IMPLEMENTING THE MASSACHUSETTS MODEL FOR COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS:

A CASE STUDY EXAMINING MARC AWARD RECIPIENTS

A thesis presented
by
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to
The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

In the field of
Education

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
June 2013
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................. 5

Acknowledgements ................................................................................ 6

Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................ 7
  Problem of Practice ............................................................................. 7
  Definitions .......................................................................................... 9
  Brief Summary .................................................................................... 10
  Positionality Statement ..................................................................... 13
  Theoretical Framework ........................................................................ 14
  Comprehensive Guidance Model ....................................................... 16
  Results-Based Model ........................................................................ 18
  Developmental Guidance Model ....................................................... 19
  Research Questions ............................................................................ 21

Chapter 2: Literature Review ............................................................... 23
  Post Secondary Education is Essential ............................................. 23
  School Counselors Can Help ............................................................ 25
  Best Practices in School Counseling ................................................ 27
  ASCA National Model ...................................................................... 28
  State School Counseling Models ...................................................... 30
  Massachusetts Model for School Counseling .................................... 32

Chapter 3: Research Design ............................................................... 35
  Research Questions ............................................................................ 35
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Tradition</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and Access</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Storage</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Human Subjects</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Report of Research Findings</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile: Doug (pseudonym)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile: Peter (pseudonym)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile: Linda (pseudonym)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile: Mary (pseudonym)</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-case Emergent Themes</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion of Research Findings</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Analysis</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of Research Findings</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for School Counselors</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Administrators</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further Research ........................................................................................................ 98

References .................................................................................................................... 99

Appendix A: IRB Approval .......................................................................................... 106
Appendix B: Unsigned Consent ..................................................................................... 107
Appendix C: Invitation .................................................................................................. 109
Appendix D: Phone Call Script .................................................................................... 110
Appendix E: Interview Questions .................................................................................. 111
Appendix F: MA Model Self Study .............................................................................. 113
Appendix G: Themes .................................................................................................... 118
Abstract

Post secondary education is essential to success. To ensure that students who graduate from high school are prepared to make informed decisions about their life after high school, they need to be explicitly taught career development skills. These skills should be part of a comprehensive, results-based, developmentally appropriate comprehensive school counseling program (CSCP), such as Massachusetts’ version of the ASCA National Model, the MA Model.

Using the theories that comprise the MA Model: Gysbers and Henderson’s comprehensive guidance model, Johnson and Johnson’s results-based model and Myrick’s developmental guidance model, this case study explored the process by which four school counselors, who had achieved the MARC (Massachusetts Accountability Report Card) of Excellence Award were able to reflect on and report their efforts to implement the MA Model. Data collection consisted of individual interviews and artifacts. Data analysis revealed three key findings: (a) CSCP is a planned, proactive comprehensive part of the child’s education, (b) school counselor responsibilities and expectations can facilitate or inhibit CSCP implementation and (c) accountability is an essential component of an effective CSCP. The data provided useful insight into the barriers and opportunities of school counselors who were implementing the MA Model. The findings illustrate the need for school counselors to provide proactive and programmatic services that produce positive outcomes for all students.

Key words: School counseling, comprehensive school counseling programs, implementation
Acknowledgements

The journey to Dr. Salas has been a long one and would not have been possible without the help and support of my family and colleagues. A special thanks to my parents John and Barbara Beeler, your support and encouragement along this journey has been enormous to its completion. In addition, this journey would not be possible without the encouragement and cheerleading from Steve, Jennifer and Andrew. Your support and self-sufficiency during this journey was instrumental. You wouldn’t let me quit, you knew when to give me time to work and more importantly, you knew when I needed to take a break. I hope that by traveling alongside me, you will realize that you, too, can achieve any goal that you set your mind to, especially the tough goals that seem nearly impossible to achieve. One foot in front of the other in the direction of your goal and you will get there!

I would also like to thank the doctors that have gone before me. Your kind words and advice were monumental in giving me the tools to bring this project to completion, Timothy Poynton and Carol Dahir for their insight into school counseling research, Kirk Jones for spiritual motivation to continue writing and Paul Patti for talking me off of the doctoral ledge. From my school counselor colleagues at MASCA and ASCA to my professors, advisors and peers at Northeastern University, you all have helped shaped my thinking and given me the desire to be the best school counselor I can be. I would also like to thank the amazing school counselors who took the time out of their busy schedules to share their experiences. Finally, I would like to thank my advisor, Kelly Conn, for staying with me and supporting me throughout this process, second reader Jane Lohmann for her helpful information and my third reader Helen O’Donnell whose insight into the MA Model is deserving of special admiration. I am thankful to have worked alongside such amazing individuals.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem of Practice

School counselors are getting a bad rap. Mention that you work as a school counselor and undoubtedly you will be flooded with stories from others on how they didn’t know their school counselor or the school counselor gave them bad advice. A recent Public Agenda Report for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation entitled “Can I Get a Little Advice Here?” illustrates this assumption in their report on the ineffectiveness of school counselors in its first finding. “Most students, even those who successfully complete college, give their high school guidance counselors fair or poor ratings” (Johnson, Rochkind, Ott, & Dupont, 2010, p. 5).

A reason for the poor ratings may be in the inefficient way guidance services have been delivered to students with minimal college and career readiness training. “The guidance system as it operates in public schools today indicates that counselors are often overworked and underprepared when it comes to helping students make the best decisions about their lives after high school” (Johnson et al., 2010, p. 2). The results are graduates from high school who are poorly prepared for post-secondary planning and success.

Seniors are graduating from high school unprepared for college entry or for future employment. A recent study by the National Organization for School Counselor Advocacy reported, “only 69 percent of high school graduates enroll in a post-secondary institution” (College Board, 2011, p. 21). Enrollment in a post-secondary institution is the culmination of several events in the student’s academic experiences.

Students need to have an idea of their career interests, awareness of the post-secondary education enrollment requirements to achieve that goal, and an ability to successfully complete
the college preparatory coursework necessary for admission. Unfortunately, the coursework that counts towards post-secondary admissions begins in ninth grade, but the student may not become aware of enrollment requirements until college exploration and visits, usually junior, or even senior year. By then, it’s often too late to complete the necessary coursework in high school. An example of enrollment requirements that may cause obstacles for students is the requirement of two years of a world language. If the high school does not require the completion of coursework in world language, and the student is not advised of this core requirement, the student may not elect to enroll, resulting in a failure to meet the college’s two-year world language requirement (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, n.d.).

**Significance of the problem.** A recent U.S. Census report found that higher levels of education result in higher earnings, as well as a higher likelihood of full-time employment. More specifically, the report found that the relationship between education and earnings amounts to millions of dollars in variation regardless of differences in personal characteristics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). In addition, high unemployment rates are another factor supporting career advising for students about post-secondary education and specialized training to enhance employment credentials.

Many school counselors are still providing responsive services to students who are referred, rather than utilizing a proactive and programmatic service to all students (American School Counselor Association, 2012). According to the MA School Counselor Standards and Indicators, on the educator evaluation document, counselors are required to help all students become college and career ready (Massachusetts School Counselor Association website, n.d.). School counselors must more actively promote the enrollment of all seniors into post-secondary education.
Definitions

The following definitions are used throughout this document and are defined for clarification purposes:

*Comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCP):* Comprehensive school counseling programs, comprehensive developmental school counseling programs and comprehensive guidance and counseling programs are terms that refer to school counseling programs which are comprehensive in scope, preventive in design and developmental in nature (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012; Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Myrick, 2003). The term “comprehensive school counseling programs” will be utilized throughout this study.

*American School Counselor Association (ASCA):* The national organization that represents professional school counselors.

*ASCA National Model:* A model for comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCP) developed by ASCA to provide a framework for school counselors, which consists of four components: foundation, management, delivery, and accountability.

*Massachusetts School Counselor Association (MASCA):* The state organization that represents professional school counselors in Massachusetts.

*Massachusetts Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (MA Model):* This model is aligned with the ASCA Model but specifically designed to include Massachusetts Career Development Education (CDE) Benchmarks.

*Massachusetts Career Development Education (CDE) Benchmarks:* The CDE Benchmarks serve as guidelines for establishing guidance curricula and consist of three domains:
academic/technical, personal/social and workplace readiness.

*School Counselor:* The term utilized by ASCA to represent a change in role and function rather than the antiquated term “guidance counselor” which refers to an earlier role that focused on vocational counseling (Bemak, 2000). The term “school counseling” will be utilized throughout this study rather than the term “guidance.”

**Brief Summary**

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has recognized the need for school counselors to provide direct services (classroom lessons, individual planning sessions and responsive services) to every student by delivering a Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP). A CSCP is a structured and results-based program that consists of four components: guidance curriculum, responsive services, individual planning and system supports (Gysbers, 2010, p. 170). Following the launch of ASCA’s National Model in 2003, state organizations began creating their own version of a comprehensive school-counseling program. To date, “17 states have established models, 24 states are progressing in model implementation, and 10 states are at a beginning stage of model development” (Martin, Carey, & DeCoster, 2009, para. 1). In states that have completed studies on the impact of CSCP (such as Missouri and Utah), Lapan, Gysbers and Kayson (2007) found “that more fully implemented comprehensive guidance programs had a significant impact on student achievement” (p. 4). Similarly, Nelson, Fox, Haslam and Gardner (2007) found that in Utah, “students in high-implementing comprehensive counseling and guidance schools achieve higher levels of academic achievement and make better decisions about education and career planning than do students in matched lower-implementing schools” (p. 116).
Massachusetts is a state that has been determined to be progressing towards model implementation. Martin et al. measured nine features of model implementation with a 16-item structured survey of state guidance leaders and found that Massachusetts contained four to six of the nine features (2009). The nine features included: written model on state department of education’s website, modern model features, model endorsement, model linked to career planning, school counseling leadership in state department of education, supportive legislation, supportive licensure and accreditation, professional development, model evaluation. Martin et al. did not state specifically which of the nine features were present in Massachusetts.

The CSCP created specifically for Massachusetts is entitled the Massachusetts Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (MA Model). The MA Model was developed using the ASCA National Model as a template (Massachusetts School Counselors Association [MASCA], 2006). While there are studies in other states (Connecticut, Missouri, Nebraska, Rhode Island, Utah) that have examined their state models, there are currently no studies in Massachusetts that have explored how Massachusetts’ school counselors are implementing the MA Model or what impact it has had on post-secondary school enrollment.

It appears that few schools in Massachusetts are implementing the MA Model, despite the stated benefits to students in other states (Lapan, Gysbers, & Kayson, 2007; Nelson, Gardner, & Fox, 1998). Most notably, Lapan, Gysbers & Kayson (2007) found that in Missouri, more graduates from the high school that was fully implementing the CSCP were attending college than graduates from the lower implementing high school one year after graduation. In recent personal conversations with both Katie Gray and Helen C. O’Donnell, Ed.D (June, 2012), members of the core writing team of the MA Model, both questioned whether any school in Massachusetts was fully implementing the MA Model. Implementing a comprehensive school
counseling program involves consistently gathering, assessing and using data such as student test scores, attendance rates, and graduation plans from the school’s student information system as well as teacher, student, and parent input to increase student success. The identified PreK-12 data from the implementation initiatives then needs to be shared with stakeholders, i.e., school counselors, administrators, parents, board members, and other stakeholders (the individuals who affect or are affected by changes in student support services). Support from stakeholders is critical to the implementation of a CSCP (Lehr & Sumarah, 2002).

The MARC (Massachusetts Accountability Report Card) of Excellence Award is an indicator of evidence that the school counseling program within the school is achieving measurable student outcomes in both student achievement data (test scores, grade point average, graduation rate) and achievement related data (attendance rates, suspensions, course enrollment patterns, participation in extracurricular activities). The MARC is a comprehensive document that highlights many areas of a CSCP such as principal support, student results, a focus on improvement, school climate and safety, as well as evidence that the school counseling program has contributed to student success.

To date, only eight schools out of nearly 2,000 schools in Massachusetts have received the MARC since its inception in 2006. While this is not an indicator of how many schools within the Commonwealth are actively working to begin implementation of the MA Model, the limited number of programs being recognized by the MA School Counselor Association illustrates that many Massachusetts school counselors are not implementing a comprehensive school counseling program or taking the time to complete the MARC. This study seeks to explore the process by which MARC recipients implemented their comprehensive school counseling programs. Documenting this process may help other Massachusetts school counselors who are considering
implementing the MA Model.

**Positionality Statement**

I have been a school counselor for the past eighteen years and have worked in five school districts. In my experience, the function and role of the school counselor varies widely with the expectations of each administration. Most administrators have no knowledge of comprehensive school counseling programs, but will support the implementation of the MA Model as long as the school counselor can still fulfill all of the previously prescribed duties, which can include coordinating the state testing for the school, serving as the team facilitator, assisting with discipline issues, etc. When school counselors spend considerable time engaged in administrative tasks, then they have less time to implement a comprehensive school counseling program. School counselors face challenges such as outdated or nonexistent written job descriptions, inconsistent understanding of the competencies and vision of the school counselor role by administrators, limited access to classroom instructional time and/or constant interruptions for crisis response. As a result, school counseling can evolve into an ancillary service, rather than be recognized as a strong developmentally, comprehensive, and preventive component of a child’s education.

This study provided the insights and experiences as well as identified the barriers and opportunities of school counselors who were able to more fully implement the MA Model. The practical goals for this project were to explore the experiences of school counselors who had been able to more fully implement the MA Model and to describe the process of implementation, including the barriers encountered and how those barriers were overcome. The intellectual goals for the project were to assist school counselors who are trying to implement the MA Model. This study will add anecdotal information from the perspective of the school counselor regarding the
process of implementing a CSCP. In addition, the study will add to the national conversation about the school counselor’s role in promoting success for all students and contribute to scholarship regarding the process of implementing CSCP.

**Theoretical Framework**

The ASCA National Model sets the standard for best practices in school counseling and is based on three theories: the comprehensive guidance model, the results-based model, and the developmental guidance model. Figure 1 describes the major idea in each theory, its unique components and how each theory’s use to guide this research study. Each theory provided a different lens to use in viewing a CSCP. Together, the three theories represent the essential components to ensure that the school counseling program was comprehensive in scope, preventive in design and developmental in nature.
To ensure that all students who graduate from high school are prepared to make an informed decision about their lives after high school, they need to be explicitly taught career development skills. These skills are part of a comprehensive, results-based, developmentally appropriate CSCP, such as Massachusetts’ version of the ASCA National Model, the MA Model. Unfortunately, as is true in other states, many school counselors are still not implementing a CSCP (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009).

The MA Model is based on the ASCA National Model, which is comprised of three
theories: the comprehensive guidance model (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006), the results-based model (Johnson & Johnson, 2006) and the developmental guidance model (Myrick, 2003). These three theories will direct this study as they frame the research on CSCP implementation, in particular, how school counselors can contribute to student success when there is an organized plan.

The first theory, Gyspers’ and Henderson’s comprehensive guidance model (2006) offers a programmatic look at how school counseling services should be delivered, with an emphasis on the processes for implementation and school counseling as a program, not a service. The second theory, the results-based model (Johnson & Johnson, 2006), also stresses the comprehensiveness of school counseling as a program rather than an ancillary service, but also looks to accountability and evidence of student progress. The third theory, the developmental guidance model (Myrick, 2003), references developmental stages of students so that skills may be taught sequentially.

All three theories provided a theoretical framework for defining what elements a CSCP must possess in order for students to derive the most benefits. These benefits included college and career readiness, which can best be measured by the increased number of graduates from high school who are planning to attend higher education institutions. Participants in this study were asked to describe their experiences in implementing the MA Model and what impact it had on student achievement.

**Comprehensive guidance model.** According to the comprehensive guidance model, the CSCP is comprised of four interlocking components: the content element, organizational framework, resources element, and the development, management, and accountability element. All elements working together create a system in which students can achieve success.
The content element of the comprehensive guidance model contains the knowledge and skills that students will acquire as a result of the CSCP. In Massachusetts, the student competencies are the MA Career Development Education (CDE) Benchmarks (Massachusetts School Counselors Association [MASCA], 2006). The CDE Benchmarks are comprised of three domains: academic-technical development, workplace readiness development, and personal/social development. All three domains target different skills and knowledge that a student needs in order to be successful. A school that is targeting college and career readiness would likely focus on benchmarks such as “W-1 learners will develop and demonstrate knowledge and skills in the planning and decision-making process” (MASCA, 2006, p. 7).

The second component of the comprehensive guidance model is the organizational framework, which consists of the structure, activities and time element of the school-counseling program. The program components are of particular interest in this study as they encompass direct and indirect services to the student. The program components include the guidance curriculum, individual student planning, and responsive services. In making plans for life after high school, the student needs to be taught skills explicitly. These skills include identifying career interests, searching for a good fit post-secondary school, getting accepted into that school, and being successful through to completion.

The final two components of comprehensive guidance model include the resources element and the development, management, and accountability element. This section helps define the roles of the school counselors and other school personnel. For the purposes of this study, an emphasis was placed on the implementation process, as the goal of this study was to explore how some school counselors were able to more fully implement their CSCP. The master calendar revealed how often and at what times counselors got into the classrooms. It also
identified other programs and assemblies for students and families that promoted the guidance curriculum and facilitated a student’s journey towards college acceptance. Examples included Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) workshops and college post-secondary planning nights for families. The school counseling program’s master calendar ensured that these activities were completed each year.

**Results-based model.** Similar to the comprehensive guidance model, the results-based model is comprehensive and stresses that the system works when all of the pieces are in place. This approach “ensures equity to guarantee that all students acquire the competencies to become successful in school and to make a successful transition from school to higher education, employment, or a combination of higher education and work” (Johnson, Johnson, & Downs, 2006, p. 7). The results-based model is unique in that it is a data-driven approach, which revolves around student success. Whereas the other theories describe the necessary components of a CSCP, the results-based model ensures that it is implemented and effective through the collection, analysis and the dissemination of data.

The results-based model requires school counselors to collect and analyze data such as student achievement data (test scores, grade point average, graduation rate) as well as achievement-related data (attendance rates, suspensions, course enrollment patterns, participation in extracurricular activities). School counselors then implement their program based on the data received. In examining a more fully implemented CSCP, one would see artifacts such as a gap analysis, needs assessments as well as evidence of student achievement. For example, in examining the percentage of graduates from high school who are planning to attend college, a school counselor first looks at the graduation plans from previous years for trends. The next step includes a survey of high school students to inquire about their skills and knowledge in
career decisions, the college application process, financial aid, etc. Programming and targeted interventions are implemented. Impact data is assessed. The results-based model provides evidence that the school counseling program has an impact on student achievement.

**Developmental guidance model.** Similar to the comprehensive guidance model and the results-based model, the developmental guidance model is comprehensive, planned, organized and provided to all students. The uniqueness of the developmental guidance model is its emphasis on human development and optimal learning at the appropriate time. According to Myrick (2003), “development must be viewed as continuous, cyclical, progressive, and active” (p. 40).

School counselors can use their positions and school counseling programs to assist students in succeeding during adolescence. In an article by Eccles et al. (1993) regarding the impact of stage-environment fit on young adolescents’ experiences in schools, the authors noted a decline in school interest, motivation and relationships with teachers, which can lead to school failure during early adolescence. Adolescents at this stage desire increased decision-making, peer interaction and relationships with adults outside of their homes. School counselors are in positions to build on student motivation by teaching students the skills to identify and achieve their goals. School counselors can provide opportunities for students to increase peer interactions in school by planning collaborative guidance activities, and promoting student participation in extracurricular activities. As far as increasing adult relationships, school counselors are in positions to build relationships with a student over the entire time that the student attends school in that building and be the person that the student can go to when he or she needs support.

School counselors need to be knowledgeable in the stages of development when creating their guidance programs and with their interactions with students. “Based upon developmental
stages, tasks, skills, and learning conditions, the guidance curriculum is a planned effort to provide each student with a set of skills and experiences that helps enhance all learning” (Myrick, 2003, p. 42).

Myrick (2003) lists eight goals, which characterize the skills and knowledge to be achieved in the guidance program (p. 42).

Goal 1: understanding the school environment
Goal 2: understanding self and others
Goal 3: understanding attitudes and behavior
Goal 4: decision-making and problem solving
Goal 5: interpersonal and communication skills
Goal 6: school success skills
Goal 7: career awareness and educational planning
Goal 8: community pride and involvement

Evidence of a developmentally appropriate guidance program is seen in the scope and sequence of the curriculum map. Activities build on each other depending on the age of the student. For instance, career awareness at the elementary level would include meeting workers in the neighborhood, such as police and fire personnel. At the middle school level, students could begin a deeper exploration of entry-level careers. Finally, at the high school level, students might engage in a detailed exploration of careers by looking at employment trends, skills, and required education.

These three models offered the researcher different lenses through which to explore the experiences of school counselors who were more fully able to implement the MA Model. A more fully implemented CSCP according to the comprehensive guidance model should look like a
program rather than a service and should include the following components: the content element, organizational framework, resources element, and the development, management, and accountability element. Challenges may arise in the struggle to change from a service to a program. In examining the CSCP through the lens of results-based model, one would expect the school counselors to have artifacts that illustrate the impact that their program has had on student achievement. Collecting and analyzing data may be a challenge for some school counselors. The developmental guidance model focuses on meeting the needs of the student in order to achieve success. Evidence that the CSCP is developmentally appropriate is described in the guidance curriculum scope and sequence. A challenge in this area includes when and how often the school counselors get into the classrooms and meet with each student. If the school counselor only sees the student twice per year then it is unlikely that he or she will build a relationship.

The American School Counselors Association (ASCA) accepts these three theories as standards of practice in the current field of school counseling. Each theory summarizes necessary elements of a CSCP, defines school counselor roles, and establishes the focus of curriculum content and delivery. The elements of these theories are blended together and integrated into both the ASCA’s National Model and the MA Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs, which inform and guide school counseling practitioners and administrators about program design and implementation.

**Research Questions**

This case study asked the following questions to discover how school counselors were more fully implementing the MA Model.

1. What are the experiences and perceptions of school counselors who have been able to more fully implement the MA Model?
How do school counselors who are implementing the MA Model spend their time?

What components of the MA Model are present in schools that more fully implement the MA Model?

How are school counselors documenting the impact of their programs?

What factors are motivating school counselors to document the impact of their program?

2. What are the challenges and opportunities that school counselors have encountered while implementing the MA Model?

3. How have school counselors who have been implementing the MA Model been able to address and resolve challenges that they encountered?
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The themes for this literature review included the need for high school students to continue their post-secondary education and how school counselors could assist. Comprehensive school counseling program models at both the national and state levels were explored for best practices. The impact that more fully implemented CSCP had on student success was also examined. Finally, the need to study implementation of the MA Model is illustrated.

Post-Secondary Education is Essential

Earning a high school diploma isn’t enough to be successful; graduates from high school need to have a plan after high school in order to succeed financially and reach their career goals. “Career and life planning is not a point in time activity, but rather planned activities over time, developmentally structured and delivered” (Drier, 2000, p. 77). If the plan includes college completion, then that student has better prospects for employment and job security than his peers who stop their formal education after high school (Brock, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Further education can lead to higher pay and stable employment. The more a student learns, the more he will earn. As stated in a report from the U.S. Census Bureau (2011) “higher levels of education allow people access to more specialized jobs that are often associated with high pay” (p. 2). These specialized jobs are the positions that will likely be more available as few are qualified. In these tough economic times, stable employment is indeed desirable.

Graduates from high school not pursuing a post-secondary education. Some of the reasons that graduates from high school are not pursuing post-secondary education are illustrated in Klasik’s (2012) study on the steps from college aspiration to college enrollment. The road from desiring to go to college and actually enrolling is complex and includes aspiring to go to college in the tenth grade and then maintaining that aspiration through twelve grade. Also
included is the completion of entrance exams, such as the SAT and/or ACT, being academically prepared, applying to the college, completing the application for financial aid, and finally enrolling.

In addition, students need to have explored their career interests so they know what programs to pursue, know the path that it takes to get there, and be accepted into the program. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education defines college and career readiness as “the knowledge and skills necessary for success in postsecondary education and economically viable career pathways in a 21st century economy” (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d., p. 1).

As such, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education encourages all high school students to complete The Massachusetts High School Program of Studies (MassCore). The MassCore “is a recommended, rigorous course of study based on standards in Massachusetts’s world-class curriculum frameworks that align high school coursework with college and workforce expectations” (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011, p. 1). The MassCore requirements are also the minimum requirements to enter a Massachusetts state university. The goal of the MassCore is to provide high school students with the skills and knowledge to start college without the need for remedial coursework. Students who do not complete the MassCore requirements are not eligible for admission to a Massachusetts state university. School counselors can ensure that all of the students on their caseloads are completing the MassCore.

In addition to being aware of career interests and being academically prepared, students need to know admissions requirements and procedures. Students applying to colleges need to be aware of the application requirements. While many schools use the Common App, some still
require a paper application or another type of electronic application. In addition to the application, some schools also have supplementary requirements. All schools have deadlines and those deadlines vary greatly. “Many students give up simply because they feel intimidated or overwhelmed by all of the requirements and activities associated with applying to college” (Conley, 2007, p. 22).

Students need direct instruction on how to weave through the maze of college admissions successfully: in particular, first generation college students and students who lack family support. Students without support can make a decision based on impulse. Students may revert to impulse decisions in order to ease their stress. “Many students worried about whether they had made the right decision. Some made decisions prematurely just to get rid of the stress and pressure they were feeling” (Daigneault & Wirtz, 2008, p. 4). Direct instruction on how to complete the college admissions process could reduce stress in students.

School Counselors Can Help

Drier (2000) states that self-satisfaction and high performance are the ultimate outcomes from a student’s participation in a CSCP. Providing services to all students is a focus of all three school counseling theories (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Johnson et al., 2006; Myrick, 2003). These services include post-secondary planning. Priorities and practices of school counselors that focus directly on students rather than administrative tasks are essential.

Myrick (2003) suggests that counselor interventions be divided into direct and indirect services. Using the example of college planning, direct services can include classroom guidance lessons to all high school students on the college application process. Direct services also include focus groups around additional help with scholarships and financial aid. Finally, direct services include individual counseling. The school counselor needs to meet with each senior individually
to discuss where he or she would be in his or her planning process and what other supports are needed. Although parent consultation is considered an indirect service, the parent’s role in the student’s post-secondary planning process is nonetheless important in helping the student to achieve success in meeting his or her post-secondary goal.

A study by Daigneault, S. and Wirtz, E. (2008) identified student concerns as students graduated from high school. While the students expressed excitement over freedom and self-imposed rules, they expressed concerns that school counselors could address in their CSCP. Students concerns “included worries about money, about being successful in college or work, and about leaving friends and family” (p. 11).

Worries about money could be addressed using Johnson and Johnson’s (2006) results-based model. Daigneault and Witz’s research study is the first step in identifying the need to provide more information and support regarding financing college. The second step includes collecting data on how many students and parents attended the financial aid planning night as well as how many families filled out a FAFSA. The activities to address this need may include having additional FAFSA workshops and having a representative from an educational financial planning institute available during evening hours. Data would be collected after the events to determine the impact on student achievement.

In theory, providing effective comprehensive school counseling services to students seems simple; however, studies that have explored a student’s satisfaction with school counseling services say otherwise (Gallant & Zhao, 2011; Johnson et al., 2010). Gallant and Zhao’s study examined the awareness, use and satisfaction of school counseling services. Researchers discovered that while “83% of respondents indicated plans to attend either a 2- or 4-year college…less than half of respondents reported using” school counseling services (p. 96).
Even more disturbing than the lack of students utilizing school counseling services is the satisfaction rating that students who do seek assistance give their school counselors. Only “59% of respondents who visited the school counselors’ office reported satisfaction with all services received” (Gallant & Zhao, p. 97). Another report entitled “Can I Get a Little Advice Here? How an Overstretched High School Guidance System Is Undermining Students’ College Aspirations” (Johnson et al., 2010) indicated similar findings. This public agenda report for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation found that “most students, even those who successfully complete college, give their high school guidance counselors fair or poor ratings” (Johnson et al., 2010, p. 5). The study claims that because counselors have such large caseloads and other responsibilities they are not able to meet with all of their students. The study concludes by stating “when it comes to facilitating students’ transition from high school to college or work, the current system is seriously underserving those it is intended to help” (p. 14). These examples illustrate a need to change from the old guidance model of students seeking out the school counselor to a CSCP in which all students are served.

**Best Practices in School Counseling**

Comprehensive school counseling programs are an effective means to ensure that services are delivered to all students (American School Counselor Association, 2012; Burnham & Jackson, 2000, Green & Keys, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2006, Johnson et al., 2006; Lapan et al. 2003; Myrick, 2003). School counseling associations, such as the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) have combined the three theories of school counseling: comprehensive guidance model (Gysbers, 2005), results-based model (Johnson et al., 2006) and developmental guidance model (Myrick, 2003) to create a best practices model for counselors to use as a guide in developing their school counseling programs. The theories provide a
developmentally appropriate, comprehensive program that is data driven. It is by following the ASCA Model that school counselors can effectively and efficiently service all students.

**ASCA National Model**

“School counseling evolved from a position, to a service, to a program, the organizational concept embedded in the ASCA National Model” (American School Counselor Association, 2012, p. vii). The ASCA National Model is comprised of all of the necessary components of a model comprehensive school counseling program.

The ASCA National Model (American School Counselor Association, 2012, p. xii)

- Ensures equitable access to rigorous education for all students
- Identifies the knowledge and skills all students will acquire as a result of the K-12 CSCP
- Is delivered to all students in a systematic fashion
- Is based on data-driven decision making
- Is provided by a state-credentialed school counselor

Four components make up the framework of the ASCA National Model: foundation, management, delivery and accountability. Each component provides a structure for the essential elements in the CSCP that combined will ensure student success. Surrounding the four components are the embedded themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systematic change. These skills and practices will ensure the successful implementation of the CSCP.

The foundation is the “what” of the program and “is defined as the student knowledge, attitudes and skills that are learned because of a school counseling program” (American School Counselor Association, 2012, p. 21). This section is comprised of the beliefs, mission, vision and goals, standards and competencies of the school counseling program. The foundation provides a
focus and guidelines for school counselors to build their programs. For this study, artifacts from the school’s counseling department and website will be explored such as the master calendar, copies of presentations for students, parents, teachers and board members, the scope and sequence chart for the guidance curriculum, the school counselor job description, evaluation rubric and management agreements. The MARC submission application will also be examined. A more fully implemented school counseling program has a mission and a vision. These artifacts illustrate the elements to make graduates from high school successful.

The second component of the ASCA National Model is the management component, which ensures that the program is efficient and effective. The management component “provides organizational assessments and tools designed to …help school counselors develop, implement and evaluate their school counseling program based on clearly defined priorities reflecting students needs” (American School Counselor Association, 2012, p. 41). The management component contains the program assessment, needs assessments, program results, calendar and curriculum map. It also defines counseling vs. non-counseling activities and how counselors should spend their time. In exploring the management component, school counselors will be asked how they spend their time and what, if any, duties they perform during the school day. School counselors who spend much of their days engaged in non-counseling tasks are unable to spend the time necessary to access their programs. This leads to program ineffectiveness for students. For example, if an assessment shows that few students and their families fill out the FAFSA, the CSCP needs to focus its efforts on direct instruction and added supports in this area so that students have the financial means to attend college.

The third component, the delivery system, is where school counselors should be spending 80% of their time providing direct or indirect student services. These include direct services such
as classroom instruction of the school counseling curriculum, individual student planning and responsive services. It also includes indirect services such as the times when a school counselor is helping a student through other people. The interviews with the school counselors will identify to the researcher how the counselor spends a typical day. The curriculum map will illustrate how many times the school counselors go into the classrooms during the year. In a more fully implemented CSCP the counselor is in the classroom much of the time meeting with all students rather than the archaic method of waiting in her office for the students to refer themselves. They will also be collecting evidence that illustrates the impact of their CSCP. All students need to learn skills such as how to explore career interests, how to search for the best-fit college, and how to complete the application process.

The final component of the ASCA National Model is the accountability component, which measures impact. “School counselors use this evaluation to answer the question, ‘How are students different as a result of the school counseling program?’” (American School Counselor Association, 2012, p. 99). It is here that school counselors collect data to show that they are making a difference. More fully implemented CSCP can increase the percentage of high school graduates planning to attend post-secondary institutions because those students are taught the skills needed in order to achieve that goal.

**State School Counseling Models**

The ASCA National Model has had a significant impact on the school counseling profession and how counselors deliver services to students, resulting in state school counselor associations and state leaders aligning their state school counseling models with the ASCA National Model (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009). Most states have created their own version of a school counseling model, although the degree of implementation varies. Some states have
mandated CSCP and requirements for student to counselor ratios, 6-year career plans for all students, as well as other requirements for training and certifying school counselors (Martin et al., 2009). These legislative mandates facilitate CSCP implementation.

Missouri was one of the first states to develop and implement a state model for school counseling. In a state wide study (Lapan, Gysbers, & Kayson, 2007) regarding the relationship between comprehensive guidance program implementation and academic achievement, researchers found that comprehensive school counseling programs made a significant impact on student achievement. This study surveyed Missouri school counselors and administrators on the degree of implementation of the Missouri’s model for school counseling program in their building. After controlling for differences among school buildings such as student expenditure, enrollment, and students receiving free or reduced lunch, the researchers analyzed tenth grade state math scores, graduation rates, attendance rates and discipline instances to degree of implementation.

One year after graduating high school “only 28 percent of graduating seniors” (Lapan et al., 2007, p. 8) in lower implementing schools were attending a four-year college, whereas almost half of all graduation seniors (47 percent) from schools with a more fully implemented school counseling program were attending college.

Other statewide studies on the impact of the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Program have yielded positive results for a more fully implemented program as well. One study that examined data from 22,601 students revealed increased feelings of safety at school among seventh graders (Lapan, Gyspers, & Petroski, 2001). In this study, teachers reported on the degree of implementation and students reported on feeling safe at school, satisfaction with their education and grades, as well as perception data on their relationships with their teachers.
Another study of 22,964 students attending 236 Missouri high schools cited that students reported being better prepared for the future in schools that had more fully implemented MCGP (Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997). Both students and school counselors completed these surveys. The degree of implementation for the school’s CSCP was calculated using the mean counselor rating across all thirty-two items. Student surveys included data measuring student characteristics and attitudes towards school. Results from these large statewide studies set an example for other states.

Utah is another state that has invested resources into examining the impact of their state model. “These results strongly indicate that school counseling programs in Utah’s Intermediate, Middle and Junior High Schools are making measurable contributions to student achievement” (Carey & Harrington, 2010, p. 48). In an earlier study (Nelson, Gardner, & Fox, 1998) regarding the impact of the Utah Comprehensive Guidance Program in high schools, the researchers examined how well the students perceived that their school prepared them for post secondary success, “44% of the students in the high implementation sample rated their preparation as either ‘very good’ or ‘more than adequate” compared to “37% in the low implementation sample” (p. 2). Utah and Missouri are considered states in which there are established models, while Massachusetts is still progressing in their efforts (Martin et al., 2009).

**Massachusetts Model for School Counseling**

Massachusetts has a state goal of preparing “students to succeed in entry-level college credit-bearing courses and for entry-level jobs with career opportunities” (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.). As such, the state goals are to increase the graduation rate to 88.3% and increase the MassCore completion rate to 82.5% by 2014. One of the seven key projects identified by the state for meeting these goals is the
implementation of the Massachusetts Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (MA Model). Local districts that signed on to participate in Race to the Top have identified $113,443 of their RTTT funds to support 90,506 students in Grades 8-12 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.).

The state model for Massachusetts is the Massachusetts Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (MA Model). The ASCA National Model was used as a template for developing the MA Model as it was used in developing other state models. The MA Model was endorsed by the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education in 2005 and then released to the public at the Massachusetts School Counselor Association’s annual conference (MASCA, 2006).

The MA Model has similar goals as the ASCA National Model, but is guided by the Massachusetts Career Development Education (CDE) Benchmarks. The CDE Benchmarks “are the standards and competencies that students should acquire in a comprehensive school counseling program in Massachusetts” (MASCA, 2006, p. 10). For instance, the three domains of the ASCA Model are academic, career and personal/social development (American School Counselor Association, 2012), whereas the same domains for the MA Model are entitled academic/technical, workplace readiness, and personal/social (MASCA, 2006).

The MA Model “is intended to: (1) guide school administrators and counselors in the development of measurably effective school counseling programs; and (2) help counselor education programs to align their curriculum with basic tenets of the Model” (MASCA, 2006, p. 2). While the MA Model has many benefits, one of the stated benefits is to provide “programs and services that develop essential attitudes, knowledge and skills for student achievement and successful post-secondary transition to adulthood” (MASCA, 2006, p. 2).
To educate MA school counselors in the MA Model and to support implementation, the Massachusetts School Counselors Association (MASCA) created the MA Model Institute. The MA Model Institute three intensive training days, fall and spring conference attendance, and yearlong technical support with implementation initiatives. Assignments include mission statements, annual calendars, management agreements, plus the development and delivery of a standards-based lesson including the collection and assessment of pre/post lesson data. Capstone projects include a poster session presentation to colleagues at the spring conference and submission of a MARC Jr. or MARC. The annual MARC Award recognizes schools, which have demonstrated MA Model implementation. Since its inception in 2008, only 8 schools have achieved the MARC and two schools have achieved the MARC twice.

In order for additional school counselors to be more successful implementing the MA Model and documenting program impact using the MARC document, they need to find out how MARC recipients have more fully implemented the MA Model and created their MARC. Developing an understanding of how some school counselors have achieved implementation will inform colleagues about implementation strategies, share success stories, and identify barriers and challenges.

As suggested in one of the few studies to address MA Model implementation (Poynton, Schumacher, & Wilczenski, 2008), more research is needed in terms of “qualitative studies that provide rich and revealing stories of school counselors' journeys through implementation” (para. 17). This researcher completed a case study that provided insights and experiences, as well as discovered barriers and opportunities in an in-depth exploration of school counselors who had implemented the MA Model. The next section describes the methodology, research design and procedures used to investigate the research questions for this study.
Chapter 3: Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative, inductive, multicase study was to gain a deeper understanding of how school counselors implemented the MA Model through their individual accounts of experiences and artifacts. As a paradigm for understanding the essential components of CSCP and how they improved the student experience, this study employed the three theories that comprise the ASCA National Model: the comprehensive guidance model (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006), the results-based model (Johnson & Johnson, 2006) and the developmental guidance model (Myrick, 2003), as a paradigm for understanding the essential components of CSCP and how they could improve the student experience. The research questions focus specifically on the practices of school counselors who have been identified through MARC submission as at least partially implementing the MA Model.

The following research questions guided this case study.

Research Questions

1: What are the experiences and perceptions of school counselors who have been able to more fully implement the MA Model?

   o How do school counselors who are implementing the MA Model spend their time?
   o What components of the MA Model are present in schools that more fully implement the MA Model?
   o How are school counselors documenting the impact of their programs?
   o What factors are motivating school counselors to document the impact of their program?

2: What are the challenges and opportunities that school counselors have encountered
while implementing the MA Model?

3: How have school counselors who have been implementing the MA Model been able to address and resolve challenges that they encountered?

A qualitative research design was utilized to answer the above research questions as it offered the researcher the ability to explore the problem deeply and with detail, which led to an increased understanding of the participants’ perspectives (Creswell, 2007). A qualitative research design was preferable in this study as the research on the MA Model was limited. To date, only one published study addressed the MA Model. The study by Poynton et al. (2008) sought to identify facilitators and barriers to implementing the MA Model. The quantitative study surveyed 1,400 MASCA members to measure their perceptions of the impact of the MA Model. This study sought to understand the experiences of school counselors who had been identified as implementing the MA Model. As such, open-ended interview questions were preferable to a quantitative approach as they were broad and general which allowed participants to construct meaning of the situation. A qualitative research design also yielded in depth descriptions that would not have be possible with quantitative methods.

**Research Tradition**

This study used a case study approach with a general inductive analysis to explore the experiences of school counselors who had more fully implemented the MA Model in their schools. A case study was the best research approach for this study as the researcher sought to investigate “a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). In addition, a case study allowed the researcher to describe how school counselors were implementing CSCP in their schools. A rich description would prove too complex for a survey or other experimental strategies (Yin, 2009). Describing how these few school counselors were able
to implement a CSCP in their schools, while many have not, required evidence from many sources such as an interview, self-study, archival documents, etc. This study utilized a multiple case design to describe how more than one school counselor was able to implement the MA Model. Multiple cases offered different perspectives on CSCP implementation and was therefore preferable to a single case study (Yin, 2009).

Thomas (2006) states “the primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (p. 238). This design was chosen as an in depth exploration of school counselors’ experiences implementing the MA Model using a variety of specific data sources (interviews, surveys and artifacts, such as school counseling calendar, guidance curriculum map). By utilizing an inductive approach, the researcher was able to identify common themes and factors in the experiences of the school counselors who were implementing the MA Model.

Participants

A purposeful sampling criterion was used for this study of Massachusetts’ school counselors who have received the Massachusetts Accountability Report Card (MARC) award. Purposeful sampling occurs when participants are selected because they have an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007). In this study, in order to find out more about implementing the MA Model, the participants needed to be well versed in it. The MARC award documents illustrated a commitment by the school counseling program to achieving measurable student outcomes (masca.org). MARC recipients were selected for this study as they have demonstrated knowledge and use of the components of the MA Model. More importantly, MARC recipients demonstrated that their school counseling
program produced positive results for student outcomes. In order to ensure that participants could describe the implementation process that they experienced, the criterion for selection was that participants had received the MARC and were still currently employed within that district.

In terms of sampling size, Creswell (2002) suggested that in qualitative studies the researcher should study a few individuals and collect extensive detail about each individual studied. Since only eight schools had achieved the MARC award, all eight schools were invited to participate in this study. Four elected to participate. While fewer subjects allowed the researcher the ability to explore their individual experiences in depth, few subjects posed a potential threat to generalizability.

**Recruitment and Access**

Participants were recruited from MARC recipients. A list of MARC award recipients was received from David Elsner (August, 2012), MARC coordinator. Since all of the MARC recipients were MASCA members, their contact information was published in the MASCA directory of Massachusetts School Counselors. Award recipients were invited to participate in this study via a letter that informed them of the details of the study. In the letter, the researcher identified herself as a school counselor; Rubin & Rubin (2012) suggested that people were more willing to talk to you if they felt a personal connection. The letter was followed up by a personal phone call. School counselors who wished to participate were given consent forms to sign and return to the researcher.

Participants were assured of confidentiality on the informed consent. In addition, pseudonyms were utilized rather than identifying information.
# Data Collection

Table 1

*Sources of data and data collection activities.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Data collection</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the experiences and perceptions of school counselors who have been able to more fully implement the MA Model?</td>
<td>Interviews, MA Model Self Study, MARC application packet, artifacts (curriculum map, master calendar, job description), plans of graduates from high school</td>
<td>School counselors, school website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do school counselors who are implementing the MA Model spend their time?</td>
<td>Interviews, MA Model Self Study, MARC application packet, artifacts (curriculum map, master calendar, job description)</td>
<td>School counselors, school website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What components of the MA Model are present in schools that more fully implement the MA Model?</td>
<td>Interviews, MA Model Self Study, MARC application packet, artifacts (curriculum map, master calendar, job description), plans of graduates from high school</td>
<td>School counselors, school website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are school counselors documenting the impact of their program?</td>
<td>Interviews, MA Model Self Study, MARC application packet, artifacts (presentations to stakeholders)</td>
<td>School counselors, school website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are motivating school counselors to document the impact of their program?</td>
<td>Interviews, MARC application packet</td>
<td>School counselors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the challenges and opportunities that school counselors have encountered while implementing the MA Model?</td>
<td>Interviews, MA Model Self Study, job description, MARC application packet</td>
<td>School counselors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have school counselors who have been implementing the MA Model been able to address and resolve barriers that they encountered?</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>School counselors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researcher collected “as many detailed specifics from the research setting as possible, then set about the process of looking for patterns of relationship among the specifics” (Hatch, 2002, p. 10). Data was collected using semi-structured interview questions that were developed by the investigator. Individual interviews allowed school counselors to open up about their experiences regarding the implementation process. Counselors may not be as likely to describe challenges and barriers during a written survey in which probing for additional information is not possible. An open interview allowed probing and follow-up questions to elaborate on key events.

The researcher asked questions related to the degree of implementation of the four elements of the MA Model. The investigator asked participants to complete the MA Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Self-Study. The MA Model Self Study was developed by Dahir (2003) as a way for school counselors to “evaluate progress, identify gaps, and assess strengths and weaknesses” (MASCA, 2006, p. 24). The MA Model, like the ASCA National Model is comprised of four quadrants: the program foundation, delivery system, management system and accountability. According to ASCA, the program’s foundation is the “what” of the program. It contains the mission statement, benchmarks and standards (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2005, Location 672). The ASCA National Model uses the ASCA National Standards for School Counseling Programs which consist of three domains: academic development, career development and the personal/social domain. The MA Model utilizes the MA Career Development Education Benchmarks, which also consists of three domains nearly identical to the ASCA Model. The three domains in the MA Career Development Education Benchmarks are academic-technical skill development, workplace readiness and personal/social development. “The delivery system is the how of the implementation process, and the management system addresses the ‘when, why, by whom and on what authority’”
(ASCA, 2005, Location 949). It consists of the guidance curriculum, responsive services, individual planning and system support. The third quadrant of the model is the management system. The management system “addresses the when (action plan and calendar), why (use of data), who will implement (management agreement) and on what authority (management agreement and advisory council) the school counseling program is delivered” (ASCA, 2005, Location 1106). The final quadrant is accountability and consists of measuring student outcomes, evaluating and modifying of programs as well as sharing the results (MASCA, 2006).

Finally, the researcher examined artifacts such as the MARC application packet as well as the school counseling calendar, guidance curriculum, etc. Documents that school counselors utilized during the implementation process as well as current documents were also examined.

Data Storage

Audiotapes, artifacts and transcribed interviews associated with this study will be stored in a secure, locked file cabinet. Only the researcher will have access. After three years all documents will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

In this qualitative, inductive, multiple case study, the researcher sought to bring abstractions across cases (Merriam, 2009). This comparative case study involved collecting and analyzing data from several schools. First, each individual case was described to provide a within-case analysis. Then a cross-case analysis was completed which provided generalizations of schools that were implementing the MA Model.

Qualitative data from the MARC application, interview, artifacts and MA Model Self Study were analyzed according to Hatch’s (2002) steps to inductive analysis:
1. Read the data and identify frames of analysis
2. Create domains based on semantic relationships discovered within frames of analysis
3. Identify salient domains, assign them a code, and put others aside
4. Reread data, refining salient domains and keeping a record of where relationships are found in the data
5. Decide if your domains are supported by the data and search data for examples that do not fit with or run counter to the relationships in your domains
6. Complete an analysis within domains
7. Search for themes across domains
8. Create a master outline expressing relationships within and among domains
9. Select data excerpts to support the elements of your outline (p.162).

Data was prepared and organized for analysis. This researcher conducted interviews by listening actively and moving “the interview forward as much as possible by building on what the participant has begun to share” (Seidman, 2006, p. 81). The interviews were digitally recorded and then immediately transcribed for later analysis. Data was then reviewed and open coding used to find themes. Saldaña (2009) described open coding as an initial coding method that afforded the researcher the opportunity to reflect deeply on the data while remaining open to similarities and differences that emerge.

As recommended by Saldaña (2009), during first cycle coding, descriptive coding was used for coding documents such as MA Model Self Study, MARC application packet, artifacts (curriculum map, master calendar, job description), and the plans of high school graduates. In vivo coding was used for the interviews. In vivo coding gave the participants a voice in describing their experiences and perceptions as in vivo coding used “the direct language of
participants as codes rather than researcher-generated words and phrases” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 48). In vivo coding was most appropriate in this study as it captured the processes in which school counselors implemented the MA Model in their school as well as what challenges occurred and how they addressed barriers to implementation.

Second cycle coding was used to “develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization” from the first cycle codes (Saldaña, 2009, p. 149). Specifically, descriptive coding was utilized as the second cycle coding method as descriptive coding let the researcher describe what she saw and heard. The next part of the data analysis included reviewing the artifacts (MARC application, guidance calendar, curriculum map, school profile) using pattern coding. Saldaña (2009) suggested that pattern coding was an appropriate way of grouping data summaries into themes.

Finally, cases were coded from within and then cross case analysis was utilized to identify the common themes that emerged amongst cases. The end result was well-codified themes that described the process of implementing CSCP.

**Trustworthiness**

Triangulation and member checking was utilized as it increased this study’s credibility. Triangulation from multiple sources of data is a strategy used by qualitative researchers to increase the internal validity of their findings (Merriam, 2009). As such, data was compared and crosschecked from interviews, artifacts, MARC application and the MA Model Self Study.

Subject participation was a key element in this qualitative study as in many qualitative studies and as such was employed to provide and check information. Participants were informed that the researcher was a school counselor because knowing that a common background was
shared will increase trust (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). To further increase internal validity, participants were asked to review transcribed interviews and provide feedback.

Merriam (2009) suggested that transferability increases by providing a rich, thick description of the data. This study provided a detailed description of the data collected so that school counselors in other settings may be able to determine the extent to which these findings can be transferred to their schools.

Despite the in-depth information yielded from interviews and artifacts, with only a few subjects, this study has its limitations.

- The first limitation is the criteria for subject selection: school counselors who have achieved MARC. Other school counselors in Massachusetts may be fully implementing the MA Model but have not been identified, as they have not completed the application process for MARC.
- The second limitation is that this case study was limited to a few participants, and results cannot be generalized to a broader population.
- The third limitation is the risk of interviewer bias, since this researcher is also a practicing school counselor.

Protection of Human Subjects

Several steps were taken during this study to ensure that the rights of all participants were protected. Prior to the first interview, participants were informed about the nature of the study and its procedures. They were given the opportunity to ask questions and were able to participate voluntarily. All information gathered during the study was coded to ensure confidentiality of the participants and their institutions. Participants were made aware that they could withdraw their participation from this study at any time. The research process followed all of Northeastern
University’s Office of Human Subject Research’s guidelines. An application to conduct the proposed research study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board.
Chapter 4: Report of Research Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the insights and experiences of school counselors who were at least partially implementing comprehensive school counseling program. The participants were selected as they have all achieved the MARC award. The study used a qualitative case study method to investigate the process by which school counselors were able to implement the MA Model in their schools. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the experiences and perceptions of school counselors who have been able to more fully implement the MA Model?

2. What are the challenges and opportunities that school counselors have encountered while implementing the MA Model?

3. How have school counselors who have been implementing the MA Model been able to address and resolve challenges that they encountered?

A total of eight participants qualified for this study and four agreed to participate after receiving the invitation and informed consent to participate. All participants had received the MARC award for their school. The researcher conducted telephone interviews and collected artifacts from each of those schools. Telephone interviews were used, as the participants resided in all parts of Massachusetts. Telephone interviews also allowed for flexibility in scheduling that a face-to-face interview would not have afforded. The interviews each lasted approximately one hour and consisted of eleven open-ended questions (see Appendix E). Interview questions and probes were developed and conducted according to suggestions by Rubin & Rubin (2012). Follow-up questions were asked when appropriate during the interview. Interviews were audio-
recorded and then later transcribed for coding purposes. The researcher listened to the recording several times to ensure that nothing was missed. The transcribed recordings were then reviewed for common themes. Artifacts collected included but were not limited to the MA Model Self Study (see Appendix F), MARC application, guidance calendar, and curriculum map.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will report the findings for each single case analysis, and the second section will report the cross case findings.

**Data Analysis**

First, the data from each case were analyzed; next, a cross case analysis was completed. The researcher used inductive analysis to “allow research findings to emerge from frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in the raw data” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). Hatch’s (2002) steps to inductive analysis were utilized to analyze the research findings in each case and then between cases.

The data were read several times and as Hatch (2002) suggests, frames of analysis were identified. Four major frames of analysis emerged from reading the data: experiences, challenges, opportunities and strategies. Broad domains within the four frames of analysis were identified during the first round of coding and then categories were developed from the codes. Like categories then created emergent themes within each case. A map was created for each participant to illustrate emergent themes in their responses during the interviews. Artifacts were also collected from each participant as “documents can provide other specific details to corroborate information from other sources” (Yin, 2009, p. 103).
**Challenges**

We’re still pulling our hair out even with the one to three hundred ratio, but it’s still a whole lot better than one to four hundred.

I would say that one of the biggest challenges was realizing certain things that we needed that were difficult to do needed some kind of union input.

(Advisory) The union folks kind of said, “Oh, no. We’re not guidance counselors. We don’t want to get into that.”

Maybe half of the teacher really did my pre and post surveys.

“Classroom instruction. That’s kind of a teacher job.”

“So why are you adding more stuff to our plate?” that’s been my biggest internal issue

Data scares people.

Still resistance by some faculty members who are not sure what guidance is doing for students.

Guidance kind of did what guidance has always done.

We weren’t directed.

We weren’t trying to gather data.

We just saw people.

It’s easy to get overwhelmed with individual cases.

“Sorry, come back,” and the kid would get mad at guidance. The kid wouldn’t come back to guidance.

In terms of plans of high school graduates, I think my problem is I think the data on that is very sketchy, very skewed, and so not really clear.

**Experiences**

I want to go into the class because I want to give presentations, I want to do pre and post surveys, people were on board because they knew that everything we were going to try was going to help.

We did a need’s assessment with the faculty and then based on that came up with a game plan.

Data really is the only way that guidance will show that we’re successful.

We picked and chose activities that articulated the role of guidance and had the greatest impact.

Through data, I was able to substantiate why we were cutting a math teacher and a history teacher, why we needed to add a fourth guidance counselor.

Let’s be more aware of how we’re spending our time, because we’re really only supposed to spend 25% on responsive services.

Whether we’re in learning groups, whether in classrooms, we’re affecting more of our population than previously.

It’s one more thing but it’s a systematic approach to making sure your kids who are eligible for college by doing the college paperwork.

We have about 120 more students taking advanced placement classes, which makes them more college ready.

We’re making more students college ready.

I think the advisory impact, having one more adult help them

**Motivation**

What helped really was NEASC coming out. One of those requirements is to deliver an annual guidance plan. We have seen with the college readiness piece through duel enrollment and then kind of the emotional piece with advisory, I think, for this year, though. Those would be two of the good things we’re hoping to work on.

First year as guidance director.

Involved with MASCA.

**Strategies**

We have a lot of interns, four or five.

If we do advisory in the school, then these things will get done so we created an advisory committee.

Guidance staff that are reluctant to attend conferences typically come back energized by the break-out sessions.

Data is how we got the fourth guidance counselor.

The more that we let faculty know what we are doing the less resistance we will get.

20 minutes per student per appointment.

Don’t call one in at a time; call five kids at a time… maximize what you are doing.

Attend the summer institute; create a relationship with people that are doing the same work.

Knowing your school culture and what it’s going to take to get the buy-in from the staff and faculty and kind of start small, so an easy one that you can come back with that and say, “Look. This is what we accomplished.”

You can’t go for the fence. You’ve got to go for the singles and doubles, and don’t go for the, you know, homerun off the bat.
Profile: Doug (pseudonym)

Doug is the guidance director at a large urban high school with approximately 1,200 students in grades 9-12. Under his supervision, Doug’s school has achieved the MARC award two times. The guidance department consists of Doug in his role of the director, three school counselors, and a bilingual program counselor. The third school counselor was a new position to the department two years ago after Doug presented the data to administration showing a need for more school counseling personnel.
### Table 3

*Results of Findings for Doug*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subordinate Theme</th>
<th>Cross Case Theme</th>
<th>Domain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change is needed</td>
<td>• Keep working at it</td>
<td>• Patience as the day is limited and change takes time</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• From few to all</td>
<td>• Change happens with support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Resistance to change</td>
<td>• Persistence to overcome barriers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Build support you’re your</td>
<td>• Use outside resources</td>
<td>• Guidance as a comprehensive integral program rather than an ancillary service</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
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<td>administration, teachers, staff</td>
<td>• Collaboration is key to buy-in</td>
<td>• Use data</td>
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<td>and peers</td>
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<td>• Student centered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data is scary but necessary</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Change happens with support</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Build new programs to meet needs</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Use data</td>
<td>Experiences,</td>
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<td>Strategies,</td>
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<td>Motivation</td>
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<td>More directed, effective and</td>
<td>• Patience as the day is limited and change takes time</td>
<td></td>
<td>Experiences</td>
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<td>accountable</td>
<td>• Guidance as a comprehensive integral program rather than an ancillary service</td>
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<td>• Use data</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Student centered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keep increasing college readiness</td>
<td>• Patience as the day is limited and change takes time</td>
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<td>Experiences, Motivation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Persistence to overcome barriers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Student centered</td>
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Doug’s emergent themes. Six themes and five subordinate themes emerged from Doug’s interview and artifacts. Themes and subordinate themes are identified and listed below.

Change is needed. Change was referenced throughout Doug’s interview. Doug discussed that the building staff was behind the change in the guidance department from an ancillary service where students would see counselors individually to a more comprehensive program where guidance is delivered in part by guidance lessons delivered in the classroom. “People were on board because they knew that everything we were going to try was going to help,” Doug stated. With only a “60% graduate rate” and “85 freshman out of 300 being held back for failing math and English” there was clearly a need to try something new. In terms of change, three subordinate themes emerged: the need to keep working at it, servicing all students rather than just a few and recognizing that there was some resistance to change.

Keep working at it. Persistence resonated during Doug’s interview and in his artifacts. Interview statements included how he addressed his counseling staff in continuous improvement, including statements such as, “Okay, guys. It’s a new year. What are we doing differently this year?” He was always seeking to find areas of improvement. Under Doug’s supervision, the guidance department increased their presentations to students via assemblies and classroom guidance lessons facilitated an advisory program, increased enrollment in advanced placement classes, and increased the graduation rates through a credit recovery program (2011 MARC). Doug’s artifacts also included a “School Guidance Curriculum Action Plan” that listed each lesson, projected start and end dates, materials needed, students impacted, how evaluated as well as who was responsible.

From few to all students. Doug spoke repeatedly about getting “more bang for the buck” such as presenting a lesson on goal setting to a class of thirty students rather than meeting with
each student individually. In addition, Doug directs his counseling staff to see more students in small groups and limit the meeting times with individual students to 20 minutes each. The premise behind this decision was made to free up staff to service more students as the traditional method was “seeing the one kid with an issue, and another kid with an issue for 45 minutes, so ‘I saw six kids today, but I made six people happy.’ Never mind how many people we turned away that we couldn’t make happy because you took 45 minutes with that student.”

*Resistance to change.* While Doug seemed quite proud of the fact that the building’s teaching staff was primarily on board with the changes in guidance, he expressed his frustration with some members of the guidance department who showed resistance to changing their ways. The resistant school counselors “don’t want to do classroom guidance and they only see one student at a time. Guidance wasn’t accountable for anything. It was just kind of same old, same old.” He dealt with this resistance by clearly stating his expectations and using data to show the value in changing methods.

*Build support from your administrator, teachers, staff and peers.* The need to build support in order to make change happen was evident during the interview and illustrated in the artifacts. Doug discussed his role as part of the instructional leadership team and how he uses that role to get support for programs and initiatives. He also finds opportunities to strengthen his guidance program such as when the school was undergoing the NEASC accreditation and participating in the Mass Math and Science Initiative (MMSI) grant.

*Collaboration is key to buy-in.* Doug discussed how different departments in his building wanted to take on different parts of the guidance curriculum. He discussed this during the instructional leadership meetings and with support from administration was able to expand the guidance curriculum.
The departments said we want more input in delivering the curriculum, right, so then the next year, we divvied it up and said, ‘Okay. English, you’re going to do the goal setting. Math, you’re going to time management. Science, you’re going to study skills’, and I actually came up with a locating schedule. Through collaboration more guidance lessons were delivered to students. Doug also stated that his department conducts an annual breakfast for teachers to further gain support. He provides bagels and coffee to teachers while he “shows the data slides of what the guidance department has accomplished that year.” This gesture has aided in increasing teacher support especially when it comes to pulling students out of class.

*Use outside resources.* Doug spoke of how he used the NEASC accreditation process to gain another school counselor:

I had known all along that we had our NEASC coming up …we had more like a one to four hundred ratio, and I worked with the principal on the budget …I was able to substantiate why we were cutting a math teacher and a history teacher, why we needed to add a fourth guidance counselor.

Through his role on the instructional leadership team and helping with the NEASC accreditation, Doug used data to substantiate additional staff to his department. He also used the MMSI grant to increase college readiness for students. He increased the amount of students enrolled in AP classes as well as increasing the support for these students such as four hours of tutoring per week and student study sessions (MARC, 2011).

*Data is scary but necessary.* Data was another prevalent theme in Doug’s interview and evident in the artifacts. While he noted the importance, he recognized the fear in school
counselors collecting data, saying, “The biggest thing there, I think that scares people, is, you know, doing pre- and post-surveys and having data.” Doug used data to show impact, get resources, and to drive programs. Doug used data on his MARC application to show an increase in graduation rates as a result of the credit recovery program, an increase in AP enrollment, and an increase in students completing the FAFSA. In terms of gaining resources, data was used to show that one more school counselor would reduce each counselor’s caseload from 400 to 300, which is more in line with ASCA’s recommended counselor-student caseload. Doug also completed needs assessments to drive programs. He asked staff, “What did you think we needed to work on? You know, bullying, substance abuse, self esteem class?” Their responses then help determine the goals of the guidance department. Doug stated that he has graduate interns to help with the data collection and analyzation. In addition, the principal allotted funds for student data to be collected as well.

Build new programs to meet needs. In response to students needing to increase their relationships with adults in the school, as well as a need to implement the guidance curriculum, Doug advocated for an advisory program and created the school’s advisory handbook. He stated to the instructional leadership team, “If we do advisory in the school, then these things will get done”. Along with big initiatives such as advisory, Doug looks for any opportunity to help his students. He said:

At the end of the year, if you’ve affected 10 kids with that technique and 20 with that, and 15 with this, you know, we’d see 1100 kids. Throw them all together with a lot of different strategies. It’s a pretty good effect on the overall population of the school.
More directed, effective and accountable. While Doug discussed the change in the guidance department from seeing a few referred students to a more comprehensive guidance program, this theme was evidenced in the artifacts collected which included: two MARC applications, an annual plan for guidance, a curriculum map, AP course enrollment data and a school counselor/administrator agreement. The school counselor/administrator agreement clearly states that school counselors would spend 25% of their time delivering guidance curriculum, 25% of their time completing individual student planning, 30% of their time for responsive services and 20% of their time for system support. With this agreement, school counselors spend more time proactively delivering a guidance curriculum and less time with responsive services.

Keep increasing college readiness. Doug discussed several supports that were in place for students to increase their college readiness. College readiness appeared to be the ultimate goal in all of the guidance initiatives. Among the guidance initiative were: increase FAFSA completion rate by requiring school counselors to meet with and assist students in completing the FAFSA that have a GPA of 2.0 and higher by February, double the enrollment in AP classes through classroom visits, raise graduation rate through credit recovery, help students fill out college applications, provide duel enrollment and internships for students who have all required credits, support emotional preparation for students through advisory, connecting with another adult, and learning skills such as goal setting. These guidance initiatives enabled students to be prepared for the enrollment process as well as the rigor of post secondary education programs.
Challenges

Our guidance, classroom guidance delivery is still limited. You know, part of our struggle is the semester block, the no study halls. Can’t really build it into the semester schedule easily and we have access to only two classrooms. It really is a struggle to do the classroom guidance piece, because not everybody has English at the same time.

My challenge is I am part-time director, part-time counselor, so even though I have a reduced caseload, I’m trying to struggle to a group, but it’s been very hard

I would say we’re probably a seven because we do a very good job but not where I want it to be … part of its consistency.

The website’s one of those that, you know, is forever frustrating because it A, doesn’t get updated like I like, and B, we don’t have access to do it ourselves.

I don’t know why, if I’m ineffective or what, but I just feel like I’m always running uphill, and I can’t get ahead, and I want to do …I want to do Facebook, and I want to do Pinterest, and I want to do all the cool stuff, but when there’s just two of us

If I didn’t have a caseload, I could do so much more. I have to pull myself back, because I know I can’t … I can’t keep adding anything to the plate.

The biggest challenge right now, the longer I’m here, the more frustrating it gets, is the limited resources.

Experiences

You know, it’s just doing something you should do. We go in the computer lab. We teach the lesson, and they get started, and then they do a follow up in 10th grade as well as 11th grade, all on Your Plan.

We have a career, part-time career counselor who handles all that.

We’re all in it together, and we work together, and you know, even though our titles are different and our preparation is different it’s still, we’re a team.

I’m on the District Administrative Team

We meet with every junior and their family for an hour or 45 minutes in the spring, and we have a planning session for next year, and then for their senior year, what are they going to do afterward?

It’s a really great opportunity to connect to families and talk to students

Well, I’m just trying not to be reactive, it’s so easy to be reactive. Um, you know, try to be proactive.

We do some pre and post assessments, we tried to gather data. Obviously the data went into our MARC, so we tried to do that piece. We are a little bit more evidenced based.

Mass Model or just good school counseling

Motivation

It’s a great opportunity to showcase what you’re doing.

That’s an example of something that’s worked really well, and that’s certainly part of the model.

I’m optimistic/hopeful.

The family community engagement piece is very strong. Part of it is I’m a parent so I know how I want to be treated, so I really try hard to communicate with the families.

The opportunity to get to know the kids and work with them for four years, so you have that relationship. More helpful, giving students what they need.

Strategies

We’ll pick a class, so it might be, Eleventh Grade History, so we might have two or three sections of that, and those that don’t have it this semester, we do it by pulling kids out of class.

The goal is really to have all of our constituencies represented. This group has been great, we are in our third year.

We were able to accomplish great things because we had a community group.

One of the things we’ve done, our strategies, is because we weren’t getting it in the classrooms is we’ve used our advisory program to deliver a lot of what would be school counselor curriculum.

I learned about that by going to a conference, the professional development piece.
Table 4

*Results of Findings for Peter*

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<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subordinate Theme</th>
<th>Cross Case Theme</th>
<th>Domain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited by time and resources</td>
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<td>Patience as the day is limited and change takes time</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working together to help students</td>
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<td>Change happens with support</td>
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<td>Persistence to overcome barriers</td>
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<td>Student centered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good school counseling</td>
<td>Increase relationships</td>
<td>Patience as the day is limited and change takes time</td>
<td>Experiences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Persistence to overcome barriers</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pieces all over the place</td>
<td>Guidance as a comprehensive integral program rather than an ancillary service</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
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<td>Part of the leadership team</td>
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<td>SC as part of the leadership team</td>
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<td>Post-secondary preparedness and</td>
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Profile: Peter (pseudonym)

Peter is a guidance director/school counselor and adjunct professor of school counseling in a small rural school district with 350 students in grades 9-12. Under his supervision, Peter’s high school has achieved the MARC award two times. Peter’s school was one of the first schools in Massachusetts to receive the MARC award. The school counseling department at Peter’s school consists of Peter as guidance director for the district and one other school counselor for the high school. There is also a school social worker as well as a part time career facilitator.

Peter’s emergent themes. Seven themes and three subordinate themes emerged from Peter’s interview and artifacts. Themes and subordinate themes are identified and listed below.

**Limited by time and resources.** During his interview, Peter described the limitations that he felt in regards to time and resources. The predominant struggle in terms of time was having too much to do as a result of his multiple roles. Peter is the guidance director for the district and as such must supervise the school counselors in the other buildings. He also has a caseload of approximately 100 students for whom he is responsible for at the high school. He stated in his interview, “I just feel like I’m always running uphill, and I can’t get ahead.” In addition to Peter’s many responsibilities, he also cited lack of resources as a challenge to implementing the MA Model. The school is limited in programs to help struggling students, space to hold guidance seminars, and block scheduling that prohibits counselors from seeing all students in one subject at one time. He stated, “Our classroom guidance delivery is still limited. Part of our struggle is the semester block and no study halls. We can’t really build in into the semester schedule easily and we have access to only two classrooms.” As a result of these limitations, the guidance staff
will conduct the seminars with the students who have English that semester and then pull the other students out of class.

The need to increase the time spent delivering guidance curriculum is noted in Peter’s 2011 MARC application under the area of “Focus for Improvement” which states “increase time spent on direct services to students” (MARC, 2011). In addition, Peter scored “Curriculum and Planning” as the least implemented area in the “Self Study” with a score of “2”, “1” being not at all implemented and “5” being fully implemented.

**Working together to help students.** The theme of working together to help students resonated in both the interview as well as the artifacts. Despite only having Peter and his colleague as the only school counselors in the high school, Peter has branched out to other individuals to create a team. In his interview he describes the process of creating his team. He explained, “I really tried to make it more of a department, that we’re all in it together, and we work together, and you know, even though our titles are different and our preparation is different, we’re a team.” This team consists of Peter, a school counselor, a part time career facilitator and a school adjustment counselor. In addition, he spoke at length of the teamwork that the advisory program has done for students. The school counselors help to create the curriculum for the advisory activities and then each staff member has an advisory group of 10-12 students that they meet with each Friday. There is also an advisory council for the district that includes five school counselors, a school social worker, two career counselors, as well as a parent, teacher, staff member, administrator from each building; there are some community members as well. There are a total of 27-29 members of this committee. The committee is broken into three subcommittees, one for each of the domains of school counseling. Peter explained:
We bring in speakers that, you know, I’ve had a local, another school counselor
director come in to talk about their program and what they’re doing. So we keep
it, you know, interesting. Give people a reason to come. Then they will go and do
their sub committee work, and in theory, these three chairs or co-chairs of those
three sub committees, are the three domains of school counseling.

In the artifacts, “Collaboration with families and colleagues” was scored as “fully implemented”
on the “Self Study.” The 2011 MARC states that “the team regularly collaborates with other
staff, including the school psychologist, school nurse, and the special education staff, including
weekly meetings of the Student Assistance Team and various school-wide and classroom based
programs” (MARC, 2011). On the school counselor’s job description, “consulting” was the 2nd
major responsibility, further demonstrating this school’s emphasis on the importance of
teamwork.

**Good school counseling.** Throughout Peter’s interview he emphasized the notion of
“good school counseling” rather than just implementing the MA Model. The subordinate themes
of good school counseling could be distinguished as increasing student-adult relationships, being
accountable, and being involved in many areas.

**Increase relationships.** Students have the opportunities to build relationships with
teachers as well as the school counselors. Students build relationships with their advisor during
the weekly advisory groups. They also meet with their school counselor individually. Peter
stated that he and his colleague have “the opportunity to get to know the kids and work with
them for four years, so you have that relationship.” The reason for the many individual meetings
is because “my hope is that when kids graduate, they know who their counselor is. They’re not
going to leave saying, ‘I don’t remember seeing him.’” The counselors are also available during
the summer vacation to check in on seniors who need extra support transitioning to their post-secondary program.

**Accountability.** School counselors being accountable for helping students succeed was an area of passion for Peter. In regards to completing the MARC, he stated:

> The problem is that even when people aren’t mandated to do it, we need to be doing it yearly. When they are, who knows if it’s done right because nobody checks. I mean, you could be doing your piece of the model and think it’s great, but you could be omitting all sorts of important things. So if we don’t hold the schools accountable for that and part of it is based on our history as guidance counselors. You know, they’re not accountable. They can do whatever they want and usually it’s what they like to do.

As stated in the artifacts, accountability is an area of importance in Peter’s school. The school counselor job description states that the school counselor “conducts a yearly audit to review extent of program implementation,” “collects and analyzes data to guide program direction and emphasis,” and shares these results with stakeholders. On the MA Model Self Study, Peter listed his program a progressing towards full implementation with scores of “3” and “4” in regards to “Measuring Student success and School Counselor Accountability.”

**Pieces all over the place.** Peter articulated that his school counseling program had all of the components of a comprehensive school counseling program (foundation, management, delivery and accountability). Through the advisory program and activities planned by the school counseling advisory council, all areas of the MA Model are included in the program. The guidance curriculum is delivered in part in the advisory program, as well as through Health, History and English classes. Peter stated, “We do a very good job but not where I want it to be.”
His statement is confirmed on the Self Study with scores primarily in the “3” to “5” range, “5” indicating parts of the MA Model that are “fully implemented.”

**Part of the leadership team.** During the interview Peter discussed the importance of being part of the leadership team. As guidance director, Peter is part of the District Administrative Team. As such, Peter consults on the master schedule, is part of the group that is in the process of changing the student computer system, and has recently started a virtual high school program for students who need credit recovery. With this support from administration Peter stated, “If I go to the principal and say that I want to do something, he is going to let me do it.”

**Post-secondary preparedness.** Preparing students for life after high school was another theme evident in Peter’s interview and artifacts. In the interview, Peter discussed implementing Your Plan for College to students in grades 10 and 11 to continue career searches that began at the middle school. In terms of preparing for college, school counselors “meet with every junior and their family for an hour or 45 minutes in the spring, and we have a planning session for next year, and then for their senior year, what are they going to do after high school. It’s a really great opportunity to connect to families and talk to students.” The support doesn’t stop at graduation, in July:

> Both the other counselor and I will make ourselves available, and we’ll call all the students to follow up and make sure they’re on track, doing what they’re supposed to be doing, and, um, make sure, you know, especially those kids that fall through the cracks, say, ‘Oh, I’m going to community college,’ and then they never go. We want to make sure we can offer them another little piece of support. Give them that extra boost if they need it.
In the MARC, it was stated, “the increased emphasis placed on career pathways through career folders and various events, more students are furthering their education before entering the workforce.” The graph showed an increase in the number of students planning to attend four-year colleges. On the Self Study, 3.A.4 “School counselors ensure that every student has a post secondary (college and career) plan that is aligned with their aspirations and educational coursework” was listed as a “5” indicating fully implemented by Peter.

**Communication.** Communication was another theme in Peter’s interview. In regards to informing stakeholders, he said, "Well, if you don’t toot your horn who is going to?" They have a 63-page high school planning guide on the guidance website, and send out newsletters such as the Senior Scoop and Guidance Guide. Whenever a newsletter is sent out, a Connect Ed phone message is sent out as well alerting families of the new information. In addition, during parent nights, Peter uses it as an “opportunity to showcase what you’re doing, and I tried, I remember, to include it in all of my programs I do with families so that they could see some of the work that we’ve done and we’re doing.” In the artifacts, a major responsibility of the school counselor is to “communicate with the administrators, teachers and staff, parents and students” (School counselor job description). On the Self Study, Peter reported 6.2 “school counselors, teachers, and administrators collaborate on the day to day delivery of the program” as a “4” which is almost fully implemented.

**Professional membership.** Finally, Peter emphasized the importance of professional membership for continuity. He stated that “if I had my way in order to be certified you would have to belong to your professional organization, most likely a national one and they would dictate how you … what you do.” He was concerned that continuity is lacking amongst school
counselors as typically the building principal supervises the school counselor. As such the role of the school counselor varies widely between schools. He continued:

You know, who says what counselors do for professional development. Well if they don’t do it for themselves and they don’t belong to the state organization then they’re probably just doing whatever, and that’s not good enough these days.

Peter also talked about how school counselors may not even be aware of the MA Model, and they can’t implement it if they are not even aware of it. In the artifacts, the job description states “maintains membership in local, state and national professional associations, attends meetings when possible and imparts information gathered there to guidance personnel” (School counselor job description). In the MARC, it states that school counselors “belong to numerous local, state and national professional groups” (MARC 2011). In the Self Study, 4B Professional Growth that states that a school counselor “actively pursues professional development and learning opportunities to improve quality of practice or build the expertise and experiences to assume different instructional and leadership roles,” Peter reported a “5,” which means fully implemented.
Strategies

It’s the nice idea of collaborating with different departments too you know, because we do have a great working relationship with the health department, PE health people that because we’re taking the classes at least once a month.

And even English and History

Definitely do it.

Whatever parts of it that you feel you can do, try. Just try something because you can always pull back

You need a teacher recommendation

I’m going to teachers going you know Johnny really wants this AP class and I really think you know we could give him a shot so they sign the recommendation.

Challenges

I never think it’s enough, so I’m always beating myself up.

We don’t have a spot like an elective or something that we can pull them out of.

So that’s the challenge probably getting into the class. Also, time out of the office you know like days like today.

Tomorrow I’m going to be doing course selections with the kids that you know there’s just always it’s … it’s the time.

It’s really the time trying to balance is a challenge.

I don’t know how we could do anymore. I really don’t, because boy, when you’re out … when you’re out like last week, we were out with juniors and I’m still paying for it this week trying to play catch up

An alumni survey, we talk about that a lot, but it costs money. We really just don’t have one in place… I know it’s hard to … very hard to judge I think.

We’ve got to update that website, we’ve got to add more stuff.

I’m a big beat myself up person, but you run out of time. You know there’s no time in the day.

Experiences

Making a curriculum that’s good for kids, you know that in the areas and readjusting that because you know we’re like five, six years later we don’t do everything that we did then.

You’re always re-evaluating and saying okay, we did this, but now let’s try this you know and see.

It’s always a thing of fitting … fitting everything in. There’s so much more that you want to do and then the year ends you know and you’re like oh well … well let’s try to throw that in next year.

Kind of like interfacing a little bit more because you’re taking kids out of their classes and sometimes just sitting in and they see what you’re doing.

You’re out, you’re not just stuck in the office

It’s also a wonderful way to meet with all the kids. Because there is no way that we would ever meet one-on-one with all eighth, ninth, 10th, 11th and 12th graders. There’s just no way, so at least you get to see them in group guidance and guidance seminar and you feel like you’re doing something for them.

We’re collaborating with a lot of … with definitely administration for letting us do this us to do it with regular ED teachers.

Motivation

I think the most benefit we get out of it was to see you know through the graphs and everything wow, we really did make a difference.

I think that that was enlightening and encouraging, like if I’m looking at one thing we did on teen dating violence and 89% found the information helpful, well that’s gratifying.

It was a good opportunity to sit with the principal and go and this is what we do.

We did a seminar on teen dating, we did one on violence, we did a study skills lesson, we do all kinds of stuff you know?

So it was kind of nice to share with him, because he knows that we do stuff, but to actually say wow, we implemented the advisor/advisee program with peer leaders in SADD, did a seat belt count and we do all kinds of good stuff with peer leaders.

I love, love getting kids to think outside the four walls of the high school in any fashion.

So if you can get them to do any sort of thinking about anything, guidancy, you know or school to careerish I think it’s only going to help them and they’re not even going to know it.

Experiences

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Table 4:

Results of findings for Linda.

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<th>Subordinate Theme</th>
<th>Cross Case Theme</th>
<th>Domain</th>
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<td>• Patience as the day is limited and change takes time</td>
<td>Experiences</td>
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<td>• Persistence to overcome barriers</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
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<td>• Guidance as a comprehensive integral program rather than an ancillary service</td>
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<td>• SC as part of the leadership team</td>
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<td>• Use data</td>
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<td>• Student centered</td>
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<td>Making an impact</td>
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<td>• Patience as the day is limited and change takes time</td>
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<td>• Student centered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increasing student contact</td>
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<td>• Patience as the day is limited and change takes time</td>
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<td>• Patience as the day is limited and change takes time</td>
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<td>• Guidance as a comprehensive integral program rather than an ancillary service</td>
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<td>• Change happens with support</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
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<td>Collaboration</td>
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Profile: Linda (pseudonym)

Linda is the guidance director of a rural high school with approximately 600 students in grades 8-12. Her school achieved the MARC award during her first year as director. The support services in the school consist of Linda as the guidance director, another school counselor, as well as a third counseling colleague whose title is guidance/school psychologist/adjustment counselor.

Linda’s emergent themes. Six themes emerged from Linda’s interview and artifacts. Themes and subordinate themes are identified and listed below.

Good for kids. Linda emphasized in her interview that she does what’s good for kids. Whether it’s readjusting and reevaluating the guidance curriculum, advocating for them to go into AP classes despite resistance, or getting them to think “outside the four walls of the school,” In regards to helping her students succeed, Linda stated:

Making a curriculum that’s good for kids, you know that in the areas and … and readjusting that you know because you know we’re like five, six years later we don’t do everything that we did then….you’re always re-evaluating and saying okay, we did this, but now let’s try this you know and see.

Linda discussed the benefits of getting out of the office and into the classrooms, saying, that it was a wonderful way to meet with all of the students. With such large caseloads it would be impossible for Linda to meet one-on-one with all of the students in grades eight through twelve. “There’s just no way, so at least you get … you see them you know in group guidance and guidance seminar and you feel like you’re doing something for them.”

In addition, Linda recalled a situation where she had worked to gain additional access for students in AP classes. She said:
Advocating for them to go to AP and I’m all over that you know? Equal access for kids with the AP definitely you need a teacher recommendation. I’m going to teachers going you know Johnny really wants this class and I … I really think you know we could give him a shot.

By advocating for students individually with teachers, Linda was able to get students into the AP classes who would otherwise not have access. Student success was evident in the artifacts as well. The school’s mission statement reads “The XXXX (actual school name omitted) guidance counseling program seeks to support students, families, staff and community members to promote the successful development of each student’s potential.”

**Making an impact.** Linda discussed how important it was to know that her guidance program was making an impact. She said it was “gratifying to know you are making an impact, it creates motivation to keep going.” She stated that she had taken on the MARC the first year as director and wanted to keep the momentum of the programs that they had implemented. “I think what we wanted to do is um, you know definitely keep up some of the good habits that we had developed from the MARC,” she said. In regards to looking at the impact of the guidance programs, Linda stated, “I think that that was enlightening and encouraging you know, and if I’m looking at one thing we did on teen dating violence and 89% found the information helpful, well that’s gratifying.”

Evidence of the guidance program was also noted on the MARC application with 80% of graduates pursuing post-secondary education and 77% of students indicating positive results regarding the advisory program. In addition, Linda scored a four out of five on the Self Study for using “data to develop interventions to close identified gap.”
**Increasing student contact.** Another theme evident in Linda’s interview was increased student contact. She discussed how monthly guidance seminars and individual meetings strengthened student rapport. This increased contact resulted in students who were more comfortable accessing guidance services because “they know who we are-easier for them to come down if something is going on.”

In addition, Linda stated the benefits of seeing the student in the classroom environment, explaining, “you’re interfacing with kids a lot more and you can see you know them in classroom situation and then you can see them one-on-one, so you’re getting both aspects too.” Frequent meetings with students were also evident on Linda’s “Guidance Monthly Calendar Events” which lists the guidance seminars, individual meetings, presentations and other events.

**Finding a balance.** Finding a balance between time in class and time in the office was another theme in Linda’s interview. At Linda’s school, students at each grade level 8-12 have a monthly guidance seminar. She stated while there is value in classroom guidance seminars, it means that things in the office are left undone. “I don’t know how we could do any more. I really don’t, because boy… when you’re out like last week I was … we were out with juniors and I’m still paying for it this week trying to play catch up,” she said.

She discussed the need to find a balance between the classroom seminars and the office work, saying:

> It’s really the time, trying to balance… balance I think is a challenge.

> It’s always a thing of fitting … fitting everything in. Um, there’s so much more that you want to do and then the year ends you know and you’re like oh well … well let’s try to throw that in next year.
Collecting and sharing data. Collecting and sharing data was another theme in Linda’s interview. While collecting data initially posed to be a challenge, it later became just another part of what they do as a guidance department:

I think doing the MARC helped us implement the MA Model. You know what I mean? It really did. It forced us to do more data collecting, become more familiar how to do that and mindful of doing it and that you wanted to cover all those topics in there too and do it in a fashion that would be good for the MARC, but would be good for kids too.

Pre- and post- surveys then became part of the guidance seminars. The challenge with the surveys was remembering to create them and then have the students complete them at the end of the class. Analyzing the data also proved to be a challenge for Linda “compiling the data after that and you know and into track form and everything. I mean it’s … it’s a lot of work.”

Linda then discussed the benefits of collecting data, saying, “I think the most benefit we get out of it was to see you know through the graphs and everything wow, we really did make a difference.” After collecting and compiling the data from the guidance seminars, Linda met with the principal to share the results. She said:

It was a good opportunity to sit with him and go this is what we do you know? We did a unit on teen dating, we did violence, we did study skills, and we do all kinds of stuff you know? So it was kind of nice to share with him, because he knows that we do stuff, but to actually say wow, we implemented the advisor/advisee program with peer leaders and in SADD did a seat belt count and we do all kinds of good stuff with peer leaders, to see it on paper is gratifying.
On the Self Study, in terms of “Measuring Student Success and School Counselor Accountability,” Linda rated “using data” as a 4 out of 5 meaning that using data in the school counseling program is not yet fully implemented.

**Collaboration.** The final theme was collaboration. Linda described collaboration as a strategy to overcome the challenges of getting into classes, getting students into AP classes and getting support from administration. Linda collaborates with the Health, ELA and History teachers to deliver the guidance curriculum. Not only will these teachers allow Linda and her staff into their class, but they will also continue the lesson. She said:

> Time in classes. It’s difficult. The health teachers are more than happy to let us do our guidance seminars. We also have a very good rapport with our English and History, because that’s where you know you can get them all, because we want to hit all the kids. So we have a good working relationship with them so that we aren’t pulling them out of the same classes all the time.

Guidance also collaborates with administration. This collaboration yields support in implementing guidance seminars in classes. In addition, the school counselor is a member of the Student Assistant Team and Student Intervention Team, which are listed on the guidance Monthly Calendar of Events. On the Self Study, 4C Collaboration was scored as a “5” indicating, “fully implemented.”
**Challenges**

I was alone.

I had to do all the classroom work by myself.

I was completely worn out, and the other thing that was a challenge was the principal was just... while saying he knew all about developmental guidance, he was not there with me at all.

You know, would not even give me 10 minutes at teacher meetings to explain what was going on with implementation, such that it would impact the whole school.

No, there was no attention paid.

I won that, too, and took that back to the school to try to kind of play up the full study that I was doing, because that's what handed the scholarship to the school.

**Experiences**

It took several months because I used... I set a goal and used some existing lesson plans and did some before and after research and also developed new curriculum and did some before and after studies in order to support my thesis.

And that's why I could use before and after, existing curriculum and also I added new curriculum.

I only did what I could.

I worked very hard the first year at it, and then I'm afraid I backed off from new initiatives I was worn out. I started to think about retirement, and that's exactly what I did.

No, and I think the key value is my colleague, uh, is excellent with master scheduling.

I think, together, they're probably gaining some initiatives and some momentum for some new initiatives, along with the new adjustment counselor who also is not old school. She's new school.

**Strategies**

I managed... well, support in terms of what I needed to do because I had a good strategy worked out for that. Yeah. They were supportive of what I needed to do.

Teachers when they had just finished a major project, and it was important to get the results back to the students quickly. I would go in and take their students, so they had time to get the projects corrected and then get them back to the students.

So it really worked well.

Made me more cognizant of pro-active versus reactive

We're trying to take a look at the school and what would be the best thing to do with all students to not only the things that are already prescribed, but you know, try to meet needs, that kind of thing.

A whole different way of looking at the school.

I kept copying people, asking if I could.

**Motivation**

That was a pleasure to do that with teachers. They actually thanked me.

Kids know who we are.

Let me keep my fingers crossed that they know who their guidance counselor is, and they did. They all did.

I really do think the kids know us and know what we're trying to do.

The new counselor is so enthusiastic about developmental guidance and Mass Model.
Table 5:

*Results of findings for Mary.*

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<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subordinate Theme</th>
<th>Cross Case Theme</th>
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<tr>
<td>Momentum lost without</td>
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<td>• SC as part of the leadership team</td>
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<td>Colleague not available</td>
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Profile: Mary *(pseudonym)*

Mary is a recently retired school counselor for a small rural high school with approximately 550 students in grades 7-12. Mary initiated the completion of the MARC during her employment at the school and still works there periodically as a substitute school counselor. The support services in Mary’s school consist of two school counselors.
**Mary’s emergent themes.** Five themes emerged from Mary’s interview and artifacts. Themes are identified and listed below.

**Momentum lost without administrative support.** Throughout Mary’s interview she expressed her discouragement at the lack of administrative support. Lack of administrative support was also reflected in the Self Study. She discussed how she had attended the MA Model training and was excited about implementing the Model, however, her excitement diminished without the support from her principal, saying, “I worked very hard the first year at it, and then I'm afraid I backed off from new initiatives.” It appeared from Mary’s interview that her principal’s views on the role of the school counselor differed from her own. While the MA Model involves an emphasis on classroom guidance lessons, Mary’s principal placed an emphasis on building scheduling, Mary stated, “I think the key value is my colleague, she is excellent with master scheduling.” Mary’s frustration in trying to deal with this conflict in roles is illustrated in the next comment:

I was completely worn out, and the other thing that, um, was a challenge was the principal was just … while saying he knew all about developmental guidance, he was not there with me at all.

Even after receiving the MARC award and an additional scholarship from MASCA, Mary received no recognition from her principal “even that got absolutely no … no attention whatsoever.” While the MA Model application, in the principal’s comments states “I applaud their efforts and look forward to continuing involvement…for implementation of the MA Model.” Mary’s perception on a day-to-day basis was that the administrative support was not there.
Lack of support is also documented on the Self Study that Mary completed. 4.A.1, “School counselors participate in fair share responsibilities that do not detract or jeopardize their ability to deliver the school counseling program” and 4.B.2, “There are appropriate resources in place to implement the program” scored the lowest ion Mary’s Self Study at a “2” out of “5,” which is just above “not at all” implemented.

Colleague not available. During Mary’s interview, not only was she not receiving support from her principal, she also lacked support from her school counseling colleague, making her feel isolated. “I was alone,” she said. “I did receive some support from my colleague. She was supportive of me, but we really never regained that momentum for initiative.” The issue was revealed to Mary that her colleague was not comfortable delivering classroom guidance activities. The reluctance of Mary’s colleague to do the classroom guidance piece resulted in Mary taking it on by herself.

Support from teachers. Despite minimal support from her colleague and no support from her administrator, Mary felt supported by the teachers in the building. During her interview, when asked where she did receive support, she stated:

I managed … well, support in terms of what I needed to do because I had a good strategy worked out for that. They were supportive of what I needed to do. Teachers when they had just finished a major project, and it was important to get the results back to the students quickly. I would go in and take their students, so they had time to get the projects corrected and then get them back to the students. So it really worked well.
By working with the teacher’s schedule, Mary was able to conduct the classroom guidance activities. She enjoyed this collaborative effort with teachers as she stated, “That was a pleasure to do that with teachers. They actually thanked me.”

The support from teachers is noted in the artifacts, on the Self Study, 4C Collaboration was rated the highest with a “5” indicating “fully implemented.”

**Student centered.** Another theme that resonated throughout Mary’s interview was that the guidance program was student centered. Not only did this describe the program but also served as a motivation for Mary to keep implementing the MA Model despite lack of support. She stated that the students knew who the school counselors were through the guidance seminars. She described a time when she entered a class and the teacher directed the students to stand on the side of the room with their counselor “Let me keep my fingers crossed that they know who their guidance counselor is, and they did. They all did,” she said. Mary was delighted that all students could identify their school counselor. But more than just identifying whom the school counselor assigned to them was, Mary stated that students are aware of the support services in their school, saying, “I really do think the kids know us and know what we're trying to do.”

Mary also expressed that implementing the MA Model has increased student relationships with counselors. “I think we were much more involved in … in your individual lives by doing the Mass Model, because we were … we were with them in the classroom more, made more familiarity when they came into talk to us individually,” she said.

Another example of the theme of being student-centered in Mary’s interview was the desire to service all students. “We're trying to take a look at the school and what would be the best thing to do with all students to not only the things that are already prescribed, but you know,
try to meet needs, that kind of thing. So a whole different way of looking at the school,” she said.

In the artifacts, the philosophy of the XXXX School Counseling Program states that the school counseling program fosters “growth and awareness in the areas of educational, personal/emotional and career development.” The MA Model application cited achievements in the areas of career planning; all tenth graders created a career plan that included three career ideas, a resume, and career interests. In addition, the curriculum map showed lessons such as graduation requirements for grades 9-12, career exploration for 10th graders, essential steps to college for 11th and 12th graders as well as financial literacy for 12th graders.

**Hopeful.** The final theme that was evident in Mary’s interview was that of being hopeful. She had worked hard during her time as a school counselor to gain momentum in implementing the MA Model despite doing so primarily independently. She had played a part in hiring her replacement and described the new counselor as “enthusiastic about developmental guidance and MA Model.” Mary was hopeful that there would be collaboration within the school counseling department and that from that collaboration, administrative support would be gained. “I think, together, they're probably gaining some initiatives and some momentum for some new initiatives, along with the new adjustment counselor who also is not old school. She's new school,” she said.
Table 5:

Report of findings cross-case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Domain</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patience as the day is limited and change takes time</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change happens with support</td>
<td>Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence to overcome barriers</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance as a comprehensive integral program rather than an ancillary service</td>
<td>Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School counselor as part of the leadership team</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use data</td>
<td>Strategies, Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student centered</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross-case Emergent Themes

Seven themes emerged from the interview and artifacts. Themes are identified and listed below.

*Patience, as the day is limited and change takes time.* The theme of patience resonated throughout all of the interviews. The participants discussed being motivated to make change but then coming to the realization that it wasn’t going to happen all at once.

Doug used a small steps approach, doing two or three things each year, stating, “You got to start small, you can’t go for the fence. You’ve got to go for the single and doubles and don’t go for the homerun off the bat.” He chose to implement activities that articulated the role of guidance and had the greatest impact. Similarly, Peter also discussed having to make small changes so as not to keep adding to an already challenging list of responsibilities. He stated “we do a very good job but its not where I want to be.”
Linda and Mary both discussed a momentum loss after initially receiving the MARC. Linda had talked about being very motivated her first year at the school, which was the year that they received the MARC. After receiving the MARC she realized that she needed to find a balance in order to fit in everything. While initially Mary was motivated to implement the MA Model, without the support from her administration her motivation waned, and she “backed off after the first year.” Mary did still deliver a guidance curriculum; she just didn’t add initiatives, as she knew they would be unsupported.

In summary, the participants came to the realization that while they couldn’t take on all of the initiatives that wanted to, they could take on some things each year and do them well.

*Change happens with support.* That change happens with support was another theme amongst participants. Participants discussed the ways in which they reached out to stakeholders such as teachers, administrators, students, families and community members to share the results of their programs and gain assistance in implementing new programs.

Doug reached out to teachers by hosting a staff breakfast in which teachers could go to the guidance suite for breakfast and view the program results for the past school year. He also received help from teachers in implementing the advisory program.

Peter spoke of the importance in gaining support from stakeholders as sharing results of his guidance program was a regular presentation at all parent nights. In addition to just sharing the information with stakeholders, Peter was also able to enlist stakeholders in helping to add to the initiatives of the guidance department via an advisory council. This council consisted of administrators, counselors, teachers, parents and community members who would discuss and plan activities for students regarding the three domains of school counseling: personal/social, academic and career.
Linda was able to gain support from her administrator especially after sharing the results from the pre- and post surveys. She also discussed how her administrator encouraged her to collaborate with teachers. This collaboration resulted in gaining support during the guidance lessons.

Conversely, as stated during Mary’s interview, it was the lack of support from administration that resulted in waning motivation to implement new initiatives. Thankfully, the support that she gained from teachers was enough to sustain the existing guidance program.

By engaging support from administrators and colleagues, stakeholders became clearer on the role of guidance. Everyone is then on board with what guidance is doing and how guidance is spending their time.

**Persistence to overcome barriers.** Another theme evident from the participants was the need to be persistent in overcoming barriers. When the school counselors in Doug’s school were resistant to changing their ways, Doug sent them to the state school counseling conference where they gained insight from other school counselors who had been embracing change. When they were resistant to the amount of classroom guidance lessons, he initiated the advisory program so that the part of the guidance curriculum was being delivered in advisory. Similarly, in Peter’s school, block scheduling made implementing a classroom guidance curriculum a challenge so they implemented part of it through the weekly advisory meetings.

Linda and Mary used their connections with teachers to overcome barriers. Linda sought out teachers to sign recommendation forms allowing greater student access for students who had potential but would not have been initially recommended for AP classes. When Mary lacked support from her principal she reached out to teachers who welcomed her into their classrooms.
Guidance as a comprehensive integral program rather than an ancillary service. All participants discussed guidance as a comprehensive integral program rather than an ancillary service. Participants discussed the need to service all students rather than only the self-referred students. Participants implemented school wide programs such as advisory. They also had guidance calendars, which listed monthly events and curriculum maps illustrating the services that students would receive as part of the guidance program.

In addition to implementing the advisory program, Doug also implemented a credit recovery program, a duel enrollment program, and student internships. In addition, he increased enrollment in AP classes. In terms of enforcing change in his counselors, he limits the time that they see students individually to 20 minutes rather than the whole period. He also encourages that counselors see students in groups for similar issues. Peter stated that his guidance program had “pieces all over the place,” meaning that guidance was involved in many programs throughout the school. In addition to advisory and classroom guidance lessons, the school counselors at Peter’s school also have individual and family meetings with students.

Linda discussed increasing interfacing with students. Not only are they conducting monthly guidance seminars, but they also conduct individual meetings. She relayed that the rapport built in the classroom guidance seminars helped with the individual meetings. Mary expressed her desire to help all students. By conducting classroom seminars she was also able to build relationships with students, as Linda had stated.

School counselor as part of the leadership team. Each of the participants expressed the importance of guidance being a part of the leadership team. With the exception of Mary, all participants had a role on the leadership team. Again with the exception of Mary, all met regularly with the principal to discuss initiatives and results. Being part of the leadership team
appeared to also serve as an opportunity to garner support for the guidance program. Conversely, lack of membership on the leadership team can have a detrimental effect on support of the guidance program.

**Use data.** Another theme evident cross cases was using data to drive programs and show impact. While data was initially cited as a challenge amongst school counselors, it was later revealed to be useful. The most notable use of data was from Doug; as despite budget cuts he was able justify adding an additional counselor to his staff through the use of data. Doug was also able to use data to get his school counselors on board. While they initially thought they were doing a good job, he showed them with FAFSA completions that there was much room for improvement. This prompted additional meetings with students so that FAFSA applications were complete.

Doug and Peter both used data to show stakeholders the impact of their guidance program. Presentations to stakeholders helped to garner support. All participants discussed using pre- and post- surveys in each of their lessons to gather impact data. While initially it was challenging to create the surveys and remember to distribute them, this task got easier with time. Linda also employed a statistics teacher to help in sorting the data.

Many of the participants, namely Doug, Peter, and Linda, expressed that collecting data from graduates posed a challenge. It was costly to survey the students after they had left the school and accuracy posed a challenge as well. For instance, Doug said that on one survey most of the graduating seniors said they were going to college but only half had actually filled out the FAFSA. Without completing the financial aid documents it was unlikely that these individuals would be attending post-secondary education programs. He then reframed the question to ask, “Where have you placed a deposit?” This yielded data more similar to the FAFSA completion
rate. Peter proposed that seniors be surveyed one year after graduation to determine if they followed through on their original plan and what the challenges were they encountered during that first year. This data could then be used to determine what services the students needed before attending college.

**Student centered.** Meeting the needs of the students resonated throughout all of the interviews. Student success seemed to be the primary motivator for these school counselors to overcome challenges and deliver an effective guidance program to all students. Doug focused on increasing college readiness. Through his guidance program he increased FAFSA completion, AP enrollment, increased the graduation rate through credit recovery, increased the completion of college applications, and increased college preparedness through a dual enrollment program.

Peter, Linda, and Mary’s guidance programs sought to strengthen relationships with students; the emphasis was on increased student contact through guidance seminars. Peter stated, “My hope is that when kids graduate, they know who their counselor is.” His guidance program enhanced relationships through advisory and family meetings. His staff was also available in the summer for seniors who needed support prior to beginning their post secondary education. Linda’s guidance program not only increased contact with students but she was cognizant of her program being “good for kids,” continually reevaluating and readjusting the curriculum to meet the needs of the students.

**Conclusion of Research Findings**

This study used a qualitative case study approach that included data collection in the forms of interviews and artifacts to answer the following research questions and subordinate questions. Four out of the eight MARC recipients participated in this study. The data from the
interviews and artifacts provided insights and experiences as well as identified barriers and opportunities into how these participants implemented the MA Model.

Data collection included in-depth interviews, the completion of the MA Model Self Study, as well as the collection of artifacts from four out of the eight MARC recipients. The research data provided insight into the participants’ experiences as they implemented the MA Model in their schools. Seven themes emerged from the analysis of the data: patience as the day is limited and change takes time, change happens with support, persistence to overcome barriers, guidance as a comprehensive integral program rather than an ancillary service, school counselors as part of the leadership team, use data and student centered.

In the next chapter the researcher will discuss how these findings relate to the theoretical framework and research questions and then form conclusions and make recommendations for future research.
Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

Post secondary education is essential to success. Years of education are shown to increase lifetime earning potential (US Census Bureau, 2011). As mentioned earlier in the literature review, school counselors are in a prime position to help students enroll in postsecondary education programs by implementing a CSCP. Using the theories that comprise the MA Model: Gysbers and Henderson’s comprehensive guidance model, Johnson and Johnson’s results-based model and Myrick’s developmental guidance model, as well as in-depth interviews, this study explored the process by which four school counselors were able to reflect on and report about their efforts to implement the MA Model in their school. Documenting these findings offers insight to other school counselors and administrators who are working to implement the MA Model initiatives. Awareness about potential challenges and barriers will allow colleagues to carefully develop implement strategies and plans.

Thematic Analysis

Seven themes emerged from this study and will be analyzed using the lenses of the three theories that comprise the MA Model: Gysbers and Henderson’s comprehensive guidance model, Johnson and Johnson’s results-based model and Myrick’s developmental guidance model.

Patience as the day is limited and change takes time. The theme of patience emerged when school counseling evolved into a program rather than an ancillary service as described in Gysbers and Henderson’s comprehensive guidance model. As an ancillary service, the school counselors waited in their offices for student referrals. As a comprehensive program, the school counselors have structural components such as planned programs that consist of standards based lessons. The participants of this study had planned events evidenced on their guidance master calendar and strived to add new initiatives each year.
Participants recognized that change was difficult and as such were always trying to improve on their programs. Constant evaluation and improvement as described in Johnson and Johnson’s results-based model served to facilitate selection of programs that offered the greatest impact such as the steps to college enrollment as noted by Klasik (2012).

**Change happens with support.** Change happens with support was another theme amongst participants. Support was received from school counseling colleagues, staff as well as administration. As noted in the comprehensive guidance model as well as the results-based model, a management agreement can help define the role of the school counselor. All of the participants had a letter of support for their program, as it was included in the MARC application. In addition, sharing results with stakeholders as suggested by Lehr & Sumarah, 2002 is another critical way of gaining support for the CSCP.

**Persistence to overcome barriers.** Another theme evident from the participants was the need to be persistent in overcoming barriers. These participants didn’t give up, when faced with a challenge, they found a way to achieve their goal. Peter and Doug both had challenges getting into the classroom so they initiated an advisory program in which they wrote the curriculum and the teachers taught small groups of students. Linda introduced a career unit and then the health teacher completed it. This allowed better implementation of the guidance curriculum. In a quest to increase college readiness Doug, Linda and Peter increased enrollment in AP classes. The results-based model states that in order for a program to produce results, all systems have to be in place (Johnson et al. 2006). These school counselors were able to find creative ways to get all of the pieces of the MA Model in place.

**Guidance as a comprehensive integral program rather than an ancillary service.**
Another emergent theme was that of guidance as a comprehensive program that is delivered to all students. The need to engage all students in guidance activities is a consistent recommendation in best practices for school counselors (American School Counselor Association, 2012; Burnham & Jackson, 2000, Green & Keys, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2006, Johnson et al., 2006; Lapan et al. 2003; Myrick, 2003). However, two out of the four participants in this study acknowledged that their school counseling colleagues were more comfortable seeing students individually in their offices than they were providing classroom instruction.

**School counselors as part of the leadership team.** School counselors can be an asset to the school’s leadership team as witnessed with several of the participants. When implementing a CSCP, the components of the comprehensive guidance model list leadership as a key component (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). With a school counselor on the leadership team, programs such as advisories can be introduced as a whole school initiative with the school counselor ensuring that the curriculum is developmentally appropriate. School counselors can also ensure that policies such as the school’s graduation requirements are in compliance with the MassCore so that students are prepared for college enrollment.

**Use data.** Another theme that emerged was using data to drive programs and to show impact. Johnson & Johnson’s results-based model emphasizes the need for the CSCP to demonstrate impact. As stated in the literature review of this study as well as in the findings, collecting and analyzing data is a challenge for school counselors. After conquering this challenge, participants in this study were able to use achievement and achievement related data to show get additional resources and gain support for initiative such as the advisory program.
**Student centered.** Providing for students’ needs resonates in all three theories, Gysbers and Henderson’s comprehensive guidance model, Johnson and Johnson’s results based model and Myrick’s developmental guidance model. Eccles et al. (1993) discussed the need for adolescents to have relationships with adults outside their families. CSCP in which the school counselors see all of the students more frequently increase the time that students can foster relationships with their counselors. Several participants mentioned the need for adolescents to foster positive relationships with adults during this study when they discussed the reason for creating an advisory program. In advisory, students meet weekly in small groups with their assigned advisory. This gives the student another adult in the building that he can access.

**Discussion of Research Findings**

The findings provide insight into how school counselors are able to implement the MA Model. This chapter discusses the key findings, addresses the implications, and offers suggestions for future research projects.

**Central Question 1: What are the experiences and perceptions of school counselors who have been able to more fully implement the MA Model?**

**Summary of key findings.** Interviewed participants agreed that CSCP should be a planned, proactive comprehensive part of the preK-12 education of every child.

*How do school counselors who are implementing the MA Model spend their time?*

It is important that counselors are cognizant of how they spend their time, and have a program delivery plan rather than waiting to see what the day brings. Myrick (2006) states, “because school counselors are the basic program resource, recordings of their actual program-related behaviors are the most critical data you will gather” (p. 109). In addition, Foster et al. (2005) recommends, “that school counselors examine their daily work activities to determine if they are
engaging in those activities that promote students’ academic, career, and personal/social development on a regular and consistent basis as opposed to non-counseling-related activities” (par. 32).

All of the school counselors interviewed had a master calendar for the academic year to guide their planning. Since keeping stakeholders aware of plans and programs is essential, these calendars were available via the school’s website. Calendar information included guidance seminars for students and parents (including dates and topics), classroom themes, deadlines, testing dates, post secondary application deadlines, transition programs, etc.

While all participants stated that they were busy and some things were left undone, school counselors expressed the importance of having a calendar, especially when planning classroom instruction and guidance seminars, to ensure the timing of the implementation. In discussing the importance of having a calendar prior to the start of the school year Peter stated, “If I schedule it, then I have to do it, my day gets filled up with so much other stuff”.

CSCP’s are implemented systemically over time. Interviewed participants realized that they couldn’t do it all at once. Guided by needs assessments, they selectively prioritized, implemented and analyzed a few initiatives each year. For Doug and Peter it was the advisory program this year.

What components of the MA Model are present in schools that more fully implement the MA Model? As listed by Gysber’s and Henderson (2006), program components of a CSCP include guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services and system support. Although the participants varied on the degree and the delivery method to which they implemented each of these components, all of the components were present. By implementing all of the components, students received services via classroom seminars, small group as well as
individual meetings. In Doug’s and Peter’s schools, classroom teachers delivered some of the
guidance curriculum as part of the advisory program. The school counselors developed the
lessons that met the guidance standards, but the teachers taught the lessons. In both cases,
students were encouraged to follow up with their school counselors if they needed further
assistance. In all cases, the focus of the guidance program was to ensure student success, success
in terms of academic achievement as well as identifying career interests and having a plan for
post-secondary enrollment.

How are school counselors documenting the impact of their programs? Johnson (2006)
states that when evaluating program effectiveness that an exemplary program “has a written
reflection on the successes and means to increase results” (p. 249). This was evident on the
MARC applications where participants specified student results, major achievements,
measurements and focus for improvement. All participants stated that one of the biggest changes
that they faced by implementing the MA Model was collecting data. These school counselors
created pre- and post-surveys and then collected the results.

What factors are motivating school counselors to document the impact of their
program? While participants initially started collecting data as a requirement for the MARC
application, they later realized the importance of documenting the impact of their program.
Participants were able to gain support from administration and see that their hard work resulted
in positive student impact. Doug was able to add an additional school counselor to his staff after
sharing data with his administrators. In regards to analyzing the data, Linda stated “I think that
that was enlightening and … encouraging like if I’m looking at one thing we did on teen dating
violence and 89% found the information helpful, well that’s gratifying”. Data illustrates the
impact that school counseling programs are having on student outcomes and as such can be used
as leverage to gain support and implement change.

Central Question 2: What are the challenges and opportunities that school counselors have encountered while implementing the MA Model?

Summary of key findings. Administrative awareness of the benefits of CSCP and MA Model implementation plus the aligned understanding and support by administrators of school counselor’s role of assigned responsibilities and expectations of school counselors facilitates implementation. In addition, collegial awareness and partnership for MA Model implementation facilitates and enhances MA Model Implementation.

“Collaborative success is grounded in the assurance that the beliefs and priorities of principals and school counselors are focused on a common goal, which is a passion for improving student outcomes” p. 299 Dahir et al. During the interviews, it became evident that administrative and school counselor congruency in their perspectives and understanding of the school counselor’s role, responsibilities and expectations were instrumental in determining the degree to which the MA Model would be implemented. This finding reinforces other studies indicating the need for administrative support (Dollarhide, et al. 2007, Dollarhide et al. 2008). In the cases of Doug, Peter and Linda, all three counselors had the support of their administration and were a part of the school’s leadership team. It was in that role that they could get support for implementing advisory programs and going into classrooms to implement guidance seminars.

Conversely, Mary expressed during her interview that there was a disparity in the principal’s view of her role, and as a result he did not support the implementation of the MA Model. “I worked very hard the first year at it, and then I'm afraid I backed off from new initiatives...” The lack of administrative and collegial support resulted in her loss of momentum
with implementation initiatives. Lack of administrative support for school counselors is cited as a challenge in other studies as well (Ameta & Clark, 2005; Dahir et al. 2010, Dobson, 2009).

Interestingly enough, it was revealed in this study by the school counselors that collegial disinterest presented as a challenge to implementing the MA Model, especially when the colleague saw their role as primarily a responsive service provider who works with students individually. This was the case for both Doug and Mary who had to work to convince their colleagues that best practice (ASCA Model and MA Model promoting service deliver to all students) strongly promoted a change in traditional school counseling service delivery. Counselor resistance noted in this study was similar to the challenges that Myrick (2003) listed: don’t have the time, don’t have the knowledge or the skills (classroom and data), accountability is scary, accountability is confronting, and results are difficult to measure.

Implementing the MA Model provided the opportunity for increased student connections. Connectedness was intrinsic motivation for the interviewed school counselors to keep working hard at expanding MA Model initiatives. Students would get to know their school counselors in guidance seminars and then feel more comfortable in seeking them out individually. The advisory programs in both Doug’s and Peter’s schools offered students another adult connection. College enrollment and readiness was increased for students through such initiatives as following up with seniors during the summer at Peter’s school, increased FAFSA completion at Doug’s school and increased AP course enrollment at all schools.

Central Question 3: How have school counselors who have been implementing the MA Model been able to address and resolve challenges that they encountered?

Summary of key findings. Accountability is an essential component of an effective CSCP. Data must be collected and analyzed to identify gaps, document progress towards
meeting objectives, inform stakeholders, and guide future planning.

Interview responses explained strategies about how school counselors have been able to overcome barriers to implementing the MA Model. Doug, Linda and Mary all discussed how they began collecting and analyzing data when they began implementing the MA Model. Doug and Linda stated that using data was the biggest difference in implementing the MA Model. When asked about challenges Doug stated “the biggest thing there, I think that scares people, is doing pre- and post- surveys and having data”. However, it was from using data that Doug was able to show his administrator that he needed an additional school counselor and it was also through the use of data that he was able to illustrate to his staff that they needed to get into classrooms and do more as they weren’t being effective in their current school counseling practices.

In terms of how to get started using data Linda stated, “I think you know doing the MARC helped us implement the MA Model. You know what I mean? It really did. It just forced us to do more data collecting, become more familiar how to do that and mindful of doing it and that you wanted to cover all those topics in there too and do it in a fashion that would be good for the MARC, but would be good for kids too.” By making the commitment to apply for the MARC, school counselors had to collect data to show that their program had a positive impact on student outcomes.

In summary, uniformly the interviewed participants agreed that accountability is an essential part of an effective CSCP, since it helps school counselors identify what issues need to be addressed and it informs administrators about school counselors progress towards achieving those goals. “Counselors must be not only engaged in the progression of student learning, they must also be able to demonstrate to administration and the public that they are responsible for
positive results for students” (Johnson, Johnson & Downs, 2006, p. 9). While school counselors may resist accountability (Myrick, 2003), the school counselors in this study embraced the use of data and then used it to overcome barriers.

**Implications for School Counselors**

- Success is impacted by the level of support by administrators and colleagues.
- Continued professional development about CSCP such as the MA Model should include: current research findings, identification of needs; implementation initiatives that focus on enhanced student academic success and college/career readiness; and technical support implementing the initiatives and developing a MARC or MARC Jr. showcasing results data.
- It is essential to collect, analyze and share accountability data.

**Recommendations and Suggestions: increase accountability, support and skill development for MA Model implementation**

  **Success is impacted by the level of support by administrators and colleagues.**

As noted in this study, school counseling outcome research has identified positive results developing essential career and college readiness competencies in schools where delivery of a systemic and integrated CSCP to all students preK-12 is provided. Therefore, it is imperative that school counselors participate in administrator’s awareness about this research and the 21st century role of school counselors as an essential academic partner can be developed using data to identify achievement gaps, plan targeted interventions to begin closing gaps, and using data to compile results reports like the MARC and MARC Jr. This evidence will demonstrate the impact of programs and initiatives and build understanding and support to more fully implement the MA Model and ASCA Model.
Use MA Model to increase post-secondary readiness and enrollment. Although the participants in this study were implementing a comprehensive guidance curriculum, they all stated that guidance seminars were reduced during senior year because of scheduling issues. A recent study by Sciarra and Ambrosino (2011) revealed that post secondary information is more important for students during their junior and senior years to ensure educational attainment than during their sophomore year. In addition, (Johnson et al., 2010) reports “our hope is that this research, based on what young people themselves say about their high school experiences, will open up a broad, forthright reexamination of the high school guidance counseling system”. Part of that change should include an action plan as to how school counselors can ensure that students receive enough support especially in terms of college enrollment and readiness during their senior year.

**Continued professional development about the MA Model.** MA Model and CSCP professional development should include: current research findings, identification of needs; implementation initiatives that focus on enhanced student academic success and college/career readiness; and technical support implementing the initiatives and developing a MARC or MARC Jr. showcasing results data.

Another suggestion is to increase the support and skill development for implementing the MA Model. Dollarhide et al. (2008) suggests, “school counselors should secure mentorship and support from others to keep them grounded and energized; regular interaction with others who share their vision can maintain positive momentum”(par.41). Support and skill development can be achieved by encouraging school counselors to attend the MA Model Institute.

The MA Model Institute is a three-day intensive training course on implementing the MA Model. Not only does the Institute provide the participant with the skills to implement the MA
Model, it also provides the participants with technical support and mentoring from the Institute trainer for the academic year plus a supportive network of peers. Assignments are required for each component of the MA Model including development and delivery of a standards-based lesson with pre- and post- data assessment and the completion of either a MARC or MARC Jr.

Participants cited collegial resistance to deliver the guidance classroom piece as a challenge in both Mary and Doug’s schools. Specifically, training should include behavioral management, curriculum development and assessment. In addition to the MA Model Institute, school counselors could receive training during professional conferences and focus groups. They could even meet virtually through Google Hangout. The need for professional development for high school counselors was revealed in Dahir, Burnham, Stone (2009), which states that high school counselors “would benefit from a stronger understanding of the value of classroom guidance” (p. 189).

It is also recommended that school counselors increase their support systems. Without the support of her principal, Mary stated that she felt alone. School counselors need someone they can rely on for support. A new school counseling mentoring program is recommended as a way of supporting young counselors. Peter had mentioned in his interview that some new counselors are placed in a building that is not implementing the MA Model. A mentoring program could offer support to a school counselor who is trying to implement the MA Model in their building for the first time. A stronger professional support system through professional membership is also recommended for all school counselors so they can keep current with changes in the field (Kaffenberger et al., 2006).

**It is essential to collect, analyze and share accountability data.** Finally, increase accountability among school counselors by requiring the MARC annually. Committing to
completing the MARC will help school counselors implement the MA Model. It’s similar to the analogy of signing up for a race helps you to become a better runner.

**Implications for Administrators**

As school counselors move forward implementing the best practices of their field, it becomes imperative that administrators be educated about the research documenting how students who graduate from a high school that more fully implements a CSCP fair better in college (Lapan et al. 2007). Hopefully, that knowledge will increase administrative-counselor communication, increase alignment and understanding about the school counselor’s role implementing a prek-12 CSCP delivery model, and increase the essential administrative support.

**Conclusion**

After analyzing and reflecting on the data, the seven emerging themes from the four cases and three key findings were discovered: CSCP is a planned, proactive comprehensive part of the child’s education, responsibilities and expectations can facilitate or inhibit CSCP implementation and accountability is an essential part of an effective CSCP.

College and career readiness has its foundation in preK-12 education. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and in partnership with National Association for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) and aligned with the American School Counselors Association (ASCA), have identified that school counselors have key responsibilities as partners preparing all students for post secondary education, assisting the development of college and career competencies, and facilitating enrollment.

Guided by best practices research and using the developmental guidance theories that promote comprehensive, results-based and developmental programs, school counselors should be proactively evolving from an ancillary service to a developmentally comprehensive, preventative
component of every child’s education. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education endorsed the MA Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs, aligned with the ASCA Model, provides a template for program development as it strives to achieve this best practice approach. The MA Accountability Report Card (MARC) and the MARC Jr. are templates for sharing data with stakeholders. More education, support, and encouragement are needed to help school counselors implement CSCP aligned with the ASCA and MA Models and to document results.

**Limitations of the Study**

This was a case study examining four school counselors in Massachusetts who received the MARC. The sample was small, therefore the findings cannot be generalized to other school counselors. In addition, the sample included only high school counselors. The data for this study included interviews and artifacts. It should be noted that the researcher is also a practicing school counselor and has an interest in implementing the MA Model.

**Further Research**

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that further studies seek to find school counselors who may be implementing the MA Model but have not applied for the MARC. By discovering what incentives are needed to complete the MARC could then be supported by the Massachusetts School Counselor Association. It is also recommended that further studies explore how aware Massachusetts’s school counselors are of the MA Model. The study could explore the extent to which graduate programs introduce the MA Model to graduate students and what the level of implementation is in their field experiences.
References


http://www.publicagenda.org/theirwholelivesaheadofthem?qt_active=1:


Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (n.d.). *The Massachusetts college and career readiness delivery plan: “Where we want to go and what we think will get us there.* Retrieved from Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website: http://www.doe.mass.edu


Appendix A: IRB Approval

NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: January 15, 2013    IRB #: 12-12-22
Principal Investigator(s): Kelly Conn
                        Kathryn Salas
Department: Doctor of Education Program
            College of Professional Studies
Address: 20 Belvidere
          Northeastern University
Title of Project: Implementing the Massachusetts Model for
                Comprehensive School Counseling Programs: A Case
                Study Examining MARC Award Recipients
DHHS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7
Informed Consents: One (1) unsigned consent form
Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: JANUARY 14, 2014

Investigator’s Responsibilities:
1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when
recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new
information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must
be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month
prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any
other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection
Appendix B: Unsigned Consent

Unsigned Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies

Principal Investigator: Kelly Conn
Student Researcher: Kathryn Sulas
Study Title: Implementing the Massachusetts Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs: A Case Study Examining MARC Award Recipients

We would like to invite you to take part in a research project. We are asking you to be in this study because you have received the MARC Award and as such can offer a perspective of implementing the MA Model.

The purpose of this study is to explore the process by which MARC recipients implement their comprehensive school counseling program by providing insights and experiences as well as identifying barriers and opportunities.

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to
- provide copies of artifacts that you already have on file, such as your master calendar, guidance curriculum scope and sequence, presentations and/or school counseling job description.
- complete the MA Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Self-Study (attached)
- participate in a one session, one-hour interview over the telephone (interview questions attached)
- in addition, participants will have the opportunity to review the transcribed interviews

We believe there are no risks associated with this research study; however, a possible inconvenience may be the time it takes to complete the MA Model Self Study and interview.

While there may be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study, the information learned from this study may help other Massachusetts school counselors who are struggling to implement the MA Model in their school. If you prefer, the researcher will share the results of this study with you at its conclusion.

Your part in this study will be confidential. While the researchers on this study will make every effort to minimize identity, the information that is public data could reveal identity.

APPROVED
NU IRB# 12-12-12
VALID 1-15-15
THROUGH 1-14-14
All information gathered during the study will be coded to ensure confidentiality of the participants and their institutions. Pseudonyms will be used rather than the participants’ real name. Only the researchers and a professional transcriber will have access to the data. The data will be used to determine which components of the Massachusetts Model of Comprehensive School Counseling Program are being implemented.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. We would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board to see this information.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may withdraw at any time.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have about this study. If you have questions or problems related to this study you may contact the principal investigator, Kelly Conn at k.conn@neu.edu or the student researcher, Kathryn Salas via email at salas.k@husky.neu.edu

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

You may keep this form for yourself. Thank you.

Kathryn Salas
Appendix C: Invitation

Dear Colleague,

I hope that your school year is going well. I am a doctoral student working on my thesis as well as a practicing school counselor with 17 years of experience at primary through high school levels. While I realize that no one is busier than a school counselor, I am hoping that you can find time to participate in a research study that I am conducting for my doctoral project on MA Model implementation at Northeastern University. You are invited to participate in my project because you are identified as one of the few recipients of the MARC Award. I am providing some details of my study and will also follow up with a phone call. This letter is intended to serve as an official invitation for you to be a study participant. I sincerely hope that you will consider my request.

The purpose of my research is to gain a deeper understanding of how school counselors have been able to implement the MA Model. I will be conducting telephone interviews with several school counselors who have applied for and received the MARC award. Your voice is critical in exploring the insights and experiences of implementing the MA Model. The interview will last approximately 60-minutes. I will also be collecting artifacts that will help illumine your journey to implementing the MA Model, such as a copy of your MARC application, as well as other documents that may be helpful. In addition, participants will be asked to complete the MA Model Self-study to determine where you are in the implementation process today. I am inviting you to participate in this research: however, your participation is voluntary. Even if you begin the research, you may quit at any time.

Attached to this letter is an Informed Consent to Participate in Research form, which contains several important pieces of information about the consent process, as well as a draft list of proposed interview questions. As you can see from the questions, they are intended to gain a better understanding of the MA Model implementation process. You should feel free, however, to ask me any questions at any time regarding this research and your participation.

Thank you so much for considering my request I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Salas
Appendix D: Phone Call Script

Follow-up Phone Call Script

Hello,

My name is Kathryn Salas and I am a practicing school counselor and a student researcher at Northeastern University. A few weeks ago I mailed you an invitation to participate in a study on MA Model implementation. Did you have a chance to read the information that I sent you? Do you have any questions regarding this study?
Appendix E: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Warm up question: What was it like to achieve the MARC award?

Research Question 1: *What are the experiences and perceptions of school counselors who have been able to more fully implement the MA Model?*

2. How did you become aware of the MA Model?

3. What, if any training did you receive on the MA Model?

4. Describe the process in applying for the MARC award?

Research Question 2: *What are the challenges and opportunities that school counselors have encountered while implementing the MA Model?*

5. Describe the biggest challenges that you have encountered in implementing the MA Model?

6. Describe any opportunities that implementing the MA Model have afforded you?

Research Question 3: *How have school counselors who have been implementing the MA Model been able to address and resolve barriers they encountered?*

7. How has implementing the MA Model changed what you do as a school counselor?

8. How are your students different as a result of implementing the MA Model?

9. How has implementing the MA Model affected the plans of HS graduates?

10. What advice would you offer to your peers who are contemplating implementing the MA Model?
11. Debriefing question: Are there any other comments you wish to make?
## MA Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Self-Study

*Directions:* The self study assesses the degree to which the school counseling program is aligned with the key components of MA/ASCA Model for Comprehensive School Counseling. The self study guides program design and development and appraises annual progress. The results of the self study inform those responsible for the development and implementation of the school counseling program to evaluate progress, identify gaps, and assess strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, the information gained can be used to revise annual goals and establish baselines for accountability.

School ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Implementation Team Members: _____________________________________________

_________________________________________  ___________________________

### PART 1:
**PROGRAM SELF STUDY LINKED TO ASCA & MA MODEL IMPLEMENTATION**

**TO WHAT DEGREE HAS THIS OBJECTIVE BEEN MET?** Scale: 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Fully Implemented)

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<td><strong>1. Getting Ready</strong></td>
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<td>1.1 The school counselors are utilizing the MA Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs.</td>
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<td>1.2 The school counselors are aware of national changes in school counseling programs and implementation skills that include: the ASCA National Standards, the ASCA National Model (3rd edition), &amp; the Transforming School Counseling Initiative.</td>
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<td>1.3 The school counselors are fully informed of the regulations that drive school improvement in Massachusetts the statutes and the impact of the regulations on school counseling programs.</td>
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<td>1.4 Counselors implement strategies support SPED students.</td>
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<td>1.5 Counselors implement strategies support ELL students.</td>
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<td>1.6 Counselors provide support to students with 504 accommodation plans.</td>
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<td>1.7 Counselors support at risk students and students in needs improvement MCAS categories with EPP plans.</td>
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<td>1.8 Counselors are familiar with the Common Core Standards and its impact on student achievement.</td>
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<td>1.9 Counselors are aware of district, state &amp; national RTTT initiatives.</td>
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<td><strong>2. Building the Foundation</strong></td>
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<td>2.1 The program has a mission statement that is aligned with the school mission statement.</td>
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<td>2.2 The belief statement indicates that all students can achieve and find success.</td>
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<td>2.3 The program uses the ASCA national standards, MA Career Development Education Benchmarks, Common Core Standards, and/or the National Career Development Guidelines as the basis for the content of the school counseling standards-based curriculum.</td>
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<td>2.4 The identified competencies and implementation strategies are organized developmentally and sequentially by school level and/or grade</td>
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<td>2.5 Student progression towards achieving the program's stated targets and competencies is reviewed annually.</td>
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<td><strong>3. Delivering the School Counseling Program</strong></td>
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<td><strong>A. Individual Student Planning</strong></td>
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<td>3.A.1 School counselors coordinate activities that assist students individually to establish academic, career, and personal-social goals.</td>
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<td>3.A.2 The school counseling program provides opportunities for students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their progress.</td>
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<td>3.A.3 School counselors participate in the development and monitoring of student educational and career plans with teachers, students and parent/guardians.</td>
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<td>3.A.4 School counselors ensure that every student has a post secondary (college and career) plan that is aligned with their aspirations and educational coursework.</td>
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<td><strong>B. Prevention, Intervention, and Responsive Services</strong></td>
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<td>3.B.1 Intervention services are delivered through individual and/or group counseling.</td>
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<td>3.B.2 Prevention and intervention services are delivered in collaboration with teachers, administrators, and student services staff and/or community services and resources.</td>
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<td>3.B.3 School counselors use the consultation process to help students succeed in their academic, career, and personal-social development.</td>
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<td><strong>C. School Counseling Curriculum</strong></td>
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<td>3.C.1 The school counseling curriculum is integrated across content areas.</td>
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<td>3.C.2 The school counseling curriculum is delivered to all students</td>
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<td>3.C.3 The school counseling curriculum is aligned with MA competencies, benchmarks and standards.</td>
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<td>3.C.4 The school counseling curriculum supports the school improvement plan.</td>
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<td>3.C.5 The school counseling curriculum supports RTTT initiatives.</td>
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<td><strong>4. Managing Your School Counseling Program</strong></td>
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<td><strong>A. System Support</strong></td>
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<td>4.A.1 School counselors participate in fair share responsibilities that do not detract or jeopardize their ability to deliver the school counseling program.</td>
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<td>4.A.2 School counselors provide professional development and information to faculty and staff on student related issues.</td>
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<td><strong>B. Program Management</strong></td>
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<td>4.B.1 The school counselors have a plan to manage the program.</td>
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<td>4.B.2 There are appropriate resources in place to implement the program.</td>
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<td>4.B.3 Counselors are working to implement district RTTT initiatives (if applicable).</td>
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<td><strong>5. Measuring Student Success and School Counselor Accountability</strong></td>
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<td>5.1 The school counseling program uses school based data that supports the goals of school improvement.</td>
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<td>5.2 The school counseling program is data driven and uses data to determine the need for continuous improvement.</td>
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<td>5.3 School counselors use data to develop action plans and demonstrate accountability.</td>
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<td>5.4 School counselors develop interventions to close identified gaps (academic, cultural, etc.)</td>
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© C. Dahir (2003). Self Study adoption for SCA, DOE/DESE, and district school counseling comprehensive programs. With permission, additional MA adoption by 2010 (Advanced) and 2012 MA Model Institute cohorts and H. O'Donnell.
### 6. Transformed Skills in Practice

6.1 School counselors are committed to develop and enhance skills in leadership, advocacy, learning and collaboration, and using data to inform decision-making.

6.2 School counselors, teachers, and administrators collaborate on the day to day delivery of the program.

### 7. Moving Towards a Comprehensive Program

7.1 The school counseling program addresses the academic/technical, workplace readiness, and personal-social development needs of every student. Do we need the word career?

7.2 School counselors support every student’s right to participate in a school counseling program.

7.3 School counselors gather input from and share information with key stakeholders (including students) on the school counseling program.

7.4 The program is mapped and aligned with the MA/ASCA National Standards, Common Core Standards, and/or MA CDE Benchmarks.

7.5 The program supports the goals of school improvement.

7.6 School counselors abide by the ASCA Ethical Standards (2010) at all times.

7.7 The school counseling program addresses and respects all aspects of diversity which includes but is not limited to: gender, culture, ethnicity, race, religion, learning ability/disability, and sexual orientation.

7.8 The school counseling program supports every student’s right to a quality education and equal access to coursework and resources.

### PART 2: PROGRAM SELF STUDY LINKED TO MA DESE Evaluation Rubric

(Standards and Indicators)

To what degree has this implementation been met? Scale: 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Fully Implemented)

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### Standard 1: Curriculum, Planning and Assessment:

The program promotes the learning of growth of all students by providing high-quality and coherent instruction, designing and administering authentic and meaningful student assessments, analyzing student performance and growth data, using this data to improve instruction, providing students with ongoing, constructive feedback and continuously refining learning objectives.

1A **Curriculum and Planning**: The program uses effective, rigorous, coherent instruction using standards-based curriculum and measurable student learning outcomes to meet the needs of all students.

1B **Assessment**: The program designs and administers authentic and meaningful student assessments using both informal and formal methods to measure student learning and growth.

- 1B-1 The program uses a variety of assessment methods.
- 1B-2 The program makes adjustments to practice.

1C **Analysis**: The program analyzes student performance and growth data to improve instruction, plan programming and share appropriately with

---

1 D Systemic Planning and Delivery: The program uses data to create, develop, deliver, and evaluate a standards-based comprehensive school counseling programs.

| Objective | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2 A Instruction: The program uses instructional and clinical practices that reflect high expectations for all students regarding content, quality of effort and work; accommodation of diverse learning styles, needs, interests and levels of readiness.

- 2A-1 Quality of effort and work
- 2A-2 Student Engagement
- 2A-3 Meeting Diverse Needs

2 B Learning environment: The program creates and maintains a safe, collaborative learning environment that motivates students to take academic risks, challenges themselves, and claim ownership of their learning.

- 2B-1 Safe Learning Environment
- 2B-2 Collaborative Learning Environment

2 C Cultural Proficiency: The program actively creates and maintains an environment in which students' diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths and challenges are respected.

- 2C-1 Respects Differences
- 2C-2 Maintains a Respectful Environment

2 D Expectations: The program plans, implements and/or supports lessons that set clear, high expectations and makes knowledge, information and/or supports accessible for all students.

- 2D-1 Clear Expectations
- 2D-2 High Expectations
- 2D-3 Access to Knowledge

2 E Student Services: The program helps all students become college and career ready through academic, career, and post-secondary planning and knowledge-building that promotes equity and access; provides responsive services and supports transitions to reduce barriers that impact student achievement.

- 2E-1 Academic Advising
- 2E-2 Transitions
- 2E-3 Post-Secondary Planning
- 2E-4 College Planning (If applicable)
- 2E-5 Responsive Services

3 A Engagement: The program welcomes and encourages every family to become active participants in classrooms and the school community.

3B **Collaboration:** The program collaborates with families to create and implement strategies for supporting student learning and development at home and at school.

- 3B-1 Learning Expectations
- 3B-2 Student Support

3C **Communication:** The program engages in regular, two-way, and culturally proficient communication with families about student learning, behavior, and wellness.

- 3C-1 Two-Way Communication
- 3C-2 Culturally Proficient Communication

4A **Reflection:** The program demonstrates the capacity for counselors to reflect on their practice, using informal means as well as meetings with teams and work groups to gather information, analyze data, examine issues, set meaningful goals, and develop new approaches in order to improve teaching and learning.

- 4A-1 Reflective Practice
- 4A-2 Goal Setting

4B **Professional Growth:** Actively pursues professional development and learning opportunities to improve quality of practice or build the expertise and experiences to assume different instructional and leadership roles.

4C **Collaboration:** Collaborates effectively with colleagues on diverse tasks.

- 4C-1 Professional Collaboration
- 4C-2 Consultation

4D **Decision-Making:** Becomes involved in school-wide decision making and takes an active role in school improvement planning.

4E **Shared Responsibility:** Shares responsibility for the performance of all students within the school.

4F **Professional Responsibilities:** Is ethical and reliable and meets routine responsibilities consistently.

- 4F-1 Judgment
- 4F-2 Reliability and Responsibility

What I/we learned from the self study:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How I/we will utilize this information:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

My/our priorities for the next school year:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Appendix G: Themes