



Media Contact

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

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Hanna Kemble-Mick Selected as 2025 School Counselor of the Year Finalist



ALEXANDRIA, VA – The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is pleased to announce Hanna Kemble-Mick, school counselor/USD 437 dean of elementary school counseling, Indian Hills Elementary School, Topeka, Kan., as a finalist for the 2025 School Counselor of the Year® awards program (#SCOY25). The school serves 474 students, grades K-6. Kemble-Mick, who has been a school counselor since 2015, earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Kansas State University.

"She exemplifies exemplary character and integrity," said Teresa Plachecki, acting principal, Indian Hills Elementary School. "With unwavering dedication, she places the well-being and success of our students at the forefront, acting as both a trusted mentor and a passionate advocate. Her compassionate demeanor and steadfast commitment to nurturing student growth have profoundly impacted our school community."

One of Kemble-Mick's proudest accomplishments as a school counselor has been the development of a Junior Coaches program, initially designed to address a specific issue with two students struggling with aggressive behavior and bullying on the playground. The program focuses on teaching leadership skills and conflict-resolution strategies. It allowed these students to channel their energy in a positive direction, seeing themselves as role models for their peers. Their behavior

improved significantly as they learned to manage their emotions and assist others in resolving conflicts. The program's success is evident in the data: one student's office discipline referrals decreased by 71%, while another saw a 77% reduction. Additionally, a primary student with anxiety benefited from the program, reducing their morning transition time from 45 minutes to immediate classroom entry with the support of a Junior Coach. The program's impact has extended beyond Indian Hills Elementary School, as other school counselors have adopted Kemble-Mick's training manual to create their own Junior Coaches program. "Seeing this transformation, – from a targeted intervention for two students into a program that now empowers a dozen young leaders in my school – has been incredibly rewarding," Kemble-Mick said. "It's a powerful reminder of how the right support and opportunities can help students grow into confident, compassionate leaders."

"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 2025 and will participate in online events during National School Counseling Week, Feb. 3–7, 2025.

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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 43,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, visit www.schoolcounselor.org.