

PreK to Graduation: School Counselors are Tremendous Resources for the Whole
Hillsboro-Deering School Community
By Elizabeth LaBier

At Hillsboro-Deering, school counselors are incredibly important to the wellness and success of students and staff at all levels, but what may not be known by many is the larger role that school counselors take on each day. With the varying needs at different levels of education, the role of a school counselor can take many forms and the responsibilities extend beyond what may be expected by the larger community.

As explained by HDES school counselor Cara Juliano, “today, school counselors work at all grade levels and implement a school counseling program that supports students’ overall well-being, consisting of social and emotional skills development, academic skills and success, and college and career planning and education. This gives students the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need as the foundation for future success”. In addition, HDHS school counselor Michael Boucher shared about the position he and his fellow HS counselors are in saying that “Oftentimes the school counselors' work is done so much behind the scenes that students and parents don’t realize the magnitude of what we are doing to support the function of the school overall. We are working with students individually on academic, social/personal, and career development; but we also have our hands in testing, scheduling, policy making, student safety, curriculum development, professional development, and so much more”.

During the past year with Covid-19, the school counselors all had to make adjustments to how things were conducted, and faced numerous challenges. At HDMS, school counselor Michael Bagtaz emphasized that the nature of the job changed with the pandemic and that doing things completely remotely while also keeping confidentiality in mind was difficult, however the counselors worked hard over the summer to figure things out to ensure that the transition from in person to online or hybrid meetings consisted of the same level of service. At the Elementary school, counselors Cara Juliano and Shannon Rockwell have encountered that in addition to technology and connectivity issues, it is much more difficult to read body language and facial expressions, but they have met these challenges by coming up with alternatives such as using a chat feature in the virtual meeting. In spite of all the challenges, the school counselors are making strides towards continuing to provide fantastic service to the school community.

When asked if there was anything they would like to share with the community about school counseling, Michael Bagtaz mentioned “If we don’t know the answer we will find it, so don’t be afraid to ask. We are here to help. We work with everyone”. Cara Juliano and Shannon Rockwell explained “We can help facilitate referrals to community agencies, help connect you with local resources and financial support with the help of our Families in Transition liaison, and of course help support your students while they are here at school with any social, emotional, or academic concerns. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have a question, concern, or need anything and are just not sure who to ask!” HDHS counselors Alicia Langille, Katelyn Cashorali, and Michael Boucher have put together a school counseling website that is a great resource for a

variety of topics relevant to students and families. You can find the HDHS School Counseling Website [here](#).

Outside of counseling, the Hillsboro-Deering school counselors serve as coaches, class advisors, club organizers, members of the district-wide Mental Health Team, and much more. “I have been able to watch the community come together in celebration, support, sorrow, and in so many other ways” says Michael Boucher. “It is reaffirming to see that no matter the challenges or obstacles the school community has worked to create the best possible experiences for the students, staff, and larger community”.

SAU #34 would like to thank all of the school counselors. (HS: Michael Boucher, Alicia Langille, Katelyn Cashorali, MS: Michael Bagtaz, ES: Cara Juliano grades 3-5, Shannon Rockwell grades PK-2)

Link to the HDHS School Counseling Website:

<https://sites.google.com/hdsd.org/hscounselingcenter/home>

