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### **Vanessa Barnes Selected as 2021 School Counselor of the Year Finalist**



ALEXANDRIA, VA – The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is pleased to announce Vanessa Barnes, Millbrook Magnet High School, Raleigh, N.C., as a finalist for the 2021 School Counselor of the Year awards program (#SCOY21). Barnes is the dean of students, counseling and student services at Millbrook Magnet High School, where she leads a team of six school counselors serving the urban school's 2,375 students, grades 9–12.

"Ms. Barnes has been the driving force in helping grow programs and improve the quality of our services for a diverse student population," said Dail Midgette, assistant principal, Millbrook Magnet High School. "She has a unique ability to understand the needs of students regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances and to then use that understanding to create support systems and structures to address their individual needs and goals."

As part of closing-the-gap efforts, her department organized a Futuro Summit to work with Latinx students and families to increase their knowledge of community resources and educational opportunities. The event included bilingual and motivational sessions for students, as well as an opportunity to participate in a community fair and work with school counselors on scholarships and the college

application process. In the project's first year, 98.5% of the students involved graduated.

A school counseling internship supervisor, Barnes collaborated with the counselor education faculty at North Carolina State University to run intervention groups to assist select sophomores identified as needing assistance with improving academic performance, attendance and study skills. She worked with school counseling interns from across the county to run weekly small-group sessions as a part of a three-year collaboration. The first year, 83% of participants were promoted to the next grade level. Barnes and the interns presented at the North Carolina School Counselor Association conference regarding the impact of collaboration on student success.

"Each year, this School Counselor of the Year program shows us what the research tells us – that school counselors have a significant impact on students' academic achievement, social/emotional development and plans for life after graduation," said Jill Cook, ASCA executive director. "Through their dedication, contributions and excellence, these finalists have demonstrated their commitment to the values and mission of the school counseling profession."

The School Counselor of the Year and finalists will be celebrated in a series of virtual events and will participate in briefings and webinars during National School Counseling Week, Feb. 1–5, 2021.

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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 and territory associations and a membership of nearly 40,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, visit [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org).