Amanda Jo Bustamante Named 2020 School Counselor of the Year Finalist by the American School Counselor Association

ALEXANDRIA, VA – Amanda Jo Bustamante, a school counselor at Paso Del Norte School in El Paso, Texas, has been named a 2020 School Counselor of the Year finalist by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA).

Bustamante, an El Paso native, is a graduate of The University of Texas at El Paso. A former fifth-grade teacher, Bustamante transitioned into the school counseling field in 2014 and has been employed with the Socorro Independent School District since 2006.

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.

Michelle Romero, former principal at Hurshel Antwine Elementary School, describes Bustamante as a powerhouse school counselor who unites content and data analysis with creative intervention strategies to provide invaluable support to students.

In the 2018–2019 school year, Bustamante used her innovative methodology to spearhead a nonacademic learning opportunity to promote a kindness culture at her former school site, Hurshel Antwine. Bustamante collaborated with her school counseling colleagues and the school leadership team to launch the Kindness Kampaign, a community service project linking residents at a senior living community with Hurshel Antwine students to help educate students about the
importance of relationships. These students, the Kindness Ambassadors, benefited from opportunities to learn about empathy, how to use effective cooperation and communication skills and demonstrate appropriate behaviors for different environments.

“She single-handedly fostered a culture of kindness and acceptance among both students and faculty/staff,” Romero said. She was the “cornerstone of our team, our school and our community.”

Bustamante is a fierce advocate for her students as well as the school counseling profession. “Amanda is deeply committed to her field of school counseling, by continually expanding her skills and knowledge through her own continued learning as well as sharing what she knows with others,” said Amanda Paredez, a Socorro Independent School District parent.

In addition to school-based advocacy initiatives such as quarterly newsletters, parent conferences and serving on the school counselor advisory council, Bustamante has also presented campus, district and national professional development sessions to colleagues to highlight school counselors’ role and responsibilities. From topics such as positive behavioral interventions and supports, response to intervention for struggling students, multitiered systems of support and mental health awareness in schools, Bustamante remains dedicated to ensuring fellow educators and school administrators are aware that school counselors are a dynamic component to the school leadership team.

“I believe that through these staff development experiences, and with supporting outcome data, my campus colleagues understand school counselors are vital members of the school community,” Bustamante said. “They value our school counseling program and all that it has to offer because they have seen the difference it makes in the kids we serve.”

The four School Counselor of the Year finalists were selected based on their ability to create lasting change within the profession through leadership, collaboration and advocacy. Bustamante and the other finalists will be in Washington, D.C., Jan. 28–30, 2020, where they will be honored and formally
recognized at a black-tie gala.

###

**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 36,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, visit www.schoolcounselor.org.