



Cristina Nuñez Named 2018 School Counselor of the Year Finalist by the American School Counselor Association



ALEXANDRIA, VA – Cristina Nuñez, a middle school counselor at Paso Del Norte School in El Paso, Texas, has been named a 2018 School Counselor of the Year finalist by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). Nuñez, a graduate of the University of Texas at El Paso and Webster University, has been a school counselor for eight years and has been at Paso Del Norte School since 2011.

The School Counselor of the Year award honors professionals who devote their careers to advocating for the nation's students and addressing their academic and social/emotional development and college and career readiness needs.

Nuñez was a third-grade teacher in the Socorro Independent School District (ISD) prior to becoming a school counselor at Paso Del Norte, which serves students in grades K-8. As a teacher at Elfida P. Chavez Elementary School, Nuñez recognized the academic difficulties her students experienced when their social/emotional needs were not met due to personal challenges or home life trauma. She decided to transition to school counseling to have a more direct impact on students' foundational well-being so they could be academically successful.

Myrna Tapia, Socorro ISD's lead dyslexia specialist, first met Nuñez when she was teaching. "It was evident she was a caring, responsible, structured and knowledgeable teacher to her students," Tapia said "The rapport she has with students is not something she could have learned from a book but truly a gift she carries within."

Nathan Ballard, Paso Del Norte's principal, agrees. He says Nuñez's dedication and mindfulness have helped her build positive relationships with students who are struggling academically. At Paso Del Norte, she has worked with administrators to help 40 students considered academically fragile in reading. After identifying each student's specific needs, she used various interventions and a goal-setting curriculum that resulted in more than half of the students passing the state re-exam.

Nuñez remains dedicated to adding value and worth to all her students, past and present. Stephanie Rojas, parent of a former Paso Del Norte student, says her son makes time to visit Nuñez, his favorite school counselor, even though he's now in high school. "She always reminds him to care for himself and always do his best. As a parent, it feels great to know that regardless of the issues our children have, Mrs. Nuñez is there to support them," said Rojas.

Six finalists were selected for School Counselor of the Year based on their ability to create systemic change within the profession through leadership, collaboration and advocacy. All six finalists achieved increased student success through their comprehensive school counseling programs.

Nuñez and the other finalists will be in Washington, D.C., Jan. 31–Feb. 2, 2018, where they will be honored at a special recognition ceremony and formally recognized at a black-tie gala.

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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 associations and a membership of more than 34,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, visit www.schoolcounselor.org.