If you are like me, you always feel excited to wrap up another school year. It is a great time to reflect on work you’ve done during the year. My staff and I routinely conduct our school counseling audit every June. Although our process is informal, we meet and discuss what we accomplished during the year. We look at our successes and our areas of weakness. We evaluate our programming and our school counseling curriculum and classroom lessons. If we need to make adjustments, we make a plan to make it happen. From there, we start to strategize about goals for the next school year. We ask ourselves, what do we hope to accomplish as individual school counselors and as a department?

I know I am fortunate to work with an amazing group of people. In fact, one of the counselors on our staff reminds us often that “it takes team work to make the dream work.” I hope that you, too, work with a team of school counselors committed to delivering a comprehensive school counseling program. If you do, you know that conducting a yearly audit of your program is highly recommended.

In thinking about the work of the MASCA Governing Board this year, our organization has worked hard. We’ve made some great improvements and met some important goals. Some of these include:

• Implementation of Wild Apricot, a new membership and event management system
• Appointment of a new membership coordinator and 50% increase in membership
• Collaboration with NEACAC to produce Reach Higher Professional Development Days at Stonehill College and UMass Lowell
• Collaboration with DESE to produce DART Data Workshop
• Collaboration with MSSAA to offer Reach Higher Professional Development for School Counselors
• Launch of the ASCA State Association Newsletter in addition to the monthly Counselor’s Notebook
• MA Reach Higher Convening as part of the Annual MASCA Conference
• Restructure of our Board configuration to a manageable size and adopted a policy governance model of management
• Launch of the MASCA Pillars Awards to recognize and memorialize the dedication and hard work of three pillars of our profession – Ed Bryant, Carol Ryan Tarka, and Sal-ly Ann Connolly
• Support of the Mass Model Writing Team as they worked to create the draft of the Mass Model 2.0. The team will be editing and finalizing the document in the months to come.

Although we still have lots to do, we should be proud of the work that has been accomplished. At our upcoming Leadership Development Institute at the end of July, your MASCA leaders and new president, Kate Salas, will meet and conduct MASCA’s yearly audit. We will celebrate our accomplishments, make note of areas for improvement, and make plans for the year to come.

I hope you know that you are part of a professional association that is dedicated to improving the work of school counselors across the Commonwealth. If you would like to take on a leadership role in our state association, there is room for you! Please contact me or any member of the Governing Board for more information.

As I conclude my last Counselor’s Notebook message as your president, please accept my thanks for all you do. Please always remember, even when the days are hard and the challenges are many, the work we do is important, and you make a difference every single day. Best wishes for a well-deserved summer break!
Through effective school counseling programing and strategic partnerships, Reach Higher Massachusetts will inspire every student to take charge of their future by completing their education past high school.

**WHO**
A collaboration of school counselors, K-12 educators, higher education officials, non-profit organization representatives & policy makers

**WHAT IS REACH HIGHER**
A statewide initiative to ensure all students complete their high school education and seek post-secondary training and education

**REACH HIGHER WILL**
Support school counselors to:
- Ensure all students graduate from high school college and career ready
- Expose students to post-secondary and career training opportunities
- Encourage academic planning and career development opportunities
- Provide students and families critical financial information that can make post-secondary education an affordable reality
- Help students learn about and navigate the college search and application process

**WORK GROUPS**
The goal of each group will be to reach out to constituents, end users and other interested parties to create opportunities to promote the Reach Higher agenda
#1. Preparing All for Viable Careers and Citizenship
#2. Financing Postsecondary Education
#3. Post-secondary Access, Persistence, & Completion
#4. Marketing & Communication

**REACH HIGHER GOALS**
1. Increase the 4 and 5 year cohort high school graduation rate
2. Increase the number of Massachusetts High School Program of Studies (MassCore) completers
3. Increase the number of students that participate in citizenship and career development activities
4. Increase the percentage of high school graduates that enroll in postsecondary education
5. Decrease the percentage of high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary education that enroll in remedial coursework

**WHAT YOU CAN DO**
Organizations, K-12 school districts, institutions of higher education and individuals who are interested in promoting the Reach Higher goals are invited to join a work group and make commitments to ensure more students graduate from high school and attend some sort of post-secondary education and training opportunity.

**FOR MORE INFO**
Bob Bardwell
Team Lead
Reach Higher Massachusetts
413.267.4589x1109
bardwellr@monsonschools.com
or
www.reachhigherma.org
reachhigherMA@gmail.com

A state division of the national Reach Higher initiative
Looking to the Future
By MEGAN KRELL, Ph.D., MASCA President-Elect-Elect

I am honored to be MASCA’s President-Elect-Elect! I have been a counselor educator and fieldwork coordinator at Fitchburg State University for the past five years. Since 2012, I have served as one of MASCA’s VP Counselor Educators. This role has allowed me to work closely with school counseling graduate students and counselor educators across the state. I have had the wonderful opportunity to coordinate the graduate student poster sessions and scholarships at the MASCA conference.

During my time on the Governing Board, I have witnessed MASCA strive to make positive changes for both the association and the profession. A highlight for me was being part of MASCA’s strategic planning during summer 2015. It is a privilege to work with dedicated school counseling leaders in shaping the future direction of MASCA. The mentorship I have received from MASCA leadership has been invaluable.

As I step into this leadership position, I hope to keep an open dialogue with both current and potential members. I look forward to further developing relationships with school counselors, counselor educators, and school counseling trainees across the state. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please feel free to reach out. Thank you very much for your support, and I look forward to my time in this new role!
I was sitting at the computer in my office checking my email when I saw an email pop up from Central Office “reminding all teachers who will be recertifying after July 1, 2016 that they must earn 15.0 PDPs addressing the needs of English language learners in order to qualify for recertification.” I was about to hit the delete button when I decided to send off a quick query about whether this requirement applied to school counselors. I received an instant response that this requirement “applies to all educators.” You can imagine my surprise!

This started me on my journey to learn more about this new requirement, but not before pressing the reply button to sign up for the district’s grant-funded, 15.0 PDP ELL Workshop series, to be taught by our district ELL teacher. Since beginning this workshop series on December 3, 2015, I have learned a great deal about the strategies for supporting English Language Learners (ELL), the role that technology plays in helping to communicate with and engage ELL students and their families, and most of all, the importance of building a bridge for a collaborative, cooperative learning community where risk-taking is not only encouraged but celebrated.

There is an abundance of information on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website at www.mass.gov/ese/licensure/resources.


As a profession, we are always busy taking care of the needs of our students. What I have learned on my professional journey is to never hit the delete button on my emails in a hurry, how much I have grown as an educator by taking the ELL Workshop series, and the importance of what we do in our ever-changing roles as educators.
School counselors have always played a role in shaping the vocational interests of students. Many careers are facing shortages of professionals with proper credentials due to the demand for a college-educated workforce. A prime example of this shortage is reflected within the nursing profession, which faces an unprecedented shortage due to numerous nursing professionals retiring over the next decade. School counselors are often tasked with the three “C’s”: counseling, consultation, and collaboration. This article offers solutions in collaborating with the nursing professions to assist with national shortages.

School counselors are important influences on the career decisions of middle and high school students, making them valuable recruitment targets for nurse educators. For nursing to be seen as a viable career option, school counselors must have accurate and timely information about the profession. There is a lack of empirical research examining the perceptions of middle and high school counselors of nursing. Misconceptions about nursing as a viable career may limit students’ interest in nursing and leave many to look more closely at other careers, further contributing to the nursing shortage. It is vital that school counselors are able to accurately discuss educational preparation and degree options with students interested in nursing. Otherwise, students may be left at a deficit upon applying for college programs.

This pilot study surveyed school counselors in local middle and high schools regarding their perceptions of nursing as a health career choice, their recommendations for nursing school degree options, and perceived secondary level educational preparation for a seamless progression into nursing school. The role of the school nurse as a recruitment strategy was also explored. This is one of few empirical studies that examine the crossroad between nursing and school counseling. Questions that were asked were: 1) If they thought nursing was a viable career option 2) Would they recommend it to their students 3) Nature of their relationship with the school nurse and if collaboration had already taken place 4) Specific courses they would recommend to students interested in nursing 5) When students typically knew they were interested in continuing their education in a nursing program.

School counselors’ perceptions of nursing were optimistic, often recommending nursing as a career option. This may be related to the many colleges and universities in the area with a strong nursing education model. This study confirmed that school counselors lacked awareness of differing degree options for nursing, which can impact quality and safety of nursing care delivery. This study found that while school counselors had a good working relationship with the school nurse, a stronger alliance could be built to enhance efficacy in exposing students to nursing. School counselors were able to recommend an appropriate plan of study that aligns with the requirements for nursing school. However, the late declaring of nursing as a career choice allows less time to prepare for nursing school enrollment. One feasible solution to the late declaration of an interest in nursing and ultimately the nursing shortage is to incorporate career fairs and career counseling in middle school. Lack of time is often a barrier in implementing classroom guidance in the middle school to discuss vocational options. However, we implore school counselors to collaborate with the school nurse in their building to assist in motivating students to enter the nursing profession and ensure that a correct plan of study is set up as early as 7th grade. To maximize recruitment strategies and provide a seamless transition into nursing programs, school counselors and nursing professionals need to enhance their relationships and start counseling students earlier.
Life as a school counseling intern has an infinite number of benefits. The opportunity to observe effective strategies, make mistakes, and ask questions has been the best part of learning the ins and outs of this field. Even on days when a parent disagrees with you or a student is in crisis, each situation is a reminder that even though you show up every day for free, it is still a vital learning experience that no classroom setting could prepare you for; ultimately, the internship is a safe place for honing our skills and developing our own unique style of counseling. We have the very fortunate opportunity to use trial and error to see what works best for us and our students.

Throughout the internship, we have this major element to decipher: what should we do with all that we have learned? As my internship comes to a close, I am left with an overwhelming yet exciting question, “Who am I as a counselor?”

I have had a year to decide what to adopt and model after my internship site, but the more difficult part is how to implement strategies unique to my personality. In class we are taught numerous theoretical perspectives. Most theories agree that counselor genuineness or authenticity is extremely important in order to build trusting relationships; therefore, our counseling style should be a reflection of who we are as people, even outside of our role.

Outside of work, I am an avid yoga student and television consumer. As an intern, I have, of course, found ways to use movies as a mode for teaching lessons on friendship, anxiety, and emotions. I’m into my third round of watching “Inside Out” and Bing Bong’s sacrifice still gets me teary eyed. However, as a counselor I really want to emphasize the mindful side of me by combining my own interests with teaching students to be present in the moment without reservation or judgment of their emotions.

In my own research on the topic of living mindfully, I have been impressed by the effectiveness that this approach has on students. A 2012 school-based study published by New Directions for Youth Development in Canada evaluated the efficacy of two mindfulness programs. Over the course of several months, students in two groups were each administered a mindfulness based program and then they were compared to their peers who did not. The results showed that those who received mindfulness-based programming had an increase in optimism, better social and emotional competence, and a decrease in depression and stress. Since mindfulness is a part of me as a person, I would like to bring this approach into my counseling style to help teach my students lifelong skills in stress management.

To my fellow interns, you may not be a movie buff or practice yoga, but there is something unique to you that should be incorporated into your counseling style. I encourage you to design your practice based on who you are on a genuine level. I firmly believe that by doing so, your work with students will be more effective. Take this internship opportunity to try out different approaches or ideas until you find what comes naturally and feels genuine to your personality.

Reference:
Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities

- **MA Model Institute for Accountable Comprehensive School Counseling Programs** (Introductory Institute and Institute 2: Next Steps):
  - June 20 - 21: Dean College
  - June 22 - 23: Fitchburg State University

More dates and sites TBA. Flyer available on MASCA website at MA Model tab. Institute details, inquires, suggestions for dates and sites, and registration, contact helenod@att.net.

- “Counseling the College Bound Student”:
  Instructor Bob Bardwell, Director of School Counseling for Monson Schools, Fitchburg State
  June 20 - August 19: online class Inquiries and registration contact bardwellr@monson-schools.com.

- **Cultural Proficiency for recertification MATSOL**:
  http://www.matsol.org/re-tell-extending-the-learning

- Free CCR resources: futurereadyma.org
- **Innovative and Successful Teaching and Counseling Practices for Student Engagement, Empowerment and Motivation**:
  Instructor: Gail Okerman.
  http://www.fitchburgstate.edu/academics/extended-campus-prod/center-for-professional-studies/student-engagement-empowerment-and-motivation/

---

**New England Reach Higher Convening**:
August 16
Assumption College, Worcester, MA.
Free! Register at: www.risla.com/reach-higher-2016 by July 29.

---

**Degrees of Difference**

877-TRY-DEAN • dean.edu/masca
Your membership renewal date is indicated by year and month on your address label above.
To renew your membership, go to MASCA’s website, www.masca.org.

The Mission of MASCA

The mission of MASCA is to advocate for school counselors in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts by providing leadership, collaboration, and professional development.

Stay informed by visiting MASCA’s website regularly. You can share your views with fellow MASCA members by joining in the Forum.

www.MASCA.org