In our view...

East Meck counseling department is overworked

When it comes to applying to college, seniors have a lot on their minds. They need to write essays, ask for letters of recommendation, and most importantly, work with their counselor to ensure that all documents are sent in on time. The counselors at East Meck guide students through the stressful application process, but this is not the department’s only job. Counselors also handle student and class registration, 504s and IEPs for students with disabilities, career development and any other academic, social, or personal problems students may have. There are times when students feel that they are not able to receive their counselors’ full attention, but we understand that it is because of the overwhelming workload placed on them everyday. We praise what they do to help every student find their own path after graduation, and we hope that CMS continues to increase its financial support of student service programs.

According to the CMS School Counseling Services Page, there are approximately 280 counselors serving more than 146,000 students from grades K-12 in CMS. At East, there are five counselors for a total of 2,085 students: Jonathan Williams (who serves students with last names A-C), Susan Ross (who serves students with last names D-Hi), Frieda Miller (who serves students with last names H-Mills), Caleb Brown (who serves students with last names Min-R), and Janie Braszwell (who serves students with last names S-Z). Recently, our counselors have been trying to make themselves more accessible to the student body through different mediums. They have had more success in reaching out to students by visiting senior homerooms, creating an online form to sign up for appointments and attending senior assemblies. While there have been complaints about some counselors having limited time slots during the week to meet, it is important to keep in mind the number of students on each counselor’s caseload. At East, the student to counselor ratio is approximately 418 students per counselor. In comparison, the American School Counseling Association recommends a ratio of 250 students per counselor. This means that counselors at East are taking on a caseload that is more than one and a half times the size of the national expectation. CMS has realized the strain this puts on counselors, and the 2018-2019 budget allocates an increase of $4,656,787 to student services. The additional funding will go into hiring more school psychologists, investing in a web-based tool to help high school students plan for their future and continuing the next part of a phase-in plan initiated in the 2014-2015 school year to add 33 counselors and 17 social workers.

The counseling department gives their best effort to fulfill students’ needs, but the department needs and deserves to have more resources. The Eagle supports the hard work our counselors do every day. They ensure students plan to win, prepare to win and expect to win.