

MASCA Counselor's Notebook

MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION

Vol. 56, No. 9

May 2020

President's Message: Our feelings do not own us!

By BARBARA MEYER, MASCA President

May 2020 Awareness Dates

Asian–Pacific American
Heritage Month

Better Hearing and
Speech Month

Clean Air Month

Mental Health Month

Military Appreciation Month

National Bike Month

National Foster Care Month

National Physical Fitness and
Sports Month

Teen Pregnancy Prevention
Month

1-7 Choose Privacy Week

4-8 Children's Mental Health
Awareness Week

4-8 National PTA Teacher
Appreciation Week

16 Armed Forces Day

17 International Day
Against Homophobia,
Transphobia, and Biphobia

25 National Missing
Children's Day

31 World No Tobacco Day



Barbara Meyer
MASCA President, 2019-2020

Hello Massachusetts School Counselors, and welcome to May!

As I write this article, three weeks into school closures, my fervent hope is that this issue of the Counselor Notebook finds us all back in school.

Since last July, when Jen McGuire passed the title of MASCA President to me, I have attempted to write monthly articles on topics that I deem important to our profession, and valuable to you. But this month, I am struggling to do the job I have loved for 27 years. So instead of trying to guess what you need to hear, I want to write about my feelings.

I tell my students all the time that feelings belong to us, but they don't own us. "Feel the feelings, accept them, and then manage your thoughts and thought distortions about them." I have to admit that it has been difficult for me, over these last three weeks, to take this advice myself. My feelings include gratitude for the health and safety of my family (thus far), and for two paychecks that will continue to come into

my home. I have also felt anger at a government that is failing to protect the most fragile among us and to offer us all reasonable healthcare. I feel overwhelmed by the amount of technology I must learn to use every day, and by the way in which I must attempt to reach and counsel my students. But the most common emotion I am experiencing is sadness.

It turns out that the parts of my job that I love are missing from this online world: Contact with people. Caring for and supporting students is harder electronically. The emotions are not palpable through the screen of my computer, and the connection feels less real. I also miss my counseling team and the amazing teachers and support staff I work with every day. Collaborating, laughing, sharing our lives through all the ups and downs - these people are a second family. And I am grieving their loss, even though I know it is temporary.

So, I am doing what I would tell my students to do: Feel these feelings. Cry if I need to, and then think about what I am able to control in my situation. I am able to learn how to use all of the Google Suite (which is what my school system uses). I have a google classroom, I see students on Google Hangouts Meet, and I have office hours that students can sign up for electronically. I am able to connect with colleagues by phone and video. And I am able to take care of myself by following a routine, taking care of myself, and investing some time in healthy habits. I have also downloaded an app called "House Party," so I can have virtual happy hour with friends when I need it!

When life returns to normal, I will have some new tools under my belt, and a renewed appreciation for the people who make my job meaningful. I hope that you are safe, and well, and that your feelings are not owning you. Until next month,

Barbara

MASCA 2019/2020 DIRECTORY

GOVERNING BOARD:

Barbara Meyer, President
b_meyer@stoughtonschools.org
School Counselor, Stoughton High School

Kerry Bartlett, President Elect
kabartlett@hudson.k12.ma.us
School / Career Counselor, Hudson High School

Jennifer McGuire, Past-President
jmcguire@uppercapetech.org
School Counselor/
Teacher Leader for Guidance,
Upper Cape Cod Technical School

Ruth Carrigan, Board Member
Ruth.Carrigan@whrsd.k12.ma.us
Director of School Counseling,
Whitman-Hanson Regional High School

Ed Connor, Board Member
econnor@dean.edu
Executive Director of Admissions,
Dean College

Laurie Dickstein-Fischer, Board Member
ldicksteinfisc@salemstate.edu
Assistant Professor & Program Director
for School Counseling,
Salem State University

Megan Krell, Board Member
mkrell@fitchburgstate.edu
Associate Professor,
Fitchburg State University

April Megginson, Board Member
amegginson@bridgew.edu
Assistant Professor of Counselor Educa-
tion, Bridgewater State University

Johanna Smith, Board Member
smithjoh@lynnschools.org
School Counselor,
Lynn Vocational Technical Institute

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

April Megginson, Advocacy Committee
amegginson@bridgew.edu
Assistant Professor of Counselor Educa-
tion, Bridgewater State University

Jeremie Bateman,
Awards & Publicity Committee
jbateman@lexingtonma.org
School Counselor,
Lexington High School

Ruth Carrigan, Conference Committee
Ruth.Carrigan@whrsd.k12.ma.us
Director of School Counseling,
Whitman-Hansen Regional High School

Helen O'Donnell, MA Model Committee
helenod@att.net
Retired School Counselor,

Manjula Karamcheti, Member Services
karamcheti@wwgradschool.org
Woodrow Wilson Graduate School of
Teaching and Learning

Jennifer McGuire, Nomination and
Bylaws Committee
jmcguire@uppercapetech.org
School Counselor/Teacher Leader for
Guidance,
Upper Cape Cod Technical School

Dina Sibilia,
Professional Development Committee
sibilia@wsps.org
School Counselor,
West Springfield High School

Christine Shaw, Research and
Evaluation Committee
shawc@merrimack.edu
Associate Professor of Practice, Educa-
tion & Community Studies,
Merrimack College

Jennifer McGuire, Strategic Planning
Committee
jmcguire@uppercapetech.org
School Counselor/
Teacher Leader for Guidance,
Upper Cape Cod Technical School

APPOINTED POSITIONS:

Bob Bardwell, Executive Director
bardwellr@monsonschools.com
Director of School Counseling, Monson
Public Schools

Julia Cahill-O'Shea, Secretary
j.cahill-oshea@hwschools.net
School Counselor, Hamilton- Wenham
Regional High School

Catherine Kinyua,
Membership Coordinator
c/o Woodrow Wilson Graduate School of
Teaching and Learning
kinyua@wwgradschool.org

Jean Atwater Williams, *Counselors
Notebook* Editor & Webmaster
cn@masca.org; webmaster@masca.org

LIAISONS:

Laurie Dickstein-Fischer,
Counselor Educator Liaison
ldicksteinfisc@salemstate.edu
Assistant Professor & Program Director
for School Counseling,
Salem State University

Megan Krell, Emerging Leaders Liaison
mkrell@fitchburgstate.edu
Associate Professor,
Fitchburg State University

Helen O'Donnell, Retirees Liaison
helenod@att.net
Retired School Counselor

Jennifer McGuire, Social Media Liaison
jmcguire@uppercapetech.org
School Counselor/
Teacher Leader for Guidance,
Upper Cape Cod Technical School

Lisa Weinstein, DESE Liaison
LWeinstein@doe.mass.edu
Education Specialist
MA Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education

EMERGING LEADERS:

Molly Brewster, Emerging Leader
mhallbrewster@bostonpublicschools.org
School Counselor, Brighton High School

Karen Stackow, Emerging Leader
kstackow@wrsdeaf.org
School Counselor, Willie Ross School for
the Deaf

Tyeshia Weir, Emerging Leader
weirt@springfieldpublicschools.com
School Counselor, RISE Academy

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We're in this Together!

By Bob Bardwell, MASCA Executive Director

My first thought is my hope that by the time you read this we are all back to work and helping our students navigate the regular routines of their educational journey, although the likelihood of that grows dimmer every day. My second thoughts are with all of you during this global pandemic, hoping that you are safe, healthy and supported with family, friends and colleagues, even if from afar. We all probably know people, and colleagues, who have been sickened by this horrible virus. They need our help, love and support now more than ever. I also think constantly about our students, who have done nothing wrong, yet are faced with numerous challenges, frustrations and setbacks.

The only positive thing about the current situation is that we are all in it together. No one is immune and while some of us are impacted to a greater degree because we have, or know others, who have become sick, have lost income or had major life events impacted, we have seen some signs that we will emerge from this dark period stronger and better as a result. We must hold onto that faith.

MASCA is no different than other organizations and our members are impacted just like everyone else. We had to cancel our annual conference, our most important networking and financially profitable event of the year which will have a financial impact for years to come. MASCA fortunately has reserves to cover situations like this, but it hurts none-the-less as we may not be able to deliver some of the plans for programs and services to our members we have planned.

What I hope is different is that we are already seeing a rebirth and identifying ways to grow, instead of becoming stuck. Instead of adopting a “woe is us” mentality, we have seized on the opportunity to adjust to the new reality and provide resources and solutions never done before.

MASCA quickly recognized that during this time of transition, uncertainty and



Robert Bardwell
Executive Director, MASCA

disbelief, we needed to provide a platform to offer high quality professional development and networking opportunities. With everyone quarantining at home and not being able to fulfill our professional needs in traditional ways, we had to adapt. Enter Zoom meetings. While certainly there are some challenges with the technology and some known security concerns, Zoom has allowed MASCA to provide timely and much needed relief.

As of this writing, we have scheduled eighteen different professional development meetings during the months of April and May with more to come. Some sessions were about working in a virtual world, others provided networking opportunities for work-alike groups while others focused on good old-fashioned professional development topics but delivered in a different format. In just the first eight presentations, we have hosted over 1400 counselors and colleagues – all free of charge and open to members and non-members because we want MASCA to be a trusted resource for all educators.

Zoom meetings are never going to replace the traditional workshops, conferences or meetings – there will always be a place for those – but they

do provide us the flexibility to offer additional services, quicker, more conveniently delivered, and in a format for most which is easier to be consumed. If you have not yet participated in one of these meetings, I urge you to check them out for yourself and give it a try. Most feedback received so far has been positive and appreciative of MASCA being able to deliver the information so quickly and efficiently.

We've also launched our first ever Book Club which hopes to engage our members and colleagues in a different professional way. Thanks to Nicole Fernald and Maria Maloney, our Book Club Coordinators, who quickly answered the call for help. They have selected *The Energy Bus* by Jon Gordon as our first read. All you have to do is to read the book and join us for a Zoom discussion on Thursday, May 14 at 7:30 pm. Making this extra special is that the author will join us for this discussion. Pre-registration is required in order to get the access code to participate. Please consider joining us and inviting a friend or colleague as well.

I also want to give a warm welcome to the 48 counselors from the Worcester Public Schools who recently joined MASCA. I particularly want to thank Cathy Knowles, Liaison for College and Career Readiness, for spearheading this effort. During this time of what will become budget challenges and perhaps limited resources, Cathy convinced her supervisor to provide the funding for all 48 counselors to become MASCA members. We welcome you to the fold and pledge to deliver you high-quality professional development and support.

In closing, I want to reiterate that MASCA will come out of this on the other side a much stronger, more nimble and improved organization. However, even more so than ever before, this will require members and non-members to support our programs, join and renew memberships and spread the good word. I look forward to our bright future and am glad that you are on the journey with us.

Resiliency in Uncertain Times

By Christine Shaw, Ph.D. Director of School Counseling, Merrimack College.
MASCA Research and Evaluation Committee Chair.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines Resiliency as: “the ability of something to return to its original size and shape after being compressed or deformed. An ability to recover from or adjust easily to adversity or change”. It is hard to imagine that we will ever return to our original ‘size and shape’ after this global pandemic. Consider for a moment the very few human experiences that have been felt around the world. Possibly our past World Wars created similar feelings of fear, anxiety and question about the future, but no other event has truly impacted all people from all parts of the globe like this pandemic. It does not matter if you are a student in China, a grandmother in Russia, a doctor in India, your struggling with the same challenges. In this time of shared trauma we can also find shared hope and strategies to help us and those around us navigate this unique experience and develop resiliencies that we will surely need as we enter a new ‘normal’.

The American Psychological Association (2020) produced a prophetic piece in February of this year focusing on the development of resiliency. They define resiliency as “as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress “and suggest that the experience of ‘going through something challenging can also lead to personal growth. Our ability to adapt and discover our inner strength to traverse through difficult times provides us with a growing sense of empowerment over our own emotions.

Keep in mind, being resilient doesn’t mean that we don’t feel the impact of trauma or adversity in our lives, nor does it mean those experiences won’t be difficult. Rather it means that the emotional pain we may feel will not debilitate us, that we can feel those feelings and not lose hope nor our sense of ability to get through it.

Developing resiliency is not necessarily a painless process. Consider going to the gym and working out. When you are building that muscle up, it aches and you often feel like quitting. However, after a few weeks, a month, you become stron-

ger and you can get through a workout much easier. The American Psychology Association provides five strategies to develop resiliency: Build Connections, Foster Wellness, Find Purpose, Embrace Healthy Thoughts and Seek Help.

Build Connections – Often people will move in the opposite direction of connection during a time of trauma. Especially now with the isolation orders. However, seeking connection is a key aspect of resiliency. The idea that “I am not in this alone” is a powerful source of strength. Reaching out to friends, family, past schoolmates, joining groups, listening in on a broadcast, taking a webinar or any activity that will engage one with others will strengthen a sense of belonging.

Foster Wellness – Mental wellness and physical wellness help us weather the storm and reduce additional issues that could come from poor nutrition or lack of physical activity. Caring for our physical body helps us handle anxiety and stress. Consider small steps, little daily goals. Often you’ll find an ‘all or nothing’ approach to physical wellness which can have negative impacts on self-esteem. Pick one goal, maybe eating a healthy breakfast. Create ‘steps’ or ‘ladders’ of goals. Achieve one and then consider doing another. This way you are going up with each activity. Wellness also includes the practice of mindfulness and consideration of what you have right now, staying in the present and being grateful.

Find Purpose- Having a sense of purpose whether from helping others through volunteering or being there for a friend can foster self-worth as well as help make connections with others. Moving toward goals, and being proactive are also behaviors that help us develop resiliency. Take some time to focus on your strengths and take time to acknowledge these.

Embrace Healthy Thoughts – Learning how to identify irrational or extreme thoughts can help. Developing a more balanced view of the situation can help reduce feelings of being overwhelmed or out of control. “You may not be able to change a highly stressful event, but

you can change how you interpret and respond to it” (APA, 2020). Learn from your past and reflect on times that you were able to respond effectively to a stressful situation. Consider rewriting a negative or pessimistic ‘script’ and focus on what could be a more hopeful outcome. Switching from what you fear to what you hope for can help you deal with a difficult situation.

Seek Help – Its okay to not be okay. We have all heard it a million times, but what does it mean. It means that just like physical health, sometimes our mental health issues might be more than we can handle on our own. Seeking professional help when your ability to function effectively in your life is critical. Research shows the earlier someone gets help the more likely they are to recover and find wellness.

These strategies are just a few examples of how we can work toward developing our resiliency in times of trauma and stress. One thing we do know about the situation is that it will change and so can we. Focusing on self-empowerment over our own feelings, thoughts and behavior is part of staying mentally well.

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College Orientation Tips You Can't Live Without

By Collin Peoples, Sallie Mae employee and a graduate of the University of Delaware

You did it! You worked so hard through high school, took the SAT, applied to colleges, and earned a spot in the upcoming freshman class at your dream school. Now what? Orientation!

Even if you've read every single one of your school's webpages, followed their social media accounts, and visited the campus before, attending your orientation is important. For many incoming freshmen and their families, this is the first opportunity to get a taste of what the next four years will be like.

Use these tips to make the most out of your orientation experience:

What to do before college orientation

Whether your orientation is half a day, a long weekend, or a full week, it's helpful to put together a plan to make the most out of your orientation experience.

Here's what you need to do beforehand:

1. Complete preorientation tasks
2. Research courses
3. Pack a comfortable pair of shoes
4. Bring a refillable water bottle

How to crush the day of orientation

You've peeked on the IG accounts of just about everyone in your school's incoming freshmen group, your outfit has been ready for the last week, and you've located the closest campus bookstore to grab your first swag. Orientation is here!

Below are a few tips to help you take on your big day:

1. Eat a healthy breakfast
2. Make friends
3. Join a club
4. Have fun

What parents need to know about college orientation

Whether you're sending your first kid off to college or you're settling in to officially become empty-nesters, college orientation is just as important for parents and guardians as it is for the students themselves.

Here are some tips to help parents navigate college orientation, too:

1. Attend the orientation in person
2. Ask questions - Parents can help by asking questions like: "Does the college offer meal plans?"

or "What nighttime safety services are available?" Some other popular questions for parents are:

"How can I see my student's grades?"

"What are the hours at the student health center?"

"What types of insurance does the health center accept?"

"Are there any counseling or support groups available?"

3. Come prepared - As part of their orientations, schools like to hand out pamphlets,

pens, pencils, t-shirts, water bottles, etc. Think about bringing a tote bag to carry everything comfortably.

This is an exciting time for both you and your student, and with the right resources and a positive mindset, you'll both ace college orientation and be prepared for that first semester.

This article was edited for space. To read it in full, go to: <https://www.salliemae.com/blog/typical-college-orientation/>

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Career Activities Corner: K-12 College and Career Readiness Activities

Reach Higher MA Working Group #1: Careers and Citizenship for All hosts this Career Activity Corner to encourage infusion of a career development strand into your school counseling curriculum. You are invited to submit K-12 lessons with identified standards alignments, interdisciplinary curriculum links, measurable student learning objectives and implementation outcome data to Helen O'Donnell, Ed. D helenod@att.net

MY MAY MADNESS CAREER EXPLORATION BRACKET

Adapted from activity submitted by **Dina Sibilila** and **Colin Moge**, School Counselors, West Springfield HS.

Please note:

- Brackets idea initially applied to college decision-making and shared at a past MASCA conference.
- See electronic version of article in May CN at masca.wildapricot.org for google link to download and modify your bracket.

Grade Level: Upper Elementary - HS

Materials Needed: Internet Access and support, as needed, for ELL and students with IEP plans.

Delivery Method: Multitiered with independent exploration and research encouraged

This career brackets activity encourages students to explore FREE on-line resources to become aware of career clusters, reflect on their personal interests and talents, identify career clusters that have jobs they might be interested in exploring, and ultimately narrow their career cluster choices until each student picks a top choice. Then the research can continue within their chosen career cluster.

Middle School and High School: Use these on-line FREE resources for your career research.

- O*Net Online Career Exploration,
- MassHire Career Information System | Home, (select the MS or HS version)
- MEFA Pathway
- IF you have a school Naviance account, that resource can be used.

Elementary Schools: Use these FREE on-line Resources for career research.

- <https://careerkids.com/pages/career-research>
- https://www.cfnc.org/static/pdf/home/sc/pdf/Elem_Career_Interest_Explorer.pdf

Modify the bracket steps and assignments to meet your instructional needs.

Step #1 - Sweet 16: Reflect on the 2 job clusters in each of the Sweet Sixteen (outer 8) boxes.

Step #2 - Elite 8: Circle the career cluster that interests you.

Step #3 - Final 4: Compare the Elite 8 chosen career clusters and pick your 4 winning choice

Step #4 - Semi-Final Round: Pick your 2 top choices for the championship round

Step #5 - Championship Round: Decide your Career Cluster winner!!!

Step #6 - Identify 2 careers to within you career cluster and place those 2 careers in the top 2 boxes.

Step #7 - Research the 2 jobs of choice and

What are 2 job responsibilities of a person in your chosen career?

What school subject/s prepare you for that job?

What are the entry level job requirements to enter that job or career field?

Outcome Activities and Results:

- Submit your 2 job summaries as writing assignments,
- Create ppt about your chosen job to present to classmates or post as part of a virtual career fair
- Compile a digital classroom careers booklet or bulletin board.
- Quantify selection results: most popular career cluster, 10 most popular job choices, and assignment completion data.

Standards Alignment:

MA College/ Career Advising and MyCAP Framework: Career Development Education Strand (9-12)

MA Career Development Education (CDE) Benchmarks: Academic: A3, A4; WR: all, PS: #1

CASEL Social Emotional Learning Competencies: Self-Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making

ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success: Mindset #4

Behavior Standards: Learning Styles #1, #5, #7 Self-Management Skills: #3 Social Skills: #1



To download a pdf of the May Madness Career Readiness Bracket, go to https://masca.wildapricot.org/resources/Pictures/MAY_MADNESS_brackets.pdf

IMPLEMENTING MA MODEL FOR COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS: THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR

By Helen C. O'Donnell, Ed. D, MA Model Trainer, and MASCA MA Model Chair

The MA Model 3.0 for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs includes documentation about the role and competencies of the MA school counselors. One section in DEFINE (p.21) is titled *School Counselor Professional Standards and Competencies: Licensure and Evaluation*.

- School counselors practicing in MA schools are licensed by **MA DESE Provisional and Professional Licensure Standards** (603 CMR 7.11) and [Professional Standards for Teachers \(PST\)](#).
- “School Counselor evaluations are governed by the DESE’s **Massachusetts Educator Evaluation** system, which includes an optional *Specialized Instructional Support Personnel [SISP]* rubric, designed to identify the standards and indicators by which Massachusetts school counselors can be evaluated. MASCA worked in collaboration with DESE to create the [SISP rubric and Role Specific Indicators for School Counselors](#) (known as DESE SISP Rubric Appendix E) which **DEFINES** our role, guides how programs are organized and **MANAGED**, addresses how school counselors **DELIVER** direct and indirect services, and encourages program **ASSESSMENT**. Aligned with ASCA Model 4.0[®] and supported by DESE, school counselors are strongly encouraged to work with administrators and collective bargaining units to promote awareness and implementation of the DESE’s SISP Rubric and *Role Specific Indicators* Appendix E for school counselor evaluations. (See *MA Model 3.0 Appendix E*)
- [ASCA’s School Counselor Professional Standards and Competencies](#) defines what school counselors need to know, understand

and do to effectively perform their school counseling duties. They outline the knowledge, attitudes and skills that ensure school counselors are equipped to meet the rigorous demands of the profession.

- In MA Model 3.0 Appendix F, **ASCA’s Role of the School Counselor** *Who are School Counselors? The School Counselor’s Role*.

Change can be very slow and evolve over time. Be the change agent! Listed below are some strategies for your schools and districts to help our role recognition evolve from the 20th century term of *guidance counselor* up our recognition as *school counselors*.

1. Request administration to update references you your department and position.
2. Make sure signage in your building references school counseling office.
3. Update union contract language, job descriptions, website references, email signatures, voice mail message, letterhead materials, vision and mission statements, business cards, and all social media references to “school counselor”.
4. Remind school and counseling office staff answer phones with a greeting that states school counseling office. A written statement by the phone might remind busy staff about the update.
5. Introduce yourself as a **school counselor!**



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MASCA
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**The Mission of
MASCA**



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By providing leadership, collaboration, and professional development.
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