic achievement, social, and emotional development.

### **Ratio of Professional School Counselor to Student**

Gagnon and Mattingly (2016) state ASCA recommends one professional school counselor to 250 students, however nationwide they found only 17.8 percent met the

recommendation. Gagnon and Mattingly explain the average ratio being one professional school counselor to 411 students and increasing each year that passes (2016). Further, Gagnon and Mattingly (2016) note the location where a district lies has much to do with the ratios mentioned (see Table 1).

Table 1  
Average School Counselor to Student Ratio Nationwide

	Type 1 250:1 or lower	Type 2 251:1 to 350:1	Type 3 351:1 to 500:1	Type 4 501:1 to 750:1	Type 5 Higher than 750:1
Alabama			X		
Alaska			X		
Arizona					X
Arkansas		X			
California					X
Colorado			X		
Connecticut			X		
Delaware			X		
Florida				X	
Georgia				X	
Hawaii		X			
Idaho			X		
Illinois				X	
Indiana			X		
Iowa			X		
Kansas		X			
Kentucky			X		
Louisiana				X	
Maine		X			
Maryland			X		
Massachusetts		X			
Michigan				X	
Minnesota				X	
Mississippi			X		
Missouri		X			
Montana	X				
Nebraska		X			
Nevada			X		
New Hampshire	X				
New Jersey			X		
New Mexico		X			
New York		X			
North Carolina	X				
North Dakota	X				
Ohio			X		
Oklahoma		X			
Oregon				X	
Pennsylvania			X		
Rhode Island			X		
South Carolina			X		
South Dakota		X			
Tennessee			X		
Texas			X		
Utah				X	
Vermont	X				
Virginia			X		
Washington				X	
West Virginia			X		
Wisconsin			X		
Wyoming		X			

## **Professional School Counselor-Led Curriculums**

The effectiveness of school counseling curriculums depends on evidence-based practices (Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Eder, 2011). Schlossberg, Morris, and Lieberman discuss high school students are more likely to improve academically, behaviorally, and obtain knowledge when they have participated in classroom guidance programs geared towards goal-setting, problem-solving, and career exploration (2001). Dimmit et al. (2005) state there is a gap in the current research involving professional school counselor-led curriculums and student academic achievement. As professional school counselors increase their implementation of research-supported programs, stakeholders such as the community will have the opportunity to experience first-hand the difference professional school counselors can make in the lives of students and families (Webb & Brigman, 2006).

The ASCA National Model explains school counseling programs should be an integral part of students' daily educational environment and professional school counselors should be partners in student achievement (2016). The guidance curriculum is a component of a comprehensive school counseling program which provides all students with systematic and developmentally appropriate content related to guidance and prevention (Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Eder, 2011). "Students who participated in school counseling curriculum tended to score on various outcome measures about a third of a standard deviation above those who did not receive the curriculum" (Whiston and Quinby, 2009, p. 2).

## **Classroom Guidance**

Classroom guidance covers topics such as college and career readiness, behavior, and academic achievement (ASCA, n.d.). Classroom guidance programs can include, but are not limited to, topics of test anxiety and how to improve student self-awareness, sense of control,

coping skills, and test scores (Cheek et al. 2012, Eder & Whiston, 2006). Students taking part in these types of curriculums at the high school level have their success measured by one's grade point average (Lapan et al., 1997). A student's grade point average is determined by a student's academic achievement in their high school classes. Literature has found that a professional school counselor supports students in the areas of career development and college advising (ASCA, n.d.). Dimmit (2007) found students acquired more knowledge surrounding career opportunities, potential orientation, an increase in self-efficacy and improved school engagement. Students pursue post-secondary education at either a four-year university, a technical college, or enlisting in the military (Akos, Cockman, & Strickland, 2007). Akos et al. (2007) states when facilitating classroom guidance, it is important for professional school counselors to recognize all areas of post-secondary education to reach each student's interest.

### **Student Behavior in Classroom Guidance**

Battista (2015) found when students partake in professional school counselor-led curriculums there is a noteworthy improvement or accomplishment in the student's fullest potential, a decrease in their absences, enhanced behavior, and increased grades. According to Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun (1997), a school-wide use of a classroom guidance curriculum covering positive social skills benefits students by decreasing physical aggression as well as increasing positive student behavior. Lapan et al. (1997) suggest when students are a part of classroom guidance curriculum they are less likely to interrupt their teachers and act better compared to their classmates who did not participate in the classroom guidance curriculum. Similarly, Wilson, Lipsey, & Derzon (2003) explained a decrease in aggressive behavior was found when students partook in classroom guidance dealing with feelings of safety and disciplinary events in the school setting.

## **Florida High School Graduation Requirements**

Academic achievement represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in high school (Steinmayr et al., 2014). York, Gibson, and Rankin (2015) imply grades and grade point average (GPA) are the most commonly used element to measure a student's academic success. School districts set their own standards for promotion to the next grade and promotion requirements vary from district to district in Florida (Neild, 2009). Hupfeld (2007) reported that students whose academic performance is poor is shown through the earning of low or failing grades, present low-test scores, and being credit deficient prior to graduation are more likely not to be successful. Throughout the state of Florida in which this study takes place follows state requirements where student must earn 24 credits in specific subject areas, complete 20 hours of community service, pass standardized assessments, complete one virtual course, and acquire a minimum of a 2.0 GPA (Department of Education, 2016).

### **Summary**

Based on a review of the literature related to the research topic, several conclusions were obtained regarding the professional school counselor and their role and purpose in a school setting and specifically, as classroom guidance facilitators. As well as when professional school counselors are facilitating classroom guidance. Topics covered were the roles of a professional school counselor, student engagement, student behavior, student and counselor rapport, transition into high school, counselor-led curriculums, small group, and Florida graduation requirements. This review also provided a discussion about the professional school counselor's role as it pertains to aiding students in the domains of academic, career, social/emotional developments. Although the literature is extensive when it comes to the role of the professional school

counselor, there is little that addresses further development of classroom guidance curriculums. Professional school counselors aim to promote the whole development of all teachers, administrators, parents, and staff as well as every student (Mitcham, Portman & Dean, 2009). ASCA (2017) believes the days of professional school counselors simply sitting in their offices handing out waivers, college applications, changing schedules and so forth are no longer acceptable. Hence, the researchers of this study are developing a classroom guidance curriculum.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

The foundation of this study was to gain a better understanding of the professional school counselor's role and purpose in the high school setting while facilitating classroom guidance and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors. This chapter addresses the research methodology used in this study, describes the participants, as well as the procedures used to collect and analyze the data. The study was designed to examine the roles and purpose of a professional school counselor while facilitating classroom guidance in a school setting using a qualitative and quantitative approach.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perception of a professional school counselor's role and purpose in a school setting when facilitating classroom guidance and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the study:

- 1: How does a classroom guidance curriculum improve the role of professional school counselors?
- 2: What is necessary to integrate an effective classroom guidance curriculum in a high school setting?

### **Research Design**

The mixed method study presented a Likert scale survey "needs assessment survey" along with three open-ended questions to current professional school counselors to examine the roles and purpose of professional school counselors in the school setting while facilitating classroom guidance and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors. The

study utilized only descriptive inferential statistics. This needs assessment survey was administered to professional school counselors at public high schools in Florida via Survey Monkey©. The mixed method study provided the needs assessment survey to professional high school counselors. Throughout the survey, professional school counselors reported information on how often they facilitate one-on-one counseling, small group, classroom guidance, as well as whether a specific classroom guidance curriculum could benefit the role and purpose when facilitating classroom guidance. Moreover, the assessment evaluated the school counseling program to denote to pivotal stakeholders if the school counseling program is or is not operating in a way which meets the student needs.

### **Participants**

To enter the field of school counseling one must acquire a Master Degree with a specialization in School Counseling, which qualifies him or her to help students in domains of their education (ASCA, 2017). The target population for the study was professional school counselors in a public high school environment, which excludes charter schools and anyone who does not hold credentials in school counseling. The professional school counselors are male and female and work in a public high school in the state of Florida. There are approximately 900 high schools in the state of Florida which employ approximately 1,966 high school professional school counselors. Their ethnicity will be unknown.

### **Data Collection**

The sample of this study was comprised of professional school counselors from public high schools in Florida. Each of the professional school counselors received the needs assessment survey through Survey Monkey© via email. The following steps were carried out:

- Step 1: Obtained approval from Lynn University Institutional Review Board (IRB)



- Step 2: After approval from Lynn University IRB, the email addresses were requested for Professional School Counselors in Florida from the Florida Department of Education Bureau of PK-20 Education Reporting and Accessibility Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurement PERA Data Team (PERADataRequest@fldoe.org)
- Step 3: An initial email was sent to approximately 1,966 professional school counselors requesting they complete the survey
- Step 4: The first page of the survey is the consent page so once “ok” was clicked the professional school counselor was able to continue onto the survey
- Step 5: A follow up email was sent after three weeks to approximately 1,966 professional school counselors reminding them to complete the survey and thanking the participants who have already
- Step 6: At least 10% of the professional school counselors completed the survey within one month of receiving initial email and follow up email
- Step 7: Answers from the survey were collected by the researchers via Survey Monkey©

### **Instrumentation**

The researchers used the online survey platform, Survey Monkey©. Survey Monkey© is an online survey platform which provides feedback from people you are surveying. Before entering the survey, the participants will read the Informed Consent and click “OK” if and only if they feel comfortable moving forward to complete the survey. By clicking “OK” the participants are agreeing to partake in the survey. There is no physical paper the participants will be asked to sign for consent. The survey will include questions such as the following:

1. School counselors facilitated one-on-one consultation on a regular basis (i.e. daily/weekly)

Strongly Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
Agree                  Neutral

2. Define Classroom Guidance.

### **Ethical Considerations**

For professional school counselors to maintain ethical consideration, several steps will be taken. The professional school counselor's names remained anonymous. Survey monkey© prevents IP addresses from being recorded in survey results which will also keep the names of participants anonymous. Only the people facilitating the study had access to the data. The data will be kept for three years on a password-protected computer at the researcher's place of residence to ensure professional school counselor's information is protected then destroyed.

### **Data Analysis**

The study used a mixed-method design simultaneously with a Likert Scale and open-ended questions in the same needs assessment survey. The Likert Scale asked questions that correlate with numbers for answers using descriptive statistics such as cross tabulations, averages, means, modes, and medians. The open-ended questions were analyzed using the qualitative method of coding and deriving themes from the coding. The researchers took the quantitative and qualitative results that the professional school counselors provided to obtain the necessary needs assessment data to improve the implementation of classroom guidance.

For this mixed method study, the researchers used the needs assessment given to professional school counselors in public high schools via Survey Monkey©. The information

collected from the surveys was used to address the research questions. The study evaluated the information current professional school counselors provide in the areas of a student to counselor ratio, how often they facilitate one-on-one counseling, small group, and classroom guidance as well as whether they feel a school counselor's role and purpose is beneficial in the school setting by facilitating classroom guidance.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

High school professional school counselors in Florida were asked to complete the needs assessment survey. A few of the limitations are the professional school counselors not answering the survey truthfully, not answering all the questions or not answering any of the questions. Another limitation was that the survey participants may answer the way they think the researchers would want them to answer, instead of honestly. As well as, participants had technological limits because they were not familiar with platform Survey Monkey©. Upon examining the data, the researchers became aware only 92 participants completely answered every question, therefore, 106 skipped at least one question. Although this means only 50% of the participants answered every question the researchers counted all participants including the one middle school professional school counselor who participated. Further, a delimitation was that the researchers are excluding anyone who does not hold credentials in school counseling or is employed at a charter school.

### **Risks and Benefits**

Risks participating in the survey are minimal, however, if participants feel uncomfortable or anxious due to answering survey questions they may exit out of the survey at any time. While no monetary reward will be given to participants, they may enjoy answering questions about their profession as well as request to hear about the results when the study is complete. No IP

addresses will be kept or known to the researcher. If the participant emails the researchers requesting the results, the participants survey will continue to remain anonymous.

### **Summary**

The methodology chapter reports on the professional school counselor's perceptions of classroom guidance and needs for curriculum. The survey assessment was emailed to public high school professional school counselors in Florida, who were asked to report on how often they facilitate one-on-one counseling, small group, classroom guidance as well as whether they feel a school counseling classroom guidance program aids in the betterment of the students. In this chapter, the researchers discuss the purpose of the study, research questions, research design, participants, data collection, ethical considerations, analyzing data, data analysis, and limitations was included.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Professional school counselors' efforts help students focus on academic, career, and social/emotional development to achieve success in school and are prepared to be responsible members of society (ASCA, 2013). The professional school counselors' comprehensive program recognizes personal beliefs, which show how all students benefit from a school counseling program (ASCA, n.d.). The study emphasized the need for professional school counselors to facilitate classroom guidance.

The purpose of the needs assessment study was to examine how high school professional school counselors perceive the development of a classroom guidance curriculum and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors. This study investigated: a) the professional school counselor's role and purpose when facilitating classroom guidance, b) evaluate whether a professional school counselor finds the development of classroom guidance curriculum beneficial to student achievement and c) discuss further needs for improvement in the classroom guidance curriculum. Overall, the study explored high school professional school counselors' perception of classroom guidance and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors.

The researchers approach to the study was to gain a better understanding of the professional school counselor's role and purpose in the high school setting while facilitating classroom guidance and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors. The following questions guided the study:

**Research Question 1: How does a classroom guidance curriculum improve the role of professional school counselors?**

**Research Question 2: What is necessary to integrate an effective classroom guidance curriculum in a high school setting?**

**Research Design**

The mixed method study presented a Likert scale survey “needs assessment survey” along with three open-ended questions to current professional school counselors to examine the roles and purpose of professional school counselors in the school setting while facilitating classroom guidance and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors.

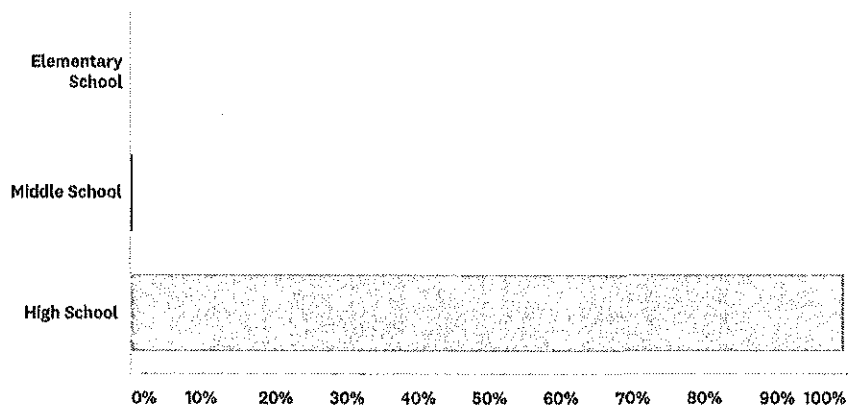
**Participants**

The target population for the study was professional school counselors in a public high school environment, excluding charter schools and anyone who does not hold credentials in school counseling. The professional school counselors are a combination 1,966 male and female and work in a public high school in the state of Florida. The researchers used the online survey platform, Survey Monkey©. Survey Monkey© is an online survey platform which provides feedback from people you are surveying.

**Survey Responses**

There were 198 total responses to the survey. This included 196 professional high school counselors, two participants who skipped the questions pertaining to their specific school level, and one participant stated they worked in a middle school (See Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Participants of the Survey



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Elementary School	0.00%	0
Middle School	0.51%	1
High School	99.49%	195
TOTAL		196

The participants were asked to identify their educational credentials using an open-ended question. There was a range of responses and majority stated they earned a degree in school counseling as outlined in table 2 below. While only 18% marked their educational credentials as an educational specialist in school counseling, 10% stating they earned a Ph.D. in school counseling, and 1% stated they earned an Ed.D. in the area of school counseling (See Figure 2 below).

Figure 2. Educational Credentials of the Participants

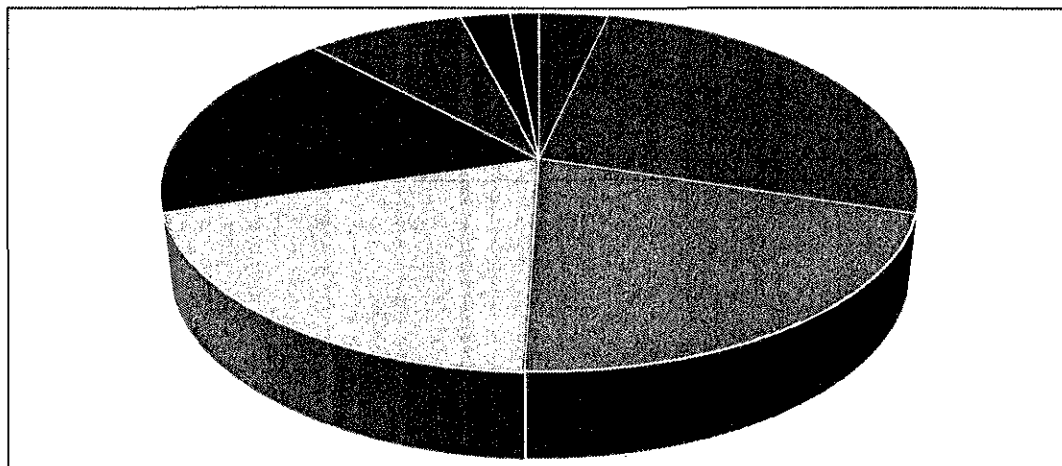


Due to the survey only being sent to all high school professional school counselors in the state of Florida, the result of this question shows the participants were professional school counselors. This approach was deliberately used because the purpose of the researcher's survey was to examine how high school professional school counselors perceive the development of a classroom guidance curriculum and whether professional school counselors see it as important.

The survey also identifies how long each of the participants who answered this question have been working in the field of school counseling. Majority of the participants have been a professional school counselor between six to 10 years while the smallest was 30 years or more (See Figure 3 below).



Figure 3. Number Years the Professional School Counselor has been a School Counselor



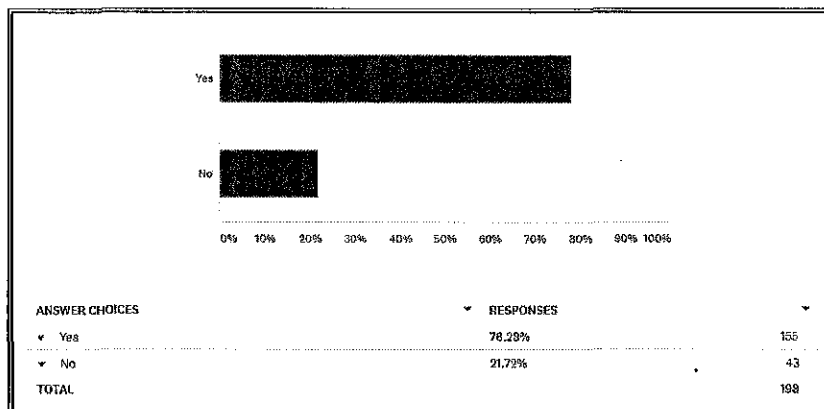
- Less than 1 year
- 1 - 5 Years
- 6 - 10 Years
- 11 - 15 Years
- 16 - 20 Years
- 21 - 25 years
- 26 - 30 Years
- 30 Years or more

Majority of participants explained they have taught a classroom guidance program

(78.28%). While the other 21.72% participants have never taught a classroom guidance program

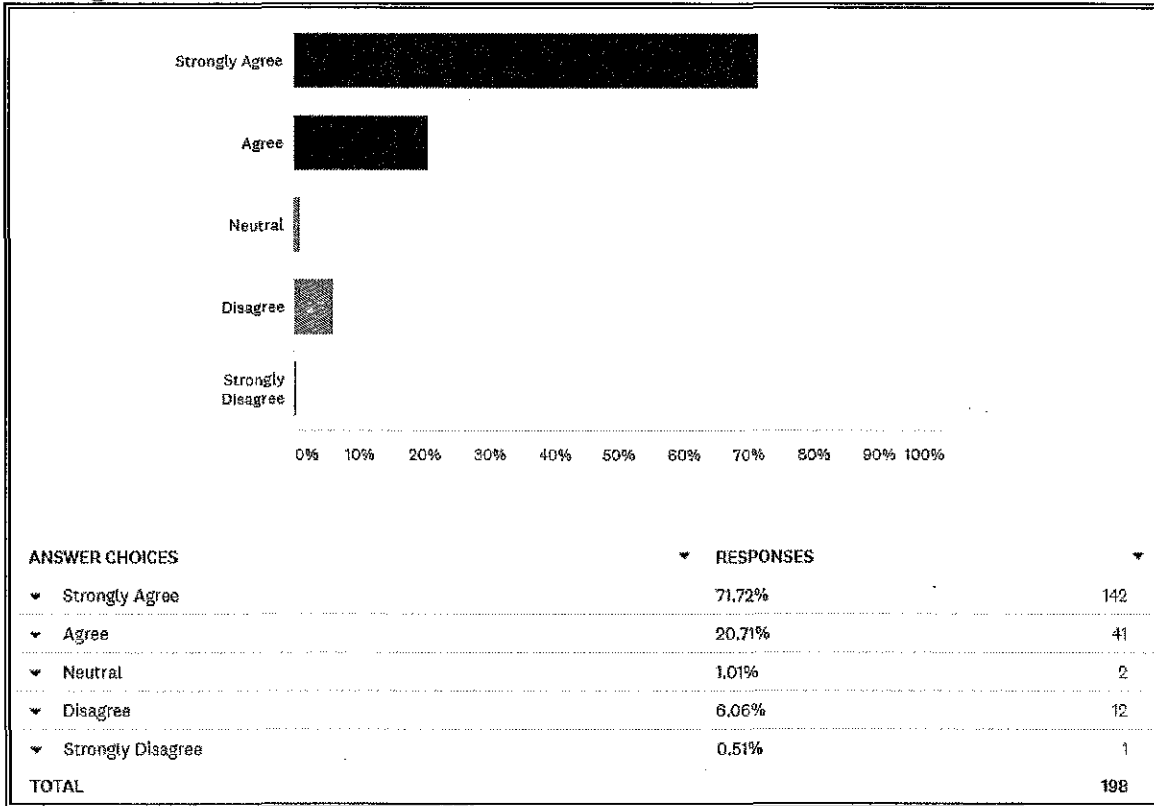
(See Figure 4 below).

Figure 4. Percentage of Professional School Counselors Who Have Taught Classroom Guidance



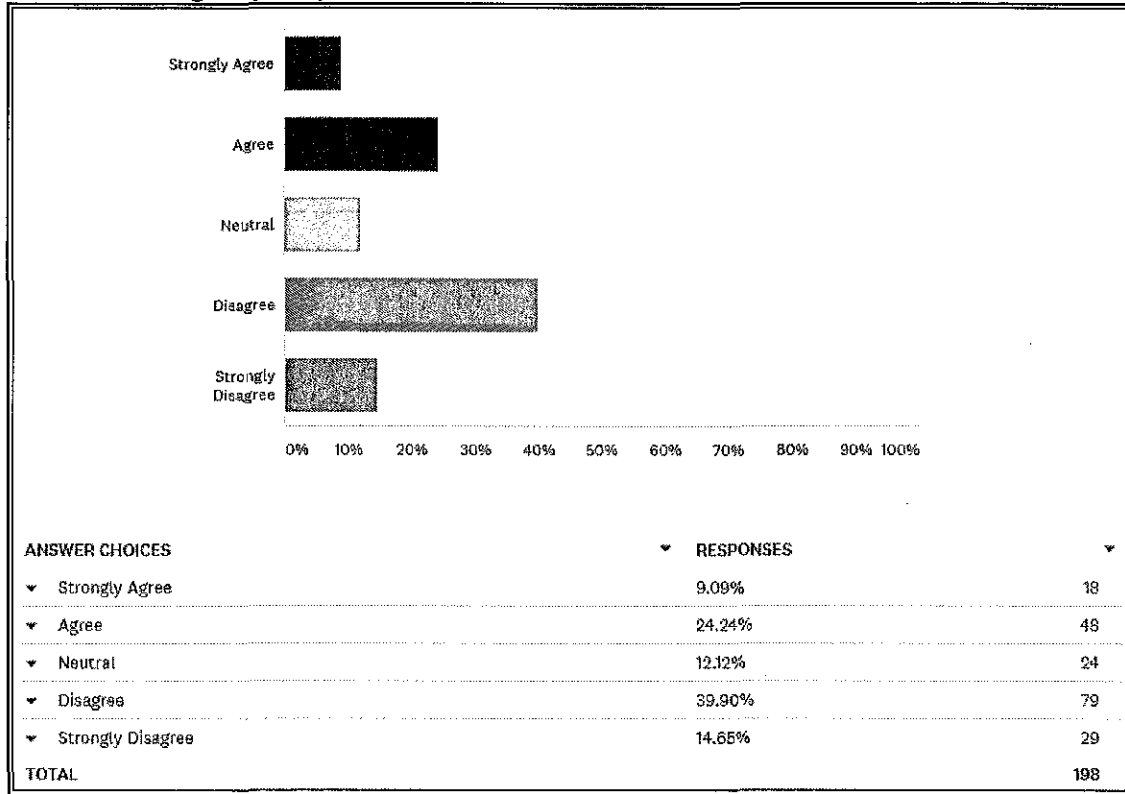
There were three questions purposely related to the professional school counselor’s role in the school setting. Majority (71.72%) of the school counselors strongly agree regarding facilitating one-on-one consultation on a regular basis (i.e. daily/weekly) and 0.51% strongly disagreed (See Figure 5 below).

Figure 5. Percentages of Professional School Counselors Who Facilitate One-on-One School Counseling



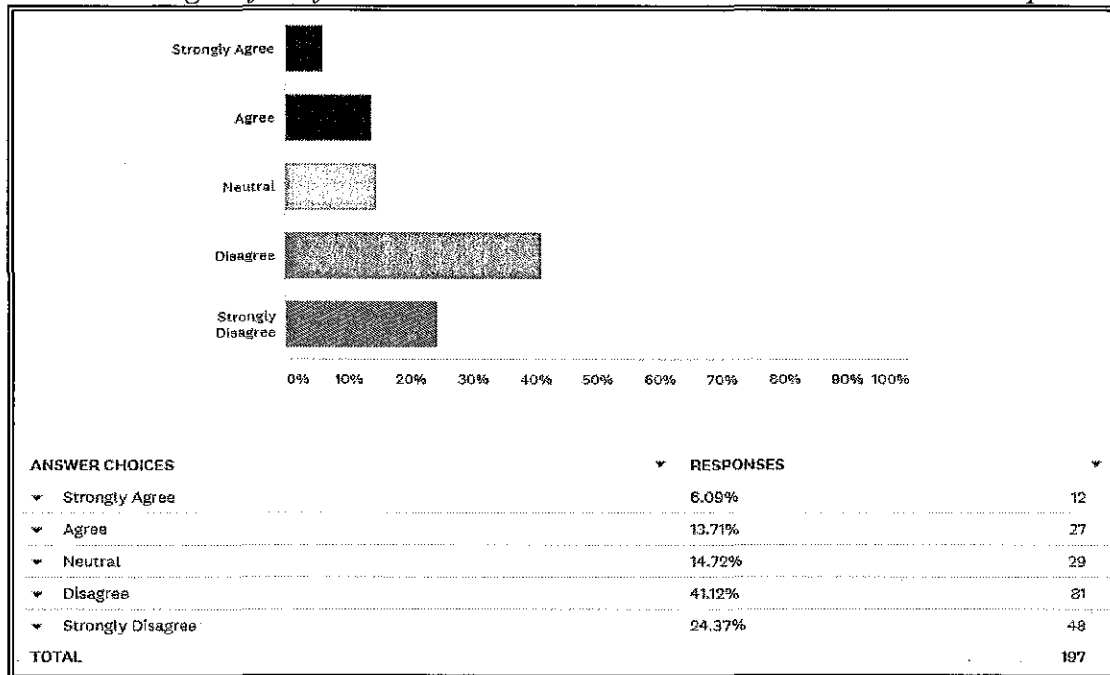
Majority (39.90%) disagree with facilitating classroom guidance on a regular basis (i.e. weekly/monthly) and with strongly agree (9.09%) being the least (See Figure 6 below).

Figure 6. Percentages of Professional School Counselors Who Facilitate Classroom Guidance



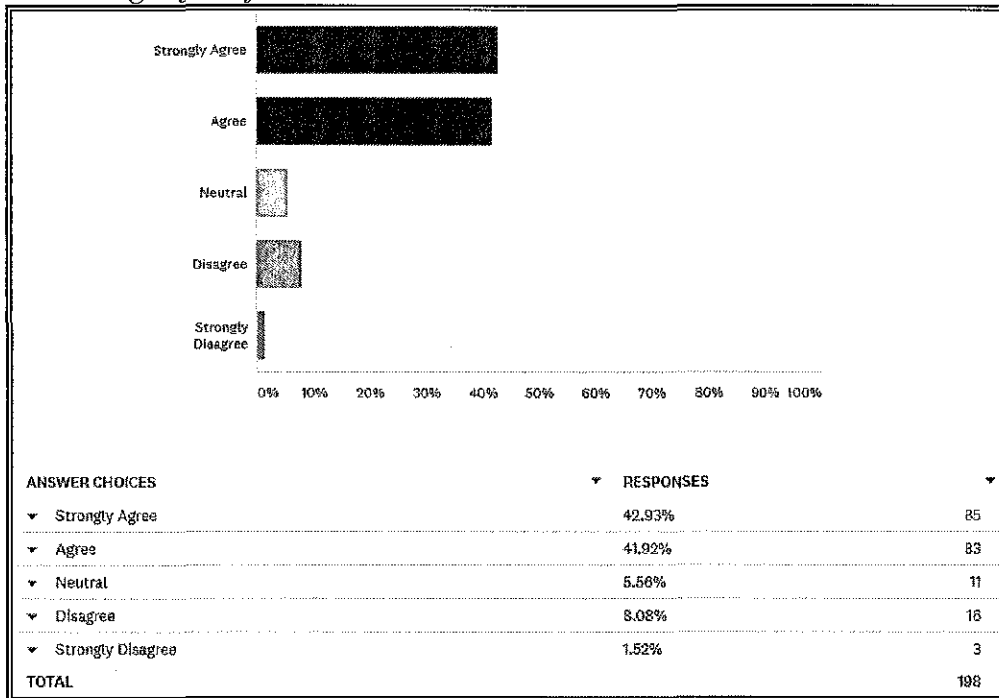
Majority (41.12%) of the participants disagree, while 24.37% strongly disagree with facilitating small group guidance on a regular basis (i.e. weekly/monthly) and only 6.09% strongly agreeing (See Figure 7 below).

Figure 7. Percentages of Professional School Counselors Who Facilitate Small Group Guidance



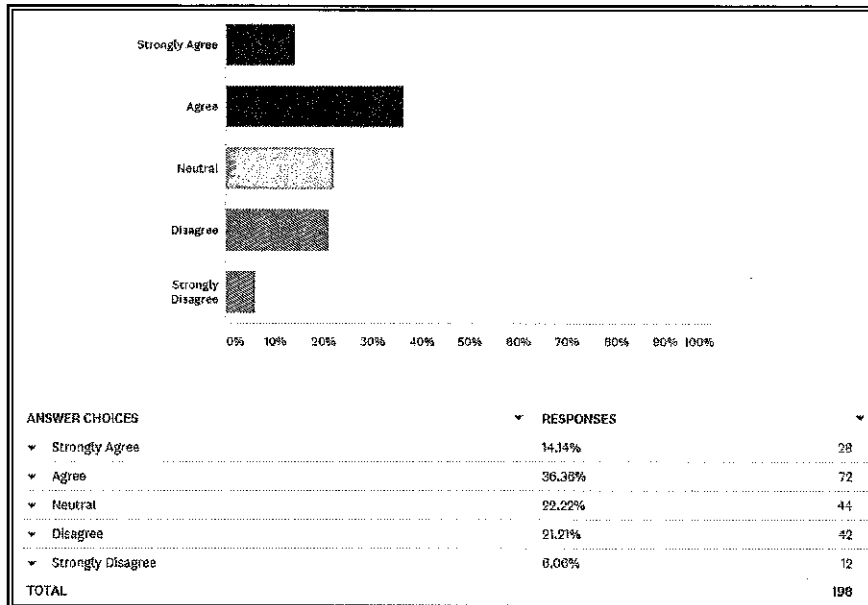
Nearly all participants either selected strongly agreed (42.93%) or agreed (41.92%) regarding there is a clear understanding of the needs of the students in their school setting (See Figure 8 below).

Figure 8. Percentage of Professional School Counselors Who Understand Student Needs



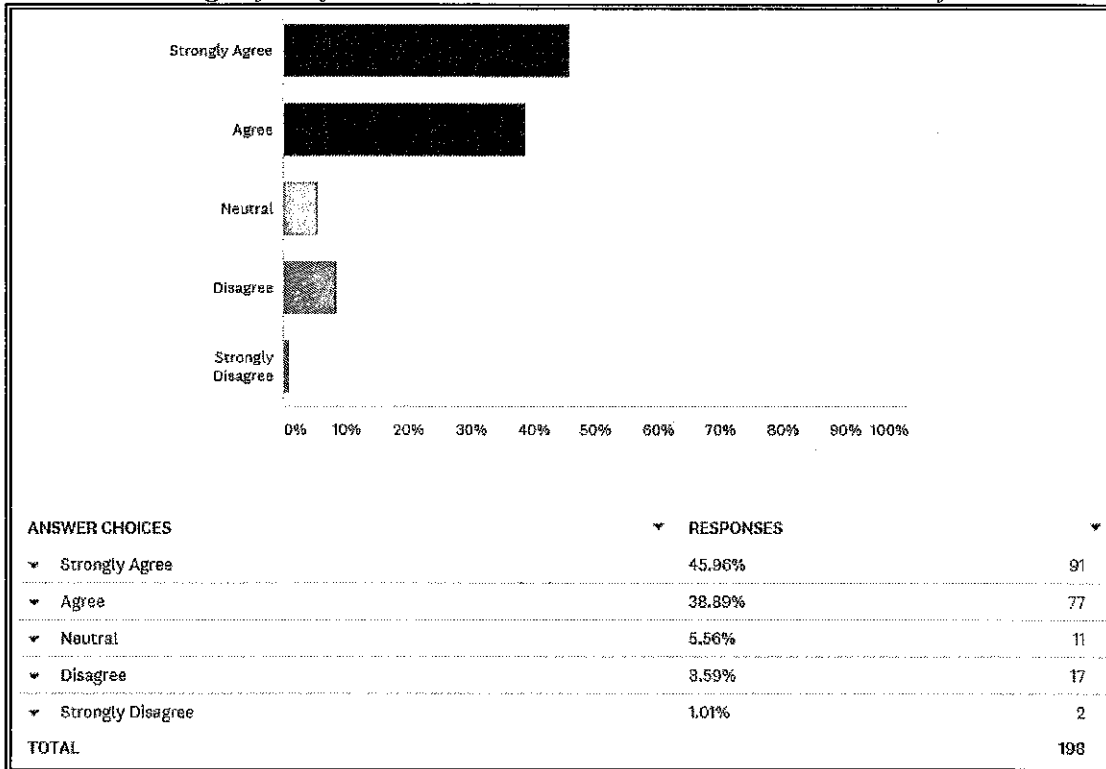
The responses to this next question regarding if professional school counselors have a tool they can access when providing classroom guidance showed counselors were split between strongly agree/agree (50.5%) and neutral/disagree/strongly disagree (49.50%). This question clearly shows one such reason the researchers have created classroom guidance lessons (See Figure 9 below).

*Figure 9. Percentages of Professional School Counselors Who Have Access to Classroom Guidance Curriculum*



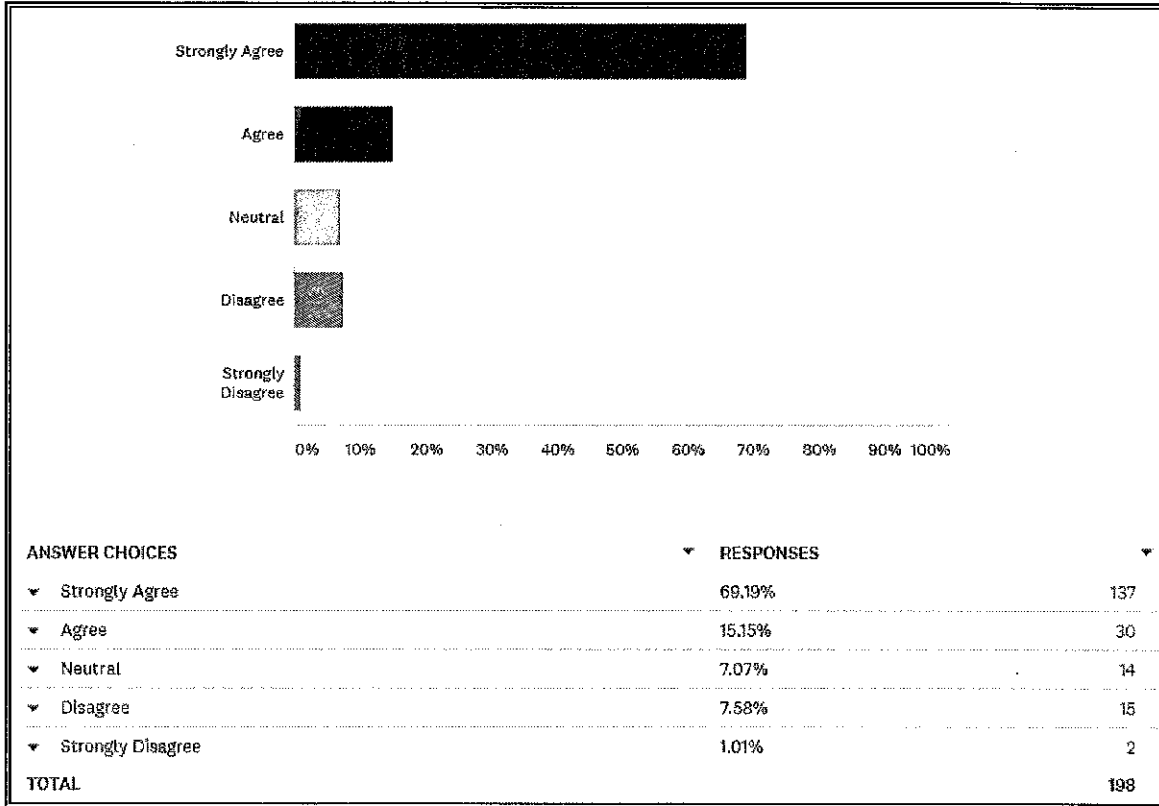
Nearly all participants selected either strongly agreed (45.96%) or agreed (38.89%) school counselors are available to students when they need their help (See Figure 10 below).

Figure 10. Percentage of Professional School Counselors Who Are Available for Students



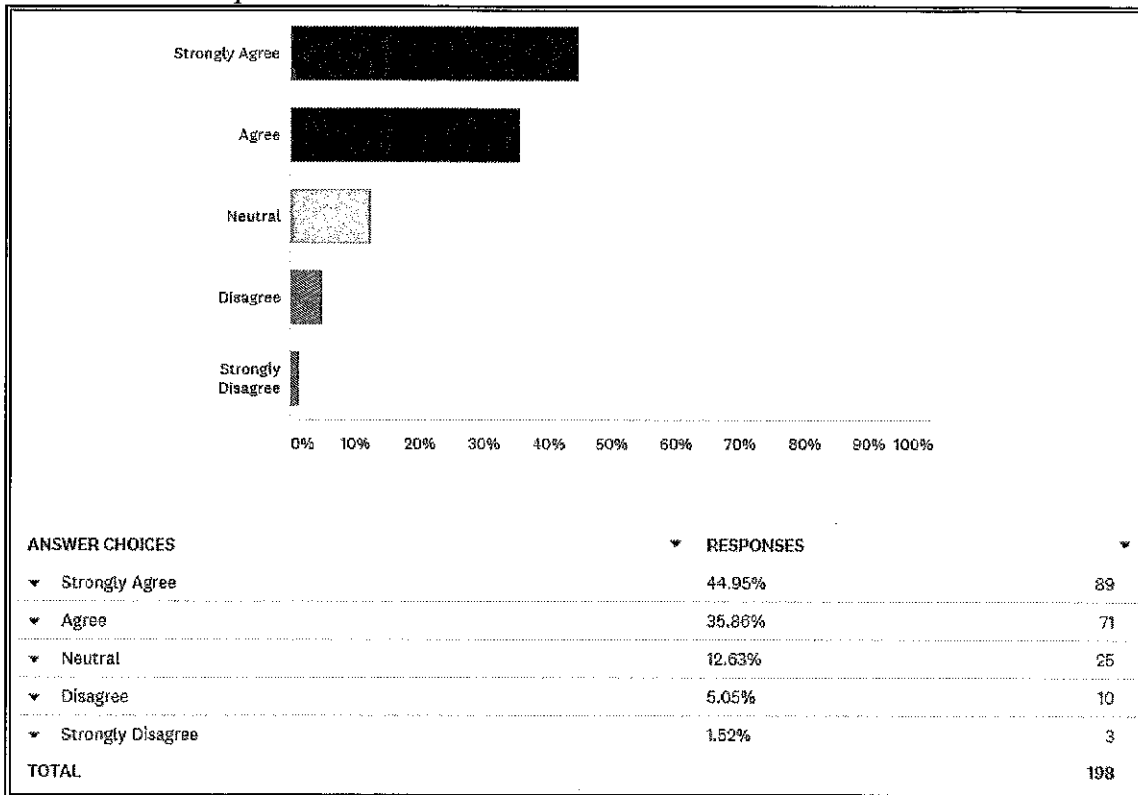
Majority (69.19%) of the participants strongly agree there is a need for an additional one or more school counselor(s) and 15.15% agreeing in their school counseling department (See Figure 11 below).

Figure 11. Percentages of Professional School Counselors Who Feel an Additional One or More School Counselors are Needed



The responses regarding if professional school counselors know what topics to cover when facilitating classroom guidance and small group(s) showed most professional school counselors were between strongly agree/agree (80.81%) and neutral/disagree/strongly disagree (19.2%). This question clearly shows school counselors are aware of their demographics, but they do not have the proper tools to facilitate (See Figure 12 below).

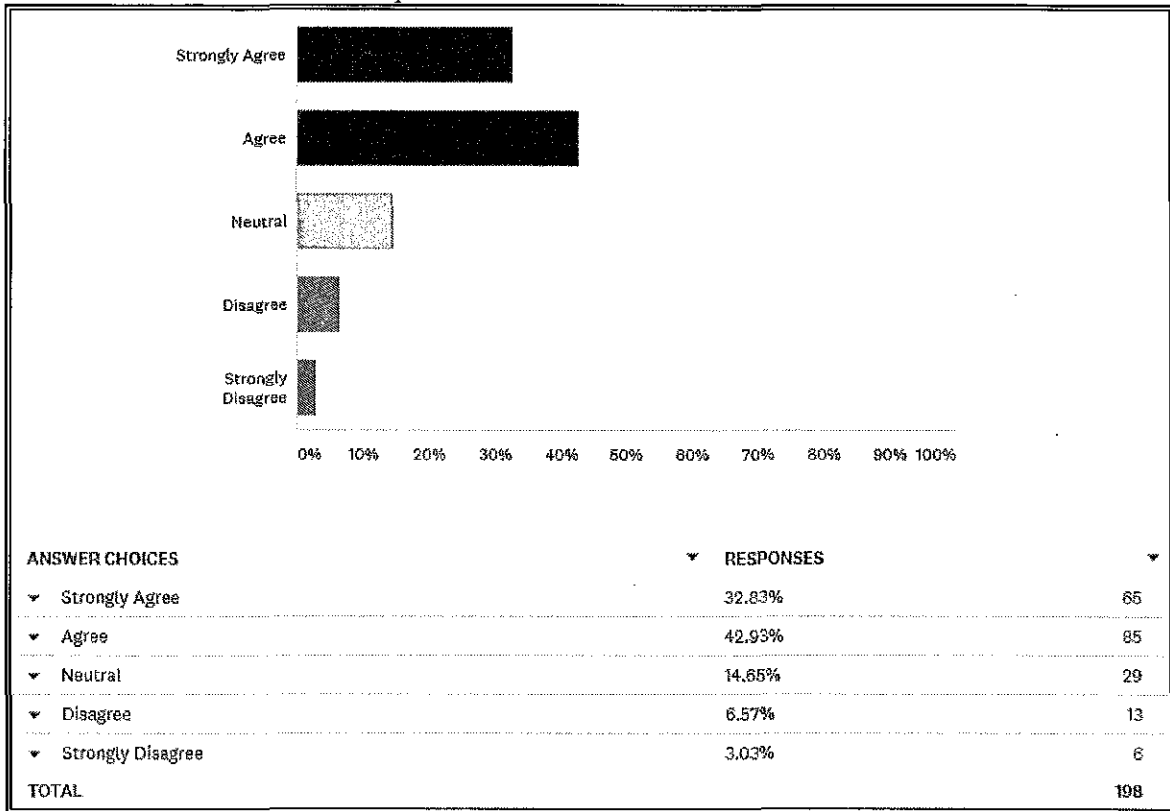
Figure 12. Percentages of Professional School Counselors Who Know Topics for Classroom Guidance/Small Group



The responses to this next question regarding if professional school counselors know when to facilitate classroom guidance and small group(s) showed most of the school counselors were between strongly agree/agree (75.76%) and neutral/disagree/strongly disagree (24.25%). This question too, clearly shows school counselors are aware of their student needs, but they do not have the proper tools to facilitate (See Figure 13 below).

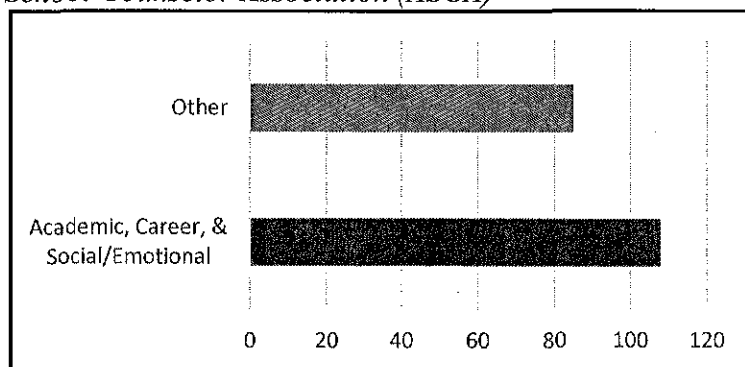


Figure 13. Percentages of Professional School Counselors Who Know When to Facilitate Classroom Guidance/Small Group



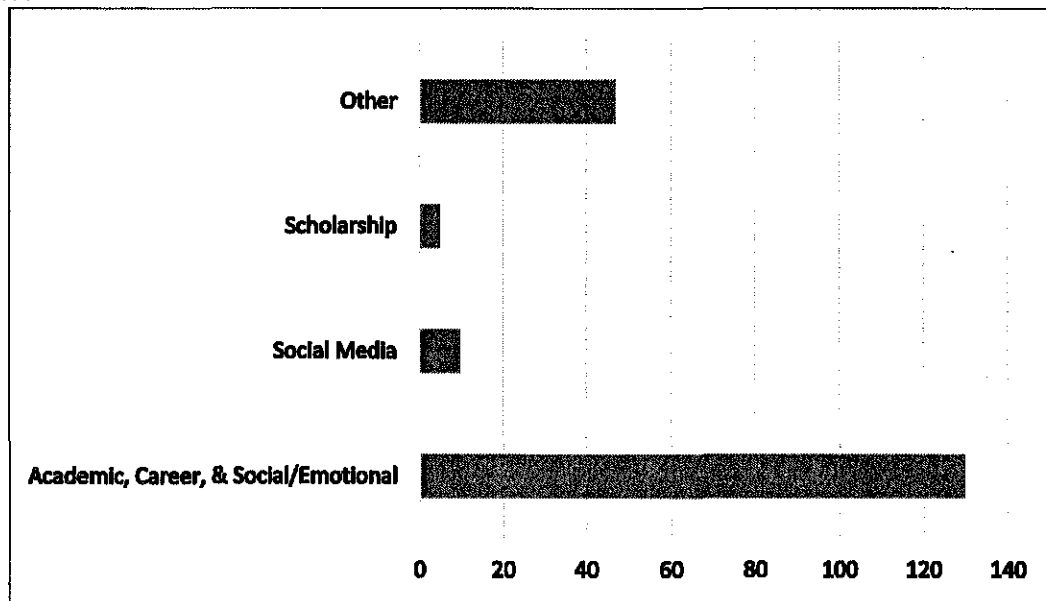
The participants were asked to define classroom guidance in their own words. They provided the researchers with insight of their knowledge about this topic. The table below outlines the responses discussed by the professional school counselors who mentioned in their definition either academic, career, or social/emotional and all other responses were coded as other (See Figure 14 below).

Figure 14. Percentages of School Counselors Who Align the Definition of Classroom Guidance with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA)



The participants were asked an open-ended question to include what content is vital for classroom guidance. The responses showed majority of the professional school counselors stated the content should include academic, career, and social/emotional. Other topics included but were not limited to social media, scholarships, and other (See Figure 15 below).

Figure 15. Lesson Plan Topics Professional School Counselors Should Cover in Classroom Guidance

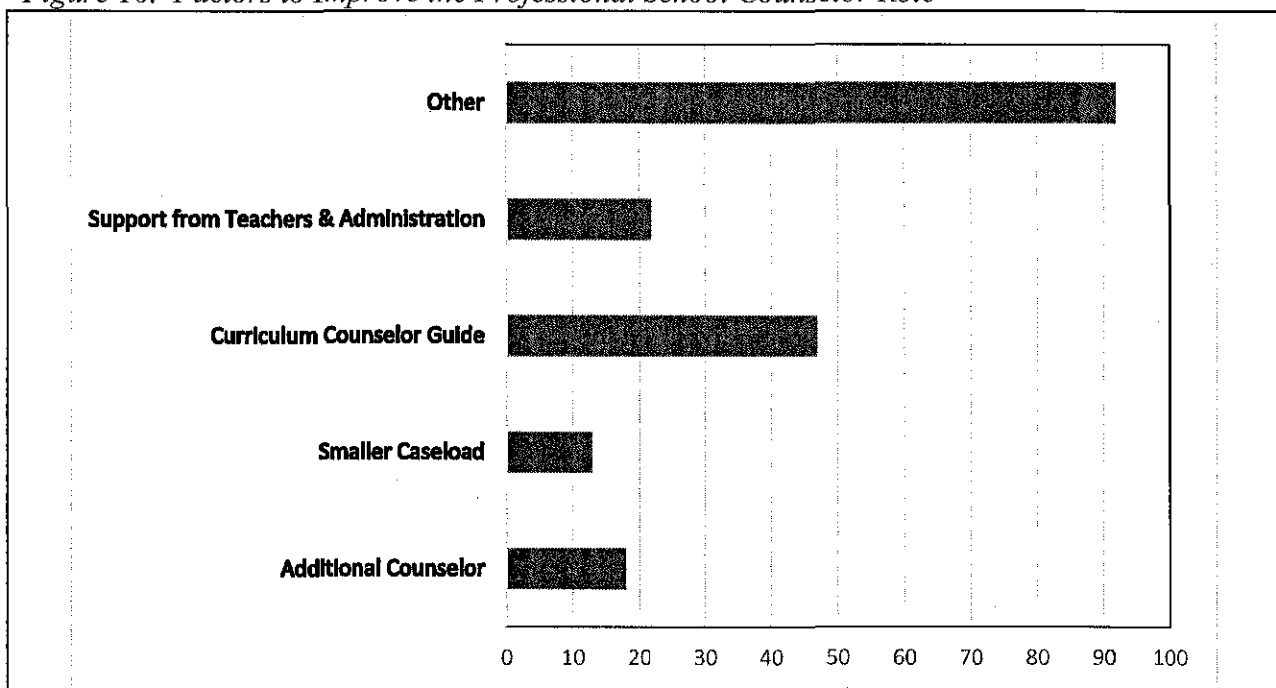


The last open-ended question the professional school counselors were asked was regarding their thoughts on how the role of a professional school counselor can improve while facilitating classroom guidance. Majority of the responses were coded as other which included; less test administering, clerical work, more resources needed, time utilized for non-student related tasks, and being afforded the opportunity to attend more trainings in this field (See Figure 16 below). When participants were asked, “What can help improve your role as a school counselor while facilitating classroom guidance? If an improve is not needed, please explain why” several responses included:

- “Continued training in various diverse areas.” – Response A
- “Smaller caseload. Currently have 560 freshmen.” – Response B

- “Curriculum resources; I pull from many websites and guides I have collected over the years but don’t have much time to ‘lesson plan’” – Response C
- “Less testing, less paperwork, lower counselor-to-student ratios (250:1 instead of 400:1), less clerical tasks upon counselors. The role of a counselor facilitating classroom guidance has been taken away and replaced with testing, clerical tasks, and more testing.” – Response D
- “Lesson plan ideas.” – Response E

Figure 16. Factors to Improve the Professional School Counselor Role



### Summary

The purpose of this needs assessment study was to examine how high school professional school counselors perceive the development of a classroom guidance curriculum and whether the professional school counselors see it as important. Through the lens of the high school professional school counselors who participated in this study, the researchers have determined

professional school counselors value their roles as a professional school counselor. The survey was geared towards professional school counselors at the high school level. The results clearly stated professional school counselors feel they need better access to tools for classroom guidance due to limited time. Furthermore, the data collected provided a wealth of feedback from the participants which indicated that the creation of lesson plans are an effective method to aid school counselors while facilitating classroom guidance. The survey data also signified that a website would be a useful tool for professional school counselors to access said lesson plans. Lastly, the data showed professional school counselors feel they are not afforded enough time to not only plan classroom guidance, but also to facilitate the counselor-led lessons.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

The study assisted the researches to gain a better understanding of the professional school counselor's role and purpose in the high school setting while facilitating classroom guidance and whether the professional school counselor seen it as important. The researchers also aimed to examine how high school professional school counselors perceive the development of a classroom guidance curriculum and whether the professional school counselor views it as important.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How does a classroom guidance curriculum improve the role of professional school counselors?
2. What is necessary to integrate an effective classroom guidance curriculum in a high school setting?

The researchers used a mixed method study using a Likert scale survey "needs assessment survey" along with three open-ended questions utilizing only descriptive inferential statistics. To entice participants, the researchers stated any participant who would like the results could inquire via email. The researchers sought public high school professional school counselors in the state of Florida. An email was directly sent to the high school professional school counselors who were asked to complete the survey. The researchers found 198 participants who met the criteria for the study. The duration of the study was one month in length including a following up email after three weeks from initial email sent. The data collected was conducted immediately after closing the survey.

The researchers examined and analyzed the participant's responses from the survey. Based on the results of this mixed method study the researchers have concluded there is a need

for classroom guidance lesson plans to support the professional school counselor's role and purpose in the high school setting. The researchers have created a website for professional school counselors to access lesson plans in the areas of academic, career, and social/emotional. The website is in a user-friendly format to afford those less technologically savvy individuals ease when accessing. It was clear from the participant's responses that their time as a professional school counselor is limited, therefore, the need for access to classroom guidance lesson plans.

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **Research Question 1. How does a classroom guidance curriculum improve the role of professional school counselors?**

In response to the first research question, the findings indicate a classroom guidance curriculum would improve the role of a professional school counselor in many ways, such as the following:

- Professional school counselors can reach more students at one time
- If lesson plans have already been created professional school counselors can facilitate with ease due to having limited time
- Better professional school counselor to student ratios (i.e. 250:1 per ASCA recommendations)

When asked if professional school counselors had access to a tool, 49.50% of the participants stated they do not have access to a tool to provide classroom guidance. The aforementioned lead the researchers to create the website containing lesson plans in the areas of academic, career, and social/emotional developments.

**Research Question 2. What is necessary to integrate an effective classroom guidance curriculum in a high school setting?**

In response to research question number two, the findings indicate to integrate an effective classroom guidance curriculum in a high school setting professional school counselors need better access to classroom guidance lesson plans. When participants were asked, “What can help improve your role as a school counselor while facilitating classroom guidance” several responses included a need for pre-made lesson plans such as the following:

- *“Curriculum resources; I pull from many websites and guides I have collected over the years but I don’t have much time to ‘lesson plan’.” – Response A*
- *“Lesson plans and PowerPoints would be very helpful.” – Response B*
- *“Free lesson plans, access to technology.” – Response C*

Additionally, when a professional school counselor reaches more students, has lesson plans already created, and a better professional school counselor to student ratio, the professional school counselor can integrate an effective classroom guidance curriculum.

**Recommendations for Research**

Plans for the future of the website will include a full library of classroom guidance lessons in the areas of academic, career, and social/emotional, as well as small group activities and school counseling resources. With respect to potential exploration, the researchers recommend a follow up survey being sent to the same high school professional school counselors in Florida regarding the website and whether the website is useful or not. Future research is also needed due to the area of classroom guidance having limited amount of literature currently published.

**Summary**

The results from the study showed professional school counselor's role in the high school setting would be improved if they had better access to classroom guidance tools; such as, a website. The results showed the participants explained their time during the school day is limited, therefore, the researchers conclude that there is a great need for a website with lesson plans. A comprehensive curriculum and website will give access to professional school counselors when they facilitate classroom guidance. "High school counseling programs are essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set informed career goals and realize their full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community" (ASCA, 2017).



## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Email example with Lynn's IRB approval letter to the Florida Department of Education Bureau of PK-20 Education Reporting and Accessibility Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurement PERA Data Team requesting the email addresses for all public secondary professional school counselors to peradatarequests@fldoe.org.

**Records Request for Email Addresses to FLDOE**

Recipients

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Records Request for Email Addresses to FLDOE

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Good Afternoon,

We are doctoral students at Lynn University, in Boca Raton, Florida. We would like to survey all secondary school counselors in the state of Florida. Our study has been approved by Lynn University IRB and we have attached a copy of our letter to this email.

We would like to request email addresses for all secondary school counselors.

We hope you can help us and we thank you in advanced.

Sincerely,  
Ashley Rizzi and Samantha Vanderpool

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APPENDIX B: Email example that was sent to all public secondary professional school counselors.

**Email Request to High School Professional School Counselors** \_ ↗ ✕

Recipients

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Email Request to High School Professional School Counselors

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Hello Fellow Professional School Counselors,

We are doctoral candidates at Lynn University writing to invite you to participate in a research study investigating how high school professional school counselors perceive the development of a classroom guidance curriculum and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors. This study has been approved by the Lynn University IRB. Attached you will find the Lynn IRB approval letter. The participants' identities will be anonymous and the survey should take no more than 10-15 minutes of your time.

Follow this link to the survey:

[Take the Survey](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FHWG8RY>

We will gladly respond to any questions or concerns you may have about participating in the study. Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,  
Ashley Rizzi and Samantha Vanderpool

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APPENDIX C: Follow up email example sent to all secondary professional school counselors

Follow Up: Complete This Survey for a Doctoral Research Study

Recipients

Follow Up: Complete This Survey for a Doctoral Research Study

Dear Fellow Professional School Counselors,

This is a friendly reminder that you were invited to participate in a research study investigating how high school professional school counselors perceive the development of a classroom guidance curriculum and whether it is seen as important by professional school counselors.

If you have already completed the online survey, we sincerely thank you and you may disregard this reminder email.

If you have not yet completed the online survey, please complete the survey by simply following this link to the survey website: [Take the Survey](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FHWG8RY>

We will gladly respond to any questions you may have about participating in the study.

Thank you for your help with this research project!

Sincerely,  
Ashley Rizzi and Samantha Vanderpool

Rich text editor toolbar with options for font (Sans Serif), size, bold, italic, underline, link, list, and other formatting tools.

Rich text editor toolbar with options for Send, undo, redo, link, unlink, and other actions.

## APPENDIX D: Copy of the informed consent example

### INFORMED CONSENT

#### Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this research is to investigate high school professional school counselors and their perceptions of their role and purpose in a school setting when facilitating classroom guidance.

#### Specific Procedures:

Your participation in this study will assist in learning more about the knowledge of professional school counselor's roles and purpose and insight on classroom guidance. You will be asked to answer 16 questions about your opinions regarding school counseling.

#### Duration of Participation and Compensation:

The total duration of your participation should be no longer than 15 - 20 minutes. There will be no compensation for participation.

#### Risks:

This online survey is strictly voluntary and no penalty will be imposed for non-participation. There are minimal risks in participating in the survey. However, if you feel uncomfortable or anxious at any time, you may press the "X" button in the upper right-hand corner of the survey and exit out of the survey.

#### Benefits:

There are no benefits for answering the survey questions, however, pre-service and practicing professional school counselors may enjoy sharing their knowledge, expertise, and assist in increasing the knowledge base in the area of school counseling.

#### Confidentiality:

This survey is strictly anonymous and there is no identifying information. If you email the researchers requesting the results, your survey will continue to remain anonymous. No IP addresses will be kept or known to the researchers. Your answers to questions will be stored for three years on a password protected computer and after that time will be deleted. This project's research records may be reviewed by the departments at Lynn University responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

#### Contact Information:

If you have any questions about the research project you may contact Ashley Rizzi (email [REDACTED]) or Samantha Vanderpool (email: [REDACTED]). For any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call Dr. Robert Reich, Chair of the Lynn University Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects, at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

#### Documentation of Informed Consent:

I have had an opportunity to read the consent form and have the research study explained. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the research project and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above.

By clicking "OK" I am consenting to participate in the survey.

APPENDIX E: Copy of the survey sent to the secondary professional school counselors via Survey Monkey©

**An Investigation on the Perceptions High School Professional School Counselors**

1. What are your educational credentials? i.e. B.S in ESE, Masters in English

2. What level of school are you a professional school counselor?

Elementary School

Middle School

High School

3. How long have you been a Professional School Counselor?

4. Have you ever taught a classroom guidance program?

Yes

No

5. School counselors facilitate one-on-one consultation on a regular basis (i.e. daily/weekly)

Strongly Agree                       Disagree

Agree                                       Strongly Disagree

Neutral

6. School counselors facilitate classroom guidance on a regular basis (i.e. weekly/monthly)

Strongly Agree                       Disagree

Agree                                       Strongly Disagree

Neutral

7. School counselors facilitate small group guidance on a regular basis (i.e. weekly/monthly)

Strongly Agree                       Disagree

Agree                                       Strongly Disagree

Neutral

8. As a school counselor there is a clear understanding of the needs of the students in your school setting

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. School counselors have a tool they can access when providing classroom guidance

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. School counselors are available to students when they need their help

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. In your school counseling department, there is a need additional one or more school counselor(s)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. In your school counseling department, the school counselors know what topics to cover when facilitating classroom guidance and small group(s)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13. Regarding your school counseling department, the school counselors know when to facilitate classroom guidance and small group(s)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. Define classroom guidance.

15. What content should be included in classroom guidance?

16. What can help improve your role as a school counselor while facilitating classroom guidance? If an improvement is not needed, please explain why.

Thank you for participating and making a difference in the field of school counseling. If you are interested in receiving our results please feel free to email us at [REDACTED].

By requesting a copy of the results, your answers to the survey will still remain anonymous and we will not share your identity and your information will remain confidential.

## APPENDIX F: Comprehensive Classroom Guidance Curriculum and Website

The researchers created comprehensive classroom guidance lesson plans and a website for professional school counselors. This tool can be accessed when facilitating classroom guidance to help professional school counselors reach more students at one time. The website is called, *Got Guidance?* The website was created via wix.com.

All of our lesson plans align with the ASCA National Model Standards and are a part of the three domains (Academic, Career, and Personal/Social). We created each lesson plan to be a part of our students educational setting and for professional school counselors to use when they give classroom guidance presentations. The link below is to the website:

<https://gotguidance.wixsite.com/schoolcounseling>



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