

# MASCA Counselor's Notebook

MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION

Vol. 60, No. 5

JANUARY 2024

## We Rise by Lifting Each Other

*By Melinda Cripps, MASCA 2023-2024 Board Chair and Director of School Counseling, Billerica High School*

The theme for the upcoming [MASCA Conference](#) on April 8th and 9th, 2024 - "We Rise By Lifting Each Other" - powerfully captures the spirit of unity, collaboration, and support needed to empower students, educators, and counselors alike to reach their full potential.

As school counselors, we have a unique opportunity and responsibility to lift up those around us. We can start by truly listening to our students, validating their challenges, and guiding them to recognize their inner strengths. Through empathy, compassion, and encouragement, we can inspire students to believe in themselves and feel supported as they navigate life's obstacles. Take time to ask questions, be present and attentive, and offer advice tailored to each individual's needs. Help students gain perspective, cope with stress, and believe in their self-worth. Advocate for their goals and aspirations. Include students in conversations, especially those where their voices



*Melinda Cripps*

need to be heard and can make an impact. By lifting them up during formative years, we can instill confidence and resilience in our students that will serve them for a lifetime.

Beyond the students, we must also lift up our fellow educators. All folks in today's education have an immensely challenging job. Educators face mounting pressure and often receive little validation. Many struggle with burnout and fatigue, and for some, this may lead to wavering motivation. By offering an empathetic ear, words of affirmation, and practical support, we can renew our colleagues' passion and help shoulder their heavy load. Simple acts like checking in, sharing resources, appreciating their efforts, and expressing gratitude can make a world of difference. Collaboration allows us to draw on one another's strengths and compensate for weak-

nesses. It forges mutual understanding and creates a positive school culture. As counselors, we can promote this cooperative spirit and lead by example.

And at the organizational level, we can lift up MASCA itself to amplify the voice of school counselors statewide. By actively participating in the association, promoting its good work, and contributing our perspectives, we make the organization stronger and more impactful. Getting involved in committees, taking on leadership roles, and encouraging others to join allows us to shape MASCA's direction and harness its collective power. We can showcase the life-changing value of school counseling and secure greater resources and recognition for the profession. The more we put in, the more our unified efforts will accomplish.

The elevator only rises when we all lift together. By choosing to see each other's humanity, recognize each other's burdens, and lend each other a helping hand, we can uplift the spirits, minds, and lives of students, colleagues, and the counseling profession. [The MASCA Conference](#) presents the perfect opportunity to reaffirm this cooperative uplifting spirit and learn tangible ways to put it into practice in our schools. When we rise by lifting each other, there is no limit to what we can achieve. Together, we have the power to make an immense positive difference in our schools and communities.

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# MASCA 2023-24 DIRECTORY

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## **Technology Committee**

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College & Career Information Coordinator  
New Bedford Public Schools

## **Ad Hoc Committee on School Counselor Gaps**

Dana Catarius  
School Counselor  
Anne Fales Elementary, Westborough  
Jennifer McGuire  
College & Career Information Coordinator  
New Bedford Public Schools

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Executive Director of School Counseling Services  
Boston Public Schools

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School Counselor  
Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School

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Jean Atwater-Williams  
IT Consultant  
BizTech Associates

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Executive Director of School Counseling Services  
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Ashland High School  
Dana Catarius  
School Counselor  
Anne Fales Elementary, Westborough

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Graduate Student  
Merrimack College  
Alexis King  
Graduate Student  
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School Counselor  
The Academy at Kiley Middle School

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School Counselor  
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Paige Kenney  
School Counselor  
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Gisele Rojas  
Director of Student Support Services  
Holyoke Public Schools

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG) LEADERS

### **Career/Technical SIG**

Anie McCarthy  
School Counselor  
Franklin County Technical School

Maryrose O'Neil  
School Counselor  
Tantsqua Regional High School

Lauren Robillard  
School Counselor  
Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School

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Dana Plunkett  
Director of Guidance  
Wellesley High School  
Ross Wolfson  
Assistant Director of School Counseling  
Waltham High School

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School Counselor  
Granite Valley School, Monson  
Maura Ricardi  
School Adjustment Counselor  
East Street School, Ludlow

Emma Russell  
School Counselor  
The Learning Project Elementary

School, Boston

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School Counselor  
Worcester East Middle School

Olivia Hull  
Graduate Student  
Lesley University

Heidys Mendez  
School Counselor  
Lawrence High School

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Paige Kenney  
School Counselor  
South Middle School Brockton  
Dena Coffey  
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Helen O'Donnell  
Retired School Counselor  
Anne Thidemann French  
Retired School Adjustment Counselor

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School Adjustment Counselor  
Gardner High School  
Kate Niedel  
Retired School Adjustment Counselor  
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Retired School Adjustment Counselor

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Leanne Soulard  
School Counselor  
Franklin High School

Rachael Weinhold  
School Counselor  
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School Counselor  
Lowell High School

Atiera Horne  
School Counselor,  
Boston Arts Academy

Rani Gould  
School Counselor  
The Academy at Kiley Middle School

## **Vocational/Technical SIG**

Annie McCarthy  
School Counselor  
Franklin County Technical School

Maryrose O'Neil  
School Counselor  
Tantasqua Regional High School

Lauren Robillard  
School Counselor  
Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School

*For complete contact information, please go to <https://masca.wildapricot.org/GB+Staff/>*

# Happy New Year!

By Bob Bardwell, MASCA Executive Director and Executive Director of School Counseling Services Boston Public Schools

Happy New Year colleagues!

It does not seem possible that it is January 2024 already. A new year can mean many things. For some, it means a fresh start with new resolutions, new goals and changes to our previous routines. For others, it is just another flip of the calendar page or time off from work due to the holiday.

Whatever your connection to the New Year is, I hope that you have had a relaxing holiday break and return to work feeling rejuvenated, energized and excited. As you well know, our students and families need us now more than ever. Our work is very challenging, difficult and stressful. That is not debatable. As we enter the new year, be sure to take care of you first, for without a strong you, your students and families will not get your best.

A new year also means that MASCA recently concluded our annual Kindness and Compassion Giveaway. In case you missed the email from late December, we announced five recipients. In the twelve days that we collected nominations, we received 64 nominations representing 52 school counseling colleagues from the Berkshires to the Cape and everywhere in between. Several of these colleagues received multiple nominations. Thank you so much to all of our nominators.

The judges found this task extremely difficult - to narrow the field from 52 to just a few. They wanted to give every nominee something for what they have had to deal with over these past few years and will continue to deal with moving forward in 2024. Minimally each nominee has received an email letting them know that they have been recognized by at least one peer as part of this campaign.

Meet **Ruthie Lydon**, our top honoree and School Counselor at the Dr. William W. Henderson Inclusion School in Boston. Here is what her nominators had to say -

*Ruthie Lydon is one of the kindest, hard-working, dedicated and compassionate school counselors I have ever had the pleasure of working with. She tirelessly goes above and beyond for her students and families. Ruthie wanted nothing more than to be a mother her whole life, treating her students like her own, advocating for them and their families, following a*



Robert Bardwell  
Executive Director, MASCA

*pursuit of justice and equity for them and always creating opportunities for them to reach their goals and achieve their ultimate success with very few resources and/or supports. After many years of infertility treatments, procedures, surgeries, many losses, including burying twin baby boys that caused her to require 6 blood transfusions to stay alive, she suffered an AVM at work that nearly killed her. As her colleagues watched in terror as she nearly bled to death she was asking "please make sure the students don't see me leave in an ambulance...." "I don't want them to be scared."*

*After years of heartbreak and accepting the painful truth that she would never become a mother on her own, she and her husband Chris started down the gauntlet of adoption, and after many arduous trials, tribulations and losses along the way, they adopted Tori (age 3) during Covid who was born addicted to drugs. Ruthie selflessly volunteered to go back to work early virtually to help her students feel seen and heard during the pandemic with a colicky baby on her hip. They then found out Tori's birth mother was pregnant and going to Jail so they adopted Chase (age 2) during Covid just 14 months later. She was never able to use her maternity leaves properly because her journey to become a mother was so daunting and physically taxing*

*that she used so much of her sick time that her time with her adopted children was cut short. Self-care has certainly been last in line when it comes to herself. Now, as she focuses on her and her family's health, she is out of paid sick time. All the while, she is still seeking out ways to help others.*

*I believe she is the most deserving for the Kindness & Compassion Giveaway. She would do anything for anyone and during this extremely difficult time she could use all the love, care, cheer and support possible. Her students miss her, and continuously check-in to see how she is doing.*

*Ruthie Lydon is a rockstar who is definitely deserving! Despite her own struggles, grief and loss Ruthie always managed to show up to work with a smile on her face and willingness to lend a helping hand.*

Ruthie will receive \$300 and a free 2024 MASCA conference registration (\$180 value). She used that money to ensure some of her students had gifts at Christmas.

We are also happy to announce four additional recipients of this giveaway:

**Erica Benjamin**, School Counselor, Pierce Middle School, Milton

**Nicole Fernald**, School Counselor, Maynard High School

**Alison Furtado**, School Counselor, Plymouth Community Intermediate School

**Jennifer Lydon**, School Social Worker, Lynn Vocational Technical Institute

They will each receive a free 2024 MASCA conference registration (\$180 value) and a \$50 gift card of their choice or a free MASCA membership.

Regardless of your thoughts about the New Year and making resolutions, I want to thank you for your membership in MASCA and for making MASCA one of the top state school counselor associations in the country. MASCA is what it is because of you and for that I am most grateful.

Here's to a healthy, joyful, stress-free and rewarding 2024!



## *Welcome to our Newest Members*

*The following have joined MASCA in the last month:*

Cari Baker	Marsha Inniss-Mitchell	Lindsey Monti
Alex Bermejo	Erin Jaques	Christina Park
Kacie Bourrell	Joanne Jean-Paul	Sophie Parquet
Elizabeth Cantor	Meaghan Jianaces	Jason Phillips
Ryan Capuzziello	Julie Jollimore	Alex Pilger
Alexandra Cox	Jessica Lamond	Raegan Porfido
Samantha DeCarlo	Ryan Lange	Lauren Rice
Sydney Dickhaut	Jennifer Lydon	Eve Rybnick
Christina Dionne	Caitlyn Lynch	Amanda Snow
Kathleen Donnelly	Morgan Maddock	Kristyn Swift
Kerry Farrell	amanda marshall	Rashedah Tatum
Kathy Garrity	Bailey McDonnell	Stephanie Toporowski
Carrie He	Richard McGovern	Zhane Wells
Grace Heald	Rose Mendonca	Jessica Woodacre

*If you know any of these new members, please extend a warm welcome and greeting.*

*We are happy you have joined us!*

**Register NOW for MASCA's Premier PD Event!**

For more information go to [ncyionline.org/conferences/masca/](https://ncyionline.org/conferences/masca/)



**Spring Conference**

**APRIL 8-9, 2024  
SHERATON FRAMINGHAM  
HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER  
FRAMINGHAM, MA**



# Where have all the School Counselors Gone?

by Jennifer McGuire, Co-Chair, Ad Hoc Committee for the School Counselor Shortage  
and College & Career Information Coordinator, New Bedford Public Schools

I know I am not alone when I share that my district has an open School Counselor position. In fact, until a few weeks ago, we had two open positions. We were in a similar situation last fall. More and more, it seems this is not unusual in our profession. There simply do not seem to be enough school counselors seeking employment to fill the openings that

exist in our schools. Additionally, the volume of openings allows counselors to leave current positions and take new ones during the school year, creating an opening in yet another school.

This situation is vastly different from when I entered the school counseling job market almost 23 years ago, when schools were often receiving one hundred applications for one opening. It is true that many industries are short staffed right now, but this shortage feels more personal. Many practicing school counselors and school counselor educators have worked tirelessly over the past two decades to elevate our profession and to have school counselors seen as integral to the successful education of young people. We have changed the image from a “guidance counselor” drinking coffee and waiting for a student to come to the office to one of a professional school counselor delivering tier one instruction in classrooms from kindergarten through high school. Could a lack of school counselors to deliver comprehensive models threaten the work we have done?

As our state professional association, MASCA has taken on the challenge of trying to not only get to the bottom of why there is a dearth of school counselors to fill the openings, but also committing to working to engage the future



workforce in the opportunities that a career as a professional school counselor provides. To that end, MASCA has formed an ad hoc committee focused on the school counselor shortage. The hope is that through this work, we might increase the number of individuals interested in entering the profession. I am fortunate to be co-chairing this group along with Dana Catarius and wanted to provide some highlights six months into our committee’s work.

The committee is made up of eight active members, including myself and Dana. We also had three additional members who were integral to the initial tasks of the group but were unable to continue their involvement due to competing priorities. One of the main undertakings of the committee is to explore where the school counselor pipeline is being cut off. Throughout the coming months, we will be seeking to connect with undergraduates in majors that we have identified as possible areas of interest for future school counselors (primarily education and psychology) to ensure that students are aware of the role of school counselors and that it is being considered as a possible career path by those interested in working with young people in school settings.

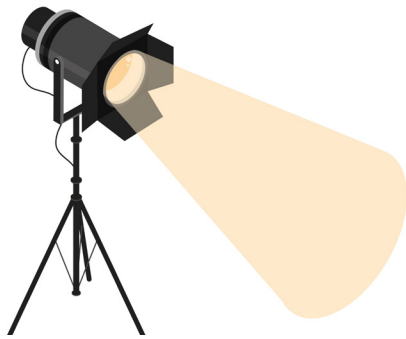
Additionally, the committee is hoping to gain insight into why some graduate

students either head in other directions at the conclusion of their degree program, or enter the field and leave within a few years. While we can speculate as to the reasons, to better inform this work, we will be exploring through surveys by reaching out to individuals who fall into one of the two situations described. The results of these surveys will hopefully provide some direction for the committee moving forward.

Beyond that, the committee is working to update information available on the MASCA website related to licensure. We believe that MASCA should be the first place individuals go to find out how to enter the field. Having that information readily available and written in a manner that is clear and easy to navigate is absolutely imperative. We anticipate some updates in the next few months.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the committee’s work is that we will be commissioning a video production company to produce a video promoting the work of school counselors. This project should result in a professional level tool that we can utilize for the foreseeable future, specifically for the purpose of engaging career seekers. The goal is to review all of the bids within the coming weeks and to select a company that we feel will best help us meet our needs.

The Ad Hoc Committee on the School Counselor Shortage has a long road ahead. I believe I speak for the entire team when I share that we are committed to working diligently on behalf of the Association. I look forward to the opportunity to share our continued work in the coming months.



# SIG Spotlight:

## Career & Technical SIG

The mission of the MASCA Career & Technical Special Interest Group (CT SIG) is to advance practices in the Career & Technical School Counseling profession by providing Career & Technical School Counselors a community in which they can engage in collaboration, peer support, professional development, and advocacy.

### CT SIG OBJECTIVES:

#### Collaboration

Provide a forum for collaboration on School Counseling best practices and concerns that relate specifically to Career & Technical Schools

Provide a forum for collaboration on best practices that can be more universally applicable (comprehensive

and other school models), particularly in areas of expertise (work based learning, portfolio projects, Capstones, partnerships with industry leaders, etc)

#### Professional Development

Identify and provide professional development opportunities that target the specific needs and goals of School Counselors supporting Career & Technical students and their education and transition needs

#### Advocacy

Advancing the interests of Career & Technical School Counselors AND advancing the interests of their schools and their students at the local, state, and Federal levels

Ensure equity for members by actively recruiting members who can represent the professional interests and needs of all Career & Technical School Counselors across the State

### CT SIG LEADERS:

Annie McCarthy, School Counselor, Franklin County Technical High School, Turners Falls

Maryrose O'Neil, School Counselor, Tantasqua Regional High School, Fiskdale

Lauren Robillard, School Counselor, Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical School, Charlton

## January 2024 Awareness Dates

**National Mentoring Month**

**National Thank You Month**

**1 Emancipation Proclamation Anniversary**

**1 Global Family Day**

**4 World Braille Day**

**15 Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service**

**21 World Religion Day**

**27 International Holocaust Remembrance Day**

Registration is now open for 4 academic year **MA Model Graduate Courses**. Syllabi Summaries available from [helenod@att.net](mailto:helenod@att.net)

(Registration \$450 includes 45 MASCA PDP's. Additional \$295 for 3 Graduate Credits from Fitchburg State University).

- *MA Model Introductory Institute*
- *MA Model 2: Next Steps*
- *Counselors in K-12 Classrooms: Delivering Curriculum That Supports Academic Achievement & CCR*
- *Counselors in K-12 Classrooms: Action Research and Program Assessment*



# Implementing the MA Model 3.0: A Framework for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

by Helen O'Donnell, Ed.D, MASCA MA Model Committee, 3.0 Writing Team Co-Chair, PD Institute Trainer

Endorsed by both MA DESE and MA School Counselors Association's Governing Board, the MA Model 3.0: Framework for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs is an evolving document to guide professional best practice. It was presented as a professional courtesy to the field in the spring of 2020 as a public domain resource. This ongoing Counselor's Notebook (CN) series shares steps and strategies for implementing the MA Model 3.0 and ASCA Model 4.0©.

A library of updated MA Model resources and CN implementation articles available at [https://masca.wildapricot.org/MA-Model\\_3.0](https://masca.wildapricot.org/MA-Model_3.0)

## School Adjustment Counselor Successfully Implementing MA Model Practices: A Success Story

When assigned as a School Adjustment Counselor to a new school and new grade levels, **Colleen Fors**, LMHC SAC, SSW decided to reach out to Dr. Helen O'Donnell to mentor implementation of MA Model practices for her transition to Quabbin Regional Middle High School. The QRMHS serves students grades 6-12 and has three adjustment counselors to support students in addition to grade level school guidance counselors.

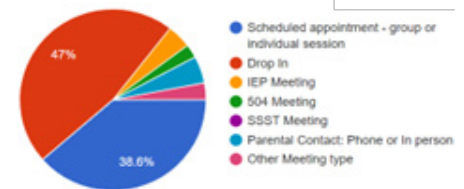
Her first initiative was to develop and share a SAC annual calendar to inform and educate the school community about her role. The calendar includes her vision statement (*Preparing Panthers for Post High School Pathways*), a role definition (*Guided by student 504 and IEP goals, the QRMHS School Adjustment Counselor's role is to support the development of students social/emotional and academic competencies to help prepare students for post high school pathways and employment.*), and identifies on-going direct and indirect services she provides. To document her alignment and partnership with the school counseling program, the calendar footer includes the school counseling department's vision and mission statements. You may view the [QRMHS Calendar HERE](#).

To comply with MA Time on Learning legislation, Colleen has made significant efforts to document her role as an integral part of the school's educational program by aligning her curriculum and lessons to student learning objectives from MA CDE

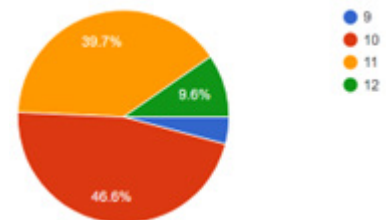
Benchmarks, CCR/MyCAP Scope and Sequence targets, and ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success. Her Tier 2 and 3 curriculum student learning objectives align with and reinforce the school counseling curriculum target grade level goals. For ex: *"By the end of Semester 1 and completion of the Own Your Learning Unit, students in grades 10-12 will be able to take responsibility for their own academic success and improve critical thinking and organizational skills as evidenced by completion of an audit of their transcript and identifying what they need to be successfully promoted and/or achieve graduation requirements."* *"By the end of Lesson 1, "What is a Transcript", students will be able to identify the importance of their transcript, where it is located, and how it assists in documenting progress towards achieving graduation requirements."*

Colleen also wanted to gather data to assess her transition into her new position to answer her research question, *As a School Adjustment Counselor for grades 10-12, how am I spending my time, what students are being served, and how am I supporting the school community?* She maintained a 5-week clinical support data tracking system. The MARC Jr. notes the tracked data is only a brief snapshot of the work of one adjustment counselor assigned to grades 10-12 in the high school over a period of five weeks. Since 47% of her practice during the tracking period was delivered to "drop-in" support, she disaggregated the unscheduled meeting

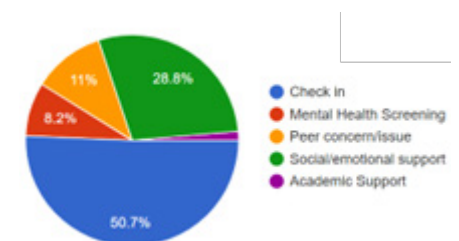
Graph 1: Types of Student Contacts



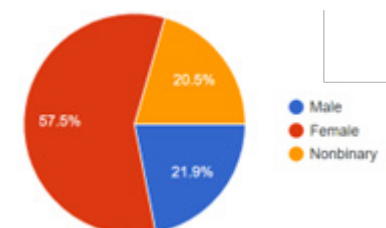
Graph 2: Students per grade level



Graph 3: Types of Support Provided



Graph 4: Student gender



(continued next page)

## MA Model Success Story

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section into the following areas: *grade level, type of support, gender and length of meeting.*”

### Data findings:

- *The SAC spends almost half of her time in unscheduled drop-in support meetings that last on average between 11-30 min in duration.*
- *Females accessed SAC support most often.*
- *10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students sought support more often than students in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Although 9<sup>th</sup> grade is not assigned to the counselor, a small percentage of students were provided support when needed.*

The MARC Jr. section, *Focus for Improvement/Action Plan*, summarizes that:

-the SAC counselor provides reactive Tier 3 mental health support as indicated by the number of students requiring

unscheduled drop-in sessions.

- IEP and 504 students are receiving Tier 2 and 3 SAC support to reinforce the delivered school counseling curriculum and assist their achievement of grade level curriculum targets.

-providing reactive student counseling mental health services allows school guidance counselors time to proactively focus on academic needs, MyCAPportfolio development and post high school planning.

During the principal’s review and discussion of the MARC Jr., she suggested a combined meeting between the school and SAC counselors with administration to review and analyze the data findings. As the year continues, Colleen’s action plan states she will make an active effort to

- Reach out to and encourage seniors to seek out supportive services when needed.
- Assess if the needed drop-in support suggests a Tier 1 prevention education topic that would be bene-

ficial for the school community.

- Collaborate with other SAC’s to discuss their caseloads, common counseling themes, and ways to enhance the SAC’s role supporting the school community.
- Track and analyze another 5-week service delivery to assess results.

Congratulations, Colleen, on a job well done!

### Calling MA Model Success Stories

Have you implemented the MA Model (or some part of it) to help students? Most of us don’t like to brag, but the Model Committee wants to help with that!

Fill out the (brief) [MA Model Success Story](#) form and the Committee will contact you to get the details ....so we can share your successes!!

Happy  
New  
Year

From all  
of us at  
MASCA!



# 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)*

MASCA deeply values its diverse membership and is fully committed to creating an organization where each individual is welcomed, included, respected and empowered. No person will be excluded from MASCA on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, political affiliation or military status, or for any other discriminatory reason.

*These activities include, but are not limited to, appointment of its Governing Board, hiring or firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and the providing of services.*