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Ana Celia Báez Selected as 2027 School Counselor of the Year Finalist



ALEXANDRIA, VA – The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is pleased to announce Ana Celia Báez is a finalist for the 2027 School Counselor of the Year® awards program (#SCOY27). Báez is the school counselor at South Division High School, Milwaukee, Wis. The school serves approximately 900 students, grades 9–12. Báez has been a school counselor since 2013. She received a bachelor's degree in human development and family studies, with a certificate in Chicano/Latino studies, and a master's degree in counseling psychology, both from the University of Wisconsin – Madison.

"South Division High School is one of the most diverse schools in Wisconsin," said Dr. Jose Trejo, principal, South Division High School. "Many of our students are immigrants, refugees, multilingual learners and first-generation college aspirants. They arrive with extraordinary strengths but often face significant systemic barriers. Ana has dedicated her career to ensuring those barriers never determine a student's future. In my years as a school leader, I have worked with many outstanding educators. Very few have demonstrated the rare combination of vision, leadership, innovation, advocacy and compassion that Ana brings to her work each day. She has fundamentally changed the lives of thousands of students while serving as a model for what comprehensive school counseling can achieve."

"Beyond everything she accomplishes professionally, Ana brings joy, positivity and

genuine care to our school community," said Van Mawi Tial, mathematics teacher, South Division High School. "She responds to students with urgency, advocates relentlessly on their behalf and inspires those around her to continually improve their own practice."

"Ana is an extraordinary school counselor – the kind every adult looks back on and wishes they had in high school," said Nadya Pérez-Reyes, deputy secretary, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. "Having known Ana for over 20 years, I have watched her transform personal childhood adversity into a dedicated career of impact, serving in the same school district she attended, with a profound level of empathy, authenticity and leadership. Ana's passion as a school counselor is rooted in her own lived experience. Ana relates to the shame, fear and barriers students and families face, and she works tirelessly to cultivate spaces where families feel safe, respected and loved."

"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 January 2027.

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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 53 state and territory associations and a membership of approximately 38,000 school

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