

SUCCESS

# ONTARIO SCHOOL COUNSELLORS' ASSOCIATION

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Role of the Guidance  
Teacher - Counsellor

Survey 2018  
Executive Summary Report



OSCA / ACOSO



# Acknowledgements

The development of this survey could not have happened without the support of many individuals. First, to the 650 participants who took the time out of their busy days to respond to the survey in the spring of 2018. Without their involvement, the information contained in this report would not have been collected. To Sean Lyons PhD., from the University of Guelph, who spent countless hours developing the survey, along with valuable input from the OSCA/ACOSO Board of Directors. To Kiranjit Saggu, M.A., from the University of Guelph, who under the supervision of Dr. Lyons, compiled the data into a workable report for the OSCA/ACOSO Board of Directors to use. To Raheel Ahmed from Dazzle Dezine, who creatively took the data and designed the executive summary and to the Ministry of Education, who supported the project. And lastly, to the members of OSCA/ACOSO Board of Directors, who volunteer to serve their time on the board to ensure that Guidance and Career Education remains a forefront in the minds of all.

# Introduction

The challenges of preparing and developing Ontario's students for the future are substantial. Shifts in technology, demographics and globalization make it highly uncertain which career paths will provide opportunities in decades to come and which will see decline. Growing awareness and openness about mental health among school-aged children provides opportunities for life-changing interventions, but also places strains on educators, who require new training and supports to address these issues. Changing generational values, attitudes and behaviours create potential understanding gaps between students and educators that can affect communication and interactions.

Amid this complex and dynamic context, the Ontario School Counsellors' Association (OSCA/ACOSO) undertook this study to gain a clearer understanding of the state of the Guidance Teacher-Counsellor (GC) role in Ontario. The study was conducted in May and June 2018 to gather a snapshot of their roles, responsibilities, time demands and training and development needs of Ontario's Guidance Teacher-Counsellors.

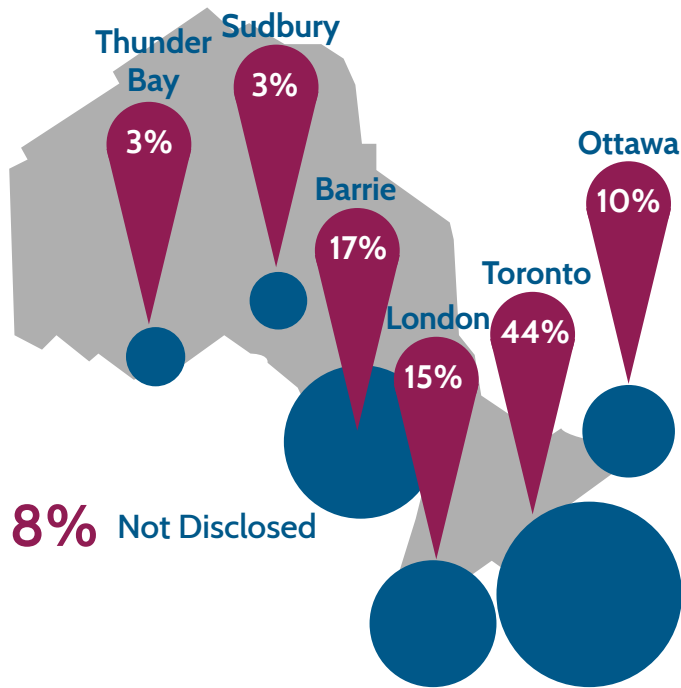
**The study had the following main objectives:**

1. To document how Guidance Teacher-Counsellors spend their time within the GC role, both during and outside of school hours;
2. To understand GCs' training and development needs and whether they are being met;
3. To document other people's perceptions about the GC role as they are experienced by GCs.

# Methodology

Invitations to participate in the survey were sent out to OSCA subscribers and were shared with the larger Ontario guidance and career education community in May and June 2018. The survey was provided in both English and French.

## Percentage of Respondents by Ministry of Education Regional Office



Participants

650



Employed by Ontario School Board

97%



Independent

2%



Elsewhere

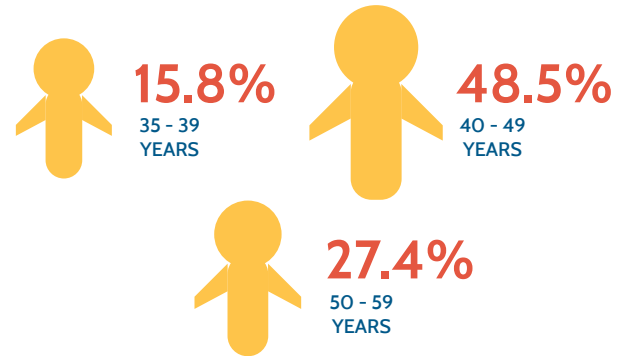
0.5%



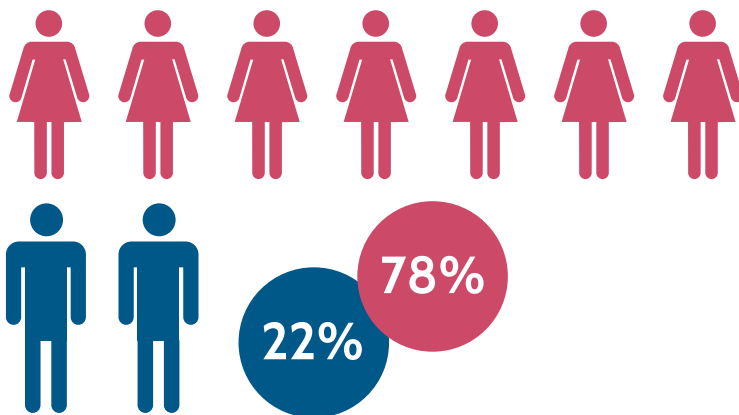
### Language of Respondents



### Responses by Age



### Participants by Gender

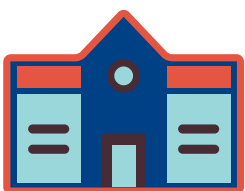


**95%** GCs in a single school



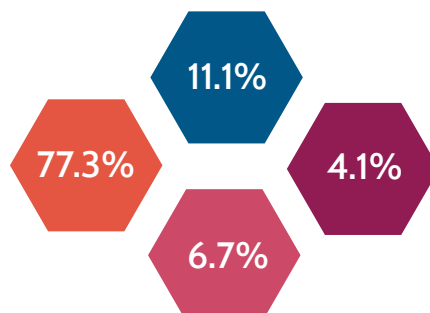
**5%** GCs in multiple schools

### Responses by Role



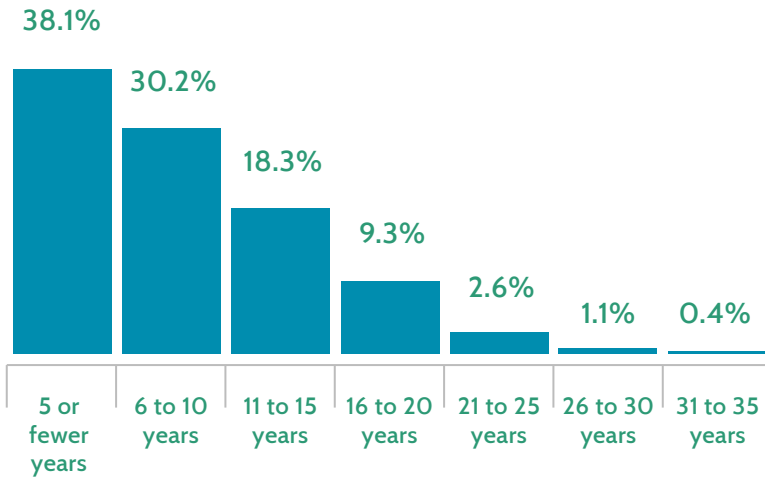
**77%**

GCs in secondary schools grade 7-12 schools or 9-12 schools



- Secondary School GTC (grades 7-12 OR 9-12)
- Elementary School GTCounsellor (grades K-8)
- Board Guidance Lead/Coordinator
- Other

### Number of Years of Experience in the GC Role



**73%** Specialist qualification: G & CE

### GC's Assigned to One School



**95%** of the participants work in a single school

### Number of Schools where GCs Works and Proportion of Time Dedicated to GC Role

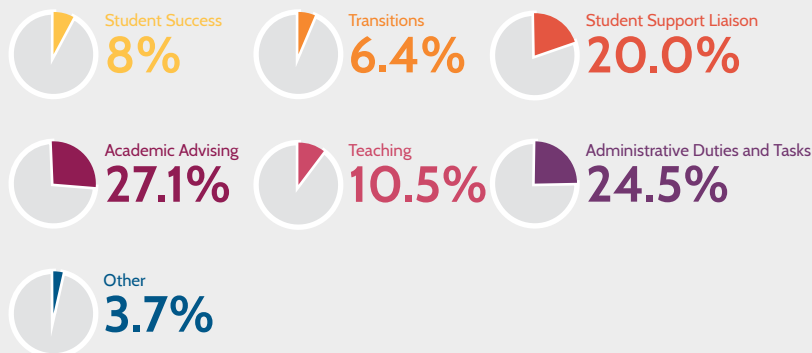


- GC at more than 1 School
- GC at 1 School
- Guidance Teacher-Counsellor Fully Assigned
- Guidance Teacher-Counsellor Not Fully Assigned

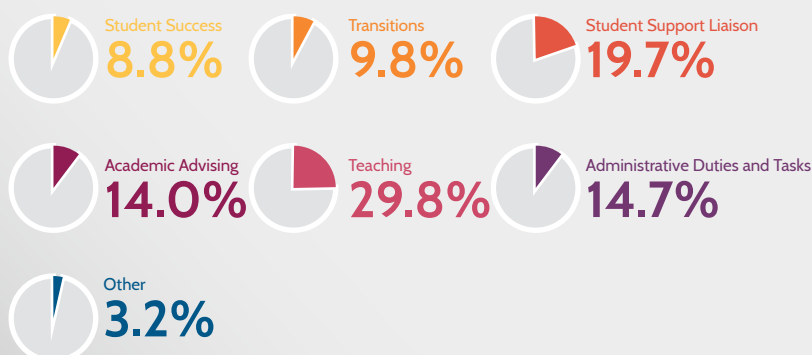
## Guidance Teacher - Counsellors' Time Demands

A major aim of this survey was to determine how GCs spend their time at work. To gather this information, we asked a number of questions related to the number of hours GCs spend each week on six broad categories of responsibilities: administrative duties and tasks; academic advising; teaching; student support liaison; transitions; and student success. We then asked them to specify how many hours they spend on a number of activities within each of these categories.

### Time Spent on Various Tasks – Secondary GCs



### Time Spent on Various Tasks – Elementary GCs



## Average Hours Per Week Spent on Various Tasks

Administrative duties and tasks

11.02 hours  
5.29 hours



Academic Advising

11.97 hours  
4.92 hours



Teaching

4.73 hours  
10.67 hours



Student Support Liaison

8.92 hours  
6.32 hours



Transitions

2.89 hours  
3.59 hours



Student Success

3.61 hours  
2.60 hours



Other

1.75 hours  
1.18 hours



Total

44.78 hours  
34.57 hours



■ Secondary school Guidance Teacher - Counsellors  
■ Elementary school Guidance Teacher - Counsellors



## Specialist Programs in GC's School GCs working in a Single School



## Average Hours per Week Spent on Transition Activities

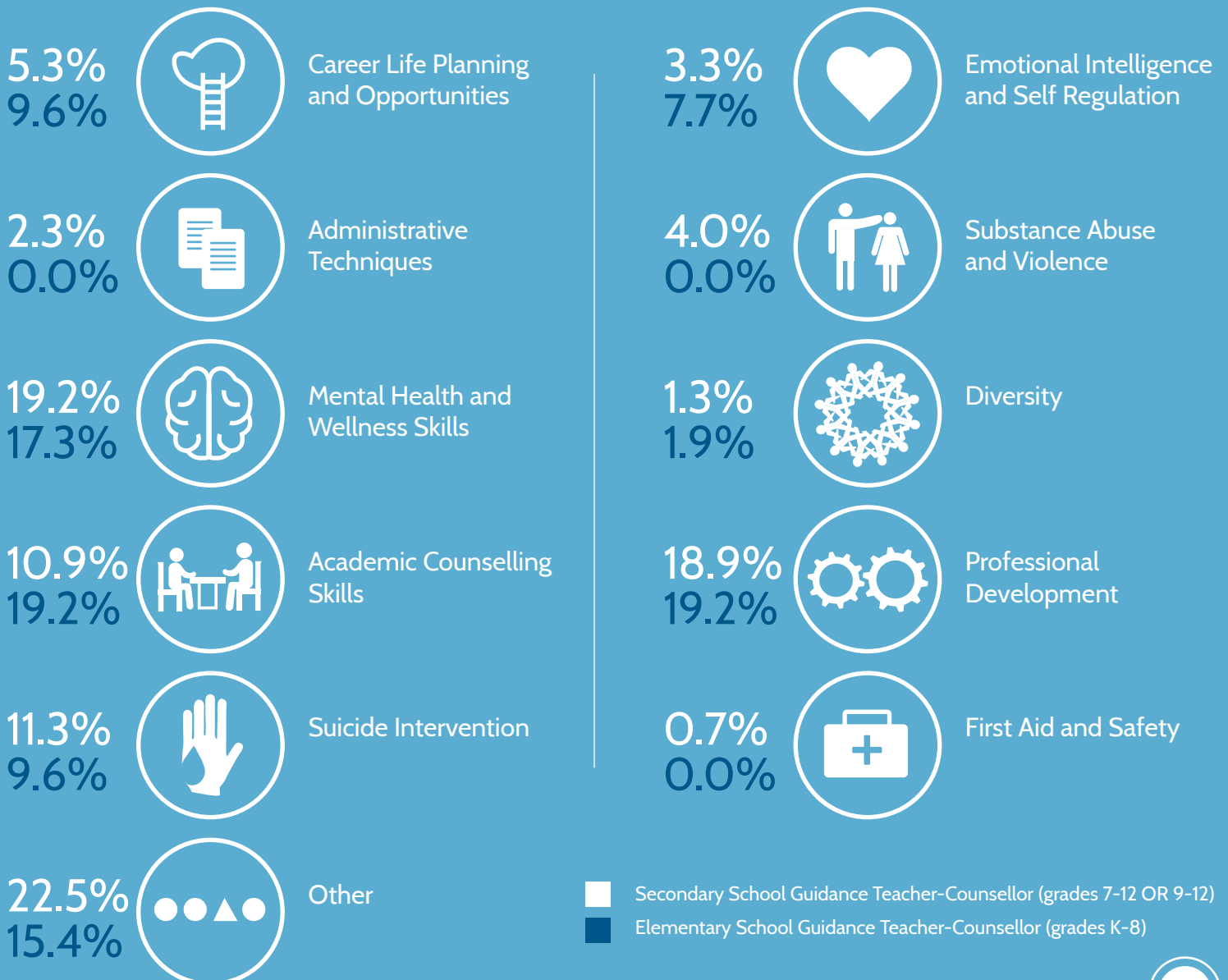
Secondary/College/University visits	00:66	00:36
Take Our Kids To Work Day	00:30	00:11
Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)	00:18	00:10
Post-secondary fairs	00:37	00:09
Post-secondary financial planning (e.g.,...)	00:63	00:00
Job search workshops	00:11	00:02
Employment workshops	00:11	00:02
Transition meetings	00:76	01:12
Transition to high school lessons	00:24	01:50
Grade 8 tours	00:46	00:70
Dual credits	00:33	00:00
Post-secondary pathways workshops/lessons	00:56	00:33
Other	00:24	00:24

## Average Hours per Week Spent on Student Liaison Activities

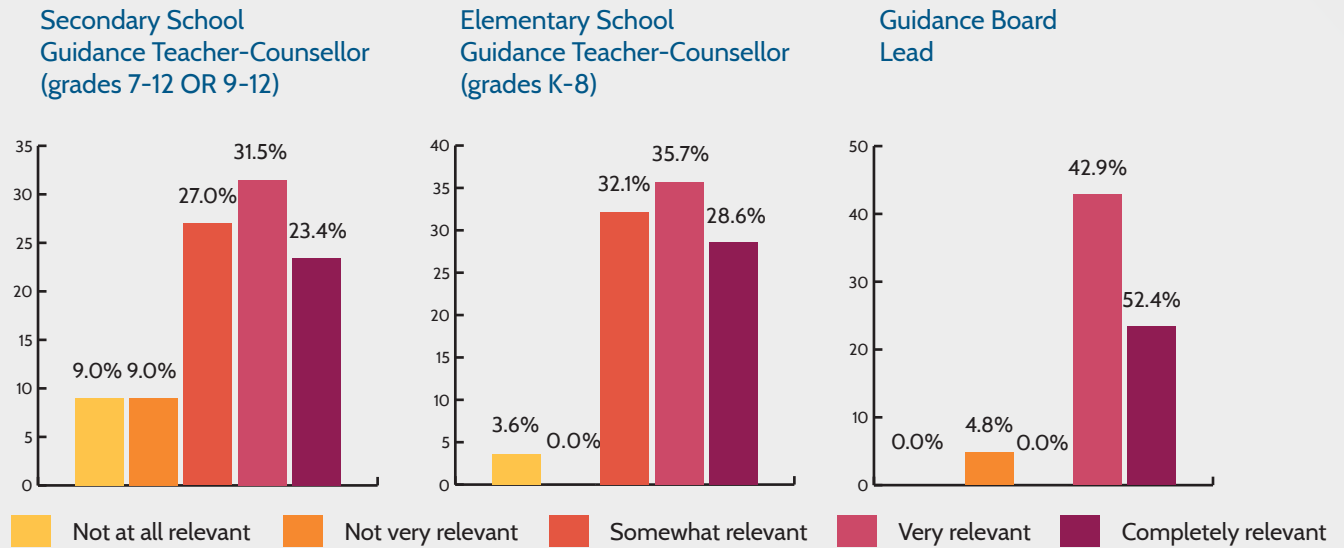
02:36	02:68	Student interpersonal/social skills/relationship issues
04:52	03:28	Student social/emotional/mental health issues
00:98	00:35	Social Worker/Child and Youth Worker (CYW) liaison
00:20	00:08	Settlement Worker liaison
00:30	00:10	Board Psychologist liaison
00:39	00:17	External mental health professional liaison
01:41	00:78	Meeting with Administrators
00:06	00:02	Other

## Training Needs and Priorities

Guidance Teacher-Counsellors and Guidance Board Leads were asked a number of questions related to their training needs and priorities. First, we asked them to tell us “What type of professional learning have you received during the past school year relevant to your role as a Guidance Teacher - Counsellor, and how was it delivered?”, by typing in an open-ended response. We then coded the responses, creating a unique category for each type of training that was mentioned at least twice. Training that was only mentioned by a single participant was included in the “other” category.

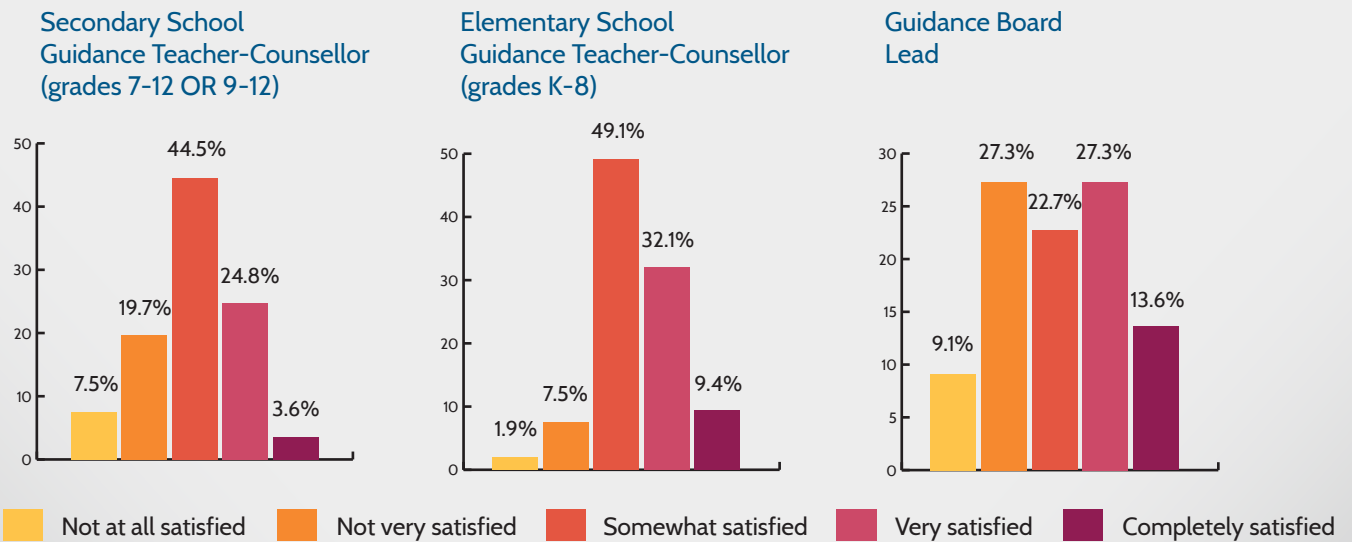


## Guidance Teacher - Counsellors' Ratings of Training Relevance



## Ratings of Training Satisfaction

Since taking your Additional Qualification in GCE, how satisfied are you with the effectiveness of the professional learning you have received, as it relates to your role?



## Top 10 Priorities for GC Training



Secondary School  
Guidance Teacher-Counsellor

Elementary School  
Guidance Teacher-Counsellor

Rank

Rank	Secondary School Guidance Teacher-Counsellor	Elementary School Guidance Teacher-Counsellor
1	Training on skills connected to mental health and wellness	Training on skills connected to mental health and wellness
2	Learning about the jobs of the future and future workplace trends	Training about specific considerations for LGBTQT2 students
3	Training to update facilitation and/or counselling skills	Training on emotional intelligence and relationship building
4	Training about support for substance abuse	Training to update facilitation and/or counselling skills
5	Training on how to access and work with community resources	Training about suicide intervention (e.g., ASIST, Safe Talk)
6	Training about specific considerations for LGBTQT2 students	Training about specific considerations for Indigenous students
7	Training on healthy relationships for teens	Training on healthy relationships for teens
8	Training on emotional intelligence and relationship building	Training on how to access and work with community resources
9	Training about suicide intervention (e.g., ASIST, Safe Talk)	Learning about the jobs of the future and future workplace trends
10	Training about specific considerations for Indigenous students	Training about support for substance abuse

## Top 10 Guidance Board Lead Defined Priorities for GC Training

Guidance Board Leads largely agreed with the GCs about GC training needs, with one exception: Board Leads did not rank training related to LGBTQT2 student issues in their top 10, but did rank training on Education and Career/Life Planning (CPS) in their top 10, which was not a top priority among GCs themselves.

### Guidance Board Lead Rankings of GC Training Need Priorities

Rank

1

Training on skills connected to mental health and wellness

2

Learning about the jobs of the future and future workplace trends

3

Training to update facilitation and/or counselling skills

4

Training on emotional intelligence and relationship building

5

Training about suicide intervention (e.g., ASIST, Safe Talk)

6

Training on how to access and work with community resources

7

Education and Career/Life Planning (CPS)

8

Training on healthy relationships for teens

9

Training about specific considerations for Indigenous students

10

Training about support for substance abuse

## Perceptions of the Guidance Teacher - Counsellor Role

A number of open-ended questions were asked related to the perceptions that other people hold regarding the Guidance Teacher-Counsellor role, based on the observations and experiences of GCs. The goal of these questions was to gather some qualitative data about the way that GCs feel they are viewed by others. Because the questions were open-ended, we did not know in advance what type of responses we were going to get to the questions. Therefore, this set of questions should be viewed as exploratory.



## Administrators' Expectations of GCs

What are some of the common expectations Administrators have about your role as a Guidance Teacher-Counsellor?

① Administrators' expectations of the tasks and duties of the GC role

Academic Advising    Student Success Activities

Teaching Responsibilities    Student Support Liaison

Administrative Duties and Tasks    Transitions

Student Mental Health and Wellness Responsibilities

② Administrators' expectations of GCs' time management:

always be available

get things done yesterday

short completion timeline

③ Administrators' expectations of GCs' emotional involvement:



caring adult



## Students' Common Expectations of GC Role

What are some of the common expectations students have about the role as a Guidance Teacher - Counsellor?

① Students' expectations of the tasks and duties of the GC role

“ academic advising  
career counselling and post-secondary guidance  
choosing an individual pathway  
student mental health and wellness

② Students' expectations of GCs' time management:

always be available    put in extra hours    drop everything  
available before school, after school and at lunch

③ Students' expectations of GCs' expertise:

miracle workers who solve all their problems  
all the answers    first point of contact/school hub

④ Students' expectations of GCs' emotional involvement:

be a mother    be a father    police officer  
tutor    psychologist    doctor    teacher  
confidentiality    empathy    advocacy

## Parents' Common Expectations of GC Role

What are some of the common expectations parents have about the role as a Guidance Teacher - Counsellor?

① Parents' expectations of the tasks and duties of the GC role

academic advising  
student support liaison  
transitions

liaison between parents and teachers/administration  
support for mental health and personal problems

② Parents' expectations of GCs' time management:

be available at all hours  
drop everything

meeting with each of their children often

③ Parents' expectations of GCs' expertise:

all the answers    make decisions for them

solve all of their problems

fix things for them

④ Parents' expectations of GCs' emotional involvement:

be the parent when they cannot get through to their child

family or marriage counsellor

## Other Teachers' Common Expectations of GC Role

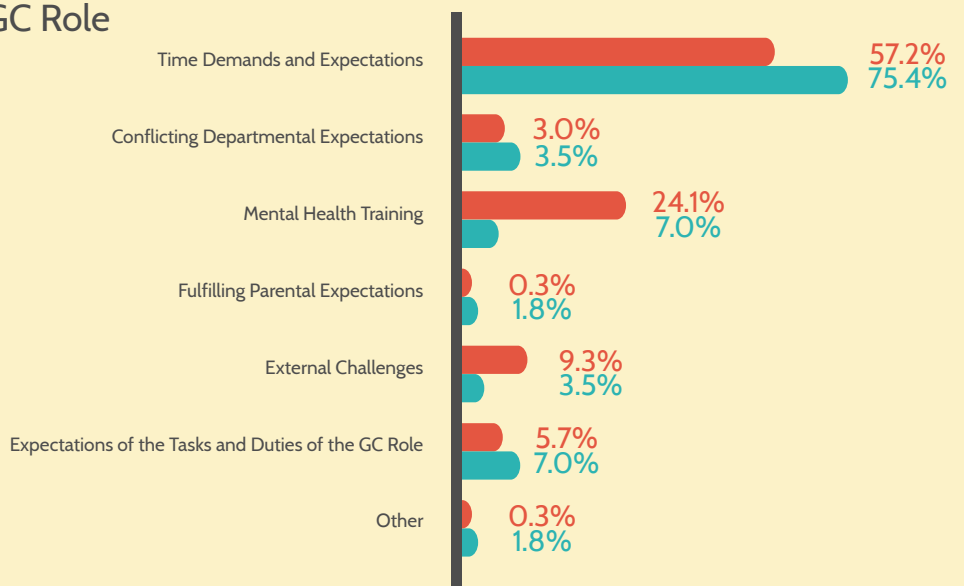
What are some of the common expectations other teachers have about the role as a Guidance Teacher - Counsellor?

- ① Other teachers' expectations of the duties and responsibilities of the GC role
  - deal with problem students
  - handle attendance issues
  - part of the team to help resolve student issues
  - liaison between parents and teachers and administration
  - student mental health and psychological wellness
- ② Other teachers' expectations of GCs' time management:
  - supervisions on field trips    be available at a moment's notice
  - calling parents    drop everything
- ③ Other teachers' expectations of GCs' expertise:
  - involved in every aspect of student's life
  - fix every problem    how to behave in their classes
- ④ Other teachers' expectations of GCs' emotional involvement:
  - share confidential information about students and their families

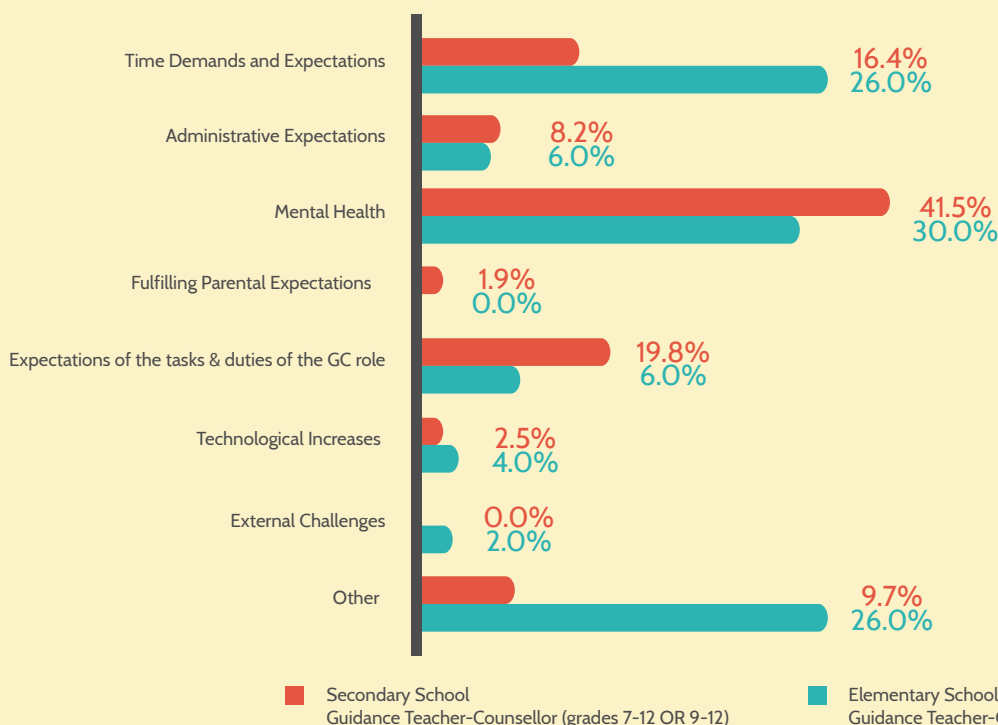
## Challenges and Changes in the GC Role

We were interested in learning GCs' perspectives about the challenges they face in the GC role and how they have seen that role change over time. First, we asked the open-ended question "What are the biggest challenges you face in meeting the needs of students on a daily basis?"

### Challenges and Changes in the GC Role



### How Has the GC Role Changed



## Recommendations

Based on the responses from this survey the following recommendations are made:

1. **Ministry of Education** funding for Secondary and Elementary Guidance Teacher-Counsellors positions needs to be consistent and appropriate. The needs of students twenty years ago has changed, therefore, the funding model for these roles needs to change as well. Students needs have become more complex, hence, greater time is needed to be spent with students individually. For example, GC's deal with more students with mental health issues. Charting an academic pathway now needs to take this into account. GC's need more time to do this with students.
2. **Role of the Guidance Teacher-Counsellor**. There is a need for a realistic interpretation of what the role is by Administrators, colleagues and unions. Face to face conversations would allow for an open dialogue to occur, increasing the understanding of the role.
3. **Professional Learning sources** can be obtained from a variety of sources. As the needs of students have become complex, the need to further one's learning needs to take into account where the best training program can be sought out. In addition to school boards and EDU training, there are other places that Guidance Teacher-Counsellors can receive further training beyond that acquired from their Additional Qualifications courses. One such example, is that of a university social work department that offer workshops on counselling and facilitation skills. This was identified as a training need by GC's in this survey. There are countless other agencies, universities, colleges and other training facilities that can offer GREAT professional learning opportunities so that GC's can have the most up-to-date tools and knowledge to support Ontario's young people. Professional learning needs to be relevant to the role and practical in nature.
4. **Child and Youth Workers/School Social Workers**. Schools need more CYW/SSW in their schools. The model of one day/week is not meeting the needs of our students, with all the life situations they are trying to balance. Guidance Teacher-Counsellors are well aware that they are not therapists, however, there are not enough mental health clinicians to meet the needs of students in need of this greater level of support that a GC is not trained to do. Students need greater increased access to these supports, which can only happen through increased funding in this area.

## Conclusions

The results of this survey point to a number of important concerns related to the Guidance Teacher-Counsellor role in Ontario's schools:

- GCs are facing increasing demands for student mental health and emotional support
- These demands require resources, support and training that are greater than those currently provided
- Increasing administrative requirements of the GC role and expanded caseloads, combined with increases in the incidence and severity of student mental health issues are straining GCs' ability to provide academic advising and career counselling support to students
- Parents and students' confusion about the respective roles of various members of the student success team requires GCs to be the point of access for an increasing range of student issues
- Although current training and development is viewed by GCs to be fairly job-relevant, their level of satisfaction with training and development is moderately low
- Elementary and secondary school GCs and Guidance Board Leads all agree that training and development for mental health and student wellbeing tops the list of training priorities
- Despite heavy time demands, which exceed 44 hours per week on average for GCs, GCs are dedicated to their roles and continue to engage in extracurricular volunteer activities.

Guidance Teacher-Counsellors will continue to focus their work on supporting the whole student and work to support the success and well-being of all students during their schooling years. Guidance Teacher-Counsellors will continue to lead, encourage, inform and support Ontario youth in the years to come.





**OSCA / ACOSO**

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