School Counselors' Perspectives on the Social and Emotional Development of Students

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Summary and Conclusions

ACT collaborated with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) to identify school counselor perspectives, needs, and challenges related to students' social and emotional (SE) development. Further, we sought to identify best practices that work for school counselors as they help prepare students for academic and career success. This research was undertaken prior to and during the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic. To gain a broader view of the school counselor context, we surveyed school counselors, school counselor educators who prepare school counselors, pre-service school counselors in training, and district directors with decision-making responsibility for school counselor staffing and resources. Survey items, tailored to each of these four participant groups, focused on SE perspectives, standards and frameworks, practices, and professional development. Our findings include:

Survey participants agreed that developing students' SE skills is important. District directors indicated that developing students' SE skills was as important as developing academic knowledge for student success, and school counselors conveyed importance through their interest in incorporating social and emotional learning (SEL) into school counseling programs. Pre-service school counselors articulated the expected importance of SE skill development in their work, and counselor educators reported that their programs address building students' SE skills.

The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success was the most well-known and the most widely used resource among school counselors. While multiple SEL standards , frameworks, and curricula were identified by school counselors, they most frequently cited knowledge and use of ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success (updated and renamed in summer 2021, see page 11 for information), followed by the Second Step® curriculum and their own state's provided framework. School counselors reported being less knowledgeable of, and less likely to use, Building Blocks for Learning and the KIPP Framework for Excellent Teaching.

The most important ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for students to develop were often the most difficult for students to learn. Behavior standards related to students' coping skills, self-discipline, self-control, self-motivation, and self-direction were reported as the most important to develop and among the most difficult for students to learn.

School counselors used common methods and assorted resources to deliver SE skill instruction. Popular methods for school counselors to deliver SE instruction included one-on-one outside the classroom, in the classroom, and small groups outside the classroom. School counselors reported using existing standards, frameworks, or curricula as resources to deliver SE skill instruction followed by online resources, videos, books/ stories, visual displays, and worksheets.

In-school stakeholders were more supportive of developing students' SE skills than out-of-school groups. School counselors and district directors indicated that teachers were the most supportive in-school stakeholders, and families were the most supportive out-of-school supportive group. However, school counselors reported difficulty with involving families to help develop students' SE skills.

Current and aspiring school counselors welcome professional development in SE learning. School counselors requested professional development in SEL applications, mental health issues, and how to work with specific populations. Pre-service school counselors might need training on strategies, tools, and resources to help students develop SE skills.

So What?

There is growing consensus among educators, policymakers, and researchers that K–12 students' social and emotional (SE) skill development may be nearly as important as cognitive ability for education and workplace success. SE development has been linked to improved learning, increased graduation rates, improved school climate, increased attendance rates, and a decrease in disciplinary referrals. School counselors are pivotal in helping students develop these SE skills, collaborating with classroom teachers to provide SE curriculum, identifying interventions that support students' SE development, and referring students to resources that can better meet their SE needs.

Now What?

We recommend that school counseling professionals—aspiring and current—be provided with support that will allow them to better integrate SEL strategies into the classroom, model how that integration will look, and identify what works for their students' SE development. In collaboration with district and school leadership, we also recommend developing school, family, and community partnerships that focus on meeting the SE needs of children. For these efforts, we highlight the importance of using evidence-based resources that include examples for how to effectively implement SEL standards. This work means emphasizing the role of school counselors in delivering SEL education and interventions and serving as a consultant and collaborator for school-wide SEL efforts with educators.

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Background

School counselors are vital to student success. They are committed to helping all students with their academic, career, and social and emotional development. With the coronavirus pandemic exacerbating challenges already experienced by many students (e.g., digital access, mental health, behavioral issues), it has become even more imperative for school counselors to use their knowledge and experience as they work to identify and address students' diverse social and emotional needs. School counselors are being called upon to do more as they continue to serve extremely high numbers of students (see sidebar).

Nationwide, on average, there is one counselor for every 455 K–12 students, according to data from the US Department of Education. ASCA recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of 250:1. Sources: American School Counselor Association and US Department of Education, 2019.

School counselors understand that social and emotional growth is essential for student learning and for college, career, and life readiness. There is also growing consensus among educators, policymakers, and researchers that social and emotional factors outside of cognitive ability may be nearly or just as important for education and workplace success.[1] These factors contribute positively to important outcomes such as GPA and high school graduation,[2] school climate and number of disciplinary events,[3] attendance and achievement test scores,[4] job performance and job satisfaction,[5] and health and well-being later in life.[6]

Social and emotional (SE) skills are defined here as, "individual capacities that (a) are manifested in consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, (b) can be developed through formal and informal learning experiences, and (c) influence important outcomes throughout the individual's life."[7]

As part of their learning experiences, students can develop SE skills such as persistence, dependability, collaboration, empathy, helpfulness, problem solving, stress management, planfulness, and flexibility, which are in demand by employers (see sidebar) and have lasting positive effects on their futures. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), **social and emotional learning (SEL)** is "the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."[8] Students' SE skills can be developed or improved through SEL programs, including school-based programs and afterschool programs. Programmatic decisions related to developing students' SE skills can translate into reduced problem behaviors, positive feelings and attitudes among students, and improved overall school performance.[9] A review of 213 studies with hundreds of thousands of students participating in universal K–12 school-based interventions led to the conclusion that students who participate in SEL programs see

greater gains in SE skills and academic performance compared to students who do not participate.[10] Both short- and long-term benefits from SEL programs have since been documented.[11]

School counselors are pivotal in helping students develop SE skills through their school counseling programs. These programs are designed to help all students apply academic achievement strategies, manage emotions and apply interpersonal skills, plan for the future, and ultimately, be prepared academically, socially, and emotionally for any postsecondary options (higher education, military, workforce, etc.).[12] According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), school counselors support students' SE development in the following ways:

Top skills employers want in graduates are SE skills:

- work in teams

- make decisions and solve problems

- communicate verbally

- plan, organize and prioritize
—The National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2015

- "Collaborate with classroom teachers to provide the school counseling curriculum to all students through direct instruction, team-teaching, or providing lesson plans for learning activities or units in classrooms aimed at social/emotional development;

- Understand the nature and range of human characteristics specific to child and adolescent development;

- Identify and employ appropriate appraisal methods for individual and group interventions that support K–12 students' social/emotional development;

- Know and utilize counseling theories to inform both direct and indirect services providing support to K–12 students' social/emotional development;

- Use assessment in the context of appropriate statistics and research methodology, follow-up assessment, and measurement methods to implement appropriate program planning for social/emotional development;

- Select and implement technology in a school counseling program to facilitate K–12 students' social/emotional development; and

- Serve as a referral source for students when social/emotional issues become too great to be dealt with solely by the school counselor, including crisis interventions."[13]

Given these key school counselor responsibilities related to social and emotional development and the importance of SE skills for students, ACT collaborated with ASCA on a study to identify school counselor perspectives, needs, and challenges that can influence students' SE development. Further, we sought to identify best practices for school counselors as they help prepare students for academic and career success. To gain a broader view of the school counselor context, we surveyed school counselors (n = 263), school counselor educators who prepare school counselors (n = 26), pre-service school counselors in training (n = 68), and district directors with decision-making responsibility for school counselor staffing and resources (n = 41). Survey items were tailored to each of these four participant groups, with a common focus on SEL perspectives, standards, frameworks and curricula, practices, and professional development. See the appendix for additional details on the survey methodology.

Survey findings further our understanding of the SEL knowledge and methods used by school counselors and the importance of developing students' SE skills. Results from this survey highlight how school counselors apply frameworks such as the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success in developing students' SE skills, and whether other stakeholders within and outside of school are perceived as supportive of SEL. We conclude with recommendations on ways to support school counselors in their efforts to help students develop SE skills.

There are limitations to this study. While the sample included four participant groups (school counselors, counselor educators, pre-service school counselors, and district directors) with school counselors being the largest, the response rate was not high enough for the other groups to warrant generalizations about their SEL perspectives. Further, self-selection into the survey limited the representativeness of the sample.

Findings

How Important is it to Develop Students' SE Skills?

An overwhelming majority of survey participants agreed that developing students' SE skills is important. District directors responded directly about its importance, and school counselors conveyed importance through their interest in incorporating SEL into school counseling programs. Pre-service school counselors weighed in on the expected importance of SE skill development in their work, and counselor educators emphasized that their programs focused on building students' SE skills.

Among school district directors, approximately three-quarters (72.5%) reported that developing students' SE skills was as important as developing academic knowledge for student success (Figure 1). One-quarter (25%) of the district directors thought developing SE skills was more important than academic knowledge. Interestingly, all but one of the district directors in this study were also currently licensed school counselors. With school counselor training and experience, the district directors may be in a unique position to understand the criticality of SEL and perhaps reflected this understanding in their survey responses. Clearly, district directors signaled the importance of SE skills.

Figure 1. Percentages of District Directors (n = 41) Rating the Importance of Developing SE Skills Compared to Developing Academic Knowledge for Student Success

72.5% Equally Important
25% Academic More Important
2.5% SE More Important
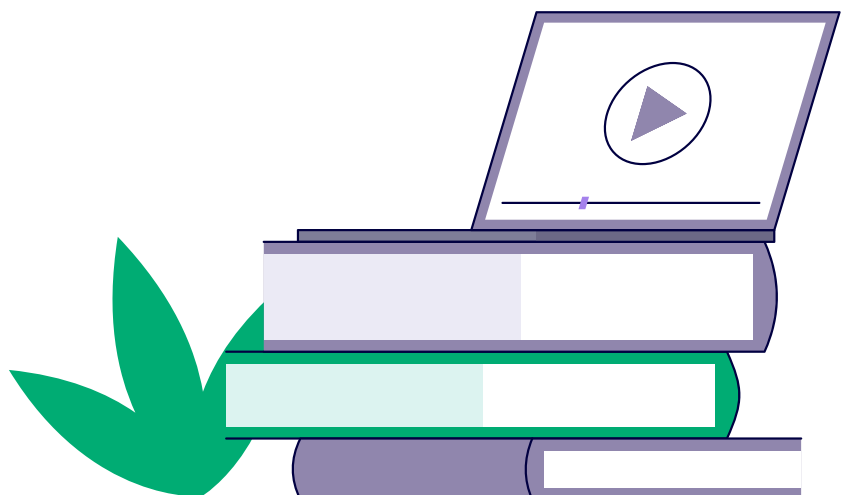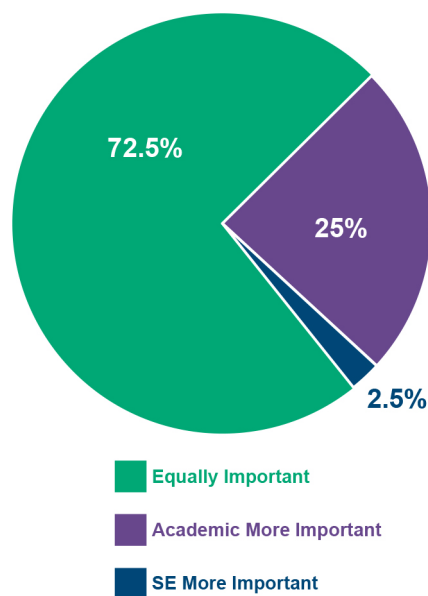
To gauge the importance of SE skills for school counselors currently employed in K-12 schools, school counselors indicated their level of interest in incorporating SEL into their school counseling programs. More than four in five school counselors reported being very interested in SEL at their schools (Figure 2). The extent to which school counselors wanted SEL to be part of their programmatic efforts highlights an important focus toward developing SE skills in students. School counselors recognize that effective school counseling must go beyond improving academic skills to promoting social and emotional competencies, and that enhancing SE skills is at the very heart of school counseling.[14]

> **School Counselor comment:**
> "Social and emotional is definitely what takes the most of my time, and with the second focus being academic and grades. Normally, academic issues come from social and emotional issues. So I try and start there, I feel like if we can work on social and emotional then we can go from there to academic."

Figure 2. Percentages of School Counselors (n = 263) Rating Their Interest in Incorporating SEL into Their School Counseling Programs

Very Interested	85%
Somewhat Interested	13%
A Little Interested	2%
Not Interested At All	0.4%
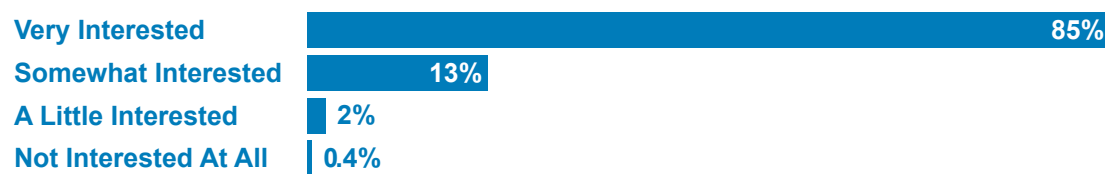
Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Pre-service school counselors provided an almost unanimous perspective on the importance of SEL, with 91% of them reporting that SEL would be a very important focus of their future work (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Percentages of Pre-Service School Counselors (n = 68) Rating Degree to Which Focusing on Students' SEL Would be Important to Their Work as a School Counselor

Very Important	91%
Moderately Important	9%

The school counselor educators who prepare pre-service school counselors reinforce the importance of SE development in their school counselor education programs. Among the school counselor educators surveyed, roughly two-thirds (65%) indicated that their programs focus a great deal on preparing school counselors-in-training for developing the SE skills of K-12 students (Figure 4). This focus is also backed by the standards for quality guiding the accreditation of school counseling preparation programs advanced by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation and ASCA.[15] These standards reflect a commitment to learner development, supportive learning environments, and inclusive learning experiences, which make students' SE development essential for preparing effective future school counselors.

Figure 4. Percentages of Counselor Educators (n = 26) Rating of How Much Their School Counselor Programs Focus on Preparing School Counselors-in-Training for Students' SE Development

A Great Deal	65%
Moderately	27%
Slightly	8%

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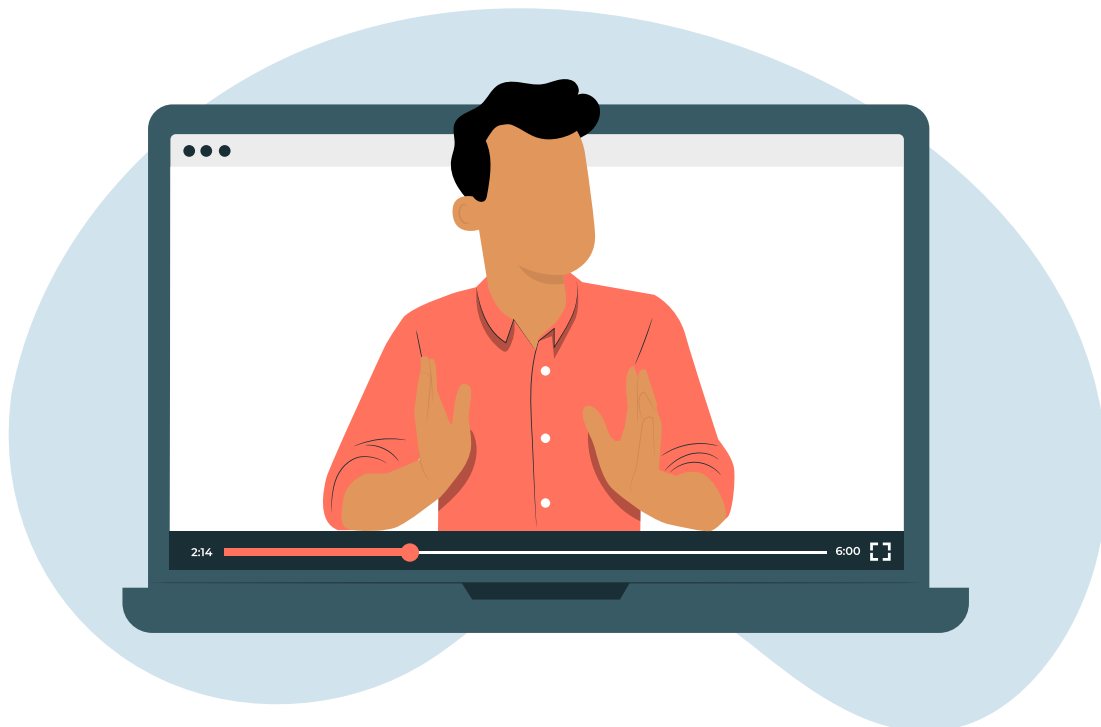
How Prepared are School Counselors for Developing Students' SE Skills?

School Counselors are Knowledgeable of SEL Standards, Frameworks, and Curricula

SEL standards and frameworks inform which SE services school counselors provide to K–12 students. These include the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, Building Blocks for Learning, CASEL Framework, KIPP Framework, and Second Step curriculum (see sidebar).

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success

ASCA updated and renamed the Mindsets & Behaviors student standards in summer 2021. The ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success describe the knowledge, skills, and attitudes K-12 students need to achieve academic success, college and career readiness, and social and emotional development. The mindset and behavior standards identify and prioritize the specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills students should be able to demonstrate as a result of a school counseling program. Review the revision process here: https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/aaa85b20-de6b-4a7d-8ab0-74ccf9733168/summary-of-changes-21.pdf

Building Blocks for Learning

A framework for comprehensive student development created by Turnaround for Children that focuses on the inter- and intrapersonal skills and mindsets children need to succeed in school, college, and life. Examples of these skills and mindsets include self-regulation, stress management, social awareness/relationship skills, sense of belonging, and resilience.

CASEL Framework

A framework that fosters knowledge, skills, and attitudes across five areas of competence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making) and multiple key settings (e.g., classrooms, schools, families, and communities) to establish equitable learning environments that advance students' learning and development.

KIPP Framework

A strengths framework that outlines abilities and attitudes critical to leading an engaged, happy, and successful life. It highlights seven strengths closely tied to student success and well-being in college and beyond—zest, grit, optimism, self-control, gratitude, social intelligence, and curiosity.

Second Step Curriculum

A holistic approach to instruction in social and emotional learning. The program contains separate lessons with units on different SE skills for use in pre-K through grade 8. Example topics of early elementary units include empathy, emotion management, and friendship skills, and topics for grades 6–8 include mindsets and goals, recognizing bullying and harassment, and make better decisions.

When asked how knowledgeable school counselors were of SEL resources, the majority indicated that they were very or moderately knowledgeable about at least one resource. The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors was the most well-known resource, cited by more than four in five school counselors (83%; Figure 5). Half of school counselors were also knowledgeable about the Second Step curriculum (51%) and a state-provided framework (50%). Building Blocks for Learning and the KIPP Framework were not as widely known by school counselors, with less than a quarter of them reporting they were very or moderately knowledgeable of these two frameworks (21% and 3%, respectively).

Figure 5. School Counselors' (n = 263) Rating That They Were Very or Moderately Knowledgeable of SEL Standards and Frameworks

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors	83%
Second Step Curriculum	51%
A State-Provided Framework	50%
CASEL Framework	40%
Building Blocks for Learning	21%
KIPP Framework	3%
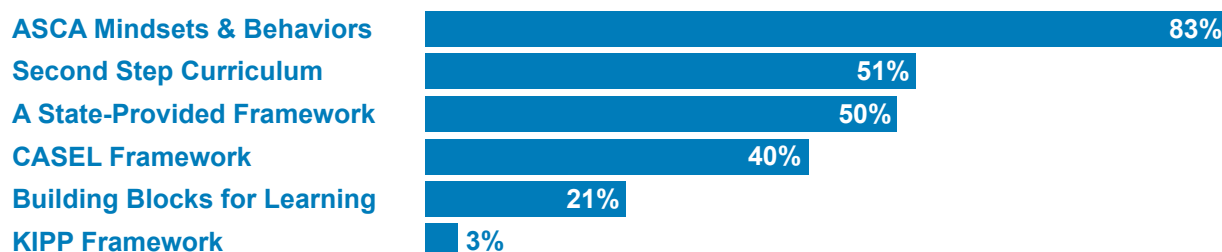
Among school counselors, there were differences in knowledge about the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors depending on the size of the schools in which they worked.[16] School counselors in smaller schools (699 or fewer students) were more likely to have a little or no knowledge of the ASCA Mindsets & Behavior Standards compared to counselors in larger schools (700 or more students). In smaller schools, about one-quarter of the school counselors (23%) reported they had a little or no knowledge of these standards, while this percentage was much smaller (7%) for school counselors in larger schools (Figure 6). One reason may be the number of school counselors working in a school, which was associated with school size.[16] A majority of larger schools (87%) had more than one school counselor, whereas more than three-quarters of smaller schools (77%) had only one school counselor. The multiple responsibilities of a school counselor, particularly when there is only one school counselor, may limit opportunities to learn about SEL standards and standards like the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success.

Figure 6. Percentages of School Counselors (n = 263) in Smaller Schools and Larger Schools Rating They Had a Little/No Knowledge of the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success

Larger School (n = 99)	7%
Smaller School (n = 164)	23%
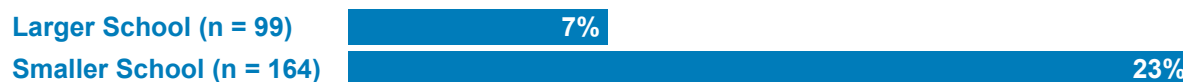
There were also differences in knowledge about the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success across other survey participant groups.[16] School district directors were more likely to report they were very knowledgeable of the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success (59%) than pre-service school counselors (15%; Figure 7). Experience and training likely account for this difference. With all but one of the surveyed school district directors licensed as school counselors, and about half of them (49%) in their current positions for five or more years, they are likely more familiar with ASCA standards. On the other hand, although 71% of pre-service school counselors reported that their training focused on defining

> **Pre-Service School Counselor comments:**
> " I think they get lost in the shuffle of day-to-day interactions with students. Our services are very reactive so it's hard to get in front of some of the issues and fully implement ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors."
>
> " Incorporating them into every lesson that we plan is a challenge."
>
> " Certain mindsets and behaviors are easier to tailor guidance and lessons to, but others are more difficult to work into a broader set of lesson plans, etc."

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success a great deal or to a moderate extent, a little more than two-thirds (68%) indicated that they experienced challenges with understanding and implementing the standards as part of their school training experiences (highlighted by their own comments).

Figure 7. Percentages of Participants in Each Group Rating Their Level of Knowledge of the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success

A Little / Not Knowledgeable: 10%, 15%, 31%, 17%
Moderately Knowledgeable: 32%, 38%, 54%, 44%
Very Knowledgeable: 59%, 46%, 15%, 39%

School District Directors (n = 41)   Counselor Educators (n=26)
Preservice School Counselors (n = 68)   School Counselors (n=263)
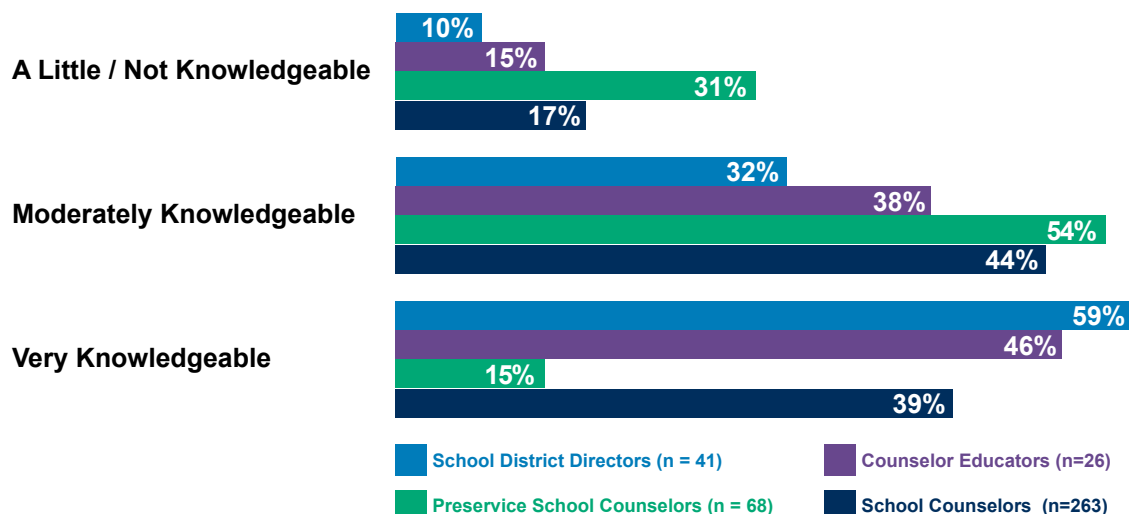
School Counselors Use SEL Standards, Frameworks, and Curricula Widely

School counselors not only know about SEL resources, but they are using these guidelines in their work. Nearly all school counselors (92%) used at least one resource to guide their work. The most well-known SEL resource, ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors, was also the most widely used. Three out of four school counselors (76%)
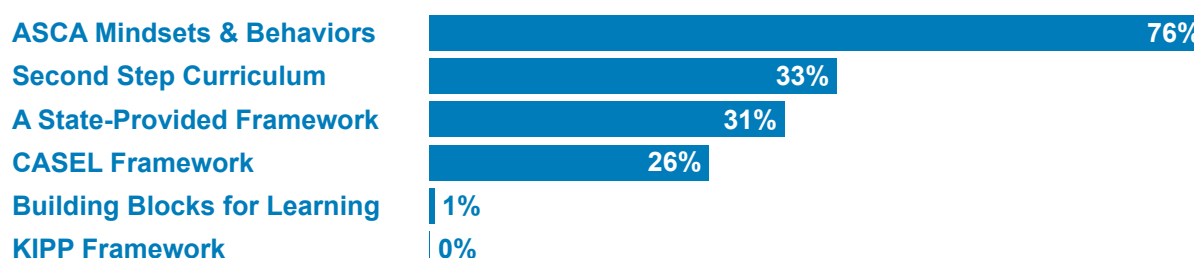
> **School counselor comment:**
> " The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors guide my practice and are my 'favorite' tool."

used the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success (Figure 8). As a follow-up to school counselors reporting use of the ASCA standards, they provided additional information in an open-ended question about how they determined which mindsets and behaviors to apply with their students. The two primary sources that school counselors relied on for selecting mindsets and behaviors were needs assessments (45%) and whether there was alignment between the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors and state-specific standards (25%). One out of three school counselors reported using the Second Step curriculum (33%) or their state framework (31%).

Figure 8. Percentages of School Counselors (n = 263) Indicating Use of SEL Standards and Frameworks to Guide Their Work

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% because participants could choose more than one framework.

School counselors commonly used SEL standards, frameworks, and curricula when creating practice strategies or activities for developing students' SE skills. While different SEL resources are available to school counselors, those focusing on skills related to specific outcomes and age-appropriate SEL

> **School counselor comment:**
> The ASCA model is "clearly concise and on point for students' growth."

practices would support identifying potentially more impactful approaches to building SE skills.[17] School counselors also benefit from SEL guidelines that include classroom curriculum and professional development, which offer additional SEL supports. These supports are part of most of these resources,[17] which are likely to be a factor in how easy the resources are to implement. When asked how easy it was to use SEL resources, a large majority of surveyed

school counselors (ranging from 79% to 88%) reported that the SEL tools they used were very or somewhat easy to implement (Figure 9). The highest percentage of school counselors found the Second Step curriculum easy to use (52%), followed by the CASEL Framework (38%). It is important to distinguish between standards (ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors) and curricula as their respective characteristics may influence how easy they are to use.

Figure 9. Percentages of School Counselors Rating How Easy or Difficult it is to Apply SEL Frameworks

	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (n = 199)	32%	47%	20%	1%
CASEL Framework (n = 69)	38%	51%	12%	0
Second Step Curriculum (n = 87)	52%	36%	10%	2%
A State-Provided Framework (n = 81)	31%	49%	19%	1%
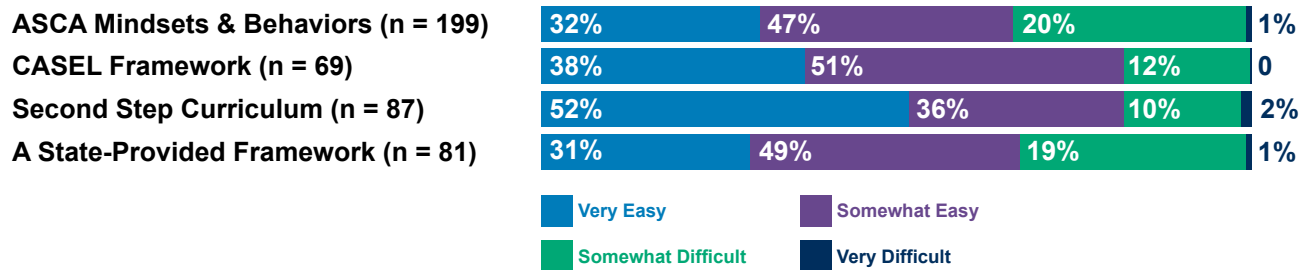
Note: The Building Blocks for Learning and KIPP Framework were omitted given the limited number of respondents who use this framework to guide their work. N counts indicate the number of school counselors who reported they used each SEL framework.

School counselors provided more perspective on the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, the most popular and widely used SEL resource in the survey. These student standards define how school counselors enhance students' academic, career, and social/emotional development. The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success consists of standards that identify specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills designed to enhance the learning process and promote college, career, and life readiness.[18] The standards are categorized into four areas:

1 The Mindset standards are related to "the psycho-social attitudes or beliefs students have about themselves in relation to academic work."

2 The "Behavior Standards: Learning strategies" focus on "processes and tactics students employ to aid in the cognitive work of thinking, remembering, or learning."

3 The "Behavior Standards: Self-management skills" are related to "continued focus on a goal despite obstacles (persistence) and avoidance of distractions or temptations to prioritize higher pursuits over lower pleasures (delayed gratification, self-discipline, self-control)."

4 The "Behavior Standards: Social skills" focus on "acceptable behaviors that improve social interactions, such as those between peers or between students and adults."[19]
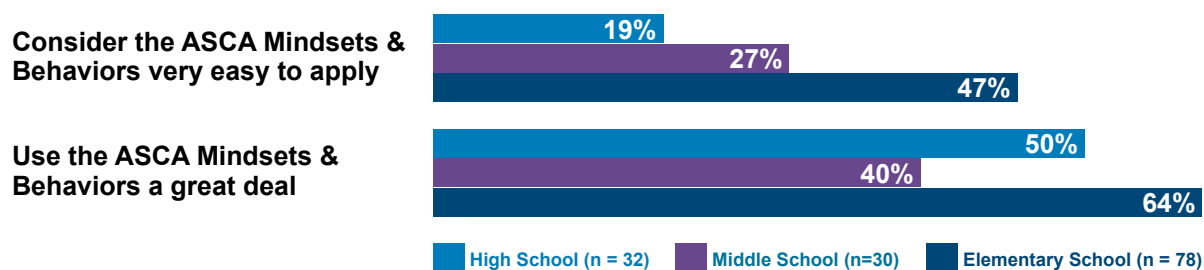
Nearly three-quarters (ranging from 71% to 73%) of school counselors reported that social skills and self-management skills, along with standards related to mindsets, were highly useful for preparing young people to be successful in their future (Figure 10). This is a strong signal by school counselors that the ASCA SE skills are critical for college and career readiness.

Figure 10. Percentages of School Counselors Using the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (n = 199) Who Agree Each Area is a Great Deal Useful for Preparing Young People to be Successful

Behavior Standards: Social Skills	73%
Behavior Standards: Self-management Skills	73%
Mindset Standards	71%
Behavior Standards: Learning Strategies	65%

The study revealed significant grade level differences among school counselors in the use of ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success. Elementary school counselors were more likely to use the ASCA standards a great deal (64%) to guide their work, and they were more likely to report that ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors were very easy (47%) to apply[16] compared to school counselors in middle schools and high schools (Figure 11). Elementary school counselors reportedly spend more time on students' personal and social development and less time on academic and career development than school counselors in higher grade levels.[20] While SE growth is still important during middle school and high school, it is not unusual for school counselors to increasingly focus on the academic coursework needed for students to matriculate and guidance on their transitions to college or career.[21] The research shows somewhat higher use of the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success among high school counselors than middle school counselors (50% vs. 40%, respectively), even though relatively few high school counselors (19%) indicated that the standards are easy to apply.

Figure 11. Percentages of School Counselors in Different Grade Levels Indicating They Used the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors a Great Deal and Considered the Resource Very Easy to Apply

Consider the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors very easy to apply
High School: 19%
Middle School: 27%
Elementary School: 47%

Use the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors a great deal
High School: 50%
Middle School: 40%
Elementary School: 64%

High School (n = 32)   Middle School (n=30)   Elementary School (n = 78)

School Counselors Identify Key ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors Standards

For those school counselors with knowledge and use of the ASCA standards, they further considered which key ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors are most important for students to develop and which are most difficult for students to learn. From the 35 ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors standards, school counselors selected the top five that students should develop. They then chose the top five that would be most difficult to learn from the entire set of standards. When standards within each of the areas were aggregated, school counselors identified the standards for self-management skills as both the most important to develop (31%) and most difficult to learn (32%) for students (Figure 12). For standards important to develop, this is closely followed by the mindset standards (30%). For standards difficult to learn, school counselors then most frequently selected standards related to learning strategies (31%).

Figure 12. ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors Standards Selected by School Counselors (n = 199) as Most Important to Develop and Most Difficult for Students to Learn by Standard Areas
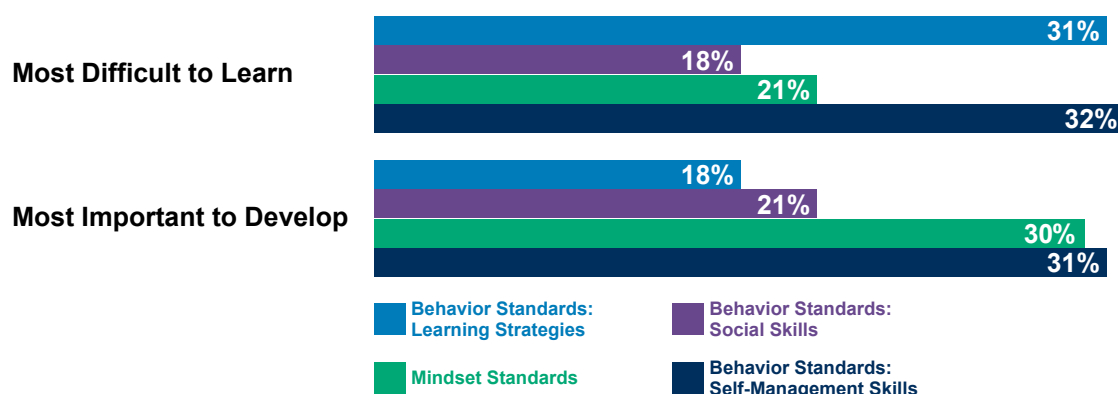
Note: Participants' top five choices were aggregated across the four areas.

There was a moderately positive relationship between the most important and the most difficult ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors standards selected by school counselors (r = 0.59), indicating that they considered the same standards as both most important to develop and most difficult for students to learn. Recognizing students may experience challenges in learning certain SE skills, school counselors can use effective, evidence-based approaches to target the development of these critical SE skills. The following table shows the top five standards to develop and those difficult to learn as selected by school counselors.

Table 1. School Counselors' Top 5 Standards to Develop and Those Difficult to Learn

Most important to develop (n = 177)	Most Difficult to learn (n = 184)
M 1: Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social emotional and physical well-being (50.3%)	B-LS 4: Apply self-motivation and self-direction to learning (38.6%)
B-SMS 7: Demonstrate effective coping skills when faced with a problem (40.7%)	B-SMS 4: Demonstrate ability to delay immediate gratification for long-term rewards (34.8%)
B-SMS 2: Demonstrate self-discipline and self-control (36.2%)	B-SMS 2: Demonstrate self-discipline and self-control (29.9%)
M 2: Self-confidence in ability to succeed (33.9%)	B-SMS 7: Demonstrate effective coping skills when faced with a problem (28.8%)
B-LS 4: Apply self-motivation and self-direction to learning (26.6%)	B-LS 1: Demonstrate critical-thinking skills to make informed decisions (23.9%)

Note: Please refer to: to https://tinyurl.com/ASCAStudentStandards for an explanation of the labeling scheme (e.g., M1, B-SMS7).

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Three of the top five ASCA standards identified as most important to develop were also reported as the top five most difficult for students to learn. These included behavior standards focused on coping skills, self-discipline, self-control, self-motivation, and self-direction. These standards suggest that school counselors are keenly aware of the challenges associated with students developing self-starting skills. Half of the school counselors surveyed identified the mindset standard focusing on developing a healthy balance of mental, social, emotional, and physical wellbeing as most important. School counselors understand the importance of addressing the needs of the whole person. One-third of responding school counselors indicated that building self-confidence in one's ability to succeed was also among the most important, suggesting they recognize the benefits of self-confidence for students' academic performance from elementary school through high school.[22]

As for most difficult to learn, school counselors reported that delaying immediate gratification for long-term rewards (35%) and that developing critical-thinking skills to make informed decisions (24%) are challenges for students, both of which are essential for pursuing long-term academic and career goals successfully.[23] By drawing on their knowledge and use of the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, school counselors were able to identify key standards as most important and difficult to learn, which further prepares them for developing the SE skills of students.
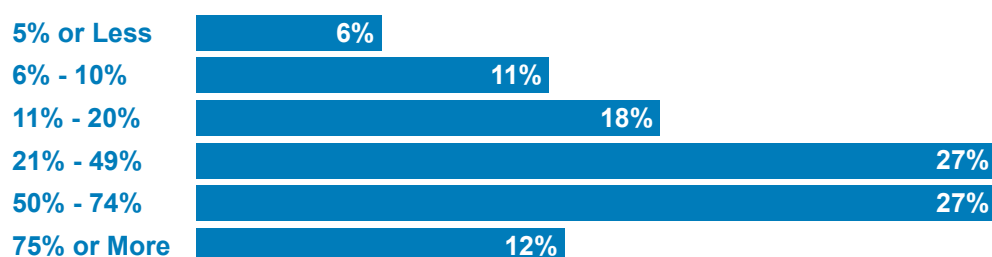
How are School Counselors Developing Students' SE Skills?

Time Spent Developing Students' SE Skills Varied Among School Counsels

To deliver SEL to students effectively, school counselors must invest time into designing and implementing programs that support essential SE skill development. School counselors estimated how much time they spent during the school year developing students' SE skills. Overall, slightly more than one-third (39%) of school counselors indicated that they spend 50% or more of their time on SEL (Figure 13). A similar percentage (35%) of school counselors spend 20% or less of their time on SEL.

Figure 13. Percentages of School Counselors (n = 263) Estimating % Time Spent During School Year on Students' SE Skill Development

5% or Less	6%
6% - 10%	11%
11% - 20%	18%
21% - 49%	27%
50% - 74%	27%
75% or More	12%

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Elementary school counselors were more likely to spend a greater amount of time developing students' SE skills than high school counselors.[16] About 60% of elementary school counselors estimated they spent 50% or more of their time on SEL, while only 5% of high school counselors spent this amount of time. An emphasis on SEL in early grades is well-timed as many younger students are just beginning to develop SE skills, such as getting along with others, paying attention, and managing emotions, especially at the beginning of elementary school.[17]
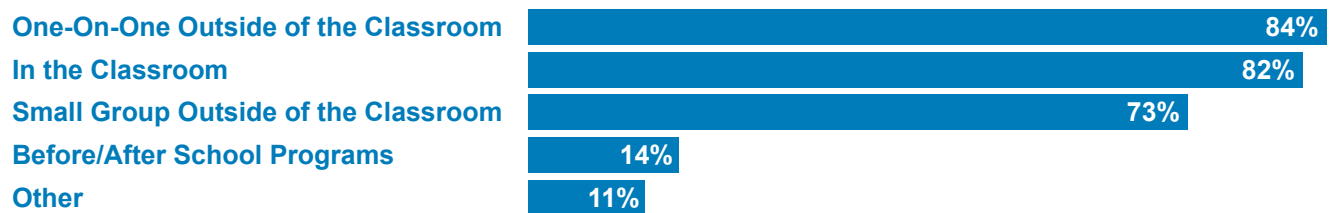
In addition, school counselors in larger schools tended to spend less time developing students' SE skills than school counselors in smaller schools. About one-half (46%) of school counselors in larger schools estimated they would spend 20% or less of their time on SE skill development compared to approximately one-quarter (28%) of school counselors in smaller schools.[16] School counselors serving higher numbers of students in larger schools may have more limited time available to focus on SEL.

School Counselors Use Common Methods, Strategies, and Resources for SE Skill Development

Professionals who employ effective SEL strategies and resources are better able to foster the development of students' SE skills.

The three most popular methods in which school counselors delivered/reinforced SEL instruction included one-on-one outside the classroom (84%), in the classroom (82%) and small groups outside the classroom (73%; Figure 14). These results highlight that considerable SEL instruction occurs outside classroom settings, either with individual students or small groups of students. In addition, the results correspond to the typical role of school counselors in providing instruction to students in classrooms, in large and small groups, and individually. Regarding in-classroom instruction, research has shown that SEL instruction is highly effective when integrated into ongoing classroom activities.[24] By using a classroom delivery model,[23] school counselors can promote inclusion and transform the classroom into a welcoming environment where students can focus on development and growth.[25] Integrating SEL directly into the classroom setting has been widely advocated as it provides the opportunity for students to apply new SE skills they have learned in classroom situations.[23] It also increases the likelihood for long-lasting change by reinforcing new behaviors in students' daily lives.

Figure 14. Percentages of School Counselors Selecting Methods Used to Deliver or Reinforce SEL Instruction

One-On-One Outside of the Classroom	84%
In the Classroom	82%
Small Group Outside of the Classroom	73%
Before/After School Programs	14%
Other	11%

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% because respondents could select more than one response option.

In terms of effective strategies for implementing SEL, as shown in the word cloud, role play was the most commonly cited strategy (23%) by school counselors. Other strategies, although not as frequently cited, included games, mindfulness practices, coping strategy practices, and writing/coloring.

Research has found that effective SEL strategies often involve elements like modeling, reacting, and instructing about students' expression of emotions.[24] Modeling demonstrates social norms for conveying and regulating emotions. Reacting to students' emotions with empathy and support helps develop competence in self-regulation and emotion understanding.[26] Explicit instruction in routine school activities has the potential to continually enhance students' SE skills.[24] The strategies mentioned by school counselors in the survey create opportunities for practicing these skills.

Additionally, school counselors used assorted resources to deliver or reinforce SEL instruction effectively. Nearly one-half of the school counselors (44%) indicated that they used an existing framework or curriculum as a major resource (Figure 15). Online resources (e.g., Teachers Pay Teachers, Google, YouTube, and Pinterest) were used as well (27%). The most common resource tools used by school counselors included videos (38%), books/stories (28%), visual displays (16%), and forms/worksheets (11%). With growing interest in SEL, considerable information resources are now available about SEL programs and approaches.[24]

Figure 15. Effective Resources Commonly Used by School Counselors (Based on Open-Ended Responses)

44% Existing Model/Curriculum as Their Major Resources

38% Videos

28% Books/Stories

27% Online Resources

16% Visual Displays

11% Forms/Worksheets
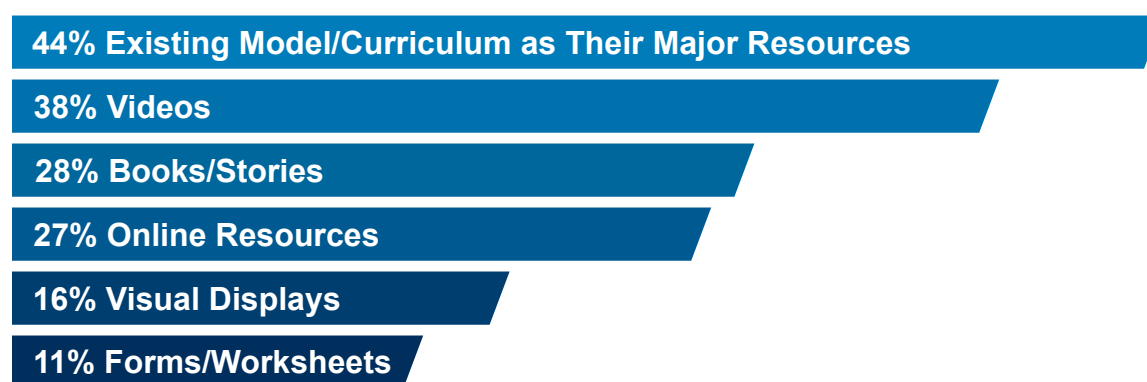
Interestingly, based on survey responses from pre-service school counselors,[27] the counselors-in-training were learning common ways for delivering SEL instruction (e.g., one-on-one, small group, classroom instruction), but did not indicate they were learning about the types of strategies used by school counselors to promote SEL. About the same proportion of pre-service school counselors (43%) as school counselors learned to use an existing framework/curriculum as their major resource for helping students develop SEL during their counseling programs; however, very few reported learning to use other tools/resources during their programs as was indicated by school counselors. These findings suggest that pre-service school counselors received training on evidence-based standards and frameworks, but few of them were learning about SEL practice strategies as part of their school counselor programs. While the time spent on SEL is mixed among school counselors, they are using a combination of methods, strategies, and resources as interventions to address the diverse SE learning needs of students.

What Could Help School Counselors?

Supportive Stakeholders

Developing students' SE skills is a collaborative effort. While school counselors play a critical role, other stakeholders are essential partners in the SEL process. School counselors and district directors reported the level of perceived support for SEL received from different groups within and outside of schools. In-school groups were defined as supportive groups that had regular direct interactions with students in the school environment, including teachers, administrators, support staff/paraprofessionals, and other school health professionals. Out-of-school groups were the supportive groups that also functioned as important stakeholders but were not typically engaged in daily interactions with students inside the schools, such as district directors, school boards, school counselor advisory committees, and families.

Overall, school counselors reported that in-school stakeholders were more supportive of developing students' SE skills than out-of-school groups. A large majority of school counselors considered teachers and administrators (principal, assistant principal, etc.) as the most supportive in-school groups (83% and 81%, respectively; Figure 16), with about half of school counselors reporting families and district directors (49% and 44%, respectively) as the most supportive out-of-school groups (Figure 16). More than two-thirds of school counselors (69%) perceived other health professionals (school psychologist, school social worker, school nurse, etc.) as supportive of SEL. The school board was perceived as least supportive, with almost half of school counselors (48%) considering this group slightly/not at all supportive of SEL.

While less than half of school counselors (44%) reported that school district directors supported their efforts to develop students' SE skills, most school district directors (88%) thought they advocated "a great deal" for resources to support school counselors in developing students' SE skills. Perhaps the resources being provided are insufficient for school counselors to do their SEL work

> **School counselor comment:**
> "While my district and school board claim to support social emotional support, they do not allocate their funds to show this support."

effectively, or other kinds of support (e.g., helping integrate SEL into academic instruction, providing professional development opportunities) are needed from school district directors to change the perceptions of school counselors.

Figure 16. Percentages of School Counselors (n = 263) Rating Perceived Level of Support for Developing Students' SE Skills From Other Stakeholder Groups
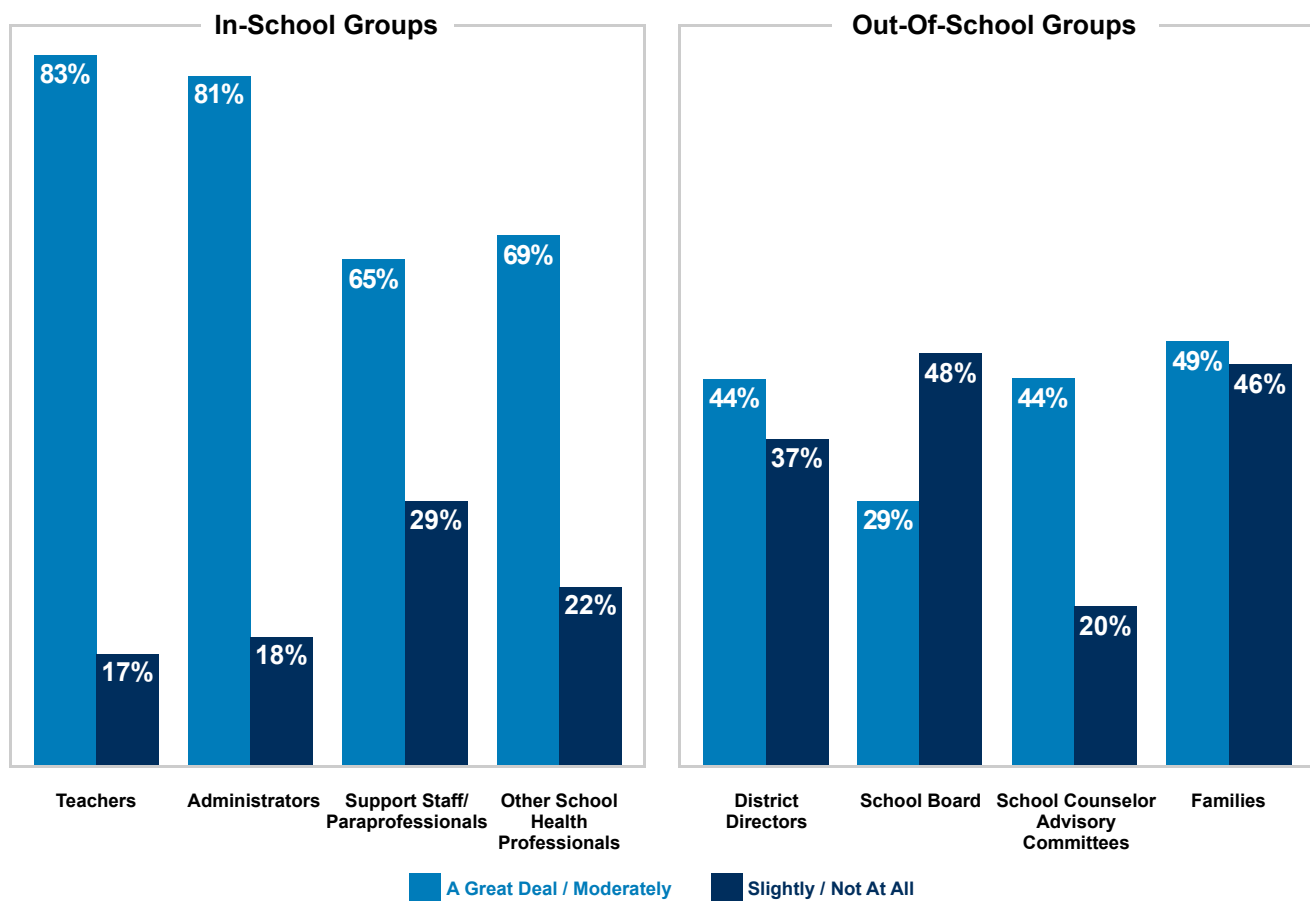
Note: If the percentages for a group do not add up to 100%, it is because some participants selected "I don't know" or "Not applicable."

Consistent with the pattern for school counselors, district directors also had relatively higher ratings for in-school groups supporting SE skill development (i.e., other school counselors, other mental health professionals, teachers, and administrators) compared to out-of-school groups (i.e., state leadership, school board, families). Almost all the school district directors surveyed considered school counselors and other mental health professionals (98% and 93%, respectively) to be a great deal or moderately supportive of developing students' SE skills (Figure 17). Nearly three-quarters of district directors (71%) thought teachers were supportive of SEL. Like school counselors, the least supportive group reported by nearly half of school district directors (49%) was the school board. A much higher percentage of district directors (66%) than school counselors (49%) indicated that families were supportive of building SE skills, while school counselors emphasize that parents/guardians are important to involve in SE skill development as shown in the following section of this report.

Figure 17. Percentages of District Directors (n = 41) Rating Perceived Level of Support for Developing Students' SE Skills From Other Stakeholder Groups
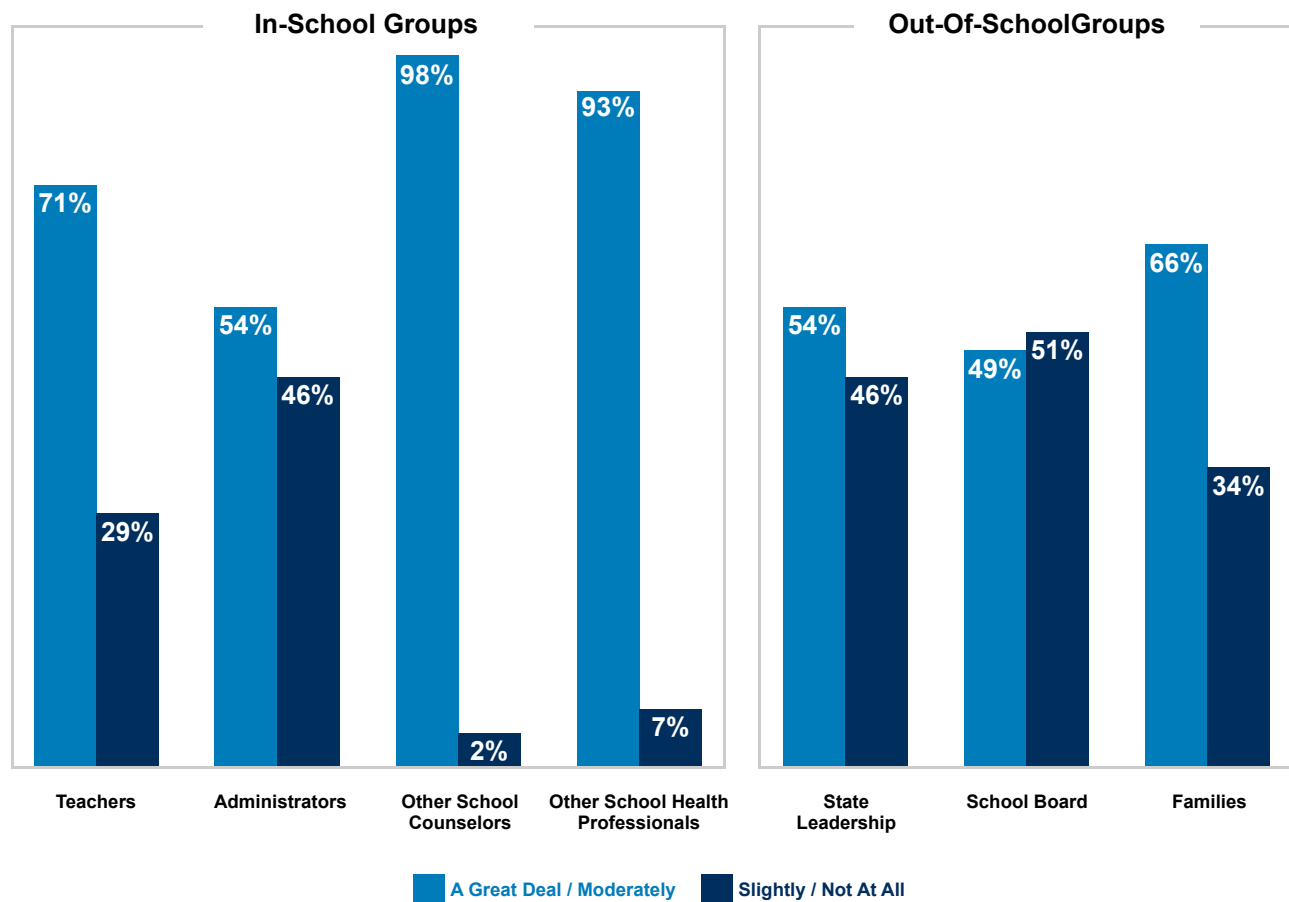
While school counselors and district directors perceived some stakeholder groups as more supportive of developing students' SE skills than other stakeholder groups, there are stakeholders that have concerns about SEL. Some of these concerns include questioning the link between SEL and academic success, apprehension that SEL will detract from core academic programming, and reluctance to transition the role of teaching SE skills from families to counselors and teachers.[28] School administrators, for example, sometimes consider SEL as supplemental, rather than integral, to academic success.[13] Other stakeholders may recognize the connection between SE skills and academic achievement but consider the focus in school should still predominantly be on academic development.[29] Still others view SE skills as the domain for which families should be primarily responsible.[28]

In the survey, school counselors expressed concern that other stakeholders overlooked the importance of SEL and commented on the challenges of not having "buy in" from these stakeholders.

Collaboration between school counselors and other stakeholders is critical for SEL "buy in." According to surveyed school counselors, other stakeholders provide valuable inputs during needs assessments. For example, when school counselors collected evidence to determine what was most important for students to develop and which ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors standards to focus on, they considered other stakeholders (e.g., teachers, families, administrators) as important sources of information. Further, stakeholders such as administrators, teachers, families, and other school personnel should be involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of SEL programs as they provide a more comprehensive perspective on the students and the environments that influence their development. By involving all stakeholders in the development of an integrated, schoolwide SEL program, they are more receptive and committed to the plan.[30] This helps to build support for SEL.

Two school counselor comments:

"The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors are my standard for my practice. My issue is the system in my state/district does not support the application of these standards. This is my biggest frustration in school counseling because I am unsure as to how to resolve this situation."

"Without buy in from administration and other teachers, some (ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors) are difficult to implement school wide."

Involved Families and Teachers

School counselors recognize teachers and parents/guardians as critical stakeholders in the SEL process, given their ongoing and influential interactions directly with individual students. An overwhelming majority of school counselors (98%) considered it important for parents/guardians to be involved in helping their children develop SE skills (Figure 18). However, more than three quarters of school counselors (78%) thought it was very or moderately difficult to involve parents/guardians. Possible difficulties with involving parents/guardians may be lack of time due to other responsibilities within and outside the home, lack of awareness of the importance of SE skills, and lack of resources for developing SE skills at home.[31]

Figure 18. Percentages of School Counselors (n = 263) Rating Importance and Difficulty of Involving Parents/Guardians in Developing Students' SE Skills
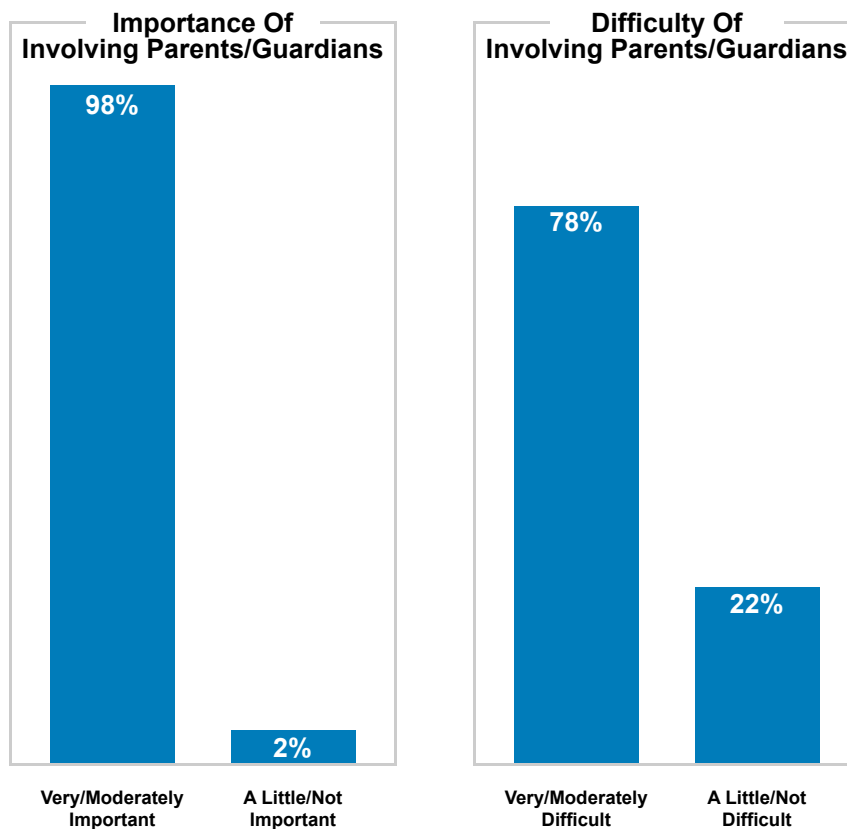
The difficulty with involving parents/guardians was more obvious in lower SES schools (SES identified using 50% or more of students receiving free or reduced lunch). School counselors from lower SES schools were more likely to report difficulties involving parents/guardians with helping their children develop SE skills than school counselors from higher SES schools. Most school counselors (90%) from lower SES schools considered it very or moderately difficult to involve parents/guardians, compared to slightly more than two-thirds (68%) of school counselors from higher SES schools (Figure 19). Parents/guardians in lower income areas may face obstacles such as diminished resources and time constraints related to irregular work schedules that potentially hinder their involvement in students' SEL.[13] This requires school counselors to actively initiate efforts to understand the environments in which students live, to build relationships with parents/guardians, to help them learn about SEL and its benefits, and to introduce realistic ways to participate in building SE skills. Parental involvement in SEL programming has been a key part of successful SEL interventions.[32]

Figure 19. Percentages of School Counselors From Lower SES Schools (n = 114) and Higher SES Schools (n = 136) Rating Difficulty Involving Parents/Guardians in Helping Students Develop SE Skill.

Lower SES Schools (n = 114)	39%	51%	11%
Higher SES Schools (n = 136)	29%	39%	32%

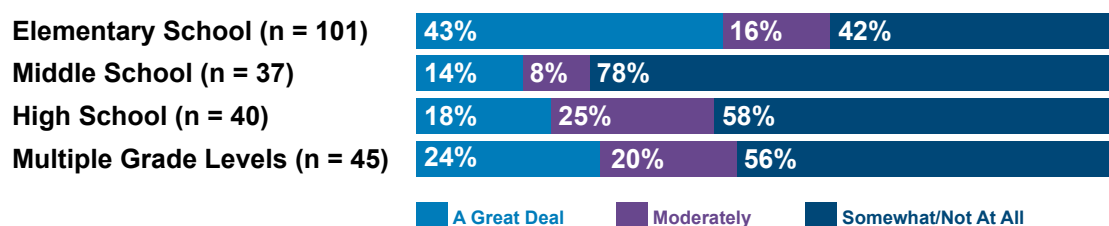■ Very Difficult   ■ Moderately Difficult   ■ A Little/Not Difficult

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Teachers are also important collaborators in the development of students' SE skills. However, most teachers have lower confidence in their proficiency and ability to integrate SEL into the classroom,[33] as well as concerns about fitting SEL into an already packed schedule,[34] and tailoring content to the appropriate grade level.[35] School counselors are well positioned to train teachers on delivering SEL and help teachers see the ways they may already be using SEL in the classroom.[13] School counselors are integral to assisting teachers with SEL curriculum development, and they may need to spend time working hands-on in the classroom with teachers to implement these activities with students. Given the ratio of school counselors to students, it is important for school counselors to not only teach SEL skills but also provide indirect student services, serving as consultants on SEL rather than having sole responsibility for implementing SEL programming. This extended focus helps teachers and families incorporate SEL into their daily interactions with students and create a climate where SEL can thrive.[36]

Less than half of school counselors (46%) reported that they helped teachers and families become aware of the SE skills that students need to be successful. Increasing the SEL awareness of teachers and families differed by grade level. Over half of elementary school counselors (59%) reported that they helped teachers and/or families a great deal or moderately to become aware of necessary SE skills, while less than half of school counselors (ranging from 22% to 44%) in other grade levels reported a similar degree of helping teachers and families with awareness (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Percentages of School Counselors at Different Grade Levels Rating the Extent They Help Teachers/Families Become Aware of the SE Skills Students Need to be Successful

Elementary School (n = 101)	43%	16%	42%
Middle School (n = 37)	14%	8%	78%
High School (n = 40)	18%	25%	58%
Multiple Grade Levels (n = 45)	24%	20%	56%

■ A Great Deal   ■ Moderately   ■ Somewhat/Not At All

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

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School counselor efforts to communicate more with teachers and students' families throughout elementary, middle, and high school about the importance of SEL may increase involvement among these stakeholders. As SEL leaders, school counselors would be primed for developing collaborative relationships with teachers or families related to meeting the SE needs of their students.

More Professional Development

Professional development (PD; specialized training or formal education to enhance professional knowledge and skills) is an important aspect of effective SEL implementation. Access to the most current SEL practices, resources, and outcomes is invaluable to school counselors as they work to help students develop SE skills, involve families and teachers in this effort, and build SEL support across stakeholders.

Nearly two-thirds of school counselors (63%) reported that they have received a great deal or moderate amount of PD related to SEL (Figure 21). The most common PD received by school counselors were workshops/conferences (54%), training specific to an SEL framework/curriculum (35%), and online training (11%), much of which occurred at a state or district level.[37]
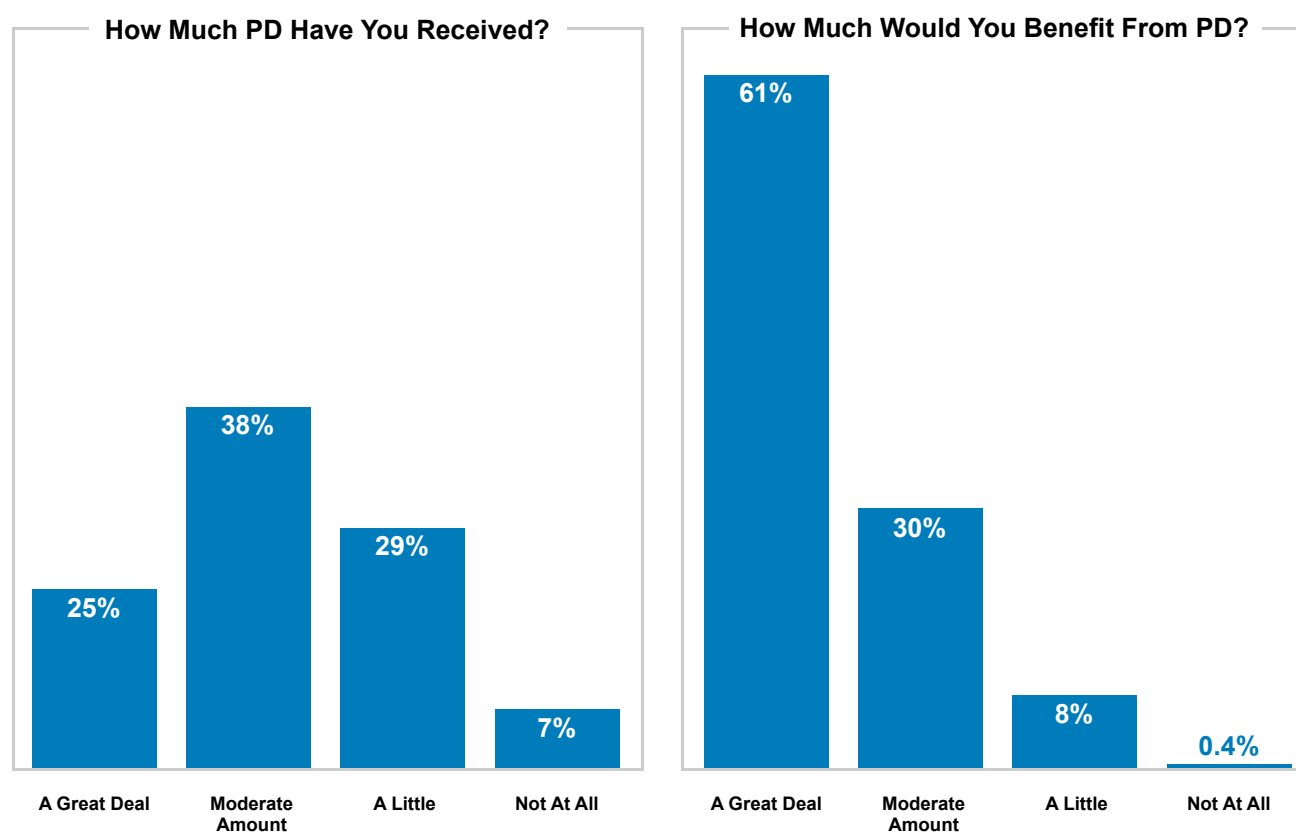
Two school counselor comments:
" I believe more professional development is needed for teachers and staff."

" I wish grade level/classroom teachers had more such [PD] opportunities!"

Figure 21. Percentages of School Counselors (n = 263) Rating the Degree to Which They Received and the Expected Benefit From SEL-Related PD

How Much PD Have You Received?

- A Great Deal: 25%
- Moderate Amount: 38%
- A Little: 29%
- Not At All: 7%

How Much Would You Benefit From PD?

- A Great Deal: 61%
- Moderate Amount: 30%
- A Little: 8%
- Not At All: 0.4%

At the same time, a large majority of school counselors (91%) thought they would benefit a great deal or at least moderately from professional development in SEL (Figure 21). The three most frequently identified areas where school counselors indicated they would benefit from professional development were SEL applications (e.g., how to embed in classroom, curriculum/ activities ideas; 21%), mental health issues (e.g., stress, anxiety, trauma; 21%), and how to work with specific populations (e.g., students with special needs, specific age groups; 10%).[38] Some school counselors also indicated a need for more guidance on how to apply and implement SEL standards and frameworks, such as the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, in the classroom. They also welcomed more curriculum/activities, based on specific standards or frameworks, that could be applied directly with students.

> **School counselor comment:**
> " [There's a need for] workshops that provide lesson plans/ways to teach skills to students in large groups such as classroom settings or how to incorporate those skills being taught in core curriculum classes."

As pre-service school counselors prepare for their futures in the field, they also receive professional training in SEL. While two-thirds (65%) of counselor educators reported that their programs placed a great deal of emphasis on preparing pre-service school counselors for students' SE skill development (as shown in Figure 4), fewer pre-service school counselors (57%) thought their training focused a great deal on preparing them to develop the SE skills of students (Figure 22).

School counselor comment:
"I would like more specific strategies/books/ materials/websites to use to actually teach ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors."

"I would love coaching on how specifically to apply them at my site."

"I wish there were more banks of lessons available for exploring ways to teach these ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors."

Figure 22. Percentages of Pre-Service School Counselors (n = 68) Rating the Extent Their School Counselor Training Focused on Preparing Them to Develop SE Skills of Students

A Great Deal	57%
Moderately	35%
Slightly	7%

Note. Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Pre-service school counselors may benefit from additional professional training, particularly in areas where they indicated they have more limited knowledge such as strategies, tools, and resources to help students develop SE skills. Similar to practicing school counselors, further training on how to apply SEL standards and frameworks would be beneficial. Pre-service school counselors (35%) and counselor educators (45%) both highlighted the application of ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors as a challenge for pre-service school counselors during their training.

At the same time, pre-service school counselors do benefit from on-site training opportunities. Most pre-service school counselors (87%) reported that their practicum or internship experiences addressed developing the SE skills of students moderately or a great deal (Figure 23). These valuable work experiences help pre-service school counselors to see school counselors model SEL best practices, to practice SEL activities, and to receive feedback, all of which can help them develop and refine their own skills to be more effective in their work with students.

Preservice school counselor comment:
"Sometimes it feels challenging to incorporate a good range of the Mindsets and Behaviors in a lesson plan."

School counselor educator comment:
"The challenge comes with the application when they are in their practicum and internship experience."

Figure 23. Percentages of Pre-Service School Counselors (n = 68) Rating the Extent to Which On-Site Training Opportunities Addressed Developing the SE Skills of Students

A Great Deal	53%
Moderately	34%
Slightly	3%

Note: The percentages in the figure added up to 90% because the remaining 10% of pre-service school counselors reported they had not had an internship or practicum yet.

With additional professional development or training, school counselors and pre-service school counselors would be further equipped to provide SE services to students. Ongoing support through professional development can provide opportunities for these professionals to develop as SEL consultants, an alternative to direct servicers, and use these skills to facilitate greater involvement by teachers and families in implementing SEL. Moreover, professional development that is aligned with evidence-based school SEL goals endorsed by administrators and district directors would potentially help to increase support among stakeholders for developing students' SE skills.

Recommendations

Research shows that SE skill development contributes to positive education and work outcomes of students. When students implement, for example, effective learning strategies, self-management skills, and social skills that improve social interactions, they are less likely to have disciplinary problems and are more likely to excel academically. School counseling professionals are instrumental in whether these skills are developed, and if so, how well. For this reason, we provide recommendations for supporting school counselors as they do this important work.

Incorporate SEL initiatives into comprehensive school district plans. School counseling and school district professionals confirmed, via their survey responses, the importance of developing students' SE skills. However, the school system must support the development of these skills strategically and intentionally. It is recommended that stakeholders in the educational system work toward common goals by having school districts include agreed-upon SEL initiatives in their comprehensive plans and create vertical alignment of their goals and strategies throughout the K–12 experience. These plans must also consider the support school counselors and educators need to develop students' SE skills, such as SE curriculum, after-school programs, and professional development opportunities. Through these comprehensive efforts, stakeholders across elementary, middle, and high schools can better understand the relevance of SEL and more appropriately meet students' SE development needs.

Inform SE skill development with evidence. School counselors indicated that they employed needs assessment data or state standards to help determine which SE standards to tackle. They used different types of evidence to inform decision-making and identify the most relevant SE skills and effective approaches to developing these skills. Additional evidence may be available through existing school or district data, such as attendance rates or the number and type of disciplinary incidents. To create a unified approach, stakeholders should establish which data (e.g., achievement, attendance, and discipline data) would shed light on the SE skills students need to develop and subsequently use the data to show improvement. The unified approach should specify mechanisms through which to collect those data and explain how the data will be used in the decision-making process. It is important to emphasize that implementation of the plan would be tailored to the needs of the students and the school, for example, by grade bands and school size in SE knowledge, use, and needs.

Support professional development for school counseling professionals. It was reassuring to see that both current and pre-service school counselors believed they would benefit from professional development in SE skill development. Districts and schools should support opportunities for ongoing education and specialized training in the key SEL areas reported by the school counselors in this study. This training would focus on developing methods by which teachers and school counselors can collaborate on integrating SE strategies and interventions into the classroom, methods for teaching learning strategies, self-management skills and social skills, and modeling of concrete examples for SE development. Additionally, opportunities to learn more about implementing evidence-based strategies for family and

community engagement would be important since this was viewed both as a benefit to students' SE development and was reported as a difficulty in identifying effective ways to engage. This professional development and training would serve both in-service school counselors and pre-service school counselors as they support the development of students' SE skills in schools.

Ensure school counselors lead SEL efforts within schools. Considering the limited time for SEL in schools, varying amounts of support among stakeholders, and difficulty involving families, our results suggest the need to emphasize the role of school counselors in delivering SEL education and interventions and serving as consultants and collaborators for all SEL efforts with other educators in their schools. As consultants, school counselors would lend SEL-related support to educators, keep up to date on the cutting-edge work of SE development, provide advice for action, and connect individuals across the educational system based on SE needs. As collaborators, school counselors could integrate their lessons with academic content or co-teach SEL lessons with teachers. As SEL leaders, school counselors could expand the perspective on who can engage in SE skill development and how SEL can occur in schools. There would be more opportunities for school counselors to increase awareness of students' SE needs among educators, families, and other school staff, and to use limited resources to address these needs more widely.

Promote the availability of and improvements to SE skill development supports through federal and state funding. School counseling professionals were consistent in reporting that they need additional support for the effective development of students' SE skills. Considering the call for support and the above recommendations, improving students' SE skill development requires state and federal funding. This would include funds for professional development opportunities, SEL-related resources to support students, SE data collection and management, and continuing research to identify best practices and curricula for developing students' SE skills. With the negative impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic on students' academic growth, social and emotional development, and mental health, it is even more important for students to have increased access to high-quality, school-based SEL services.

Appendix A. Sample and School Characteristics

In total, 398 participants (10% Male, 90% Female) completed the survey (total sample of participants with complete and incomplete surveys = 532). Two-thirds were school counselors (66%), followed by pre-service school counselors (currently a school counselor in training; 17%), school district directors (10%), and school counselor educators (7%). By race/ethnicity, participants were White (77%), Black/African American (10%), Hispanic/Latino (7%), Asian (2%), American Indian/Alaska Native (0.25%, n = 1), and Multiracial (3%). There were 81% of participants who speak only English, and 19% of them speak English and a language other than English. Regarding years of experience, 22% of school counselors had less than 5 years of experience in the profession, 35% had between 5–10 years as school counselors, and 43% were veterans with 11 or more years of experience.

The schools in which the surveyed counselors (with completed surveys) work were located in rural/non-metro/town areas (40%), suburban areas (39%), and urban centers (21%). School grade levels included elementary grades K–5 or K–6 (38%), middle school grades 6–8 (14%), high school grades 9–12 (15%), multiple grades across two levels (15%), and multiple grades across all three levels (17%). There were 52% of schools with one school counselor and 47% of schools with two or more school counselors. In addition to school counselors, 53% of schools had one or more people providing counseling support to students that were not school counselors. The number of school counseling staff depended on school size—larger schools with more than 700 students were more likely to have multiple school counselors and two or more other people providing school counseling support than schools with fewer students. There were 52% of schools with fewer than 50% of students receiving free or reduced lunch, and 43% of schools had 50% or more of students on free or reduced lunch. Free and reduced lunch was used as an indicator of higher and lower socioeconomic status.

Appendix B. Methodology

The survey was developed by staff at ACT with expertise in SEL, research methods, survey development, counseling, and/or various areas of psychology. Survey items were drafted based on relevant literature and trends in school counseling. ASCA staff reviewed and suggested improvements to items and the sequence of items in the survey. ASCA provided separate member lists from which participants were recruited for survey feedback interviews, a survey pilot, and the full-scale survey. Participants for each of these phases were recruited through emails. To obtain initial feedback on the survey, we conducted in-depth interviews with six school counselors from across the US, one of whom was also a dean of students. Prior to each interview, participants were sent emails that included the survey questions for review. A single researcher followed the same protocol with each participant. During the interviews, participants were oriented to the project (i.e., its goal and objective), received information on the types of questions that were designed for the four survey groups, and instructed to consider

whether the questions made sense, ways to improve them, and whether they provided useful information. A request for additional survey ideas was also part of the discussion. Feedback included wording changes to survey items, suggestions for new items, and removal of one item. After incorporating feedback, the survey was piloted with 12 school counselors, eight of whom completed the entire survey. A small number of survey items were revised based on pilot results. The final survey was administered to participants online through Qualtrics software. Participants took approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey and received $25 for their participation.

Prior to quantitative and qualitative data analysis, survey participants who had not completed the entire survey were excluded based on selected criteria. For school counselors, participants who answered more than 90% of 36 required items were retained in the sample. The distribution for each selected-response item did not change significantly after the exclusion of participants. For pre-service school counselors, school counselor educators, and school district directors, participants who completed more than 98% of their surveys were included in the analyses as their surveys included fewer items than the counselor survey.

The survey consisted of two item types: selected-response questions and open-ended questions. For each selected-response question, the distribution of each response option was identified by calculating frequencies and percentages. Descriptive results were aggregated within each participant group (i.e., school counselors, pre-service school counselors, school counselor educators, and school district directors). Using quantitative (non-parametric) analysis, several school characteristics were selected as grouping variables to categorize participants and compare their responses based on group affiliations. These grouping variables included school counselors' years of service, school location, grade level in a school, number of school counselors in a school, school socioeconomic status, number of people providing counseling support in a school, and school size. Using the grouping variables, non-parametric tests (chi-square test of independence) were conducted to see if there was an association between these characteristics and participant responses. There were significant non-parametric results for some grouping variables. Thematic qualitative data analysis procedures were used to analyze open-ended questions in the survey. All responses for each open-ended question were read, segmented by relevance, and coded by a qualitative research expert. The segments were then grouped and compared. Tentative categories were constructed for each question through this analytical coding process. Occurrences of each category across all the participants were calculated to verify the plausibility of each category.

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37. In an open-ended question, 216 school counselors reported the professional development they had received. Other kinds of professional development mentioned although with small percentages included college courses, reading materials, national-level training, school-level training, and self-directed training.

38. In an open-ended question, 198 school counselors reported the kinds of professional development they would like to receive and specific topics of interest. Other topics mentioned although with small percentages included collaboration with other stakeholders for SEL, specific frameworks and theories in SEL, behavior modification, coping strategies, emotional regulation, conflict resolutions, peer relationship, and suicide prevention.

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