

Counselor Evaluation Instrument

**Performance Standards, Criteria,
and Descriptive Examples**

Introduction

The six performance standards are defined and further supported by performance criteria. Descriptive examples of what a counselor might be doing in order to meet a specific standard are provided. The purpose of the examples is to create a sample picture of what counseling looks like when it meets and when it does not meet the MCPS performance standards. These examples are not provided to suggest that every counselor is expected to be doing all or everything that is described in either column. These examples can serve as a template against which to judge a counselor's overall performance on the six performance standards. They are not intended to isolate counseling strategies or behaviors in a checklist for assigning a numerical rating to counseling. They define a range of behaviors and provide examples and indicators. The examples that are provided are intentionally designed to reflect a high standard of performance.

Standard I: Counselors are committed to students and their learning.

Performance Criteria

- A. The counselor acts on the belief that every student can learn with appropriate supports.
- B. The counselor recognizes individual differences and advocates for equity of all students.
- C. The counselor shares responsibility for student academic, career, personal, interpersonal, and health development.
- D. The counselor understands theories of child development and their implications for learning.

Examples of evidence of beliefs, commitment, and tenacity

The counselor ...

Meets standard	Below standard
communicates that every student can learn through counseling practice	fails to communicate through counseling practices that all students can learn
utilizes a variety of information sources to help students determine an appropriately rigorous academic program	uses limited information sources to determine student academic programs
assists students in knowing their own learning patterns and using them to plan their educational experience	provides minimal assistance to students in knowing their learning patterns and applying that knowledge to educational planning
assists in identifying appropriate supports for students who need them, as part of a collaborative team	rarely participates in the identification of appropriate student supports
guides students in planning educational experiences which can support their needs and develop their potential	provides little guidance for educational planning

Meets standard	Below standard
recognizes and appreciates individual differences	rarely demonstrates appreciation of differences
consistently and proactively promotes equity for all students through words and actions	inconsistently or rarely promotes equity for all students
addresses incidents of inequity and/or bias through a variety of responses	infrequently addresses incidents of inequity
acts as an advocate for students in any reasonable cause and assists them in working toward resolving conflicts	rarely serves as a student advocate or assists them in resolving conflicts
establishes a counseling and guidance program and implements it in accordance with the MCPS comprehensive guidance and counseling program	fails to establish a counseling and guidance program that is in accordance with the MCPS comprehensive guidance and counseling program
collaborates with appropriate staff to implement student services outcomes	does not implement student services outcomes or implements without collaboration
helps guide students in their comprehensive development to support learning	shows little evidence of guiding students in their comprehensive development
helps guide educational decisions considering student developmental readiness	does not take developmental readiness into account when guiding educational decisions
assists staff and parents in understanding the implications of child development in the learning process	rarely helps staff and parents understand the implications of child development in the learning process
uses a variety of developmentally appropriate strategies to support student growth	occasionally demonstrates the use of developmentally appropriate strategies to support student growth

Standard II: Counselors know counseling theories and techniques and their application to student learning and development.

Performance Criteria

- A. The counselor is knowledgeable about counseling theory and uses appropriate skills and techniques in a variety of settings to support student learning.
- B. The counselor uses a variety of forms of communication to support student learning.
- C. The counselor works from an understanding of cultural and learning style differences to support student learning.

Examples of evidence of knowledge and application

The counselor ...

Meets standard	Below standard
demonstrates the use of effective counseling skills, such as rapport-building, reflective listening, open-ended questioning, use of silence, prompts, and summarizing	fails to demonstrate the use of effective counseling skills
differentiates techniques such as expressive and play techniques, modeling, role play, behavior rehearsal, cognitive restructuring, and empty chair or relaxation, based on unique needs of individual students	infrequently differentiates techniques based on unique student needs
works with students in classrooms, small groups, and individually	does not work with students in a variety of settings
encourages students through group guidance and responsive counseling to utilize the counselor to address issues that have an impact on learning and motivation	rarely encourages students to utilize the counselor to address issues which have an impact on learning and motivation
communicates skills for academic success through classroom/group guidance, responsive counseling, individual planning, and school program support	does not provide classroom/group guidance, responsive counseling, individual planning, and school program support
engages in outreach to all parents to encourage their participation in the educational experience	infrequently engages in parent outreach efforts
communicates with school staff to support learning	infrequently communicates with school staff
demonstrates the ability to use technology as a communication tool	unable to use technology as a communication tool

Meets standard	Below standard
advocates for the use of a variety of instructional strategies and modalities when working with students' cultural and learning-style differences	has little awareness of instructional strategies appropriate for cultural and learning-style differences
uses and models a variety of strategies and modalities when working with students	rarely varies strategies and modalities
assists students in understanding their learning styles, abilities, and interests and in using them for decision making	provides little assistance to students in understanding and using their learning styles, abilities, and interests

Standard III: Counselors collaborate in the process of establishing and facilitating a positive learning environment to enhance student growth and achievement.

Performance Criteria

- A. The counselor promotes a positive learning environment in which students can develop skills for success.
- B. The counselor involves students in meaningful learning opportunities, in collaboration with staff.
- C. The counselor establishes and maintains respectful partnerships with families in support of a positive school environment.
- D. The counselor utilizes community resources to support and enhance a positive learning environment.
- E. The counselor collaborates with other school staff in the facilitation of continuous improvement of the learning environment.

<i>Examples of evidence of collaboration and facilitation</i>
--

The counselor ...

Meets standard	Below standard
demonstrates acceptance, openness, support, responsiveness, courtesy, and consideration for all students	rarely demonstrates acceptance, openness, support, responsiveness, courtesy and consideration for students
provides group and individual activities which support identified needs of students	provides inappropriate or few group and individual activities which support identified needs of students
designs, selects, and/or implements activities to support independent learning, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and goal-setting skills	demonstrates little evidence of activities to support independent learning, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and goal-setting skills
uses a variety of strategies to increase student awareness of the world of work and its connection to academic achievement	does little to increase student awareness of the world of work and its connection to academic achievement
serves as a resource for teachers, students, and families by sharing knowledge and information	rarely acts as a resource for teachers, students, and families
supports educational, career, and personal development of all students, in collaboration with staff	rarely collaborates with staff, typically making unilateral decisions concerning students' educational, career, and personal development
uses a variety of strategies to generate interest, access, and participation in school programs	uses limited or inappropriate strategies to enhance the level of student involvement
systematically promotes student progress toward graduation and the exploration of postsecondary opportunities	fails to demonstrate systematic promotion of progress toward graduation and the exploration of postsecondary opportunities

Meets standard	Below standard
collaborates with staff to develop strategies that assist in meeting the needs of diverse populations	does not consider the needs of diverse populations
communicates with families in a proactive approach using a variety of communication modalities	little evidence of communication with families
identifies appropriate programs and resources to meet the needs of all students in partnership with families	limited awareness of programs and resources to meet the needs of all students and families
assists families in accessing resources	little evidence of assisting families in accessing resources
considers the uniqueness of families when planning activities that promote a positive school environment	does not consider the uniqueness of families when planning activities which promote a positive school environment
uses counseling strategies to establish relationships with families and communities that reflect respect for every individual	establishes relationships with families and communities that do not communicate respect for every individual
has a working knowledge of community resources and agencies	is unfamiliar with community resources and agencies
establishes a cooperative relationship with a variety of community agencies	has little or no relationship with community agencies
collaborates with community resources to facilitate school programming	rarely collaborates with community resources to facilitate school programming
serves as a liaison to the community by participating in meetings involving parents, students, and school	infrequently participates in meetings involving parents, students, and school
prepares and supports students for transitions	evidences little involvement in student transition
assists staff and students in developing sensitivity to and respect for the diversity in mcps	provides minimal assistance to staff and students in developing sensitivity to and respect for diversity
consults with families and staff to appraise student needs and interests and to discuss appropriate recommendations for educational options	rarely consults with others to appraise student needs and recommend options or recommends inappropriate options

Standard IV: Counselors collaborate to continually assess and analyze student needs in order to develop appropriate counseling and guidance interventions/programs.

Performance Criteria

- A. The counselor uses a variety of formal and informal techniques to assess student needs.
- B. The counselor implements counseling and guidance interventions/programs based on the analysis of data.
- C. The counselor monitors and evaluates counseling and guidance intervention/program effectiveness.

Examples of evidence of assessments and analysis

The counselor ...

Meets standard	Below standard
uses needs assessment surveys and a variety of other data sources to gather information about student needs	does not assess need through data collection
considers demographic, performance, and other relevant data when planning and developing programs	plans without consideration of various data sources
collaborates with staff, parents, and the community to identify and monitor student needs	is minimally involved in the identification and monitoring of student needs
analyzes and uses evaluative data to help determine changes needed in students' program	determines program changes without consideration of data
assists students in using data to develop objectives and strategies for achieving goals	rarely involves students in using data for goal setting
collaborates with school staff to implement programs that address the SIP pupil services goal	little evidence of collaborative implementation of the pupil services goal
provides individual and/or group responsive counseling as an intervention for demonstrated student needs	responsive counseling services are not related to demonstrated student needs
demonstrates the ability to use technology to review student performance data	is unable to use technology to review student performance data
uses school data such as grades, work/study skills, attendance, behavior referrals, test scores, and pre/post-assessment tools and other information sources to ascertain guidance program effectiveness	does not assess program effectiveness or does not connect program effectiveness with school data
communicates student progress information to students, parents, and staff in an effective and timely manner, and involves them in the planning and implementation of follow-up, as appropriate	rarely communicates with students, parents, and staff about student progress in counseling programs or in planning for follow-up

Meets standard	Below standard
consults with other school professionals and uses feedback to modify program	rarely seeks feedback from other professionals about program
considers parent feedback relevant to the effectiveness of programs and interventions	infrequently seeks parent feedback or considers it

Standard V: Counselors are committed to continuous improvement and professional development.

Performance Criteria

- A. The counselor continually reflects upon his/her practices in promoting student achievement, growth, and development.
- B. The counselor maintains awareness of current, effective counseling trends, practices, and materials.
- C. The counselor is a member of a learning community.

Examples of evidence of improvement and professional development

The counselor ...

Meets standard	Below standard
incorporates feedback from teachers, parents, students, and administrators when determining counselor effectiveness	fails to incorporate appropriate feedback when determining counselor effectiveness
participates in self-assessment activities	rarely participates in self-assessment activities
integrates knowledge and skills gained through professional development experiences into counseling practice	does not integrate current best practices into their counseling
acquires knowledge and skills in best practices through professional activities, such as— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ attending workshops and conferences, ▪ participating in seminars and in-service trainings, ▪ reading professional literature, and ▪ affiliating with professional organizations. 	does not pursue knowledge about counseling best practices through a variety of professional activities
utilizes school-based, county, and/or community resources for professional growth	demonstrates little awareness of resources available for professional growth
participates in professional activities to enhance knowledge related to cultural sensitivity	rarely participates in professional activities to enhance knowledge related to cultural sensitivity
collaborates with other professionals in the field	shows little or no evidence of collaboration with other professionals in the field
participates actively in school and/or systemwide committees and work groups	participates infrequently in school and/or systemwide committees and work groups
consults regularly with teachers and other staff	rarely consults with teachers and other staff

Standard VI: Counselors exhibit a high degree of professionalism.

Performance Criteria

- A. The counselor upholds the vision of the Montgomery County Public Schools.
- B. The counselor shares responsibility for total school program and support schoolwide goals.
- C. The counselor demonstrates the ethical standards of his/her profession.
- D. The counselor is knowledgeable and respectful of diverse cultural backgrounds of all individuals.
- E. The counselor conducts himself/herself in such a manner as to advance respect for the profession.

Examples of evidence of professionalism

The counselor ...

Meets standard	Below standard
is knowledgeable about and adheres to board of education goals and priorities and MCPS policies and procedures	demonstrates limited knowledge of or adherence to board of education goals and priorities and MCPS policies and procedures
assists students, parents, and staff in understanding relevant policies and procedures	provides minimal and/or inaccurate assistance to students, parents, and staff in understanding relevant policies and procedures
participates actively in the implementation of schoolwide goals	is uninvolved in the implementation of schoolwide goals
participates in educational activities by— <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ serving on committees▪ helping to plan meetings and staff development opportunities▪ sharing knowledge and expertise with colleagues	rarely participates in educational activities
engages in collaborative problem solving across disciplines	does not collaborate across disciplines to address problems
participates in school management activities and shares responsibility for total school program, as appropriate to the counselor role	participates minimally in school management activities and/or fails to share appropriate responsibility for total school program
follows federal, state, and local policies and procedures regarding professional issues	fails to follow federal, state, and local policies and procedures regarding professional issues
adheres to the ethical standards of the American counseling association and the American school counselor association	is unaware of or fails to adhere to the ethical standards of the American counseling association and the American school counselor association

Meets standard	Below standard
respects the confidentiality in the school counseling relationship, understands the privacy of student records, and recognizes the duty to warn when a student is in danger of harming self and/or others	does not respect or understand issues of confidentiality or privacy of student records or recognize the duty to warn; or warns inappropriately
demonstrates sensitivity to individual differences without exception	is insensitive to individual differences
demonstrates awareness of the demographics of Montgomery County and of the assigned school	demonstrates little awareness of county or school demographics
demonstrates a command of the demographics of the assigned school and cluster	is unable to articulate the demographics of the assigned school and cluster
is aware of personal biases and the impact these have on counseling practices	is unaware of personal biases or displays inappropriate biases in counseling practice
meets professional obligations in a timely manner	fails to meet professional obligations in a timely manner
is appropriately prepared for professional obligations	is rarely prepared or inappropriately prepared for professional obligations
follows school operating procedures	infrequently or inconsistently follows school operating procedures
builds positive relationships with students, staff, and community	does not build positive relationships with students, staff, and community

Evaluation Process for Counselor

Formal Evaluation Schedule

Tenured, Experienced, or Veteran Counselors

Counselors who are tenured professionals follow the same professional growth cycle as their teacher colleagues. They will be evaluated formally at the end of a three-, four-, or five-year growth cycle, depending on years of service in MCPS. They may also be evaluated formally whenever the evaluator has observed and documented that a formal evaluation is needed in lieu of a professional development year, following the same special evaluation criteria developed for teachers.

New Counselors/New to MCPS (Probationary)

Counselors in their first and second year of service in MCPS will be scheduled for formal evaluations. They will not be required to complete Professional Development Plans during their first two years of service. Their focus must be to develop a repertoire of counseling strategies and to familiarize themselves with the implementation of the Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program. Once probationary counselors have achieved tenure, they will follow the same professional growth cycle as their teacher colleagues.

New Counselors/Veteran MCPS Supporting Services Employees (Probationary)

Former supporting services employees newly hired as school counselors will have probationary status for their first two years of employment and be evaluated during each of those years. They will not be required to complete Professional Development Plans during their first two years of service. In their new role, their focus must be to develop a repertoire of counseling strategies and to familiarize themselves with the implementation of the Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program. Once probationary counselors have achieved tenure, they will follow the same professional growth cycle as their teacher colleagues.

Experienced Counselors/New to MCPS (Probationary)

Experienced counselors who are new to MCPS are considered probationary and will be scheduled for formal evaluations during their first and second years of service with MCPS. Although they have experience working as school counselors, they must still become familiar with the implementation of the Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program and the professional standards they are expected to meet for successful practice in MCPS. Once they have achieved tenure, these counselors will follow the same professional growth cycle as their teacher colleagues.

New Counselors/Tenured MCPS Teachers

MCPS teachers who accept promotions to school counselor positions are in a unique category. Although they are veteran MCPS educators, they are new to the counseling profession and must build their repertoire of counseling strategies, familiarize themselves with the Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program, and shift their skill set from that of a classroom teacher to that of a school counselor. In their first year of service as a counselor, they will be formally evaluated regardless of their standing in the professional growth cycle. They will not be required to complete a Professional Development Plan. Once they have demonstrated through a formal evaluation that they have met the Professional Standards for School Counselors, they will continue in the professional growth cycle already set in motion while they were teachers.

Example: If a teacher with six years of service becomes a counselor at the start of her seventh year with MCPS, she will be formally evaluated during that first year as a school counselor. Assuming that the evaluation demonstrated that Professional Standards had been met, the counselor would continue in her professional growth cycle the next year (year eight) and next be formally evaluated in year nine.

Counselor Observation

The Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program (CGCP), identifies four categories of school counseling services:

Group/Classroom Guidance: Through group guidance, counselors address skills or competencies that all students should achieve. These competencies are delineated by the CGCP. To help students master appropriate developmental tasks, counselors work with them in the classroom or in small-group settings.

Responsive Counseling: Counselors respond to individual needs through responsive counseling, addressing academic, social, and/or personal issues which are barriers to learning. The counselor helps students individually and in small groups, consults with parents and appropriate staff, and acts as a liaison between MCPS and community agencies. In addition, counselors provide crisis intervention services for students and their families as needed.

Individual Planning: Counselors provide support for productive decision making about educational and career planning by guiding students in the identification and implementation of their goals. Counselors, students, parents, and staff share involvement in this process. Specific activities may include the development and revision of a four-year plan, postsecondary planning, counseling students with academic difficulties, and assisting in program planning for students with special needs. Counselors work to help young people make sound decisions about academic program, educational choices, and career opportunities.

Program Support: Counseling and guidance activities that are necessary for the effective implementation of the school's program are included in this service component. Counselors support articulation, orientation, and registration of students. They may also offer training that provides staff development opportunities. Counselors serve on appropriate school committees

that analyze student needs and plan for school improvement. Through this component, counselors may generate activities to improve school climate, enhance positive behavior, and support academic achievement for all students.

Because the role of the counselor involves an array of services, counselors should be observed conducting a variety of professional activities.

Observed activities may include—

- classroom/group guidance,
- responsive counseling in small groups,
- group presentations or workshops,
- staff development activities,
- participation in grade-level or team meetings,
- contributions to EMT/IEP team meetings,
- parent conferences,
- parent education/outreach,
- transition/articulation presentations,
- 504 case management activities,
- informal interactions with students, parents, and/or staff, or
- guidance department meetings (for resource counselors).

Definition of Formal Observation

- At least two of the three required observations must occur for a minimum of 30 minutes. Due to the varied nature of the counselor's role and responsibilities, it is recommended that these observations be of different activities in different settings.
- The compilation of a series of brief observations (not less than 10 minutes each) that cumulatively add up to thirty minutes may be used for one formal observation.
- Due to the sensitive, confidential nature of responsive counseling activities, observations conducted during responsive counseling sessions must be announced, agreed upon, and include a pre-observation conference. Counselors have the ethical obligation to inform and prepare students for an observation.
- All observations shall include an observation conference.
- In the case of 30-minute observations, post-observation conferences should be held within three school days after the observation. Post-observation conferences not held within that time frame for extenuating circumstances could be delayed by mutual agreement. When brief observations are used in lieu of a 30-minute observation, then the observation conference should be held within three school days after the last brief observation.
- Counselors may respond to observation report write-ups by submitting a written response to their file.
- The observation report is considered a stand-alone document. Any notes taken by an observer or evaluator may be shared with the counselor but are not considered part of the formal documentation.
- The administrator and the counselor review the observation report. It is housed in the local school file.

Timing and frequency of counselor evaluations will be the same as for teachers.

Observations for the purpose of evaluation of school counselors may be conducted by—

- school administrators,
- resource counselors, or
- consulting counselor.

Note: Department chairs are not permitted to conduct observations for evaluation purposes.

Additional Data Sources

In addition to observations, other data sources must be included during the formal evaluation of school counselors. Counselors are encouraged to assemble a portfolio of documentation that demonstrates that they have met the Professional Standards for School Counselors.

Additional data sources may include—

- the Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program Implementation Report;
- evidence of work on professional development plans;
- needs assessment results;
- counselor logs;
- counselor schedules;
- counselor caseload and/or record-keeping data;
- informational publications generated by the counselor such as newsletters, brochures, and pamphlets;
- classroom/group guidance lesson plans;
- handouts, worksheets, or other counselor-generated classroom/group guidance materials;
- student work samples generated during classroom/group guidance activities;
- Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) generated by the counselor;
- student contracts generated by the counselor;
- surveys or other evidence of requesting feedback from teachers, parents, and/or students;
- agendas of meetings, presentations, workshops, or staff development activities led by the counselor;
- written communication with administrators, parents, students, and/or staff;
- letters sent to counselors by administrators, parents, students, and/or staff;
- evidence of workshop attendance and follow-up reflection about integrating workshop content into practice;
- informal interviews conducted with guidance department counselors (for resource counselors only); or
- any other documentation addressing the Performance Criteria for School Counselors.