



Alma Lopez Named 2022 School Counselor of the Year by the American School Counselor Association



ALEXANDRIA, VA – Alma Lopez, lead school counselor at California’s Livingston Middle School, has been named the 2022 School Counselor of the Year by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). Lopez is the first Latina School Counselor of the Year.

A graduate of California State University – Fresno, Lopez has been a school counselor for 15 years and serves as Livingston Unified School District’s school counseling coordinator. The School Counselor of the Year award honors professionals who devote their careers to advocating for the nation’s students and addressing their academic, career and social/emotional development.

Lopez embodies the full spirit of school counseling. “The deep commitment she has to her community, her relentless focus on providing equitable outcomes for her students and her implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program were evident throughout her application and interview process,” said Valerie Hardy, a member of the independent judging panel that selects the School Counselor of the Year finalists and winner of the award. “As a first-generation college attendee, Ms. Lopez serves as an inspiration for her students, her community and the profession.”

All 804 students at Lopez’s rural school, which serves grades 6–8, receive free or reduced-price lunch. The 2,500-student district had only two school counselors when Lopez started working there; her advocacy efforts in 2015 contributed to the district’s decision to expand the number to five.

“Ms. Lopez provides an excellent example of school counseling advocacy,” said Jill Cook, ASCA Executive Director. “By using data and articulating the impact of a comprehensive school counseling program, Ms. Lopez demonstrated the benefits of reducing student-to-school-counselor ratios, ultimately improving student outcomes.”

“Alma is passionate about supporting our students in succeeding in middle school,” said Jorge Arteaga, Livingston Middle School principal. “As she plans and organizes support services, Alma always thinks of equity and access to ensure our neediest students get the support they need to be successful.”

Superintendent Andrés Zamora said Lopez is “a positive, humble and strong advocate for school counseling programs.” She was the first to approach him about expanding the district’s school counseling services when the California Department of Education introduced a new funding model based on the concepts of local control.

“She was diligent in advocating for the ASCA framework as a model to most effectively and directly impact students,” Zamora said, noting that, as a result, Livingston became Merced County’s first district to have full-time school counselors at all its elementary schools.

Lopez, a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) reviewer, serves on the California Association of School Counselors Board of Directors. In 2018, she received the city of Livingston’s “You Make Us Proud Award” and also helped her school achieve RAMP status the same year. “What is unique and special about Ms. Lopez is her heart and the passion by which she serves our school community,” Zamora said.

“She is a voice of reason, a kind human and the protector of students and their rights,” said Markella Tsatsaronis, Livingston Middle School teacher and athletic director.

About the American School Counselor Association

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) professional organization based in Alexandria, Va. ASCA promotes student success by expanding the image and influence of school counseling through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change. ASCA helps school counselors guide their students toward academic achievement, career planning and social/emotional development to help today’s students become tomorrow’s productive, contributing members of society. Founded in 1952, ASCA has a network of 50 state and territory associations and a membership of more than 41,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, visit www.schoolcounselor.org.