

FINANCIAL EXPENDITURES BY FUNCTION FOR TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A  
MULTIYEAR STATEWIDE INVESTIGATION

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Doctor of Education

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by

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my incredibly supportive husband, Jason Merik, my darling daughters, Ainsley Grace and Ava Elizabeth, and to the strongest, most loving woman I know, my Lola (grandma), Dulsora T. Monteroso. To my husband, Jason, I thank him for his unending patience, support, generosity, and love. I could not have wished for a more amazing soulmate to share my life with and to have as the father of my children. Jason is, quite simply, my very best friend, my strength and stay, my superman, and my forever valentine. With Jason by my side, forever will never be enough.

To my daughters, Ainsley and Ava, whom I love more than I can ever say and more than they will ever know, I thank them for never failing to put a smile on mommy's face. To Ainsley, I thank her for her love, sensitivity, and overall emotional intelligence. To Ava, I thank her for her infectious sweetness, energy, and warmth. I hope that my daughters will always know that they are loved by their parents, and most importantly, that they are loved by our Heavenly Father. I hope to instill in my girls the courage and confidence to go after their dreams, along with the wisdom and humility to seek God in all that they do.

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## ABSTRACT

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### **Purpose**

Three major purposes were present in this journal-ready dissertation. The first purpose was to determine the monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies at Texas elementary, middle, and high schools. The second purpose was to investigate the degree to which differences might be present in the monies spent and as a percent of the total monies for the aforementioned functions and school levels. The third purpose was to ascertain the extent to which trends might exist in monies spent and as a percent of monies at all three school levels across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year so that the presence of trends could be ascertained.

### **Method**

For these quantitative analyses, a causal-comparative research design was utilized. Archival data were obtained from the Texas Education Agency's Public Education Information Management System. Financial expenditures for the aforementioned functions and school years were analyzed.

### **Findings**

Regarding Guidance Counseling Services and Social Work Services, statistically significant differences were established between the elementary, middle, and high school levels for most of the 10 school years examined. The monies spent per student and the percent of total monies spent, were highest for high schools, followed by the middle

schools, and were lowest at the elementary schools. From the 2009-2010 school year to the 2018-2019 school year, the monies spent in both functions showed a positive increase, not yet taking into account inflation. Regarding Guidance Counseling Services for elementary, middle, and high schools, the monies spent for services increased by \$60, \$95, and \$100, respectively. Regarding Social Work Services, expenditures increased by \$7, \$8, and \$19, respectively.

With respect to Instructional Leadership, statistically significant differences were documented in the dollars spent per student for most of the 10 school years. However, only a few of the school years yielded a statistically significant difference in the percent of total monies spent. The Instructional Leadership dollars were highest for high schools, followed by the middle and elementary schools, which frequently spent similar amounts of monies per pupil. For the aforementioned 10 school years, expenditures for elementary, middle, and high schools increased by \$42, \$40, and \$48, respectively.

*KEY WORDS:* At risk; Economically disadvantaged; Elementary school; Financial expenditures; Funding; Guidance counseling; High school; Instructional leadership; Middle school; Monies; Public education information management system; Professional development; Public schools; School counseling; Social work; Texas Education Agency; Trends

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Texas State Legislature slashed funding for public education by an excess of five billion dollars during the 2011 legislative session (Marder & Villanueva, 2017). Consequently, already underfunded Texas public school districts were forced to make difficult decisions on how best to allocate the remaining limited funding for a growing number of students, while at the same time having about \$500.00 dollars less money to spend per student as a result (Marder & Villanueva, 2017). The era of high-stakes testing and holding schools accountable for student achievement through the use of test scores continued with the implementation of the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness.

Occurring concurrently with the decrease of public education funding, student needs increased as the number of students who were at risk and who were in poverty continued to rise (Texas Education Agency, 2011, 2019b; United States Department of Education, 2020). With the increase in the number of students who were at risk and in poverty, the need for additional student mental health supports, social and emotional learning to help encourage healthy behaviors, and the need for connection between school, home, and the community have also become even more necessary (Blount, 2012; Johnson & Perkins, 2009; Princiotta & Reyna, 2009; Warren et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2014). Student mental health supports and connecting families to available community resources are ideally suited for the roles of professional school counselors and school

social workers (American School Counseling Association, 2012, 2021; School Social Work Association of America, 2020).

With limited funding and continued pressure from lawmakers to increase student test scores, however, schools and school districts maintained their focus on instructional leadership as a strategy to provide on-going professional development to teachers through the use of instructional coaches and other professional development activities (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2018). Hence, less attention and resources have been given to non-academic student support services such as school counseling services and school social work services, as evidenced by the high student-to-school counselor ratios, and by the nonexistence of school social workers in some Texas school districts (Alvarez et al., 2013; National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018;). In this journal-ready dissertation, school level financial expenditures for Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership for Texas public schools were examined for 10 school years.

## **Overview of the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System Categories**

Although specific information regarding school finances vary by state and by school district, school funding is comprised of a combination of federal, state, and local resources, with over 90% of the funding provided at the state and local levels (Ellerson, 2010; Hegar, 2019). In the State of Texas, education accounts for nearly 40% of general revenue spending (Hegar, 2019). In Texas, school districts are required to report their expenditures, along with other school and district-specific information, to the Texas



Education Agency's Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).

Regarding financial data, districts are required to categorize expenditures according to assigned accounting codes as designated by the PEIMS Data Standard (Texas Education Agency, 2021a).

School districts are required by the PEIMS to report their financial expenditures, both at the district level and by each individual school (Texas Education Agency, 2021a). The financial reports contain four main categories: (a) revenues, (b) expenditures, (c) disbursements, and (d) fund balances (Texas Education Agency, 2019a). The revenues contain all forms of revenues that are given to schools and districts including operating revenue, recapture revenue, debt service financing, and Teacher Retirement Systems revenue.

Regarding the focus of this journal-ready dissertation, expenditures, are required to be reported by multiple categories including operating expenditures by object, non-operating expenditures by object, operating expenditures by function, and operating expenditures by program intent code (Texas Education Agency, 2019a). Specifically for this journal-ready dissertation, operating expenditures by function will be the main focus. Operating expenditures by function include costs associated with payroll, professional and contracted services, supplies and materials, as well as other operating costs (Texas Education Agency, 2019a). With respect to the specific categories, expenditures by function include the following: Instruction, Instructional Resources and Media Services, Curriculum and Staff Development, Instructional Leadership, School Leadership, Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, Health Services, Transportation,

Food Services, Extracurricular, General Administration, Facilities and Maintenance Operations, Security and Monitoring Services, Data Processing Services, and Community Services (Texas Education Agency, 2019a). In this journal-ready dissertation, the following three expenditures by function will be examined: Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership.

### **Role of Educational Leaders in the Creation of School and District Budgets**

Unlike the business world in which 35% to 40% of an organization's budget is allocated toward the cost of personnel and benefits, public schools and school districts allocate an average of about 80% to 85% of their budget to payroll costs (Ellerson, 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Therefore, due to all schools and districts having finite resources, it is imperative that educational leaders exercise a thoughtful review of school campus and school district goals, and allocate staffing as well as other resources efficiently so that student performance is maximized. In short, educational leaders have the multifaceted task of matching their academic and performance goals for students with their available human and monetary resources.

According to the State of Texas' Principal Standards, principals are tasked with being "deliberate in the allocation of resources (e.g., staff time, dollars, and tools), aligning them to the school priorities and goals, and work to access additional resources as needed to support learning" (21 Tex. Educ. Code § 21.3541, 2014). Additionally, for numerous budget items that may or may not be associated with salary, principals and district leaders are sometimes obligated to spend specific percentages for specified programs, depending on the specific source(s) of the funding that is provided (Sadler,

2017; TEA, 2019b). Moreover, according to the State of Texas' Principal Standards, school principals are essentially tasked with preparing the school budget (21 Tex. Educ. Code § 21.3541, 2014). However, in many school districts, educational leaders at the district level in conjunction with the school board, frequently allocate budgets associated with salary, and principals are allowed considerable input in regard to their staffing and other school needs (Geivett, 2010; Grey, 2016; Pont, 2008).

According to Assistant Superintendent and Chief Financial Officer, Gahan, "using the data from student achievement and where our kids are at, our administrative team can develop a budget with priorities by building" (Grey, 2016, p. 2). In other words, collaboration between school campus and school district leaders, in conjunction with the use of data are both critical elements in the creation of a successful school budget. Gahan also added that after the administrative team identifies how the school "priorities tie to the strategic plan," the team then works together to "figure out where we don't have resources to meet all the needs and then target the resources for the greatest impact" (Grey, 2016, p. 2).

Therefore, how school campus and school district level educational leaders allocate funds through the school budget reflects the priorities that leader(s) has for the school(s) or district. The task of school budget creation is one that requires communication, understanding, and patience as schools and districts have limited funds and a multitude of needs. According to Frederick County Public Schools' Purchasing Supervisor, Vard, during budget creation there is "a battle for funding" in regard to competition between different departments and programs for money and resources (Grey,

2016, p. 3). Hence, school and district leaders have the complex task of efficiently allocating resources in a manner that best aligns the school campus or school district's available resources to support the priorities established by the school or district.

### **Review of the Literature of Guidance Counseling Services Expenditures**

The school counseling profession has undergone numerous changes in duties, responsibilities, and expectations throughout the last several decades. Initially, school counseling began with a purpose and focus solely on vocational counseling (Chandler et al., 2008; Chandler et al., 2018, Martin & Robinson, 2011) and has developed into a more encompassing role that now includes an emphasis on social emotional learning, college and career planning, and providing responsive services to students and families (Chandler et al., 2008; Chandler et al., 2018; Martin & Robinson, 2011). Hence, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2012, 2021) changed the name of school counselors from *guidance counselors* to *professional school counselors* (Martin & Robinson, 2011). The term guidance counselor is now obsolete as professional school counselors are responsible for implementing comprehensive school counseling programs that assist students with their social and emotional growth, academic goals, as well as their career goals (ASCA, 2012, 2021). Present day school counselors are integral to providing students with wrap-around services that include the establishment of healthy behaviors, mindsets, and goals. With the assistance of school counselors, students learn skills in cooperation, collaboration, resilience, and tenacity, alongside important soft skills such as time management and self-direction.

Hence, schools that have fully funded comprehensive school counseling programs are able to provide necessary supports to students in regard to their social and emotional health, as well as increase students' college and career readiness (Jones et al., 2019). According to Cholewa et al. (2015), school counselors should be given ample time and resources to work with underrepresented students as doing so may potentially increase the number of students who choose to pursue higher education. Bryan et al. (2011) documented that the number of contacts a student had with his/her school counselor was a significant predictor of college application completion rates. In other words, students who met with their school counselors more frequently were more likely to apply for college. Similarly, Hurwitz et al. (2014) determined that having one additional high school counselor can increase student enrollment into a 4-year university by about 10%. Accordingly, Hurwitz et al. (2014) suggested that increasing the number of high school counselors also increases the likelihood of students enrolling in college.

For students who are at risk of not graduating and for students in poverty, services provided by school counselors are critical. School counselors, however, often struggle with fully meeting the needs of students who are at risk and students in poverty due to frequently being assigned numerous non-counseling tasks in addition to their counseling duties (Fitch et al., 2001; Karatas & Kaya, 2015; Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010). These non-counseling duties include responsibilities ranging from clerical tasks to administrative tasks as well as other tasks that are all outside of the role of the school counselor (Bringman et al., 2010; Karatas & Kaya, 2015; Lowery et al., 2018; Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010).

Sadly, the inconsistency of school counselor duties has resulted in role uncertainty, confusion, as well as school counselor job dissatisfaction and burnout (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Moyer, 2011). With the variability of counselor responsibilities and the importance of school counseling duties, the overall job satisfaction of school counselors needs to be considered, as job satisfaction can affect productivity and effectiveness (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2022). In a study focused on job satisfaction, Cervoni and DeLucia-Waack (2011) addressed how time spent on duties recommended by the ASCA influenced the overall job satisfaction of high school counselors. From their sample of 175 secondary school counselors, of which more than 93% were employed in public schools, and varied from one year to 41 years of experience, they determined that more time spent on appropriate counseling duties created more job satisfaction for high school counselors. Conversely, more time spent on non-counseling tasks resulted in less job satisfaction for high school counselors (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011).

Similarly, Baggerly and Osborn (2006) analyzed factors that were predictive of career satisfaction and commitment levels of school counselors. From a survey in 2002 on school counselors from Florida, in which 1,280 responses were received, with over 60% of the participants being middle school counselors, Baggerly and Osborn (2006) established the presence of statistically significant relationships between performing the appropriate job duties of counselors and counselor satisfaction levels. Counselors that were assigned appropriate duties according to the ASCA reported much higher levels of career satisfaction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006) than counselors who were not assigned

appropriate duties. As such, they documented that high levels of proper counseling duties resulted in higher levels of commitment by school counselors. Interestingly, secondary counselors perceived their jobs to be more stressful than elementary counselors (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006).

Also of importance is that researchers (e.g., Kim & Lambie, 2018; Moyer, 2011) have documented that school counselors are experiencing burnout. In a survey of 382 counselors, Moyer (2011) established that the more time school counselors spent on non-counseling related duties, the more likely that counselors were to exhibit signs of burnout. Moyer (2011) also determined that counselors who spent more time completing non-counseling related duties were less likely to exhibit empathy for their students. Overall, the school counseling profession may be especially susceptible to burnout due to role ambiguity, excessive job demands, and workload (Moyer, 2011).

In another article related to school counselor burnout, Kim and Lambie (2018) reviewed 18 published research studies between 2000 and 2018 on predictors of burnout and occupational-related stress in school counselors. Kim and Lambie (2018) ascertained that school counselors are at great risk for experiencing burnout due to large caseloads, multiple job demands including many non-counseling duties, limited support from administrators, and lack of resources. Those school counselors experiencing burnout also experience higher levels of job dissatisfaction, lower productivity, and lower levels of job commitment (Kim & Lambie, 2018).

Notably, as school counselor responsibilities grow increasingly more demanding, school counselor student caseloads continue to be high (National Association for College

Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018). With respect to the state of interest for this article, Texas, the average student-to-school counselor ratio of 449:1 is nearly double the recommended caseload of 250:1 by the ASCA (National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018). At the same time, students' needs are also increasing as the number of students who are determined to be at risk and in poverty continue to rise (United States Department of Education, 2020).

In a study concerning student-to-school counselor ratios, Parzych et al. (2019) analyzed data from 535,025 students, 1,493 schools, and 1,217 school counselors. The researchers grouped schools into higher and lower performing schools based on graduation rates, college-going rates, absenteeism rates, and disciplinary suspension rates, along with achievement test scores. Parzych et al. (2019) determined that lower-performing schools had statistically significantly higher student-to-school counselor ratios than did higher-performing schools. Additionally, about 72% of the school districts included in the study did not provide any comprehensive school counseling services to students in Grades K through 5. Parzych et al. (2019) established that in Connecticut, for districts that had school counselors for K through Grade 12, 69.4% had graduation rates of at least 90%, compared to school districts who only had school counselors for Grades 6 and higher, where only 45.8% had graduation rates of 90% or greater.

To investigate the relationship between student achievement and school counselor caseloads, data from 481 schools were analyzed by Lapan et al. (2012). Lapan et al. (2012) established that schools with higher counselor caseloads had lower attendance and



graduation rates, and also had higher disciplinary incidents, when compared to schools with lower school counselor caseloads. Similarly, schools that had a high percentage of students who were in poverty, yet had a ratio of 250:1, were documented to have better graduation and attendance rates, and lower disciplinary incidents, when compared to schools who were high poverty but had higher counselor caseloads. Lapan et al. (2012) also established that for every increase of 50 students to a counselor's case load, graduation rates decreased by almost 1%.

Similar to Lapan et al. (2012), Goodman-Scott et al. (2018) analyzed data on student-to-school counselor ratios and student academic achievement using information from the 2009 High School Longitudinal Study. Goodman-Scott et al. (2018) established that students were almost two times as likely to graduate high school when their counselors had low caseloads when compared to students who had counselors with high caseloads. Additionally, these researchers documented that high school students were more likely to continue their studies through higher education if they attended non-Title I schools in which their counselors spent less time performing non-counseling duties.

In a recent Texas study, Merik and Slate (2021) established that middle and high schools with the highest percentages of students who were at risk had the same number of school counselors as schools with the lowest percentages of students who were at risk, although it is well documented that students who are at risk require more services to help guide academic achievement (Blount, 2012; Johnson & Perkins, 2009). The ever-growing needs of students is a cause for concern for counselors experiencing burnout because it is well documented that high counselor caseloads and non-counseling duties

can lead to counselors exhibiting less empathy for students, lower levels of job commitment, and lower levels of productivity (Kim & Lambie, 2018; Moyer, 2011). In short, schools and school districts may be missing opportunities to help students by overburdening their school counselors with high caseloads and duties that are outside of the purview of the role of the school counselor.

In regard to school campus leaders and to school district leaders, the frequent and well documented circumstance of school counselors being assigned non-counseling duties (Bringman et al., 2010; Karatas & Kaya, 2015; Lowery et al., 2018; Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010) may be interpreted to mean that educational leadership preparation programs, specifically principal preparation programs, are not adequately training future principals regarding the proper tasks and responsibilities of the role of the school counselor (Benigno, 2017; Chandler et al., 2018). Principals are often the individuals who are charged with assigning duties to the school counselor. Therefore, principal training is imperative in ensuring that school counselors are assigned appropriate school counseling duties.

Lowery et al. (2018) conducted an investigation to evaluate the effectiveness of a principal certification program in Indiana related to principals' knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of school counselors. Interestingly, these researchers determined that the administrators did not consider the school counselors' roles as being aligned with the campus improvement plan and, therefore, were not satisfied with the roles of the school counselors. Most notably, a majority of the survey participants shared that they did not receive any training regarding the appropriate responsibilities of school counselors or

how to support comprehensive school counseling programs during their principal preparation coursework (Lowery et al., 2018). Concluded in their study was a need to redesign principal preparation curriculum to provide training on comprehensive school counseling programs and how principals can improve their support of school counselors.

Another noteworthy analysis of principal preparation programs as it relates to training administrators about the school counseling profession was conducted by Mason and Perera-Diltz (2010). In their study, they addressed factors that influenced principal interns' perceptions of appropriate counseling duties in a Kindergarten through Grade 12 setting. According to Mason and Perera-Diltz (2010), over 80% of the duties listed for elementary schools and over 70% of the duties listed for middle schools were endorsed by the ASCA, whereas only 65% of the duties designated for high schools were considered appropriate by the ASCA. Furthermore, 72% of the principal interns surveyed indicated that they assigned the duties of school counselors mainly from their personal experience with school counselors and the other 28% cited guessing as their method of assigning the school counselors duties that they listed on the survey (Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010).

With a lack of adequate training for principals regarding the unique roles of school counselors and the benefits of having a comprehensive school counseling program (Benigno, 2017; Chandler et al., 2018; Lowery et al., 2018; Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010), it is not surprising that the importance of school counseling services appears to be infrequently prioritized by school and district leaders. The lack of prioritization of school counseling services is also displayed by the state legislature as the employment of school

counselors is not mandated by the State of Texas. Consequently, some school districts in Texas do not have any full-time school counselors (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2019) because Texas law only requires that school districts employ at least one counselor for every 500 elementary students (33 Tex. Educ. Code § 33.002 (2013)). More often than not, where and how money is spent is a good indication of how a school, school district, or organization places importance or value in its many programs. The apparent lack of prioritization by educational leaders and lawmakers regarding the benefits of school counseling services is evident in the large student-to-school counselor ratios and the frequent assignment of non-counseling duties to school counselors, which reduces the time spent on school counseling services.

### **Review of the Literature of Social Work Services Expenditures**

School social workers have been present in the United States education system since about the start of the 20th century (Sherman, 2016). During the early 1900s, school social workers served as the main liaison between school, home, and the community for students who were at risk (Allen-Meares et al., 1996; Sherman, 2016). At the beginning of the 20th century, school social workers were more commonly referred to as *visiting teachers* (Allen-Meares et al., 1996; Sherman, 2016; Stone, 2015). The field of school social work evolved alongside the transformation of American society which was spearheaded by the growth of industries, cities, and immigration (Phillippo & Blosser, 2013; Sherman, 2016).

One of the responses in the United States to industrialization was the need for the creation of laws regarding child labor (Phillippo & Blosser, 2013). As a result, the

government and America's school systems developed what are now known as compulsory attendance laws (Phillippo & Blosser, 2013). The creation of compulsory attendance laws set the stage for school social workers to be specifically tasked with addressing the needs of students who struggled with truancy, as well as with behavior (Allen-Meares et al., 1996; Phillippo & Blosser, 2013; Sherman, 2016). The first visiting teachers, now known as school social workers, specifically worked with students experiencing behavioral and attendance concerns, and were also integral in making families aware of educational requirements, as well as the available resources within the community (Allen-Meares et al., 1996; Phillippo & Blosser, 2013; Sherman, 2016).

During the 1970s, the role of the school social worker made a substantial shift with the establishment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, better known today as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (D'Agostino, 2013; Sherman, 2016). The creation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act had the effect of expanding the role of the school social worker to also include the responsibilities of that of a mental health practitioner, a quasi-special educator for students who require special education services, as well as the traditional role of a community resource liaison (D'Agostino, 2013; Sherman, 2016).

With widespread duties and specialties, the School Social Work Association of America (2020) defines school social workers as "trained mental health professionals with a degree in social work who provide services related to a person's social, emotional, and life adjustment to school and/or society" (p. 1). The School Social Work Association of America (2020) further explains that school social workers are the "link between the

home, school and community in providing direct as well as indirect services to students, families and school personnel to promote and support students' academic and social success" (p. 1). Embedded within the duties of school social workers include conducting home visits, completing student and family assessments, creating plans for treatment, connecting families to community resources, and of course, cultural diversity, and social justice advocacy (Greenberg, 2012; Sherman, 2016).

For approximately 120 years, the role of the school social worker has demonstrated its efficacy and value in its influence in assisting students who experience truancy and chronic absenteeism (Elsherbiny, 2017; Franklin et al., 2009; Newsome et al., 2008). Newsome et al. (2008) conducted a study of 115 students in urban secondary schools; 74 students who were receiving social work services were compared with 71 students who were not receiving services. Newsome et al. (2008) documented statistically significant reductions in risk factors related to truancy-related behaviors for the group of students who received intervention from a social worker. Although interventions by social workers did not directly improve attendance rates, Newsome et al. (2008) reported that services performed by social workers did improve the overall academic performance of the students who received the social work services.

Franklin et al. (2009) suggested that school social workers have multiple positive influences on the behavioral, mental, social, emotional, and academic outcomes of students. Furthermore, Cameron (2006) established that school social workers can assist schools in implementing successful, nonpunitive disciplinary approaches. Most notably, Alvarez et al. (2013) conducted a study on the 100 largest school districts in America and

analyzed the influence of school social workers on high school completion rates. Alvarez et al. (2013) documented that the number of school social workers was statistically significantly related to the percentages of students who completed high school. In short, the more school social workers were employed in a school district, the higher the percentage of students who completed high school in the respective districts (Alvarez et al., 2013; Stone et al., 2013).

Even though the research literature is somewhat limited (Alvarez et al., 2013), school social workers have been documented to influence positively the academic outcomes of students who are at risk and students who are in poverty (Alvarez et al., 2013; Elsherbiny, 2017; Franklin et al., 2009; Newsome et al., 2008). With respect to Texas, the state of interest for this article, schools are not required to employ school social workers (National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter, 2020). Consequently, several of the largest school districts in Texas employ few, if any, social workers (Alvarez et al., 2013). Although school social workers are not required in the State of Texas, the number of students who are at risk of not graduating high school continues to rise steadily, with 46.3% of all Texas students or 2,275,179 students at risk in the 2010-2011 school year, and 50.1% or 2,713,848 students who were at risk during the 2018-2019 school year. The information from the Texas Education Agency reflects an increase of nearly 4% of students who were at risk between the 2010-2011 school year and the 2018-2019 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2011, 2019c). Similarly, the number of students who were in poverty also increased from 2,909,554 or 59.2% in the 2010-2011 school year to 3,283,812 or 60.6% in the 2018-2019 school year. These data

are indicative of an increase of about 1.5% or 374,258 more students living in poverty between the 2010-2011 school year and the 2018-2019 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2011, 2019c).

From an educational leadership perspective, school, school district, and state leaders may be doing a disservice to Texas students by not mandating the services of school social workers at schools and districts. Well documented in the literature is that students who are at risk and students who are in poverty require a much greater level of intervention and assistance to succeed academically (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009; Warren et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2014). Unfortunately, students who are at risk frequently suffer from familial circumstances such as abuse, pregnancy, and the incarceration of one or more parents, among numerous other situations which develop into obstacles for student success (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009; Warren et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2014). Regrettably, students who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds suffer from the environmental struggles of poverty, lack of food and healthcare, inconsistent parenting, substance abuse, and violence (Bavin, 2002).

The circumstances endured by students who are at risk and in poverty necessitates healthy coping skills for the students and a tremendous amount of support by the school staff, including, school counselors, school social workers, and the community. Although school counselors are more accessible than school social workers and also serve as important support for students who are at risk and students who are in poverty, school counselors struggle to meet the needs of students due to overloaded caseloads (National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018). In a recent Texas



statewide investigation, Merik and Slate (2021) determined that Texas middle and high schools that had the highest percentages of students who were at risk employed the same number of school counselors as schools with the lowest percentages of students who were at risk. These statistics are concerning because it is well documented that students who are at risk require more assistance to be academically successful (Blount, 2012; Johnson & Perkins, 2009). With schools having large student-to-school counselor ratios and with schools and school districts not consistently employing school social workers, important opportunities to intervene in the lives of struggling students and families are being missed. Inevitably, high school students who are at risk or in poverty lose the safety net provided by their schools upon graduation or dropping out of school. Hence, as schools have a very limited timeframe in which to assist students, it is imperative that school and school district leaders expand their focus to embrace and fund the unique benefits of school social workers to meet the expanding needs of students in regard to their social and emotional health, as well as to break down barriers to academic achievement.

### **Review of the Literature of Instructional Leadership Expenditures**

In the current era of holding schools accountable for student learning through the use of high-stakes testing, school leaders have focused on increasing teacher effectiveness and quality (Synar & Maiden, 2012). In 2019, this greater focus on teacher quality and effectiveness was emphasized by the Texas Education Agency's implementation of a revised set of criteria in regard to the state's principal certification requirements (Texas Education Agency, 2021b). The focus of the role of the school principal is now that of an instructional leader (Texas Education Agency, 2021b). A

commonly utilized strategy to improve teacher effectiveness is through instructional leadership or professional development. The Texas Education Agency (2019a) defines costs and activities associated with instructional leadership as the “managing, directing, supervising, and providing leadership for staff who provide either instructional or instruction-related services” (p. 7). Accordingly, in this article, *professional development* and *instructional leadership* will be used interchangeably.

With an increasing focus on professional development, it is important to note that researchers (Foster et al., 2013; Harris & Sass, 2011; Jacob & Lefgren, 2004) have established that the influence of professional development on student outcomes, if able to be quantified at all, has had either only some positive effects or no effect at all on student achievement. In one such study, Foster et al. (2013) examined the effectiveness of a professional development training program on the mathematics and science outcomes of students. They determined that the professional development was effective for only instruction in mathematics for student outcomes in middle school. The professional development program, however, was not effective for science and was also not effective at the elementary and high school levels. As a result, the effectiveness of the professional development program varied by both content area and school level (Foster et al., 2013). Foster et al.’s (2013) results were congruent with the findings of other researchers (e.g., Harris & Sass, 2011; Jacob & Lefgren, 2004) who also established that professional development programs had mixed results, or no observable effects, on student academic achievement.

Many researchers (Birman et al., 2000; Gallagher, 2002; Killeen et al., 2002; Knight, 2007, 2011, 2018) agree that on-going professional development for instruction is necessary to help improve student achievement. Due to the on-going prevalence of professional development, it is worth noting some key research investigations in which researchers (Hertert, 1997; Killeen et al., 2002; Miles et al., 2004; Odden et al., 2002) have analyzed the costs of professional development using different financial expenditure formats and methodologies. Hertert (1997) examined data from 16 school districts and documented that school district spending on professional development varied greatly between 1.7% and 7.6%, with an average of about 3.6% of a school district's net operating expenditures. In an investigation of national professional development expenditures, Killeen et al. (2002) established that school districts ranged from about 1.5% to about 8% of the general school district expenditures spent on professional development/instructional improvement. On average, other researchers (Miles et al., 2004; Odden et al., 2002) have documented that most school districts spend about 3% to 5% of their total budgets on teacher professional development.

Although a number of studies (Hertert, 1997; Killeen et al., 2002; Miles et al., 2004; Odden et al., 2002) are present in the research literature on the cost of teacher professional development, these studies are dated. Moreover, these researchers had not investigated trends in the costs associated with instructional leadership or professional development, on a statewide basis, or by school levels. Notably, previous researchers (Hertert, 1997; Killeen et al., 2002; Miles et al., 2004; Odden et al., 2002) had difficulties quantifying and generalizing the true expense of professional development because of

variances in accounting codes and definitions of what professional development entails (Gallagher, 2002). Hence, it is difficult to generalize the results from the aforementioned studies due to inconsistencies in accounting codes and differing definitions for professional development.

In the past decade, educational leaders have come to the realization that occasional professional development for instruction is insufficient (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2018). As a result, many schools and school districts have created full-time professional positions such as content coaches, skills specialists, instructional coaches, and subject area coordinators that are housed at specific campuses along with similar positions at the district level (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2018; Moody, 2019). These instructional supervisors serve to support teachers throughout the school year by modeling lessons, assisting with lesson planning, and providing professional development for the instructional staff, among other responsibilities (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2018).

With the creation of instructional coaching/supervisor positions, and hence the on-going professional development of teachers, it is reasonable to question if student test scores have also increased. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2021), Texas, the state of interest for this article, has experienced minimal gains, if any, in the reading and mathematics scores of their Grade 4 and Grade 8 students. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2021), 39.02% of Grade 4 students in Texas tested proficient in mathematics in 2011 and 43.67% were proficient in 2019. Regarding Grade 4 reading, 28.27% of students tested proficient in 2011 and 30.27% were proficient in 2019. For Grade 8, 40.01% were proficient in

mathematics in 2011 and 29.55% were proficient in 2019. With respect to Grade 8 reading, 26.52% of students were proficient in 2011 compared to 25.04% of students in 2019 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2021). In summary, Grade 4 mathematics scores increased by 4.65% and reading scores increased by 2%. However, Grade 8 mathematics scores decreased by 10.46% and reading scores decreased by 1.48% from 2011 to 2019 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2021).

From an educational leadership perspective, school and school district leaders know the importance of quality and effective teachers and the positive influence they can have on students and their academic performance (Marzano, 2003, 2017; McCaffrey et al., 2003). Due to limited funds, school and school district leaders must make difficult decisions on how best to allocate resources in hopes of maximizing student achievement and overall well-being. In short, school and school district leaders must decide how and where they can best target resources to produce the greatest influence on student success. Providing additional teacher training by increasing instructional leadership is one such avenue. Increasing student support services such as school counseling and social work are other avenues. For school and school district leaders, finding a balance, or just the right combination of these services and other ones is a challenge in today's high-stakes testing environment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2012, 2021) recommends a student to school counselor ratio of 250:1. Unfortunately, in the State of Texas, the average student to school counselor ratio is almost double the recommended ratio at

449:1 (National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018). Large school counselor caseloads and the nonexistence of school counselors in certain school campuses and school districts may be interpreted to mean that school counseling is not sufficiently funded in Texas. Researchers have documented that students who attend schools with lower student to school counselor ratios or with the recommended student to school counselor ratio are more likely to graduate high school and participate in postsecondary course-taking (Bryan et al., 2011; Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; Hurwitz et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2019; Parzych et al., 2019), have fewer disciplinary incidents, better attendance rates, and higher SAT scores (Lapan et al., 2012; Parzych et al., 2019). Therefore, lack of sufficient funding for school counseling leads to a disservice to Texas students and their families, particularly students who are at risk and students in poverty, as it relates to missed opportunities to assist with social development, emotional well-being, mental health, academic achievement, and college and career planning.

Sharing some similarities with school counselors, school social workers have been a member of the American education system for more than a century (Sherman, 2016). The positive influence of school social workers on the social and emotional health, attendance, and achievement of all students, and specifically students who are determined to be at risk and students in poverty, have been documented by multiple researchers (Alvarez et al., 2013; Elsherbiny, 2017; Franklin et al., 2009; Newsome et al., 2008). Unfortunately, in the State of Texas, schools and school districts are not required to have school social workers (National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter, 2020). As a result, state lawmakers, schools, and school districts do not appear to

consistently consider the services provided by school social workers as a priority, as evidenced by the lack of school social workers in some of the largest Texas school districts (Alvarez et al., 2013). Hence, Texas public school students have unequal access to the services provided by school social workers. Unfortunately, as the services performed by school social workers continue to be deprioritized, the number of students who are at risk and students who are in poverty continue to rise steadily (Texas Education Agency, 2011, 2019b).

Different from school counseling services and school social work services which focus on the mental health and social and emotional well-being of students, instructional leadership focuses directly on increasing the instructional quality and effectiveness of teachers as a strategy to improve student achievement. Researchers (Hertert, 1997; Killeen et al., 2002; Miles et al., 2004; Odden et al., 2002) have documented that school district expenditures on instructional leadership vary from about 1.5% to 8% of a school district's budget, with many school districts averaging about 3% to 5%. With both federal and state governments continuing to focus on test scores as the main measure of school accountability, schools and school districts have increasingly utilized instructional leadership as a method to increase teacher quality and effectiveness (Birman et al., 2000; Gallagher, 2002; Killeen et al., 2002; Knight, 2007, 2011, 2018; Moody, 2019).

Though logical that increased instructional leadership should lead to improvement in instruction quality, and therefore, an improvement in student outcomes, a number of researchers (e.g., Foster et al., 2013; Harris & Sass, 2011; Jacob & Lefgren, 2004) have documented mixed results in regard to the effectiveness of professional development.

Furthermore, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2021), Texas students have not exhibited consistent growth in academic achievement. Instructional leadership is just one strategy to improve student academic achievement. However, other options, such as school counseling services and school social work services, have also been established to improve student outcomes (Alvarez et al., 2013; Bryan et al., 2011; Cholewa et al., 2015; Elsherbiny, 2017; Franklin et al., 2009; Hurwitz et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2019; Newsome et al., 2008). With limited funding, schools and school districts must carefully consider how best to allocate funding toward various school programs with respect to cost-effectiveness. Therefore, it is imperative that the financial expenditures of schools, as it relates to Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership, must be evaluated to assess what trends, if any, are present.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Three major purposes were present in this journal-ready dissertation. The first purpose was to determine the monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies at Texas elementary, middle, and high schools. The second purpose in this dissertation was to investigate the degree to which differences might be present in the monies spent and as a percent of the total monies per pupil for Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership between the elementary, middle, and high schools. The third purpose of the study was to determine the occurrence of each of the aforementioned determinations across 10 years from the 2009-



2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, so that the presence of trends could be ascertained.

### **Significance of the Study**

The high student to school counselor ratio may be interpreted to mean that Texas schools are not providing sufficient funding for school counseling services. This lack of adequate funding for school counseling services contributes to increased school counselor caseloads and school counselor burnout. With the anticipated negative effects of the current Covid-19 pandemic on students' academic achievement, and social and emotional health, it is imperative that schools have sufficient funding for school counselors and school counseling related services to meet the growing needs of students. The combination of high student caseloads (National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018), performing numerous non-counseling duties (Karatas & Kaya, 2015; Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010), and school counselor burnout (Kim & Lambie, 2018; Moyer, 2011), may have the unintended consequences of students going without much needed school counseling interventions unless schools, school districts, and state leaders increase funding for school counseling services.

With some similarities to school counselors, school social workers, also offer school-based mental health support, as well as serve as a liaison between school, home, and the local community. It is well established that the struggles faced by students who are at risk and students who are in poverty require additional interventions to help ensure academic achievement (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009; Warren et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2014). Unfortunately, the number of Texas students who are at risk and who are in

poverty continue to increase (Texas Education Agency, 2011, 2019c). Due to the State of Texas not mandating the employment of school social workers by Texas schools and districts (National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter, 2020), Texas students have unequal access to the services and benefits that are offered by school social workers.

Benefits provided to students and their families by school social workers have been documented by multiple researchers (Alvarez et al., 2013; Elsherbiny, 2017; Franklin et al., 2009; Newsome et al., 2008). Similarly well documented is that school counselors have positive influences on student outcomes (Bryan et al., 2011; Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; Hurwitz et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2019; Lapan et al., 2012; Parzych et al., 2019). For both school counselors and school social workers, a lack of published research literature is present regarding the funding and expenditures of these programs. This journal-ready dissertation adds to the existing research literature regarding funding for school counseling and social work services, and can be utilized by school, school district, and state leaders in making decisions regarding future financial expenditures for School Counseling Services and Social Work Services for Texas public schools.

Furthermore, in the current era of high-stakes testing, school districts have increased their focus on instructional leadership as a strategy to increase student test scores (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2018; Moody, 2019). As school districts allocate more resources towards instructional leadership, resources for student wraparound services to address the needs of the whole child, such as school counseling and school social work, may become more deprioritized. Although studies have been conducted attempting to assess the cost of instructional leadership, no published study was located in which trends

of instructional leadership expenditures, on a statewide basis, and by school level were examined. Similar to Guidance Counseling Services and Social Work Services, this journal-ready dissertation adds to the literature regarding funding for Instructional Leadership and can be used by school and school district leaders, as well as by state lawmakers in making decisions regarding future funding for Instructional Leadership.

### **Definition of Terms**

The key terms for the three research investigations in this journal-ready dissertation are provided for the reader below.

#### **Elementary School**

Grades Pre-Kindergarten through 5 were designated as elementary schools (Craig, 2006; Dove et al., 2010).

#### **Guidance Counseling Services Expenditures**

In this journal-ready dissertation, guidance/counseling services expenditures will be defined as “those used for assessing and testing students’ abilities, aptitudes, and interests; for counseling students with respect to career and educational opportunities; and for helping students establish realistic goals (function code 31)” (Texas Education Agency, 2019a, p. 7).

#### **High School**

Grades 9 through 12 were designated as high schools (Craig, 2006; Dove et al., 2010).

### **Instructional Leadership Expenditures**

In this study, “instructional leadership expenditures are those used for managing, directing, supervising, and providing leadership for staff who provide either instructional or instruction-related services (function code 21)” (Texas Education Agency, 2019a, p. 7).

### **Middle School**

Grades 6 through 8 were designated as middle schools (Craig, 2006; Dove et al., 2010).

### **Public Education Information Management System**

The Public Education Information Management System is a part of the Texas Education Agency and it collects and organizes data on all public schools and districts in Texas. The Public Education Information Management System “encompasses all data requested and received by the” Texas Education Agency “about public education, including student demographic and academic performance, personnel, financial, and organizational information” (Texas Education Agency, 2018, p. 1).

### **Social Work Services Expenditures**

In this dissertation, social work services expenditures are those funds used for “activities such as investigating and diagnosing student social needs, casework and group work services for children and parents, and interpreting the social needs of students for other staff members (function code 32)” (Texas Education Agency, 2019a, p. 7).

## **Texas Education Agency**

The Texas Education Agency is the state agency that supervises public education in Texas, both at the primary and secondary levels. The agency is governed by the commissioner of education. “The Texas Education Agency improves outcomes for all public school students in the state by providing leadership, guidance, and support to school systems” (Texas Education Agency, 2020, p. 1).

## **Literature Review Search Procedures**

For this journal-ready dissertation, the literature regarding school counseling, school social work, and instructional leadership were examined along with financial expenditures for these categories. The following words or phrases were used in conducting an extensive literature review: guidance counseling, school counseling, social work, instructional leadership, professional development, teacher leadership, skills specialists, instructional coaches, budget, cost, funding, expense, finance, effective, at risk, economically disadvantaged, economic status, special populations, Texas, elementary, middle, high, principal, training, preparation, certification. Searches were conducted using the following databases: APA PsycArticles, APA PsycInfo, EBSCO Host, Education Source, Educational Resources Information Center, Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson), and Educational Administration Abstracts. The searches were filtered by peer-reviewed literature within the last 15-20 years. Additionally, the references sections of salient articles were searched for relevant articles.

### **Delimitations**

The three studies contained in this journal-ready dissertation are limited to financial expenditures for Texas public schools only. Financial expenditures data for private and charter schools were not used in this journal-ready dissertation. Data were previously obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System for the 2009-2010 through the 2018-2019 school years on financial expenditures for public elementary, middle, and high schools. A Public Information Request form was previously submitted to and fulfilled by the Texas Education Agency for the 10 years of data. The financial expenditures categories of interest for this journal-ready dissertation are Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership.

### **Limitations**

In this journal-ready dissertation, data on only the financial expenditures for Texas public elementary, middle, and high schools for Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership were analyzed. As a result, key limitations are present. First, statistical analyses were limited to Texas public schools for the 2009-2010 through the 2018-2019 school years. Data were not analyzed for private and charter schools. A second limitation is that each school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) may not have the same number of grade levels. That is, an elementary school could consist of K-5 grades, or EE-5 grades, or 1-5 grades. It is not known how this variation in grade levels might influence results of the studies that were conducted in this journal-ready dissertation. Only quantitative data were analyzed in the three studies

in this journal-ready dissertation. Accordingly, the degree to which results might be generalizable beyond the schools whose data were analyzed herein is unknown. Because of the use of already existing data, the research design constituted a causal-comparative study in which cause-effect relationships could not be established (Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

### **Assumptions**

The major assumption for this journal-ready dissertation was that the data provided to the Texas Education Agency through the Public Education Information Management System were reported accurately. Any errors reported in relation to how financial expenditures are categorized could negatively affect the results. Similarly, any errors reported in relation to the reporting of monies spent could also negatively influence the results.

### **Organization of the Study**

In this journal-ready dissertation, three manuscripts were generated. In the first article, the financial expenditures data for Texas public elementary, middle, and high schools were examined for the 2009-2010 through the 2018-2019 school years for Guidance Counseling Services. In the second article, the financial expenditures data for Social Work Services for Texas public elementary, middle, and high schools were investigated for the 2009-2010 through the 2018-2019 school years. In the last manuscript, the financial expenditures data for Instructional Leadership for Texas public elementary, middle, and high schools were addressed for the 2009-2010 through the 2018-2019 school years.

This journal-ready dissertation is composed of five chapters. Chapter I contains the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions of the three research investigations. In Chapter II, the framework for the first journal-ready investigation is provided for the financial expenditures data for Guidance Counseling Services for Texas public elementary, middle, and high schools for the 2009-2010 through the 2018-2019 school years. In Chapter III, the second journal-ready analysis is provided for the financial expenditures data for Social Work Services for Texas public elementary, middle, and high schools for the 2009-2010 through the 2018-2019 school years. In Chapter IV, the third journal-ready dissertation investigation is provided with the financial expenditures data for Instructional Leadership for Texas public elementary, middle, and high schools for the 2009-2010 through the 2018-2019 school years. In Chapter V, a discussion of the results of the three articles is provided.



**CHAPTER II****GUIDANCE COUNSELING SERVICES EXPENDITURES AT TEXAS SCHOOLS: A  
MULTIYEAR STATEWIDE INVESTIGATION**

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This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

### **Abstract**

This study was conducted to determine the degree to which differences were present in the distribution of Guidance Counseling Services dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 through the 2018-2019 school years in Texas. Through the use of inferential statistical procedures, statistically significant differences were established. The amount of school counseling dollars spent per pupil were highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. From the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, expenditures for elementary, middle, and high schools across the State of Texas increased by only \$60, \$95, and \$100, respectively. Implications and recommendations for future research were discussed.

*Keywords:* School counseling; School counselor; Guidance counseling; Funding; Financial expenditures; Texas Education Agency; Public education information management system; Elementary school; Middle school; High school; Trend

## GUIDANCE COUNSELING SERVICES EXPENDITURES AT TEXAS SCHOOLS: A MULTIYEAR STATEWIDE INVESTIGATION

The school counseling profession has undergone numerous changes in duties, responsibilities, and expectations throughout the last several decades. Initially, school counseling began with a purpose and focus solely on vocational counseling (Chandler et al., 2008; Chandler et al., 2018, Martin & Robinson, 2011) and has developed into a more encompassing role that now includes an emphasis on social emotional learning, college and career planning, and providing responsive services to students and families (Chandler et al., 2008; Chandler et al., 2018; Martin & Robinson, 2011). As such, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2012, 2021) changed the name of school counselors from *guidance counselors* to *professional school counselors* (Martin & Robinson, 2011). The term guidance counselor is now obsolete as professional school counselors are responsible for implementing comprehensive school counseling programs that assist students with their social and emotional growth, academic goals, as well as their career goals (ASCA, 2012, 2021). Present day school counselors are integral to providing students with wrap-around services that include the establishment of healthy behaviors, mindsets, and goals. With the assistance of school counselors, students learn skills in cooperation, collaboration, resilience, and tenacity, alongside important soft skills such as time management, and self-direction.

For students who are at risk of not graduating and for students in poverty, services provided by school counselors are critical. School counselors, however, often struggle with fully meeting the needs of students who are at risk and students in poverty due to

frequently being assigned numerous non-counseling tasks in addition to their counseling duties (Fitch et al., 2001; Karatas & Kaya, 2015; Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010). These non-counseling duties include responsibilities ranging from clerical tasks to administrative tasks as well as other tasks that are all outside of the role of the school counselor (Bringman et al., 2010; Karatas & Kaya, 2015; Lowery et al., 2018; Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010).

Sadly, the inconsistency of school counselor duties has resulted in role uncertainty, confusion, as well as school counselor job dissatisfaction and burnout (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Moyer, 2011). With the variability of counselor responsibilities and the importance of school counseling duties, the overall job satisfaction of school counselors needs to be considered, as job satisfaction can affect productivity and effectiveness (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2022). In a study about job satisfaction, Cervoni and DeLucia-Waack (2011) addressed how time spent on duties recommended by the ASCA influenced the overall job satisfaction of high school counselors. From their sample of 175 secondary school counselors, of which more than 93% were employed in public schools, and varied from one year to 41 years of experience, they determined that more time spent on appropriate counseling duties created more job satisfaction for high school counselors. Conversely, more time spent on non-counseling tasks resulted in less job satisfaction for high school counselors (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011).

Similarly, Baggerly and Osborn (2006) analyzed factors that were predictive of career satisfaction and commitment levels of school counselors. From a survey in 2002

on school counselors from Florida, in which 1,280 responses were received, with over 60% of the participants being middle school counselors, Baggerly and Osborn (2006) established the presence of statistically significant relationships between performing the appropriate job duties of counselors and counselor satisfaction levels. Counselors who were assigned appropriate duties according to the ASCA reported much higher levels of career satisfaction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006) than counselors who were not assigned appropriate duties. As such, they documented that high levels of proper counseling duties resulted in higher levels of commitment by school counselors. Interestingly, secondary counselors perceived their jobs to be more stressful than elementary counselors (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006).

Also of importance is that researchers (e.g., Kim & Lambie, 2018; Moyer, 2011) have documented that school counselors are experiencing burnout. In a survey of 382 counselors, Moyer (2011) established that the more time school counselors spent on non-counseling related duties, the more likely that counselors were to exhibit signs of burnout. Moyer (2011) also determined that counselors who spent more time completing non-counseling related duties were less likely to exhibit empathy for their students. Overall, the school counseling profession may be especially susceptible to burnout due to role ambiguity, excessive job demands, and workload (Moyer, 2011).

In another article related to school counselor burnout, Kim and Lambie (2018) reviewed 18 published research studies between 2000 and 2018 on predictors of burnout and occupational-related stress in school counselors. Kim and Lambie (2018) ascertained that school counselors are at great risk for experiencing burnout due to large caseloads,

multiple job demands including many non-counseling duties, limited support from administrators, and lack of resources. Those school counselors experiencing burnout also experience higher levels of job dissatisfaction, lower productivity, and lower levels of job commitment (Kim & Lambie, 2018).

Notably, as school counselor responsibilities grow increasingly more demanding, school counselor student caseloads continue to be high (National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018). With respect to the state of interest for this article, Texas, the average student-to-school counselor ratio of 449:1 is nearly double the recommended caseload of 250:1 by the ASCA (National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018). At the same time, students' needs are also increasing as the number of students who are determined to be at risk and in poverty continue to rise (United States Department of Education, 2020).

In a recent Texas study, Merik and Slate (2021) established that middle and high schools with the highest percentages of students who were at risk had the same number of school counselors as schools with the lowest percentages of students who were at risk, although it is well documented that students who are at risk require more services to help guide academic achievement (Blount, 2012; Johnson & Perkins, 2009). The ever-growing needs of students is a cause for concern for counselors experiencing burnout, because it is well documented that high counselor caseloads and non-counseling duties can lead to counselors exhibiting less empathy for students, lower levels of job commitment, and lower levels of productivity (Kim & Lambie, 2018; Moyer, 2011). In short, schools and school districts may be missing opportunities to help students by

overburdening their school counselors with high caseloads and duties that are outside of the purview of the role of the school counselor.

In regard to school campus leaders and to school district leaders, the frequent and well documented circumstance of school counselors being assigned non-counseling duties (Bringman et al., 2010; Karatas & Kaya, 2015; Lowery et al., 2018; Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010) may be interpreted to mean that educational leadership preparation programs, specifically principal preparation programs, are not adequately training future principals regarding the proper tasks and responsibilities of the role of the school counselor (Benigno, 2017; Chandler et al., 2018). Principals are often the individuals who are charged with assigning duties to the school counselor. Therefore, principal training is imperative in ensuring that school counselors are assigned appropriate school counseling duties.

With a lack of adequate training for principals regarding the unique roles of school counselors and the benefits of having a comprehensive school counseling program (Benigno, 2017; Chandler et al., 2018; Lowery et al., 2018; Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010), it is not surprising that the importance of school counseling services appears to be infrequently prioritized by school and district leaders. The lack of prioritization of school counseling services is also displayed by the state legislature as the employment of school counselors is not mandated by the State of Texas. Consequently, some school districts in Texas do not have any full-time school counselors (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2019) because Texas law only requires that school districts employ at least one counselor for every 500 elementary students (33 Tex. Educ. Code §

33.002 (2013)). More often than not, where and how money is spent is a good indication of how a school, school district, or organization places importance or value in its many programs. The apparent lack of prioritization by educational leaders and lawmakers regarding the benefits of school counseling services is evident in the large student-to-school counselor ratios and the frequent assignment of non-counseling duties to school counselors, which reduces the time spent on school counseling services.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2012, 2021) recommends a student to school counselor ratio of 250:1. Unfortunately, in the State of Texas, the average student to school counselor ratio is almost double the recommended ratio at 449:1 (National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018). Moreover, some school districts in Texas do not have any full-time school counselors (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2019) because Texas law only requires that school districts employ at least one counselor for every 500 elementary students (33 Tex. Educ. Code § 33.002 (2013)).

Large school counselor caseloads and the nonexistence of school counselors in certain school campuses and school districts may be interpreted to mean that school counseling is not sufficiently funded in Texas. Researchers have documented that students who attend schools with lower student to school counselor ratios or with the recommended student to school counselor ratio are more likely to graduate high school and participate in postsecondary course-taking (Bryan et al., 2011; Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; Hurwitz et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2019; Parzych et al., 2019), have fewer



disciplinary incidents, and better attendance rates, and higher SAT scores (Lapan et al., 2012; Parzych et al., 2019). However, researchers have also established that high student to school counselor ratios along with other factors including the performance of non-counseling duties have greatly contributed to school counselor burnout, lower school counselor effectiveness, and lower school counselor job commitment (Kim & Lambie, 2018; Moyer, 2011). Therefore, lack of sufficient funding for school counseling likely leads to a disservice to Texas students and their families, particularly those students who are at risk and students in poverty, as it relates to missed opportunities to assist with student social development, emotional well-being, mental health, academic achievement, and college and career planning.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Three purposes were present in this article. The first purpose was to determine the monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies at Texas elementary, middle, and high schools. The second purpose in this study was to determine the degree to which differences might be present in the monies spent and as a percent of the total monies per pupil for Guidance Counseling Services between the elementary, middle, and high schools. The third purpose was to ascertain the extent to which trends might exist in monies spent and as a percent of monies spent at all three school levels across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year.

### **Significance of the Study**

The high student to school counselor ratio may be interpreted to mean that Texas schools are not providing sufficient funding for school counseling services. This lack of adequate funding for school counseling services contributes to increased school counselor caseloads and school counselor burnout. Though the ASCA (2012, 2021) recommends a student to school counselor ratio of 250:1, the average student to school counselor ratio for Texas schools is nearly double the recommended ratio at 449:1 (National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018).

With the anticipated negative effects of the current Covid-19 pandemic on students' academic achievement, and social and emotional health, it is imperative that schools have sufficient funding for school counselors and school counseling related services to meet the growing needs of students. The combination of high student caseloads (National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018), performing numerous non-counseling duties (Karatas & Kaya, 2015; Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010), and school counselor burnout (Kim & Lambie, 2018; Moyer, 2011), may have the unintended consequences of students going without much needed school counseling interventions unless schools, districts, and state leaders increase funding for school counseling services.

Simply stated, school counseling services have been well documented to positively influence the social and emotional health, and academic outcomes of students, as well as increase the likelihood of students engaging in postsecondary course taking (Bryan et al., 2011; Cholewa et al., 2015; Hurwitz et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2019).

However, the research literature is lacking information regarding the funding of school counselors, school counseling services, and comprehensive school counseling programs. Additionally, the State of Texas does not require school counselors to be employed at every public school (33 Tex. Educ. Code § 33.002 (2013)). Hence, students in Texas do not all have equal access to professional school counselors. This research study adds to the dearth of literature regarding funding for school counseling services and can be utilized by school, school district, and state leaders in making decisions regarding future financial expenditures for School Counseling Services for Texas public schools.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What are the monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies in the 2009-2010 school year for Texas elementary schools?; (b) What are the monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies in the 2009-2010 school year for Texas middle schools?; (c) What are the monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies in the 2009-2010 school year for Texas high schools?; (d) What is the difference in monies spent per pupil for Guidance Counseling Services between the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 school year in Texas?; (e) What is the difference in the percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services between the elementary, middle, and high schools levels for the 2009-2010 school year in Texas?; and (f) What is the trend in monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services for each of these school levels per pupil in real dollars and as a

percent of the total monies across the 2009-2010 and 2018-2019 school years for Texas schools? The first five research questions were answered separately for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, whereas the last question constituted all of these school years.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

A causal-comparative research design was present in this nonexperimental study (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). In this study, Texas public elementary, middle, and high schools constituted the three groups that comprised the independent variable. The monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies at each school level during the aforementioned 10 school years were the dependent variables. The financial expenditures data were previously obtained through a Public Information Request form submitted to and fulfilled by the Texas Education Agency's Public Education Information Management System. The Public Education Information Management System collects and organizes data on all public schools and districts in Texas, including financial expenditures, enrollment, and student/staff demographics, among numerous other characteristics related to the daily activities of Texas public education (Texas Education Agency, 2018).

## **Participants and Instrumentation**

Participants in this study were public elementary, middle, and high schools in Texas. Grades Pre-Kindergarten through 5 were designated as elementary schools, of which over 3,000 were present in this investigation. Data from approximately 1,000 middle schools were present in this analysis and consisted of Grades 6 through 8. With respect to high schools, more than 1,000 high schools, comprised of Grades 9 through 12, were present. For each of these three school levels, the dollars spent on Guidance and Counseling Services per student and as a percent of total funds at each school level across the 10 school years, 2009-2010 through 2018-2019, were examined.

According to the Texas Education Agency (2019, p. 7), “Guidance/counseling services expenditures are those used for assessing and testing students’ abilities, aptitudes, and interests; for counseling students with respect to career and educational opportunities; and for helping students establish realistic goals (function code 31).” Private and charter schools were not included in this analysis. The financial expenditures data were previously obtained through a Public Information Request to the Texas Education Agency’s Public Education Information Management System. The data that were obtained were then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software for analysis.

## **Results**

Prior to conducting inferential statistical procedures, specifically Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedures, to answer the research questions presented above, checks for its underlying assumptions were made. Although some of the assumptions

were not met, Field (2009) contends that the parametric ANOVA procedure is sufficiently robust that these violations can be withstood. Accordingly, use of parametric ANOVA procedures were justified.

### **Counseling Dollars Across School Years**

Regarding the extent to which differences were present in the distribution of school counseling dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 school year, the parametric ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5229) = 63.62, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .02$ . The effect size for this difference was small (Cohen, 1988). To determine which pairs of school levels differed from each other, post hoc procedures were conducted next. Scheffe` post hoc procedures revealed that differences were present between all school pairwise comparisons. As revealed in Table 2.1, the average school counseling dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. An average of about \$61 less was spent in counseling dollars per student at elementary schools than middle schools, about \$95 less was spent at the middle schools when compared with high schools, and about \$156 less was spent at elementary schools per student when compared to the high school level.

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Concerning the extent to which differences were present in the distribution of school counseling dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school

levels for the 2010-2011 school year, the parametric ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5258) = 27.40, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ . The effect size for this difference was small (Cohen, 1988). Scheffe` post hoc procedures revealed that differences were present between all school pairwise comparisons. The average school counseling dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. An average of about \$58 less was spent in counseling dollars per student at elementary schools than middle schools, about \$111 less was spent at the middle schools when compared with high schools, and about \$169 less was spent at elementary schools per student when compared to the high school level. Table 2.1 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

With respect to the 2011-2012 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5268) = 42.23, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .02$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average school counseling dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Revealed in Table 2.1 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis. In reference to the 2012-2013 school year, a statistically significant difference was present,  $F(2, 5298) = 118.04, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .04$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average school counseling dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 2.1 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Regarding the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5545) = 68.73, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .02$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988).

The average school counseling dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Delineated in Table 2.2 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

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Concerning the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded,  $F(2, 5578) = 65.92, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .02$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average school counseling dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 2.2 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

With respect to the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5476) = 25.06, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average school counseling dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 2.2 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis. In reference to the 2016-2017 school year, a statistically significant result was present,  $F(2, 5632) = 51.62, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .02$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average school counseling dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Revealed in Table 2.2 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.



Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, the difference was statistically significant,  $F(2, 5473) = 76.29, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .03$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average school counseling dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Revealed in Table 2.3 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

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Concerning the 2018-2019 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded,  $F(2, 5668) = 20.16, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average school counseling dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 2.3 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

### **Percent of Total Monies for Guidance Counseling Services Across School Years**

Regarding the extent to which differences were present in the percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 school year, the parametric ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5229) = 158.84, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .06$ . The effect size for this difference was moderate (Cohen, 1988). To determine which pairs of school levels differed from each other, post hoc procedures were conducted next. Scheffe` post hoc procedures revealed that differences were present between all school pairwise comparisons. As delineated in Table 2.4, the average percent of total monies

spent for Guidance Counseling Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level.

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Concerning the 2010-2011 school year, the parametric ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5258) = 195.65, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .07$ . The effect size for this difference was moderate (Cohen, 1988). Scheffe` post hoc procedures revealed that differences were present between all school pairwise comparisons. The average percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 2.4 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis. With respect to the 2011-2012 school year, a statistically significant result was present,  $F(2, 5268) = 226.60, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .08$ , moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Presented in Table 2.4 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

In reference to the 2012-2013 school year, the result was statistically significant,  $F(2, 5301) = 240.06, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .08$ , moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the

elementary school level. Revealed in Table 2.4 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Regarding the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded,  $F(2, 5545) = 290.44, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .10$ , moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 2.5 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

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Concerning the 2014-2015 school year, the result was statistically significant,  $F(2, 5578) = 337.18, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .11$ , moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 2.5 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

With respect to the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5476) = 275.38, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .09$ , moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Delineated in Table 2.5 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis. In reference to the 2016-2017 school year, the result was statistically significant,  $F(2, 5632) = 318.56, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .10$ , moderate effect

size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Revealed in Table 2.5 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5473) = 316.70, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .10$ , moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 2.6 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

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Concerning the 2018-2019 school year, the parametric ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5668) = 242.99, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .08$ , moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 2.6 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

### **Trends in Counseling Dollars Across School Years**

With respect to the trend in the amount of monies spent on Guidance Counseling Services per student across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for the elementary, middle, and high school levels, the monies spent per student remained

relatively the same. At the elementary level, approximately a \$60 increase occurred in the counseling dollars spent per student from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, counseling dollars increased by about \$95 during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the monies spent on counseling services per student increased by about \$100 during the aforementioned 10 school years. Presented in Figure 2.1 is a line graph depicting the trend in monies spent on school counseling services per student during the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year.

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### **Trends in Percent of Total Monies Spent for Guidance Counseling Services**

Regarding the trend in the percent of total monies spent on Guidance Counseling Services across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for the elementary, middle, and high school levels, the percent of total monies spent remained nearly unchanged. At the elementary level, a 0.33% increase occurred in the counseling dollars spent from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, the percent spent on counseling dollars increased by about 0.48% during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the percent of monies spent on counseling services increased by about 0.70% during the aforementioned 10 school years. Depicted in Figure 2.2 is a line graph depicting the trend in the percent of total monies

spent on school counseling services during the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year.

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### **Discussion**

In this investigation, the distribution of Guidance Counseling Services dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year was examined. Statistically significant differences were established in the amount of counseling dollars that were spent at all three school levels for all 10 of the school years. The average school counseling dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. At the elementary level, approximately a \$60 increase occurred in the counseling dollars spent per student from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, counseling dollars increased by about \$95 during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the monies spent on counseling services per student increased by about \$100 during the aforementioned 10 school years.

Also examined in this investigation was the percent of total dollars spent on Guidance Counseling Services for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the elementary level, a 0.33% increase occurred in the counseling dollars spent from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle

school level, the percent spent on counseling dollars increased by about 0.48% during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the percent of monies spent on counseling services increased by about 0.70% during the aforementioned 10 school years.

### **Implications for Policy and for Practice**

School counselor caseloads in Texas continue to far exceed the recommended student-to-school counselor ratios recommended by the ASCA (National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018). The high student-to-school counselor ratio may be interpreted to mean that Texas schools are not providing sufficient funding for school counseling services. The average school counseling dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels increased only by about \$60, \$95, and \$100 respectively, from the 2009-2010 to the 2018-2019 school years.

Funding for Guidance Counseling Services at the elementary school level was statistically significantly lower than funding at the middle and high school levels. This lower funding is particularly concerning as elementary counselors are vital in helping young children to develop healthy coping skills, as well as other aptitudes associated with social and emotional learning, that then contributes to student success at the secondary level (ASCA, 2012, 2021). The ability of school counselors to intervene and provide assistance in the younger grade levels will help to improve student outcomes in the older grade levels.

Not yet taking into account inflation, the minor increase in per pupil spending for Guidance Counseling Services during the past 10 years and the persistently high caseloads for school counselors were interpreted to mean that funding is insufficient for

Guidance Counseling Services in Texas schools. Accordingly, school leaders, school district leaders, policymakers, and state legislators are encouraged to increase funding for Guidance Counseling Services for all school levels so that schools, in particular school counselors, can more aptly support and provide services to students in the areas of academic achievement, social and emotional health, as well as college and career readiness. The needs of Texas students have increased as the number of students who were determined to be at risk as well as the number of students who were in poverty have also increased within the last 10 years (United States Department of Education, 2020). However, the monies spent on school counseling services have only minimally increased or, in fact, have not increased once inflation is taken into consideration. In addition, with the ongoing expected and unforeseen negative consequences on students and families brought upon by the Covid-19 pandemic (Fair Health, 2021), the need for sufficient funding for Guidance Counseling Services grows ever pressing so that schools are able to meet the increasing needs of students adequately.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based upon the results of this investigation, several recommendations are possible for future research. First, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study using other expenditure categories and to compare the rates of increase or decrease of the other expenditures to the expenditures for Guidance Counseling Services. Second, researchers are recommended to compare the number of school counselors at each school level. Third, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in other states and investigate any trends regarding school counseling expenditures in public schools across the country.



Fourth, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study to include private and charter schools. Lastly, researchers are also encouraged to review the tables in this study and investigate the large standard deviations for each school level as these large numbers suggest that schools within Texas are far from being uniform in regard to per pupil expenditures for Guidance Counseling Services at each respective school level.

### **Conclusion**

In this Texas statewide analysis, Guidance Counseling Services dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels were examined for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school years. Also investigated was the percent of total dollars spent on Guidance Counseling Services for the same 10 school years. Statistically significant differences were documented in the amount of dollars spent per student and the percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services for all three school levels for all 10 of the aforementioned school years. The amount of school counseling dollars spent per student were highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. As the school level decreased, the amount of school counseling dollars spent per student were statistically significantly lower. From the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, expenditures for elementary, middle, and high schools across the State of Texas increased by only \$60, \$95, and \$100, respectively.

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**Table 2.1**

*Descriptive Statistics for Counseling Dollars Spent Per Student for the 2009-2010  
Through the 2012-2013 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2009-2010			
Elementary Schools	3,044	\$229.77	\$425.88
Middle Schools	1,061	\$290.84	\$300.49
High Schools	1,127	\$385.95	\$409.86
2010-2011			
Elementary Schools	3,095	\$243.96	\$755.20
Middle Schools	1,018	\$302.08	\$332.57
High Schools	1,148	\$413.31	\$619.13
2011-2012			
Elementary Schools	3,087	\$219.45	\$473.11
Middle Schools	1,021	\$279.92	\$267.40
High Schools	1,163	\$412.39	\$1,016.43
2012-2013			
Elementary Schools	3,110	\$214.53	\$289.00
Middle Schools	1,027	\$286.25	\$271.01
High Schools	1,164	\$392.82	\$489.87



**Table 2.2**

*Descriptive Statistics for Counseling Dollars Spent Per Student for the 2013-2014  
Through the 2016-2017 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2013-2014			
Elementary Schools	3,272	\$225.63	\$384.31
Middle Schools	1,103	\$295.54	\$343.44
High Schools	1,173	\$450.63	\$992.42
2014-2015			
Elementary Schools	3,369	\$244.06	\$532.06
Middle Schools	1,038	\$319.02	\$354.60
High Schools	1,174	\$452.08	\$669.74
2015-2016			
Elementary Schools	3,157	\$268.49	\$914.83
Middle Schools	1,083	\$334.70	\$389.61
High Schools	1,239	\$461.37	\$815.94
2016-2017			
Elementary Schools	3,363	\$272.31	\$621.46
Middle Schools	1,069	\$336.41	\$356.35
High Schools	1,203	\$483.67	\$778.58

**Table 2.3**

*Descriptive Statistics for Counseling Dollars Spent Per Student for the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2017-2018			
Elementary Schools	3,168	\$277.63	\$469.33
Middle Schools	1,087	\$331.63	\$221.12
High Schools	1,221	\$485.23	\$708.43
2018-2019			
Elementary Schools	3,243	\$290.73	\$592.63
Middle Schools	1,208	\$385.64	\$1,667.33
High Schools	1,220	\$486.61	\$650.71

**Table 2.4**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Total Monies Spent for Guidance Counseling Services for the 2009-2010 Through the 2012-2013 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2009-2010			
Elementary Schools	3,044	3.21	1.34
Middle Schools	1,061	3.86	1.50
High Schools	1,127	4.10	2.10
2010-2011			
Elementary Schools	3,095	3.26	1.27
Middle Schools	1,018	4.03	1.54
High Schools	1,148	4.18	2.10
2011-2012			
Elementary Schools	3,087	3.22	1.26
Middle Schools	1,021	4.03	1.54
High Schools	1,163	4.23	2.17
2012-2013			
Elementary Schools	3,112	3.26	1.28
Middle Schools	1,027	4.06	1.60
High Schools	1,165	4.32	2.11

**Table 2.5**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Total Monies Spent for Guidance Counseling Services for the 2013-2014 Through the 2016-2017 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2013-2014			
Elementary Schools	3,272	3.24	1.29
Middle Schools	1,103	3.99	1.61
High Schools	1,173	4.44	2.15
2014-2015			
Elementary Schools	3,369	3.24	1.30
Middle Schools	1,038	4.12	1.57
High Schools	1,174	4.53	2.25
2015-2016			
Elementary Schools	3,157	3.30	1.26
Middle Schools	1,083	4.14	1.88
High Schools	1,239	4.55	2.41
2016-2017			
Elementary Schools	3,363	3.39	1.20
Middle Schools	1,069	4.29	1.90
High Schools	1,203	4.61	2.17

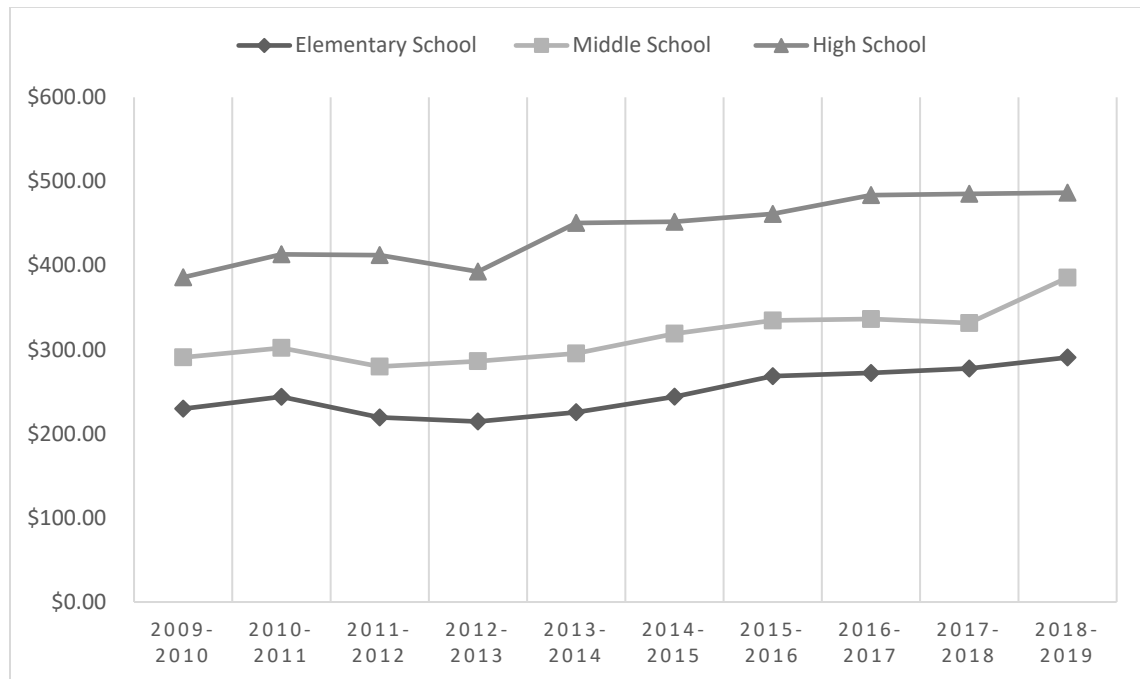
**Table 2.6**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Total Monies Spent for Guidance Counseling Services for the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2017-2018			
Elementary Schools	3,168	3.44	1.18
Middle Schools	1,087	4.25	1.65
High Schools	1,221	4.69	2.27
2018-2019			
Elementary Schools	3,243	3.54	1.59
Middle Schools	1,208	4.34	1.76
High Schools	1,220	4.80	2.36

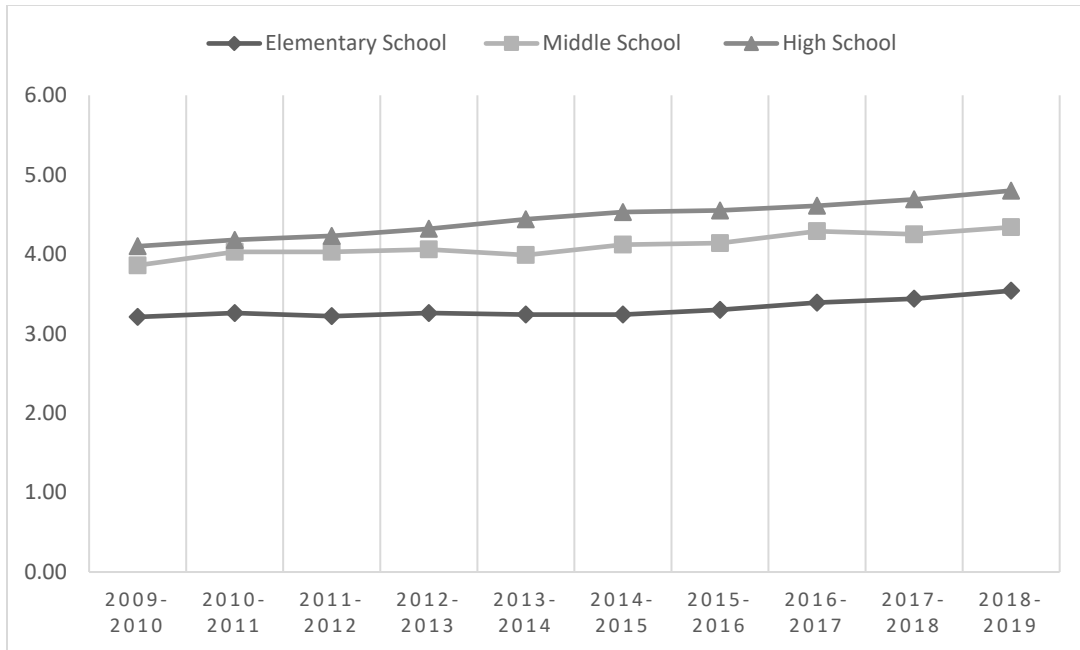
**Figure 2.1**

*Guidance Counseling Services Dollars Spent Per Student for the 2009-2010 School Year Through the 2018-2019 School Year*



**Figure 2.2**

*Percent of Total Monies Spent on Guidance Counseling Services for the 2009-2010 School Year Through the 2018-2019 School Year*



**CHAPTER III**  
SOCIAL WORK SERVICES EXPENDITURES AT TEXAS SCHOOLS: A  
MULTIYEAR STATEWIDE INVESTIGATION

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This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.



### **Abstract**

This study was conducted to determine the degree to which differences were present in the distribution of Social Work Services dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 through the 2018-2019 school years in Texas. Through the use of inferential statistical procedures, statistically significant differences were established. The amount of social work dollars spent per pupil were highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. From the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, expenditures for elementary, middle, and high schools across the State of Texas increased by only \$7, \$8, and \$19, respectively. Implications and recommendations for future research were discussed.

*Keywords:* Social work services; Social worker; Funding; Financial expenditures; Texas Education Agency; Public education information management system; Elementary school; Middle school; High school; Trend

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES EXPENDITURES AT TEXAS SCHOOLS: A  
MULTIYEAR STATEWIDE INVESTIGATION

School social workers have been present in the United States education system since about the start of the 20th century (Sherman, 2016). During the early 1900s, school social workers served as the main liaison between school, home, and the community for students who were at risk (Allen-Meares et al., 1996; Sherman, 2016). At the beginning of the 20th century, school social workers were more commonly referred to as *visiting teachers* (Allen-Meares et al., 1996; Sherman, 2016; Stone, 2015). The field of school social work evolved alongside the transformation of American society which was spearheaded by the growth of industries, cities, and immigration (Phillippo & Blosser, 2013; Sherman, 2016).

One of the responses in the United States to industrialization was the need for the creation of laws regarding child labor (Phillippo & Blosser, 2013). As a result, the government and America's school systems developed what are now known as compulsory attendance laws (Phillippo & Blosser, 2013). The creation of compulsory attendance laws set the stage for school social workers to be specifically tasked with addressing the needs of students who struggled with truancy, as well as with behavior (Allen-Meares et al., 1996; Phillippo & Blosser, 2013; Sherman, 2016). The first visiting teachers, now known as school social workers, specifically worked with students experiencing behavioral and attendance concerns, and were also integral in making families aware of educational requirements, as well as the available resources within the community (Allen-Meares et al., 1996; Phillippo & Blosser, 2013; Sherman, 2016).

During the 1970s, the role of the school social worker made a substantial shift with the establishment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, better known today as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (D'Agostino, 2013; Sherman, 2016). The creation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act had the effect of expanding the role of the school social worker to also include the responsibilities of that of a mental health practitioner, a quasi-special educator for students who require special education services, as well as the traditional role of a community resource liaison (D'Agostino, 2013; Sherman, 2016).

With widespread duties and specialties, the School Social Work Association of America (2020) defines school social workers as “trained mental health professionals with a degree in social work who provide services related to a person’s social, emotional and life adjustment to school and/or society” (p. 1). The School Social Work Association of America (2020) further explains that school social workers are the “link between the home, school and community in providing direct as well as indirect services to students, families and school personnel to promote and support students’ academic and social success” (p. 1). Embedded within the duties of school social workers include conducting home visits, completing student and family assessments, creating plans for treatment, connecting families to community resources, and of course, cultural diversity and social justice advocacy (Greenberg, 2012; Sherman, 2016).

For approximately 120 years, the role of the school social worker has demonstrated its efficacy and value in its influence in assisting students who experience truancy and chronic absenteeism (Elsherbiny, 2017; Franklin et al., 2009; Newsome et

al., 2008). Newsome et al. (2008) conducted a study of 115 students in urban secondary schools; 74 students who were receiving social work services were compared with 71 students who were not receiving services. Newsome et al. (2008) documented statistically significant reductions in risk factors related to truancy-related behaviors for the group of students who received intervention from a social worker. Although interventions by social workers did not directly improve attendance rates, Newsome et al. (2008) reported that services performed by social workers did improve the overall academic performance of the students who received the social work services.

Franklin et al. (2009) suggested that school social workers have multiple positive influences on the behavioral, mental, social, emotional, and academic outcomes of students. Furthermore, Cameron (2006) established that school social workers can assist schools in implementing successful, nonpunitive disciplinary approaches. Most notably, Alvarez et al. (2013) conducted a study on the 100 largest school districts in America and analyzed the influence of school social workers on high school completion rates. Alvarez et al. (2013) documented that the number of school social workers was statistically significantly related to the percentages of students who complete high school. In short, the more school social workers were employed in a school district, the higher the percentage of students who completed high school in the respective districts (Alvarez et al., 2013; Stone et al., 2013).

Even though the research literature is somewhat limited (Alvarez et al., 2013), school social workers have been documented to influence positively the academic outcomes of students who are at risk and students who are in poverty (Alvarez et al.,

2013; Elsherbiny, 2017; Franklin et al., 2009; Newsome et al., 2008). With respect to Texas, the state of interest for this article, schools are not required to employ school social workers (National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter, 2020). Consequently, several of the largest school districts in Texas employ few, if any, social workers (Alvarez et al., 2013). Although school social workers are not required in the State of Texas, the number of students who are at risk of not graduating high school continue to rise steadily, with 46.3% of all Texas students or 2,275,179 students at risk in the 2010-2011 school year, and 50.1% or 2,713,848 students who were at risk during the 2018-2019 school year. The information from the Texas Education Agency reflects an increase of nearly 4% of students who were at risk between the 2010-2011 school year and the 2018-2019 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2011, 2019b). Similarly, the number of students who were in poverty also increased from 2,909,554 or 59.2% in the 2010-2011 school year to 3,283,812 or 60.6% in the 2018-2019 school year. These data are indicative of an increase of about 1.5% or 374,258 more students living in poverty between the 2010-2011 school year and the 2018-2019 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2011, 2019b).

From an educational leadership perspective, school, school district, and state leaders may be doing a disservice to Texas students by not mandating the services of school social workers at schools and districts. Well documented in the literature is that students who are at risk and students who are in poverty require a much greater level of intervention and assistance to succeed academically (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009; Warren et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2014). Unfortunately, students who are at risk frequently

suffer from familial circumstances such as abuse, pregnancy, and the incarceration of one or more parents, among numerous other situations which develop into obstacles for student success (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009; Warren et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2014). Regrettably, students who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds suffer from the environmental struggles of poverty, lack of food and healthcare, inconsistent parenting, substance abuse, and violence (Bavin, 2002).

The circumstances endured by students who are at risk and in poverty necessitates healthy coping skills for the students and a tremendous amount of support by the school staff, including, school counselors, school social workers, and the community. Although school counselors are more accessible than school social workers and also serve as important support for students who are at risk and students who are in poverty, school counselors struggle to meet the needs of students due to overloaded caseloads (National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018). In a recent Texas statewide investigation, Merik and Slate (2021) determined that Texas middle and high schools that had the highest percentages of students who were at risk employed the same number of school counselors as schools with the lowest percentages of students who were at risk. These statistics are concerning because it is well documented that students who are at risk require more assistance to be academically successful (Blount, 2012; Johnson & Perkins, 2009). With school counselors having large student-to-school counselor ratios and with schools and school districts not consistently employing school social workers, important opportunities to intervene in the lives of struggling students and families are being missed. Inevitably, high school students who are at risk or in poverty

lose the safety net provided by their schools upon graduation or dropping out of school. Hence, as schools have a very limited timeframe in which to assist students, it is imperative that school and school district leaders expand their focus to embrace and fund the unique benefits of school social workers to meet the expanding needs of students in regard to their social and emotional health, as well as to break down barriers to academic achievement.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For more than a century, school social workers have been a member of the American education system (Sherman, 2016). The school social work profession has evolved alongside American society and culture. The positive influence of school social workers on the social and emotional health, attendance, and achievement of all students, and specifically students who are determined to be at risk and students in poverty, have been documented by multiple researchers (Alvarez et al., 2013; Elsherbiny, 2017; Franklin et al., 2009; Newsome et al., 2008).

In Texas, schools and districts are required to report monies spent specifically for Social Work Services, yet the state does not require the employment of school social workers by schools and districts (National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter, 2020). As a result, state lawmakers, schools, and school districts do not appear to consistently consider the services provided by school social workers as a priority, as evidenced by the lack of school social workers in some of the largest Texas school districts (Alvarez et al., 2013). Hence, Texas public school students have unequal access to the services provided by school social workers. Unfortunately, as the services

performed by school social workers continue to be deprioritized, the number of students who are at risk and students who are in poverty continue to steadily rise (Texas Education Agency, 2011, 2019b).

Consequently, because school social workers have a positive influence on the educational outcomes of students who are at risk and students who are in poverty, schools and school districts may be missing opportunities to provide positive interventions on behalf of students and their families. This potential disservice by schools and districts grow particularly pressing with the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative effects on student mental health (Fair Health, 2021), and student and family situations involving basic living necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare. All of these circumstances are ideally suited for school social workers to address in their role as mental health practitioner, and resource and community liaison (Allen-Meares et al., 1996; Greenberg, 2012; Phillippo & Blosser, 2013; School Social Work Association of America, 2020; Sherman, 2016).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Three purposes were present in this article. The first purpose was to determine the monies spent for Social Work Services per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies at Texas elementary, middle, and high schools. The second purpose in this study was to determine the degree to which differences might be present in the monies spent and as a percent of the total monies per pupil for Social Work Services between the elementary, middle, and high schools. The third purpose was to ascertain the extent to



which trends might exist in monies spent and as a percent of monies spent at all three school levels across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year.

### **Significance of the Study**

It is well established that the struggles faced by students who are at risk and students who are in poverty require additional interventions to help ensure academic achievement (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009; Warren et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2014). The number of Texas students who are at risk and who are in poverty continue to increase (Texas Education Agency, 2011, 2019b). Due to the State of Texas not mandating the employment of school social workers by Texas schools and districts (National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter, 2020), Texas students have unequal access to the services and benefits that are offered by school social workers. In addition to the growing number of students who are at risk and in poverty, the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to have long-term negative consequences for many students and families that will likely cause additional barriers to student academic achievement.

The benefits provided to students and their families by school social workers have been documented by multiple researchers (Alvarez et al., 2013; Elsherbiny, 2017; Franklin et al., 2009; Newsome et al., 2008). However, no published research literature was located regarding the funding and expenditures for school social workers and school social work services. This research study adds to the literature regarding funding for school social work services and can be used by school and school district leaders, as well as by state lawmakers in making decisions regarding future funding for Social Work Services for Texas public schools.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What are the monies spent for Social Work Services per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies in the 2009-2010 school year for Texas elementary schools?; (b) What are the monies spent for Social Work Services per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies in the 2009-2010 school year for Texas middle schools?; (c) What are the monies spent for Social Work Services per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies in the 2009-2010 school year for Texas high schools?; (d) What is the difference in monies spent per pupil for Social Work Services between the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 school year in Texas?; (e) What is the difference in the percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services between the elementary, middle, and high schools levels for the 2009-2010 school year in Texas?; and (f) What is the trend in monies spent for Social Work Services for each of these school levels per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies across the 2009-2010 and 2018-2019 school years for Texas schools? The first five research questions were answered separately for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, whereas the last question constituted all of these school years.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

A causal-comparative research design was present in this nonexperimental study (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). In this investigation, pre-existing data were analyzed. Texas public elementary, middle, and high schools for the 2009-2010 school year through

the 2018-2019 school year were the independent variables. The monies spent for Social Work Services per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies at each school level during the aforementioned 10 school years were the dependent variables. The financial expenditures data were previously obtained through a Public Information Request form submitted to and fulfilled by the Texas Education Agency's Public Education Information Management System. The Public Education Information Management System collects and organizes data on all public schools and districts in Texas, including financial expenditures, staff/student demographics, and enrollment, among many other characteristics related to Texas public education (Texas Education Agency, 2018).

In an ex post facto design, the primary advantage involves the analysis of already existing data, rather than the creation of new data. The primary disadvantage, however, involves the lack of control over extraneous or confounding variables (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). As such, definitive cause and effect determinations could not be made, in the event that statistically significant differences were revealed.

### **Participants and Instrumentation**

Participating schools included in this study were public Texas elementary, middle, and high schools. More than 3,000 elementary schools with Grades Pre-Kindergarten through 5 had data that were analyzed herein. Approximately 1,000 middle schools consisting of Grades 6 through 8 were included in this investigation. In regard to high schools with Grades 9 through 12, over 1,000 high schools were included in this study. Specifically, the amount of dollars spent on Social Work Services per student and as a

percent of total funds at each school level across the 10 school years, 2009-2010 through 2018-2019, were analyzed.

According to the Texas Education Agency (2019a, p. 7), Social Work Services Expenditures comprise of “activities such as investigating and diagnosing student social needs, casework and group work services for children and parents, and interpreting the social needs of students for other staff members (function code 32).” Private and charter schools were not included in this analysis. The financial expenditures data were previously obtained through a Public Information Request to the Texas Education Agency’s Public Education Information Management System. Data were then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software for analysis.

## **Results**

Prior to conducting inferential statistical procedures, specifically Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedures, to answer the research questions presented above, checks for its underlying assumptions were made. Although some of the assumptions were not met, Field (2009) contends that the parametric ANOVA procedure is sufficiently robust that these violations can be withstood. Accordingly, use of parametric ANOVA procedures were justified.

### **Social Work Dollars Across School Years**

Regarding the extent to which differences were present in the distribution of social work dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 school year, the parametric ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5229) = 11.97, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ . The effect size for this

difference was small (Cohen, 1988). To determine which pairs of school levels differed from each other, post hoc procedures were conducted next. Scheffe` post hoc procedures revealed that differences were present between the elementary and high school levels, and between the middle and high school levels. As revealed in Table 3.1, the average social work dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. An average of about \$4 less was spent in social work dollars per student at elementary schools than middle schools, about \$12 less was spent at the middle schools when compared with high schools, and about \$16 less was spent at elementary schools per student when compared to the high school level.

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Insert Table 3.1 about here  
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Concerning the extent to which differences were present in the distribution of social work dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2010-2011 school year, the parametric ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5258) = 10.22, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ . The effect size for this difference was small (Cohen, 1988). Scheffe` post hoc procedures revealed that differences were present between the elementary and high school levels. The average social work dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. An average of about \$8 less was spent in social work dollars per student at elementary schools than middle

schools, about \$11 less was spent at the middle schools when compared with high schools, and about \$19 less was spent at elementary schools per student when compared to the high school level. Table 3.1 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

With respect to the 2011-2012 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5268) = 25.49, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average social work dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Revealed in Table 3.1 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis. In reference to the 2012-2013 school year, a statistically significant difference was present,  $F(2, 5301) = 14.59, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average social work dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 3.1 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Regarding the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5545) = 31.16, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average social work dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Delineated in Table 3.2 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

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Insert Table 3.2 about here  
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Concerning the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded,  $F(2, 5578) = 23.23, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average social work dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 3.2 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis. With respect to the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5476) = 17.61, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average social work dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 3.2 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis. In reference to the 2016-2017 school year, a statistically significant result was present,  $F(2, 5632) = 11.76, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average social work dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Revealed in Table 3.2 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, the difference was statistically significant,  $F(2, 5473) = 11.64, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average social work dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Revealed in Table 3.3 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

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Insert Table 3.3 about here  
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Concerning the 2018-2019 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded,  $F(2, 5668) = 13.21, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average social work dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 3.3 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

### **Percent of Total Monies for Social Work Services Across School Years**

Regarding the extent to which differences were present in the percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 school year, the parametric ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5229) = 7.94, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .003$ . The effect size for this difference was below small (Cohen, 1988). To determine which pairs of school levels differed from each other, post hoc procedures were conducted next. Scheffe` post hoc procedures revealed that differences were present between the elementary and high school levels, and between the middle and high school levels. As delineated in Table 3.4, the average percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school and elementary school levels, which had nearly the same percentages.

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 Insert Table 3.4 about here  
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Concerning the 2010-2011 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded,  $F(2, 5258) = 14.36, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ . The effect size for this difference



was small (Cohen, 1988). Differences were present between the elementary and high school levels. The average percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 3.4 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis. With respect to the 2011-2012 school year, a statistically significant result was present,  $F(2, 5268) = 11.05, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .004$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Presented in Table 3.4 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

In reference to the 2012-2013 school year, the result was statistically significant,  $F(2, 5301) = 13.06, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Revealed in Table 3.4 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Regarding the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded,  $F(2, 5545) = 18.04, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 3.5 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

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Insert Table 3.5 about here  
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Concerning the 2014-2015 school year, the result was statistically significant,  $F(2, 5578) = 15.84, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 3.5 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis. With respect to the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5476) = 14.29, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Delineated in Table 3.5 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

In reference to the 2016-2017 school year, the result was statistically significant,  $F(2, 5632) = 13.57, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Revealed in Table 3.5 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5473) = 8.03, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .003$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 3.6 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

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Insert Table 3.6 about here  
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Concerning the 2018-2019 school year, the parametric ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5668) = 7.48, p = .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .003$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 3.6 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

#### **Trends in Social Work Dollars Across School Years**

With respect to the trend in the amount of monies spent on Social Work Services per student across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for the elementary, middle, and high school levels, the monies spent per student remained relatively the same. At the elementary level, approximately a \$7 increase occurred in the social work dollars spent per student from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, social work dollars increased by about \$8 during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the monies spent on social work services per student increased by about \$19 during the aforementioned 10 school years. Presented in Figure 3.1 is a line graph depicting the trend in monies spent on social work services per student during the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year.

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Insert Figure 3.1 about here  
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### **Trends in Percent of Total Monies Spent for Social Work Services**

Regarding the trend in the percent of total monies spent on Social Work Services across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for the elementary, middle, and high school levels, the percent of total monies spent remained nearly unchanged. At the elementary level, a 0.05% increase occurred in the social work dollars spent from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, the percent spent on social work dollars increased by about 0.07% during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the percent of monies spent on social work services increased by about 0.04% during the aforementioned 10 school years. Depicted in Figure 3.2 is a line graph depicting the trend in the percent of total monies spent on social work services during the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year.

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Insert Figure 3.2 about here  
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### **Discussion**

In this investigation, the distribution of Social Work Services dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year was examined. Statistically significant differences

were established in the amount of social work dollars that were spent at all three school levels for all 10 of the school years. The average social work dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. At the elementary level, approximately a \$7 increase occurred in the social work dollars spent per student from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, social work dollars increased by about \$8 during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the monies spent on social work services per student increased by about \$19 during the aforementioned 10 school years.

Also examined in this investigation was the percent of total dollars spent on Social Work Services for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the elementary level, a 0.05% increase occurred in the social work dollars spent from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, the percent spent on social work dollars increased by about 0.07% during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the percent of monies spent on counseling services increased by about 0.04% during the aforementioned 10 school years.

### **Implications for Policy and for Practice**

The number of students who are at risk and in poverty have only risen in Texas within the 10 school years covered in this study (Texas Education Agency, 2011, 2019b; United States Department of Education, 2020). School social workers have been documented to influence positively the lives and academic outcomes of students (Alvarez et al., 2013; Elsherbiny, 2017; Franklin et al., 2009; Newsome et al., 2008). However,

the State of Texas does not require schools and school districts to employ the services of school social workers, although students who are at risk and students who are in poverty require additional supports to help facilitate academic success (Johnson & Perkins, 2009; National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter, 2020).

The low expenditures documented herein may be interpreted to mean that Texas schools are doing a disservice to the neediest of students by not providing sufficient funding for social work services. The average social work dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels increased only by about \$7, \$8, and \$19 respectively, from the 2009-2010 to the 2018-2019 school years. As a result, schools and school districts may be missing important opportunities to intervene in the lives of struggling students and their families.

Furthermore, funding for Social Work Services at the elementary school level was statistically significantly lower than funding at the middle and high school levels. This lower funding is particularly concerning as receiving services at a younger age may then help students to be more successful as they progress through school. In other words, the ability to intervene sooner for students who are at risk and students who are in poverty may provide far-reaching benefits that will enhance the student's chances of graduating high school and securing a brighter future.

Not yet taking into account inflation, the minimal amount of monies allocated and the minor increase in per pupil spending for Social Work Services during the aforementioned 10 years indicate that funding is insufficient for Social Work Services in Texas schools. Therefore, school leaders, school district leaders, policymakers, and state

legislators are encouraged to increase funding for Social Work Services for all school levels so that schools can better meet the needs of its most vulnerable students. Although the needs of Texas students have increased as the number of students who were determined to be at risk as well as the number of students who were in poverty have also increased (Texas Education Agency, 2011, 2019b; United States Department of Education, 2020), the monies spent on social work services have only minimally increased or perhaps have not increased once inflation is taken into consideration. In addition, with the ongoing negative consequences on students and families brought upon by the Covid-19 pandemic (Fair Health, 2021), the need for sufficient funding for Social Work Services continues to grow more important as school social workers are vital in connecting students and their families with much-needed resources in the community. These resources, among others, include supports for food, clothing, housing, and medical care, all factors that are important in the daily lives of students and their families.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based upon the results of this investigation, several recommendations are possible for future research. First, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study using other expenditure categories and to compare the rates of increase or decrease of the other expenditures to the expenditures for Social Work Services. Second, researchers are recommended to compare the number school social workers at each school level. Third, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in other states and investigate any trends regarding school social work expenditures in public schools across the country. Fourth, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study to include private and charter

schools. Lastly, researchers are also encouraged to review the tables in this study and investigate the large standard deviations for each school level as these large numbers suggest that schools within Texas are far from being uniform in regard to per pupil expenditures for Social Work Services at each respective school level.

### **Conclusion**

In this Texas statewide analysis, Social Work Services dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels were examined for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school years. Also investigated was the percent of total dollars spent on Social Work Services for the same 10 school years. Statistically significant differences were documented in the amount of dollars spent per student and the percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services for all three school levels for all 10 of the aforementioned school years. The amount of social work dollars spent per student were highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. As the school level decreased, the amount of social work dollars spent per student were statistically significantly lower. From the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, expenditures for elementary, middle, and high schools across the State of Texas increased by only \$7, \$8, and \$19, respectively.



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**Table 3.1**

*Descriptive Statistics for Social Work Dollars Spent Per Student for the 2009-2010  
Through the 2012-2013 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2009-2010			
Elementary Schools	3,044	\$15.95	\$84.19
Middle Schools	1,061	\$19.56	\$88.42
High Schools	1,127	\$31.84	\$117.56
2010-2011			
Elementary Schools	3,095	\$15.76	\$99.58
Middle Schools	1,018	\$23.80	\$131.31
High Schools	1,148	\$35.01	\$170.31
2011-2012			
Elementary Schools	3,087	\$13.35	\$27.05
Middle Schools	1,021	\$21.82	\$72.39
High Schools	1,163	\$28.55	\$110.33
2012-2013			
Elementary Schools	3,112	\$13.48	\$27.90
Middle Schools	1,027	\$22.65	\$69.74
High Schools	1,165	\$43.51	\$336.19

**Table 3.2**

*Descriptive Statistics for Social Work Dollars Spent Per Student for the 2013-2014  
Through the 2016-2017 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2013-2014			
Elementary Schools	3,272	\$13.90	\$23.66
Middle Schools	1,103	\$23.10	\$89.83
High Schools	1,173	\$40.91	\$197.37
2014-2015			
Elementary Schools	3,369	\$15.27	\$27.77
Middle Schools	1,038	\$26.27	\$120.99
High Schools	1,174	\$43.17	\$235.52
2015-2016			
Elementary Schools	3,157	\$17.01	\$34.00
Middle Schools	1,083	\$26.91	\$114.49
High Schools	1,239	\$48.08	\$305.96
2016-2017			
Elementary Schools	3,363	\$17.44	\$36.68
Middle Schools	1,069	\$30.40	\$189.35
High Schools	1,203	\$52.22	\$424.81

**Table 3.3**

*Descriptive Statistics for Social Work Dollars Spent Per Student for the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2017-2018			
Elementary Schools	3,168	\$20.35	\$54.52
Middle Schools	1,087	\$27.88	\$117.88
High Schools	1,221	\$47.74	\$327.58
2018-2019			
Elementary Schools	3,243	\$22.62	\$58.38
Middle Schools	1,208	\$27.71	\$131.05
High Schools	1,220	\$51.33	\$322.19



**Table 3.4**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Total Monies Spent for Social Work Services for the 2009-2010 Through the 2012-2013 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2009-2010			
Elementary Schools	3,044	0.22	0.62
Middle Schools	1,061	0.22	0.39
High Schools	1,127	0.31	0.89
2010-2011			
Elementary Schools	3,095	0.20	0.33
Middle Schools	1,018	0.25	0.51
High Schools	1,148	0.29	0.80
2011-2012			
Elementary Schools	3,087	0.20	0.38
Middle Schools	1,021	0.27	0.54
High Schools	1,163	0.27	0.71
2012-2013			
Elementary Schools	3,112	0.21	0.41
Middle Schools	1,027	0.28	0.53
High Schools	1,165	0.30	0.91

**Table 3.5**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Total Monies Spent for Social Work Services for the 2013-2014 Through the 2016-2017 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2013-2014			
Elementary Schools	3,272	0.20	0.33
Middle Schools	1,103	0.26	0.51
High Schools	1,173	0.31	0.94
2014-2015			
Elementary Schools	3,369	0.22	0.36
Middle Schools	1,038	0.27	0.54
High Schools	1,174	0.33	1.17
2015-2016			
Elementary Schools	3,157	0.23	0.40
Middle Schools	1,083	0.28	0.51
High Schools	1,239	0.33	0.96
2016-2017			
Elementary Schools	3,363	0.22	0.42
Middle Schools	1,069	0.30	0.57
High Schools	1,203	0.31	0.89

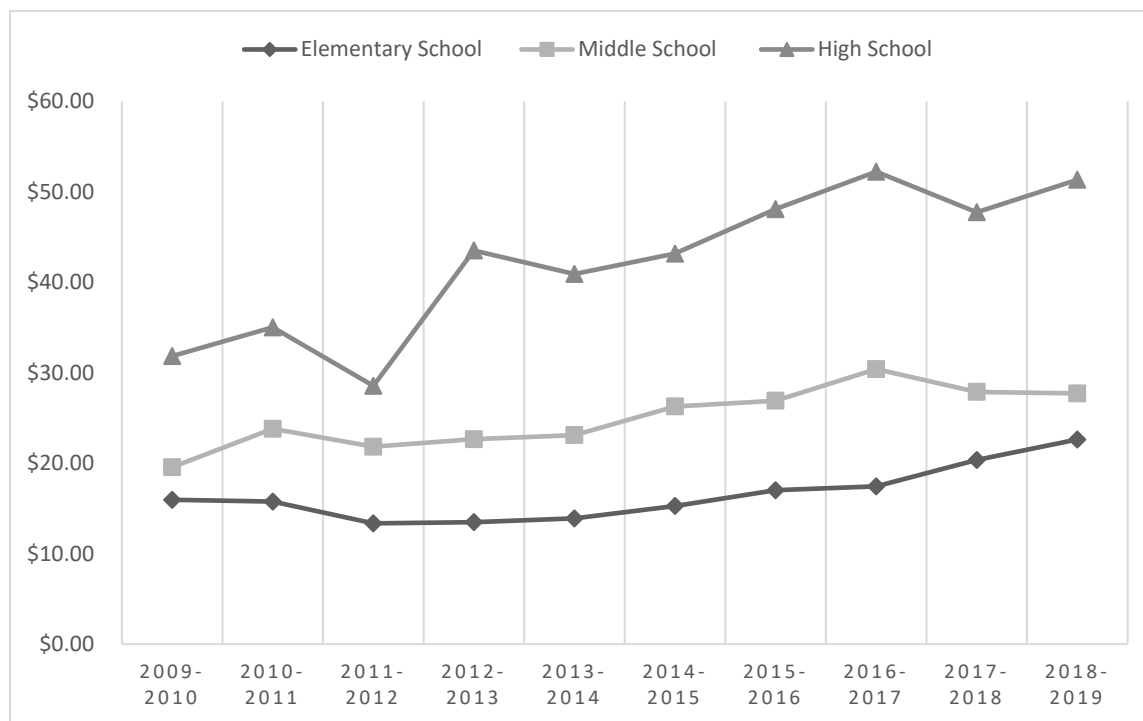
**Table 3.6**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Total Monies Spent for Social Work Services for the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2017-2018			
Elementary Schools	3,168	0.24	0.44
Middle Schools	1,087	0.30	0.58
High Schools	1,221	0.32	0.90
2018-2019			
Elementary Schools	3,243	0.27	0.45
Middle Schools	1,208	0.29	0.53
High Schools	1,220	0.35	0.90

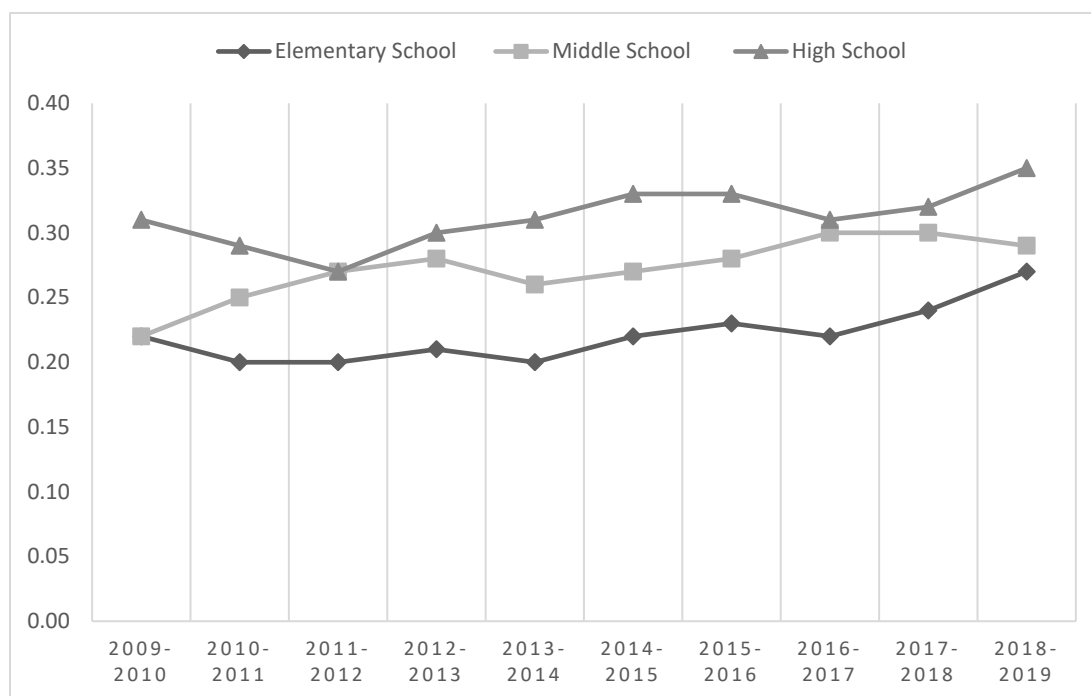
**Figure 3.1**

*Social Work Services Dollars Spent Per Student for the 2009-2010 School Year Through the 2018-2019 School Year*



**Figure 3.2**

*Percent of Total Monies Spent on Social Work Services for the 2009-2010 School Year  
Through the 2018-2019 School Year*



**CHAPTER IV****INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP EXPENDITURES AT TEXAS SCHOOLS: A  
MULTIYEAR STATEWIDE INVESTIGATION**

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This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

### **Abstract**

This study was conducted to determine the degree to which differences were present in the distribution of Instructional Leadership dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 through the 2018-2019 school years in Texas. Through the use of inferential statistical procedures, statistically significant differences were established. The amount of Instructional Leadership dollars spent per pupil were highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. From the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, expenditures for elementary, middle, and high schools across the State of Texas increased by only \$42, \$40, and \$48, respectively. Implications and recommendations for future research were discussed.

*Keywords:* Instructional leadership; Professional development; Principal; Funding; Financial expenditures; Texas Education Agency; Public education information management system; Elementary school; Middle school; High school; Trend

## INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP EXPENDITURES AT TEXAS SCHOOLS: A MULTIYEAR STATEWIDE INVESTIGATION

In the current era of holding schools accountable for student learning through the use of high-stakes testing, school leaders have focused on increasing teacher effectiveness and quality (Synar & Maiden, 2012). In 2019, this greater focus on teacher quality and effectiveness was emphasized by the Texas Education Agency's implementation of a revised set of criteria in regard to the state's principal certification requirements (Texas Education Agency, 2021). The focus of the role of the school principal is now that of an instructional leader (Texas Education Agency, 2021). A commonly utilized strategy to improve teacher effectiveness is through instructional leadership or professional development. The Texas Education Agency (2019) defines costs and activities associated with instructional leadership as the "managing, directing, supervising, and providing leadership for staff who provide either instructional or instruction-related services" (p. 7). Hence, in this article, *professional development* and *instructional leadership* will be used interchangeably.

With an increasing focus on professional development, it is important to note that researchers (Foster et al., 2013; Harris & Sass, 2011; Jacob & Lefgren, 2004) have established that the influence of professional development on student outcomes, if able to be quantified at all, has had either only some positive effects or no effect at all on student achievement. In one such study, Foster et al. (2013) examined the effectiveness of a professional development training program on the mathematics and science outcomes of students. Foster et al. (2013) determined that the professional development was effective



for only instruction in mathematics for student outcomes in middle school. The professional development program, however, was not effective for science and was also not effective at the elementary and high school levels. As a result, the effectiveness of the professional development program varied by both content area and school level (Foster et al., 2013). Foster et al.'s (2013) results were congruent with the findings of other researchers (e.g., Harris & Sass, 2011; Jacob & Lefgren, 2004) who also established that professional development programs had mixed results, or no observable effects, on student academic achievement.

Many researchers (Birman et al., 2000; Gallagher, 2002; Killeen et al., 2002; Knight, 2007, 2011, 2018) agree that on-going professional development for instruction is necessary to help improve student achievement. Due to the ongoing prevalence of professional development, it is worth noting some key research investigations in which researchers (Hertert, 1997; Killeen et al., 2002; Miles et al., 2004; Odden et al., 2002) have analyzed the costs of professional development using different financial expenditure formats and methodologies. Hertert (1997) examined data from 16 school districts and documented that school district spending on professional development varied greatly between 1.7% and 7.6%, with an average of about 3.6% of a school district's net operating expenditures. In an investigation of national professional development expenditures, Killeen et al. (2002) established that school districts ranged from about 1.5% to about 8% of the general school district expenditures spent on professional development/instructional improvement. On average, other researchers (Miles et al.,

2004; Odden et al., 2002) have documented that most school districts spend about 3% to 5% of their total budgets on teacher professional development.

Although a number of studies (Hertert, 1997; Killeen et al., 2002; Miles et al., 2004; Odden et al., 2002) are present in the research literature on the cost of teacher professional development, these studies are dated. Moreover, these researchers had not investigated trends in the costs associated with instructional leadership or professional development, on a statewide basis, or by school levels. Notably, previous researchers (Hertert, 1997; Killeen et al., 2002; Miles et al., 2004; Odden et al., 2002) had difficulties quantifying and generalizing the true expense of professional development because of variances in accounting codes and definitions of what professional development entails (Gallagher, 2002). Hence, it is difficult to generalize the results from the aforementioned studies because of inconsistencies in accounting codes and differing definitions for professional development.

In the past decade, educational leaders have come to the realization that occasional professional development for instruction is insufficient (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2018). As a result, many schools and school districts have created full-time professional positions such as content coaches, skills specialists, instructional coaches, and subject area coordinators that are housed at specific campuses along with similar positions at the district level (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2018; Moody, 2019). These instructional supervisors serve to support teachers throughout the school year by modeling lessons, assisting with lesson planning, and providing professional development for the instructional staff, among other responsibilities (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2018).

With the creation of instructional coaching/supervisor positions, and hence the on-going professional development of teachers, it is reasonable to question if student test scores have also increased. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2021), Texas, the state of interest for this article, has experienced minimal gains, if any, in the reading and mathematics scores of their Grade 4 and Grade 8 students. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2021), 39.02% of Grade 4 students in Texas tested proficient in mathematics in 2011 and 43.67% were proficient in 2019. Regarding Grade 4 reading, 28.27% of students tested proficient in 2011 and 30.27% were proficient in 2019. For Grade 8, 40.01% were proficient in mathematics in 2011 and 29.55% were proficient in 2019. With respect to Grade 8 reading, 26.52% of students were proficient in 2011 compared to 25.04% of students in 2019 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2021). In summary, Grade 4 mathematics scores increased by 4.65% and reading scores increased by 2%. However, Grade 8 mathematics scores decreased by 10.46% and reading scores decreased by 1.48% from 2011 to 2019 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2021).

From an educational leadership perspective, school and school district leaders know the importance of quality and effective teachers and the positive influence they can have on students and their academic performance (Marzano, 2003, 2017; McCaffrey et al., 2003). Due to limited funds, school and school district leaders must make difficult decisions on how best to allocate resources in hopes of maximizing student achievement and overall well-being. In short, school and school district leaders must decide how and where they can best target resources to produce the greatest influence on student success.

Providing additional teacher training by increasing instructional leadership is one such avenue. Increasing student support services such as school counseling and social work, are other avenues. For school and school district leaders, finding a balance, or just the right combination of these services and other ones is a challenge in today's high-stakes testing environment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Researchers (Hertert, 1997; Killeen et al., 2002; Miles et al., 2004; Odden et al., 2002) have documented that school district expenditures on instructional leadership vary from about 1.5% to 8% of a school district's budget, with many school districts averaging about 3% to 5%. Although a 1% difference in expenditure may appear small, this difference could be a difference of hundreds of thousands of dollars or even millions of dollars in expenditures among school districts (Hertert, 1997; Killeen et al., 2002; Miles et al., 2004; Odden et al., 2002). With both federal and state governments continuing to focus on test scores as the main measure of school accountability, schools and school districts have increasingly used instructional leadership as a method to increase teacher quality and effectiveness (Birman et al., 2000; Gallagher, 2002; Killeen et al., 2002; Knight, 2007, 2011, 2018; Moody, 2019).

However, though logical that increased instructional leadership should lead to improvement in instruction quality, and therefore, an improvement in student outcomes, a number of researchers (e.g., Foster et al., 2013; Harris & Sass, 2011; Jacob & Lefgren, 2004) have documented mixed results in regard to the effectiveness of professional development. Furthermore, according to the National Assessment of Educational

Progress (2021), Texas students have not exhibited consistent growth in academic achievement. Instructional leadership is just one strategy to improve student academic achievement. However, other options, such as school counseling services and school social work services, have been established to improve student outcomes (Alvarez et al., 2013; Bryan et al., 2011; Cholewa et al., 2015; Elsherbiny, 2017; Franklin et al., 2009; Hurwitz et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2019; Newsome et al., 2008). With limited funding, schools and school districts must carefully consider how best to allocate funding towards various school programs with respect to the programs' cost-effectiveness. Therefore, it is imperative that the spending habits of schools, as it relates to instructional leadership, must be evaluated to assess what trends, if any, are present.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Three purposes were present in this article. The first purpose was to determine the monies spent for Instructional Leadership per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies at Texas elementary, middle, and high schools. The second purpose in this study was to ascertain the degree to which differences might be present in the monies spent and as a percent of the total monies per pupil for Instructional Leadership between the elementary, middle, and high schools. The third purpose was to determine the extent to which trends might exist in monies spent and as a percent of monies spent at all three school levels across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year.

### **Significance of the Study**

In the current era of high-stakes testing, school district leaders have increased their focus on instructional leadership as a strategy to increase student test scores (Knight,

2007, 2011, 2018; Moody, 2019). As school districts allocate more resources towards instructional leadership, resources for student wraparound services that seek to address the needs of the whole child, such as school counseling and school social work, may become more deprioritized. Although articles have been published on assessing the costs of instructional leadership, no published studies could be located in which the trends of instructional leadership expenditures, on a statewide basis, and by school level were examined. Results from this research study contributes to the existing research literature regarding funding for instructional leadership services and can be used by school and school district leaders, as well as by state lawmakers in making decisions regarding future funding for instructional leadership services, and the cost-effectiveness of its various programs.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What are the monies spent for Instructional Leadership per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies in the 2009-2010 school year for Texas elementary schools?; (b) What are the monies spent for Instructional Leadership per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies in the 2009-2010 school year for Texas middle schools?; (c) What are the monies spent for Instructional Leadership per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies in the 2009-2010 school year for Texas high schools?; (d) What is the difference in monies spent per pupil for Instructional Leadership between the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 school year in Texas?; (e) What is the difference in the percent of total monies spent for Instructional Leadership between the

elementary, middle, and high schools levels for the 2009-2010 school year in Texas?; and (f) What is the trend in monies spent for Instructional Leadership for each of these school levels per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies across the 2009-2010 and 2018-2019 school years for Texas schools? The first five research questions were answered separately for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, whereas the last question constituted all of these school years.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

A causal-comparative research design was present in this study (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). In this study, Texas public elementary, middle, and high schools for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year were the independent variables. The monies spent for Instructional Leadership per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of the total monies at each school level during the aforementioned 10 school years were the dependent variables. The financial expenditures data were previously obtained through a Public Information Request form submitted to and fulfilled by the Texas Education Agency's Public Education Information Management System. The Texas Education Agency's Public Education Information Management System collects and organizes data on all public schools and districts in Texas, including financial expenditures, enrollment, and student/staff demographics, among numerous other characteristics related to the daily activities of Texas public education (Texas Education Agency, 2018).

With respect to this investigation, an advantage of utilizing a causal-comparative research design is the ability to analyze archival, pre-existing data from the Texas Education Agency's Public Education Information Management System. However, using a causal-comparative research design does not allow definitive cause and effect relationship statements (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). Consequently, definitive conclusions regarding any statistically significant differences could not be made.

### **Participants and Instrumentation**

Schools participating in this study were public elementary, middle, and high schools in Texas. An excess of 3,000 elementary schools consisting of Grades Pre-Kindergarten through 5 herein had their data analyzed. About 1,000 middle schools with grades 6 through 8 were included in this analysis. With respect to high schools, approximately 1,000 were included in this investigation and were made up of Grades 9 through 12. Specifically, the amount of monies spent on Instructional Leadership per student and as a percent of total monies at each school level across the 10 school years, 2009-2010 through 2018-2019, were analyzed.

According to the Texas Education Agency (2019, p. 7), Instructional Leadership Expenditures comprise of expenditures used for "managing, directing, supervising, and providing leadership for staff who provide either instructional or instruction-related services (function code 21)." Charter and private schools were not included in this investigation. The financial expenditures data were previously obtained through a Public Information Request that was submitted to and fulfilled by the Texas Education Agency's



Public Education Information Management System. Data were then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software for analysis.

### **Results**

Prior to conducting inferential statistical procedures, specifically Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedures, to answer the research questions presented above, checks for its underlying assumptions were made. Although some of the assumptions were not met, Field (2009) contends that the parametric ANOVA procedure is sufficiently robust that these violations can be withstood. Accordingly, use of parametric ANOVA procedures were justified.

#### **Instructional Leadership Dollars Across School Years**

Regarding the extent to which differences were present in the distribution of instructional leadership dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 school year, the parametric ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5229) = 5.52, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .002$ . The effect size for this difference was below small (Cohen, 1988). To determine which pairs of school levels differed from each other, post hoc procedures were conducted next. Scheffe' post hoc procedures revealed that differences were present between the elementary and high school levels, and between the middle and high school levels. As revealed in Table 4.1, the average instructional leadership dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school and elementary school levels, which were almost the same. An average of about \$12 less was spent at the

middle schools when compared with high schools, and about \$11 less was spent at elementary schools per student when compared to the high school level.

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Insert Table 4.1 about here  
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Concerning the extent to which differences were present in the distribution of instructional leadership dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2010-2011 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded,  $F(2, 5258) = 14.86, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ . The effect size for this difference was small (Cohen, 1988). Differences were present between the elementary and high school levels, and between the middle school and high school levels. The average instructional leadership dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. An average of about \$3 less was spent in instructional leadership dollars per student at elementary schools than middle schools, about \$20 less was spent at the middle schools when compared with high schools, and about \$23 less was spent at elementary schools per student when compared to the high school level. Table 4.1 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

With respect to the 2011-2012 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5268) = 15.62, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average instructional leadership dollars spent per student was highest at the

high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Revealed in Table 4.1 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

In reference to the 2012-2013 school year, the result approached but did not reach the conventional level of statistical significance,  $F(2, 5301) = 2.61, p = .07$ , partial  $n^2 = .001$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average instructional leadership dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 4.1 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Regarding the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5545) = 20.68, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average instructional leadership dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Delineated in Table 4.2 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

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Insert Table 4.2 about here  
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Concerning the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded,  $F(2, 5578) = 15.67, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average instructional leadership dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 4.2 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

With respect to the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $F(2, 5476) = 13.31, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .01$ , small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average instructional leadership dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Table 4.2 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis. In reference to the 2016-2017 school year, a statistically significant result was not present,  $F(2, 5632) = 2.01, p = .13$ . Though not statistically significant, the average instructional leadership dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the elementary school level, and were lowest at the middle school level. Revealed in Table 4.2 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, the difference was statistically significant,  $F(2, 5473) = 9.92, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .004$ , below small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average instructional leadership dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the elementary school level, and were lowest at the middle school level. Revealed in Table 4.3 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

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Concerning the 2018-2019 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded,  $F(2, 5668) = 8.24, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .003$ , below small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average instructional leadership dollars spent per student was highest at the

high school level, followed by the elementary school level, and were lowest at the middle school level. Table 4.3 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

### **Percent of Total Monies for Instructional Leadership Across School Years**

Regarding the extent to which differences were present in the percent of total monies spent for instructional leadership at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 school year, the parametric ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5229) = 9.73, p < .001, \text{partial } n^2 = .004$ . The effect size for this difference was below small (Cohen, 1988). To determine which pairs of school levels differed from each other, post hoc procedures were conducted next. Scheffe` post hoc procedures revealed that differences were present between the elementary and middle school levels, and between the elementary and high school levels. As delineated in Table 4.4, the average percent of total monies spent for instructional leadership was highest at the elementary school level, followed by the middle school, and lowest at the high school level.

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Concerning the 2010-2011 school year, the parametric ANOVA did not reveal a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5258) = 2.04, p = .13$ . Though not statistically significant, the average percent of total monies spent for instructional leadership was highest at the elementary school level, followed by the middle school, and lowest at the high school level. Table 4.4 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis. With

respect to the 2011-2012 school year, a statistically significant result was not present,  $F(2, 5268) = 1.09, p = .34$ . Though not statistically significant, the average percent of total monies spent for instructional leadership was highest at the middle school level, followed by the elementary school level, and were lowest at the high school level. Presented in Table 4.4 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

In reference to the 2012-2013 school year, the result approached but did not reach the conventional level of statistical significance,  $F(2, 5301) = 2.38, p = .09$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ , below small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for instructional leadership was highest at the middle school level, followed by the elementary school level, and were lowest at the high school level. Revealed in Table 4.4 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Regarding the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was not yielded,  $F(2, 5545) = 1.69, p = .19$ . Though not statistically significant, the average percent of total monies spent for instructional leadership was highest at the middle school level, followed by the elementary school level, and were lowest at the high school level. Table 4.5 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

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Concerning the 2014-2015 school year, the result was not statistically significant,  $F(2, 5578) = 0.27, p = .76$ . Though not statistically significant, the average percent of total monies spent for instructional leadership was highest at the elementary school level,

followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the high school level. Table 4.5 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

With respect to the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was not revealed,  $F(2, 5476) = 1.62, p = .20$ . Though not statistically significant, the average percent of total monies spent for instructional leadership was highest at the elementary school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the high school level. Delineated in Table 4.5 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis. In reference to the 2016-2017 school year, the result was statistically significant,  $F(2, 5632) = 7.77, p < .001$ , partial  $n^2 = .003$ , below small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for instructional leadership was highest at the middle school level, followed by the elementary school level, and were lowest at the high school level. Revealed in Table 4.5 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was not revealed,  $F(2, 5473) = 0.83, p = .44$ . Though not statistically significant, the average percent of total monies spent for instructional leadership was highest at the elementary school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the high school level. Table 4.6 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

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Concerning the 2018-2019 school year, the parametric ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference,  $F(2, 5668) = 4.30, p = .014$ , partial  $n^2 = .002$ , below

small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The average percent of total monies spent for instructional leadership was highest at the elementary school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the high school level. Table 4.6 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

### **Trends in Instructional Leadership Dollars Across School Years**

With respect to the trend in the amount of monies spent on instructional leadership per student across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for the elementary, middle, and high school levels, the monies spent per student increased for all three school levels. At the elementary level, approximately a \$42 increase occurred in the instructional leadership dollars spent per student from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, instructional leadership dollars increased by about \$40 during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the monies spent on instructional leadership per student increased by about \$48 during the aforementioned 10 school years. Presented in Figure 4.1 is a line graph depicting the trend in monies spent on instructional leadership per student during the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year.

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### **Trends in Percent of Total Monies Spent for Instructional Leadership**

Regarding the trend in the percent of total monies spent on instructional leadership across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for the



elementary, middle, and high school levels, the percent of total monies spent remained nearly unchanged. At the elementary level, a 0.38% increase occurred in the instructional leadership dollars spent from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, the percent spent on instructional leadership dollars increased by about 0.41% during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the percent of monies spent on instructional leadership increased by about 0.42% during the aforementioned 10 school years. Depicted in Figure 4.2 is a line graph depicting the trend in the percent of total monies spent on social work services during the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year.

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### **Discussion**

In this investigation, the distribution of Instructional Leadership dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year was examined. Statistically significant differences were established in the amount of Instructional Leadership dollars spent at all three school levels for the majority of the 10 school years. The average Instructional Leadership dollars spent per student was highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school and elementary school levels, which were frequently similar in the amount of monies spent per pupil. At the elementary level, approximately a \$42 increase occurred in the Instructional Leadership dollars spent per student from the 2009-2010

school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, Instructional Leadership dollars increased by about \$40 during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the monies spent on Instructional Leadership per student increased by about \$48 during the aforementioned 10 school years.

Also examined in this investigation was the percent of total dollars spent on Instructional Leadership for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the elementary level, a 0.38% increase occurred in the Instructional Leadership dollars spent from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, the percent spent on Instructional Leadership dollars increased by about 0.41% during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the percent of monies spent on Instructional Leadership increased by about 0.42% during the aforementioned 10 school years.

### **Implications for Policy and for Practice**

As test scores continue to be the main measure used by the state legislature to gauge student academic achievement, schools and school districts also continue their efforts on increasing teacher quality and effectiveness. As a result, a renewed focus has been placed on instructional leadership as another strategy of providing on-going professional development with the goal of improving teaching practices. This renewed emphasis on instructional leadership is evident by the increase of Instructional Leadership expenditures within the past 10 aforementioned school years as well as the change of the Texas principal certification requirement to that of *Principal as Instructional Leader* (Texas Education Agency, 2021).

Although an increase in expenditures of \$42, \$40, and \$48 per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively, may appear minimal, these figures represent a 48%, 46%, and 49% increase in the amount of monies spent on Instructional Leadership from 2009-2010 school year to the 2018-2019 school year. Unfortunately, although the expenditures in Instructional Leadership have increased, student academic achievement, as measured by test scores, have not increased (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2021). Additionally, funding for Instructional Leadership at the elementary and middle school levels were statistically significantly lower than funding at the high school level. The lower funding at the younger levels and the higher funding at the high school level may be interpreted to mean that a gap exists in teacher skillsets and expertise that then necessitates an additional investment of instructional leadership at the higher school level. Similarly, the gap in spending may indicate that not enough monies are being spent at the younger levels, which then again necessitates higher levels of spending as students reach the high school level.

Therefore, schools and school district leaders would benefit in reevaluating the monies spent at each school levels to determine if it would be wiser to perhaps invest more monies at the younger levels as this shift may lead to needing to spend less monies at the high school level. Additionally, teacher preparation programs may also benefit from reevaluating their curriculum and find additional opportunities to increase the effectiveness of newly graduating teachers. Furthermore, schools, school districts, and policymakers are encouraged to examine other factors that may influence student academic achievement apart from instructional practices (e.g., social and emotional

learning, the environmental struggles associated with poverty) and develop plans to provide students with wraparound services with the goal of supporting the whole child. Lastly, with the on-going negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on students' learning, lawmakers are encouraged to continue to provide additional funding to schools and school districts so that the academic and social and emotional needs of students can be adequately addressed.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based upon the results of this investigation, several recommendations are possible for future research. First, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study using other instruction-related expenditure categories and to compare the rates of increase or decrease of the other expenditures to the expenditures for Instructional Leadership. Second, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in other states and investigate any trends regarding Instructional Leadership and other instruction-related expenditures in public schools across the country. Third, as principals are now also required to be instructional leaders, the expenditures of School Leadership are recommended to also be examined. Lastly, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study to include private and charter schools.

### **Conclusion**

In this Texas statewide analysis, Instructional Leadership dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels were examined for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school years. Also investigated was the percent of total dollars spent on Instructional Leadership for the same 10 school years. Statistically

significant differences were documented in the amount of dollars spent per student for the majority of the 10 school years. However, only a few of the school years yielded a statistically significant difference in the percent of total monies spent on Instructional Leadership among the three school levels for the aforementioned school years. The amount of Instructional Leadership dollars spent per student were highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school and elementary school levels, which frequently spent a about the same amount of monies per pupil. From the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, expenditures for elementary, middle, and high schools across the State of Texas increased by only \$42, \$40, and \$48, respectively.

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**Table 4.1**

*Descriptive Statistics for Instructional Leadership Dollars Spent Per Student for the 2009-2010 Through the 2012-2013 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2009-2010			
Elementary Schools	3,044	\$87.64	\$88.19
Middle Schools	1,061	\$87.03	\$87.81
High Schools	1,127	\$99.00	\$145.39
2010-2011			
Elementary Schools	3,095	\$87.12	\$101.24
Middle Schools	1,018	\$90.17	\$93.51
High Schools	1,148	\$110.30	\$188.06
2011-2012			
Elementary Schools	3,087	\$81.15	\$122.20
Middle Schools	1,021	\$86.56	\$85.45
High Schools	1,163	\$110.91	\$251.68
2012-2013			
Elementary Schools	3,112	\$85.06	\$86.12
Middle Schools	1,027	\$92.12	\$99.28
High Schools	1,165	\$207.18	\$3,387.80

**Table 4.2**

*Descriptive Statistics for Instructional Leadership Dollars Spent Per Student for the 2013-2014 Through the 2016-2017 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2013-2014			
Elementary Schools	3,272	\$90.12	\$90.02
Middle Schools	1,103	\$97.96	\$101.00
High Schools	1,173	\$124.30	\$288.77
2014-2015			
Elementary Schools	3,369	\$100.76	\$169.15
Middle Schools	1,038	\$102.96	\$94.10
High Schools	1,174	\$131.49	\$197.41
2015-2016			
Elementary Schools	3,157	\$106.56	\$105.53
Middle Schools	1,083	\$107.24	\$100.94
High Schools	1,239	\$135.38	\$305.81
2016-2017			
Elementary Schools	3,363	\$124.58	\$387.22
Middle Schools	1,069	\$116.08	\$95.85
High Schools	1,203	\$142.09	\$248.31

**Table 4.3**

*Descriptive Statistics for Instructional Leadership Dollars Spent Per Student for the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2017-2018			
Elementary Schools	3,168	\$125.55	\$133.11
Middle Schools	1,087	\$116.32	\$87.39
High Schools	1,221	\$142.66	\$210.09
2018-2019			
Elementary Schools	3,243	\$129.35	\$92.68
Middle Schools	1,208	\$126.66	\$197.55
High Schools	1,220	\$147.37	\$187.64

**Table 4.4**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Total Monies Spent for Instructional Leadership  
for the 2009-2010 Through the 2012-2013 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2009-2010			
Elementary Schools	3,044	1.27	0.94
Middle Schools	1,061	1.16	0.87
High Schools	1,127	1.12	1.32
2010-2011			
Elementary Schools	3,095	1.24	0.76
Middle Schools	1,018	1.21	0.90
High Schools	1,148	1.18	1.34
2011-2012			
Elementary Schools	3,087	1.23	0.81
Middle Schools	1,021	1.25	0.98
High Schools	1,163	1.19	1.28
2012-2013			
Elementary Schools	3,112	1.29	0.88
Middle Schools	1,027	1.31	1.02
High Schools	1,165	1.23	1.23

**Table 4.5**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Total Monies Spent for Instructional Leadership for the 2013-2014 Through the 2016-2017 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2013-2014			
Elementary Schools	3,272	1.33	0.88
Middle Schools	1,103	1.36	1.23
High Schools	1,173	1.28	1.21
2014-2015			
Elementary Schools	3,369	1.40	0.96
Middle Schools	1,038	1.38	1.05
High Schools	1,174	1.37	1.38
2015-2016			
Elementary Schools	3,157	1.43	0.93
Middle Schools	1,083	1.42	1.24
High Schools	1,239	1.37	1.41
2016-2017			
Elementary Schools	3,363	1.57	0.92
Middle Schools	1,069	1.60	1.62
High Schools	1,203	1.43	1.14

**Table 4.6**

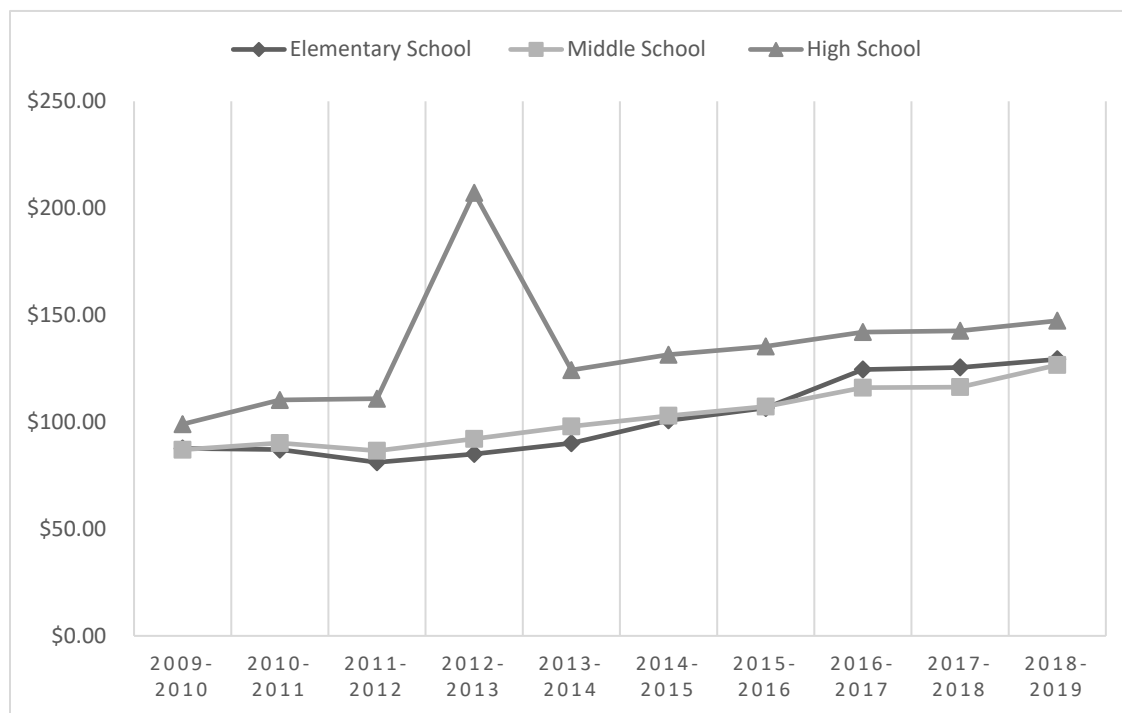
*Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Total Monies Spent for Instructional Leadership for the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year and School Level	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2017-2018			
Elementary Schools	3,168	1.58	0.98
Middle Schools	1,087	1.55	1.44
High Schools	1,221	1.52	2.18
2018-2019			
Elementary Schools	3,243	1.65	1.08
Middle Schools	1,208	1.57	1.17
High Schools	1,220	1.54	1.55



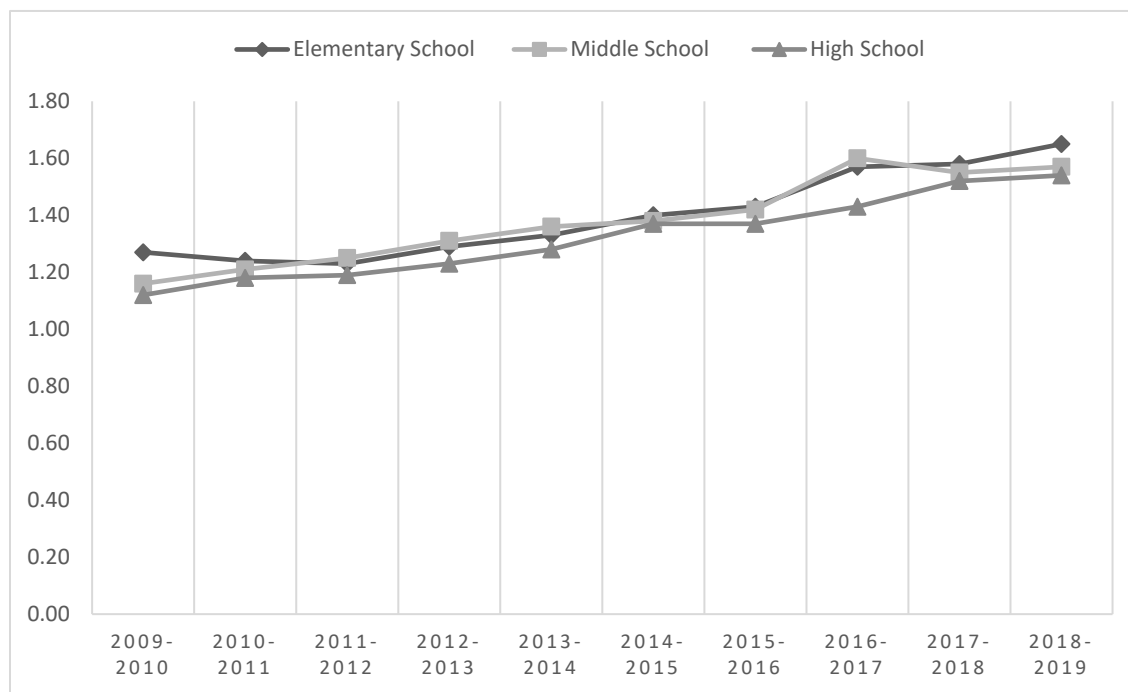
**Figure 4.1**

*Instructional Leadership Dollars Spent Per Student for the 2009-2010 School Year  
Through the 2018-2019 School Year*



**Figure 4.2**

*Percent of Total Monies Spent on Instructional Leadership for the 2009-2010 School Year Through the 2018-2019 School Year*



## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

The overall purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to examine the financial expenditures of Texas public schools in regard to Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. In the first article, the purpose was to determine the monies spent on Guidance Counseling Services per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of total monies in elementary, middle, and high schools. In the second article, the purpose was to investigate the monies spent on Social Work Services per student in real dollars and as a percent of total monies in elementary, middle, and high schools. In the third article, the purpose was to examine the monies spent on Instructional Leadership per pupil in real dollars and as a percent of total monies in elementary, middle, and high schools. Each of these determinations were made across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year so that the presence of trends could be ascertained.

For each of the studies in this journal-ready dissertation, their results are discussed and summarized in this chapter. Then, implications for policy and practice were provided, followed by recommendations for future research. A summary concludes this chapter.

#### **Discussion of Article One Results**

The results of the statistical analyses of the monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services in real dollars per pupil for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for Texas public elementary, middle and high schools are summarized in

Table 5.1. In each school year and between each school level, statistically significant differences were established in the amount of monies spent on Guidance Counseling Services. As the school level decreased, the monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services also decreased. On average, the monies spent were greatest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were smallest at the elementary school level.

**Table 5.1**

*Summary of Results for Guidance Counseling Services Expenditures per Student by School Level for the 2009-2010 Through the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
2009-2010	\$229.77	\$290.84	\$385.95
2010-2011	\$243.96	\$302.08	\$413.31
2011-2012	\$219.45	\$279.92	\$412.39
2012-2013	\$214.53	\$286.25	\$392.82
2013-2014	\$225.63	\$295.54	\$450.63
2014-2015	\$244.06	\$319.02	\$452.08
2015-2016	\$268.49	\$334.70	\$461.37
2016-2017	\$272.31	\$336.41	\$483.67
2017-2018	\$277.63	\$331.63	\$485.23
2018-2019	\$290.73	\$385.64	\$486.61

With respect to the rate of change for Guidance Counseling Services expenditures per pupil from the 2009-2010 school year to the 2018-2019 school year, on average, elementary schools increased their expenditures by about \$60 or 27%. Middle schools increased their expenditures by about \$95 or 33%. Lastly, high schools increased the amount of monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services per student by about \$100 or 26% during the aforementioned 10 school years.

Regarding the percent of total monies spent on Guidance Counseling Services, the results of the statistical analyses for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for Texas public elementary, middle and high schools are summarized in Table 5.2. In each school year and for each school level, statistically significant differences were documented in the percent of total monies spent on Guidance Counseling Services. As the school level decreased, the percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services also decreased. On average, the percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services was greatest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were smallest at the elementary school level.

**Table 5.2**

*Summary of Results for the Percent of Total Monies Spent for Guidance Counseling Services by School Level for the 2009-2010 Through the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year	Elementary Schools %	Middle Schools %	High Schools %
2009-2010	3.21	3.86	4.10
2010-2011	3.26	4.03	4.18
2011-2012	3.22	4.03	4.23
2012-2013	3.26	4.06	4.32
2013-2014	3.24	3.99	4.44
2014-2015	3.24	4.12	4.53
2015-2016	3.30	4.14	4.55
2016-2017	3.39	4.29	4.61
2017-2018	3.44	4.25	4.69
2018-2019	3.54	4.34	4.80

In reference to the percent of total monies spent on Guidance Counseling Services across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for the elementary, middle, and high school levels, the percent of total monies spent remained nearly

unchanged. At the elementary level, a 0.33% increase occurred in the counseling dollars spent from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, the percent spent on counseling dollars increased by about 0.48% during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the percent of monies spent on counseling services increased by about 0.70% during the aforementioned 10 school years.

### **Discussion of Article Two Results**

Results of the statistical analyses of the monies spent for Social Work Services in real dollars per pupil for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for Texas public elementary, middle and high schools are summarized in Table 5.3. Statistically significant differences were established in the amount of Social Work Services dollars that were spent at all three school levels for all 10 of the school years. As the school level decreased, the expenditures for Social Work Services also decreased. On average, the monies spent were greatest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were smallest at the elementary school level.

**Table 5.3**

*Summary of Results for Social Work Services Expenditures per Student by School Level  
for the 2009-2010 Through the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
2009-2010	\$15.95	\$19.56	\$31.84
2010-2011	\$15.76	\$23.80	\$35.01
2011-2012	\$13.35	\$21.82	\$28.55
2012-2013	\$13.48	\$22.65	\$43.51
2013-2014	\$13.90	\$23.10	\$40.91
2014-2015	\$15.27	\$26.27	\$43.17
2015-2016	\$17.01	\$26.91	\$48.08
2016-2017	\$17.44	\$30.40	\$52.22
2017-2018	\$20.35	\$27.88	\$47.74
2018-2019	\$22.62	\$27.71	\$51.33

With respect to the rate of change for Social Work Services expenditures per pupil from the 2009-2010 school year to the 2018-2019 school year, on average, elementary schools increased their expenditures by about \$7 or 42%. Middle schools increased their expenditures by about \$8 or 42%. Lastly, high schools increased the amount of monies spent for Social Work Services per student by about \$19 or 61% during the aforementioned 10 school years.

Regarding the percent of total monies spent on Social Work Services, the results of the statistical analyses for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for Texas public elementary, middle and high schools are summarized in Table 5.4. As the school level decreased, the percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services also decreased. For most of the school years, the percent of total monies spent for Social Work Services was greatest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were smallest at the elementary school level.

**Table 5.4**

*Summary of Results for the Percent of Total Monies Spent for Social Work Services by School Level for the 2009-2010 Through the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year	Elementary Schools %	Middle Schools %	High Schools %
2009-2010	0.22	0.22	0.31
2010-2011	0.20	0.25	0.29
2011-2012	0.20	0.27	0.27
2012-2013	0.21	0.28	0.30
2013-2014	0.20	0.26	0.31
2014-2015	0.22	0.27	0.33
2015-2016	0.23	0.28	0.33
2016-2017	0.22	0.30	0.31
2017-2018	0.24	0.30	0.32
2018-2019	0.27	0.29	0.35

In reference to the percent of total monies spent on Social Work Services across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for the elementary, middle, and high school levels, the percent of total monies spent remained nearly the same. At the elementary level, a 0.05% increase occurred in the Social Work Services dollars spent from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, the percent spent on Social Work Services increased by about 0.07% during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the percent of monies spent on Social Work Services increased by about 0.04% during the aforementioned 10 school years.



### **Discussion of Article Three Results**

The results of the statistical analyses of the monies spent for Instructional Leadership in real dollars per pupil for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for Texas public elementary, middle and high schools are summarized in Table 5.5. Statistically significant differences were established in the amount of Instructional Leadership dollars that were spent between the elementary and high school levels, and between the middle school and high school levels for the majority of the 10 school years. As the school level decreased, the expenditures for Instructional Leadership also decreased. On average, the monies spent were greatest at the high school level, followed by the middle school and elementary school levels, which had similar expenditures.

**Table 5.5**

*Summary of Results for Instructional Leadership Expenditures per Student by School Level for the 2009-2010 Through the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
2009-2010	\$87.64	\$87.03	\$99.00
2010-2011	\$87.12	\$90.17	\$110.30
2011-2012	\$81.15	\$86.56	\$110.91
2012-2013	\$85.06	\$92.12	\$207.18
2013-2014	\$90.12	\$97.96	\$124.30
2014-2015	\$100.76	\$102.96	\$131.49
2015-2016	\$106.56	\$107.24	\$135.38
2016-2017	\$124.58	\$116.08	\$142.09
2017-2018	\$125.55	\$116.32	\$142.66
2018-2019	\$129.35	\$126.66	\$147.37

With respect to the rate of change for Instructional Leadership expenditures per pupil from the 2009-2010 school year to the 2018-2019 school year, on average, elementary schools increased their expenditures by about \$42 or 48%. Middle schools increased their expenditures by about \$40 or 46%. Lastly, high schools increased the amount of monies spent for Instructional Leadership per student by about \$48 or 49% during the aforementioned 10 school years.

Regarding the percent of total monies spent on Instructional Leadership, the results of the statistical analyses for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for Texas public elementary, middle and high schools are summarized in Table 5.6. For the majority of the school years, statistically significant results were not yielded between the school levels. On average, the percent of total monies spent on

Instructional Leadership services were similar for all three of the school levels during the aforementioned 10 school years.

**Table 5.6**

*Summary of Results for the Percent of Total Monies Spent for Instructional Leadership by School Level for the 2009-2010 Through the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year	Elementary Schools %	Middle Schools %	High Schools %
2009-2010	1.27	1.16	1.12
2010-2011	1.24	1.21	1.18
2011-2012	1.23	1.25	1.19
2012-2013	1.29	1.31	1.23
2013-2014	1.33	1.36	1.28
2014-2015	1.40	1.38	1.37
2015-2016	1.43	1.42	1.37
2016-2017	1.57	1.60	1.43
2017-2018	1.58	1.55	1.52
2018-2019	1.65	1.57	1.54

In reference to the percent of total monies spent on Instructional Leadership across the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year for the elementary, middle, and high school levels, the percent of total monies spent increased slightly. At the elementary level, a 0.38% increase occurred in the Instructional Leadership dollars spent from the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. At the middle school level, the percent spent on Instructional Leadership increased by about 0.41% during the 10 school years. At the high school level, the percent of monies spent on Instructional Leadership increased by about 0.42% during the aforementioned 10 school years.

### **Connections to Existing Literature**

The findings in all three articles were in alignment with the available previous research articles discussed in this journal-ready dissertation. Although no previous published research articles were located regarding financial expenditures for Guidance Counseling Services, the minimal increase in monies spent per pupil during the 10 years were indicative of the high caseloads frequently assigned to school counselors (ASCA, 2012, 2021; National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018). Similarly, although no previous published research studies were located regarding expenditures for Social Work Services, the small amount of monies spent and the minimal increase in monies spent during the aforementioned 10 school years for Social Work Services is indicative of a lack of social workers in Texas public schools (Alvarez et al., 2013; National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter, 2020).

Lastly, the percent of total monies spent on Instructional Leadership or professional development was congruent to previous researchers who established that school districts spend, on average, about 1.5% to 8% of a school district's budget on professional development (Hertert, 1997; Killeen et al., 2002). Notably, previous researchers (Hertert, 1997; Killeen et al., 2002; Miles et al., 2004; Odden et al., 2002) had difficulties quantifying and generalizing the true expense of professional development because of variances in accounting codes and definitions of what professional development entails (Gallagher, 2002). Hence, it is difficult to generalize or compare the results in this journal-ready dissertation with the aforementioned studies due to

inconsistencies in accounting codes and differing definitions for professional development and Instructional Leadership.

### **Implications for Policy and for Practice**

School counselor caseloads in Texas continue to far exceed the recommended student-to-school counselor ratios recommended by the ASCA (National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018). The high student-to-school counselor ratio may be interpreted to mean that Texas schools are not providing sufficient funding for school counseling services. The average school counseling dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels increased only by about \$60, \$95, and \$100 respectively, from the 2009-2010 to the 2018-2019 school years.

Similarly, as the number of students who are at risk and in poverty have only increased in Texas within the 10 school years covered in this journal-ready dissertation (Texas Education Agency, 2011, 2019b; United States Department of Education, 2020), the State of Texas continues to not require schools and school districts to employ the services of school social workers (National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter, 2020), even though school social workers have been documented to influence positively the lives and academic outcomes of students (Alvarez et al., 2013; Elsherbiny, 2017; Franklin et al., 2009; Newsome et al., 2008). The low expenditures may be interpreted to mean that Texas schools are doing a disservice to the neediest of students by not providing sufficient funding for Social Work Services. The average social work dollars spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels increased only by about \$7, \$8, and \$19 respectively, from the 2009-2010 to the 2018-2019 school

years. As a result, schools and school districts may be missing important opportunities to intervene in the lives of struggling students and their families.

Furthermore, funding for Guidance Counseling Services and Social Work Services at the elementary school level was statistically significantly lower than funding at the middle and high school levels. This lower funding is particularly concerning as receiving services at a younger age may then help students to be more successful as they progress through school. In other words, the ability to intervene sooner for students who are at risk and students who are in poverty may provide far-reaching benefits that will enhance the student's chances of graduating high school and securing a brighter future.

Not yet taking into account inflation, the minimal increase in per pupil spending for Guidance Counseling Services and Social Work Services during the past 10 years, the persistently high caseloads for school counselors, and the nonexistence of school social workers in some school districts (Alvarez et al., 2013; National Association for College Admission Counseling & ASCA, 2018) indicate that funding is insufficient for Guidance Counseling Services and Social Work Services in Texas schools. Therefore, school leaders, school district leaders, policymakers, and state legislators are encouraged to increase funding for Guidance Counseling Services and Social Work Services for all school levels so that schools, in particular school counselors and school social workers, can more aptly support and provide services to its most vulnerable students. In addition, with the ongoing, expected and unforeseen negative consequences on students and families brought upon by the Covid-19 pandemic (Fair Health, 2021), the need for sufficient funding for Guidance Counseling Services and Social Work Services grows

ever pressing as school counselors and school social workers are vital in connecting students and their families with much-needed resources in the community. These resources, among others, include supports for mental health, food, clothing, housing, and medical care, all factors that are important in the daily lives of students and their families.

Regarding Instructional Leadership, as test scores continue to be the main measure used by the state legislature to gauge student academic achievement, schools and school districts also continue their efforts on increasing teacher quality and effectiveness. As a result, a renewed focus has been placed on instructional leadership as another strategy of providing on-going professional development with the goal of improving teaching practices. This renewed focus on instructional leadership is evident by the increase of Instructional Leadership expenditures within the past 10 aforementioned school years as well as the change of the Texas principal certification requirement to that of *Principal as Instructional Leader* (Texas Education Agency, 2021).

Although an increase in expenditures of \$42, \$40, and \$48 per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively, may appear minimal, this represents a 48%, 46%, and 49% increase in the amount of monies spent on Instructional Leadership from 2009-2010 school year to the 2018-2019 school year. Unfortunately, although the expenditures in Instructional Leadership have increased, student academic achievement, as measured by test scores, have not also increased (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2021). Additionally, funding for Instructional Leadership at the elementary and middle school levels was statistically significantly lower than funding at the high school level. The lower funding at the younger levels and the higher funding at

the high school level suggests that a gap may be present in teacher skillsets and expertise that then necessitates an additional investment of instructional leadership at the high school level. Similarly, the gap in spending may indicate that not enough monies are being spent at the younger levels, which then again necessitates higher levels of spending as students reach the high school level.

As such schools and school districts would benefit in reevaluating the monies spent at each school levels to determine if it would be wiser to perhaps invest more monies at the younger levels as this shift may lead to needing to spend less monies at the high school level. Additionally, teacher preparation programs may also benefit from reevaluating their curriculum and find additional opportunities to increase the effectiveness of newly graduating teachers. Furthermore, schools, school districts, and policymakers are encouraged to examine other factors that may influence student academic achievement apart from instructional practices (e.g., social and emotional learning, the environmental struggles associated with poverty) and develop plans to provide students with wraparound services with the goal of supporting the whole child. Lastly, with the on-going negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on students' learning, lawmakers are encouraged to continue to provide additional funding to schools and school districts so that the academic and social and emotional needs of students can be adequately addressed.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Several recommendations for future studies can be made based on the findings of this empirical, multiyear journal-ready dissertation. First, researchers are encouraged to



replicate this study using other expenditure categories and to compare the rates of increase or decrease of the other expenditures to the expenditures for Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership. Second, researchers are recommended to investigate the number of school counselors, school social workers, as well as the number of designated instructional leaders at each school level. Third, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in other states and investigate any trends regarding Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership expenditures in public schools across the country. Fourth, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study to include private and charter schools. Fifth, researchers are encouraged to investigate the possible reasons and ramifications of why the expenditures for all three functions examined were, on average, highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. Lastly, researchers are also encouraged to review the tables in this study and investigate the large standard deviations for each school level as these large numbers suggest that schools within Texas are far from being uniform in regard to per pupil expenditures for Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership at each respective school level.

### **Conclusion**

The overall purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to examine the financial expenditures of Texas public schools in regard to Guidance Counseling Services, Social Work Services, and Instructional Leadership for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. Statistically significant differences were documented in the

amount of dollars spent per student and the percent of total monies spent for Guidance Counseling Services and Social Work Services for all three school levels for all 10 of the aforementioned school years. For both Guidance Counseling Services and Social Work Services, the amount of dollars spent per student and the percent of total monies spent were highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school level, and were lowest at the elementary school level. As the school level decreased, the monies spent per student and the percent of total monies spent were statistically significantly lower. From the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, Guidance Counseling expenditures for elementary, middle, and high schools across the State of Texas increased by only \$60, \$95, and \$100, respectively. Regarding Social Work Services, expenditures for elementary, middle, and high schools across the State of Texas increased by only \$7, \$8, and \$19, respectively, for the aforementioned 10 school years.

With respect to Instructional Leadership, monies spent per student at the elementary, middle, and high school levels were also examined for the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school years. Also investigated was the percent of total dollars spent on Instructional Leadership for the same 10 school years. Statistically significant differences were documented in the amount of dollars spent per student for the majority of the 10 school years. However, only a few of the school years yielded a statistically significant difference in the percent of total monies spent on Instructional Leadership among the three school levels for the aforementioned school years. The amount of Instructional Leadership dollars spent per student were highest at the high school level, followed by the middle school and elementary school levels, which

frequently spent a about the same amount of monies per pupil. From the 2009-2010 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, expenditures for elementary, middle, and high schools across the State of Texas increased by only \$42, \$40, and \$48, respectively.

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## APPENDIX



Date: Jun 29, 2021 10:19:51 AM CDT

TO: Tania Merik John Slate

FROM: SHSU IRB

PROJECT TITLE: Financial Expenditures by Function for Texas Public Schools: A Multiyear Statewide Investigation

PROTOCOL #: IRB-2021-166

SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial

ACTION: Exempt

DECISION DATE: June 29, 2021

EXEMPT REVIEW CATEGORY: Category 4. Secondary research for which consent is not required: Secondary research uses of identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens, if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(i) The identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens are publicly available;

(ii) Information, which may include information about biospecimens, is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, the investigator does not contact the subjects, and the investigator will not re-identify subjects;

(iii) The research involves only information collection and analysis involving the investigator's use of identifiable health information when that use is regulated under 45 CFR parts 160 and 164, subparts A and E, for the purposes of "health care operations" or "research" as those terms are defined at 45 CFR 164.501 or for "public health activities and purposes" as described under 45 CFR 164.512(b); or

(iv) The research is conducted by, or on behalf of, a Federal department or agency using government-generated or government-collected information obtained for nonresearch activities, if the research generates identifiable private information that is or will be maintained on information technology that is subject to and in compliance with section 208(b) of the E-Government Act of 2002, 44 U.S.C. 3501 note, if all of the identifiable private information collected, used, or generated as part of the activity will be maintained in systems of records subject to the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a, and, if applicable, the information used in the research was collected subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.

**OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK:** To access the survey, click [here](#). It only takes 10 minutes of your time and is voluntary. The results will be used internally to make improvements to the IRB application and/or process. Thank you for your time.

Greetings,

Thank you for your submission of Initial Review materials for this project. The Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

**\* What should investigators do when considering changes to an exempt study that could make it nonexempt?**

It is the PI's responsibility to consult with the IRB whenever questions arise about whether planned changes to an exempt study might make that study nonexempt human subjects research.

In this case, please make available sufficient information to the IRB so it can make a correct determination.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 936-294-4875 or [irb@shsu.edu](mailto:irb@shsu.edu). Please include your project title and protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Chase Young, Ph.D.  
Chair, IRB  
Hannah R. Gerber, Ph.D.  
Co-Chair, IRB

## VITA

### Tania M. Merik

#### EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

Doctorate of Education – Educational Leadership, May 2022

*Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas*

Dissertation: Financial Expenditures by Function for Texas Public Schools: A Texas Multiyear Statewide Investigation

Master of Education, School Counseling, August 2014

*Lamar University Beaumont, Texas*

Bachelor of Business Administration, Distribution Management and Technology,  
International Business, May 2009

*Baylor University Waco, Texas*

#### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

School Counselor, Oak Ridge High School, Conroe Independent School District

School Counselor, Davis High School, Aldine Independent School District

School Counselor, Hardy Elementary School, Willis Independent School District

School Counselor, Eastside Intermediate School, Cleveland Independent School District

School Counselor, Mance Park Middle School, Huntsville Independent School District

Math Teacher, Grangerland Intermediate School, Conroe Independent School District

Math Teacher, Eastside Intermediate School, Cleveland Independent School District

Supply Chain Analyst, HEB Grocery Corporate Office, San Antonio, TX

#### RECOGNITIONS

Outstanding Graduate Student Award, 2020-2021 – SHSU Ed.D. in the Educational Leadership Program at Sam Houston State University

Southwest Educational Research Association (SERA) 2020 Deans' Award for Exceptional Graduate Student Research

#### PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

Merik, T. M., & Slate, J. R. (2021). Differences in school counselors employed by percentage of students at risk: A Texas statewide investigation. In J. E. Kelly (Ed.), *Teachers and principals: Global practices, challenges and prospects* (pp. 149-165). Nova Science Publishers.

Merik, T. M. (2020, February). *Principals and school counselors' perceptions of the role of the school counselor (research in progress)*. Paper presented at the 43rd annual meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association Conference, Arlington, TX.