



Creating a School Profile

Approaching Challenges in the Profile: Guidance from Counselors

This resource is part of Making Caring Common’s School Profile Project, an initiative aimed at providing school counselors with tools for effective and equitable college admission practices. You can find additional school profile materials [here](#), including templates, examples, best practices, and insights from school counselors. If you have recommendations for improving these resources, we welcome your comments or suggestions via our anonymous [feedback form](#).

While our resources are meant to support all counselors, the reality is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the school profile. Unique school contexts and the specific needs of your student population may lead to divergent choices in what counselors choose to include on their profile. Counselors make their choices based on what they believe will best support their student applicants.

In spring 2024, Making Caring Common conducted informational interviews with school counselors across the country to learn more about their process for creating and maintaining a school profile. Below, we offer a sample of how counselors from distinct secondary school environments weigh whether to include particular details in their school profiles.

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Ranking and Grade Distributions

“I don’t include a grade distribution because of the way my data would look. It would immediately illuminate concerns around grade inflation, and I do not want an evaluator to be going into a student’s file thinking ‘oh, this school grade inflates.’” – *Counselor at a western independent school*

“We do have a grade distribution on our profile, but it is not as detailed as other schools. I have a hypothesis that it would have really large implications in some of our college decisions for our students, specifically for students toward the lower end, meaning that it would affect them negatively. So we only list the top 10% and the top quarter. We are a school that does not rank, but we provide a grade distribution. So we’re sort of in the gray area.” – *Counselor at a large, midwestern public school*

“We don’t say what the highest GPA is because that singles out one student. But otherwise, we list the grade distribution. I think that’s really valuable because we’re such a mixed urban campus. We have students who are very high achieving, and then we have students who come to high school because they’re legally obligated to. There’s a big range on our grading scale with a lot of students at the top, and the bottom, and then the middle is kind of empty. So I think that’s really important for colleges to see. We just don’t share individual information with the highest or lowest GPA.” – *Counselor at a large, southern public school*

“I think you have to show the grade distribution. We have a grade distribution that's very widespread, and unfortunately skewed a little low the last couple of years. And that doesn't mean we are not still getting some people into highly selective schools. Having the breadth just says that you're serving a wide range of students, and hopefully, all of them with postsecondary plans that will be realistic and helpful to their success. But you can still get students into highly selective schools, even if most of the students in your class are not achieving at that level.”

– *Counselor at a small, northeast charter school*

College Matriculation/Acceptance Lists

“Every year, I debate whether to keep the college list on or off. We're a title one campus, so much of the decision about where to attend is based on family finances. We have students who get admitted to schools out of state that are very competitive, but they end up going to the local state school because that's what they can afford to do. Where students choose to matriculate is more of a financial decision for the family than where they wanted to attend or where they were admitted. So we've just chosen to leave that information off and instead provide percentage data; this percentage of our students went out of state, this percentage of our students enrolled in a public versus a private college, just to kind of keep that information a little bit more vague.”

– *Counselor at a large, southern public school*

“Some people represent acceptances which we've always found disingenuous because you can have your top two students apply to a whole bunch of selective schools in regular decision. And you could list 20 schools when, really, that's two people. So I think a true matriculation list is the way to go.”

– *Counselor at small, northeast charter school*

“I find it helpful to know where everyone is going. And that's not just helpful for admission offices, but I think it's helpful for new employees walking into the position, and for parents and guardians to know.”

– *Counselor at a northwestern independent school*

“We list highlights. It depends on what your goals are, but the reason we list the highlights is for selective schools. It's definitely a signaler. So if we send an application to Princeton and we haven't had anybody go to Princeton, but if we show a sample of our matriculation list that includes a Dartmouth, one Stanford, 'x' number of posse scholars, then it's like 'okay, they can turn out someone who's ready for this level.’”

– *Counselor at a small, northeast charter school*

Standardized Testing

“I don't do any testing data on my school profile. I think that there are some considerations where, unknowingly, it could be unnecessarily too much information. Do I want to show the entire testing range when students at the lower half of that testing range are not submitting? I don't

want evaluators to be judging my seniors on those test scores when there's so much more to the story now than before.” – *Counselor at a western independent school*

“I don't necessarily know what colleges are able to garner from (test score averages) without having more information about how many students did or did not take this, or how many took it versus reported their scores...So do you provide that context? Like what percentage of students actually took the test? We wouldn't even have the time to dive into that to be able to look at how many folks are taking the tests.” – *Counselor at large, east coast public high school*

“It's pretty time consuming at the beginning of the year, specifically in regard to testing data, I would say. ACT and SAT...getting updated reports are pretty cumbersome. But we go into a deep dive trying to get that information so that we have that context available, because we do see the importance of the profile being the most accurate for this year's graduating class.”
– *Counselor at a small, southwestern charter school*

Formatting and Length

“Listing all of the courses feels really overwhelming to me, because we have so many course offerings. Just listing our dual credit would take almost half a page...So I'm not sure that that's something that I would be able to fit. That feels really overwhelming to do. But I can also see how it would be helpful. So instead, we've listed ‘we offer this many AP courses, this many honors courses, this many dual-credit course options’ so that there's at least a number present, so that colleges can get an idea.” – *Counselor at a large, southern public school*

“Two pages feels a little short to me. I was looking for a little bit more information... So I thought that was a little limiting factor on the two-page profile. (Four pages) seemed to be a little bit more appropriate in length for me and it contained a lot more details of information that the shorter profile just couldn't provide.” – *Counselor at a northwestern independent school*

“Our school profile is about 3-4 pages long. It is very detailed, especially in the course offerings section; that takes about a page and a half. That's why the profile starts with the assistant principal of instruction. Then gets handed off to the assistant principal of counseling and we spend one of our weekly meetings looking over the new school profile.” - *Counselor at a large, west coast public school*

“I'm always of the opinion that less is more. I think you can capture things without overdoing it. So I do think a four-page profile is just too lengthy. I feel that going into course offerings and requirements is not necessary, because you're reiterating what you're going to see in a transcript.”
- *Counselor at a small, east coast charter school*