

Comments from VSCA School Counselor Survey 2023

1. If I didn't have a supportive and fantastic administration I would not still be in this job
2. I believe the 504 coordinator and the ESOL contact should both be supplemented positions
3. I often feel if you do your job well then you get more responsibilities added to your day with no compensation.
4. Do more training with admin so they will know the value and role of counselors in the schools.
5. I would like some extra support for issues such as attendance.
6. There should be more school counselors at each school. There is no way to meet the needs of 400 students social emotional needs of students in conjunction with everything else we are responsible for.
7. Advocating for us at principal and asst principal meetings is really working! Thank you for keeping our interests in the forefront of their brains! Also, having a second counselor is a game changer. I don't want to leave!
8. It would be helpful to have an advocate for the School Counselors who would inform, both principals and administrators of what School Counselor duties should be confined to.
9. There is really not a lot of good direction from the county about our role and responsibilities but I don't think that can be changed
10. I am still trying to figure out what Thomas Vaughn does? How is he supporting the counselors? We never hear from him, so I am curious what his role is to us? Why do we not have a college and career lead in the county anymore? Ms. Estelhomme is great, but she can't help us when she doesn't even get the proper information and her boss doesn't have a clue. It is amazing to see how top heavy our county admin is because I wonder why we need so many people to do the littlest of work. And their pay is taking away from those who actually work. How about instead of taking photo pictures to post- you actually come and speak to your teachers and staff without staging for a picture. It will mean a lot more and we might actually feel appreciated.
11. FTE is a joke. We don't have a single 9th grade class that isn't at least 5 kids over their limit for courseload. I also enjoy the fact that the person with 3 years of experience makes \$200 less than me with my 20+ years.
12. My BEST days are those that are spent doing what I am trained to do....working directly with students, individually and in small group, or providing purposeful SEL lessons.
13. As counselors it feels like we are either underrepresented or not represented at all with Leadership with the district. We feel and express to each other that most or none of our Leadership have been counselors, so they do not truly understand the role or the plight of school counselors. We feel like we are tasked to do so many things that do not truly fit the role of school counselor. Because of this it makes it hard for us to be effective as the school counselor. Personally, I was very frustrated last year because for about half of the year I was the only school counselor at my school. The other 2 counselors left because they had either better opportunities elsewhere or where just frustrated with the district. So, I was left to do the role of 3 counselors as 1 person. I did not receive any additional compensation even though I did the job of 2 other counselors. Everything worked out because Admin and Donnette Estelhome helped me A LOT but, I still was constantly running and having to cover every 504, PST, parent teacher meeting, Threat Assessment, etc. for all grades. It was very overwhelming as a First-Year counselor. I didn't expect anything amazing or 3 salaries but, some extra compensation would have made me feel more appreciated. Lastly, I would just like to say that being PST or MTSS

coordinator is ALOT to manage. It should be a hired position and not just a supplement. I understand educator shortage so that may not be possible, but at least increase the stipend. It is ALOT of work for a \$1000 supplement. I enjoy working and being a counselor in Volusia County. I graduate from Volusia County Schools, but I often wonder if I should leave the district for better opportunities.

14. We should not be acting as disciplinaries as it is a conflict of interest and simply unfair. Pay us more.
15. We need more support and to be treated like we are an asset to the school. I feel that teachers and staff do not understand our role and call us for things that could be solved if teachers were actually building relationships and developing SEL in their classrooms.
16. If it weren't for the administration I work with at my school I would not stay
17. I am grateful for my colleagues whom I can vent to. Some of my admin are very kind. I have never gotten a reasonable salary for my Master's Degree with VCS, I feel.
18. Job security and stability used to be one of the benefits of being an educator. What happened!? I'm supposed to get a supplement for PST/504 Chair, I signed a Requisition for \$346.66. I think this is the extra \$3.12 every pay period. Is this correct? We should also get compensated for no lunch and planning period.
19. Will they be replacing the College and Career Coordinator for the district? What does Mr. Thomas Vaughn do daily? Will communication ever get better between the district officials and those of us at the school level? When will testing be taken from our plate? How about a program where the school board members sub for a week to get a feel for the job? or Sups?
20. My biggest issue is that district administration/site administration expects counselors to cooperate with unethical practices to increase school grade. We are always told to force students against their will into both AP classes and CTE classes who don't want to be there and never asked for these. It causes significant problems for both students, parents, and teachers. Administration has no problem saying this is for school grading purposes only. This is absolutely disgraceful. Counselors should not be participating in fudging numbers. If my school and district continues to do this, they need to leave counselors out of their scams and schemes. The district clearly doesn't care about these students and they have made that abundantly clear. In a December graduation meeting, my team and I were told the only standards we have with increasing acceleration rate is that we don't end up in jail or lose our certifications. If this mentality does not change and these cowardly district officials are still working for VCS past this school year, I have no problem leaving the district and state. I'm licensed in 5 states and have great evaluations, so I will not have a problem obtaining a new position. I have pretty much lost all faith that VCS will regain any integrity or moral footing.
21. We discussed our schedule with our Principal, this year they put us on the wheel, it has not worked out well with a 6 day schedule, missing many classes due to holidays, hurricanes and no one ever knows what day we are on. They have heard our concerns and are taking us off the wheel next year so we can get back to seeing more students per day, running 2-3 support groups per week and provide administration with support for crisis and threat assessments.
22. We need to either be paid a higher difference for our masters degree or we need to be paid for all the extra duties that we have to do in a day.
23. Love what I do but more and more is put on us and there is little time to be effective in all of our duties. I believe we need to have a full-time Mental Health Counselor (not including district

counselors) on all high school campuses especially the campuses that have numerous threat assessments.

24. Testing is ridiculous! Now that all grades are being tested (and 3 times a year) it has been ridiculous how much time has been spent doing this supplemented duty. And now ACCESS for ELLs is beginning as well.
25. I have worked as a school counselor at all levels - elementary, middle, and high - in Volusia. I am at the middle school now and like it the best because here I can focus more on what a school counselor should be doing, but I am still pulled away for extra duties which makes my job very difficult. The elementary was worse because I was one counselor to 700 students and the high school was the worst because there the focus is only on getting students to graduate and making points for the school grade by getting students to take useless career certifications. I was not able to do 80% of what a school counselor should be doing at the high school level.
26. Our faculties are suffering; communication doesn't happen; I am not seeing the respect with leadership. Also, can you tell us what the role of Mr. Vaughn for student services? Is there anyone in the district role for college and career? Daytona State needs a VCS representative who has access to DSC and VCS student information systems to reduce the workload for dual enrollment on school counselors. Counselors need to be able to meet with all grade levels and focusing on dual enrollment, acceleration points and seniors absorbs 99% of our time. At the same time, 9th graders need attention; each high school should have their own 9th grade counselor that focuses on them and their success. This is the year that is make or break. The rest of the population can be split up by alphabet.
27. I think it needs to be established one way or the other whether or not we are SEL teachers or school counselors. When a large part of the day is teaching and you factor in lunch duty and a working lunch (no planning), that leaves little time for all of the other duties AND time with the kids. Not many people understand everything we do. It is a pretty long list. None of it (except for MTSS which is its own full-time job) is bad, there's just a LOT of it.
28. I have aired my opposition in the last question but if contacted I would be in a world of trouble with Admin. I'm already treated very coldly and disrespectfully.
29. We are understaffed everywhere and feel like this is the biggest issue and our first priority should be to increase and retain qualified staff. All the new programs constantly being rolled out will continue to be ineffective without appropriate amount of time, staff and consistency to be implemented correctly.
30. I would like to spend more time with small group counseling, and individual counseling. Having a morning duty and lunch duty every day is very overwhelming.
31. I need the most support in the area of School Counselors not being a testing coordinator. It sets up us for failure. Also, 504 contact should be a supplemented position because it has become a huge job since they have reduced the requirements for eligibility.
32. I absolutely love my school and admin, but not super pleased with school board.
33. I feel like counselors are used, as needed. I feel like I work harder than many others... and get paid the same or even less! I run around and do many non-counseling related duties. I take on a lot of extra work and it is expected that I don't take a planning/lunch if I am asked to go to a classroom. Even others get to eat and I get sent to handle discipline. I would never speak of this before, but it is just now starting to really upset me. I don't want to burn out....

34. I believe we are all struggling in some form or fashion. Even if we lowered caseloads, this would be a difficult job as we are pulled into a thousand roles/functions. These roles also change with each new administration, which makes it hard to be an expert at anything.
35. I feel quite happy with the school I am at and feel like I have amazing support from my admin team. They understand my role and really do not ask me to go outside of that role very often. We work as a team, I am part of the Leadership Team, my role is respected, and I feel appreciated. I know this is not the case at all schools and I do worry that if there were major changes in the admin at my school, then some of this could change, causing me to feel less satisfied with my position.
36. In 30 years, the IDEAL role of the elementary school counselor has not changed. It should consist of some whole class lessons, small group counseling and individual counseling. There is room for some other activities as needed depending on the school. However, a counselor being USED as a special area teacher is the biggest threat to our true role and the biggest injustice to the students.
37. Requiring counselors to be testing administrators and the frequency of us being pulled for testing is outrageous and directly impacts our ability to do our jobs. I met with my principal, AP, AP over testing, and testing coordinator regarding the concerns and the facts about how many hours and weeks out of a month we are losing for testing and every retake for testing most of the fall and most of the spring. The response was that they don't have anyone else to do it and they can't get substitutes to come to our school to cover for teachers to do it. Basically counselors do all of the testing every single time which took up 2-3 weeks out of each month that testing was permitted. I notified my admin that they would get complaints from the counseling department because we literally have no time to check emails and return phone calls and they shrugged their shoulders and said, it is what it is. Now I am getting called in about not checking emails and responding fast enough. I talked to admin about taking 504's off of the counselor plate and was told counselors are the ones who do 504's and it's not that hard or time consuming. We also are mandated to attend every IEP meeting, attendance MTSS meetings, ESOL meetings, and re-entry meetings on top of our own 504 meetings, parent/teacher conferences, threat assessments, weekly PLC's, monthly leadership meeting, monthly threat assessment meeting, individual student meetings to meet the district's request of 2 Grad plans for success completed for each student individually twice a year. It's as if the district is not caring about the sheer fact that the numbers speak volumes. We don't have any time to do our regular job as it is and they keep adding more roles and responsibilities to counselors plates and won't take anything off. And yet we get in trouble and get dinged on our evaluations as a result. It's literally impossible to manage our time. I also feel the district is not addressing the massive mental health crisis we are still dealing with post pandemic. I am talking to other counselors in our district and in other neighboring districts and everyone is saying the same thing: they are doing crisis counseling all day every day. It's hard to be a counselor in a school, district, and education system that does not understand what we do every day and when we speak up, we are told that we are not being a team player and our concerns are not valid or professionally respected. I'm more than happy to leave my name so someone can reach out for additional support.
38. More mental health training

39. It would be great if all my years of experience counted toward my salary. I have over 20 years' experience from outside the county but only 10 years counts toward my salary. That is very disheartening to me.
40. We need more counselors at the schools but no one is qualified and those who are qualified won't come over to Volusia because of the decrease in pay.
41. I am leaving the county due to being unpaid for my years of service. I was recruited - then told last year I did not qualify for the new teacher pay as I was not new. This year I am being told I can't get the longevity pay due to being new to the county. Finally - had a school board member tell me for the extra money being paid in Flagler I should go there. HUH?
42. The amount of work we are responsible for is so great that each day we must prioritize what doesn't get done. We are used to this. However, this year with the new testing procedures, we are called out of our office far too many times for testing students from 1st through 6th periods. The academic coaches are creating the testing protocols and procedures and they are scheduling our counselors to not only test but to also do makeup testing. All 3 counselors are scheduled to test their own grade level. This leaves the school with no available counselors on testing days.
43. If we need to do other things; we should NEVER BE CHASTISED for NOT GETTING ALL THINGS DONE !
44. Teaching special area rotation, takes up way too much time with all the planning it entails and prepping, I much rather be meeting with students in small groups and individually. I really believe this would benefit the students more and they would learn more that way.
45. I feel as Counselors are paying dues to VUE and they are not helping us with the many issues that we have had issues with over the years. This is why a few Counselors I know quit VUE.
46. Counselors serve as a support to many. Counselors deserve higher pay and to be represented and advocated for.
47. I wish the SCOTY was just for SC and not including advocates. I wish all staff received an email about National School Counselor week.
48. We are certified school counselors, not school clerks!
49. I do not believe counselors should be on a special area rotation ever.
50. At the smaller sites, there is not enough support. The smallest VCS high school has 3 School Counselors. My Registrar and I cannot get all our workload done within a day. Due to the vast numbers in and out every day, the fact that we serve elementary, middle and high school and the fact that we have youth from other districts, we have many unique burdens to bear that are supported in personnel. My administrator has tirelessly championed our cause, but nothing has changed in respect to our site staffing.
51. There are too many other duties as assigned. Counselors do everything but counsel and it's a stressful job and counselors are undervalued.
52. One of my concerns is that as counselors are put in a position of having to say yes to doing 504/ MTSS. I feel this takes time from seeing and assisting my students. I believe that this should be a position created specifically to deal with these 2 things; there is an IEP facilitator in every school. With the money they pay people throughout the county, use that money for one person, even if it was couple of people that went to different schools.
53. Why is it that there are rules and we stick by them but once a parent does to the county that they get their way? Our county admin are all about the money and power yet teachers are not

getting what they deserve. Why am I seeing the school board at meetings that they have no right to be in? Isn't there a thing called the Sunshine Law? Maybe VUE needs to report our district to the governor. Something bad is going to happen and I can see it not- the superintendent and higher ups are going to blame everyone but them. Our county is a disgrace, the teachers see it and the parents do too but go take another picture and post it because that is what we see as most important to the higher ups. How about they come in the schools and spend a couple full days so they can see what we are doing. Walking into a room for 10 minutes does not showcase all that is done in the classroom. Seems they have forgotten what it is like to be a teacher. Who is our supervisor? When Donnette does know a question- who is our next person to go to? When Donnette does not get a reply back when she asks something, who is our next in line? Thomas Vaughn? Who is he and what does he do? Tami Fisher? All I see is that she is in charge of MTSS and 504s? That is it? We need help and directions. It is like the county is leading us blindly because they do not communicate. Maybe they can take a course in people communication skills. Thank you for taking the time to read these over. I hope that you are able to make a difference with the county. I wish you luck.

54. I was told this is how it is without staff.