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Cindy Bourget Selected as 2024 School Counselor of the Year Finalist



ALEXANDRIA, VA – The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is pleased to announce Cindy Bourget, school counselor, Elk Mound Middle School, Elk Mound, Wis., as a finalist for the 2024 School Counselor of the Year awards program (#SCOY24). Bourget has been a school counselor since 2016. The school serves 368 students, grades 5–8. Bourget received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Wisconsin – River Falls and her master’s degree from the University of Wisconsin – Stout.

“Ms. Bourget’s impact on the students she works with is difficult to articulate into words. Everyone who comes in contact with her on a daily basis is better because of her,” said Chris Hahn, principal, Elk Mound Middle School. “All students have access to a free and equitable education in our school, regardless of their socioeconomic background, race, etc., because of Ms. Bourget’s planning, staff development and attention to details.”

In 2022, data on discipline at Elk Mound Middle School showed male students were struggling to meet behavioral expectations and were receiving 85% of the school’s office discipline referrals (ODRs). This data, when combined with supplemental reports from teachers, parents and students, exposed a gap in student discipline: students weren’t being taught coping and conflict management skills, and when they made mistakes, they didn’t receive the help they needed to figure out how to fix their behavior. To address the issue, Bourget created an ODR Club, where students

who received an ODR spent time processing the referral. "The focus was on identifying how their actions affect others and on how to fix the situation," Bourget said. By the end of the first year, 75% of the boys had fewer than three ODRs a semester.

For Bourget, the most rewarding aspect of school counseling is seeing how the hard work students put in pays off in ways that help them be successful the rest of their lives. "When we start our work together, many times students don't believe they can do it, and there is true joy in seeing how they can surprise themselves," she said. "I am beyond fortunate to have found a career that allows me to find personal fulfillment. I know that everything I put into my work is going to help my community for generations."

"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.