

STATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
TO THE
MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

FINAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2013

Ryan P. Casey

June 25, 2013

This is a report of the activities of the State Student Advisory Council during FY 2013 as presented by the 2012-2013 Chairman, Ryan P. Casey. This report will show the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education some of the SSAC's projects, some projects from the Regional Student Advisory Councils as well as remarks from Chairman Casey regarding his term.

June 25, 2013

Dear Members of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education,

I am incredibly thankful for what has been an unbelievable year for me. It is truly inspiring to see the work each and every one of you does to promote access to quality public education for every student in the Commonwealth. It has been an honor to serve with you.

This year has been an organizational year for SSAC. The council saw a shift in responsibility, bringing greater focus onto the 5 regional councils. Rather than a top-down leadership approach, as had been adopted in previous years, the Student Advisory Council worked with regions directly to facilitate projects. This assuaged concerns of many that the regional councils had been marginalized by SSAC projects led by the 8 delegates from each region, as opposed to the full membership of the group. This new model allowed us to more accurately represent the needs of students across the commonwealth, and lent itself to greater success.

Another change this year has been the establishment of a new Legislative Committee. In its first year, Legislative Committee worked to keep tabs on current legislative issues in the Commonwealth. At the beginning of the year, they voiced support for a bill that would allow regional school districts to charge for bussing. Later on, they focused on the budgetary process, helping to keep SSAC and, through monthly presentation by Legislative Committee Representatives, RSACs, informed of pertinent matters at the legislative level. In future years, I hope to see Legislative Committee take on an even greater presence, serving as the legislative voice for SSAC and providing students with the opportunity to testify on behalf of the council at hearings, as well as providing an organized way to contact legislators in support of various initiatives.

As is the case with any organization, collaboration is essential. Our greatest successes this year have been the work to provide student input into the development of educator evaluation procedures. It is encouraging to know that not only will student feedback be represented in the evaluation process, but also that it was included in the development of that process. I hope to see SSAC take advantage of similar opportunities in the future. It is through this collaboration that we can see the greatest impact, and fulfill our duty to represent the needs of all students in the Commonwealth.

SSAC's greatest weakness is still representation. While many schools do send representatives to Regional meetings, there are even more who do not. In order to continue to foster adequate representation, we must gain greater membership. This is especially the case among districts with high rates of poverty and ESL students. By continuing projects like BSFS, I believe this goal can gradually be attained.

I was thrilled to learn that Dan Brogan has been elected as SSAC Chairperson for fiscal year 2014. Dan has been an incredibly dedicated member of SSAC, and has demonstrated his commitment to the students both within his own Southeast Region, and the entire state. I am confident that Dan will be an excellent leader for the council, and a valuable member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Sincerest Thanks,
Ryan P. Casey

SSAC 2012 - 2013 Major Highlights:

Work with DESE Staff to provide student feedback on the implementation process for student feedback in educator evaluation.

Continue the By Students for Students Campaign, presenting at an additional two schools this year, the Nathaniel Bowditch School in Salem, and the Albert F. Argenziano School in Somerville.

Develop a tip video for incoming high school students, with suggestions and advice for a successful high school experience.

Formation of a new Legislative Committee, tasked with reviewing legislative issues and managing SSAC legislative outreach efforts.

State Student Advisory Council (SSAC)

The State Student Advisory Council focused on representing the student voice in the process of determining the best way for student feedback to be accounted for in the educator evaluation process. They worked closely with Kat Johnston and Catherine Gabriel to share their thoughts on how student feedback should be accounted for. The overwhelming sentiment from all five regions was that student feedback should be a base for further discussion. Students were weary of the presence of bias, and wanted to ensure that information is accurate and reflective of the educator's actual performance, not just the extent to which students "like" him or her.

In future years, SSAC hopes to continue working in collaboration with DESE through initiatives like the educator evaluation reforms.

Central Massachusetts Regional Student Advisory Council (CMRSAC)

This year, CMRSAC decided to focus primarily on college and career readiness. With this in mind, they worked to create a student video consisting of recommendations for each year in high school. While there is a wealth of information readily available online, many students feel that it is overwhelming. CMRSAC created their video project, which can be accessed online, in an effort to present information in a more relatable fashion.

Southeastern Massachusetts Regional Student Advisory Council (SERSAC)

SERSAC also focused on college and career readiness, a theme across the state, and chose to create a website. This website focuses on all opportunities after completion of high school – entering the workforce, completing postsecondary education, or joining the military. Rather than rewriting existing information, SERSAC created the website with the intent of establishing a database for students to organize and view existing resources.

Northeastern Massachusetts Regional Student Advisory Council (NERSAC)

NERSACs efforts centered around 21st century skills, financial literacy, and other attributes necessary for success after high school. Their initial goal of implementing a 21st century skills curriculum proved unattainable, so they set about working at the individual school level to further their efforts. NERSAC created a list of all represented schools, and their current course offerings in the areas of college and career readiness. They began contacting these districts individually, lobbying for an increased focus on these vital life skills where needed.

Greater Boston Regional Student Advisory Council (GBRSAC)

GBRSAC was the region behind the continuation of the By Students for Students Campaign. Over the course of the year, they presented at two middle schools – the Nathaniel Bowditch School in Salem and the Albert F. Argenziano School in Somerville. These presentations were an incredible success, and the students were invited back for further presentations next year. Additionally, GBRSAC worked to help revitalize SSAC's presence online. Unfortunately, due to a myriad of difficulties, this website is not available for public access at this time. They hope to continue this effort next year.

Western Massachusetts Regional Student Advisory Council (WMRSAC)

WMRSAC chose to focus their efforts this year on the changing student experience in schools across the state. With this in mind, they developed a survey designed to gauge experiences ranging from substance abuse to internet access. This allowed them to gain a better understanding of the experiences and difficulties faced by students today. While the results of the experiences were not made public, they were presented back to the individual districts to provide information for educators and administrators.

SSAC College & Career Readiness

An overarching theme behind SSAC and RSAC this year was preparation for life after high school. This focus on college and career readiness allowed students to contribute ideas and suggestions as to how to best prepare high school students. Each region successfully created and carried out a project in which they studied or improved college and career readiness in some aspect.

CMRSAC decided to focus on looking to collect sample data on Guidance Counselors in the form of a survey. The hope was that the data could be collected, analyzed and given back to school administrations, and that the questions would reflect the feasibility of student surveys as part of the wider educator evaluation system. Unfortunately, CMRSAC was not able to bring their project to fruition.

GBRSAC created a By Students for Students program where a group of students visited various local middle schools to give a presentation on why students should attend high school.

Many RSAC groups created tips, videos, and resources for students who are going through the college application process with the hope of organizing all of the information on one website.

SSAC Educator Evaluation

Early this year, Student Advisory Council (SAC) Kat Johnston and Katherine Gabriele spoke to our state delegates about the educator evaluations that were being developed and rolled out across Massachusetts this year. They looked for SSAC delegates' input regarding the new regulations and the particularly relevant Student Perception Surveys. Our partnership extended to visits by Kat and Katherine to each of the regional meetings, and several of the regions decided to tackle educator evaluations as projects for the year.

The members of the regional SAC's relayed some of the sentiments, logic, and the general attitude that students held towards the Student Surveys during Kat Johnson and Katherine Gabriele's visits to the region meetings.

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Executive Committee Annual Report

The successes of the 2012-2013 State Student Advisory Council Executive Committee include the first ever creation of a SSAC Mission Statement for future councils, and we advised the SSAC Chairperson, Ryan Casey, on multiple decisions in regards to the board meetings. In addition to this, we served as liaisons between the regional councils, the state councils, and the chairperson.

One of the main purposes of the Executive Committee is to be able to review board packets and discuss them with the chair at each meeting, but this was a great difficulty for the Executive Committee

considering the board packet availability and our meetings did not always coincide. Another hindrance to the Executive Committee this year was the lack of attendance; this slowed down discussions and made it difficult to fulfill the obligations of the committee.

One of our recommendations for future Executive Committees is to ensure access to board packets prior to the meetings. This will allow the delegates to have beneficial discussions consistently, and also fulfill their obligations to bring information from the chairperson down to the State and Regional Councils effectively. We would also strongly recommend allocating additional time for the executive meetings so that the delegates will have an appropriate amount of time for key discussion points each meeting.

SSAC Legislative Committee Annual Report

Successes:

The SSAC legislative Committee was able to successfully identify an issue pertinent to a significant amount of students within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The issue we selected to pursue was the issues relating funding of transportation for regional schools. We were able to identify the issue and collect empirical data as to the detrimental effects this policy has had on school districts. In responding to this issue, we drafted a letter to the House Regional Schools Caucus hoping to provide them with convincing evidence that this was an issue worth further investigation.

Challenges:

Among the many challenges, time and the nature of the legislature proved to be our biggest obstacles. We were always behind in time, because, with only one meeting per month, we missed deadlines as far as legislative filing. Once we drafted the letter, we were required to present it to all five regions for their approval. Since the various regions meet at different times in the month, we were unable to obtain an official vote of approval from each region.

Looking to the Future:

Though this was disappointing, looking forward, we would recommend that if subsequent Legislative Committees wish to pursue the issue of regional school transportation, then they use the letter we drafted and send it out immediately next year. However, a better use for the Legislative Committee would be to summarize and stay up to date on pending legislation in the General Court. The true function of the Legislative Committee is to synthesize the concerns of the entire Council and all constituents, and from there tackle the issues via the legislative process. Going forward, we advise that Legislative Committee acts as a lobbying arm, researching and advocating for issues of interest decided by the Council that are currently being debated on Beacon Hill, instead of attempting to file legislation on our own. Based on the time constraints we were currently under, and the increasing time constraints Legislative Committees will be under in the upcoming years, using the committee as a research and lobbying outlet will be the most impactful and achievable use for the committee.

CMRSAC Final Report

Successes of the Group's Work

For the 2012-2013 School Year, the Central Massachusetts Regional Student Advisory Council (CMRSAC) worked towards a goal of creating a basis of college preparedness and readiness in MA. We elected to spend our time aiding schools in our region by focusing on Guidance Departments and the key role that

Guidance Counselors play in college and career readiness. The students of CMRSAC believe that a well prepared, well trained and well equipped Guidance Department can do wonders when it comes to creating a student body that is prepared for the world ahead. For this reason, CMRSAC spent much of this year creating and administering a neutral, unbiased survey concerning the quality of Guidance Departments within schools that approved to administer the survey. Many schools in Central MA opted to have their juniors and seniors take this survey, the results of which CMRSAC members compiled into statistical summary pages that were used to create a final book. Each school also received its own statistical summary page, providing the schools with student feedback on their Guidance Department to use as they wish. Along with our guidance surveys, CMRSAC created a student video of advice from students regarding the college process. Tip sheets providing essential advice for parents, and essential advice for students were also created and distributed. Our student video, parent tip sheet, and student tip sheet were all incorporated into Greater Boston Regional Student Advisory Council's college and career readiness website. We worked hard to accomplish our goal and hope that Guidance Departments in Central Massachusetts improve due to our endeavors.

While working on our external, overarching project, CMRSAC also did some internal work on the Council's structure and meeting procedures. All meetings were planned and run by CMRSAC leadership. The Orientation was revised by CMRSAC delegates and completely student-run by the non-returning senior members. We did this with the intent of increasing student involvement, initiative and ideas in regard to

CMRSACs structure and progress for future years.

Challenges Faced

CMRSAC faced a few challenges this year, all of which were directly related to our Guidance Department Survey. Some schools were weary of administering our survey in their schools because they were unclear of our intent or already had a similar survey. For this reason, we had quite a few schools unwilling to participate in our survey. Therefore, we had fewer schools in the Central Massachusetts region participating than we had hoped.

Recommendation for Moving Forward

Much of the confusion with the intent of our survey had to do with how the survey was presented to schools' administrations and Guidance Departments. For the future, CMRSAC will focus on making sure each member of the Council understands the goals of the year-long project and that the intent is clear to third parties. This will hopefully reduce the confusion and challenges we faced this year.

Greater Boston Student Advisory Council Final Reports

Co-Chairs: Ian Speers and Serena DiDonato

Recorder: Sam Bojela

By Students for Students Groups:

Our original goals for the year were to promote the importance of a high school education to middle schoolers, encourage students to pursue opportunities that high school offers and in the years following HS.

To achieve our goals, first, we contacted members of the 2011 By Students for Students group to obtain the videos and Prezi needed for the presentation. After acquiring the material as a group, we discussed

the roles that each of us would like to fulfill in the By Students for Students group, whether it was to be a presenter, “tech person”, or coordinator. We then made a tentative schedule for the presentations and assigned willing members of our group to each date listed in the schedule.

We made a list of schools with the highest dropout rates and narrowed our list down to schools near the Department of Education for feasibility. After contacting the schools in Waltham, Salem and Somerville among others, we then waited to hear back. We heard back from the Albert F. Argenziano School in Somerville, the Nathaniel Bowditch in Salem, Winter Hill Community School in Somerville and proceeded to plan dates to visit. We have visited the Nathaniel Bowditch in Salem already, plan to visit the Albert F. Argenziano School at the end of April, and The Winter Hill Community School in June.

The greatest obstacle faced aside from a lack of strong responses from most schools we contacted was planning the transportation between members and schools. The uncertainty of the dates of the presentations and the lack of confirmation from schools made it difficult for our members to commit to certain presentations. Our group had conflicting opinions regarding the location of the meet-up before the presentation. Though ideally, we would like to meet as a group before presenting, this is not always feasible for all members.

To the future council, there are many returning members to guide the program. The group needs to make sure to include people that are not seniors so that there will always be a guiding force. This project impacts students of all ages directly so the more dedication to continuing this project would be ideal.

The strengths of our group include working together to contact the schools, splitting up the work by assigning half to make phone calls and the other half to follow up with an email, and communicating through Facebook.

Group members: Nalin Springer, Maya Rochefort, Hilary Greenberg, Adam Chernew, Samuel Bojela, Younes Hartout, Enzo Cerrutti, Iris Feng, Stacey Bilodeau, Sydney Georges

GBRSAC College Readiness Group:

Originally, our goal was to create either a brochure or a website containing resources that would help students become more comfortable with the college application process.

To work towards this goal, we took the following steps. First, we researched what materials existed already in terms of the college application process. We went around to our schools and gathered what information was available to us through them, as well as on Collegeboard.org, and then we brainstormed what parts of these resources were the most helpful, and decided that a timeline format, outlining what should be done each year, would be most helpful. We then compiled all of the information we had gathered, putting it on timelines for Freshmen/Sophomore year and for Junior/Senior year on the Google Drive for Massac2012. We then contacted Rachel Traub for IT support in regards to putting a page on the Department website. We were able to create a website on Wordpress that will eventually be running off the Department server. We put the information from the timelines onto the website, which is not yet public.

To continue this project, we will format our Wordpress website (sac.doe.mass.edu) according to Department guidelines. Then, we would include the video that CMRSAC made about the challenges of

high school and applying to college (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kt25AxRaJ4E>). We would also get the website and the content approved by the Department for public use. After that, we would work on advertising our website to our schools.

Throughout the process of developing this website, we encountered the obstacles of synthesizing and incorporating the different information regarding the college process presented by representatives from different schools. At the onset of the development phase of the project, there was disagreement among some of the delegates concerning the best means of communicating the information we had collected in the most efficient, understandable, and concise manner. Ultimately, we decided to categorize the information in separate web pages based on specific details relating to individual grades and in chronological order. One of the largest struggles we faced was a result of technical difficulties and the necessity of receiving approval for the implementation of our plan. While we were able to develop our ideas offline and upload them to a Google Drive account, we faced difficulty uploading this information to the Wordpress website on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary server, as they tasked us with mirroring the color scheme and layout of the larger Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education site, an enterprise which proved a significant challenge for the delegates responsible for the technical aspects of the project. Furthermore, in order to make the website accessible to the public and thus able to fulfill the group's original goal, we need approval of not only format, but also the content. This approval is still pending. As of this time, we have not been able to implement the website as a public domain, and consequently the project remains incomplete.

Our group had many strengths. We had the strength of numbers, in that we could break into smaller groups that could accomplish many things at once. We also had one member who was very technologically savvy, which allowed making a website to be a realistic idea. If we had known of the challenges that would have come from trying to connect our website to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website, we would have begun talking to IT earlier about getting the website up and running, as well as getting the content approved. We also might have considered making a separate website, not connected to the Department's.

We hope that our project can be continued and completed next year,

Nick Karnovsky, David Wexler, Drew Reidy, Mavi Fagnani, Maranatha Boyer, Jasmeet Arora, Camille Van Allen, Christine Murphy, Ben McClarey, Gina Brazao, Matt Gregory, Katherine Brumberg, Roger Parson, Colin Bell, Sharon Lee

GBRSAC College & Career Readiness

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Northeast Regional Student Advisory Council

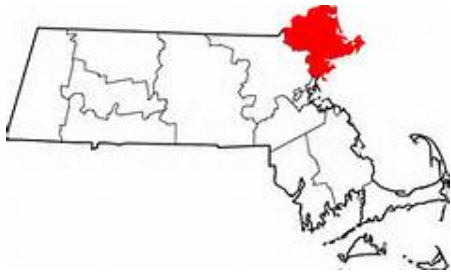
Final Report

At the culmination of the 2012-2013 school year, NERSAC has accomplished a lot, and has overcome many obstacles. At the beginning of the year, the council decided to focus on integration of 21st century skills into the curriculums of high schools in the Northeast Region. Many different ideas were brainstormed on how to tackle this issue, such as designing a course, and making recommendations to the board of education on how to teach 21st century skills.

Finally, we decided to compile a list of programs that are already in place in different schools, that students found valuable, with the hope that this list can be given to school committees that are seeking to improve their curriculums. By doing research throughout the state, we found that some schools require their seniors to do internships, other schools have technology immersion programs, for example. In the list, we included the schools that provide their students these programs, what students think of them, and how to contact the school, if a school committee is interested in starting a similar program. Next year, we hope that NERSAC members will continue to distribute valuable resource, and push school committees to adopt one or more of these programs.

The biggest challenge we faced this year was attendance. We began the year with two co-chairs, both of whom had to resign mid-year for different reasons. This left us without any leadership, so state delegates had to trade off filling the roles of running regional meetings and communicating with chairs from other regions at SSAC meetings. In addition, the attendance at regional meetings was unreliable at best. Although it was great to see so many people interested in Regional SAC throughout the year, it was different people each time. This made it difficult to continue a project from one meeting to the next. Because our council is one of the smallest to begin with, we were explaining the roles of NERSAC to new people at almost every meeting.

In the future, we hope that NERSAC will be able to communicate in between meetings, and have a clear idea of a project that will be continuously worked on throughout the year. Because of the shortened schedule for next year, communication will be essential for the council to be productive. We would like to see next year's NERSAC to continue this year's project, but that will be up to the new delegates to decide at orientation.



Northeast Regional Student Advisory Council



Members of the school committee,

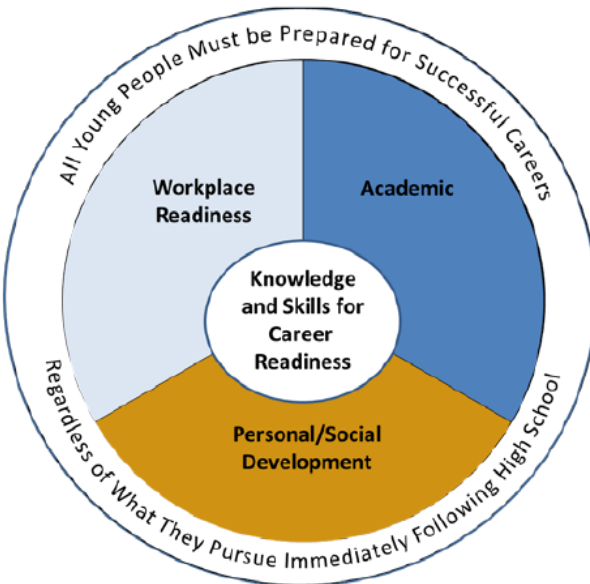


Figure 1 (Mass DESE)

As students of the Northeast Regional Student Advisory Council, we recognize the importance of 21st century skills for the development of a high school student. 21st century skills, as defined in Figure 1, are more important than ever in assuring that students are ready for life after high school. Based on our research over the 2012 - 2013 school year, we have found 21st century skills to have a broader definition than computer proficiency. This research includes talking to experts in the field, as well as additional resources compiled from students across the state. Our definition includes communication skills, personal / social development, as well as a rigorous, comprehensive academic course of study (Figure 1). There have been many different approaches to tackling this lack of 21st century

skills across the Commonwealth. Schools have developed a broad range of programs to prepare their students for college as well as the workplace. These have been listed later in this report. We understand that these programs may be costly. However, we have found that these plans are able to be implemented without a significant shift to the budget. Also, philanthropic community organizations, such as banks, have stepped in to help get these programs off the ground. Please look at this list, and consider implementing one or more of these programs in your school. With more information about what other schools are doing, this compilation will make the planning process easier. These programs will help students succeed after high school, whether they enter the workforce, or pursue a college degree.

Schools	Programs	Description of Programs	Contact Information
Hamilton-Wenham	Electives: Public Speaking Senior Portfolio: A presentation that is a graduation requirement.	Electives: The program helps students improve presentation skills. Senior Portfolio: students have to present their reflection on High School. Program helps build presentation skills and shows how a student has developed.	NERSAC Delegate: Chase Schaub and Matthew Chigas Principal: Mr. Huges Phone Number: 978-468-0400, Website: www. hwschools.net
Whittier Tech	Programs: Health Occupations, CPR certification, AED certification, CNA certification, Co-Op Internship: Internship at Penacock		Principal: Maureen Lynch
Lynnfield	Electives: Marketing , Personal Finance, Business and Law, and Public Speaking Program: Shadow Day	Electives: They are available to all Seniors and Juniors, and they receive credit. Shadow Day: A day where selected students shadow a career path.	NERSAC Delegates: Alexis Finn, Madyson Milordi Principal: Bob Cleary Phone Number: 781-334-5820 Website: www.lynnfieldpublicschools.org
Lynn Tech.	Programs: Skills USA, CVTE Strands 6&7, OSHA training and CPR Training. Courses: Entrepreneurship, Cop-Op, Web development, computer training, program and design.	Skills U.S.A: a leadership program, helps students learn more about a trade, and competes with other schools . CVTE: Business class. OSHA and CPR: a Requirement Students are trained and certified because it is necessary to join the workforce. Core Courses: Students are required to take these courses freshman year.	NERSAC Delegates: Amanda Lobo Billy Ferreras. Principal: Dianne Parsidise Phone Number:781-477-7431 Website: www.lynnschools.org
Ipswich	Banking Internships: For Juniors and Seniors. Bridge Program: For seniors Credit for Life Fair: For Juniors Career Day: Freshman and Sophomores.	Banking Internships: These internships at a bank in the school help upperclassmen prepare for working at the bank. Bridge Program: This is a fourth quarter internship program for seniors, helping them find a career path. Credit For Life Fair: Sponsored by the Institution for Savings, Juniors spend a day learning how to manage their money by role-playing a 25 year old that has have entered a career, or job. Career Day: Is a event exposing Freshman and sophomores to possible careers after High School.	NERSAC Delegates: Jeremy T. Romano and Michael Dillon Principal: David R. Dalton Phone Number:978-356-3137 Website: www.ipswichschools.org

Reading	<p>Required Skills Courses: For Freshman, include Resume Writing, interviews ,and presentation skills</p> <p>Business Co-Op: This is a program for Seniors to intern in a work place..</p>	<p>Required Skills Courses: Freshman learn necessary skills for college and careers after high school. Business Co-Op: This is a program for Seniors to intern in a work place. Learning the workplace skills, while also reflecting on their progress, showing personal development.</p>	<p>NERSAC Delegate: Luke Sullivan Principal: Kevin Higginbottom Phone Number: 781-944-8200 Website: www.edline.net/readingmemorialhighschool</p>
Newburyport	<p>Credit for Life Fair, Electives : Personal Finance, Economics Today</p> <p>Internship: Local opportunities including a Bank Internship in the school.</p>	<p>Credit for Life Fair: Sponsored by the Institution for Savings, Juniors spend a day learning how to manage their money by role-playing a 25 year old that has have entered a career, or job.</p> <p>Electives: Personal Finance (a course teaching the fundamentals of lifetime financial literacy skills), Economics Today (a course teaching the ins-and-outs of the ever-changing 21st Century economy).</p> <p>Banking Internships: These internships at a bank in the school help upperclassmen prepare for working at the bank.</p>	
Masconomet	<p>Offers electives for banking, entrepreneurship, business, economics, computer science, mass media, and financial management</p> <p>Has afterschool clubs focusing on business, debate, leadership, media communication</p> <p>Offers programs for senior internships in the spring semester of 12th grade.</p>	<p>Electives: Classes students may choose to – but are not required to – take</p> <p>Clubs: Enrichment options outside of the school day for students to join</p> <p>Senior Internship: Seniors have the opportunity to choose an internship and present at the internship fair. For students who elect to do this, the program runs during the entirety of the final quarter.</p>	<p>Principal: Pamela Culver NERSAC Delegates: Gabriella DeConti and Madison LaFreniere Website: www.masconomet.org</p>
Marblehead	<p>Offers electives for Banking, Keyboarding / Computer Applications, and Marketing. Also have a Senior Project fourth quarter.</p>	<p>Electives: Students can decide to take these courses for school credit. Students are exposed to these careers, while also learning skills necessary to enter these career paths.</p> <p>Senior Project: Students can elect to work on this project. Allows students to intern at future career positions.</p>	<p>Principal: Debra Heaton or Layne Millington. NERSAC Delegate: Emily Ricker. Phone Number: 781-639-3100 Website: www.marbleheadschoools.org</p>

SERSAC Summary Final Report

Our monthly meetings were attended by many students, and as a result we felt it would be more productive if those in our region divided into subcommittees. Below is the topic of each group's project followed by a summary of the progress made.

Guidance: This group focused on examining guidance departments in our region's schools and attempting to find commonalities that create a conducive environment for support. Formal letters were brought to each school asking for permission to include them in the group's findings. While the group's work did not come to a tangible conclusion, the progress can be picked up by next year's council which will include a few students from this past year who will continue to serve on the council.

Life Skills: This group worked to create a comprehensive website that makes it easy to become aware of what life after high school entails. Their site, <http://www.rightlifetrack.wix.com/life>, will include information and links that allow students to learn about employment, military, volunteer, and housing opportunities, among others, so they can get an accurate picture of the different paths that can be taken after high school.

SAT Prep: This group's purpose was to implement a statewide SAT course that all students could partake in. This task, however, was much too daunting for this group and they reformatted their task to creating a pamphlet on how to prepare for the SATs. This pamphlet was subpar and will probably not have much impact in the future.

In summation, the success of our council this year is not at the level we had hoped to achieve. The life skills website is a great example of how we can help the other kids in our region, but the overall success of the site is questionable as circulation will be required in order for it to reach the intended audience. However, the other groups seemed to be over overconfident in their abilities and miscalculated how difficult their projects would be. We as the leadership did our best to guide the groups in order to achieve the goals of each, but they stuck to their original plans. With the exception of the life skills group, this equated to not accomplishing the original goals.

College and Career Readiness Group of the Southeastern Regional Student Advisory Council

Due to difficulties in the college and career preparedness system, our group theorized that students would benefit from a direct, immediate set of guidelines that could detail the steps they would need to take to achieve their goals. While it was acknowledged that some students were well ahead of the curb with preparedness and personal planning, and some were far, far behind, it was thought that the peloton were merely wandering in the proverbial wilderness.

The group discussed methods to address its concerns, and, after consideration of a web-based format ended in stalemate, worked toward the production of a pamphlet, so as to best ameliorate the issue. The group compiled a set of year-by-year guidelines for students. It also used a survey to test its assumptions, which broadly confirmed them. After the survey results were returned, the group began the actual production of its pamphlet, which went through several drafts and revisions before being presented to Department of Elementary and Secondary Education officials for approval. The pamphlet included links to various college and career preparedness-oriented websites, so that students could glean further information independently.

After the DRAFT pamphlet was completed, it was distributed promptly to several high school guidance and administration teams. At this stage, it is still pending approval from most authorities, although they have expressed enthusiasm for the basic concept, and their initial impressions have been positive. In the future, the group hopes that its pamphlet (which may also be viewed online, in portable document file (PDF) format) will aid students in their college and career searches, and make them more prepared to enter the worlds of higher education and the workforce. The project could, in future, be expanded to high schools throughout Massachusetts (it is now in less than a dozen schools), and updated regularly to keep its information current.

The group faced several collective challenges, ranging from the delay caused by Hurricane Sandy to various stalls in production. Ultimately, however, its process was relatively efficient, and the final product almost exactly matched the initial goal. Unlike other groups, we benefited from the continued presence of most of our members throughout all seven SERSAC meetings. By contrast, the group's strengths were many and varied. More frequent meetings could well have aided the group's progress. Strengths found within the group were combining resources, and continued networking within different school systems.

Participants in the group were: Veronica Delaney, Parker Richards, Savannah Climo, Katelyn Cummings, Lamia Hamie, Jacquelyn Foley, Emily Tiedtke, Emily Ulrich, Kelsey Duff, Abby Koczera, Mikayla Matheson, Megan Bonefant, Julia Nicholson, and Nick Bergstein.

Survey materials used: SurveyMonkey.com

Username: SERSAC_2012-13_future_plans

Password: sersac12

All results from the survey are compiled into this website.

SERSAC Guidance Final Report:

Our objective this year has been to create a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of guidance counselor departments throughout the state in order to catalyze reform. The first step to achieving our objective was to create a survey to assess whether our concern was valid and whether other students' opinions resonated with ours. The group members distributed the surveys to a cross section of students at their respective schools and the data was assimilated into a central document. Every school represented also created a document which describes their guidance counselor department and this is emblematic of how different each school's system is. It is our belief that guidance counselor departments throughout the state would all benefit from standardization and uniformity. From the results of the surveys, we reached the conclusion that most students have not had consistency in the guidance they receive. Most seniors have reported that they have not had the same guidance counselor all four years of their high school career and a majority of students overall reported that they have had their current guidance counselor for only a year. Students also have expressed the belief that they see the value and importance in having consistency in guidance, which translates into how important having a guidance counselor all four years of high school is.

As a group, we work well together which aided us in accomplishing the first step in our endeavor, but what hindered our progress was the lack of meeting times as a group and having to resort to collaboration through social media. But this is not a challenge that we were not able to overcome.

Because we have juniors and sophomore members in our group, we hope to further our project and ultimately find a way to improve guidance counselor departments throughout the state.

Group Members: Samuel Steed, Ally Farren, Emma Zuk, Dan Block, Rachel Romeiro, Marisa Kanter, Madison Utz, Keith Drucker and Analia Cuevas-Ferreras.

SERSAC SAT Prep Summary Report

As the world of education moves forward, progresses, and expands its scope, its standards that it holds for students indubitably rises. With this increasing emphasis on education in our society inevitably comes the heightened importance of the variable that is college and career readiness. More and more, school districts are asked to create a student population that is not only prepared for post-secondary success, but that will inspire the next generation of learners. A set measure for the performance of students is the nation-wide standardized test, the SAT, also known as the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Acting as a large determining factor student success in the college application process, the SAT's are one of the most integral ventures a motivated students is required to take. Needless to say, awareness and preparation for such important, deciding-ventures as the SAT's is an absolute must. For the past year, our group, a subgroup of the Southeastern Massachusetts Regional Student Advisory Council has affirmed to not only heighten student scores on the SAT's, but to expand student awareness of the exam in general.

Collectively, our subgroup of SERSAC Juniors and seniors came to the conclusion that the SAT's, although daunting, were essential in the college application process. Our subgroup also arrived at the conclusion that many students may not be fully prepared, informed, or aware of the SAT's. With this, we strove to implement a fluid system in which students would feel comfortable while taking such a high-stakes exam.

The original intention of our group was to fully implement a comprehensive SAT-prep class across the state with a structured curriculum that would fully prepare students for the exam. In schools that *have* implemented SAT prep courses, student feedback has been positive, and student awareness of the exam's prosperities is greater. With this intention, our group completed much researched and gathered an expansive amount of information. However, this task proved to be truly daunting for just one subgroup of a regional SAC to accomplish. After a month of contemplating alternatives, we arrived at the conclusion that we must strive to create student awareness and preparation for the SAT's in a manner more manageable for a smaller group.

Our first step to achieve our goal of student awareness and preparation for the SAT exam was to narrow down what information was most to extend to the student population. Much of our research done was rooted on the website of the College Board, the organization that administers the SAT exam. Here, various tips for SAT preparation and SAT scoring were found. Many in our group found this research process to be highly eye-opening: for example, many of us in the group were unaware of the scoring policy of the SAT's that penalizes students for answering questions incorrectly. With information like this compiled, we affirmed to make a pamphlet that would fully explain the SAT process for students who otherwise might not understand the test's intricacies.

After many rough drafts of our pamphlet, we finally arrived at a refined product. Our intention from this point is to have this pamphlet distributed to underclassmen across the state in order to best make students aware of the exam before taking it as Juniors and Seniors.

Together, our group worked with great precision, diligence, and cooperation. We are proud of our final product, and we hope that our pamphlet may be distributed to a larger population of students in order to procure a greater sense of college readiness across the state.

Thank you for this opportunity,

Stephanie Hall, Amanda Gibbs, Jack Malafronte, Amanda Pimental, Adam Vieira, Sam Oslin, Morgan Haaland, Veda Krol, Courtney Girouard, Matt Whalen

SERSAC Life Skills Group

Members: Kevin Gambino, Abby Adams, Melanie Lorenz, Taylor Stebbings, Connor Saleeba, Rebecca Moussa, Matt Rota, Kate Martin, Dan Brogan

Original Goals: Our group wanted to make a website that streamlined the process of becoming aware of what life after high school entails. We all realized that the information was out there but because it was scattered all over the web, it was hard to find and therefore discouraged students from becoming educated about their futures. By gathering information about different options and compiling them on one convenient website, we hoped that students would be more prepared for life after high school.

Steps Taken to Reach Goal: As a group, we created a closed Facebook page in order to communicate between meetings. Rebecca Moussa talked to her web design teacher at school in order to create the blank template for the website and then shared the link with all of us so we could divide the topics and conquer the project. We all researched our topics in order to complete the project in a timely fashion and the Facebook page was beneficial for discussion throughout the duration of the school year.

End Product/ Summary: The title we chose for our SERSAC group project was, "RightLifeTrack," in which we created a website that would address the concerns of students who are getting prepared for a post-secondary education lifestyle. We first realized the concern that many students are unprepared to integrate into the real world after a post-secondary education.

Although information is currently available to students to find recourse with integrating into a self sufficient lifestyle, the vast majority of websites are clustered and overwhelming. We thought that creating a resourceful website that is essentially a directory for students who are in search of learning how to live after high school would be beneficial.

We thought that having a website that is concise would help provide students with acquiring the knowledge of post-secondary options that include, but are not limited to: Financial literacy, military, community service/volunteering, adapting in the competitive job market, and college advice.

Our website can be edited through wix.com. Our username is rightlifetrack@gmail.com and our password is sersacgroup1. The website can be viewed at <http://rightlifetrack.wix.com/life>.

Resources:

Our group searched the web for various sites that were helpful and vital to the each topic that we wanted to address. Once Rebecca's teacher set up the initial website, we each used Facebook to communicate with each other to understand the direction each member was taking.

Project Strengths:

Some of the strengths that our group had included the consistent ability to communicate with each other, as well as being on time with our projected goals. Overall, we felt as a group, that communication was constant.

Project Weaknesses:

As a group, we felt that one of the weaknesses we had was ineffective time management. We felt that time wasn't necessarily managed as well as it could have been, and another concern is that we are not completely sure of our future direction and distribution of our website, but we do understand that the goal of this project is to inform students and to assist them acclimate into a post-secondary education.

Future Goals:

Although we are not entirely sure what we are going to do with our project in regards to the future, we do anticipated adding this website on our school websites as well as using social media to advertise our website. If regional delegates wanted to continue supplying information for our website, our account name is "rightlifetrack@gmail.com" and our password is, "sersacgroup1." We utilized a free service entitled, "wix.com" in which students would still have access to adding supplemental information to the current website. We hope in the future, that this website will be used to assist students, and hopefully future regional delegates will continue the work on this project, although, this project is considered fully completed in relations to our prior goals.

What We Have Learned:

We have learned the challenges of being able to work within a group online in between Regional meetings, but we have been able to overcome such adversities, and we were able to complete our website. We have also learned to be more specific about our goals