2015 Legislative Report Colorado School Counselor Corps Grant Program

Submitted to:
House Education Committee
Senate Education Committee
State Board of Education

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Executive Summary

The School Counselor Corps Grant Program (SCCGP) became part of the Colorado Revised Statute in 2008 (22-91-101 et. seq.) in order to increase the availability of effective school-based counseling within secondary schools. The purpose of SCCGP is to increase the graduation rate within the state and increase the percentage of students who are appropriately prepared for, apply to, and continue into postsecondary education. SCCGP allocates funding for a three-year grant cycle. This report describes SCCGP Cohort 2 grantees and their third year of outcomes for the July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014 reporting period.

SCCGP Cohort 2

SCCGP Cohort 2 consists of 23 grantees funding a total of 75 secondary schools. Eighteen grantees were districts and five were charter schools spanning diverse regions of the state. These schools served 44,489 students, 64 percent of whom qualified for free or reduced lunch on October 1, 2013. The students being served through SCCGP Cohort 2 also have highly diverse ethnic backgrounds with 68 percent identifying with an ethnic minority background as compared to 45 percent of students across the state. Additionally, these students experience a higher rate of mobility (22 percent) than the state (16 percent).

SCCGP Cohort 2, Year 3 Outcomes

Since 2009-10, the statewide on-time graduation rate for Colorado had increased an average of 1.5 percentage points annually until this past year, which realized an additional half percentage point increase with the Class of 2014, reaching a statewide rate of 77.3 percent. SCCGP Cohort 2 realized a similarly positive trend with a more profound rate of improvement than the state average over the course of the five years. SCCGP Cohort 2 has realized a 7.8 percentage point gain whereas the comparison group only 5.8 percentage points. While all groups are making improvements, SCCGP Cohort 2 is making greater strides at closing the achievement gap for graduation rates. Sixty-five percent of the Class of 2010 from SCCGP Cohort 2 graduated whereas 72.5 percent of the cohort's Class of 2014 graduated.

In 2008-09, prior to SCCGP funding, Cohort 2 schools had an annual dropout rate of 5.5 percentage points whereas the state's rate was 5 percentage points. At the end of three years of SCCGP funding, the Cohort 2 schools closed the achievement gap with an average dropout rate the same as the state average, 3.5 percentage points. The SCCGP Cohort 2 schools reduced the dropout rate twice as much as the state (a 2 percentage point reduction) resulting in 372 fewer dropouts over the three years. The comparison schools had less significant of a rate of change than both the SCCGP Cohort and the state, lowering from 5.2 to 3.9 percentage points.

During the third year of funding, 39 SCCGP Cohort 2 high schools engaged 1,742 students in Concurrent Enrollment, which was nearly a 74 percent increase from the first year. During this same period, the state realized a 30 percent increase, and the comparison group saw a 48 percent gain. SCCGP Cohort 2 schools significantly increased their students' participation in Concurrent Enrollment as compared to the state and the comparison group.

Postsecondary matriculation data for year one illuminated a significant increase in students enrolling in college after the first year of SCCGP funding from 31 percent to 44 percent. SCCGP Cohort 2 schools continued to close the gap between their rate and the state's steady rate of 57 percent by reaching 46 percent after year two. Data for year three were not yet available at the time of report submission.

SCCGP Cohort 2, Year 3 Grant Implementation

Overall, grantees are making progress toward their grant goals. In these cases, grantees are identifying strategies for improvement through the use of data and support that the SCCGP provides. Grantees benefited from direct access to a total of 3,600 hours of postsecondary workforce readiness (PWR) professional development, with more than 325 school professionals accessing an average of 11 hours of training on PWR through SCCGP. Additionally, SCCGP school counselors engaged in more than 10 hours of interactive professional development, focused on best practices in identifying achievement gaps and making data-driven decisions. These additional hours were funded directly by the SCCGP.

Pursuant to SB 09-256, all schools are required to have Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) for each student, grades ninth through twelfth. Grantees reported on their progress with this postsecondary workforce readiness strategy noting how the school counselors were instrumental in quality, comprehensive implementation.

SCCGP funding successfully reduced student-to-counselor ratio in cohort schools from 363:1 prior to funding to 229:1 in the third year, which is well below the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) recommended maximum rate (250:1). Grantees and schools report how critical SCCGP funding is to having the capacity to implement a quality school counseling program.

Overall, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools have partially implemented school counseling programs with an overall ASCA National Model implementation score of 3.2 (on a four point scale with 4 = fully implemented). The following are areas on which to focus continued improvement and support: School Counseling priorities on curriculum and education committees (2.6) and implementing regular needs assessments to guide programming (2.7). The attention that SCCGP program staff has given to professional development addressing analyzing data by demographic variable to identify interventions to close achievement gaps is beginning to show impact in self-reported implementation scores increasing from 2.7 to 3. Analyzing the individual components, schools are excelling at spending at least 80 percent of school counselors' time on activities that directly benefit students (3.6); organizing services so that all students are well served and have access to them (3.5); designing interventions to improve the school's ability to educate all students to high standards (3.4); and using student performance data to decide how to meet student needs (3.4).

Introduction

House Bill 08-1370 established the School Counselor Corps Grant Program. The resulting legislation enacted by the General Assembly is 22-91-101 et. seq., of the Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.). The State Board of Education promulgated rules for program implementation, including: the timeline for submitting applications to the Department, the form of the grant application, criteria for awarding grants, and any information to be included in the Department's program report. Effective September 30, 2008, these rules can be found at 22-91-101 et. seq. (C.R.S.).

Purpose of the Program

The purpose of the School Counselor Corps Grant Program (SCCGP) is to increase the availability of effective school-based counseling within secondary schools with a focus on postsecondary preparation. SCCGP was created to increase the graduation rate and increase the percentage of students who appropriately prepare for, apply to, and continue into postsecondary education. The role of school counselors has undergone revisions and changes, and today the emphasis is on college and career readiness and ensuring timely high school graduation. Among the reasons for this shift is that a high percentage of students either are not graduating on-time (within four years of entering ninth grade) or not graduating.[i] Timely monitoring, evaluating, and intervening are necessary measures to decrease the number of students who dropout and increase the number of students who graduate.[ii] SCCGP supports school counselors in implementing these types of activities.

Role of the School Counselor Corps Advisory Committee

The School Counselor Corps Advisory Committee assists the Department in providing ongoing support to the funded sites in the form of professional development, mentoring, site visits, and technical assistance. See Attachment A for a listing of School Counselor Corps Advisory Board members.

Description of Program for Reporting Period July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014

Grant Application Process

The Request for Proposal (RFP) was announced in the spring of 2011 prior to the State Legislature making final appropriations to the program in order for eligible education providers to have time to prepare application to the program. This allowed the funds to be maximized by beginning implementation at the start of the new school year. The available funding for the launch of the second SCCGP cohort in the 2011-2012 school year was $4,800,000, $4,320,000 for 2012-13, and $3,928,650 for 2013-14. The SCCGP design reduces funding by 10 percent annually over the course of three years in order to encourage grantees to systematize and sustain programming beyond the grant program.

SCCGP defined an eligible education provider as:
- A school district (on behalf of one or more secondary schools);
- A Board of Cooperative Services (BOCES);
- A charter school; or
- An Institute Charter School.

Priority was given to applicants that serve:
- Secondary schools at which the dropout rate exceeds the statewide average; and/or
- Secondary schools with a percentage of students who are eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch exceeding the statewide average.

Allowable activities included secondary school counselor salaries and benefits; postsecondary preparatory services; and professional development. The RFP included a rubric that detailed criteria that a proposal would be measured against and included sections on 1) a quality plan, 2) partnerships, 3) postsecondary activities, and 4) a budget narrative.
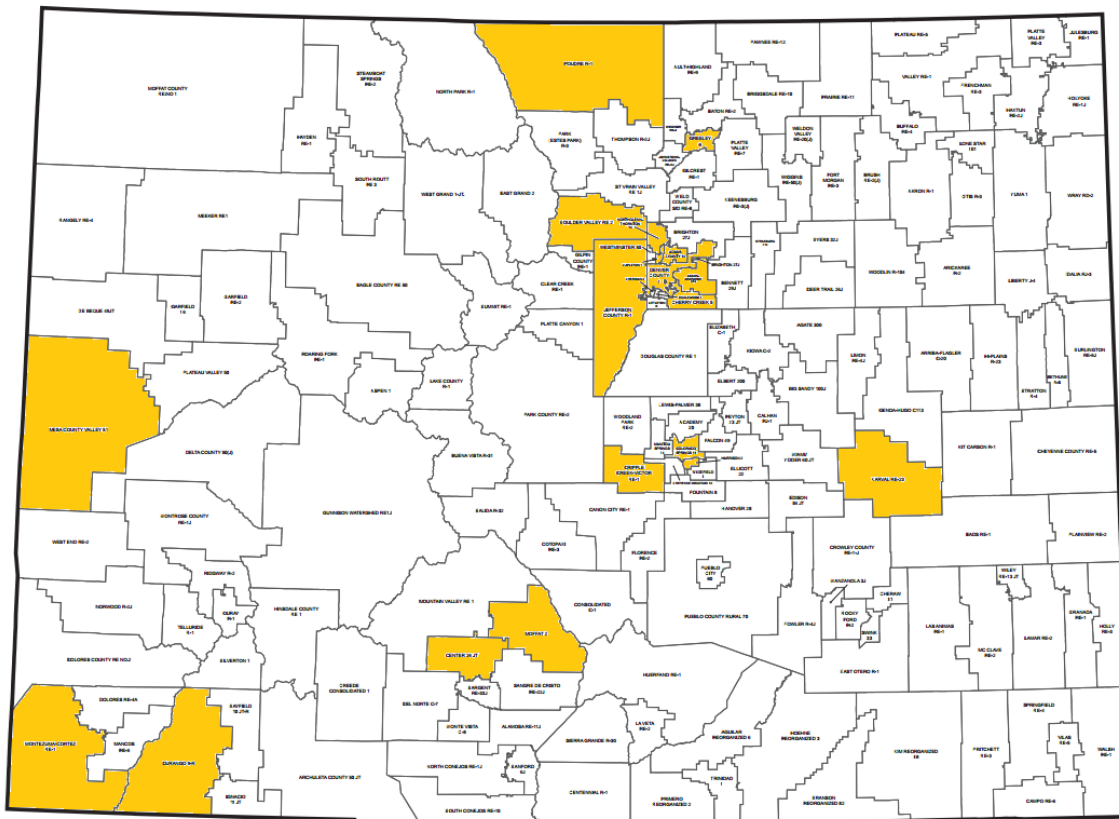
Description of Grantees

SCCGP Cohort 2 consists of 23 grantees. In the two initial years, 76 schools were funded. However, after the 2012-13 school year, Wasson High School in Colorado Springs District 11 closed. Eighteen grantees are districts and five are charter schools. SCCGP grantees represent a wide range of schools serving a diverse student population with regard to secondary school type, student count, mobility rates, geographic region, ethnicity, and free and/or reduced lunch qualified students.

Type of Secondary School: Thirty-three of the 75 SCCGP funded schools are high schools. An additional 12 serve both middle and high school grade levels. The remaining 30 are middle schools. Table 1, on page 9, outlines the grantees and the secondary grade levels served by the schools funded.[iii] Eleven of these schools are designated Alternative Education Campuses (AEC).

Geographic Location: As depicted in the map below, SCCGP Cohort 2 grantees are located across Colorado.

MAP 1: SCCGP Cohort 2 Grantees' Location

Colorado School District Map

MAP 2: SCCGP Participating Districts from 2008-2015

School Counselor Corps Grant Map
* shaded districts are current grantees
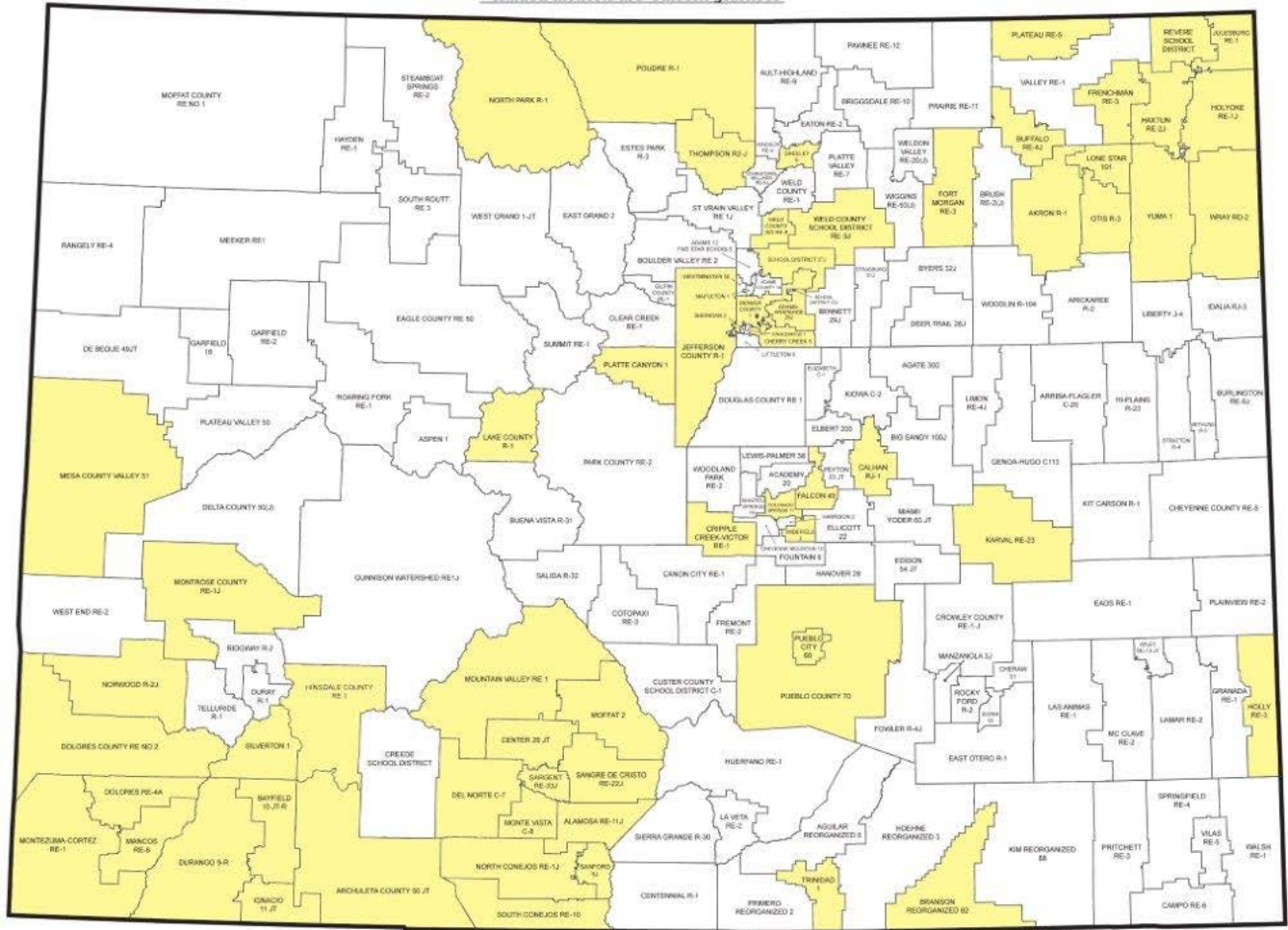
TABLE 1: SCCGP Cohort 2 Grantees and Types of Schools Funded

	High	Middle	Undivided Middle & High	Total
Districts				
Adams 12 Five Star Schools	3	0	0	3
Adams County 14	2	2	0	4
Adams-Arapahoe 28J	0	7	0	7
Boulder Valley RE 2	2	0	0	2
Center 26 JT	2	1	0	3
Cherry Creek 5	1	3	0	4
Colorado Springs 11	3	5	1	9
Cripple Creek-Victor RE 1	0	0	1	1
Denver County 1	4	3	3	10
Greeley 6	3	0	0	3
Harrison 2	2	5	0	7
Jefferson County R-1	4	0	0	4
Karval RE-23	0	0	2	2
Mapleton 1	1	0	1	2
Mesa County Valley 51	3	0	0	3
Moffat 2	0	0	1	1
Montezuma-Cortez Re-1	1	0	0	1
Poudre R-1	0	3	1	4
Charter Schools				
Ace Community Challenge School	0	0	1	1
Animas High School	1	0	0	1
Atlas Preparatory School	0	1	0	1
Colorado Springs Early Colleges	1	0	0	1
High Point Academy	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	33	30	12	75

Student Count and End of Year Pupil Membership: At the time of the official student count in October of 2013, the 75 SCCGP Cohort 2 schools had 44,489 students enrolled in grades 7-12. Despite one SCCGP funded school closing, nearly the same number of students was served through the grant. Over the course of the year, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools served 56,269 students grades 7-12 in 2013-14, which is also roughly the same as in the prior year. (Note: The majority of data described throughout the report utilizes End of Year pupil membership, because it takes into consideration the students who are transient during the course of the year and, therefore, provides a more accurate base count.)

Mobility: CDE defines student mobility rates as the unduplicated count of grade K-12 students who moved into or out of the school or district in a given year divided by the total number of students that were part of the same membership base at any time during the same year. In 2012-13, the calculation was changed to exclude students who changed districts during the summer, whereas in prior years only students who just changed schools within the same district were excluded. The following chart illustrates 2012-13 and 2013-14 mobility rates for SCCGP Cohort 2 as compared to the state for grades 7-12. This comparison illuminates that the SCCGP Cohort 2 population is highly mobile (22%) compared to the state (16%) and also suggests that SCCGP Cohort 2 schools are showing signs of retaining more of their students, which could be in part due to this grant program.

CHART 1: SCCGP Cohort 2 Mobility Rates, 2012-13 & 2013-14
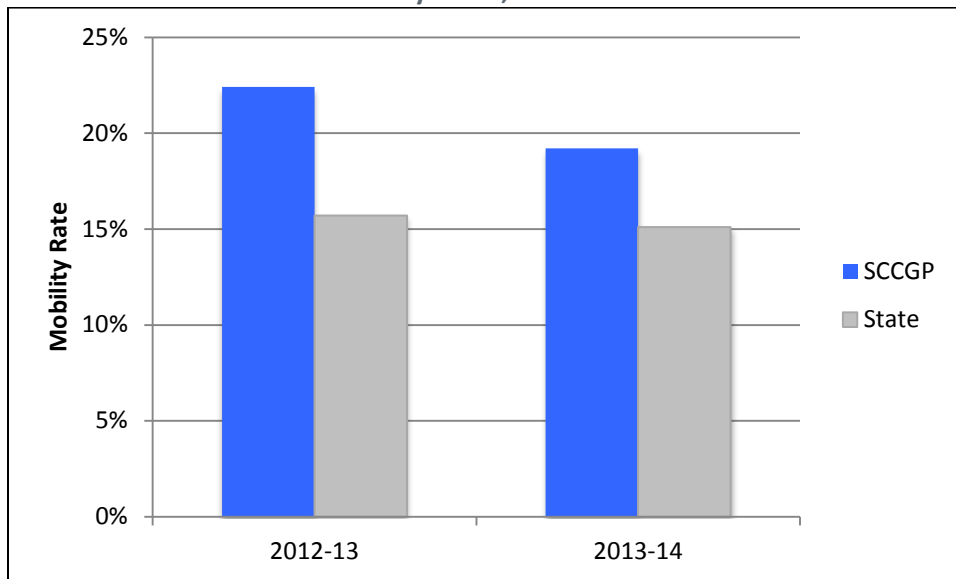
Ethnicity: The students being served through SCCGP Cohort 2 have highly diverse ethnic backgrounds. 68 percent of SCCGP Cohort 2 students identify with an ethnic minority background as compared to 45 percent of students across the state. The following chart depicts the breakdown of students' ethnicities in SCCGP funded schools for 2013-14. Little to no change was observed from prior years. (Note: only 159 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students were served in this cohort; therefore, their representation of less than 1 percent was too small to include in the chart.)

CHART 2: Students' Ethnicity in SCCGP Cohort 2 Schools, 2013-14

- Am. Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- White
- Two or More Races
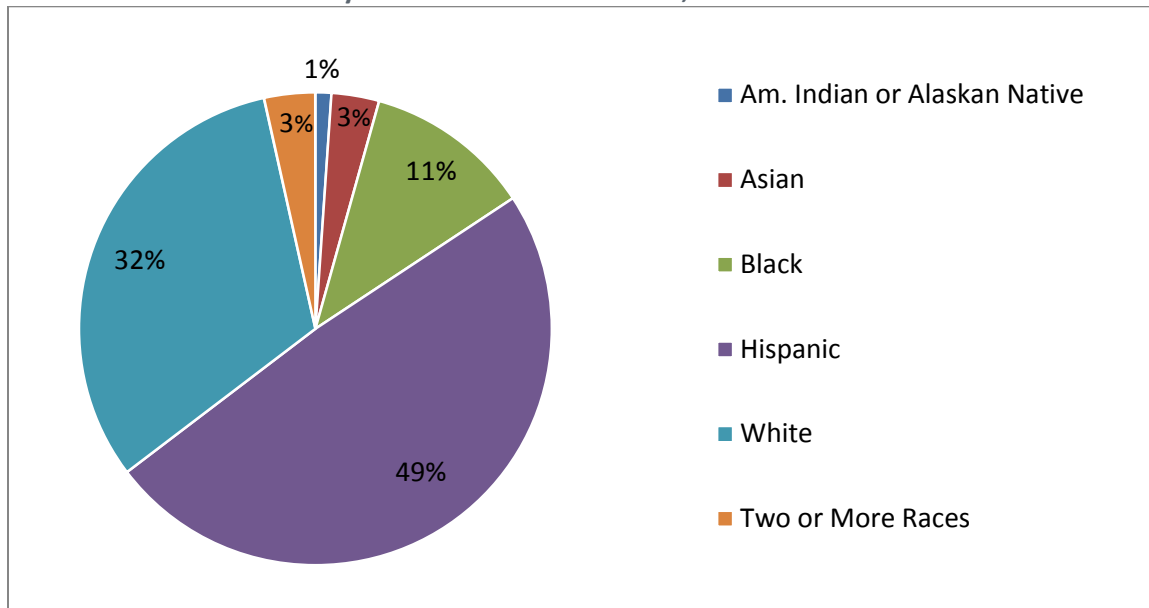
Free or Reduced Lunch: The number of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch is the standard proxy for students' socioeconomic status and, as such, one of SCCGP's eligibility requirements is that the schools serve a high percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. This year's report utilizes October count data as some of the district's End of Year data for free or reduced lunch contained systemic errors. As of October 1, 2013, 64 percent of the 44,489 students served in SCCGP funded schools qualified for free or reduced lunch. For comparison, 38 percent of all Colorado students in grades 7-12 qualified for free or reduced lunch. Thus, SCCGP continues to successfully target students who are economically disadvantaged.

TABLE 2: SCCGP Cohort 2 Percentage of Students Grades 7-12 Qualifying for Free or Reduced Lunch, 2013-14 (Based on October 1, 2013 Pupil Count)

	Students Grade 7-12 Qualifying for Free or Reduced Lunch	Students Grades 7-12	Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced Lunch
SCCGP Cohort 2	28,419	44,489	63.9%
State	144,949	378,008	38.4%

Data Collection & Analysis

A variety of data sources were utilized for this report. Wherever possible, third-party validated data sources were used as a primary source, such as the National Student Clearinghouse or U.S. Department of Education, as these data have been verified as accurate by a third party entity. When this type of data were unavailable, state-collected data were utilized. Additionally, grantees and schools submitted a year-end annual report during the spring semester to illuminate program implementation for year three. In addition to examining trends and state comparisons where possible, a quasi-experimental design was utilized with a comparison group comprising schools that are similar to SCCGP Cohort 2 funded schools. (For more analysis details, See Attachment B.)

Comparison Group

As indicated by demographic data outlined in the previous section, SCCGP schools are a unique subset within the state. Therefore, a comparison group of schools was pulled from the list of schools that were eligible for funding based on their 2008-09 dropout rate or percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. (Comparing the cohort schools to all schools shows useful data but does not compare these schools to similar schools in terms of demographics or history of outcomes.) Schools that were funded by SCCGP in Cohort 1 were excluded, which limited the number of large high schools available for comparison. Schools were selected based upon 2008-09 data on their dropout rate, percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, grade levels served, student body size, and school type (e.g. Alternative Education Campus designation, charter). A number of schools had closed or reconfigured since their eligibility was determined in 2008-09 and, therefore, were eliminated from the final comparison group. The following table describes the composition of SCCGP Cohort 2, its comparison group, and the state on key variables from 2008-09 when eligibility was determined.

TABLE 3: SCCGP Cohort 2 and Comparison Group Grades 7-12 Composition, 2008-09*

	SCCGP Cohort 2	Comparison Group	State Totals
Total Number of Schools	76	63	725
Total Pupil Count (EOY Membership)	62,012	43,015	416,953
Grades 9-12 Pupil Count	45,165	32,780	282,657
Grades 7-8 Pupil Count	16,847	10,235	134,296
Students in grades 9-12	73%	76%	68%
Students in grades 7-8	27%	24%	32%
Students in AEC schools**	4.1%	3.5%	4.7%
Students Econ. Disadvantaged	47.1%	55.3%	29.8%
9th-12th Grade Dropout Rate	5.5%	5.3%	5%
7th-8th Grade Dropout Rate	1.2%	1%	0.7%

*Baseline data prior to grant funding
**AEC designation is an estimate as schools designations are non-permanent.

This comparison group is utilized throughout the report when analyzing third-party validated and state-collected data. The only significant change to the comparison group was that at the end of 2012-13, Fairview K-8 closed.

SCCGP Cohort 2, Year 3 Outcomes

Postsecondary Workforce Readiness (PWR) was defined and jointly adopted by the State Board of Education and Colorado Commission of Higher Education in June of 2009. PWR describes "the knowledge, skills, and behaviors essential for high school graduates to be prepared to enter college and the workforce and to compete in the global economy including content knowledge, learning and behavior skills." Districts operationalize PWR in a variety of ways, including students having the required life skills for success after high school, GPAs, on-track to on-time graduation, having work experience and/or college credit. This report highlights third-year outcomes and baseline data for the following indicators:

- Graduation rate
- Dropout rate
- Attendance rate
- Concurrent enrollment participation
- Free Applications for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion
- Postsecondary matriculation

Graduation Rates

SCCGP aims to increase grantees' on-time graduation rate. This analysis begins with the Class of 2010 when the four-year formula was adopted so that a trend can be established. The revised formula defines "on time" as only those students who graduate from high school four years after transitioning from eighth grade. Since the revised definition has been in place, the graduation rates for Colorado had increased 1.5 percentage points annually until this past year which only realized a 0.4 percentage point increase with the Class of 2014, reaching a statewide rate of 77.3 percent. SCCGP Cohort 2 realized a similarly positive trend with a more profound rate of improvement than the state average over the course of the five years. The comparison group started out with a similar rate to SCCGP Cohort 2; however, SCCGP Cohort 2 has realized a 7.8 percentage point gain over the four years whereas the comparison group gained only a 5.8 percentage points. While all groups are making improvements, SCCGP Cohort 2 is making greater strides at closing the achievement gap. The following chart displays these trends.

**CHART 3: On-time Graduation Rates for SCCGP Cohort 2 (Classes 2010 – 2014)**
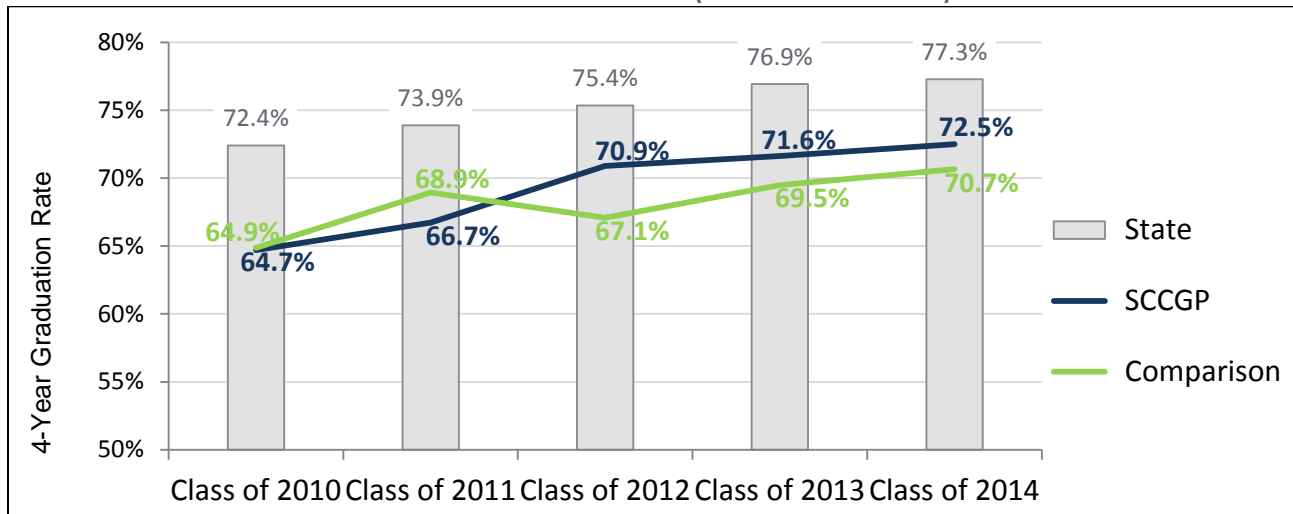
Note: SCCGP funds began the 2011-12 academic year.

Dropout Rates

Dropout rate analysis begins with the 2008-09 school year as these data were part of the eligibility criteria. Over the five school years within this analysis, the statewide dropout rate improved, or declined, from 5 percent to 3.5 percent for grades 9-12. In 2008-09, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools had a 5.5 percent dropout rate. After three years of funding SCCGP Cohort 2, the SCCGP Cohort achieved the same dropout rate as the state, 3.5 percent. The comparison group's rate remained higher at 3.9 percent despite having started out slightly lower than SCCGP Cohort 2. In three years, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools have closed the achievement gap with respect to their dropout rates as compared to the state.

CHART 4: Grades 9-12 Dropout Rates for SCCGP Cohort 2 (2008-09 through 2013-14)
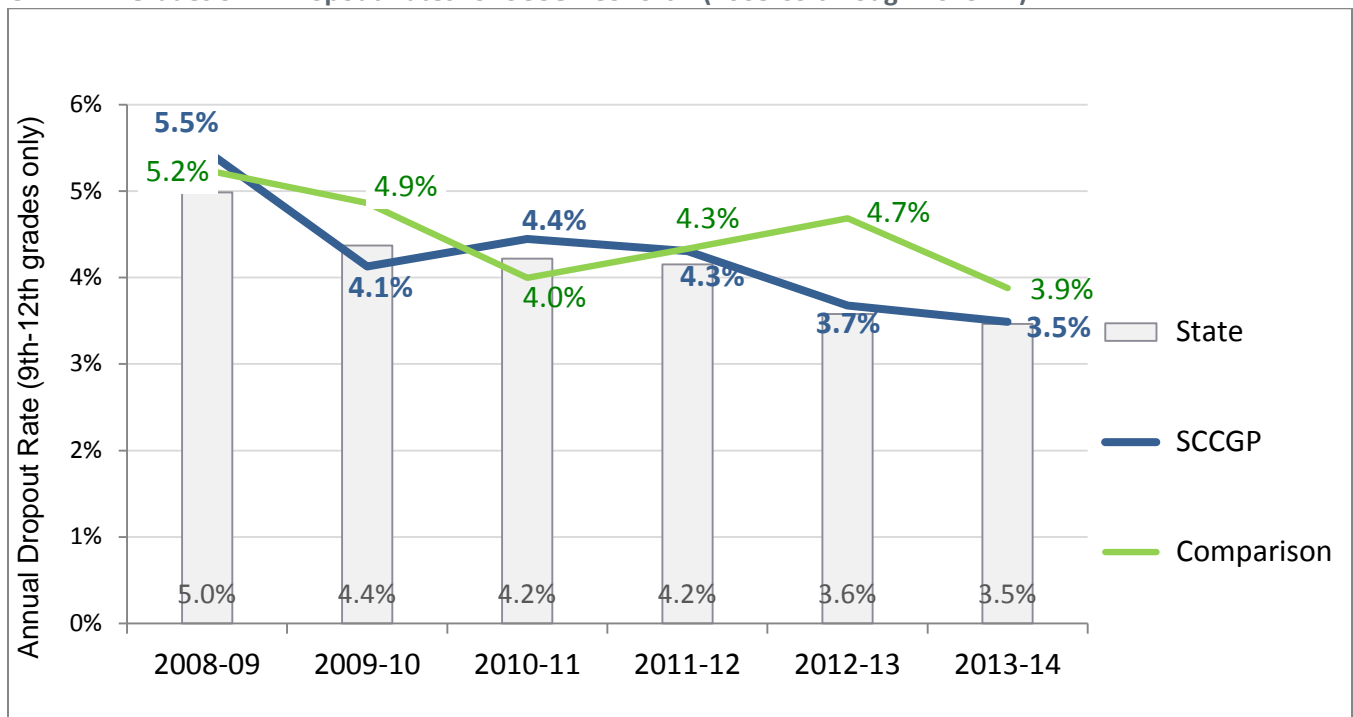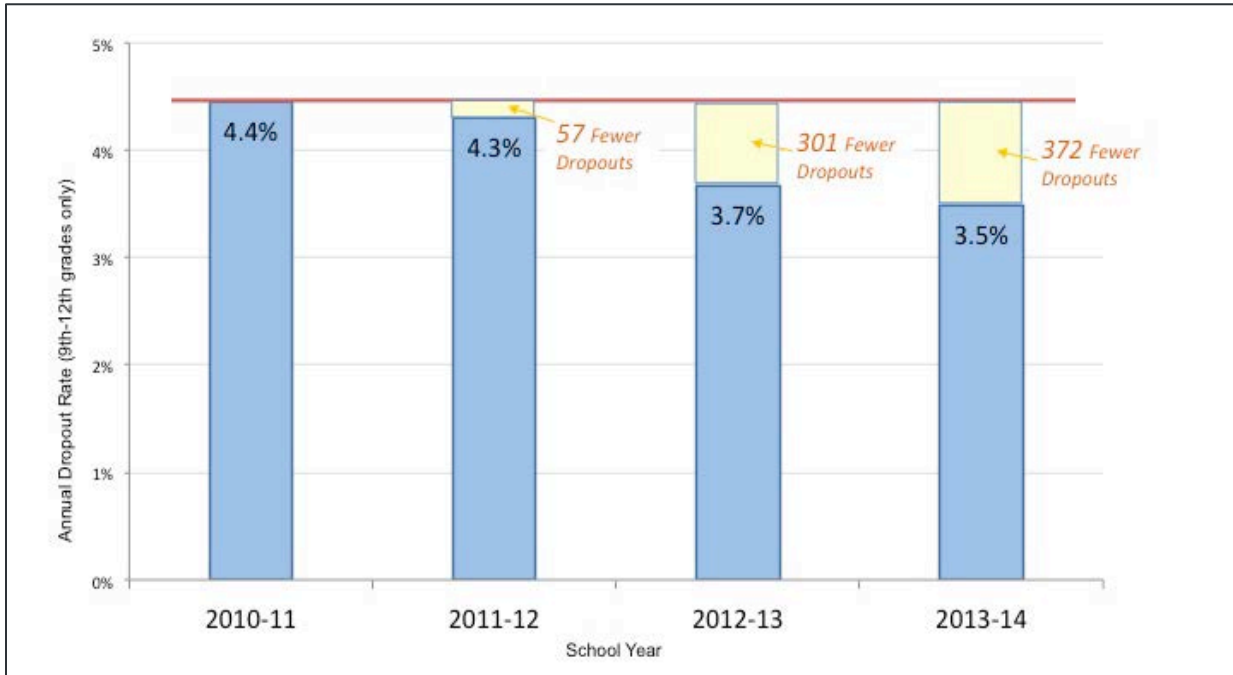

Note: SCCGP funds began the 2011-12 academic year.

The SCCGP Cohort 2 dropout rate reduction retained an additional 371 dropouts assuming that the Cohort's rate remained the same as in 2010-11, prior to funding.

CHART 5: SCCGP Cohort 2 Dropouts Retained Over the First Three Years of Funding

Attendance Rates

Graduation rates do not apply to middle schools and dropout rates at the middle school level are below one percent making meaningful change difficult to observe. Therefore, attendance rates are utilized as an additional indicator or proxy for school connectedness and future completion at the middle school level. All groups followed a similar trend in attendance in the past few years; and although slightly lower than the state average, SCCGP Cohort 2 maintains a slightly higher attendance rate than the comparison group.

CHART 6: Aggregated Attendance Rates for SCCGP Cohort 2, Middle Schools (2009-10 through 2013-14)
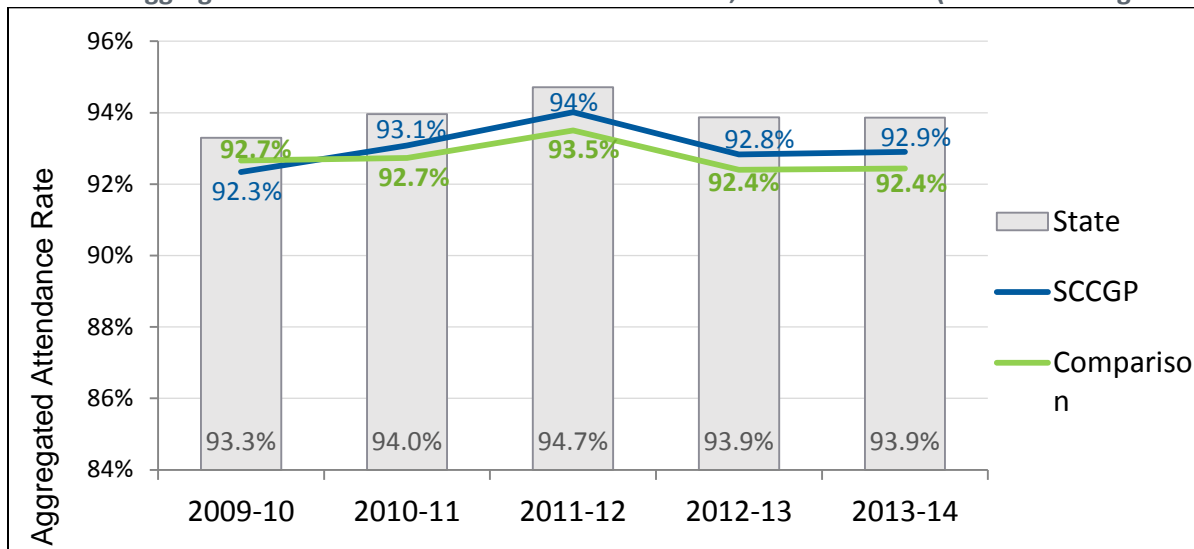
Note: SCCGP funds began the 2011-12 academic year.

Concurrent Enrollment

The Colorado Department of Higher Education in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education authors an annual report on dual or concurrent enrollment beginning in 2012, which provides high school students the opportunity to enroll in college courses.[iv] "Concurrent Enrollment" is the "simultaneous enrollment of a qualified student in a local education provider and in one or more postsecondary courses, which may include an academic or career and technical education course, at an institution of higher education" as detailed in 22-35-103 C.R.S. The report presents the districts, high schools, and number of unique students engaging in Concurrent Enrollment, ASCENT, and remedial courses as reported by the institutions of higher education. In 2011-12, Colorado higher education institutions worked with 304 high schools to serve 14,016 students across Colorado. In 2012-13, the program expanded to include 365 high schools serving 18,231 students; and in 2013-14, the program saw gains to 382 schools serving 19,306 students. This growth is substantial; however, SCCGP Cohort 2 increased participation at significantly higher rates than the state.

Impact is most observable when examining the changes in participation over the course of the grant thus far. The state experienced a 26 percent increase in high school participation with a 30 percent increase in student participation in Concurrent Enrollment. In comparison, SCCGP Cohort 2 affected a 62.5 percent increase in high school participation and a 74 percent increase in student participation. The comparison group did not realize the same rates of gain that the SCCGP funded schools did. The following two tables depict these impacts.

Table 4: SCCGP Cohort 2 Schools Participating in Concurrent Enrollment (2011-12 through 2013-14)

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Percent Change
SCCGP Cohort 2	24	35	39	62.5%
Comparison	24	34	31	29%
State	304	365	382	26%

Table 5: SCCGP Cohort 2 Schools' Students Participating in Concurrent Enrollment (2011-12 through 2013-14)

|	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Percent Change
SCCGP Cohort 2	1,000	1,531	1,742	74%
Comparison	1,694	2,258	2,502	48%
State	14,016	18,231	19,306	30%

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Nationally, research suggests that 90 percent of high school graduates who complete the FAFSA during their senior year of high school enroll in college within 12 months.[v] Thus, a best practice for school counselors is to support students in completing this PWR benchmark. The Colorado Department of Higher Education recently began collecting, validating, and reporting school-level data on seniors completing FAFSAs (see https://fafsa.highered.colorado.gov). Note that FAFSA labels these data in terms of the college freshman class. The following analysis will maintain the referencing used throughout this report with the year reflecting the high school class; therefore, the FAFSA 2012-13 data is applicable to the graduating class of 2012 and referenced here as 2011-12 from the perspective of SCCGP grantees.

Prior to funding in 2011, SCCGP Cohort 2 and comparison schools were one percentage point below the state's rate for FAFSA completion. After the first year of funding, all groups increased their rate of completions; however, the state's increase was four percentage points more than SCCGP Cohort 2 and comparison schools. In the second year of funding, all groups experienced a decrease in completions; however, SCCGP funded schools' completions fell slightly less than the state's whereas the comparison group's rate returned to its 2011 rate. Rates continued to fall for all groups in this last year with SCCGP Cohort 2 schools falling back to its pre-funding rate. Further exploration is warranted to understand why grantees' FAFSA completion rates did not maintain initial gains. The following graph depicts these trends.

Chart 7: SCCGP Cohort 2, High School Seniors' FAFSA Completion Rates (2010-11 through 2013-14)
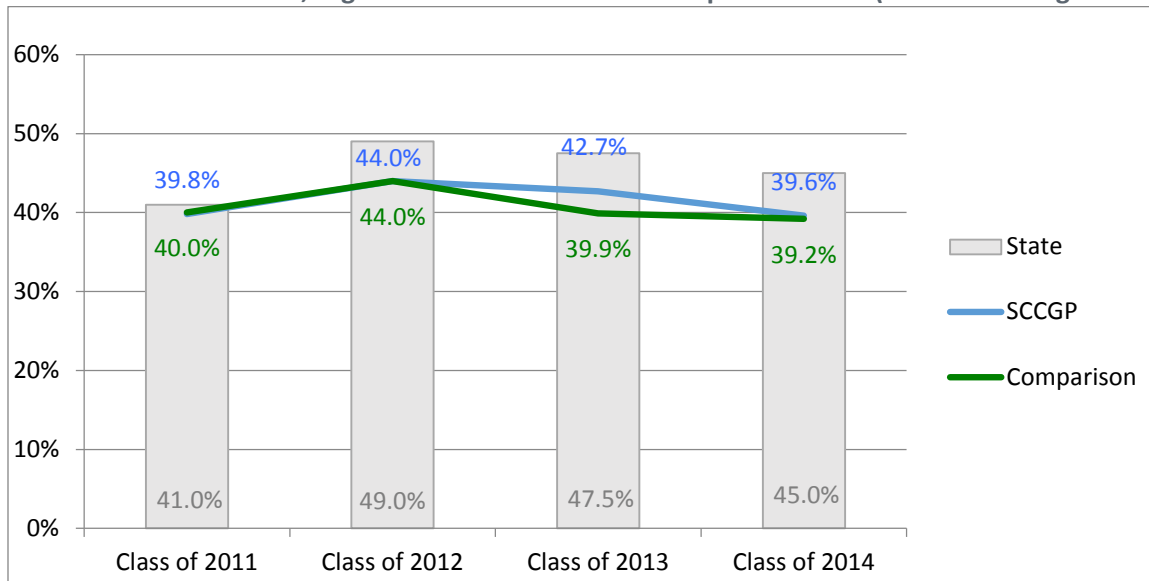
Note: SCCGP funds began the 2011-12 academic year.

Postsecondary Matriculation

Enrollment data for the Class of 2014 was not available for this report. Therefore, the following analysis contains data for Class of 2011 as baseline and Class of 2012 and 2013 for the first two years of SCCGP Cohort 2 outcomes. SCCGP Cohort 2 and comparison schools increased their matriculation rates by approximately 13 percentage points from 2011 to 2012; and in 2013, the SCCGP Cohort 2 schools continued to increase their percentage of students matriculating, reaching 46 percent. In contrast, the state's rate remained steady at 57 percent over the three years. The following chart illustrates these emerging trends.

CHART 8: SCCGP Cohort 2 Year Two Matriculation Outcomes, 2010-11 to 2012-13
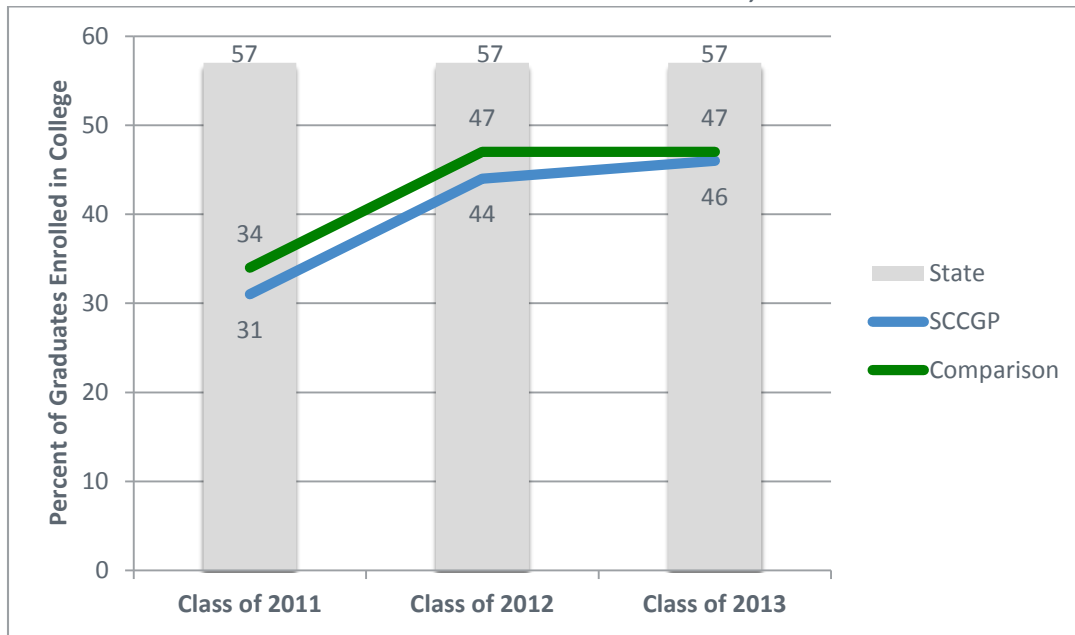
SCCGP Cohort 2, Year 3 Grant Implementation

A refined reporting system was initiated in 2012-13 and revised in 2013-14 to assess grantee and schools' grant goals, professional development, ICAP implementation, student-to-counselor ratios, ASCA National Model implementation, student participation in career and technical education as well as college visits. All 23 grantees submitted grant reports. Of the 75 schools that were identified by grantees as part of their application, 61 schools submitted a school-level grant report. The following analysis provides an assessment of program implementation and areas for program improvement.

Grantee Progress toward Reaching Their Goals

Grantees identify their own goals. For more than 70 percent of their goals, grantees reported making progress, meeting, or exceeding their performance measures. The goals that grantees reported success with most commonly included ICAP completion, improved postsecondary planning culture and capacity, and comprehensive school counselor program implementation. Many grantees explained their success solely by their ability to hire licensed school counselors through this grant program.

The primary areas where self-identified goals were not met included increased school/district performance, improving retention and decreasing dropout rates (often because these data were not available due to the reporting schedule), and getting/staying on track for graduation. Explanations for not meeting identified goals: some schools within the same district meeting the goal while others not; systems and leadership changes negatively impacting implementation; and making aspirational as opposed to attainable goals. Grantees that did not realize the impact they planned for often suggested program improvements or adjustments to their goals that reflected system changes, such as standards-based grading and policies that prohibit retention. One grantee blamed students' apathy and procrastination for their program's lack of results, which indicates a need for examining biases and root cause analysis more thoroughly in program planning. Conversely, one grantee explained that their needs assessment identified a lack of after-school opportunities was leading to a high rate of students abusing drugs, and that this research has spawned a community-wide effort to bring in some after-school programs for secondary students.

Professional Development

School Counselor Corps Grant recipients indicated that secondary school counselors and team members attended 3,600 hours of postsecondary workforce readiness professional development, reaching more than 325 school professionals with more than 11 hours professional development on average. This was almost half of what grantees accessed last year, which may reflect where program costs were trimmed due to the 10 percent annual decrease in funding. The School Counselor Corps Program provided a similar amount of the professional development (500 hours) as in past years, so that on average each counselor received more than 10 hours of grant-specific professional development. The following list provides examples of types of additional professional development opportunities the grantees were able to access:

- American/Colorado School Counselor Association Conference(s);
- National Association of College Admissions Counseling National Conference;
- ACT workshop/conference;
- Colorado Council on High School and College Relations Annual Conference;
- Colorado Statewide Pre-Collegiate Conference; and
- Naviance Training.

Grantees shared the value of these professional development opportunities on their work. The following quotations illustrate the impact that these trainings had on district and school practices:

> *"This mid-year professional development opportunity provided valuable discussion around strengths and weaknesses of the integration of PWR into classrooms. The most significant impact of this professional developmental offering was the voicing of a united need for a more concrete delivery system, which led to discussion on reinstituting advising structures."*

> *"District counselors used the data provided by the district and CDE to create building-specific SMART goals. Counselors aligned tools (ICAP, Naviance, and the ASCA standards) in their school-based practice. The support of the SCCGP and (district) funds for the Counselor Corps facilitated the alignment of counseling practices across middle schools."*

> *"One of our goals is to improve ACT performance. We used the information to revise the ACT prep program and to work with our content teachers through PLCs in an effort to integrate ACT prep and targeted intervention based on ACT competencies."*

Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) Implementation

ICAP is a multi-year process that intentionally guides students and families in the exploration of career, academic and postsecondary opportunities. With the support of adults, students develop the awareness, knowledge, attitudes and skills to create their own meaningful and PoWeRful pathways to be career and college ready. The ICAP is used to help establish personalized academic and career goals, explore postsecondary career and educational opportunities, align coursework and curriculum, apply to postsecondary institutions, secure financial aid, and ultimately enter the workforce following college graduation. The State Board of Education promulgated rules for ICAPs pursuant to SB 09-256:

> *Effective September 30, 2011, each school counselor or school administrator shall ensure that every student in grades nine through twelve and their parents or legal guardians has access to and assistance in the development of an ICAP (1 CCR 301-81, 2.02 (1)(d)).*

Grantees' comments illustrate how the grant supported them in meeting this requirement with high quality:

> *The counselors at the two middle schools (salaries paid through this grant) begin the ICAP process with students in the middle school so that students arrive at the high school with a plan of their course of study that matches their career and educational goals.*

> *ICAP implementation underwent significant evaluation and change over the past two school years to ensure that process reflected the culture, needs, and unique challenges of our school. The 2013-2014 school year saw the implementation of these changes and…the successful integration of ICAP into the curriculum through class plans and the reworking of our senior portfolio…. School-wide implementation of ICAPs occurred on individual and classroom levels during the 2013-2014 school year. Many classroom instructors included elements of ICAP, such as career exploration, interest inventories, job shadows, college tours, and college applications and financial aid support into their class curriculum. We continue to identify areas for improvement to ensure that necessary components of ICAP are completed by all students every year. In addition, we are revising our data collection and tracking system to better capture ICAP complete rates.*

Student-to-Counselor Ratio

The grant played a significant role in reducing the student-to-counselor ratio in funded schools to meet the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) recommendation of 250:1. ASCA recommends this ratio so that professional school counselors can focus their skills, time, and energy on direct and indirect services to students at least 80 percent of their time. This comprehensive school counseling program model:

- ensures equitable access to a rigorous education for all students;
- identifies the knowledge and skills all students will acquire as a result of the K-12 comprehensive school counseling program;
- is delivered to all students in a systematic fashion;
- is based on data-driven decision making; and
- is provided by a state-credentialed, licensed professional school counselor.

Benefits of lower student-to-counselor ratios and implementing the comprehensive counseling program include higher standardized test scores, higher graduation rates, and higher retention rates.[vi]

Out of the 75 funded schools for 2013-14, 62 reported their student-to-counselor ratios for this funding cycle. SCCGP funding is sustaining a reduced student-to-counselor ratio by on average at least 100 students per counselor per year. Prior to SCCGP funding, the schools' average ratio was 363:1; then the first year of funding reduced the average ratio to 261:1, and then 232:1 in the second year, which was under ASCA's recommended maximum rate. This third year maintained an average ratio below ASCA's recommendation at 229:1. The high school ratio dropped significantly from 239 students to 189 students per counselor, while the reduction in the middle school ratio crept slightly up above the recommendation this year. However, the middle school ratio is still significantly better than it was prior to SCCGP funding and even from the first year of funding. This indicates that grantees might be prioritizing high schools with their SCCGP staffing resources. The following table illustrates the significant reduction in school counselor caseloads that SCCGP afforded funded schools.

Table 6: Student-to-Counselor Ratios Prior to and During the Three Years of SCCGP Cohort 2 Funding

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
High Schools	311:1	239:1	239:1	189:1
Middle Schools	438:1	303:1	237:1	282:1
Undivided Middle & High Schools	344:1	183:1	182:1	216:1
TOTAL	363:1	261:1	232:1	229:1

Note: SCCGP funds began the 2011-12 academic year.

Throughout the grant reports, grantees noted that improved student-to-counselor ratios afforded schools additional opportunities to develop systems and supports that enable them to provide more comprehensive, quality, and/or individualized postsecondary readiness support services.

American School Counselors Association (ASCA) National Model Implementation

The school-level grant report included a reliable measure for assessing the level of ASCA National Model implementation, the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.[vii] This is the second year this tool has been utilized to measure implementation of the ASCA model by grantees. The survey includes a total of 14 items, which provide an overall implementation score and two factor scores – programmatic orientation and school counseling services. The following table includes the two years of survey data for SCCGP Cohort 2. (Note:

the four point rating scale for the survey was 1 = Not Present, 2 = Development in Progress, 3 = Partly Implemented, and 4 = Fully Implemented.)

Table 7: ASCA National Model Implementation Scores for SCCGP Cohort 2, Years 2 & 3

	Overall Implementation	Programmatic Orientation	School Counseling Services
2012-13 (Baseline)	**3.1**	**3**	**3.2**
2013-14	**3.2**	**3.1**	**3.3**

Overall, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools' ASCA Implementation Scores improved slightly. They continue to report "partly implemented" school counseling programs with an overall implementation score of 3.2. Examination of individual items indicates that schools continue to excel at organizing services so that all students are well served and have access to them; spending at least 80 percent of their school counselors' time on activities that directly benefit students, including interventions designed to improve the school's ability to educate all students to high standards; and having the resources for counselors to complete appropriate professional development activities. Areas to focus program improvement and support include implementing regular needs assessments to guide programming, analyzing data by demographic variable to identify interventions to close achievement gaps, conducting an annual review to get information for improving next year's programs, and representing school counseling priorities on curriculum and education committees.

Career and Technical Education

As grant reporting methods continue to be refined, this data point changed slightly from the year prior. In 2012-13 grantees reported duplicated counts of students enrolled in multiple career and technical education (CTE) courses. This past year, grantees were asked to report an unduplicated count. Despite this change, SCCGP Cohort 2 high school reports for 2012-13 and 2013-14 show that as a whole, the cohort is maintaining their participation level of students enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) courses, even with the change in the data measurement. This past year SCCGP Cohort 2 schools enrolled 15,317 students and the year prior they enrolled 15,420 students in CTE courses.

College Visits

The number of unduplicated student visits to colleges that SCCGP Cohort 2 schools provided decreased slightly this last year as compared to the year prior. In 2013-14, 7,449 students were engaged in at least one college tour whereas in 2012-13, 8,581 students participated. This is another area where the step-down in funding was reflected.

Conclusion

Overall, year three of SCCGP Cohort 2 was successful in reaching its target audience and has demonstrated great impact toward improving student achievement.

- SCCGP Cohort 2 serves a significantly greater percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch (64 percent) as compared to the state average (38 percent).

- SCCGP Cohort 2 schools concluded 2010 with an on-time graduation rate of 64.7 percent and by 2014, graduated 72.5 percent of its seniors (nearly an 8 percentage point increase). The state concluded 2010 with a 72.4 percent graduation rate and by 2014, only increased that rate by five percentage points.

- For the three years prior to receiving SCCGP funds, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools had an average dropout rate of 4.67 percent. After three years of SCCGP funding, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools experienced a full percentage point decrease bringing them to the state dropout rate of 3.5 for 2013-14. This retained an additional 371 dropouts if the Cohort's rate remained the same from 2010-11 prior to funding.

- SCCGP Cohort 2 schools' have reduced student-to-counselor ratios to nearly ASCA's recommended maximum ratio of 250:1 with an overall ratio of 254:1.

- Data for year two demonstrated SCCGP funding continues to impact postsecondary matriculation rates by increased student enrollment from 31 percent in 2011 to 46 percent in 2013 further reducing the gap between SCCGP Cohort 2 schools and the state rate of 57 percent.

- SCCGP Cohort 2 engaged nearly 1,750 students in Concurrent Enrollment this third year of funding as compared to 1,000 in the first year. This 74 percent change more than doubled the 30 percent change the state realized.

- During the second year of funding, 38 SCCGP Cohort 2 high schools partnered with higher education institutions to provide Concurrent Enrollment opportunities for their students, which was a 58 percent increase in partnerships from the first year. In comparison, the state overall increased partnerships by 26 percent. These increases suggest SCCGP Cohort 2 schools' intentionality to increasing access for their students' participation in Concurrent Enrollment.

- SCCGP funds supported more than 325 school professionals in receiving more than 11 hours of postsecondary workforce readiness professional development on average for a total of 3,600 hours. This is a substantial decrease in hours (nearly half), which may indicate where grantees are cutting costs as funding steps down.

- SCCGP Cohort 2 schools continue to consider their school counseling programs to be "partly implemented" with the school counseling services factor slightly further along in implementation than the programmatic orientation factor.

SCCGP is making a meaningful impact on students' postsecondary success and closing the gaps between students living with disadvantaged circumstances and the state average. Notable improvements have been observed and maintained over the three years of funding in the areas of reducing student-to-counselor ratios,

increasing graduation rates, reducing dropout rates, increasing concurrent enrollment participation, and increasing enrollment in postsecondary institutions following high school graduation.

SCCGP would benefit from focusing improvement strategies on attendance as well as supporting middle schools in developing robust programs that foster students' school connectedness. Additional support can be provided by creating opportunities for grantees to share best practices, particularly for grantees that are struggling with increasing retention and decreasing dropout rates.

Attachment A: 2013-14 School Counselor Corps Advisory Committee

Dr. Paul Thayer, Colorado State University, Student Retention (Chair)

Tracy Thompson, Colorado Community College System, ICAP Liaison & Retired School Counselor (Vice-Chair)

Andrew Burns, Fort Lewis College, College Admissions

Carl Einhaus, Colorado Department of Higher Education, Student Affairs

Darrell Green, Colorado Association of Career & Technical Education

David West, Aurora Public Schools, Master Counselor Practitioner

Deb Suniga, Arapahoe Community College, TRiO Talent Search

Jennifer Quintana, Adams 50, Middle School Counselor

Lisa Moore, Jefferson County Public Schools, High School Counselor

Rana Tarkenton, Denver Scholarship Foundation

Dr. Rhonda Williams, University of Colorado – Colorado Springs, Counselor Educator

Attachment B: Data Collection and Analysis Process

1) CDE provided grantee reports at the district and school level. (Grantees with missing reports were contacted for these data.) These data were utilized for:
   - Student-to-counselor ratios
   - Grantee implementation indicators
     - Goals
     - Professional development
     - ASCA standards

   The reporting system changed for 2012-13 and included the following additional indicators:

   - Career and Technical Education
   - College Visits

2) Once the final list of SCCGP schools was determined, CDE's Data Services provided aggregate demographic data on free or reduced lunch, ethnicity, and student count by grade level. CDE updated demographic data in addition to mobility data.

3) The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) i3 data system and reports were utilized for:
   - FAFSA Completion (U.S. Department of Education verified data)
   - Concurrent Enrollment (SURDS)
   - Postsecondary Matriculation (National Student Clearinghouse & SURDS)

   CDHE provided additional data for schools that had too small of numbers to report publicly. In the future, it would be helpful to receive raw data sets (as opposed to reports) for Concurrent Enrollment.

4) To determine the comparison group, CDE's Office of Dropout Prevention & Student Engagement provided dropout, graduation, attendance data, and analysis as well as the dropout and free or reduced lunch data from 2008-09 that determined schools' eligibility. (Note: the RFP had 2009-10 data on it despite eligibility being determined from 2008-09 data.) The list of Alternative Education Campuses as well as the School Directory was also provided for additional context, including grade level, name, and school type changes.

   The consultant selected the comparison group by examining the following data:
   - School type
   - Dropout rate
   - Free or reduced lunch rate
   - Student count
   - Alternative Education Campus designation

   CDE staff then pulled dropout and free or reduced lunch data for the initial list from 2008-09 through 2011-12 and examined the school directory to eliminate some schools based on changing contexts that made these schools anomalies. The comparison group was finalized after comparing its 2008-09 demographic, school, and dropout data to SCCGP Cohort 2 and the state average. The consultant then analyzed graduation and attendance data for the comparison group, SCCGP Cohort 2, and the state.

Endnotes

[i] White, S.W., and Kelly, D.F. (2010). The School Counselors Role in School Dropout Prevention. *Journal of Counseling and Development,* *88*, 227-235.

[ii] Ibid.

[iii] New Horizon High School in Harrison School District 2 and Irving Alternative Education Campus in Colorado Springs School District 11 have closed and, therefore, are not included in this report.

[iv] Colorado Department of Higher Education & Colorado Department of Education. (2013). Annual Report on Concurrent Enrollment 2011-12 School Year. Retrieved on May 7, 2013 from http://highered.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/Enrollment/FY2012/2012_Concurrent_Enrollment_Feb_2013.pdf

[v] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002/06).

[vi] Burkard, A., Gillen, M., Martinez, M., & Skytte, S. (2011). Wisconsin School Counselors Benefit All Students: The Effect of Fully Implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Programs in Wisconsin High Schools. Retrieved on April 22, 2013 from www.oakcreek.k12.wi.us/ochs/guidance1/guidance_docs/WSCA_Research_Report_2011_11.pdf

[vii] Clemens, E., Carey, J. & Harrington, K. (2010). The School Counseling Program Implementation Survey: Initial Instrument Development and Exploratory Factor Analysis. *ACA: Professional School Counseling,14:2,* 125-134.