

A PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

How the growing business of personality testing continues to affect school and workplaces



Illustration by Nadirah Johnson

MORE THAN A CODE

Utilizing personality surveys as a career-readiness launchpad, increasing student exposure to a wide variety of occupations

ARGYRENIA PIPINOS
Co-Editor-in-Chief

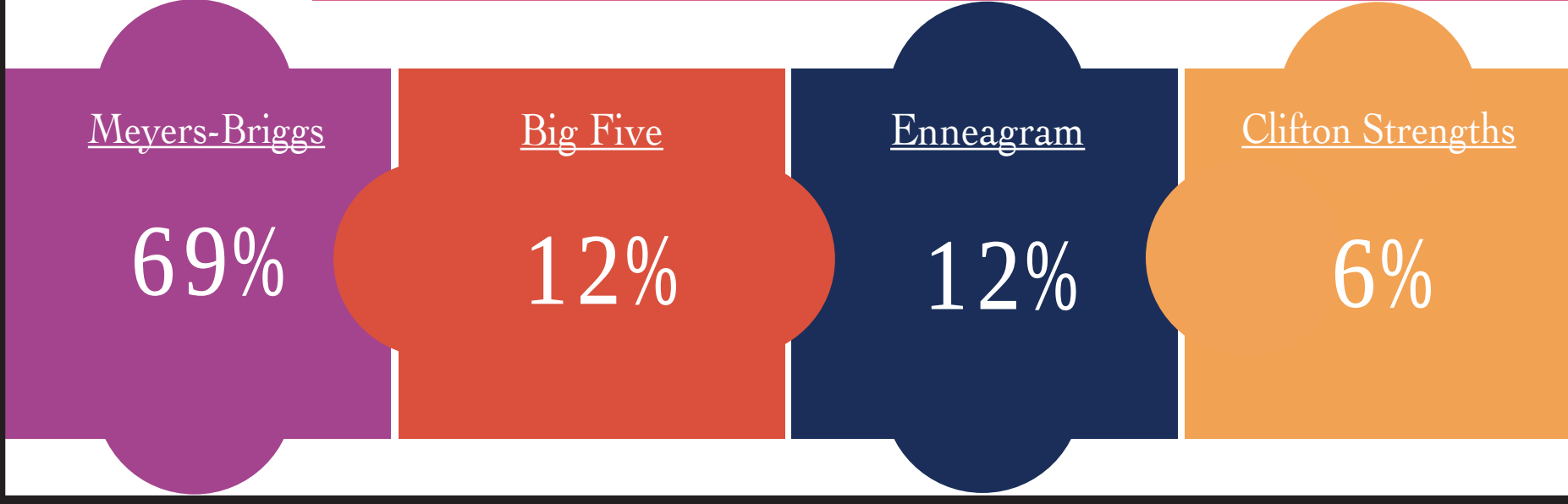
The cursor blinks, the last bubble turns blue, and four blocky letters bloom on a bright Chromebook. Backpacks slump under desks, friends trade screens, and a counselor nudges the chatter from “What am I?” to “What should I try next?” The room feels like a crossroads—half quiz, half roadmap—as links promise classes, clubs, and first jobs if you test the code in real life. “My results make me choose on purpose,” senior Pranavi Prakash said. “I lean into communication, so I take roles where talking, organizing, and presenting really matter.” Every student likely encounters at least one personality or career survey in Healthy Living, and counselors add a personality lesson in English 9 that ties traits to concrete course choices. Some teachers layer in a career inventory in Speech, so most students see these tools twice—and sometimes three times—before graduation. Counselors then revisit results in one-on-one meetings about course sequences, certificates, or colleges, which turns a one-period activity into an ongoing plan. “It helps 9th and 10th graders set up classes, and it helps 11th and 12th graders zero in on what comes next,” counselor Abbie Sivinski said. “You know yourself more, so the plan gets clearer.” Counselors keep the materials current as platforms change and language updates, aiming for clarity

and inclusion rather than labels. Underclassmen use results to sample on purpose—engineering, art, biomed, business—so picks feel intentional instead of random. Upperclassmen circle back with more experience and use the same information to narrow post-secondary options, from apprenticeships to majors. “One moment where the test hit for me is disorganization,” senior Saara Mukherjee said. “So, I started a planner and built a new homework system because my results called me out on it, and I wanted to change.” That bridge— from insight to action—runs through the classroom. In psychology classrooms, teachers frame surveys as mirrors, not verdicts, and ask students to convert data into action. AP Psychology teacher Brad Edmundson ties inventories to reflection and habit-building rather than destiny. He uses strengths to coach problem-solving while reminding students that results can change as they do. “All three—Myers-Briggs-style tools, CliftonStrengths, and Big Five—are good personality inventories,” Edmundson said. “If you don’t like what a result tells you, work on changing.” Beyond academics, hands-on programs turn those insights into practice, whether it’s HOSA, DECA, honor societies, or any of the Academies. DECA is a student organization centered on business, marketing, finance, and hospitality. Students choose events—case studies, role-plays, written plans—and compete at conferences, applying classroom skills to real problems and getting feedback from industry judges.

“DECA gives you a menu,” French teacher and DECA sponsor Ryan FoeHLinger said. “You pick events that match what you’re into... and then you solve real business problems.” Group events add a strategy layer because partners compare strengths and divide the work to cover blind spots. “It’s useful to know where you and your teammate line up or differ,” FoeHLinger said. “You can split roles so each person leads with what they do best.” Surveys can point you in a direction, but they don’t write your story. “They’re only a starting point,” FoeHLinger said. “No test would have told me ‘French teacher’—I found that by trying things that go beyond the 4-letter code.” Confidence often follows when results feel true. Teachers and counselors also caution against overreliance: codes are snapshots, not barriers. “Leave room to explore new interests, even ones that don’t match your results, or you might miss out on fun activities,” Sivinski said. By the time the bell rings, those four letters are one data point among many. Students may use the result to consider possible next steps, such as trying a class, club, or competition, and then compare those experiences with what the survey suggested. In later conversations, the result can be referenced alongside grades, schedules, and interests to see what aligns. The survey ends with a code, and subsequent adjustments depend on what students test in real settings.

From Theory to Reality

Which personality tests have MN students taken the most? *survey of 77 MN students



Don't Get Boxed In

Tips to navigate personality test results

DO: Examine your results in relation to career path

- Potential strengths and interests can be highlighted in personality tests, allowing individuals to align certain personality components with career paths, increasing compatibility and fulfillment.

DON'T: Think your results define you

- When taking any personality test, it is important to remember the many nuances associated with specific traits, and understand that human nature is more complex and than questionnaires, as is forever changing and growing.

DO: Utilize results for constructive criticism

- Look for areas of improvement, and although not definitive, can provide a means for increased self-awareness and introspection.

DON'T: Fall for the Barnum Effect

- The Barnum effect, which is the tendency for individuals to accept vague personality statements, even if they are actually not applicable to the individual, can arise after analyzing personality results, leading to misinterpretation.

Box of Traits

ERRATIC: An erratic person typically exhibits frequent mood and behavioral changes, affecting overall decision processing

DEFENSIVE

CONSCIENTIOUS: Characterized by a willingness and determination to do things in diligent, careful manner

ALTRUISTIC: Someone who is extremely generous toward others without expecting anything in return; selfless

COMPULSIVE

AFFABLE: Having a very inviting, sociable demeanor; friendly

PERFECTIONIST: Refusing to accept anything other than the best result; holding very high standards

PRUDENT: Exhibiting good judgement and regard for the future

RELIABLE

ZEALOUS: A person who is very passionate and enthusiastic about a particular cause

PESSIMISTIC: Having a very negative outlook on life; always believing in the worst outcome

TRUSTWORTHY

NERVOUS

REFLECTIVE

CREATIVE

KIND

RESPECTFUL

STUBBORN

HONEST

CAUTIOUS

FAIR

HUMBLE

INDECISIVE

RIGID

THE PONDERING OF PERSONALITY

Exploring personality tests from inception to modern day, particularly on their creation and development

MIRA MUKHERJEE
Co-Editor-in-Chief

The computer mouse hovers over the light purple button, tentatively waiting for your index finger’s final decision. After scrutinizing the corresponding answers to the 50-question test, you click “submit”, the screen instantly generating a customized personality type. Squinting slightly, you make out the four letters that represent your newly designated character and proceed to conduct an intense investigation on its strengths, drawbacks, and future potential.

These assessments, known as personality tests, are a means to identify and evaluate individualized traits and characters. Although ubiquitous and multifaceted today, the origin and intent of personality tests vary greatly from modern questionnaires.

According to “Smithsonian Magazine,” the start of personality tests began during World War I as physicians noticed early symptoms of what would later be named Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Originally coined as shell-shock, this affliction hosts a multitude of symptoms, like insomnia, paralysis, nightmares, and anxiety attacks.

Once the U.S. entered the war, provisions were already instituted in terms of these mental health concerns; the military created psychiatric divisions and a school of military

But although Woodworth’s test would allow for the momentum of personality questioning, with the next few decades producing a variety of tests like the Rorschach test and Bernreuter Personality Inventory, modern psychology argues the validity of basing tests solely on distressing emotions.

Today’s personality testing, a 2 billion dollar industry, according to

For example, the popular Big Five personality test not only deals with neuroticism, but also explores openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, and agreeableness; Gallup, a management consulting firm, has created a well-known assessment called CliftonStrengths, which many companies and organizations use for their employees.

But how exactly are these tests created? “Psychology Today” describes some basic steps to understand how modern tests are made: define the trait, write multiple statements associated with the trait, test subjects on these statements, typically on a Likert scale, and take an average of their quantified responses to determine how much of the specified trait they have.

The participant would then score themselves on how much they agree with the statement, and after completion of the test, developers would take the average of all responses to statements pertaining to organization in order to gauge how organized

a person is.

For students, whether in high school or college, personality tests can help gauge strengths to recognize and narrow down potential fields of work.

From scoring high on “Relator” on Gallup’s CliftonStrengths test to being an “ENTJ” on the Myer-Briggs assessment, personality tests are utilized to fine-tune and summarize prominent traits. Although now utilized in a different manner than its ancestor, the personality test is increasing in frequency, making individuals ponder just a little more about their personality.

Sources: *Truth*; *Verywell Mind*, *Gallup*

Part of a Whole

Exploring common modern personality tests and their distinctive elements

Meyers-Briggs

Each personality type (there are 16) has four different components:

- Extraversion/Introversion
- Sensing/Intuition
- Thinking/Feeling
- Judging/Perceiving

Big Five

Details five distinguishing personality factors:

- Openness to experience
- Conscientiousness
- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Neuroticism

Enneagram

Classifies personality types into nine categories:

- The Perfectionist
- The Giver
- The Achiever
- The Individualist
- The Investigator
- The Skeptic
- The Enthusiast
- The Challenger
- The Peacemaker

Clifton Strengths

34 overarching themes categorized into four categories:

- Executing
- Relationship Building
- Influencing
- Strategic Thinking

The Meyers-Briggs test was developed by Isabel Myers and her mother, Katherine Briggs, during WW2.

assessment, on over 1,000 potential soldiers.

Woodworth believed that the detection of neurotic tendencies — predisposition to negative emotions, like fear and anxiety — was essential to the success of psychological screenings.

psychology in the Georgia location of Medical Officers Training Camp.

With awareness of these growing psychological strains, the military began to seek out a form of screening. Columbia University professor Robert Sessions Woodworth was a central figure in the creation of psychological screenings, having tested his

“The New York Times,” uses more than just a narrow, emotion-specific lens, instead focusing on a varied range of mental and emotional aspects.

In the “New York Times article” “The 2 Billion Question of Who You Are at Work,” Ben Dattner, an organizational psychologist, states that although humans are much more complex than an assessment, modern personality testing can help people get feedback on “blind spots.” The growth and expansion of personality tests has been increasingly associated with providing career guidance.

Modern testing has been increasingly expanding, accounting for more nuances and factors like social and de-

The Enneagram stems from ancient philosophies detailing human fears, motivations, and desires.

Each trait in the Big Five test has two ends of a spectrum; for example, an individual’s openness could lean more towards curious or cautious.