



Media Contact

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

For immediate release – Nov. 17, 2026

Lydia Thu Kim Larimore Selected as 2026 School Counselor of the Year Finalist



ALEXANDRIA, VA – The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is pleased to announce Lydia Thu Kim Larimore as a finalist for the 2026 School Counselor of the Year® awards program (#SCOY26). Larimore is a school counselor at Neabsco Elementary School in Woodbridge, Va. The school, a culturally diverse Title 1 schools serves 614 students, grades K–5. Larimore, who has been a school counselor since 2021, received a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Simpson University and has master’s

degrees in business administration from the University of Phoenix and school counseling from Liberty University. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in counseling and supervision at James Madison University. Larimore is a first-generation Chinese/Vietnamese American.

“In her role as a school counselor, Mrs. Larimore consistently goes above and beyond to ensure the success and well-being of every student,” said Brooke LeVecchi, principal, Neabsco Elementary School. “She is deeply invested in fostering connections that support student growth and family engagement. She collaborates with teachers and staff to address individual and whole class needs, ensuring a supportive and inclusive school environment. Her dedication to teamwork and communication strengthens Neabsco Elementary School as a community where every student can thrive.

Larimore created Stars Supporting Stars, a student-driven peer mentorship program that reduced chronic absenteeism by 44% in its first year. The initiative supports students' attendance, academic achievement and social/emotional development through structured peer relationships. Following that success, her school earned accreditation, and the program was added as an annual goal in their continuous improvement plan. Larimore also launched a peer reader program in which students from general education settings read one-on-one with peers in specialized support settings to build literacy while fostering inclusion and empathy. Larimore's work is driven by a commitment to ensuring every student feels seen, supported and empowered to thrive.

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