

# MASCA Counselor's Notebook

MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION

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February 2021

## Jessica Descartes named 2021 MA School Counselor of the Year!

Jessica Descartes, School Counselor at TechBoston Academy (TBA), was honored as the 2021 School Counselor of the Year by the Massachusetts School Counselor Association (MASCA) at a surprise school assembly on Tuesday, January 26. Descartes will now represent Massachusetts in Washington DC at the national school counselor of the year gala in February 2022 and will compete with other state winners from around the country for the 2022 American School Counselor Association's School Counselor of the Year award.

Jessica Descartes is a 6-12 counselor for students in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) and Students with Limited Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). Jessica also has a leading role among other counselors as co-content facilitator. A natural leader, Jessica is involved in a number of initiatives and organizations with the goal of helping students and families at TechBoston Academy. She is a committed member of the RISE UP Program in her TBA community, embracing their vision of "transforming the lives of young girls,



*Jessica Descartes (affectionately known as "Ms. D") center, with members of the BostonTech Academy School Counseling Team*

families, and communities for a more just and equitable world”.

Jessica truly embraces the school counselor profession in all its' aspects by acting as a leader in the school but also in her community by providing students with access to programs and information that can empower and transform their school experience and their lives; and by developing school counseling programs that are developmentally appropriate and standards based, such as rolling out career, academic and social-emotional development curriculum for the entire school.

During these unprecedented times, Jessica has demonstrated compassion and care beyond imaginable. She has contacted every family to assess their needs and provide information and access to resources. She has made sure that every child in her caseload has access to a computer and internet services, including contacting internet providers. Working with parents with limited English, Ms. Descartes has person-

ally connected parents with food, housing, academic support and other services and resources.

Ms. Descartes embraces the school counselor profession with her heart. She is truly committed to social justice, equity and service. Jessica believes that to change the world one child at the time, she needs to give the best of herself. Today, we recognize Jessica Descartes' actions and professionalism which have earned her the admiration of students, parents, faculty, colleagues and the community. A leader and a true role model, whose compassionate character and true devotion for her students, rightfully earned her this year's title of MASCA School Counselor of the Year. MASCA Executive Director Robert Bardwell said, "MASCA is proud to honor such a dedicated and passionate school counselor as the 2021 School Counselor of the Year. Jessica is truly an inspiration to all of us."

*Congratulations Jessica!*

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*Find out how you can become a  
MASCA leader. Go to:  
[https://masca.wildapricot.org/  
How-to-Get-Involved](https://masca.wildapricot.org/How-to-Get-Involved)*

# Celebrating and Supporting School Counselors

*By Bob Bardwell, MASCA Executive Director*

Happy February, the month of the year when we formally celebrate school counselors! There are so many wonderful, exciting, awesome, interesting, informative, and wonderful events happening. I will share a few with you here.

Let us start with the very exciting news that MASCA announced on January 26 at TechBoston Academy. Continuing our recent tradition of surprising the annual school counselor of the year at his/her school as part of a school assembly, I was able to award Jessica Descartes the 2021 School Counselor of the Year. I wish to thank Head of School Nora Vernazza and the many other folks who helped to organize or contribute to this success of this event in some way. You can read about Jessica elsewhere in the newsletter but suffice to say she is most deserving. I am particularly impressed with her energy and dedication, especially in her urban school environment. Congratulations to Jessica and I look forward to learning more from you in the months and years to come.

February also means it is time for the annual celebration of the school counseling profession during National School Counseling Week (NSCW) – February 1-5. Under the direction of newly formed Publicity Committee and Chair Gloria Rubilar, and the Professional Development Committee and Chair Dina Sibilia, MASCA has several events, resources, and initiatives to celebrate NSCW. We will have events each day of the week, Monday, February 1-Thursday, February 4 including inspirational speakers, fun activities, Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings and a virtual awards celebration. Check out the list of activities for the week here. Our website again contains several celebratory and useful resources for school counselors (and others). Members will receive numerous emails leading up to and during the week that contain valuable and creative information for all school counselors to use as part of their celebrations. We will also offer a special membership discount for new and cur-



**Robert Bardwell**  
Executive Director, MASCA

rent members who join/renew as an entire department, only good during February 1-5. Look for raffle prizes, special gifts, the launching of a MASCA online swag store and more!

I am also pleased to announce that Lisa Harney has recently been appointed as the new DESE Liaison to MASCA, replacing Lisa Weinstein. Lisa is no stranger to MASCA having been working closely with us on several DESE projects such as the MyCAP and dropout prevention efforts. Expect to see Lisa at our upcoming PD events, sharing important and relevant DESE updates in the monthly Counselors Notebook and facilitating important behind the scenes discussions with her DESE colleagues. You can contact Lisa via email here.

I continue to meet regularly with school adjustment counselors and social workers and, and representatives from the Massachusetts School Nurses Organization (MSNO), Massachusetts School Psychologists Association (MSPA) and Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium (MASMHC). Called the Massachusetts Student Support Personnel Coalition, these four organizations represent the majority of student support service educators. Working to-

gether we will be stronger and better positioned to exert pressure on policy makers to support our positions and policies that impact student success and achievement. This coalition is still in the infancy stages, but we are making progress. In addition to collaborating on professional development and advocacy initiatives, the group has created a flyer which will help explain the differences between these school service providers. Look for more information about this work in the coming months.

I also want to report that MASCA continues its work on issues related to diversity, equity, and anti-racism. As you know we created an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access Committee last spring and under the direction of Manjula Karamcheti and Tyeshia Weir, the Committee has been meeting monthly to formulate plans to help MASCA move forward with these topics. The Board already has begun its first training in January with other sessions to be scheduled. Members will be able to participate in a MASCA pre-conference session - School Counselors and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice: Learning and Leading Together – on Monday, April 5 as part of the MASCA conference. Registration information can be found here. Finally, we are working on an Equity and Inclusion Institute spread out during June, July, and August 2021. All very exciting and greatly needed.

Finally, you are so fortunate to have such dedicated and passionate leaders moving us forward. The behind-the-scenes efforts that members of the Governing Board are making to improve the school counseling profession in Massachusetts is simply staggering. I continue to be amazed at the level of commitment and willingness to get involved. MASCA's future is bright for sure.

Happy National School Counseling Week! I hope you like what MASCA is doing and take advantage of these many amazing opportunities and resources.



# Celebrate National School Counseling Week!

National School Counselor Week is always celebrated the first full week of February each year, to focus public attention on the unique contribution of school counselors within U.S. school systems. National School Counseling Week, sponsored by ASCA, highlights the tremendous impact school counselors can have in helping students achieve school success and plan for a career.

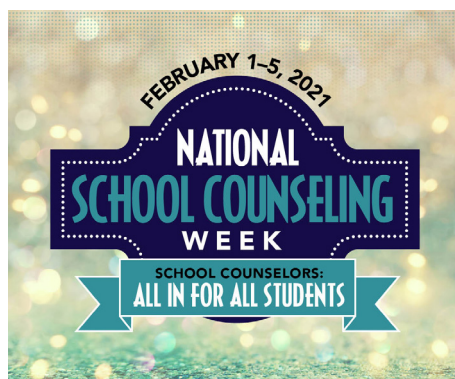
We use this time to focus public attention on the unique contribution of school counselors in our schools. National School Counseling Week highlights the impact that school counselors have in fostering academic and career development for every student and the impact that counseling programs have in a student's personal and social-emotional development.

To celebrate this week, MASCA and [ASCA](#) have developed many materials, documents, activities and events. Click on the links and check them all!

## MASCA 2021 NSCW EVENTS

Check out our [AGENDA](#) for the informative, engaging, and fun daily events that MASCA has prepared to celebrate the 2021 NSCW. We encourage you to register as soon as possible to secure your spot and to get the opportunity to participate in our daily raffles. [Fill out this form](#) to help us give you the recognition you deserve as one of our counseling champions. Don't miss the great activities we have prepared for you!

To help promote this celebration, MASCA is providing its members with various materials and suggestions for activities that can be implemented during this week.



## SAMPLE EDITORIAL- READY TO SEND TO YOUR LOCAL PAPER

One of the most effective ways of impacting the community beyond your school building and district is to share information in the local newspaper(s) describing exactly what school counselors do and the impact that they have on student achievement every day.

[Download this editorial template](#) that includes a brief summary of the history of our profession. All you need to do is edit the highlighted sections and add your name and contact information. Send it off to your local paper to be published during the week of February 1. It is our time to shine!

## PRESS RELEASE AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Make sure to help coordinate efforts between your school counseling director/coordinator and the district superintendent to ensure the recognition of school counselors in your district and to inform students, parents, faculty and the community about the various events and activities your school has organized to celebrate NSCW. [This press release](#) is ready to use, make sure to replace

the highlighted sections with your own information. [Here is a list of suggested activities](#) which includes public relations, professional and creative/fun activities.

## SAMPLE NEWSLETTERS AND NEWSLETTER MATERIALS

Want to share valuable news and information with your school community but don't have time to put together the materials? [Here we offer you a list of materials](#) that can help you address topics of interest in your newsletters. We have also included [examples of electronic newsletters](#) and information about [webletter building applications](#).

## SAMPLE MORNING/DAILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Check this [suggested list of morning/daily announcements](#). They have been selected to help you educate your students, staff and school community about the role and professional tasks of school counselors and the impact we have on student success and achievement. Choose from the many sample announcement blurbs and use them throughout the week.

## GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS/ OVERCOMING THE REMOTE CHALLENGE

We are aware that the traditional way we have celebrated NSCW until this year represents various challenges. However, we encourage you to think outside the box and be creative. [Click Here for creative ways](#) in which you can celebrate NSCW with your students, parents, faculty, colleagues, and the community. Explore them all and get your message across!

## February 2021 Awareness Dates

African American  
History Month

Career and Technical  
Education Month

Gap Year Awareness  
Month

International Boost  
Self-Esteem Month

National Children's  
Dental Health  
Month

Teen Dating Violence  
Awareness and  
Prevention Month

1-5 National School  
Counseling Week

1 National Freedom Day

2 National Groundhog  
Job Shadow Day

14-20 Random Acts of  
Kindness Week

22-28 National Eating  
Disorders Awareness  
Week

22 World Thinking Day

## PATHWAYS TO THE FUTURE FOSTERING CHANGE AND INCLUSION



APRIL 5-6, 2021



SPRING CONFERENCE



### Key Benefits and Highlights of our Virtual Conference:

- No schedule conflicts! You can see any session - watch live or view a recorded session when it is convenient for you! *(Recorded sessions will be available from approximately one week after the conference through May 31, 2021.)*
- A great value! Affordable and no travel or hotel expenses!
- Join a Virtual Awards Ceremony & Update from Jeffrey C. Riley, MA Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Don't miss this opportunity for counselor-centered professional development!

Go to [MASCA.org](https://www.masca.org) for registration details.

Questions? Contact [Ruth Carrigan](mailto:Ruth.Carrigan@curry.edu), Conference Chair.



# CURRY COLLEGE

## QUICK FACTS:

- A private, four-year, co-educational liberal arts college founded in 1879
- Serving about 2,000 traditional undergraduate students
- 85% of first-year students reside on campus
- 131-acre New England campus located just minutes from downtown Boston
- Over 97% of recent graduates employed, in graduate school, or in service
- 30 majors and 60+ minors/concentrations leading to bachelor's and master's degrees
- Student/faculty ratio is 12:1, with an average class size of 20 students
- Approximately 99% of first-time students receive some form of financial aid
- Offering a wide array of extracurricular activities, including 15 NCAA Division III athletic teams

**(800) 669-0686 or (617) 333-2210**

1071 Blue Hill Ave., Milton, MA 02186 | [curry.edu](https://curry.edu) | [adm@curry.edu](mailto:adm@curry.edu)



# SEEKING SELF-NOMINATIONS FOR MASCA GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS

## ARE YOU INTERESTED IN...?



- Having a vote on the MASCA Governing Board
- Serving as a voice for school counselors
- Becoming a leader for our professional association
- Collaborating with other school counseling advocates nationwide

## SUBMISSION INFO

Interested candidates should submit the following to Megan Krell at [mkrell@fitchburgstate.edu](mailto:mkrell@fitchburgstate.edu) by **Friday, February 19th at 11:59pm:**

- Resume
- Names and Email Addresses of 10 MASCA Members who support your nomination

## ELECTIONS

Electronic voting will open on March 22, 2021 and end Tuesday, April 6th at 12:00pm.

## SERVICE TERM

Elected board members will serve a three-year term beginning on July 1, 2021.

Did you know MASCA offers Professional Development online?

GO TO:

<https://masca.wildapricot.org/Electronic-PD>

# Change the World.

## Become a RAKtivist!

### Be a RAKtivist!

random acts of kindness

write a thank-you note (not an email or text) **babysit for free** study with a classmate who needs extra help  
 PICK UP TRASH-DOESN'T MATTER WHO LEFT IT THERE take the middle seat (in the car or on a flight) **encourage someone with a smile, a kind word, or some extra help** thank your police or fire department **be kind online-don't say anything hurtful or untrue** PAY SOMEONE'S TOLL OR FAST-FOOD ORDER BEHIND YOU leave a used book on public transportation  
 call a new mom and offer to pick something up at the store **read to the elderly or just spend some time talking together** work harder in school and respect your teacher  
 talk with a homeless person and offer to buy them some food **surprise your neighbor by shoveling their walk** **forgive someone** ask someone from another country about their traditions **cheer on a teammate even if you are on the bench** invite a student who is sitting alone to eat lunch with you and your friends **introduce yourself to someone new** let someone go in front of you **TIP BIG** hold the door for a mother with a stroller **arrive on time to wherever you're supposed to be** ask before you borrow; return it promptly **leave an anonymous note or flowers for someone** OFFER A DRINK TO THE HANDYMAN **focus on really listening to others**

[www.lets-get-together.com](http://www.lets-get-together.com)

rand  m  
act of kindness

# The Importance of Being Kind

by Maria Maloney, School Counselor, Granite Valley Middle School and MASCA Emerging Leader

Through many twists and turns of fate, I have found myself an elementary school counselor. While this is not what I had planned, I truly love my job and feel blessed to go to work each day and see the students' faces.

Prior to this I was a school social worker at the high school in my district, and I felt the same way. So, whether you are elementary, middle or high school level, I hope that this article speaks to you about a universal need for all of us: kindness.

Random Acts of Kindness Week is celebrated February 14th-20th. One would hope that more than one week per year we reflect on the importance of this, but this week calls upon us to focus on kindness and how we might share it with one another.

As counselors, we are often one of the faces our students seek out when they need kindness. Students may come to us to discuss peer difficulties, angst over college applications, troubles at home, or the death of a loved one. How we respond to our students often sets the tone for how they will reach out for help in the future.

As School Counselors, we advocate, support, comfort and assist. In doing this we show them that they matter, and that they are important and deserving. For some students, we are one of many adults in their lives that they can turn to when in need. For other students, we are the only friendly face they know. How very important that we treat children with "universal" kindness, as we never know what obstacles and challenges they may be facing. As the numbers of students we see encountering trauma increase, it is important to focus on how we can increase their resilience. Our very presence in their lives can help to counteract trauma they are enduring.

"Indeed, six decades of research indicate that a child's resilience mostly depends on their connections to other people, rather than their own inherent

qualities." Masten, A. Barnes A. Resilience in Children: Developmental Perspectives July 2018.

There are so many students, and so little time. How can we make meaningful connections as our caseloads grow and demands increase?

One way that has helped me to have consistent connections with students is through whole class lessons. Some counselors love whole class lessons, others do not like them at all. When I first began doing them, it was out of necessity but now I feel that they are a crucial part of my services to students.

Depending on the grade level, you might teach about a myriad of topics. As an elementary counselor I focus largely on SEL, but also incorporate ways to help the brain learn, study skills and career lessons, even for grade 1. The topics are important, and the children will learn a great deal about these skills that they need to know. But more importantly, this whole class lesson will put you in close proximity to your students regularly and allow you to develop and strengthen relationships with them.

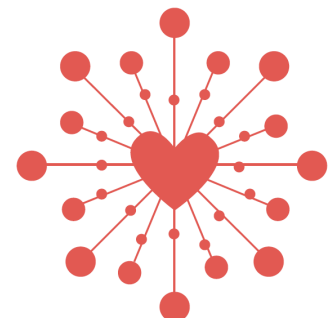
Whole class lessons may not be feasible in your schools. Your principal may not want you to use your time in this way or teachers who feel burdened by delivering content may not want you to take away any of the time on learning. I would encourage you to partner with other teachers where you might have a natural link, for example, teaching mindfulness in Health or Phys. Ed, teaching career lessons or resume building in an English or Business class. Social Studies or Library Science might be another place to partner.

If whole class lessons remain out of reach after you have exhausted creative avenues, there are other ways to make connections to your students outside of office meetings. For example, cafeteria time. While counselors

should not be supervising students as a lunch duty and giving out discipline, being in the lunchroom is a great way to connect with students. Checking in on them to see how their day is going, seeing who eats alone, observing their peer connections are all great ways to deepen knowledge of your students and allow them to connect with you. Greetings and good-byes are another way to enhance your student relationships. Stand by the door in the mornings and afternoons and wish everyone a good morning or good afternoon. This is a great time to remind students about homework, or help them start their day on a positive note. It also models for staff and other students how to positively interact with others and can improve the tone of a school when relationships become more of a focus.

While remote learning presents many challenges in terms of making connections with students, consider pushing into classrooms and chatting in a break-out room, offering to host a Zoom lunch group, or even doing a home visit with a colleague to a student's driveway (if allowed by your district). For those of you looking for additional resources you can find more resources [here](#).

Whether you can do whole class lessons once a week or once a quarter, or want to integrate kindness into your lunchroom or somewhere else, I encourage you to seek spaces to deepen relationships with your students and fellow colleagues. Random Acts of Kindness offers a free curriculum for students k-12 including mini lessons for virtual learning.



# Supporting Students' College Search in a Virtual World

by Julia Stone, MASCA Graduate Student Liaison

In the past, the college search process was met with excitement and anticipation for the next chapter of life by many high school students. Unfortunately for these same students, milestones and celebrations they've only heard about like prom, graduation, and even college tours or road trips have been put on hold or cancelled altogether. What is important to remember is that while the world looks very different right now and many schools have adapted temporary alternative methods of instruction, the college admissions experience is still available. As a graduate fellow in my college's admissions office, I'm here to share all of that knowledge with you so as to assuage any stress or anxiety that may be circulating at this point. I spoke to three different college admissions offices around Massachusetts to bring some information to light about the college admissions process of the present.

In speaking with the different admissions offices, my first question was, "What is something we as school counselors should know about the college admissions world as it is now?"

Admissions counselors and other staff members are actively seeking out new ways to engage prospective students. After all, colleges had to adapt to this new world just like we did! Whether they are on campus or not, counselors are hosting information sessions, office hours, 1-on-1 meetings, and even virtual workshops. No student should feel alone in the application process as they have knowledgeable individuals eager to help them. School counselors can not only encourage their students to reach out to admissions offices to answer any of their questions, but they can also ask admissions counselors their own questions about the college admissions process.

Additionally, colleges and universities also have support in place for students when they arrive on campus (physically or virtually). There are not only academic services, but also mental health services and community forums. With everything that has been going on in



*Julia is completing her Masters of Education in School Counseling at Springfield College, where she holds a fellowship in the Undergraduate Admissions Office. She will graduate in May and will pursue a School Counseling/Adjustment Counseling position.*

the world, it is important to identify the supports on your college campus. Most schools have all of this contact information on their websites, but if students are looking for support, they can always count on their admissions counselor to connect them with the right place. Many schools even offer assistance in filling out the FAFSA or scholarship applications!

Above all, we are here to communicate with and support each other. These are unprecedented times, and the health and safety of our communities remain the focus. Colleges and universities are continuing their work with counselors to ensure they are best serving their students and answering any questions that arise. Many schools assign admissions counselors to students based on geographical location. For example, where school counselors typically have cohorts based on grade level or last name, admissions counselors are assigned particular high schools or regions. If this information is not easily accessible on the website, a simple call or email to the admissions office can connect you with the counselor assigned to their application. This can oftentimes be the student's point person through the entire admissions process!

My next question for the admissions offices was, "What advice do you have for a student who is applying to college

amid the pandemic?"

One response that I heard time and time again is that admissions offices are here to help! They know that your college-search process will likely look nothing like your older sibling's or friend's, but that doesn't mean that it can't still be fun! Colleges have enhanced their websites and virtual experiences to give students the best "feel" of campus without physically being there. There are virtual tours, live and recorded information sessions, virtual Open Houses, current student panels, and more! If there is a particular aspect about a campus you may be interested in learning more about, see if the school has any events you can register for! Not only is this extremely useful in making the best decision, but colleges also love to see demonstrated interest.

Another key piece of advice for prospective students is to maintain contact with the schools they are interested in. They can request more info on a school's website, and they will email/call/text the student with any opportunities for them to partake in. One of the perks of having access to technology in this time and day is that students can now "visit" schools that were once too far away for them to check out. Social media is also a great way to check in on what the school has going on and it often showcases many different current students. Colleges and universities want students and their families to have the most information possible to make the best decision, and social media is yet another tool to enhance that.

Additionally, colleges and universities want students to know that while this entire process can feel overwhelming at a time when our country is fighting a pandemic, you are supported. We admire the strength and resilience of the youth who have given up their "normal" routines in order to keep each other safe. We are in unprecedented times. Cancelled SATS or other standardized testing should not add more stress to a student's plate and many schools are waiving this require-

*(Continued next page)*



# Increasing FAFSA Completion



For last year's seniors, enrollment in higher education dropped by 10 percent this past fall compared to the previous year, and by 20 percent among economically disadvantaged students. COVID is clearly exacerbating already persistent college going gaps, particularly for low income, African American and Latino students.

For this year's seniors, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion has dropped compared to this time last year by over 9 percent statewide, with larger drops in populations with historically low college going rates. FAFSA completion is a strong indicator of college-going, and this drop may be an early indication of further drops in college enrollment in September 2021.

Overcoming the financial barrier to higher education is critical. To help mitigate this potential crisis in college going, DESE, in partnership with Mass. Dept. of Higher Education, Mass. School Counselors Assn. (MASCA), Reach Higher, and GEARUP are sponsoring two FAFSA completion webinars to help illustrate the FAFSA completion situation, demonstrate FAFSA reports on Edwin Analytics, and hear from a few practitioners to explain how they are "getting it done" despite the pandemic.

While these sessions are particularly aimed at high school counselors and district and high school administrators, all are welcome. After registering at one of the links at right, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about how to participate in the meeting.

**This webinar will be offered twice. Please register in advance for whichever session you would like to attend (via Zoom):**

**Feb 9, 2021 03:00 PM**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZMpfuihq-j8sHtT-uN7Lv4wnx0eTHeq\\_QQg](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZMpfuihq-j8sHtT-uN7Lv4wnx0eTHeq_QQg)

**Feb 10, 2021 10:00 AM**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZYocemtpzkv-G9AIKQGYzpRsRalQQSayt8zE>

## Supporting Students'

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ment or extending deadlines to combat this stress. If you are concerned about exam cancellations, contact your admissions counselor and let them know. Chances are you are not the only student facing this dilemma, and admissions counselors can advise you on what to do when this situation arises.

To sum up what my conversations brought me, across the board the answer remains the same: reach out! Admissions offices are open and eager to talk with you about your future. They know this is a difficult process and one that seems very confusing at first. They are here to help you make the most informed decision possible about your future!

### Key Ways to Support Students' College Search:

- 1. Reach out!** Whether you're a student who is looking for more information or a school counselor hoping to connect with an admissions office, someone is on the other side of the phone/computer waiting to assist you! You are not alone in this process.
- 2. Ask questions!** This year has certainly changed a number of procedures and requirements (i.e. SAT, MCAS, etc.) and admissions staff know this is confusing. Check back often to hear the latest updates from colleges and universities.
- 3. Take advantage of as many virtual events as you can!** Not only is it helpful for the students, but admissions staff love to see demonstrated interest. Join any info sessions, zoom events, or virtual tours you are interested in.
- 4. Don't sweat the small stuff.** Staying safe for you and your loved ones comes before all else. Overall we want students to enjoy this college search process and be excited by the limitless possibilities that lie ahead.

## 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](mailto:helenod@att.net)

### Using Cooperative Learning Strategies to Encourage Student Reconnection and Reengagement

Like many members of our workforce, the pandemic has forced students in our schools to work in social isolation at home. Often this has allowed students the freedom to choose to engage or not engage and determine their levels of engagement without the structure and direction of school personnel. Educators are now faced with the challenge of reconnecting students to a structured virtual, hybrid, or face-to-face learning environment. How do we motivate reengagement? How do we move students from social isolation and independent decision-making to accepting personal responsibility for engaging in their education?

Many students miss their friends and the socialness of school so we must consider applying the developmental milestone of socializing with peers. Research clearly confirms students' need for and the power of peer relationships. Since the work environment often require working with colleagues and company employees, you can model that experience in your classroom implementing activities requiring cooperative learning strategies.

Plan educational instruction that mandates peer partnerships requiring each person to take responsibility for completing their ~~completed~~ assigned tasks before the whole project is successfully completed. Class decision-making about a specific project and its design can be motivating and empowering. Peer engagement, peer collaboration, peer responsibility, peer pressure, and peer praise are the powerful educational strategies of cooperative learning. Use these strategies to encourage reengagement and keep students actively involved.

An idea that can creatively and collectively engage students in post high school planning by focusing on their individual interests, utilizing the

power of peers to outreach and engage their classmates, and providing an authentic career development education experience are all key.

DESE is developing K-12 College Career Advising (CCA) and MyCAP Benchmarks for grades 9-12 are currently included in the MA Model 3.0 appendix. To assist, DESE has statewide free trainings that ~~assist~~ aid schools with planning and developing a CCA culture with the goal of having all students develop and managed personal MyCAP portfolio's and My Career Academic Plans.

Since every student needs to focus on the universal goal: "After high school, what?", this article suggests school counseling departments develop projects that promote career awareness, career exploration, and career immersion experiences to assist students to in planning their career pathways. Outcome goals for each project should include:

- developing students' understanding of the skills that are required for specific careers
- encourage students' understanding of the educational requirements for specific careers
- promote the connection between current academic performance and future career options
- identify career clusters and specific careers they may be interested in pursuing in the future

Suggest or have the class brainstorm a project related to the career clusters that requires full group participation (grade, homeroom, advisory, class). The project must be inclusive of every career cluster and include every student's job/s of interest. Suggest some projects, but ultimately have students

select and define their project. Sampling of ideas:

**Build an electronic school career library** populated with student research and written job descriptions representing every career cluster. Every student is required research and write two job descriptions. Format should be defined by the group, but content should include career cluster, specific job, entry level job requirement and beginning salary range, academic subjects that prepare you for that job, Labor Market Information about job opportunities, salary range, etc.

- **Design a classroom career newspaper** of Career Cluster News with an edition produced for each career cluster or write/ edit a newspaper that has a page for each cluster. Students with identified interest in that career cluster design their page or edition. It can include job cameos, job opportunities, employment "Help Wanted" ads AND employment ads for class members looking for jobs.
- **Me and My Future Booklet:** (elementary) Every student selects a possible future career. Visualize yourself working in that career and draw a picture of you at work. List the school subjects needed to prepare for that job. Class consensus on the cover page. One idea is that every class member contributes something to the cover.

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## Cooperative Learning Strategies *(continued from previous page)*

- **Design a virtual class collage with a sketch of you working at that job:** (elementary) Identify academic subjects that will prepare you for that job.
- **Career Cluster Calendar:** Create a career calendar that focuses on a different career cluster each month. All students who have identified a cluster as their area of interest, collaborates on the design and information on their calendar page
- **Develop a virtual career cluster library of interviews:** Each student needs to interview an employed person in the career cluster they are interested in exploring. Group discussion identifies some uniform in-

terview questions including details about job responsibilities, academic preparation for entry level positions, Labor Market Information (LMI) and job opportunities, etc. During the interviews, students will apply active listening skills. Consider community partnerships for interviews: Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club, Woman's Club, Rotary, local businesses, etc.

- **Informative virtual presentations about career clusters that can be part of a student developed department career Library** - ALL group members brainstorm and choose a presentation platform (newspaper, ppt, Prezi, website, etc.)

and agreed required group expectations about their cluster:

Consider grouping students by their identified high interest career clusters. Encourage cooperative learning strategies for decision-making and coming to consensus with a written statement about the proposed initiative signed by each group member. Group discussion topics include project format, contents, design, development timeline, individual assignments, project monitoring, and completion date. Every student on their team must identify how they want to actively participate in the project. If necessary, peers reach out to project partners to engage, motivate, and assist them for project completion.

**Weaving social engagement, reflective thinking, and teamwork into career development school work via Collaborative Projects can promote academic reengagement, teamwork, and social connections.**

*MA Model committee presents:*

### **ACTION RESEARCH and THE ACCOUNTABLE COUNSELOR**

**March 24, 2021 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm**

#### **Agenda:**

- Review of MA Model 3.0: Define, Assess, Manage, Deliver
- MA Model Implementation in Action: Practitioners Presenting Implementation Initiatives.
- Data: The Short Version
- Drafting your MARC/MARC Jr. document
- Announcing MASCA's MARC/MARC Jr. Recognition Award Recipients

#### **Outcome goals for participants:**

##### **Guided activities include:**

- an overview of Define, Assess, Manage and Deliver components of the MA Model 3.0 by the MA Model writing committee;
- strategies for Identifying and compiling program outcome data;
- reviewing MARC and MARC Jr. documents.

#### **Outcomes: As a result of participating in this work, participants will:**

- deepen their understanding of MA Model Implementation
- develop awareness of MARC/MARC Jr. document development.
- learn action researcher competencies.
- begin to draft a MARC or MARC Jr. to document your program's impact.

**[REGISTER HERE](#)**

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NOTE: Non-Members must join MASCA to attend  
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Registration and inquiries: [helenod@att.net](mailto:helenod@att.net)

# IMPLEMENTING MA MODEL FOR COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS:

by Helen C. O'Donnell, Ed. D, MA Model Trainer, MASCA MA Model Chair and MA Model 3.0 Co-Chair ,  
Cynthia Eselionis, M.Ed., MA Model 3.0 Co-Chair, School Counseling Coordinator, Ayer Shirley RSD

*This Counselor's Notebook (CN) series began in Sept 2017 to inform colleagues about steps and strategies for implementing the MA Model 2.0 and ASCA Model 3.0. With the spring 2020 endorsement of MA Model 3.0 and June 2019 release of ASCA Model 4.0©, previous MA Model resources are being updated. A library of updated CN articles organized by theme will be posted on the MA Model section of the MASCA website soon. .*

## Collaborative Partnerships and Teamwork

*Submitted by: Brenda Richardson, M.Ed., MA Model 3.0 Writing Team  
Director of Admissions & Counseling, Greater Lawrence Technical School*

I think that most would agree that as School Counselors the meaning and practice of “collaboration” comes quite naturally, since we understand the value of relating to others for a variety of reasons - whether it be for support, professional consultation, the sharing of resources, or for simple connection. However, the extent of collaboration I have witnessed and been a part of since the pandemic began almost a year ago has taken the meaning and practice of collaboration to a whole new level.

I have had the opportunity to network and collaborate with other guidance directors, admissions directors, school counselors, teachers and administrators on a variety of topics - from how to engage students during remote learning to meet their educational, physical and social-emotional needs or sharing best practices for developing school reopening plans. Organizations like MASCA and MAVA (Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators) in particular have been extremely proactive in making connections between and among schools and their stakeholders, increasing access to platforms for communication and well-structured collaboration that result in the acquisition of strategies and resources that have a direct and immediate impact on students and families.

I also feel compelled to highlight the incredible amount of professional collaboration that has taken place, and continues to take place, in the City of Lawrence, Greater Lawrence Technical School's largest sending district, which is among the most heavily impacted by COVID in the state. Since last spring when the pandemic began and the brick-and-mortar school buildings closed their doors, the non-profit organizations and local officials swiftly organized and set up virtual meetings as a vehicle for facilitating communication and ensuring that all residents and community members had their needs met - from food, housing and healthcare to access to technology and other resources such as a working computer and reliable internet access. Access to these resources quickly became an absolute necessity and a clear equity issue, with the potential for widening opportunity and achievement gaps that would impact

many of our students and families. Members of the GLTS staff, including school counselors, school adjustment counselors, administrators and parent liaisons, continue to attend multiple working group meetings to share and receive information, which ultimately helps the entire community to meet the needs of our students. While I think it is safe to say that we all share a feeling of pandemic fatigue, it is helpful to take a step back to acknowledge and appreciate all of the positive things that have resulted from this impossible situation we have collectively experienced.

Shifting gears from the pandemic to that of the MA Model implementation, I am pleased to share the collaborative efforts of my very own GLTS counseling team in their work to build a comprehensive counseling program that aligns ASCA National Model 4.0© and MA Model 3.0. I had the opportunity to work with Dr. Helen O'Donnell several years ago when I participated in the MA Model Introductory Institute and Counselors in K-12 Classrooms offered through Fitchburg State University. I gained an understanding of the value of the MA Model in guiding development of a comprehensive school counseling program to positively impact student outcomes, and in advocating for our program and resources when data-driven decision making is utilized.

This past summer five members of the GLTS School Counseling Department (four school counselors and one school adjustment counselor) registered for Counselors in K-12 Classrooms. In addition to introducing the team to the major components of the new DESE and MASCA endorsed MA Model 3.0 (Define, Assess, Manage, Deliver), the counselors have been able to continue their work of developing standards-based lesson plans that are vertically aligned and span all three MA CDE domains (Academic/Workplace Readiness/Social Emotional Learning). This curriculum work, while challenging due to the novel demands of providing guidance and counseling services to all students while fully remote, was actually well timed, since the department and school was transitioning to a new platform (MEFA Pathway) for our college and career planning and

CCA/ MyCAP implementation. In addition, the team was able to modify lessons as needed for delivery in a virtual environment. Screen-castify was used to record segments of the lesson which could be delivered in a more uniform way and shared with students who either missed the delivery of the lesson or benefitted from reinforcement or repetition of the material. The team was also able to collaborate and share lesson plans and/or resources with teachers and administrators who were meeting with their assigned students during advisory. While advisory is new to GLTS this year and was implemented as a strategy to support students and address social emotional learning competencies during remote learning, it has been very well received by the majority of the faculty and staff; we are hopeful that advisory will continue to develop in the future and serve as a Tier 1 SEL strategy as well as a delivery method for Tier 1 school counseling curriculum.

Guided by MA Model 3.0, the department has developed a curriculum map for each grade level, 9-12, addressing each of the three MA Career Development Education (CDE) Benchmark domains and identifying, or in some cases recommending, a collaborative delivery method for each of the lesson plans. Again, due to the disruption caused by pandemic related issues, the timeline for the development and implementation of the school counseling curriculum had to be extended, however it continues to move forward with the full support of the administration, which is key. Our next steps include meeting with our lead CVTE (Career/ Vocational Technical Education) teachers, the subject matter experts, to review our curriculum maps and identify content delivery partnership opportunities for future collaboration and interdisciplinary instruction. Goals include identifying gaps in VTE (Vocational Technical Education) frameworks and strands to further develop lesson plans related to the individual CVTE areas and strengthening GLT's College Career Advising (CCA) and electronic portfolios (MyCAP) initiatives.. Our work of creating a comprehensive school counseling program will continue to evolve through the collaborative efforts of our school counseling department and the school community.



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*Two \$600 awards are available for partial or full payment of identified PD opportunity.*

*REGISTRATION FEE ONLY.*

*In addition, four \$100 awards available for action research on your practice as evidenced by submitting a MA Accountability Report Card (MARC or MARC Jr.)*

## LOUISE B. FORSYTH AWARD

*This award covers the cost of MASCA conference registration for MASCA members.*



# MASCA

Massachusetts School Counselors Association

*The mission of MASCA is to promote excellence in the school counseling profession by advocating for, connecting, supporting, and empowering school counselors in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through leadership, collaboration, and professional development.*

*Visit us on the web at [www.MASCA.org](http://www.MASCA.org)*