

# The Social Value Of School Counselling

Evaluating its impact on students, teachers and schools

## School Counsellors Are Teachers First



In Alberta, school counsellors are certificated teachers who have received additional professional development or graduate-level training that prepares them to support students' personal, social, educational and career development, as well as promote students' mental health and well-being.

*How many counsellors are enough to respond to students' needs?*



## School Counsellors Work With



### Colleagues

They offer classroom guidance by developing structured lessons or units of curriculum to help students build critical personal and life skills for their future success.



### Students

They provide counselling one on one or in groups to respond to students' unique needs or respond to crisis situations.



### Families

They support families by collaborating with parents and connecting them to appropriate community, health and mental health care resources.

## School Counsellors Are Worth the Investment



**To support our students, a school counsellor should be in every elementary, junior high and high school.** Moreover, school leaders are encouraged to move towards the evidence-based recommended ratio of 1 counsellor to every 250 students, which produces the best overall student, teacher and school outcomes.



**The Ministry of Education should make a firm commitment to sustainable funding for school counsellors at all school levels,** given the high social returns of investment in school counsellors and the robust scientific evidence of improved student academic, career, behavioural, social and mental health outcomes associated with counselling activities in schools.

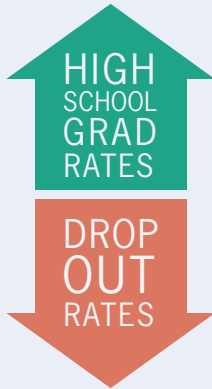


**School counsellors need to be positioned as core members of the teaching, support staff and leadership teams** to foster collaboration and understanding of the impact of their services and the value added in supporting teachers to meet students' needs.

# What is the value of school counsellors?

## Improving Students' Success

Schools that have enough counsellors have been able to **cut their drop-out rates in half**, and **almost double their high school completion rates to approximately 80 per cent**.



### Students who have received in-school counselling



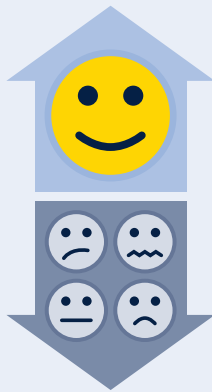
a) have **higher grades** in math and English, and **higher scores** on provincial and national achievement tests.



b) are **more likely** to be admitted to postsecondary institutions.

## Addressing Mental Health Issues and Behaviour Problems

School counselling has been found to **significantly reduce student anxiety and depression**.



### Having enough school counsellors in a school has been connected to



a) a 59 per cent **decrease** in student discipline or behaviour problems reported by teachers.



b) **fewer incidents** of bullying.

## Generating Social Return



Every \$1 invested in counselling services for children and youth generates social value of \$1.62 **after only one year**.



Employing additional counsellors has a more potent effect on student achievement and behaviour than hiring more teachers because counsellors offer multifaceted supports to colleagues, students and families.

This publication provides highlights from the "Briefing on Social Return on Investment for School Counselling," written by Dr Noorfarah Merali (University of Alberta). The briefing—prepared for the Alberta Teachers' Association's Council of School Counsellors—is available on the council's website ([www.ataschoolcounsellors.com](http://www.ataschoolcounsellors.com)). It includes complete references for all of the information and data presented here.