



NEWS RELEASE

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Gwinnett celebrates the work of school counselors

As part of **National School Counseling Week**, celebrated this year **Feb. 3-7**, **Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS)** highlighted the key role school counselors play in the academic success and overall well-being of all Gwinnett children. In doing so, the school district named its top counseling professionals of the year. The 2020 GCPS top counseling professionals are:

Gwinnett County Board of Education

Louise Radloff
2020 Chairman
District V

Carole C. Boyce
2020 Vice Chairman
District I

Steven B. Knudsen
District II

Dr. Mary Kay Murphy
District III

Everton Blair, Jr.
District IV

J. Alvin Wilbanks
CEO/Superintendent

The Mission of Gwinnett County Public Schools

is to pursue excellence in academic knowledge, skills, and behavior for each student, resulting in measured improvement against local, national, and world-class standards.

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It is the policy of Gwinnett County Public Schools not to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, national origin, age, or disability in any employment practice, educational program, or any other program, activity, or service.

2010 and 2014 Winner of



2020 Gwinnett County Elementary School Counselor of the Year: Laura Spencer of Ivy Creek Elementary School

Laura Spencer believes that creating meaningful connections with students through encouragement and support will positively influence their attitudes towards learning. The veteran counselor also has a passion for mentoring, having started mentoring programs connecting students to police officers—C.O.P.S. (Caring Officers Providing Support)—and firefighters—FLAME (Fireman Lunch And Mentor Experience). Ivy Creek Principal Laura Callahan says the school is blessed to have Spencer. “She is dedicated to our students, staff, and families. Mrs. Spencer goes out of her way to ensure that our students know how important they are to our school community and have the tools they need to succeed in the classroom and beyond,” Callahan said.



2020 Gwinnett County Middle School Counselor of the Year: Teshia Dula of Hull Middle School

Teshia Dula’s dedication and passion for school counseling extends beyond just students. She believes in all students and discusses her beliefs about their achievement and success with parents, staff, and the community through workshops, meetings, and social media. Denise Showell, the principal at Hull Middle School, adds, “Mrs. Dula symbolizes what it means to be a school counselor. She is a caring and dedicated leader, advocate, collaborator, and systems change agent.



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**2020 Gwinnett County Secondary School
Counselor of the Year: Joyce Gonzalez of
Mountain View High School**

Joyce Gonzalez is known as the “counseling warrior” because she looks out for all students and does what’s right for them even if they are not a part of her caseload. Tamia Robb, assistant principal at Mountain View High, says Gonzalez transforms lives. “The noticeable impact Mrs. Gonzalez has on our school can be seen by the transformational growth many of her students experience. Students who once were paralyzed with anxiety and fear are flourishing academically. Students who wanted to give up in multiple ways regarding school and life are making better choices because they know that she cares,” Robb said.



**2020 Gwinnett County Mary Joe Hannaford
Counselor Administrator of the Year:
Dr. Angelique Mitchell of Ferguson
Elementary School**

Counselors at Ferguson Elementary School say Dr. Angelique Mitchell values the role of counselors, making sure they have the time necessary to provide a comprehensive and equitable program for all students. Sherry Ferguson, a counselor at the school, adds, “Dr. Mitchell loves to promote leadership in our students, even co-leading a counseling small group of fifth-grade students, Principal’s Elite Club, which helps develop leadership skills through service to the school and community. She inspires students and staff every day to believe that anything is possible if you set your mind to it,” Ferguson said.



GCPS counselors continue to be among the most recognized with state and national honors. As part of today’s event, Gwinnett counselors and leaders saluted Laura Ross, a school counselor at Five Forks Middle School, who is the 2020 National School Counselor of the year. She is the latest of a long list of GCPS counselors honored at the national level. Recent honorees include Stacey Miller, a 2016 semifinalist for the national honor; Jennifer Diaz, a finalist for 2015 National Counselor of the Year; Andrea Hodgin, a semifinalist for the 2015 national honor; and Robin Zorn of Mason Elementary, who was named the 2014 National School Counselor of the Year.