



Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium

***Why did the Consortium commission a study of the availability and responsibilities of counselors?***

In 2012 in response to budget cuts to public education the Consortium commissioned a study of the impact of the cuts on public schools. One key finding of that study was a reduction in the number of available counselors. When the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 5 in 2013, Texas foundations quickly connected the new importance of counseling to the previous session's cuts. This study conducted by the Ray Marshall Center at the University of Texas will:

- Ensure that policymakers have good information about the availability of counselors in Texas.
- Provide recommendations for policy change to improve access to trained and equipped counselors.

***What were the key findings of the research sponsored by the Consortium?***

- House Bill 5 increased the amount of work counselors are required to perform.
- The student-to-counselor ratio increased substantially across the state from 2011 to 2012, and even with district budget adjustments continues to be at higher levels than prior to 2012. The cost of reducing the student-to-counselor ratio to pre-recession levels is approximately \$66 million a year.
- There are more efficient means of providing counseling services to students, including the use of technology and building partnerships with higher education.
- Data and a means for collecting data for many outcomes mandated by House Bill 5 are not currently available to staff to help high school students transition into college or the workforce.

***What can the Texas Legislature do to immediately improve access to quality counseling?***

- Reduce time spent on administration of standardized tests to increase the time counselors have to perform the work they were hired to do.
- Provide counseling technology capacity building grants to allow high schools to partner with colleges, universities, and private vendors to develop and implement the technological tools to improve counseling efficiency.
- Enhance current data collection systems to ensure that House Bill 5 can be appropriately evaluated.
- Provide funding to school districts to increase the number of their counselors, to provide funding credit to colleges and universities who provide on-site college and career preparation services to non-dual credit high school students, and to take Advise Texas to scale.
- Specifically encourage school districts to create an 8th to 9th grade counselor position for each middle school to serve as a coordinator for graduating 8th grade students.
- Assist counselors to understand and use existing tools to evaluate local labor market demand.
- Encourage connections between local workforce development boards and high school campuses.