

## Creating a School Profile: Best Practices from School 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](#).

In spring 2024, Making Caring Common conducted informational interviews with school counselors across the country to learn more about their process of creating and maintaining a school profile. Their responses helped shape many of our supporting school profile documents. Throughout the course of our conversations we heard many helpful tips, advice, and insights.

**Below, we offer selected excerpts:**

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### How to Start

“When you have time and **when you can judge that a visiting admission representative has a little bit of time, ask them to look at your profile.** They're right there. They are usually so incredibly willing and gracious with their time and feedback to help you in that moment when they're physically present.” – *Counselor at a small, western independent school*

“One thing we always do when we're trying to do anything new is look at other schools' profiles. **Who's doing great work? Let's look at what they're doing, and then let's make it our own.**” – *Counselor at a small, northeast charter school*

“Look at a lot of examples, and make sure that you look at examples that are similar to your demographics, and where you're coming from. I looked at examples, but sometimes they were for rural schools which have their own needs. It's definitely different from being in an urban or suburban school. **The more examples I saw, the better I understood what it was supposed to be, and the better I could serve my students.**” – *Counselor at a large, west coast public school*

“**Just try to make one or two changes a year**...so not doing a total overhaul of anything, but really just trying to identify one area based on feedback from colleges or workshops. And then over time, it will start to feel like your profile has gotten better. But it's incremental change.” – *Counselor at a large, east coast public school*

“I would recommend looking at the school profile with the transcript and go through it, ideally with an admissions officer or two or three, or at least pretending like you are one. **The reason the profile is there is to contextualize the applicant and the transcript they're seeing.** Our original school profile was actually a folder and the transcript got stapled in it.” – *Counselor at a small, northeast charter school*

## Make the Profile Work for You

“There's a real slant toward helping colleges; ‘colleges want this,’ ‘this makes it easier for colleges.’ **Well, easier is not always my priority.** I *do* want to make sure they understand my curriculum, and the way we calculate GPAs. But I don't always want to make it easier for college admissions professionals. Rather, **I want to drive them towards the application.**” – *Counselor at a western independent school*

“**Know and understand that the school profile is really important.** It is crucial. With the volume of applications that college admissions counselors are faced with and the thousands of high schools, there's such importance to the work that you're doing. **It really does matter to spend the time to have accurate data.** It can really advantage your students when you provide more context and details to the type of environment your school provides.” – *Counselor at a large, midwestern public school*

“Profiles sometimes serve multiple purposes. There have been times where I've debated putting information on our profile because it also often gets used as a ‘hello’ to prospective parents. **I really think that we need to have two separate profiles, one for parents and one for colleges, because it's two very distinct pieces of information.** That doubles my workload...But a lot of my hesitations have been because this is personal or important for parents, but will colleges need to know this? So do we put it on anyway? I think having two profiles would be really helpful.” – *Counselor at a large, southern public school*

“The first thing I tell families is that they will be evaluated in the post-secondary college search process based on the context of their high school. **So I show them a profile, and I explain the context.** We are a highly competitive high school, so being able to provide students and families with that context allows me to say what's a best fit academically based on application history and based on this profile. It allows me to help guide and manage their expectations when providing college advice or different lists.” – *Counselor at a large, midwestern public school*

“Colleges are looking for context to understand who our students are and where they're coming from. **My very first draft of our profile did not do that. It was not helpful. It was purely data.** It didn't really help a college understand who our most successful students are, or who our average students are, or what their family background is, or financial background. **Try to add in more of that information so that colleges really understand what a high performing student looks like at our school,** what opportunities are even available on our campus, compared to other campuses.” – *Counselor at a large, southern public school*

## Design and Creation

“You have to have your information presented in a digestible presentation, even if there's not a budget to make it glossy, so to speak. **Readability is important because admission officers, the ones who do read the profiles, are skimming this.** You need to have something that is digestible, has the key pieces, but not too many details. The graphics and the pictures, that's really not that important, but the readability of it, whatever format it is, is important.”

– *Counselor at a northwestern independent school*

“**We make our school profile ourselves. We do it on Canva,** actually, and you can get a free account as a school employee. It's an easy way to create something that looks visually appealing that has the information you need.” – *Counselor at a small, northeast charter school*

“**Don't try to do it all in one setting, because you will go crazy.** For me, I have to go to multiple different sources of information to even pull all of this information together. There's not one link in my district where I can gather all the data that I need, so it takes a while to pull together.”

– *Counselor at a large, southern public school*

“I've had students help me create it because I'm like, you know how to use publisher. **So who's your creative team? Because at the schools I've been at, we don't have a marketing team. Who can make it look pretty? Who can create the data points?**” – *Counselor at a small, southwestern charter school*

“I'm always considering ways to reduce information. Sometimes **graphics or charts can be quick and digestible.** Ultimately, I try not to make the profile too many words.” – *Counselor at a large, east coast public school*