



# Massachusetts Accountability Report Card

*A continuous improvement document for school counseling outcomes*

## M.A.R.C. Jr.

### 2009-2010 School Year



### Michael E. Smith Middle School

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<http://smithmiddle.shschools.net/>

**DISTRICT:** South Hadley

**GRADE LEVELS:** 5--8

**SCHOOL YEAR:** traditional

**PRINCIPAL:** Ms. Erica Faginski-Stark

**ENROLLMENT:** 664

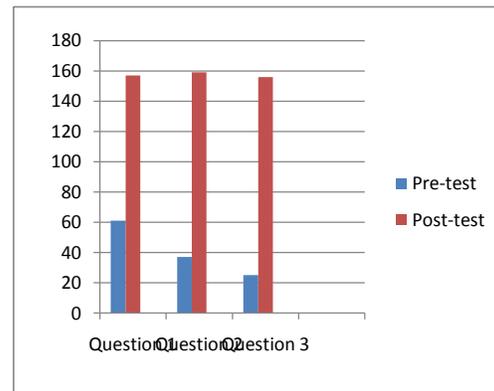
### Principal's Comments

Our school counselors have continued the implementation of the Massachusetts Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs at Michael E. Smith Middle School this past year. As a school, our goal is to have a broad scope of services intended to be distributed to our entire student community. The focus of our work has been the implementation of early college awareness for eighth grade, complete implementation of the Signs of Suicide (SOS) curriculum and screening, as well as student and parent outreach through programming and events. The counselors have worked tirelessly in communicating with outside resources to also help extend the level of services our students are able to receive and create a bridge between home and school. As a team, the counselors have actively identified the needs of students via our Student Support Team which has helped to frame their course of action in order to tailor our school's programming. I am excited about the quality of work that the counselors have established through the promotion of positive living and health lifestyles. As a school, we are fortunate to have the social, emotional, and academic supports that allow our students to flourish and thrive at the middle level.

Erica Faginski-Stark, Principal

### Student Results

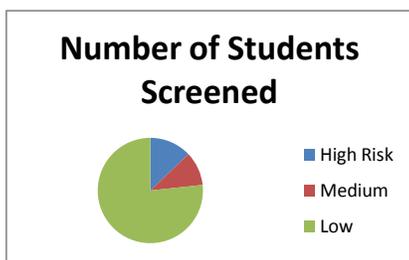
The mission of the School Counseling Program of the Michael E. Smith Middle School is to serve all students in a comprehensive developmental program that addresses student need in order to succeed academically, grow socially, and build personal competency and career/college awareness. To that end, the counseling staff introduced a class this year to increase early college awareness at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. Materials used came from the community education programs offered by MEFA, the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. Students were asked about the financial advantages of a college education, college admission rates and the availability of financial assistance for college.



The data indicates that the level of student knowledge more than doubled in every area and that pre-test knowledge of financial assistance availability to make a college education accessible

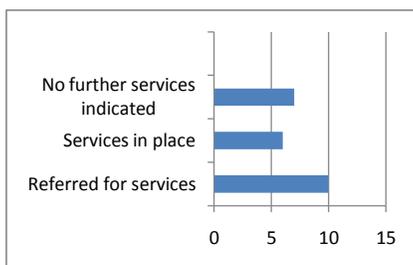
was especially low. This data is helpful in formulating our continuous improvement plan for next year as we seek to increase the number of students in our district who gain acceptance to 4-year colleges.

In January 2010 the tragedy of a student suicide at our High School caught international media attention and put our entire district at heightened risk for copy-cat student suicide. The counseling staff worked in conjunction with the Trauma Team of the Springfield Behavioral Health Network and with Riverside Community Services of Needham to quickly implement the SOS (Signs of Suicide) screening and educational program at the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade level. This program addresses the CDE benchmarks A1-1, A1-2, PS1-1, PS3-1, W1-3 and W4-2 as students learn about depression, symptoms of suicidal ideation, and the responsive techniques for getting help. The SOS student survey was used to determine the level of risk which existed among our students. The graph below illustrates the data that was found as a result of this screening.



We individually interviewed those students who were found to be in the high-risk category, on the same day to determine if immediate referral was needed, if services were already in place or if no further evaluation was indicated.

Table 1: Students Screened



A follow-up class demonstrated that over 90% of the students demonstrated mastery of the material to tell a trusted adult at the first sign of suicidal behavior, and the difference between productive

and non-productive coping strategies for dealing with stress.

### Focus for Improvement

The school counseling staff intends to continue and expand upon areas identified this year. Data collected from student surveys following a Student Career Presentation Series in the winter of 2009 indicates that career education is necessary, in addition to early college awareness, and should be a focus of improvement. The school counselors will pilot a different format of career education for next year based on student surveys which will be conducted in the fall. A post-program survey will be conducted to measure effectiveness.

Our community-wide Anti-Bullying Task Force which was established in the aftermath of the tragedy has researched and recommended science-based curriculums for implementation at every school level in the district to supplement and strengthen existing programming. School counseling staff have participated with community members in task force groups to identify and prioritize the additional student programming which will be recommended to the School Committee for implementation. This will be a focus of improvement for next year to comply with the new Anti-Bullying Bill which was passed by the Massachusetts Legislature.

### Student Support Personnel Team

School counseling staff meets weekly with administrative staff in order to collaborate on the needs of the student population. The counseling staff meets regularly with grade-level teaching teams, with the arts block educators and with the school nurse. Outside consultants and area professionals work with the school counselors as innovative programs and services are created for our students. School counselors participate actively in creating, implementing and evaluating programming for students and parents intended to promote academic and personal success.

- Brenda Ewing, MEd, CAGS School Psychologist
- Vanessa Gwin, MA, MEd Adjustment Counselor
- Pamela Soderbaum, MEd, CAGS Building Coordinator of Special Education Services
- Karen Walsh Pio, MSW, LICSW, LADC I, ACSW Guidance Counselor
- Steve Wojnar, MA, MEd Behaviorist