

MCPS SCHOOL COUNSELOR PERFORMANCE STANDARDS, PERFORMANCE CRITERIA, SAMPLE CLAIMS

Each performance standard is clarified by performance criteria and sample claims of observable behaviors and/or observable counselor performance in other roles. The purpose of the sample claims is to provide a sample picture of what counseling looks like when it meets and when it does not meet the MCPS performance standards. They are designed to show examples of what could be included as claims in *post-observation conference reports*. When changed to the present tense, these sample claims can be used to document a counselor’s current level of knowledge and skills based on data collected over an entire professional growth cycle (*evaluation*). NOTE: The Performance Criteria and Sample Claims are in alignment with and inspired by the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) School Counselor Performance Appraisal.

STANDARD I: Counselors are committed to students’ social, emotional, academic, and postsecondary development.

Performance Criteria

- A. The counselor demonstrates the belief that through a comprehensive school counseling program all students have equal access and opportunity to a high-quality education.
- B. The counselor demonstrates the belief that each student can succeed and graduate prepared for post-secondary opportunities with strategic planning and appropriate support.
- C. The counselor recognizes individual differences and shares responsibility for students’ academic, career, personal/interpersonal, and health development.
- D. The counselor acts to end the predictability of achievement/performance among racial and ethnic groups by implementing practices, structures, and processes in schools and worksites that eliminate inequities based on race and ethnicity.

SAMPLE CLAIMS	
POSITIVE	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
The counselor held all students to high expectations regardless of differences such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, region, religion, language, age, and ability.	The counselor did not hold all students to high expectations regardless of differences such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, region, religion, language, age, and ability.
The counselor clearly communicated high expectations.	The counselor did not clearly communicate high expectations.
The counselor sent students the message that effective effort leads to achievement.	The counselor sent students the message that effective effort leads to achievement for select populations.
The counselor promoted and encouraged a growth and resilient mindset by sending students the message, “You can do it.”	The counselor promoted and encouraged a fixed mindset by not sending students the message, “You can do it.”.
The counselor explained the benefits and rationale for the school counseling program to students and all stakeholders.	The counselor’s explanation was vague and a minimal number of students and/or stakeholders received the explanation.
The counselor acted on behalf of students by advocating for equity, confronting biases and addressing barriers to access and opportunity.	The counselor did not readily or consistently confront biases that create or serve as barriers and interfere with equitable access to opportunities.
The counselor used data to demonstrate the value the school counseling program adds to student achievement.	The counselor presented insufficient data to demonstrate the added value of the school counseling program to student achievement.
The counselor utilized a variety of information sources to help students determine an appropriately rigorous academic program.	The counselor relied on a very limited number of information sources to help students determine an appropriately rigorous academic program.
The counselor helped students understand the importance of postsecondary education and/or training as a pathway to a career.	The counselor provided disjointed and/or limited information, resources and support to help students understand the importance of postsecondary education and/or training as a pathway to a career.
The counselor provided guidance and focused support to students in planning educational experiences which can support their needs and develop their potential.	The counselor provided very limited guidance and generalized support to students in planning educational experiences that could support their needs and develop their potential.
The counselor assisted students in developing their self-awareness and agency to plan their educational experience.	The counselor provided very limited assistance to students in developing their self-awareness and agency to plan their educational experiences.

STANDARD II: Counselors know and practice techniques to support students in their social, emotional, academic, and post-secondary development.

Performance Criteria

- A. The counselor demonstrates application of counseling theories, pedagogical methods and approaches to individualized learning.
- B. The counselor demonstrates understanding of educational systems, legal issues, policies, research, and educational trends.
- C. The counselor utilizes professional counseling resources to inform the implementation of the school counseling program.
- D. The counselor applies appropriate skills and techniques in a variety of settings to support student learning.
- E. The counselor applies knowledge and understanding through an anti-racist/anti-bias lens to support students based on the intersection of students' cultural, learning, and social needs.

SAMPLE CLAIMS	
POSITIVE	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
The counselor demonstrated the use of effective counseling skills such as rapport building, reflective listening, open-ended questioning, use of silence, prompts, and summarizing.	The counselor demonstrated challenges with employing counseling skills such as rapport building, reflective listening, open-ended questioning, use of silence, prompts, and summarizing.
The counselor effectively used techniques with students who were resistant and/or hesitant to engage with the counselor.	The counselor ineffectively used or selected inappropriate techniques to use with students who were resistant and/or hesitant to engage with the counselor.
The counselor differentiated techniques, such as expressive and play techniques, modeling, role play, behavior rehearsal, cognitive restructuring, mindfulness, based on unique needs of individual students.	The counselor demonstrated challenges with differentiating techniques, such as expressive and play techniques, modeling, role play, behavior rehearsal, cognitive restructuring, mindfulness, based on unique needs of individual students.
The counselor used culturally-responsive practices of multi-tiered systems of support within a school counseling program such as proximity control, use of appropriate pronouns, inclusiveness in recognizing family, school and community resources.	The counselor inadequately, insufficiently or failed to use culturally-responsive principles of a multi-tiered system of support within the school counseling program.
The counselor explained educational systems, philosophies and theories and current trends in education, including federal and state legislation.	The counselor demonstrated limited knowledge, understanding and/or abilities in explaining educational systems, philosophies and theories and current trends in education, including federal and state legislation.
The counselor explained processes for implementation of policy and procedures at the building, district, and state levels.	The counselor demonstrated limited knowledge, understanding and/or abilities in explaining processes for implementation of policy and procedures at the building, district, and state levels.
The counselor applied their knowledge of career development theories for post-secondary planning.	The counselor struggled with applying their knowledge of career development theories for post-secondary planning.
The counselor demonstrated pedagogical skills, including culturally responsive classroom management strategies, lesson planning and personalized instruction.	The counselor demonstrated challenges with pedagogical skills, including culturally responsive classroom management strategies, lesson planning and personalized instruction.
The counselor researched and assessed cultural and social trends when developing and choosing curricula.	The counselor conducted limited research and/or assessment of cultural and social trends when developing and choosing curricula.
The counselor created standards-aligned lesson and/or small group counseling plans that included assessment of impact and appropriate use of technology.	The counselor lesson and/or small group counseling plans were misaligned or not aligned to standards, and/or did not include a plan to assess impact and/or misused technology.
The counselor differentiated the content of the lesson (in content, process, product) without lowering the standard.	The counselor did not differentiate the content of the lesson (in content, process, product) without lowering the standard.
The counselor effectively framed the learning.	The counselor ineffectively framed the learning.
The counselor used a variety of culturally-responsive and developmentally appropriate strategies to support student growth.	The counselor used very limited culturally-responsive and developmentally appropriate strategies to support student growth.
The counselor worked with students in a variety of settings (classroom, small group or individual) to provide prevention, intervention, and crisis support as appropriate.	The counselor worked with students in limited settings (classroom, small group or individual) to provide prevention, intervention, and crisis support as appropriate.
The counselor employed a variety of strategies to encourage students to utilize the counselor to address issues that have an impact on learning, achievement, personal/interpersonal, and social-emotional needs.	The counselor employed a limited number of strategies to encourage students to utilize the counselor to address issues that have an impact on learning, achievement, personal/interpersonal, and social-emotional needs.

STANDARD III: Counselors collaborate with stakeholders in creating and maintaining a positive and equitable learning environment for all students.

Performance Criteria

- A. The counselor demonstrates understanding of the impact of cultural, social, and environmental influences on student success and opportunities.
- B. The counselor employs a team approach in the design and implementation of structures, processes, and plans for student achievement and success.
- C. The counselor promotes and fosters a positive learning environment where students can develop skills and demonstrate success.
- D. The counselor collaborates, communicates, and coordinates with staff to involve students in meaningful learning opportunities.
- E. The counselor establishes and maintains respectful partnerships with families in support of a positive school environment.
- F. The counselor utilizes community resources to support and enhance a trauma-informed and culturally-responsive, positive learning environment.
- G. The counselor collaborates in the facilitation of continuous improvement of the learning environment.

SAMPLE CLAIMS	
POSITIVE	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
The counselor worked to build personal and positive relationships with students, regardless of differences such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, region, religion, language, age, and ability.	The counselor made connections with some students, but did not reach out to all. <i>(If there is a pattern based on one of the groups to the left, call it out specifically, e.g. "The counselor focused all interpersonal conversations with students of his/her own gender.")</i>
The counselor created a welcoming and safe climate that fostered openness.	The counselor created a climate in which students, families, and school staff feared risk-taking.
The counselor expertly managed their time with stakeholders.	The counselor struggled with pacing and management of time with stakeholders.
The counselor collaborates with all student service providers; such as school social worker, pupil personnel worker, school psychologist, school nurse, and other stakeholders.	The counselor did not delineate the roles of student service providers, such as school social worker, school psychologist or school nurse, and/or struggled to identify ways to collaborate.
The counselor explained how the intersection of students' cultural, social and economic background may affect their academic achievement, behavior, relationships and overall performance in school.	The counselor struggled with explaining how the intersection of students' cultural, social and economic background may affect their academic achievement, behavior, relationships and overall performance in school.
The counselor understood the dynamics of cross-cultural communications and demonstrated the ability to communicate with persons of other cultures effectively.	The counselor struggled with understanding the dynamics of cross-cultural communications and/or demonstrated challenges with communicating with persons of other cultures effectively.
The counselor collaborated with administrators, teachers and other staff in the school and district to ensure culturally responsive curricula and student-centered instruction was available and accessible.	The counselor missed opportunities to collaborate with administrators, teachers and other staff in the school and district to ensure culturally responsive curricula and student-centered instruction was available and accessible.
The counselor defined the role of the school counselor and the school counseling program in the district and school crisis plan.	The counselor vaguely defined the role of the school counselor and the school counseling program in the district and school crisis plan.
The counselor participated in the school improvement process to bring the school counseling perspective into the development of school goals.	The counselor missed the opportunity to participate in the school improvement process to bring the school counseling perspective into the development of school goals.
The counselor served as a leader in the school and community to promote and support student success.	The counselor served in a limited or unobservable capacity as a leader in the school and community to promote and support student success.
The counselor engaged with school administrators, teachers and other staff to ensure the effective implementation of instruction and student interventions.	The counselor rarely or inconsistently engaged with school administrators, teachers and other staff to ensure the effective implementation of instruction and student interventions.

SAMPLE CLAIMS

POSITIVE	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
The counselor helped students and families navigate postsecondary awareness, exploration, admissions and financial aid processes.	The counselor provided limited and/or generalized help to students and families navigate postsecondary awareness, exploration, admissions and financial aid processes
The counselor made referrals to appropriate school and community resources based on student and/or family needs.	The counselor did not make referrals or did not make referrals in a timely manner to appropriate school and community resources based on student and/or family needs.
The counselor communicated, collaborated and coordinated with appropriate school and community professionals to team with the family in a crisis situation.	The counselor did not effectively communicate, collaborate, and/or coordinate with appropriate school and community professionals to work with the family in a crisis situation.
The counselor facilitated in-service training or workshops for families, administrators, support professionals, teachers or other stakeholders to share school counseling expertise.	The counselor missed opportunities to facilitate in-service training or workshops for families, administrators, support professionals, teachers or other stakeholders to share school counseling expertise.

STANDARD IV: Counselors continually assess and analyze student needs in order to design and implement a comprehensive school counseling program.

Performance Criteria

- A. The counselor designs and implements instruction and action plans aligned to counseling standards, and school and/or district initiatives in classroom/large-group, small-group, and individual settings.
- B. The counselor provides appraisal and advice in classroom/large-group, small-group and individual settings.
- C. The counselor makes referrals to appropriate school and community resources.
- D. The counselor consults with stakeholders to support student achievement and success.
- E. The counselor collaborates through a team approach with families, administrators, support professionals, and other stakeholders for student achievement and success.
- F. The counselor assesses and reports program results to the school community.
- G. The counselor uses a variety of formal and informal techniques to assess student needs.
- H. The counselor implements, monitors, and evaluates impact and effectiveness of counseling interventions/programs based on the analysis of data.

Evidence of assessment, analysis, and adaptation of instruction

SAMPLE CLAIMS	
POSITIVE	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
The counselors demonstrated skills with accessing, extracting and using data platforms.	The counselors demonstrated limited or lack of skills with accessing, extracting and using data platforms.
The counselor gathered information on student needs from families, teachers, administrators, support professionals, and community organizations to inform the selection of strategies for student success.	The counselor gathered limited, inadequate or insufficient information on student needs from families, teachers, administrators, support professionals, and community organizations to inform the selection of strategies for student success.
The counselor prepared and implemented activities and programs to aid students with transitions.	The counselor was unprepared and struggled with implementing activities and programs to aid students with transitions.
The counselor analyzed data from lessons and activities to determine impact on student outcomes and inform programming.	The counselor missed an opportunity to analyze data to determine impact on student outcomes or to inform programming.
The counselor assisted students with reviewing, analyzing, and using data to develop objectives and strategies in setting and achieving goals.	The counselor experienced challenges in assisting students with reviewing, analyzing, and using data to develop objectives and strategies in setting and achieving goals.
The counselor assisted students with making connections between educational experiences and the world of work to deepen understanding and explore career interests.	The counselor made limited connections between educational experiences and the world of work, thus not deepening the understanding and not encouraging the exploration of career interests by students.
The counselor consulted with and used feedback from families and staff to appraise student needs and interests to identify and determine appropriate recommendations for educational programming options.	The counselor consulted with, but did not use feedback from families and staff to appraise student needs and interests to identify and determine appropriate recommendations for educational programming options.
The counselor collected, analyzed, and shared data that identified areas of success or gaps between and among different groups of students in achievement, attendance, discipline and opportunities.	The counselor collected data, but struggled with analyzing and sharing the data that identified areas of success or gaps between and among different groups of students in achievement, attendance, discipline and opportunities.
The counselor created goals, action plans and programs based on student, community, school and/or district data to close the achievement, opportunity and/or information gaps.	The counselor created goals, action plans and programs not based on student, community, school and/or district data to close the achievement, opportunity and/or information gaps.
The counselor routinely used data to inform intervention and program planning.	The counselor inconsistently used data to inform intervention and program planning.
The counselor assessed and reported school counseling program results to the school community.	The counselor assessed, but did not report school counseling program results to the school community.

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

Performance Criteria

- A. The counselor applies school counseling professional standards and competencies.
- B. The counselor appropriately uses the school counselor performance appraisal process.
- C. The counselor functions as a reflective practitioner in promoting and implementing programs for student achievement, growth, and development.
- D. The counselor maintains awareness of current, effective counseling trends, practices, and materials.
- E. The counselor participates as a member of learning communities.

SAMPLE CLAIMS

Note: These sample claims are intended to represent only some of the many ways that a counselor can demonstrate skill, or lack of skill, in the PGS standards and can be used to document a counselor’s current level of knowledge and skills based on data collected over an entire professional growth cycle (evaluation).

POSITIVE	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
The counselor accepts and incorporates feedback from teachers, parents, students, and administrators when determining counselor impact and effectiveness.	The counselor accepts, but does not incorporate feedback from teachers, parents, students, and administrators when determining counselor impact and effectiveness.
The counselor engages in self-assessment activities and seeks consultation support when necessary.	The counselor engages in self-assessment activities, but does not seek consultation support when necessary.
The counselor demonstrates thorough integration of knowledge and skills gained through reading professional literature and/or professional development experiences into counseling practice.	The counselor struggles to demonstrate integration of knowledge and skills gained through reading professional literature and/or professional development experiences into counseling practice.
The counselor collaborates with other professionals in the field.	The counselor missed opportunities to collaborate with other professionals in the field.
The counselor actively participates in school and/or district-wide committees or work groups.	The counselor does not actively participate in school and/or district-wide committees or work groups.
The counselor participates in school counseling and education-related professional organizations.	The counselor participation in school counseling and education-related professional organizations is limited.

STANDARD VI: Counselors exhibit a high degree of professionalism.

Performance Criteria

- A. The counselor upholds the vision and mission of the Montgomery County Public Schools.
- B. The counselor uses time appropriately to maximize impact on the school and counseling programs.
- C. The counselor establishes agreement with the principal and other administrators about the school counseling program.
- D. The counselor demonstrates advocacy and leadership through the development and implementation of the school counseling program.
- E. The counselor applies legal and ethical principles of the school counseling profession.
- F. The counselor shares responsibility for the total school program and supports school-wide goals.
- G. The counselor demonstrates knowledge of and respect for diverse cultural backgrounds of all individuals.
- H. The counselor conducts themself in such a manner that aligns with, reflects, and upholds the ethical standards of the profession and field of education
- I. The counselor is responsive and completes tasks and requests for information from all stakeholders in a timely manner.

SAMPLE CLAIMS	
POSITIVE	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
The counselor is knowledgeable about and adheres to the Board of Education goals and priorities , and MCPS policies and procedures.	The counselor needs to increase their knowledge about the Board of Education goals and priorities , and MCPS policies and procedures so they can adhere to them.
The counselor uses national recommendations and data to articulate the best use of a school counselor’s time when providing direct and indirect student services.	The counselor inadequately uses national recommendations and data to articulate the best use of a school counselor’s time when providing direct and indirect student services.
The counselor effectively communicates the vision, mission and comprehensive counseling program goals to administration, school staff and other stakeholders..	The counselor does not effectively communicate the vision, mission and comprehensive counseling program goals to administration, school staff and other stakeholders.
The counselor establishes and convenes a stakeholder group to periodically review implementation, needs, and progress of the school counseling program.	The counselor convenes random stakeholder groups to periodically review implementation, needs, and progress of the school counseling program.
The counselor is proactive and assists students, parents and staff in understanding relevant policies and procedures.	The counselor is reactive and provides limited assistance to students, parents and staff in understanding relevant policies and procedures.
The counselor identifies, evaluates and participates in fair-share responsibilities.	The counselor experiences challenges with identifying, evaluating and participating in fair-share responsibilities.
The counselor actively participates in the implementation of school-wide goals.	The counselor passively participates in the implementation of school-wide goals.
The counselor supports the total school program by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serving on committees • helping to plan and implement meetings and staff development opportunities • sharing knowledge and expertise with colleagues • utilizing facilitative skills when collaborating 	The counselor supports some parts of the school program by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serving on committees • helping to plan and implement meetings and staff development opportunities • sharing knowledge and expertise with colleagues • utilizing facilitative skills when collaborating
The counselor engages in interdisciplinary collaborative problem-solving.	The counselor limits their engagement in interdisciplinary collaborative problem-solving.
The counselor demonstrates basic knowledge and respect of differences within and across diverse populations when interacting with, planning for and responding to students and the community.	The counselor demonstrates challenges with basic knowledge and respect of differences within and across diverse populations when interacting with, planning for and responding to students and the community.
The counselor adheres to the ethical standards of the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA).	The counselor demonstrates challenges with adhering to the ethical standards of the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA).
The counselor follows federal, state, and local policies, procedures and protocols regarding professional issues and responsibilities.	The counselor experiences challenges with following federal, state, and local policies, procedures and protocols regarding professional issues and responsibilities.
The counselor respects and upholds the confidentiality policy in the school counseling relationship, maintenance of privacy of student records, and recognizes the duty to warn/inform when a student is in danger of harming self and/or others.	The counselor demonstrates challenges with respecting and upholding the confidentiality policy in the school counseling relationship, maintenance of privacy of student records, and in recognizing the duty to warn/inform when a student is in danger of harming self and/or others.

RESOURCE COUNSELORS ONLY

STANDARD VII: Resource counselors are committed to students and staff through effective school and department leadership.

Performance Criteria

- A. The resource counselor assists and supports counselors in all aspects of the counseling program and serves as a counseling program role model.
- Assists counselors with their growth and development and with implementing a comprehensive school counseling program
 - Apprises counselors of program changes and requirements
 - Provides strategies and implements programs and practices for improving student achievement and school climate
 - Supervises implementation of approved counseling lessons
- B. The resource counselor supports the development of a professional learning community within the department and school.
- Arranges for collaboration between the counseling department and other departments within the school
 - Facilitates intra-departmental discussions on the three domains: Social/Emotional, Academic, and College & Career Readiness.
 - Helps foster cohesive, cooperative interpersonal relationships with the department
 - Participates in the planning of school staff development activities and promotes such activities in the department
- C. The resource counselor observes and analyzes instruction and related data to support the professional growth of counselors.
- Observes instruction both formally and informally
 - Writes observations according to MCPS standards
 - Meets with counselors to discuss observations and offers suggestions as needed
 - Analyzes data to help counselors improve areas of instruction as needed
 - Identifies and supports the instructional needs of new counselors
 - Elevates best instructional practices within the department
- D. The resource counselor collaborates with colleagues, administrators, and others on instructional issues.
- Helps to design and implement the Local School Improvement Plan
 - Serves as an active participant in leadership team meetings and implementation of goals throughout the school year
 - Dialogues with consulting teachers and mentors assigned to counselors within the department
- E. The resource counselor takes a leadership role in the identification, acquisition, and distribution of instructional resources.
- Works with the financial office to order office and instructional materials as needed
 - Manages departmental budget
 - Solicits suggestions from department members for material orders
- F. The resource counselor serves as a liaison to gather and disseminate information.
- Attends all appropriate county and school meetings, and shares information from the meetings with the department
 - Works with subject coordinators/supervisors to keep current
 - Holds department meetings as needed
 - Meets frequently with administrators to discuss instructional issues