

Contact:
Toby Gilbert
AUSD PR
toby@tobygilbert.us
281-546-6457
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



A Day with the San Gabriel High Counselor Team Shows Why Counselors Matter, Highlights the Impact of Counselors throughout AUSD

Whether SGHS students need help with academics, college applications, career planning or social emotional issues, this team is there to assist

Twenty-first century school counselors face a herculean task. Every day a school counselor is the frontline mentoring support for academic growth, social emotional health, and future college and career success for up to 500 students. A counselor's day can begin at 7:00 a.m. and continue on to midnight with no break.

"We start every day with a list of what should and needs to be done, but if a student is in crisis, that will take precedence over everything else," says Dr. Stephanie Hall, San Gabriel assistant principal of counseling. "Adolescence can be a challenging time in terms of social stress and finding your place,"

Ask Dr. Hall about her team and she says, "Our culturally diverse counseling team is amazingly strong and reflects the diversity of our students. Each one of the counselors has been doing this work for a long time. We work collaboratively and all love one another. That mutual respect is a great model for our students."

The SGHS counseling team includes counselors Solinet Wong, Devin Vergo, Elaine Jong, Jing Wu, and Maritza Cha. In addition, the Gateway to Success counselor, Denise Fernandez, and the CTE College and Career counselor, Paulina Diaz-Serrano provide counseling assistance to students.

The school nurse, the attendance office, the registrar and the career center are another important part of the counseling department. “Counseling is high stress high reward work that all of us are dedicated to doing. We celebrate the joys and share the heartaches as any close team does,” Dr. Hall adds.

Though there is no typical day for a high school counselor, consider one day in the life of the team of counselors at San Gabriel High School: In the morning, meet with students to review their classes. What credits do they still need to graduate? What courses will help them get into college? Next up, a student struggling in math class. Can the counselor arrange tutoring for after school? Another student has been acting out in history class and needs to meet with his teacher. Then a meeting to discuss a child’s individual education plan, sorting out strategies to support her dyslexia.

In between, the counselor will squeeze in calls to the homes of students who aren’t coming to school. They prepare classroom presentations on topics like decision-making, on the East LA College + AUSD dual enrollment program or college and career resources. Likely as not, a student will show at their door unannounced, upset and seeking support and advice about challenges in school, at home, or with a friend.

At San Gabriel High the counselors also fit in meetings about students’ college options — whether they’ve taken the SATs yet, filled in financial aid forms or need help finishing their application or college essay. There are college and CTE field trips to plan, and meetings to share resources with parents and teachers. This juggling act starts again the next day.

Research shows that school counselors help students stay in school, achieve more academic success, stay more engaged and on track for graduation, and help students prepare for future career and college success. Counselors help keep students — and schools — safe by improving a school’s culture of connection and empathy, and by helping students problem-solve a myriad of questions, hardships, challenges and frustrations before they become overwhelmed.

Though this is a story about the SGHS counseling team, it is also the story of any counselor in the district. Thank a counselor tomorrow. They are heroes. ###

CAPTION: San Gabriel High’s Counseling Team, gathered here on the school’s front steps, collaborates on supporting the academic, career and person/social development of the 9-12 students at SGHS.

L to R back row Dr. Stephanie Hall, Devin Verga. Front row L to R Paulina Serrano, Solinet Wong, Elaine Jong, Denise Fernandez, Maritza Cha, Jing Wu

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