



ISCA School Counselor Advocate of the Year

John Casey
Cameron Elementary School
Chicago, IL

John Casey believes in the strong impact an elementary school counselor can have on the students, families, and schools they serve and has long worked to help redefine the role of an elementary school counselor in Chicago Public Schools. John is active in the CPS Master Counselor Cohort, the Professional Learning Communities for School Counselors, Communities in Schools, and in the Chicago Teachers Union. He encourages, impacts, and advocates for over 700 school counselors in Chicago Public Schools. John has been an essential team member and advocate for creating systemic change in Chicago Public Schools.

John began working at Cameron Elementary School in 1995 as a 5th and 6th grade teacher. In the fall of 2001, he moved into the counselor's office as a "Student Development Teacher" - a role created due to a shortage of certified school counselors. In 2004, his masters degree complete, John officially became Cameron's School Counselor, and a surprise to him, *Special Education Case Manager*.

In the spring of 2012, John joined the newly formed Chicago Teachers Union School Counselors' Committee. He has served the committee as a co-chairperson, chairperson, and member for the past 8 years. He has presented contract proposals on behalf of the CTU School Counselors' Committee for the last three negotiated contracts between Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union. John was instrumental in developing contract language that allowed elementary school counselors to say "no" to special education case management and focus on developing school counseling programs that serve all students within the school. This has led to an 86% decrease in school counselors serving as case managers district-wide over the past 5 years.

In 2019, with two other members of the committee, John presented to the Chicago Board of Education the importance of all students having access to a school counselor and a school counseling program that is aligned to the ASCA national model. The message was heard, and the Board of Education agreed to put language in the new CTU contract stating that school counselors should only perform duties in schools that align with the ASCA National Model. These wins are making national news, and other states are following by adding specific roles for school counselors in their union contracts.

Not only has John helped to create systemic change in Chicago Public Schools, but he has also created change in his school. John advocated to reduce the student to school counselor ratio at Cameron. With the support of his administration, there have been two school counselors working at Cameron for the last five years when most of the elementary schools in the Chicago Public School district have only one school counselor regardless of the number of students. John has also advocated to perform appropriate roles in his school that align with ASCA. He likes to say that though he has been in the role of school counselor at Cameron for over 15 years, he really has only just begun to be a school counselor!

School Administrator of the Year

Stephen Harden
Cameron Elementary
Chicago, IL

Stephen Harden, principal at Cameron Elementary in Chicago takes the time to understand what a school counselor can do. Over the last few years, he has worked to remove non-counseling related duties like test coordination, student records management, and special education case management from his school counselors. In 2014, he worked with the local school council to secure funds to hire a second counselor. This reduced the caseload size and provided his students greater access to a comprehensive school counseling program. He collaborates each year with his school counselors on their school counseling program, identifies goals and provides the resources to achieve those goals.

In his years at Cameron, Stephen has worked to build partnerships with multiple community organizations to support student growth and development. Local churches - New Life Center and River City Community Church - have provided after school programming to many of our students as a part of the CPS Safe Haven Program. In 2018, Stephen worked hard to ensure that Cameron was one of twenty schools selected to receive funding through the Sustainable Community Schools Grant to form additional community partnerships and build additional support for students at his school. As a result, parent engagement at the school has also improved.

Stephen Harden has been the principal of Cameron Elementary for 10 years and knows most of the students and their families by name. He leads with sincerity, efficiency, and dignity.

As one of his school counselors stated about him: He cares. He really cares. He inspires all us, teachers, staff, and school counselors to be better at what we do, to have an impact, to care.

Dr. Toni Tollerud School Counselor Educator of the Year

Kim Kopec
DePaul University
Naperville Central High School

Professor Kim Kopec works as a full time school counselor at Naperville Central High School and for the past 10 years, she has dedicated herself to also helping future school counselors learn and grow by leading a section of DePaul Universities internship class. She is always happy, excited, and energized to speak with her school counseling interns. In addition to leading weekly classes, Kim also does site visits for each of her 6 school sites. These schools are all over the Chicagoland area. Kim collaborates with site supervisors to ensure the relationship is successful for all parties involved and works as an advocate for her students. Kim shares her real life experiences with counselors in training, and helps them to realize what the important things are to focus on in real life situations.

Kim stands out as a Counselor Educator because of her love for her students. She knows the importance of the standards, ethics, and guidelines of each program, however she cares just as deeply for her

students as people as well. Kim knows that a good school counselor feels validated, loved, and supported, and she makes her students feel that way each and every day they come to class.

School Counselor Internship Supervisor of the Year

Larissa Zelisko
Westmont High School
Westmont, IL

Larissa Zelisko is well aware of the collaboration needed to produce an effective and successful counseling department. She is in constant contact with the necessary stakeholders to ensure that all parties are always on the same page - especially when it comes to students and their needs. Zelisko's main priority is to always help students graduate on time. She has perfected the art of 'credit checks' and is always looking for ways to improve student experience.

Zelisko has changed student's experience by lobbying to get rid of "class rank". This antiquated way of ranking students based on their GPA is not helpful for students at all. During her tenure as a counselor, Zelisko noticed the many negative impacts having class rank creates for students (and sometimes even their parents). Many times, they end up only focusing on this information - rather than trying their best to improve their grades for their own betterment. Thankfully, Zelisko realized this and was able to convince these key stakeholders to eliminate class rank and its days are now numbered at Westmont High School.

She is ethical, knowledgeable, and committed. She puts her students first and works tirelessly to make sure that they are taken care of across all domains. She takes her time with each student - ensuring no one is left behind.

Her intern, Kirsten Vancura states: "Larissa Zelisko is truly a one-of-a-kind person, counselor, and supervisor - she deserves to be recognized for her dedication and success in her position. She is very hands-on as a site-supervisor, she was quick to let me do things on my own and make mistakes. I have had much more independence and I am so thankful for the trust and confidence that she has in my abilities as an intern. I would not feel as confident as an intern as I do if it had not been for her guidance."

ISCA School Counselor Graduate Student of the Year

Pamela Nehrke
Schaumburg High School
DePaul University

Pamela Nehrke is a graduate student at DePaul University. Recently, DePaul's counseling program underwent CACREP accreditation last and Pamela was tasked as the lead Graduate Assistant in charge. This meant she spent countless hours helping to organize meetings, revise documents, and streamline processes. DePaul is proud to say that they obtained CACREP accreditation and are deeply grateful for Pamela's enormous contributions.

Pamela also served as a lead member for the Lift as You Climb: Pathways to Leadership for Educational Equity at DePaul University. Pamela collaborated with college of education faculty, fellow students, alumni, and community stakeholders including Big Brothers Big Sisters, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Police Department, and Precious Blood Ministry in the Back of the Yards. Because of her innate talents and abilities, she was promoted to a leadership role to help organize a physical and mental health retreat for 20 young mothers and their children from Precious Blood Ministry Yards.

Pamela also was a Cheerleader and Assistant for USA's first ever ParaCheer of the USA Cheer Association of 75% athletes without and 25% athletes with limitations including Cerebral Palsy, Down's syndrome, Multiple Sclerosis, or Autism. She and her team competed at the 2018 Worlds Cheerleading Competition at Disney and returned as silver medalists.

Pamela is currently the Vice President Graduate Student on the Illinois School Counseling Association Board of Directors. This commitment means that she participates in monthly meetings to discuss the organization and prepare for the state conference. She also created and actively manages social media accounts for the ISCA on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Moreover, she attended the American School Counseling Association's Midwest Leadership Development Institute and lobbied for ISCA rights at an ICA meeting with Board President, Dr. Matt Liberatore. She will also be the lead presenter for a presentation at this year's ISCA conference, titled Trauma Informed Care Through an MTSS Lens.

Pamela goes above and beyond. She has a bright and fun personality. She is clearly passionate about helping both students and the profession.

ISCA Elementary School Counselor of the Year

Elizabeth Rosenfeld
Chase Elementary
Chicago, IL

Elizabeth Rosenfeld has served as a school counselor at Chase Elementary for five years. Elizabeth is the SECOND elementary school counselor to EVER get RAMP in Chicago Public School history.

Elizabeth goes above and beyond to ensure that her students have access to a comprehensive school counseling program. Not only has she earned RAMP for her school, she has also earned the exemplary rating for the "Supportive Schools Badge" for Chicago Public Schools which means she has ensured that comprehensive social and emotional supports are available for her students and families. This includes strategic planning, weekly lessons for social and emotional learning, a menu of supports for small group and individualized interventions, community partnerships and a behavioral health team. Her SEL program has served as a model for other Chicago Public Schools. More than all of this, Elizabeth is a lovely person to know and will do whatever it takes to make sure that her students have all the supports that they need.

Middle/Junior High School Counselor of the Year

Jenelle Hoyt

Camelot Safe School Chicago, IL

Jenelle Hoyt works extremely well with all stakeholders to improve the school's mission and achieve student gains. Ms. Hoyt is a counselor that has an indescribable passion for students. She wants all of her students to be successful and she strives to ensure that they are no matter what. She engages with parents to ensure a positive relationship and partnership with them. She understands that student success is increased significantly when parents buy into and feel a part of the school. Ms. Hoyt checks in with parents, teachers and administrators regularly to see how she can support them. She listens intently, proposes some solutions and supports them in any way that she can. Ms. Hoyt also works with individuals from outside of school, such as community partners and colleagues from other Camelot campuses to not only support them but also see how everyone can work together for the common mission: ensuring student success.

Ray Piagentini High School Counselor of the Year

Dr. Heidi Truax
Simpson Academy for Young Women
Chicago, IL

Heidi Truax is a true leader at the district, state and national level. As a Master Counselor for the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Heidi helps to vet district initiatives, facilitates presentations and serves as a mentor for school counselors. She leads "RAMP camps" city-wide for school counselors that want to learn how to complete the RAMP application. She has earned RAMP three times and most recently earned a RAMP School of Distinction award from the American School Counselor Association. At her school, she has also assisted the school with earning an "exemplary" "safe and supportive school badge" from the Chicago Public Schools, meaning that a comprehensive social and emotional learning plan is in place at her school including strategic planning, social-emotional core curriculum, a menu of options for small group and individual supports, a behavioral health team and community partnerships.

She advocated for her school, which serves pregnant and parenting teens, to establish a Career and Technical Education course and a Dual Credit Course. She coordinates all school wide events for parents and students at Simpson Academy and serves as a lead on multiple initiatives throughout the school.

At the state and national level, Heidi also uses her collaborative talents. Heidi serves on the board for the Illinois School Counselor Association as the vice-president counselor educator. She regularly earns one of the highest ratings for her presentations at the ISCA state conferences year after year and also has facilitated presentations for ISCA in the fall on the new 4th edition of the ASCA model. Heidi also serves as a lead RAMP reviewer for the ASCA and regularly presents on behalf of ASCA at the annual conferences.

She also serves as a counselor educator at Roosevelt University. She won the Dr. Toni Tollerud School Counselor Educator of the Year award from ISCA for the amazing work that she has done at Roosevelt University to build and improve their school counseling graduate program.

Her knowledge and expertise never goes unnoticed in any platform in which she serves. Her passion for her students and the school counseling profession is evident in all that she does. From developing stellar programs in her school and seeing huge improvements, to serving at the state and national level through ISCA and ASCA, to serving as a counselor educator. Heidi is wise and truly cares about the well-being of others.

School Counselor Legislator of the Year

Mary Edly-Allen

Illinois House Representatives

Mary Eddy-Allen is a legislator for the Illinois House of Representatives. She is the coauthor of HB3652 which ensures counselors discuss multiple postsecondary pathways. This includes military, trades, certificate programs, and gap years. Mary leverages her previous role as an educator to champion and support school counselor work. This is unlike any other previous representative. Mary has also created building trade (trading cards) to promote the career salaries, training, and other information. These are in demo mode and looking to be made widespread for counselors and other educators to use as an educational tool. Mary also has had 1-1 meetings with ISCA leadership to find additional ways to collaborate. Mary is a friend of ISCA.

Amanda Szaraz' (2019 IL School Counselor of the Year)

Introduction of the Illinois School Counselor of the Year

Dr. Heidi Truax

Simpson Academy for Young Women

Chicago, IL

*I am incredibly excited to virtually introduce the 2020 Illinois School Counselor of the Year. This school counselor has done it all, and when I say that, I mean it. They are a leader in their school and in their district. They are known for being a true advocate for their students and their entire school community. They educate future school counselors. They have earned RAMP three times! They are someone that I have personally had the pleasure of getting to know, and is someone who I am honored to call a colleague. **It is with so much enthusiasm and pleasure that I get to announce Dr. Heidi Truax as the 2020 Illinois School Counselor of the Year!***