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Danielle R. Crankfield Selected as 2026 School Counselor of the Year



ALEXANDRIA, VA – The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is pleased to announce Danielle R. Crankfield as the 2026 School Counselor of the Year® (#SCOY26). The first national School Counselor of the Year from Maryland, Crankfield is a school counselor and department chair at Crofton High School in Gambrills, Md. The school serves 1,900 students, grades 9–12. Crankfield, who has been a school counselor since 2010, received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Temple University and a master's degree in counseling (school counseling concentration) from Johns Hopkins University.

"Danielle represents the very best in professional school counseling from her commitment to her students' academic, college/career and social/emotional success, to her reputation among her peers as Crofton High School's 'North Star,'" said Molly McCloskey, School Counselor of the Year Selection Committee member. "Her excellence is not only in what she does, but in the way she does it – authentically and with an eye toward meaningful, measurable results."

In her school's founding year, Crankfield disaggregated course enrollment data to determine whether the school had a course access gap, particularly in honors and Advanced Placement courses. The data showed that Black and Hispanic students were disproportionately taking standard-level courses rather than honors and Advanced Placement classes. To address this access gap, she created guidelines for middle and high school teachers to use when making core course recommendations. In addition, she collaborated with the testing coordinator and department chairs in several content areas to promote higher-level courses and honors and Advanced Placement electives that met students' interests. "The school counseling department and I encouraged open access, which allows students and

parents to request honors or Advanced Placement courses by choice, even when students are recommended for a different course level,” Crankfield said. “Over time, the course access gap decreased.”

“She is a natural leader who advocates not only for her students’ and families’ needs, but also for systemic changes to break down the entrenched barriers that have resulted in students of color not receiving the same access to educational opportunities, said Daniel Kassel, assistant principal, Crofton High School.

“Although this work is difficult, frustrating and exhausting at times, Ms. Crankfield is always upbeat and positive and has a unique way of making all who interact with her feel comfortable and heard. She is genuine and passionate about her profession and the crucial role a school counselor has in the life and future of a child.”

“Each year, the School Counselor of the Year® program reminds us of the incredible difference school counselors make in students’ lives – helping them grow academically, supporting their social/emotional well-being and guiding their plans for the future,” said Jill Cook, ASCA executive director. “All the school counselors of the year embody the heart of the school counseling profession through their dedication, compassion and unwavering commitment to students.”

Crankfield, the School Counselor of the Year® finalists and state school counselors of the year will be celebrated in Washington, D.C., in January 2026 and will participate in online events during National School Counseling Week, Feb. 2–6, 2026.

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 53 state and territory associations and a membership of more than 40,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, visit www.schoolcounselor.org.