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Beyond the Handoff

Building Real Collaboration Between School Counselors, Independent Counselors, and Admissions Officers

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Meet the Panel

INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT

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ADMISSIONS OFFICER

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The Premise

Most students are advised by more than one voice on their way to an application — a school counselor, often an independent counselor, and eventually an admissions officer reading the file both helped shape.

These voices don't always coordinate.

The result: mixed messages to families, duplicated or contradictory advice, and friction that can work against the very student the system exists to serve.



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Today's Conversation

01

Where It Breaks Down

Real moments of mixed signals, from all three seats

02

What Actually Works

Concrete practices that have improved coordination

03

Open Floor

Your questions to the panel



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Where does collaboration most often break down?”

- A. Conflicting advice to students
- B. Unclear roles and responsibilities
- C. Late communication and deadline pressure
- D. Lack of trust between professionals



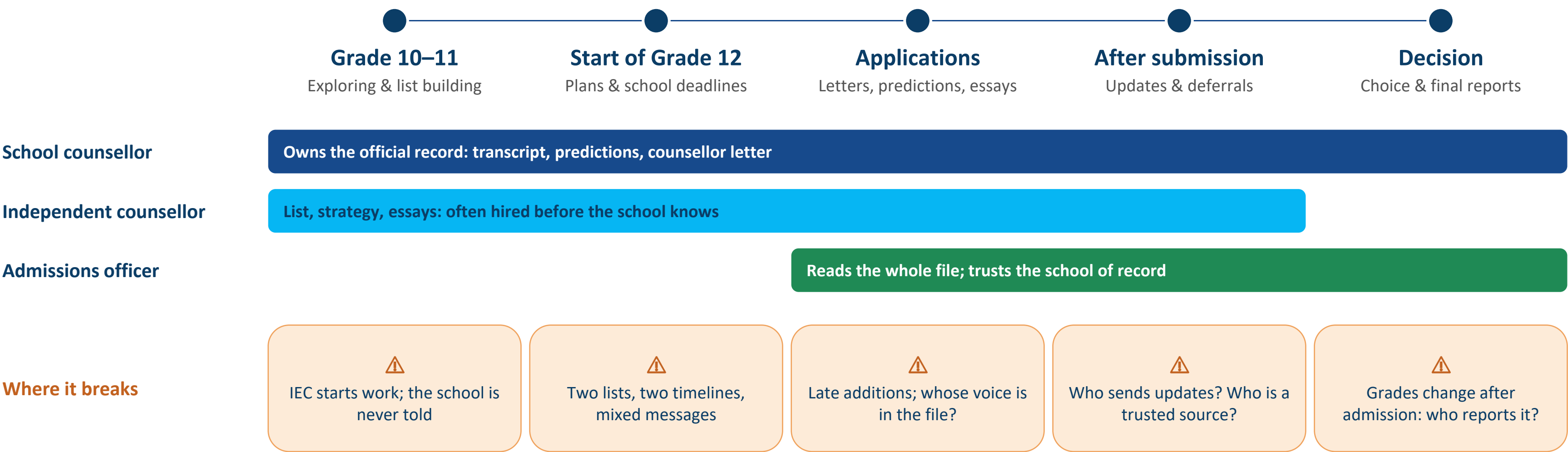
Let's see where we share common challenges.



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The Handoff Map

Where each role steps in, and where the handoff tends to break



Case Studies

- A Grade 12 student develops a balanced university list with the school counsellor. An independent counsellor later recommends a more ambitious list. The parents interpret this as the school lacking confidence in their child. The student feels caught between two advisers.
- An independent counsellor helps a student add a university shortly before its deadline. The family then requests transcripts, predicted grades and recommendations from the school within 48 hours, although the school communicated its internal deadlines earlier.



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Case Studies

- **Navigating institutional boundaries:** School counsellors work within school guidelines, which may limit direct communication with independent counsellors. Any collaboration needs to follow approved channels, protect student confidentiality and avoid implying that the school endorses a particular external service.
- **Determining a trusted source:** A university admissions counselor receives an email advocating on behalf of a particular student. When checking the student's record, the person's name is not listed as the school counselor. Recognizing privacy considerations, what information about a student could be shared with an independent counselor?



Case Studies

- **Reputational management:** A university representative speaks with a school counselor who indicates that the school does not support their students working with independent counselors. When engaging with a prospective student, the person tells the university representative that they are working with an independent counselor - what is an appropriate follow up from the university representative to the school counselor?



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Case Studies

- **The letter nobody wrote:** A teacher asks a student to draft their own recommendation for signature, and the family asks the independent counsellor to help. The admissions reader notices the teacher letter, counsellor letter and essays share one voice. Who should step in, and what happens to the next file from that school?
- **Parent's choice or student's voice?** The student tells their parents and independent counsellor they want engineering. Privately, they tell the school counsellor they want design, assuming anything said to the counsellor their parents pay will reach home. Both counsellors act in good faith. Should one tell the other, and how do they help the student say it to the family?



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02

What Actually Works



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A practical collaboration agreement

- Establish contact early, with appropriate consent.
- Clarify responsibilities and document timelines.
- Share relevant updates through an agreed channel.
- Discuss differences directly and respectfully.
- Keep the student involved in decisions.



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Let's Talk

Your questions for the panel



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Small, concrete coordination — not sweeping change — is what moves the needle.

Thank You

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