



SCHOOL COUNSELING CURRICULUM



IMPACT Research Summary

How IMPACT is designed to improve student outcomes, the research behind it, and how results are tracked. For grant writers, it includes the logic model, research basis and evaluation plan that ESSA Tier IV asks for.

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A note from me

I created IMPACT so school counselors have a complete, organized program that is ready to use, without building everything from scratch. My resources are based on the best available research, sourced from peer-reviewed articles published in the *Professional School Counseling* journal, and they all follow evidence-based school counseling: research-backed interventions used to improve student outcomes.

For grant applications: under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a program is evidence-based at Tier IV when it "demonstrates a rationale" (ESEA section 8101(21)(A)(ii)). That takes three things, and all three are here: a logic model (a one-page map of how IMPACT's resources and activities lead to results for students), research behind each part of IMPACT, and a plan to track results. You are welcome to use it in Title IV-A, Title II-A, Title I and state grant applications. Your district makes the final determination of evidence level for its own funding decisions.

Rachel

Rachel Davis, MA PPS
Founder, Bright Futures Counseling

Program description

IMPACT is a school counseling curriculum for PK-8 school counselors. Each counselor license includes a library of electronically delivered, printable resources organized by grade level, topic, tier, resource type and season:

Tier 1

Classroom lessons for every grade level

Tier 2

Small group counseling plans

Tier 3

Individual counseling resources

Data tools

Self-assessments, behavior surveys and progress monitoring forms

Professional development

Monthly trainings with certificates

Community

A counselor community for collaboration

IMPACT is built around the ASCA National Model and the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, and many resources support CASEL competencies. IMPACT collects no student data.

Problem statement

Elementary and middle school counselors are expected to deliver a comprehensive, data-informed program across three tiers of support, often for hundreds of students each. ASCA recommends one school counselor for every 250 students, and research shows that students do better on attendance, behavior and achievement when counselors have manageable caseloads and time for direct services (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012; Lapan et al., 2012; Carrell & Carrell, 2006). Yet many counselors spend scarce planning time searching for and adapting materials, and their lessons, groups and data tools often come from many unconnected sources. That makes it hard to deliver consistent, standards-aligned instruction in coping skills, self-regulation, relationship skills and school success behaviors, and hard to show results.

When students lack these skills, the effects show up in classroom behavior, peer conflict, attendance and learning. Universal, well-implemented skill instruction in schools improves these outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Cipriano et al., 2023), and counselor-delivered classroom and small group programs improve school success behaviors and achievement (Whiston et al., 2011; Villares et al., 2012). IMPACT addresses the gap between what counselors are asked to deliver and the time and tools they have to deliver it.

Target population

- **Direct users:** PK-8 school counselors and counseling teams in public, charter and private schools.
- **Students reached:** all students through Tier 1 classroom lessons; students identified through referrals and academic, behavior and attendance data for Tier 2 small groups and Tier 3 individual support.
- **Other participants:** teachers who host classroom lessons and complete behavior surveys; administrators who review program data.

Theory of action and key assumptions

- If counselors have a complete, organized, standards-aligned set of Tier 1, 2 and 3 resources and the training to use them, then they will spend less time preparing and deliver more direct services with greater consistency.
- If students receive regular, explicit instruction and practice in coping skills, self-regulation, relationship skills and school success behaviors, then their skills improve in the short term (Durlak et al., 2011; Cipriano et al., 2023), and those gains are linked to later well-being and behavior (Taylor et al., 2017).
- If counselors use data to place students in small groups and monitor progress, then interventions reach the students who need them and can be adjusted (Zyromski & Mariani, 2019; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016).
- What makes the biggest difference: how well and how often lessons are delivered (Durlak & DuPre, 2008), counselor caseload, administrative support for classroom time, and student attendance.

Recommended implementation

Results depend on how well and how often lessons are delivered (Durlak & DuPre, 2008), so IMPACT comes with a recommended plan. Counselors adapt it to their caseload, schedule and school data.

Component	Recommended implementation
Tier 1	One classroom lesson per class each month, August through June, following the IMPACT scope and sequence for each grade level.
Tier 2	Small groups of 6 to 8 sessions, meeting weekly, for students identified through referrals and academic, behavior and attendance data.
Tier 3	An individual counseling curriculum for students who need more support, with progress recorded on the included rating scales and data tracking tools.
Data	Pre and post self-assessments for every lesson unit, group and individual plan; teacher and parent behavior surveys before and after Tier 2 and Tier 3 support; periodic data review and an end-of-year report.
Professional development	Monthly training attendance, with certificates kept for professional development records.
School support	Protected time for classroom lessons in the master schedule and a named data contact for each school.

How IMPACT leads to results

Inputs and resources	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes within a semester	Intermediate outcomes one school year	Long-term outcomes two or more years
Library of printable resources organized by grade, topic, tier, resource type and season	Counselor teaches Tier 1 classroom lessons on a planned calendar. Recommended: one classroom lesson per class each month.	Classroom lessons delivered per grade; percent of classes reached	Students can name and practice the coping skills, self-regulation strategies and communication skills taught in lessons	Fewer office discipline referrals and classroom disruptions in participating grades	Improved school climate and safety indicators
Lesson plans, slides and handouts built around the ASCA Student Standards; many supporting CASEL competencies	Counselor runs Tier 2 small groups for students identified by school data. Recommended: small groups of 6 to 8 sessions.	Groups and sessions completed; students served per group	Group members show pre and post gains on self-assessments tied to group goals	Improved attendance and work habits for students served in groups	Improved academic achievement, especially for students who received Tier 2 or Tier 3 support
Tier 3 individual counseling curricula with student journals and data tracking tools	Counselor uses Tier 3 resources in individual sessions and documents progress	Students with individual plans; sessions documented	Students meet individual short-term goals recorded on rating scales and progress monitoring forms	Students move from Tier 3 to Tier 2 or Tier 1 support as goals are met	Sustained student well-being and engagement as students move to higher grades
Data and progress monitoring tools: pre and post self-assessments, teacher and parent behavior surveys, rating scales, caseload log, end-of-year report	Counselor collects pre and post and progress data and reviews it regularly with school teams	Completed pre and post forms; data reviews held	Counselors use data to adjust lessons and group membership	Program decisions are data-informed (the "Assess" component of the ASCA National Model)	A comprehensive, ASCA-aligned school counseling program that can document results
Monthly professional development trainings with certificates	Counselor attends monthly trainings and applies the strategies	Training hours and certificates earned per counselor	Counselor confidence and skill in delivering tiered lessons and groups increase	Higher implementation quality: lessons delivered as designed and on schedule	Counselor retention and capacity; less time spent building materials from scratch
Counselor community	Counselors share implementation tips and adaptations	Community participation	Faster problem-solving and idea sharing	Consistent program delivery across schools in a district	District-wide consistency in counseling services

Conditions for success: counselor time, classroom access in the master schedule and a school data contact, with administrators protecting time for lessons and data review. Read each row from left to right: the resources a counselor has, what the counselor does with them, what can be counted, and the changes the program is designed to produce.

The research behind IMPACT

Each part of IMPACT is tied to published research. Full citations are in the references.

Part of IMPACT	What the research says	Citations
Universal (Tier 1) classroom lessons teaching coping, self-regulation and relationship skills	A meta-analysis of 213 school-based universal programs (270,034 students) found improved skills, attitudes and behavior and an 11-percentile-point gain in academic achievement. A 2023 meta-analysis of 424 studies (575,361 students) found improved skills, behaviors, school climate and safety, peer relationships and achievement. Benefits persisted from 6 months to 18 years later.	Durlak et al. (2011); Cipriano et al. (2023); Taylor et al. (2017); Mahoney et al. (2018)
Counselor-delivered classroom and small group programs	A meta-analysis of school counseling interventions found positive average effects; a counselor-led classroom and small group program (Student Success Skills) improved school success behaviors and test scores.	Whiston et al. (2011); Brigrman & Campbell (2003); Villares et al. (2012)
A comprehensive, ASCA-aligned school counseling program	Statewide studies link comprehensive program implementation with better attendance, discipline and achievement; elementary schools with comprehensive programs showed higher achievement; elementary RAMP schools (ASCA National Model recognition) outperformed comparison schools in ELA and math.	Carey & Dimmitt (2012); Dimmitt & Wilkerson (2012); Sink & Stroh (2003); Wilkerson, Pérusse & Hughes (2013); ASCA (2019, 2021)
Counselor access and direct-service time	More counselor access reduced disciplinary problems and improved young children's behavioral and emotional outcomes; one additional counselor reduced misbehavior and raised boys' achievement; individual counselors have measurable effects on students' educational attainment.	Carrell & Carrell (2006); Reback (2010); Carrell & Hoekstra (2014); Lapan et al. (2012); Mulhern (2023); Sparks & Mulhern (2026)
Tiered (MTSS) structure for Tier 1, 2 and 3 services	Integrating a multi-tiered system of supports with comprehensive school counseling programs aligns counselor services to student need and data.	Ziomek-Daigle et al. (2016)
Data collection and progress monitoring	Logic models and data-driven decisions connect goals, interventions and evaluation in school counseling.	Zyromski & Mariani (2019); ASCA (2019)
Professional development and implementation support	Implementation quality strongly affects program outcomes; well-implemented programs produce larger effects.	Durlak & DuPre (2008); Durlak et al. (2011)
Return on investment	Social and emotional skill interventions that have been studied show benefits that exceed their costs on average.	Belfield et al. (2015)

Mulhern (2023) and Sparks & Mulhern (2026) study high school counselors; they are included as supporting evidence that counselor access matters.

How results are tracked

Each year I review how counselors use IMPACT and what they tell me, and use it to improve the program. Districts can measure their own results with the data tools already in IMPACT.

Questions to examine

- **Implementation.** How many lessons, groups and individual plans do IMPACT counselors deliver, and how closely do they follow the recommended sequence and schedule?
- **Short-term outcomes.** Do students show gains from pre to post on IMPACT self-assessments for classroom lessons and small groups?
- **Intermediate outcomes.** In schools that implement IMPACT as recommended, do behavior (office discipline referrals and teacher behavior ratings), academics (grades and assessment results) and attendance improve compared with the prior year?
- **Counselor outcomes.** Do counselors report less preparation time, more direct-service time and greater confidence?

Data sources

All student-level data stays with the school.

- IMPACT pre and post self-assessments, teacher and parent behavior surveys and progress monitoring forms, completed and kept by the school counselor.
- School records the district already collects on behavior (office discipline referrals), academics (grades and state assessment results) and attendance (including chronic absenteeism).
- Counselor feedback.
- IMPACT account usage data about counselors: resources downloaded, trainings attended and certificates earned. This is counselor account data, not student data.

When results are reviewed

When	What happens
Throughout the year	Counselors use the IMPACT pre and post self-assessments, teacher and parent behavior surveys and progress monitoring tools, and review the results with the school team.
End of the school year	Counselors complete the IMPACT end-of-year report, and the district compares behavior, academic and attendance data with the prior year.
Once a year	I review IMPACT usage data and counselor feedback, and update resources and trainings based on what I learn.

Privacy and consent

I never receive student names or student records. If a district chooses to share its results with me, it shares only aggregate school-level summaries. Districts follow their own parental notification and consent policies for any student surveys or screeners. When federal Title IV funds pay for a student mental health assessment or service, ESEA section 4001 requires prior written parental consent, and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment applies to certain surveys.

Reporting

Any licensed school or district can ask for a report of how often its counselors use IMPACT, the resources they download and the trainings they attend. Districts that want to share their own school-level results can email me at rachel@brightfutures-counseling.com.

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