



FLORIDA
SCHOOL
COUNSELOR
ASSOCIATION

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SCHOOL COUNSELORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As our Florida legislative session begins, the state budget is in the forefront of everyone's considerations. Since the voters did not overturn the class size amendment, many school districts are struggling to meet this initiative and a host of other changes in store for teachers, other educators, and state employees. The reality is that class size reductions and other key mandates will remain unfunded and that more cuts, especially to education, may be inevitable.

Parents and students already know that their school counselor is student-centered: concerned with student achievement, personal success, and ensuring a safe and secure learning environment for all of our students. The school counseling curriculum advances student personal, social, academic, and career competency. School counseling programs are designed to reach every student at every level. School counselors strive to develop and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs according to Florida's Frameworks for Student Development Programs and the Standards developed by the American School Counselor Association National Model. School counselors engage all students with data-driven and evidence based interventions that are part of an overall accountability system. However, many counselors simply cannot deliver such programs when ratios top 1000 students per school counselor and non-counseling duties are added which do not focus directly on students. The national standard for student-to-school counselor ratios is 1:250. Most Florida schools double, triple, or even quadruple that number.

As a leader of the Florida School Counselor Association I represent the thousands of professional school counselors in our state. We are asking each of you, as well as our parents and families, to think about how our budget is being balanced and its impact on each and every student in the state if school counselors were not supported.

We know that underfunding school counseling programs just doesn't make sense. There are hundreds of examples of how Florida school counselors are making a difference by helping kids to become more college and career ready, advancing personal/emotional competency, and succeeding academically. For instance, school counselors from throughout the state such as Monica Bayer, Karalia Baldwin, Ana Maria Leon, Pamela D. Houle, Janelle Leatherman, Grace Wilhelm, and Barbara Barry—all award winning counselors -- have each developed

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comprehensive programs that make a difference for students and their families. How will the looming budget cuts by the Florida legislator make it even more difficult for them and for all Florida school counselors?

Support Florida's school counselors to do their jobs well. Help us to advocate so counselors can do the jobs that our students need them to do by ensuring that school counselors have the support for appropriate professional development; relevant job descriptions and evaluation standards; and reasonable case loads of students. This way, all students can have access to quality and appropriate guidance and counseling programs and professional school counselors.

Ask your school counselor about their counseling program and how they foster student success by closing the gaps in student achievement. Make sure that your school, district, and policy makers know that you want your student to be prepared to learn, to work with others, and to exit schools with the best learning and career development skills possible. Our students are our future employees, teachers, entrepreneurs, legislators, clergy, neighbors and caretakers. They deserve our best to, not only help us recover from our economic doldrums, but to create a more vital and vibrant economy for our future.

Visit the Florida School Counselor Association Advocacy page online at <http://www.flaschoolcounselor.org/legislation.htm> to help now.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Smith", with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Christopher B. Smith
President
Florida School Counselor Association