*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

### 135 Santilli Highway, Everett, Massachusetts 02149-1962 Telephone: (781) 338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

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| Jeffrey C. Riley*Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:**  | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:**  | February 21, 2024 |
| **Subject:** | 2024 School Counselor of the Year |

School counselors play an essential role in preparing students to be college- and career-ready and helping meet their social and emotional needs. During the pandemic and beyond, the school counselors’ role has greatly expanded with a focus on student attendance, mental health support, and post-secondary planning. We celebrate and honor the work of all school counselors, exemplified by the Massachusetts School Counselor of the Year, Colin Moge of West Springfield High School. I am delighted that Mr. Moge will join us at the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meeting on February 27th.

On February 1st, Colin was surprised at a senior class assembly that also included the cheerleaders and school band.  He thought the assembly was to honor a colleague, which did happen.  But the program was also to honor him.   In addition to members of the senior class, he was joined by his counseling colleagues, district administration, town officials, members of his family, and Bob Bardwell, Executive Director of the Massachusetts School Counselors Association (MASCA).

Colin was chosen as the 2024 MASCA School Counselor of the Year because of his outstanding contributions as a school counselor at West Springfield High School since 2018. During his tenure, he has demonstrated exceptional dedication and innovation, earning him the Western Massachusetts Counselors Association (WMCA) Rising Star Award in his first year and its School Counselor of the Year this past fall. He pioneered impactful initiatives such as an attendance incentive program, mentor/mentee program, and academic pep rallies, all aimed at enhancing the overall school experience and making substantial contributions to the broader community.

Noteworthy among his achievements is the establishment and oversight of the school Renaissance Program, which recognizes students for academic excellence, good attendance, and behavior. Additionally, Colin spearheaded the "Terrier Closet," a service project providing essential items such as clothing, toiletries, professional attire, event-specific items, and personal hygiene products to students of all ages. These initiatives not only address immediate concerns but also equip students with essential life skills, fostering resilience in the face of future challenges.

Colin's leadership extends beyond counseling as he actively engages with students both in and outside the classroom. As the coach of the freshmen men’s soccer team and co-advisor of the class of 2023, he has consistently worked towards providing memorable experiences, even during the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. His coordination of fundraisers and organization of events, such as a students vs. staff basketball game, garnered widespread support from fans and community members.

Colin's unmatched warm and welcoming personality connects him with people, making them feel valued and supported regardless of the issue. His innate ability to listen keenly and communicate effectively has made him a reliable resource for students and the school community. Embodying the role of an *advocate*, Colin Moge is an inspirational leader and role model whose compassionate and unwavering commitment rightfully earned him the title of MASCA 2024 School Counselor of the Year.

We congratulate Colin, and through him celebrate the work of all school counselors across the Commonwealth!