



Media Contact

Kathleen Rakestraw
(703) 683-2722 • krakestraw@schoolcounselor.org

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Jorge Torres Selected as 2024 School Counselor of the Year Finalist



ALEXANDRIA, VA – The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is pleased to announce Jorge Torres, lead school counselor, Foster High School, Tukwila, Wash., as a finalist for the 2024 School Counselor of the Year awards program (#SCOY24). Torres has been a school counselor since 2000. The school serves 865 students, grades 9–12. Torres received his bachelor’s degree from Eastern Washington University and a master’s degree from Heritage University.

“Jorge shares a life story so similar to many of our students that he naturally blends into the community here,” said James Blanton, former principal, Foster High School. “Jorge and his family were migrant farmworkers following the harvest crops between California, Florida, Oregon and Washington state. During this time, Jorge attended 11 elementary schools, three middle schools and three high schools between the U.S. and Mexico. His lived experiences, hard work and resilience are skills he uses to support our students. Torres’ 23 years of growth, student advocacy, leadership and organizational skills make him a role model for how to do this work.”

“In fall 2016, many students and families reached out to me with feelings of fear of being separated from their families due to their legal status in a climate of increased xenophobia,” Torres said. “I experienced instability and unpredictability as a child migrant farmworker, so I know firsthand how fear can affect a student’s life and

education.” The fears expressed by students and families led Torres to initiate a legal clinic at his school that December. He coordinated with state and local organizations and 15 immigration attorneys, who provided free legal support to students and families, and he arranged for local immigrant rights organizations to inform them of their legal rights. He also ensured mental health agencies were present to provide services. “The legal clinic was a tremendous success, with more than 200 parents and students in attendance,” he said. “Parents left the clinic with legal guardianship paperwork and resources, which gave students a greater sense of safety and allowed them to better focus at school.”

For Torres, the ability to serve students during their high school years, knowing that through his work he is shaping future generations, is what he finds most rewarding about being a school counselor.

“Each year, the 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 Washington, D.C., in February 2024 and will participate in online events during National School Counseling Week, Feb. 5–9, 2024.

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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 51 state and territory associations and a membership of approximately 43,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, visit www.schoolcounselor.org.