



## **Media Contact**

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## **Megan Bledsoe Selected as 2021 School Counselor of the Year Finalist**



ALEXANDRIA, VA – The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is pleased to announce Megan Bledsoe as a finalist for the 2021 School Counselor of the Year awards program (#SCOY21). Bledsoe is a school counselor at Discovery Middle School, Vancouver, Wash., where she and two other team members provide school counseling services to the urban school’s approximately 700 students, grades 6–8.

“Middle schoolers can be a tricky group to connect with, but I find that if I am slow and steady with my approach, I can create a foundation of trust and rapport to build interventions and supports on,” she said.

“Megan is a balanced combination of unflappable determination and peaceful calm,” said colleague Brian Mathieson, school counseling specialist. “She has a great sense of humor and combines this in equal parts with her dogged focus on what is right for students and the profession.”

Her school’s high mobility rate prompted Bledsoe to focus efforts on helping new students make connections to the school and their peers. She designed and implemented a student ambassador program devoted to the needs of the transient student population. “It provides new students with a peer guide who helps them

transition into their new school, giving leadership opportunities to current students and helping to foster our schoolwide sense of community,” said Steve Dutelle, Discovery Middle School counselor.

When remote learning began for sixth-graders in fall 2020, Bledsoe looked for creative ways she could help students struggling to connect with their peers. She visited Zoom classrooms to discuss interests and needs with students, surveyed students and families, and started clubs over Zoom so students could meet and connect with others with similar interests and hobbies. Bledsoe now has more than 10 active clubs, and families report feeling more connected to the school and peers.

“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).