

# Medway Public School District

School Counseling Program  
Evaluation for Grades 5-12

Conducted by:  
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# Goals of the MPS School Counseling Program Evaluation

## Overarching Goal:

*Determine if the current structure of Medway School's 5-12 School Counseling Program is optimally designed to best support students' social-emotional needs and academic achievement.*

## Sub-Goals:

1. Determine if our comprehensive guidance scope and sequence is commensurate with the developmental level of students
2. Determine if we are using the best model of oversight and leadership
3. Determine if technical/clerical work is being done in the most efficient way (504s, AP, scheduling)
4. Determine if we are adequately staffed
5. Determine if we can improve transitions for MMS to MHS



## Process: Medway Public School District 5-12 School Counseling Program Evaluation

Over the course of 4 months, the evaluators gathered relevant archival materials and data about the programs, conducted site visits and interviews with school counselors, administrators, school psychologists, adjustment counselors, and administrative support staff in both buildings. Additionally, these stakeholders in both buildings were asked to participate in additional data gathering about the school counseling programs and related student outcomes.



# Evaluation Results

# Summary of Medway Middle School (MMS) School Counseling Program Evaluation

1. The MMS School Counseling Program is primarily a responsive services program that primarily focuses on:
  - Individual counseling, including crisis management
  - Case management for students with community-based services and 504 plans
  - Consultation with families and teachers
2. The program has a measurable positive effect for the students who have met with their school counselor more than three times for individual counseling
3. Stakeholders completing surveys were generally neutral to positive, with teachers most positive, then parents/caregivers, then students
4. Most components of the American School Counselor Association's National Model (ASCA National Model) are not present in the MMS SCP, but the school counselors would like to be doing more of those activities and there are curriculum resources available for implementation

# Summary of Medway High School (MHS) School Counseling Program Evaluation

1. MHS is implementing a comprehensive school counseling program in alignment with the ASCA National Model, primarily focusing on:
  - College and career counseling, and related parent support and information-sharing
  - Academic counseling and planning
  - Responsive services, including individual and group counseling and crisis management
  - Classroom-based school counseling curriculum for grades 9-12
2. The program, in accordance with the ASCA NM, also uses student data to make program decisions and assess impact and has a master calendar of activities
3. All stakeholder groups completing surveys were generally positive about the MHS SCP, with teachers the most positive, and then students more positive than parents/caregivers.
4. The program has a measurable positive impact for those students who have had more than three individual counseling meetings with their counselor.
5. School counselors' preferred program activities are mostly in accordance with their actual program implantation, though they do less curriculum implementation and more activities outside of their job title ("other activities") than would be ideal



## Evaluation Recommendations

# Recommendations for the Medway District

- Recommendation 1:
  - ***Create a K-12 or 5-12 School Counseling Department with a Guidance Director.***
    - Having a secondary guidance director would facilitate the coordination of services and programs, as well as be an optimal way to share resources. It would ensure that all SCs receive appropriate supervision. Team meetings and efforts to transition students across buildings could all be streamlined. Many districts are moving to 6-year academic plans instead of 4-year plans because putting academic plans in place during 7-8th grades helps with academic engagement and student awareness about course-taking choices, and a coordinated secondary SCP facilitates that effort.
- Recommendation 2:
  - ***Create a more user-friendly website, with easy access to School Counselor email addresses and SCP information.***
    - An impactful school counseling website contains information about the program, its mission and goals, its resources, and the calendar of programming for the year. It also has guidance-related information such as graduation requirements, college and career information, program of study, academic resources, and schedules available. Parents/caregivers, teachers, community members, and students should all be able to access and easily use the information.

## Recommendations for the Medway District

- Recommendation 3:
  - ***Assess building needs by surveying all educational professionals about perceived gaps in programs and staff.***
    - Because each building is different, and the needs vary considerably, surveying all building professionals would provide useful information about needed resources.
- Recommendation 4:
  - ***Improve collaboration between MMS and MHS school counselors.***
    - While there are practices in place for supporting student transitions between the MMS and the MHS, more collaboration would provide better continuation of services and early identification of student needs.

# Recommendations for Medway Middle School

- Recommendation 1:
  - ***MMS SCs dedicate time and effort to developing a comprehensive program, using either the MA Model or the ASCA National Model. This 3-5 year process involves:***
    - Identifying program beliefs and related goals
    - Developing vision and mission statements
    - Creating annual agreements about program foci and goals with the building administrator to ensure that SC time and efforts are reflecting program goals and mission
    - Identifying an Advisory Council made of parents/caregivers and school colleagues to provide collaborative support for program goals
    - Using data in an ongoing way to identify which students need services, and what student difficulties need to be addressed
    - Using data to determine program effectiveness and to demonstrate accountability
    - A calendar of the year's programming, as well as concrete action plans that support efficient delivery of school counseling services – including classroom-based, small group, and individual interventions – help to prioritize efforts

# Recommendations for Medway Middle School

- Recommendation 2:
  - ***MMS SCs participate in supervision with a student services administrator.***
    - At MMS, the current principal provides supervision, which was identified as both a strength and a challenge. It ensures strong collaboration between the SCP and the principal, but it limits the scope of the SCP to one administrator's vision and knowledge of what is possible.
- Recommendation 3:
  - ***MMS SCs have dedicated clerical support, at least part-time.***
    - MMS SCs could be more efficient with scheduling appointments, data gathering, 504 case management, and parent contact with dedicated clerical support. Paying for part-time clerical support is more efficient financially than having SC's doing the same work at a much higher pay level.
- Recommendation 4:
  - ***MMS SCs actively collaborate with wellness efforts, SEL programming, and MTSS efforts in MMS.***
    - In many middle schools, school counselors are either the coordinators of or are actively involved in implementing wellness curriculum, social-emotional learning interventions, and multi-tiered systems of support components.

# Recommendations for Medway Middle School

- Recommendation 5:
  - ***School counselors develop leadership capacity.***
    - When school counselors are leaders in creating program changes, they are less dependent on administrative leadership.
- Recommendation 6:
  - ***Provide more resources and more information about the SCP on the school website.***
    - The representation of the SCP on the MMS website does not represent the program effectively. Improving those materials would help stakeholders to understand the quality and amount of work being done.
- Recommendation 7:
  - **Assess outcomes of counseling services and interventions.**
    - Identifying the SCP components that are most impactful will help to prioritize efforts.
- Recommendation 8:
  - **MMS SCs engage in targeted professional development.**
    - PD related to leadership development, implementation of comprehensive SCPs, use of data, classroom-based interventions, and integrating SCPs with MTSS, SEL and wellness initiatives would be useful.

## Recommendations for Medway Middle School

### Recommendation 9:

- **MMS conduct a 2-week time-use study to determine where time is being spent on tasks that do not actively contribute to student success outcomes.**
  - The SCARS assessment indicated that MMS SCs are engaging in a fair bit of activities that do not directly contribute to student success, even though they would theoretically like to do more small-group counseling and classroom interventions. A time study would provide the SCs and administrators a better sense of where SC time is being spent.

# Recommendations for Medway High School

- Recommendation 1:
  - ***Provide more resources and more information about the SCP on the school website.***
    - The MHS SCP offers a comprehensive variety of interventions, classroom lessons and counseling services for students, as well as evening programs for parents/caregivers, but the program website and SCP materials need professionalizing and modernizing to represent the program effectively. Doing so would help stakeholders to understand the quality and amount of work being done.
- Recommendation 2:
  - ***Consistently assess outcomes of counseling services and interventions.***
    - Identifying the program components that are most impactful will help to prioritize efforts. Disseminating these outcomes will educate key stakeholders about the value of the SCP.
- Recommendation 3:
  - ***Identify ways that non-counseling duties can be handled more efficiently to provide more time for direct services for students.***
    - The SCARS assessment indicated that MHS SCs are engaging in a fair bit of activities that do not directly contribute to student success. Establishing efficient systems and routines for enrolling students, providing scheduling support, and managing testing would all create more time for direct service.

# Recommendations for Medway High School

- Recommendation 4:
  - **Hire a part-time HS registrar or hire a full-time registrar for the whole district.**
    - Currently, the MHS Guidance Secretary, and the main office secretaries share registrar duties in the building.
- Recommendation 5:
  - ***MHS SCs more actively collaborate with wellness efforts, SEL programming, and MTSS efforts in MHS.***
    - In many high schools, school counselors are either the coordinators of or are actively involved in implementing wellness curriculum, social-emotional learning interventions, and multi-tiered systems of support components.
- Recommendation 6:
  - ***MHS SCs receive targeted professional development related to leadership development, as they are all relatively new to the position.***

# Additional Ideas for Consideration

- 1. MMS SCs move out of the main office.** The current office situation keeps the MMS SCs isolated, unseen by teachers and most students, and connected to the main office in a way that is not conducive to comprehensive school counseling. While these offices provide good privacy, and facilitate communication with each other, they keep SCs out of sight/out of mind. Having offices in the halls where they can connect informally with students, easily travel to classrooms, and be visible to others in the building would all facilitate more effective SC services.
- 2. Have a 5-12 Guidance Director.** With a coordinated 5-12 School Counseling Supervisor, services could more easily be organized between buildings, and there could be more alignment of services and programs. The MMS SCP needs some leadership and supervision support to create the changes they would like to implement.
- 3. Turn the MHS College Center into an Academic, College, and Career Resource and Support Center.** Most college information is now found on-line, rendering large college resource centers obsolete. The MHS college center space is prime real estate. Turning it into an academic, college, and career support center would communicate the idea that post-secondary success is the goal of the school. The peer tutoring program could be moved into this space, and targeted academic, career, and college support workshops could be offered there (“how to take the SAT”, “how to fill out the FAFSA”, “how to study for tests”, “how to use career resources”, and so on). The space could also be used as a student meeting center, which would facilitate student connectedness with the school counselors.
- 4. At MMS, have one of the school counselors move to an adjustment counselor/school social worker role that is different from the school counselor role.** The AC could provide more of the individual counseling and crisis counseling services, which would free up the other two school counselors to provide classroom guidance and small group interventions.



# Next Steps

1. Meet with 5-12 School Counselors to review findings
2. Collaborate with building leadership teams to create an action plan and a timeline for implementation
3. Identify high leverage recommendations having an impact on 2018-2019 budget planning
4. Present action plans, metrics, and implementation timeline to the SC

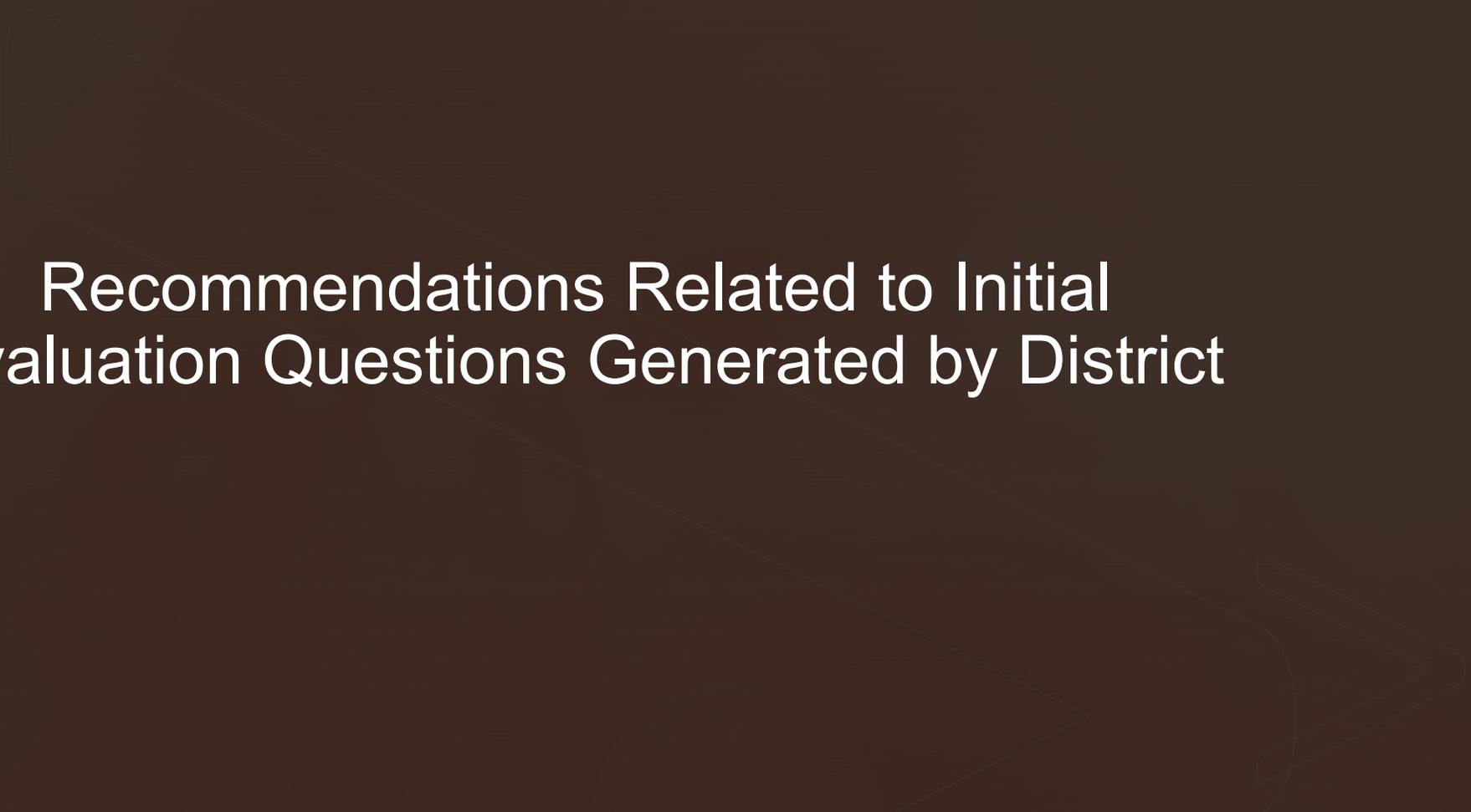
# Questions





# Appendix

Recommendations Related to Initial  
Evaluation Questions Generated by District





# Recommendations Related to Initial Evaluation Questions Generated by District

## **1. Is our comprehensive guidance scope and sequence commensurate with the developmental level of students?**

While there are some excellent school counseling curriculum materials available in both MMS and MHS, there is very little implementation of those materials happening in MMS and SC in both buildings indicated in this evaluation that they would like to be doing much more curriculum implementation. The MHS materials have a solid foundation but need to be augmented with some additional post-secondary planning and career lessons. The school counseling programs at both sites would benefit from better coordination with related curriculum efforts in the district being coordinated through MTSS and wellness initiatives. See full report for resources.

## **2. What is the best way to design a workflow for 504 writing, given increasing numbers?**

SCs in both MMS and MHS identified 504 case management and oversight as a significant part of their workload that takes up more time every year. On the one hand, having SC providing these services helps to ensure that they are being provided. On the other hand, time and energy is taken away from school-wide curriculum and SCP efforts. Using school counselors as 504 case managers may not be an efficient or financially expedient decision, as there are others in the building who cannot provide the other services school counselors do, but who can do 504 management. Some districts are hiring part-time dedicated 504 case managers at the Bachelor's degree level. Some districts give a teacher course release time to write and manage 504 plans. Since the accommodations are classroom-based, having them be teacher-driven often works well.



## Recommendations Related to Initial Evaluation Questions Generated by District

### **3. Do we have the best model of oversight or leadership?**

This evaluation identified leadership as a concern at both MMS and MHS. See recommendations in other sections. A coordinated 5-12 or district-wide guidance director – someone who can help the MMS move to a comprehensive SCP - would be ideal.

### **4. What clerical support exists and how is it used?**

Clerical support is/will be another challenge in both buildings. The current MHS guidance secretary will be retiring soon, and she takes a wealth of skills and knowledge with her. She has been able to manage much of the registrar duties for MHS as well as provide secretarial support for the department. Hiring a dedicated registrar for MHS, even if part-time, would make sense. At MMS, clarity around clerical support is also needed, as the current support is provided on an ad hoc basis by the principal's secretary. In order to have a comprehensive SCP at MHS, more clerical support will be needed.

## Recommendations Related to Initial Evaluation Questions Generated by District

### **5. Should we change the way we are sharing our technical components (schedule, report cards, student course failure, AP proctors)? Or do we need more technical support?**

More efficient technological systems and software exists that would support scheduling, report cards, student records, and additional SCP components. Several people indicated that the MHS guidance secretary (who is retiring this year) was one of the few people who successfully navigated the current system. See full report for recommendations for effective school-wide data management software.

### **6. Do we have adequate counseling support staff for the number of students we have?**

The student to counselor ratio in both buildings is below the ASCA recommendation of 250:1, suggesting that there are adequate counseling staff. The SCPs will be more effective if school counselor time is focused on direct student services, increased targeted interventions, and additional curriculum implementation.



## Recommendations Related to Initial Evaluation Questions Generated by District

### 7. Do we have tiered levels of counseling support?

School counselors in both buildings contribute to MTSS programming (see full report for details). However, the MTSS program and the SC programs would benefit from much more coordination of services and collaboration. Most districts with extensive MTSS involve school counselors primarily in tiers 1 and 2. For instance, in many districts Second Step, PBIS, SEL and Advisory programming is coordinated by school counselors, and often partially implemented by them as well. For tier 3 services, often students are referred to community providers if they need more extensive therapeutic or behavioral supports, as that ensures continuity of care over time as well as a broader range of services than schools can usually provide. MPS is well-resourced with some excellent tier 3 programs (BRYT and LINKS) as well.

# Recommendations Related to Initial Evaluation Questions Generated by District

## **8. What do other districts our size have as a model?**

Most midsize MA districts have moved to a comprehensive model of school counseling, in alignment with the ASCA National Model or the MASCA Model. The MHS program is in good alignment with this model. A comprehensive model is most effective when it's coordinated across the district, with a K-12 guidance curriculum that has logical scope and sequence across buildings.

Another increasingly widely used practice is to coordinate SCPs with MTSS programs, with SCs providing preventative curriculum interventions at tier 1 and small-group counseling services for students in tier 2. Tier 1 universal screening for mental health and behavioral issues is then done by the school counselors, while school psychologists usually provide assessments for students in tier 2 and 3. Ongoing individual counseling is only provided for tier 3 students, by either the school psychologist, adjustment counselor, or outside providers.

## **9. How can we improve transitions from MMS to MHS?**

This will continue to be a challenge if the SCPs in the two schools are not coordinated. Focused leadership for the district's school counseling programs 5-12 or K-12 would obviously support more effective transitions. Creating shared data systems that allow SCs to track the interventions that have been implemented with students during middle school would help the MHS school counselors more easily identify what services students have been receiving prior to entering the high school.

# Recommendations Related to Initial Evaluation Questions Generated by District

## **10. How can we improve our 10th grade curriculum?**

Post-secondary planning and related decision-making skills development is increasingly being taught in 9th-10th grade. One solution would be to move up the MHS curriculum by a few months, with earlier focus on career development and post-secondary choices. Some SCPs have successfully implemented study skills training for their 9th-10th graders, which supports academic outcomes. Or, consider implementing the CASEL-identified evidence-based intervention Student Success Skills (see <http://studentsuccessskills.com/>).

## **11. Do we need clerical/registrar support?**

Yes.

## **12. Are there ways to maximize our guidance curriculum without borrowing more time from academic classes?**

Suggestions include more advisory time, creating videotaped lessons on graduation requirements and college counseling options that can be played in classrooms when there are short amounts of free time or substitute teachers, putting materials on the school website, and choosing academically-integrated curriculum materials (see CASEL, <https://casel.org/guide/>).