

The Counseling Connection

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2017

A Publication of the Counseling Department at Monson High School



Department Name Formally Changes

The week of February 6 is National School Counseling Week and the MHS counseling staff chose to use this celebration to publicly launch its new name and titles. At its September 28 meeting, the Monson School Committee formally adopted the following motion:

“That the Monson Public Schools accepts the term school counselor instead of guidance counselor and the name of the department officially be recognized as the Counseling Department.”

While many of the staff have been unofficially using the title *school counselor* instead of guidance counselor, there has never been a formal approval from the School Committee for such a designation. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA), of which the counselors in Monson belong and follow its code of conduct, has been using the term school counselor for more than 25 years. The term school counselor more adequately identifies the much broader and comprehensive role we currently play in the school setting. Our hope is to change any previous attitudes or beliefs about what a guidance counselor did or didn't do. We want the students and members of the greater Monson school community to know who we are and ensure that our job title accurately reflects our current training and responsibilities.

For the past several years we have unofficially referred to our group as the Department of Guidance & Student Support Services. We did this to provide an appropriate title for the various members of the group which includes two school counselors, the social worker and School-to-Career Coordinator. However that name never seemed to resonate with students and staff and was a bit ambiguous and even somewhat confusing with our Pupil Personnel Services Department. Continuing along the lines of the formal job title change, it only makes sense that we now are referred to as the **Counseling Department** since we all provide some form of counseling. Such a name change would be more cosmetic than anything but would convey the message to students, families and the community at-large that we are a cohesive group of counselors.

For those who are familiar with school settings, this type of change is no different than when home economics teachers became family and consumer science teachers, industrial arts teachers became technology education teachers and librarians switched to library-media specialists.

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Career & College Awareness Week Schedule Set

The Counseling Department will sponsor the annual Career & College Awareness Week March 13 - 17 and will feature several exciting programs for all students. The purpose of the program is to expose students to the idea of going to college and provide access to career and college information. While many students talk about going to college, some do not really know what that means or understand how to make it happen. This program will assist in this effort.

The schedule is as follows:

March 14 - College Prep Night, 6:30 p.m., Cafetorium

March 14 - Sophomore College Exploration day & senior Credit for Life Field Trip

March 15 - Freshmen Career Exploration Day

March 16 & 17 - Hot Jobs 4 U - Career Presentations for juniors

March 17 - Student & Staff Dress Up Day

Freshmen Career Exploration Day will provide an opportunity for 9th graders to visit with representatives from four career clusters for 30 minute intervals. Speakers will



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College

O National College Fair Comes to the **r** Big E

n The annual National College Fair, sponsored by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, will be held at the Big E in West Springfield on Monday, April 3. (Please note this is a change from previous years. It is only one day in 2017 as opposed to two in the past.) The Fair will be open from 9:00-11:30 am and again from 6:30- 8:30 on Monday evening. Over 200 regional, national and international colleges are expected to attend. To find out if a college will be there, go to www.nacacnet.org and click on College Fairs and the link to the Springfield National Fair. There is no charge to attend the fair, however a \$5 parking fee is charged to park on the Big E grounds. Students should register beforehand at www.gotomyncf.com/ Registration. After registering, they should print their bar code and bring it with them to the fair. This will save time and make it easier to have information sent afterwards.

Counselors will be available onsite to answer questions which will help students get the most out of the experience.

Juniors can attend the field trip from 9-12 AM. We will return to MHS in time for second lunch. The cost is \$4.00 for the bus. Permission slips and worksheets must be returned by Monday, March 27 in order to participate.

Financial Aid 101

This time of year is always stressful for seniors. Many are still awaiting word whether they will be admitted to their first choice institution. But for all seniors, they have to deal with the reality of paying for their education.

If a student has not applied for financial aid already, this is the first step. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) must be completed for every school. This form is available online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Some selective schools will also require the Profile® form available at www.collegeboard.com. Depending upon the school, the deadline for these forms can be as early as February 1. Additional forms (i.e.: tax forms) may also be required. If so, information will be sent directly to the student indicating what is needed.

Once the college receives the information, a file will be created and an award package will be created. Although families desire 100% of the need to be met, this is rarely the case. Instead, colleges try to provide a combination of loans, grants and work opportunities to fill the need.

Loans are available to students which are either subsidized or unsubsidized. Subsidized loans are ones that are paid back after graduation and have a low interest rate. Depending upon the type of loan, the amount that can be borrowed will be limited each year. Unsubsidized loans do not have a grace period longer than a few months and have a higher interest rate.

Grants or scholarships are the best type of financial aid since they do not have to be repaid. These are “gifts” from the college or organizations that wish to help students pay the bill.

Finally, work-study is an opportunity to work on campus and earn money to pay one’s bill or to use for spending money. Students must be deemed eligible through the financial aid office to qualify for work-study. The maximum amount a student can earn depends upon the student’s need.

Please see your counselor if you have questions about financial aid.

Junior College Prep Night Is Set

The annual College Prep Night will be held on Tuesday, March 14 beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the cafetorium. Juniors and their families are strongly encouraged to attend. The event is free and open to the public. Each junior attending will receive an extensive packet of information to help with the college search process. Students will also receive an unofficial copy of their high school transcript to ensure its accuracy as well as help determine which schools might be appropriate to consider for admission.

The Counseling staff will provide an overview of the college admissions process, including applying for financial aid. In addition, representatives from Springfield College, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Springfield Technical Community College will be present to discuss requirements for admission at a variety of post secondary institutions.

Refreshments will be served.



MARK THIS DATE



State Launches Commonwealth Commitment Program

Beginning in the Fall 2016, Massachusetts residents who begin their higher education journey at one of fifteen Massachusetts Community Colleges and complete their associate degree within 2.5 years, can automatically transfer to one of nine Massachusetts State Universities or four UMass campuses. There is no application fee to transfer and the student is guaranteed admission and the transfer of credits.

If the student completes his/her bachelor's degree within two more years and maintains full-time, continuous enrollment and a cumulative 3.0 GPA throughout the program, they are eligible to earn a freeze on tuition and mandatory fees for all four years upon entry into the Commonwealth Commitment program, until student graduates or leaves the program. The reduction in tuition & mandatory fees will be on average of \$5,090 over four years through a 10% rebate off tuition and mandatory fees, payable via check or bookstore voucher at the end of every successfully completed semester as well as additional MassTransfer tuition credit once the student enrolls in a bachelor's program.

For a complete list of which programs are included in the program, what year each program is scheduled to take place and for additional information about this new and exciting opportunity, please visit www.mass.edu/masstransfer/macomcom/home.asp.

Career & College Awareness Week,

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briefly talk about their individual career paths and opportunities within that cluster. Sophomores will rotate among six local college presentations which will highlight areas of study while in college. The Hot Jobs 4 You program for juniors will focus this year on three clusters - business, finance and entrepreneurship careers. This will take place during SAP when the sophomores are participating in English Boot Camp.

On Friday, students and staff will be encouraged to wear their favorite college t-shirt or sweatshirt. A trivia contest will also be conducted via the daily announcements.

Additional information regarding College Prep Night on March 14 can be found elsewhere in this newsletter and will be included in a direct mailing home to junior families in early February.

Junior Parent Conferences Are Coming

Families of juniors will be receiving letters in early March inviting them to a post high school planning conference with their child's counselor. Counselors will set up individual hour-long appointments between March 20 and April 7 to discuss their senior year schedule and their post high school plans. It is expected that at least one family member attend this meeting as it is critical to help

ensure students are making appropriate future plans. Please contact the respective counselor should you have any questions or concerns.



Advanced Placement Exam Deposits Are Due

Students taking either AP Government, Calculus, English Literature, English Language or US History in May are reminded that the \$25 non-refundable deposit to order a test is due to Mr. Bardwell no later than Friday, March 13.

School policy dictates that in order for a student to have the AP designation listed on his/her transcript that they must take the AP exam.

The cost of the exam is \$93 per exam. Students can pay the entire amount all at once or in two payments. The final payment (\$68) is due no later than May 1.

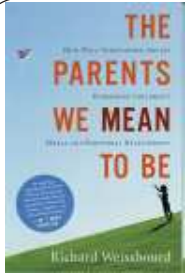
Anyone with questions should contact Mr. Bardwell in the Counseling Office.



Name Change, continued from page 1

In order to bring awareness to this change and to help students and staff remember the new name, the department will be handing out pencils inscribed with MHS Counseling Department. They will be distributed on February 6.

While it will take some time and practice, we hope that everyone will support us and use the new title and department name. Thank you.



Book Review

“The Parents We Mean To Be”

by Richard Weissbourd

A wake-up call for a national crisis in parenting--and a deeply helpful book for those who want to see their own behaviors as parents with the greatest possible clarity.

Harvard psychologist Richard Weissbourd argues incisively that parents—not peers, not television—are the primary shapers of their children’s moral lives. And yet, it is parents’ lack of self-awareness and confused priorities that are dangerously undermining children’s development. Through the author’s own field research, including hundreds of rich, revealing conversations with children, parents, teachers, and coaches, a surprising picture emerges.

Parents’ intense focus on their children’s happiness is turning many children into self-involved, fragile conformists. The suddenly widespread desire of parents to be closer to their children—a heartening trend in many ways—often undercuts kids’ morality. Our fixation with being great parents—and our need for our children to reflect that greatness—can actually make them feel ashamed for failing to measure up. Finally, parents’ interactions with coaches and teachers—and coaches’ and teachers’ interactions with children—are critical arenas for nurturing, or eroding, children’s moral lives.

Weissbourd’s ultimately compassionate message—based on compelling new research—is that the intense, crisis-filled, and profoundly joyous process of raising a child can be a powerful force for our own moral development.

Retrieved from BarnesandNoble.com, 1/31/17. This book is available for loan in the Counseling Office.

MCAS Re-test Available

Juniors who wish to re-take the MCAS to improve their scores in order to qualify for the Koplík Certificate of Mastery must sign up in the Counseling Office by March 8. The re-tests will coincide with the grade 10 MCAS scheduled for March 21 - 23 (ELA) and May 16-17 (math).

Seniors who are eligible for the Koplík Certificate of Mastery will be notified in the fall. To be eligible, students must score in the advanced category on either the English, math or biology portion of the grade 10 MCAS and proficient or advanced on the others. Applicants must also earn another minimum score on an SAT Subject test, AP Exam or earned some other academic accomplishment. Those who qualify are eligible for a tuition waiver to attend a Massachusetts state college or university.

Applications must be submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Education by May of their senior year. See your counselor for more info.



2017-18 Scheduling Process To Start

We are quickly moving forward with our course selection process for the 2017-18 school year.

Counselors will be meeting with students in small groups during the week of February 27 to discuss the scheduling process. The Program of Studies and course selection information will be shared with students in grades 9-11 at that time. Course selection day is set for Wednesday, March 8. This is the time when students discuss course selections with their teachers and receive teacher recommendations. Signed course selection forms must be returned to the Counseling Office by March 13.

Parents with questions regarding the scheduling process are encouraged to contact the Counseling Office. All students will meet individually with their counselor later in the spring.

IMPORTANT DATES

- Feb. 6-7 MCAS Biology Test
- Feb. 10 Mar SAT Registration Deadline
- Feb. 11 ACT Administration
- Feb. 20 - 24 Mid Winter Vacation
- March 1 - 3 MCAS ELA Retests
- March 2 Grade 8 Transition Night
- March 3 ... SAP Door Decorating Contest
- March 3 . Apr. ACT Registration Deadline
- March 6 - 7 MCAS Math Retests
- March 8 Course Selection Day
- March 9 Early Release - Parent Conf
- March 10 Prof. Dev. Day - No School
- March 11 SAT Administration
- March 13 - 17 ... College Awareness Week
- March 13 College Prep Night
- March 16 - 17 MCAS ELA Boot Camp
- March 21 - 23 Grade 10 MCAS ELA
- March 31 End of 3rd Quarter
- April 3 National College Fair Big E
- April 7 May 6 SAT Reg. Deadline
- April 8 ACT Administration
- April 14 - 21 Spring Vacation

Next SCAC Meeting Is March 30

The next meeting of the School Counseling Advisory Council (SCAC) will be on Thursday, March 30 beginning at 3:45 p.m at Monson Savings Bank. All are invited to join the group.

The purpose of SCAC is to discuss activities sponsored by the Counseling Department as well as plan for other programs that will be beneficial to our students and the community.

For more information contact Mr. Bardwell @ 267.4589 x1109 or bardwellr@monsonschools.com.

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